

FOURTH DRAFT  
AUGUST 30, 1991  
9/10/91 BLUE  
10/1/91 PINK  
10/14/91 YELLOW  
10/25/91 GREEN  
10/31/91 GOLDENROD  
\*11/7/91 BUFF

H E R O

a screenplay by

David Webb Peoples

from a story by

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Please note the following changes:

- A.) INSPECTOR JENSEN  
(previously changed to  
INSPECTOR BENSON on revised BLUE page 94)

has been changed to  
INSPECTOR DAYTON

B.) THE PERIGORD restaurant  
has been changed to  
THE BARCELONA restaurant

C.) TERRY WELLS  
has been changed to  
TOM WELLER

D.) CHANNEL 11  
has been changed to  
CHANNEL 13

E.) CHANNEL 7  
has been changed to  
CHANNEL 8

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE GOINES turns to the Jury FOREMAN.

JUDGE GOINES  
Mister Foreman, have you arrived  
at a verdict?

FOREMAN  
We have, your honor. We find the  
defendant guilty of all the charges.

TITLES BEGIN OVER THE SCENE

ANGLE ON THE DEFENDANT, BERNIE LAPLANTE

Forty, rumpled, cheap suit, cheap haircut. He reacts, turning to the jury, indignant.

His attorney, DONNA O'DAY, rises. She's twenty-four, looks younger.

DONNA

Your honor, may I approach the bench?

As BERNIE fumes, the JUDGE, DONNA and the youthful clean-cut PROSECUTOR engage in an earnest, inaudible discussion.

Frustrated, Bernie is watching them when he notices something that distracts him from his anguish.

Donna's wallet is lying in her open attache case. The open top of the case screens the wallet from the view of the JURY, THE JUDGE, COURT REPORTERS, etc.

Bernie looks around, checking the spectators section.

No spectators.

TITLE CONTINUE

Bernie gets the wallet to his lap. In between cautious glances toward the bench where the conference continues inaudibly, he surreptitiously selects some of the twenties and some of the tens from the wallet.

AT THE BENCH

The conference breaks up, DONNA heads back toward the defense table.

The wallet still concealed in his lap under the table, BERNIE is indignant.

BERNIE

What's going on? "Guilty"! What is this?

DONNA

I got your bail continued.

BERNIE

Bail, for Chrissake! I'm innocent!

The JUDGE gavels for order as BERNIE slips DONNA's "lightened" wallet back into her attache case unseen.

JUDGE GOINES

Mister LaPlante, I have been persuaded in view of your continued employment and your lack of prior convictions, to continue your bail under the same conditions heretofore, pending sentencing six days from now. In the meantime you will make an appointment with the probation officer who will make a recommendation to me regarding your sentence. I urge you to use these six days to set your personal affairs in order in anticipation of incarceration.

THE TITLES CONCLUDE

INT. CORRIDOR/HALL OF JUSTICE - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

BERNIE and DONNA are hurrying along the crowded corridor outside the courtroom.

BERNIE

"Anticipation of incarceration"?

DONNA

(upset)

He means prison, Mr. LaPlante.

BERNIE

I know what he means. I'm not a prison kinda guy, Miss O'Day. I'm a goddamn working man for Chrissake! Maybe I "augment" my income a little with some "business deals," maybe summa the guys I sell to are crooks, how would I know, I'm not an investigator. You can't make it on a wage no more, not in this country.

DONNA

I think our best course right now would be to focus on the Probation Officer's report...

BERNIE

He gives a good report and I walk?

DONNA

We can hope.

(consulting her notes)

You still have your job, right?

BERNIE

Yeah, I been calling in sick. They think I got the flu.

DONNA

And a son by your ex-wife? Joseph.

BERNIE

A son, yeah. What about him? Joey.

DONNA

Are you pretty involved in his upbringing?

BERNIE

Involved! Christ! She attached my goddamn paycheck! Child support. Why do you think I can't afford a lawyer?

(then...)

You know what I mean. Why I got a court appointed lawyer instead of a, uh, more experienced...

DONNA

I understand. How often do you see your son?

BERNIE

Often, uh.

DONNA

How recently?

BERNIE

Uh, his birthday, uh, May. I think.

DONNA

It's November.

BERNIE

(beat... beat...  
beat...)

She don't like me to see him.  
Says I'm a bad influence.

DONNA

I think you should visit your son.  
And try and get your boss to write  
a note about your performance on  
the job. You need to create the  
impression of a responsible, decent  
citizen with familial  
responsibilities who happened to  
slip up once.

They have reached the front door. BERNIE nods, about to exit.

DONNA

(with difficulty)

Uh, I know you're having financial  
difficulties, Mister LaPlante, but  
I wonder if... I mean, the money  
I loaned you...

BERNIE

Some of it. Right here. I got some  
of it. I'll get the rest as soon  
as I can.

BERNIE pulls out the crumpled bills he took from Donna's wallet  
and hands them to her.

DONNA

(surprised and touched)

I know things are difficult for you,  
Mister LaPlante. I don't want to  
take your last dime...

BERNIE is already reaching for a twenty.

BERNIE

Right. I better keep some if I'm  
gonna see the kid. For gas and  
stuff.

Then, unable to resist the chance, he snatches another.

EXT. LION CAGES/ZOO - ANOTHER DAY

A LION lies glumly in his cage, staring balefully through the  
bars at BERNIE who stares balefully back, contemplating the iron  
bars. At BERNIE'S side is a ten year old boy, JOEY, whose neat,  
scrubbed appearance is in sharp contrast to BERNIE'S rumped,  
slightly soiled look.

JOEY

Wow! Look at that one!

JOEY is indicating the next cage where a BLACK PANTHER is pacing restlessly to and fro.

JOEY

If you were in there, he'd kill you,  
wouldn't he...Dad?

As Bernie looks at the PANTHER, the muscular beast looks right into BERNIE'S eyes with the furious yellow stare as if to say "I'm waiting."

BERNIE

Yeah, yeah, something like that.

INT. FLUKY'S RESTAURANT - AN HOUR LATER (DAY)

BERNIE and JOEY facing each other in a booth, eating burgers.

BERNIE

This guy, this "friend" your  
mother's seeing, he's a fireman,  
huh? He ever... spend the night,  
whatsisname?

JOEY

Sometimes. His name's Elliot. He  
saved a guy's life one time. In  
a fire.

BERNIE

Oh yeah? A hero, huh?  
(a beat, then...)  
Was he in the 'Nam, this guy Elliot?

JOEY

"The Nomm"? What's that?

BERNIE

It was this war. Viet Nam. Doesn't  
matter.

JOEY

Were you in it? In the war?

BERNIE

You never saw that picture, huh?

JOEY

What picture?

BERNIE

Me in my uniform. Used to be on the bookcase.

INT. MEN'S ROOM/FLUKY'S - TEN MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Deserted except for BERNIE and JOEY side by side at the urinals. BERNIE glances at JOEY.

BERNIE

Whatcha gotta do there, buddy, is ya gotta get in close so ya don't piss on yer shoes. It don't matter now cause you're wearin' them sneakers but the time's gonna come when you're gonna be wearin' good shoes, expensive ones, and you don't wanna piss on them, you wanna protect 'em. From piss, from tough guys, from everything.

-- ALTERNATE VERSION --

BERNIE

What I don't like about public restrooms is how you're always standing in piss. It don't matter to you, you got those sneakers but I'm standing in piss in very expensive shoes. It's a breakdown in custodial services.

JOEY steals a glance at BERNIE, sees him "shake it off" and zip up. JOEY does likewise.

JOEY

Are you gonna take me somewhere next weekend?

BERNIE

I'm working on that. It's just I got some business problems and... whatsa matter?

JOEY is heading for one of the stalls. He reaches underneath and pulls out a wallet.

JOEY

Somebody lost a wallet.



BERNIE is extremely interested, takes the wallet JOEY holds out and glances inside.

Cash. A couple of fifties.

INT. FLUKY'S - SECONDS LATER (DAY)

BERNIE and JOEY exit the Men's Room and head for the door to the parking lot, BERNIE explaining...

BERNIE

You give it to the manager, he pockets the dough, throws the wallet away. Most people who work in supervisory positions... I'm not saying all... are crooks.

JOEY casts a hasty glance at TEENAGER who's wearing the Manager Badge. The youth could not look more innocent if he wore a halo.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A BAG LADY pushing two shopping carts through the parking lot spots BERNIE and JOEY crossing her path...

BAG LAOY

Excuse me, sir, could you spare...?

BERNIE

No way, lady, not a chance.

BERNIE hurries past her, notices JOEY looking back at the miserable woman.

BERNIE

You gotta resist the urge to be nice to those people, they're con artists, they take advantage of the soft heart. A lot of 'em are financially better off than the rest of us.

Arriving at an ancient, battered Toyota, BERNIE searches for his keys and then fusses with the lock.

BERNIE

What I'm gonna do on this wallet thing is, Monday, day after

tomorrow, I'm gonna have my secretary phone this guy up from the name on his driver's license. Let the guy come and get his wallet and make sure you get a reward. You deserve a reward. You want one, doncha? A reward? Gwan, get in.

INT. TOYOTA/MOVING/FREEWAY - TWENTY MINUTES LATER (DAY)

BERNIE is at the wheel, the car is gasping, struggling.

BERNIE

Whatcha gotta do, you gotta look out for number one. It sounds harsh, but it's a goddamn (excuse the vulgarity) jungle out there, kid. That's why you gotta keep a low profile! Right? A low profile!

It's where you don't give nobody nothin' to shoot at, stay outta sight, be parta the woodwork, don't ever tell 'em your name, they'll use it against you.

JOEY is looking for the right exit sign. He spots it.

JOEY

Here. Get off here.

BERNIE

(a look at Joey)

Thanks. Thanks, pal.

JOEY looks pleased.

EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE/INT. TOYOTA - LATER - DAY

BERNIE is turning onto a suburban street, checking the houses.

BERNIE

Listen, buddy, I'm really enjoying this relationship we got going here. I been missing out on not knowing you better. Thing is, I got all this business stuff...

JOEY

I could go to a movie Thursday night. 'Cause we don't have school on Friday.

BERNIE pulls the car up in front of a single story two bedroom house.

BERNIE

Here we are. Yeah, that's a possibility. A movie. Now you gwan in, tell your mother I got you back on time. Point that out to her. She was always on my case for stuff like that. She's still like that, right?

JOEY

(a little grin, his first)

Yeah.

(getting out)

I'll see ya... dad.

JOEY gets out and runs toward the house. BERNIE watches him go. Then he pulls out the wallet, thumbs the cash, glances at the credit cards.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

The bored, fiftyish bartender, CHICK, is watching the TV mounted over the bar in this unfashionable, nearly-deserted joint. He looks up when the door opens.

CHICK

Bernie! Where ya been, Pal?

Arriving at the bar, BERNIE surveys the dimly lit room, checking the booths and tables for customers. Not many.

BERNIE

Some guys been looking for me, Chick? Spanish kinda guys.

CHICK

Spanish kinda guys!

BERNIE

Business thing. Gimme a seven and seven, willya?

BERNIE checks his watch, takes a seat, puts a twenty on the bar.

CHICK

What is it, five days now I don't see you!

BERNIE

'Cause I'm up to my ass in shit is why. I'm broke, plus I got legal problems... Nobody was asking for me, huh?

BERNIE looks around nervously, peering into the shadowy booths and rear tables as CHICK puts a drink in front of him.

CHICK

Nope. Legal problems, you gotta have a good attorney.

BERNIE

My attorney, she's just outta law school, about a couple of years older than my kid, for Chrissake.

CHICK

You gotta kid? How old's your kid?

BERNIE

Nine. I think. Maybe ten. Yeah, ten. Nice kid.

CHICK

You got a ten year old attorney, Bernie?

BERNIE

I can't afford no better. My ex, she attached my pay check for child support payments.

(turning)

You looking for Bernie LaPlante by any chance?

A MAN who's just entered the lounge shakes his head no and heads for a table where he's greeted by the COCKTAIL WAITRESS.

CHICK

I didn't even know you had a kid.

BERNIE

(thoughtful)

The thing about kids is, they're so... young! They don't know

nothin' yet. When you're a kid,  
you think you're gonna grow up an'  
be a "wonderful person" instead of  
an asshole, like everybody else.

CHICK

We're all assholes, Bernie?

BERNIE

(ignoring him)

When I was a kid, I thought I was  
gonna be this fantastic wonderful  
heroic human being.

ESPINOSA'S VOICE (O.S)

You Bernie Planta?

BERNIE turns.

Two Latinos are right behind him, low lifes, ESPINOSA and  
VARGAS.

BERNIE

LaPlante. Bernie LaPlante. You the  
guys Bunny called, huh?

INT. BACK BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Credit cards are being inspected. ESPINOSA, seated between  
VARGAS and BERNIE, in a booth in the nearly deserted lounge,  
looks the cards over dubiously.

ESPINOSA

Three hours is old, man. Very old.

BERNIE

Hey, he might not of reported 'em  
at all yet. He might not know for  
a couple hours.

VARGAS

You pick his pocket?

BERNIE

Yeah, more or less. Trust me, these  
are very very fresh.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

JEFFREY BROADMAN is standing against the granite facade of a

downtown office building. Three thousand dollar suit, Hermes tie, expensively cut silver grey hair ruffling slightly in the breeze. Charming smile, candid eyes...

BROADMAN

To be honest, I can't make sense of it either, Ms. Gayley. Things seem to be on the upswing, our differences with the SEC have been favorably resolved. In a business sense, I believe we've "turned the corner..."

GALE GAYLEY, a TV reporter, is standing close to BROADMAN, a microphone in her hand. She's thirty, attractive, dignified... We can hear SIRENS in the distance and, closer, the CRACKLE of radios and walkie talkies.

GALE

Mister Broadman, your wife and children are on their way here as we speak. Don't you think -- ?

BROADMAN

I feel I've done very well in life: good health, wonderful family, much wealth. I guess what we're talking about here is a kind of despair. I just have the feeling that everything from here on is going to be... downhill... At a time like this, I think I'm entitled, as the saying goes, to "look out for number one" and put my own needs first. That pretty much concludes what I have to say. Thanks for coming out here to let me talk to you and your viewers.

A nice smile as he drops RIGHT OUT THE BOTTOM OF THE FRAME!

ANGLE ON GALE

Looking down, horrified.

GALE

Oh my god! Chucky, tilt down.

Her cameraman, CHUCKY, twenty-five, is already urgently tilting his vidpak as WE REVEAL that he and GALE are standing on a ledge many stories above the street.

GALE

Did you get it?  
(then, doubly  
horrified)  
Jesus, did I say that?

CHUCKY

Yeah, I got it. Sports training.  
You learn to follow the ball.  
(looking up at Gale)  
How about you do a wrap-up from  
up here? I'll pan off that  
skyscraper over there, find you  
here, then reveal the drop.

GALE looks shaken.

TV IMAGE (EXT. OFFICE BUILDING LEDGE - DAY)

Later, the CAMERA "finds" GALE in mid-sentence standing on the ledge, "wearing" her broadcast voice and persona...

GALE

(into mike)  
Suicide number 137 of this year  
in this city was neither a  
destitute nor a lonely man, but  
a successful executive with a  
loving family and forty million  
dollars in the bank. If there's  
nameless "despair" in executive  
offices, what can there be sixty  
stories below where the hungry and  
the homeless, the brutalized and  
the addicted, fight their daily  
battle for survival.

(beat)

From a ledge sixty stories above  
the street, I'm Gale Gayley for  
Channel Four News.

REVEAL: THE TV MONITOR IS IN AN OFFICE

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/CHANNEL 4 - LATE AFTERNOON

DEAKINS, fifty, shirtsleeves, News Director, and WALLACE, sixty, Station Manager, suit and tie, patrician, are watching the monitor while CHUCKY and PARKER, the boyish gofer, hover behind them.

CHUCKY

Whadja think of the fall shot,  
Chief? The guy drops twenty  
stories in perfect focus, center  
frame while I go smoothly from F16  
to F5.6.

DEAKINS

Helluva shot, Chucky, beautiful.

(pulling out the video  
tape)

Parker, run this down to Frazier,  
tell him we open with it at six,  
eleven and at seven a.m....

PARKER is already running out the door as Gale enters.

GALE

Hi, Chief. You like the suicide?

WALLACE

Never reach out!

GALE

Hello, Mister Wallace.

DEAKINS

(to Gale)

He's right. It's unprofessional.

WALLACE

(to Gale)

If you reach out, you could get  
pulled over yourself.

GALE

What're we talking about? Reach  
out for what?

CHUCKY

I told them how you were upset we  
didn't save the guy...

DEAKINS

Saving people is not our job. It's  
as wrong to step in and save someone  
as it would be to push someone off.

WALLACE

You wouldn't push the guy, would  
you?

GALE



I didn't say I thought we should have saved him..

WALLACE

You didn't?

GALE

I said I wished it had at least occurred to me to consider saving him.

DEAKINS

What good would that do?

GALE sits on Deakins' desk.

GALE

It would make me feel like a human being instead of a cynical, hardbitten newswoman. Besides it wouldn't be a bad story, would it, "Newswoman Saves Suicide?"

DEAKINS

Unprofessional.

GALE

You just can't bear the idea of good news.

DEAKINS

You're sitting on your ticket.

GALE finds an envelope on the desk under her butt.

WALLACE

Ticket! What's going on?

DEAKINS

She's flying to New York. She's been nominated for a Silver Mike...

WALLACE

A Silver Mike! You're covering us in glory!

GALE

I haven't won it yet.

(studying ticket, to  
Deakins)

I notice you've got me scheduled on a flight back an hour after the

ceremony.

WALLACE

An hour after...! Deak, for Heaven's sake! Let's give her a night in New York City. We'll put her and her boyfriend up at a good hotel...

DEAKINS

She broke up with her boyfriend.

(to Gale)

Listen, babe, we needja back. You gotta follow up on the jumper, find the human interest in the grim, unending tale of woe that pours from the wounded heart of the heartless metropolis.

GALE

The story behind the story, the ugly scandal behind the falling millionaire, the dirt, you mean.

DEAKINS

That too.

GALE

(to Wallace)

Would the station put me up at a good hotel...?

WALLACE

(a look toward Deakins)

Absolutely!

GALE gives DEAKINS a big grin and starts out.

DEAKINS

Okay, hell with it. Party hearty... is that what they say? I'll figure something out.

(once she's gone)

She's just pretending she's a person. She's really a reporter. Fifty bucks she's on the first flight back.

CHUCKY

You know what I don't get? I don't get why a guy who's gonna jump asks to talk to a TV reporter?

DEAKINS

Cause how's he gonna know he's  
jumped if it's not on the six  
o'clock news.

EXT. STREET/CITY CIVIC CENTER - AFTERNOON

HORNS BLARE as a FORD VAN cuts off a CAB and squirms into a parking place marked "HANDICAPPED ONLY."

The side of the van reads GUMLEY'S SUPER CARPET CARE and features a cartoon logo and a phone number.

BERNIE, wearing Gumley overalls, jumps out of the van and hurries up the steps to an imposing municipal building.

INT. CIVIC BUILDING - TEN MINUTES LATER (AFTERNOON)

A door reads "PROBATION DEPARTMENT." MOVE IN ON THE DOOR.

INT. OFFICE/PROBATION - DAY

Bernie is sitting across the desk from the stone-faced, balding Probation Officer, PATRICK DUKE.

BERNIE

(agitated)

Hey! Do I have a record? Have I ever done time? I mean I been arrested a few times, who hasn't? Parking tickets for Chrissake! Suspicion of stuff! Have I ever been convicted of anything?

DUKE

Mister LaPlante...

BERNIE

Take a look at my employment record, you got my employment record there, right? You see any unemployment there, any welfare? I'm a taxpayer. They eat me alive, the tax people, they got taxes on everything, taxes, taxes, taxes, and forms! Taxes and forms so I can pay your goddamn salary, so you can sit there and write

stuff, guys like me pay your wages...

DUKE  
Mister LaPlante...

BERNIE  
Do I hit anybody? You see me shoot anybody? Hey, drugs! Do I sell drugs? Jesus, I don't belong in prison. I'm a family man.

DUKE  
Mister LaPlante...

BERNIE  
Look, I got this kid. We got a goddamn relationship! I'm takin' him to a movie tonight! He worships me. If I go down what's this do to my son? I'm his goddamn role model for Christ sake!

DUKE looks up at the "family man's" plaintive look. Then... Bernie ruins it.

BERNIE  
Listen, if I coulda afforded an experienced attorney, I woulda walked. It was a shitty case, very circumstantial. You gonna send me downstate for having an inexperienced lawyer? How you gonna feel about the system if you do that?

The brief flash of mercy is gone from DUKE'S eyes, replaced with a hard glitter. BERNIE has just shot himself in the foot.

INT. BALLROOM /N.Y. HOTEL - DAY

VIGOROUS APPLAUSE! GALE has just received the Silver Mike Award, a tastefully small, mike-sized replica of a microphone, from the MASTER OF CEREMONIES. Clutching it, she faces the applauding AUDIENCE across a podium, speaking into a real microphone.

GALE  
Thank you, very much. I'm grateful for this. Since you're all

colleagues here, you know what kind of a team it takes... to put a story on a screen. I don't have to explain to you how much the cameraman, the editor, the assignment editor and the news director, to mention a few did to get me this award.

GALE pauses. She reaches into her purse and pulls out an onion. She holds it up.

GALE

This is an onion.

(dramatic pause,  
then...)

It's a metaphor for a news story. Only a few hours ago I was standing on a ledge sixty stories above a street interviewing a man who subsequently jumped to his death. Forty million dollars in the bank, happily married, good health. Great story!

The AUDIENCE is attentive, mesmerized as they watch her rip off the outer skin of the onion and toss it dramatically aside.

GALE

(continuing)

There's gotta be more. We're pros, right? Some kinda extramarital hanky panky, maybe? Another good story!

(she peels another layer  
of onion)

Maybe the guy's been accused of child molesting. Terrific story!

(she peels more off the  
onion)

Then it turns out the accusation was false. Wonderful! More story.

The AUDIENCE watches, captivated as the onion gets smaller.

GALE

(continuing)

Maybe the alleged mistress was lying, setting the guy up. Sensational story!

(the onion is very  
small)

We keep going, keep digging, keep investigating. We expose the guy's whole life, his family. Why? Because we're pros! Because...

(she pauses  
dramatically)  
we're looking for the truth!

GALE considers the tiny remains of the onion in her hand. Then, she peels it down to nothing and lets it fall.

GALE

But what if, after all our digging, after all our painstaking investigation, what if it turns out there wasn't any truth? Just stories! One story after another, one layer, then another layer, until there's nothing left. And if it's like that, do we have any obligation to stop at any point? Or do we just keep going, digging, digging, digging, peeling, peeling, peeling, until we've peeled it all away, until we've destroyed what we were investigating in the first place?

ANGLE ON AUDIENCE

attentive, as GALE pauses dramatically, then...

GALE

I'll bet all of you, like me, yearn for just one story that isn't about uncovering layer after layer of human weakness; a story that reveals with each new layer of investigation, something finer and nobler, something even... inspirational.

GALE gazes soberly across the podium at the AUDIENCE.

TELEVISION IMAGE (EXT. SKID ROW STREETS - DAY)

A BAG LADY addresses the camera, a news interview.

BAG LADY/TV

First rule out here on the streets  
is you gotta watch out for number

one. If you go down... break a bone or something... you're gone! Nobody's gonna pick you up.'

WINSTON'S VOICE (O.S)  
Shitty color! Looka the skin tones.

REVEAL: THE TV SET IS IN BERNIE'S APARTMENT

INT. LIVING ROOM/BERNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (RAIN)

WINSTON, fifty and fat, is scowling at the image on the TV screen in BERNIE'S spartan and tasteless three room apartment. BERNIE grabs the remote from WINSTON'S pudgy hands.

BERNIE  
Chrissake! Homeless people are supposed to have shitty skin tones. Look!

BERNIE points the remote at the screen...

ON THE TV SCREEN

CLICK! A gunfight replaces the BAG LADY ON SCREEN, then a sitcom, an old movie, MTV, and finally a slick commercial featuring a sexy bikinied BLONDE.

INT. BERNIE'S APT. - NIGHT

BERNIE  
There you go! Skin tones! Listen, you gotta fish or cut bait. I wouldn't even do this if I didn't have these legal problems. Two fifty. That's it. I gotta get outta here, I gotta take my kid to the movies tonight, I'm late.

WINSTON stares at the lithe thighs ON THE SCREEN as BERNIE starts rummaging urgently in his closet.

WINSTON  
I'll go two hundred.

BERNIE has just found his good shoes, notices a carton of brand new jackets.

BERNIE  
Two hundred! How about a jacket?  
Wanna buy me a jacket?

INT. MAIN CABIN/BOEING 727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

The engines drone as we look into the sparsely populated main cabin of the "baby Boeing". Among the many empty seats, a MR. FLETCHER reads a magazine while his ten year son RICHIE plays a pocket video game.

LESLIE SUGAR, one of the two Flight Attendants, is serving a drink to Mr. Smith, a businessman while FREDDY, the other Flight Attendant, is giving a pillow to an ELDERLY WOMAN.

We DISCOVER GALE, cradling a phone to her ear while she awkwardly fishes in her purse and pulls out the Silver Mike Award.

GALE

It's very nice actually.

(reading the  
inscription)

"For Excellence in the Pursuit of  
Truth." Uh, listen, I just wanted  
you to know I got a seat back on  
the early flight after all so...  
What?

Reacting to what she hears on the phone, GALE overturns the purse in her lap and the contents -- wallet, comb, lipstick, notepad, etc. -- spill on the floor.

GALE

What do you mean you gave it to  
Conklin? Conklin wasn't on that  
ledge! Conklin wasn't...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/CHANNEL FOUR - NIGHT

DEAKINS is grinning into his phone, winking at WALLACE who's standing beside his desk.

DEAKINS

Gale, you were gonna do the town,  
remember? Fancy suite at the  
station's expense, see a show, get  
laid maybe. What was I supposed  
to do?

Still grinning, he breaks off and listens to Gale's faintly audible response while holding out his palm to WALLACE in a triumphant "pay me" gesture. Then he speaks into the phone...



DEAKINS

Okay, okay, you get back tonight,  
doll, and I'll take Conklin off your  
suicide. Fly carefully... and  
congratulations on the award.

DEAKINS hangs up and smugly pockets the fifty WALLACE has fished  
from his wallet, chuckling gleefully...

DEAKINS

What'd I tell ya! They're all like  
that, the good ones. They're  
junkies for the story. They can't  
let go.

INT. MAIN CABIN/BOEING 727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

The eight-year-old, KELLY, seated next to GALE is helping GALE  
pick up the contents of her purse from the floor.

GALE

Thank you. Very much.

KELLY beams. And GALE gives a look to KELLY'S mother SUSAN  
who's seated on the other side of KELLY.

SUSAN

There's another credit card on the  
floor.

GALE reaches down to pick up her Visa card from the floor.

GALE

Thanks.

GALE inserts the Visa Card in her wallet with the other cards.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Rain comes down in curtains as BERNIE'S Toyota chugs and farts  
through curtains of water.

INT. MOVING CAR/CITY STREET - NIGHT

BERNIE is at the wheel, trying to see through the rain swept  
windshield. He's talking to himself as he drives...

BERNIE

I know why it's raining. I coulda predicted this. It's raining because my wipers are fucked up. If my wipers were okay, the fucking sun would be shining right now. At night!

INT. COCKPIT/727 - NIGHT

Engines DRONE monotonously. The Flight Engineer is looking at a magazine while the PILOT and CO-PILOT, surrounded by glowing instruments, stare into the blackness ahead... until something catches the bored PILOT'S eye. A red light on the control panel. He frowns and looks closer.

INT./EXT. BERNIE'S CAR/FREEWAY - NIGHT

Looking for exit signs, BERNIE can barely see through the sheets of rain that his malfunctioning wipers do little to clear.

Suddenly a sign looms into view and disappears before he can read it.

BERNIE

Damn!

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

The engines drone. The cabin is peaceful, most PASSENGERS dozing or talking softly as GALE glances up from her magazine, sees SUSAN reading while KELLY sleeps peacefully, her head in SUSAN'S lap.

PING! The electronic tone. Gale looks up, sees the "Fasten Seat Belt" sign illuminated.

GALE looks toward the dark window. No sign of any lights below. No city. No airport. strange.

The P.A. SYSTEM comes to life and the CAPTAIN'S mellifluous VOICE murmurs soothingly...

P.A. SYSTEM

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is your Captain. We're experiencing a high reading on one of our indicators. Ten to one, it's a malfunction in a gauge, but just as a precaution I'm going to ask you to fasten your seat belts while the Flight

Attendants run through some safety procedures with you. I apologize for the necessity and the inconvenience.

Murmurs in the cabin. What does this mean? SUSAN looks a question at GALE, puzzled as Flight Attendants LESLIE and FREDDY take their positions to demonstrate safety procedures.

LESLIE

First make sure your seat belts are fastened securely. Then brace your arms against the seat ahead at you like this. You can use pillows or blankets...

KELLY

(waking up)

Mommy, what's going on?

SUSAN

Everything's going to be fine, honey.

GALE'S eyes meet SUSAN'S eyes. Fear. Brave smile.

INT./EXT. BERNIE'S CAR/EXIT/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Pulling off the freeway, BERNIE peers at the signs that greet him as he slows to a stop at the foot of the exit.

Unable to read them through the windshield he has to open the door and stand in the rain.

Even then, the sign is obscured by torrents of rain.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 IN FLIGHT - NIGHT

All eyes are on LESLIE as she continues her instructions...

LESLIE

-- when you reach the bottom of the chute you should immediately move as far away from the plane as possible in the event of a fire on the aircraft.

Glancing around, GALE glimpses pale, strained FACES.

She sees the ELDERLY WOMAN holding the arm of a man, her SON.

She sees a MRS. BROWN squeezing a MR. BROWN'S hand tightly.

Looking back down the aisle she sees MR. FLETCHER putting his arm around RICHIE'S shoulder, father and son united against fate.

Beside her she sees SUSAN trying to comfort KELLY.

LESLIE

Those of you who can should help  
others who may be unable to move  
quickly.

GALE is acutely aware that everyone around her is comforting someone else. Only she is alone.

INT. TOYOTA/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Back at the wheel, BERNIE is turning right onto an unlit highway, his single headlight stabbing weakly at the storm ahead while his useless wipers clatter loudly and the engine chugs... farts... misses.

BERNIE

I'm late already! Don't quit on me  
now, for Chrissake! This ain't the  
time!

The engine struggles, continues.

BERNIE

Come on, come on !

The engine surges to life again... then begins to throb with downright vigor.

BERNIE frowns. It's getting louder.

AND LOUDER! AND LOUDER! IT'S ROARING.

BERNIE'S eyes bug with the realization that either he's about to take off... OR THAT ISN'T HIS ENGINE THUNDERING, THUNDERING.

A great shadow blurs in the rain ahead.

BERNIE brakes hard, skidding, sliding wildly.

BAWHOOOOOOOOM! HUGE NOISE. IMPACT! GRINDING!

BERNIE skids to a halt, eyes shut tight to prevent himself from

dying.

But he's not dead. He opens his eyes. Stares out the windshield.

A blank wall greets him, bouncing back his headlights in a blur of rain.

BERNIE

Now what?

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

BERNIE gets out of his car. Everything is spooky quiet.

The tail section of a huge aircraft blocks the road directly in front of Bernie's car. He skidded to a stop two feet short of ramming the twenty-five foot high vertical fin. The rest of the craft is sprawled off the low bridge and into the water, lost for the most part in the darkness.

Suddenly, a VOICE calls out... from somewhere forward along the fuselage.

VOICE

Hey! Help! Somebody! Help.

BERNIE frowns. Helping is not his instinct. Approaching the edge of the bridge, he peers into the darkness.

The plane is corkscrewed through the bridge at such a freak angle that the tail rear doors are wedged shut by the metal super-structure, the wing exits are blocked by the up-bent wing stubs, and the right forward doors are canted hopelessly toward the sky while the left exit is partially jammed in the mud near the river bank in three feet of water.

VOICE

Please! Help us. We're stuck.  
Hello! Anybody!

BERNIE

Whatsa problem, pal?

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 AT REST - NIGHT

Engulfed in darkness except for strings of floor lights leading to the exits, the cabin is a confusion of GROANS, COUGHS, CRIES and the piercing WAIL of a screaming BABY. The floor lights seem to be on the walls, high on one side and low on the other,

as the cabin is dramatically canted, making movement along aisles nearly impossible.

LESLIE, battered from the impact, her uniform torn, is struggling to open the forward emergency exit. Angled downward, the door will only open six inches before being blocked by mud. Water pours in around her ankles as she shoves furiously.

LESLIE

Somebody give me a hand.

A VOICE

We're on fire.

LESLIE

Let's stay calm, everybody.  
Everybody, stay calm, please.  
Please stay calm. Everything will  
be all right if we stay calm.  
Somebody give me a hand with this  
door.

Her flashlight stabs the darkness, reveals frightened FACES.

Slumped, motionless forms.

LESLIE

Help the people around you,  
everybody. Please help each other.

AAAAAAAHAH! SCREAMS as the plane suddenly shifts violently from the interior movement, canting further.

ANGLE ON GALE

Staggering from her seat. WHAM! Hand luggage slams into her from an overhead rack. As GALE goes down, a PASSENGER lands on top of her catching her arm at an angle, breaking it. The PASSENGER climbs off her and struggles down the slope.

GALE realizes she can't get up, her leg is wedged in the framework of a seat. PASSENGERS are climbing past her, heading forward.

SUSAN is fighting her way out of her canted seats, clutching the terrified KELLY to her.

GALE

I... I can't move. I'm caught.

SUSAN glances at her and their eyes meet. KELLY is screaming.

SUSAN turns away from GALE and half-carries KELLY toward the exit, leaving GALE alone, trapped, in pain and fear.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is climbing cautiously down the undercarriage of the bridge toward the water, as OTHER VOICES callout from the twisted fuselage.

BERNIE

Hold on there, hold on there. Just a minute.

BERNIE is awkward and... very careful... climbing down, not brave or dashing. He doesn't notice that, behind him, where the plane is corkscrewed through the bridge a BOUQUET OF ORANGE FLAMES IS BLOSSOMING IN THE FUSELAGE OF THE JET.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

Thick smoke is oozing through the cabin. PASSENGERS are stumbling over each other, clogging the canted aisles while OTHERS slump in their seats, immobilized.

RICHIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Daddy! Daddy! Daddy, wake up!

LESLIE'S VOICE

Keep calm! Everybody, keep calm.

ANOTHER VOICE

Someone's coming!

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Having reached the riverbank, BERNIE is reluctant to step in the water. He hesitates, then he takes off his shoes, looks in the darkness for a place to leave them.

VOICE

Help us! Help, please.

BERNIE

Hold on, buddy. I got hundred dollar shoes here.

More cries. BERNIE steps cautiously into the water. Up to his ankles. Deeper.

BERNIE wades along the huge fuselage, toward the VOICES, stumbling, landing on all fours in the water.

BERNIE  
Jesus Christ!

Struggling to his feet, hands muddy, he blunders toward the Emergency Exit and finds it canted into the water, jammed into the mud so that it only opens a crack.

MR. BROWN is wedged in the crack, trying to force the door open without success. Glimpsing BERNIE'S hands in the crack, he pleads.

MR. BROWN  
Help us, please. We can't get out.

BERNIE makes a tentative attempt to open the door. He has no effect whatsoever.

MR. BROWN  
Push it! You gotta push hard.

BERNIE  
Whaddaya (grunt) think I'm (grunt)  
doing?

Reluctantly BERNIE digs his feet into the mud, puts his shoulder into the door and shoves with all his might. Because he has a better angle on the door and better purchase, he's actually able to move it several inches.

MR. BROWN  
Harder. Push it harder.

BERNIE leans back into the door again and pushes with all his might. It gives ever so slightly. Another inch. MR. BROWN is trying to squeeze out.

MR. BROWN  
Again! Harder. Come on.

BERNIE  
(grunting with effort)  
I'm... pushing... it, buddy.

MR. BROWN  
Harder!

BERNIE  
I'm... pushing... it... asshole!



INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

PASSENGERS stumble over each other while a flashlight makes panicky stabs at the darkness, RICHIE cries out for FLETCHER to wake up, the BABY screams.

Someone's trying to get out the overhead exit, others are hammering at an aft exit.

GALE slumped in her seat, fades in and out of consciousness. Above her, across the canted aisle, SUSAN is calling out for help... Then, GALE'S eyes flicker with awareness at the sound of an urgent shout...

VOICE

THERE'S A GUY OPENING THE DOOR.  
HE'S OPENING IT!

A sudden shadowy surge of movement in the darkness, PASSENGERS urgently scrambling over seats toward the exit.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

BERNIE gives a great heave and goes down in the river face first.

He's opened the door just wide enough for MR. BROWN to squirm through the narrow opening, then pull MRS. BROWN through.

BERNIE, sputtering, is trying to get to his feet when the BROWNS knock him down again in their frantic rush to get as far away from the burning plane as they can.

As BERNIE struggles to his feet yet again, more PASSENGERS are oozing out the door. They brush him aside, splashing toward the river bank, while orange flames are flickering wildly now in the tail section.

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

LESLIE is beside the exit, using her flashlight to guide people. Her face is bruised and bloody, her uniform torn, but she is courage itself...

LESLIE

Once you're outside, immediately  
move as far away from the aircraft  
as you can. If you see someone who  
needs help...

Scared PASSENGERS are struggling to get over the seats that are close to where the floor ought to be.

LESLIE

Please, everybody, one at a time.  
Please, one at a time.

Just then the young RICHIE, caught in the surge of PASSENGERS, bumps into her.

RICHIE

Please, Miss, my father can't move.  
He can't move.

LESLIE grabs him and shoves him bodily out the narrow exit as she speaks urgently...

LESLIE

We'll try and help him, you wait  
outside. Get as far away from the  
plane as you can.

Just then LESLIE sees the bloody PILOT and CO-PILOT staggering toward her.

She helps them out the narrow opening, half pushing them.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

BERNIE'S face is smeared with mud! He staggers out of the water in the flicker of firelight and starts searching for his shoes on the muddy riverbank.

PILOT

Don't stop!

BERNIE

You gonna buy me a new pair a shoes,  
pal?

The sound of approaching SIRENS cuts through the rainy night.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

RICHIE is outside the plane, struggling in chest deep water. He looks back at the plane, sobbing...

RICHIE

Dad! Dad!

He doesn't know what to do.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Muttering curses, BERNIE is floundering around on the riverbank when a hand clutches at his sleeve.

BERNIE whirls, his face a mask of mud. Finds himself facing RICHIE.

RICHIE

Sir! Please, sir. Sir, my father  
can't move.

Where? BERNIE looks around.

RICHIE

He's in there! He's hurt!

In the plane? In there? BERNIE looks at the plane, reacts...

BERNIE

In there? Listen, kid, the cops  
are coming... and the firemen.  
They, uh, they got equipment and  
stuff for this kindathing, they're,  
uh, experts.

The sound of SIRENS, still. a ways off. RICHIE clutches at BERNIE.

RICHIE

Please, sir! Please! It's on fire.  
He can't move.

BERNIE stares into the desperate face... and suddenly, recklessly, BERNIE loses it, forgets he's BERNIE, acts like someone else.

BERNIE

Where is he?

YOUNG BOY

Inside! He's in the plane, he...

BERNIE

I know he's inside. Which way?  
What's his name?

INT. NEAR THE EXIT/MAIN CABIN/727 - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

Chaos and confusion. The smoke is thicker, LESLIE is upset...

LESLIE

Sir, you can't go back in. Sir,  
you're blocking passengers. Sir,  
no...

BERNIE, his muddy face unrecognizable, is pushing his way into the plane, shouldering coughing PASSENGERS aside.

BERNIE finds himself standing in the choking darkness, PASSENGERS pushing past him. Holy smokes! This is ridiculous! What's he doing here? Thicker smoke, can barely see anything, VOICES cry out in pain and fear. Just then he spots something.

A flashlight lies on the floor sending a useless knife of light into the smoky darkness. He grabs for it, drops it urgently.

BERNIE

Jesus Christ!

The light is in a hand! He reaches again, snatches the light and points it revealing FREDDY, the other Flight Attendant, lying semiconscious on the floor, bloody, GROANING.

BERNIE hesitates. Then he leans down, still gripping the light and half hauls FREDDY toward the nearby exit where LESLIE is supervising PASSENGERS.

BERNIE

Hey, somebody, grab him, willya?  
Help this guy, willya, goddamnit!

A MAN reluctantly turns and, with the help of LESLIE they manage to shove FREDDY out the exit. LESLIE instructs the MAN...

LESLIE

Get him away from the plane, help  
him.

LESLIE turns back in time to see BERNIE heading back into the darkness, struggling around the stream of PASSENGERS.

For half a second, LESLIE'S face reveals her amazement at seeing somebody go back into the the nightmare a second time. Then she's helping the next passenger out... SUSAN and KELLY...

SUSAN

There's (cough cough) a woman back  
there. She's caught.

LESLIE

Get as far away from the plane as  
you can.

Urgently LESLIE shoves them through the door.

INT. "UP THE SLOPE"/MAIN CABIN/707 - NIGHT

BERNIE is struggling aft, up the steep slope of the nose-down  
plane, coughing and cursing in the dark, calling out...

BERNIE

MISTER FLETCHER! HEY, MISTER  
FLETCHER! MISTER FLETCHER, HEY  
BUDDY, WHERE ARE YA, GODDAMNIT?

BERNIE pans the flashlight ahead of him. The blade of light  
only cuts a few feet through the thickening smoke, revealing  
only empty seats.

BERNIE

FLETCHER! HEY (cough cough) HEY,  
FLETCHER, SPEAK UP, WILL YA? DON'T  
BE AN ASSHOLE!

No answer.

BERNIE pans the light, turns and...

A SHARP GROAN!

BERNIE stumbles. He stepped on someone.

BERNIE

Fletcher?

Pans the light down.

BERNIE

Shit!

A woman! GALE. Semiconscious, in pain, she opens her eyes.

GALE P.O.V.: BERNIE'S MUDDY FACE

Looking up, all GALE can see is a vague vision of a muddy face  
dimly visible in the spill of the flashlight.

BACK TO SCENE

GALE

My leg's caught.

BERNIE points the light toward her leg, overpans the leg, the blade of light discovering her purse. Then he corrects the beam back to reveal her leg wedged between two seats.

GALE

Can you... can you get me out of here?

BERNIE pans the light back to the purse again.

BERNIE

Yeah, sure. I think.

BERNIE puts down the light and struggles her leg loose while GALE groans in pain. Her head is near the floor lights, her eyes open.

For a moment BERNIE'S face passes through the stationary beam of the flashlight and GALE gets a glimpse of a smoky, muddy face leaning close to her...AN OBSCURE VISION!

BERNIE

Okay, lady. You gotta make an effort here. I don't happen to be a goddamn bodybuilder.

BERNIE retrieves the flashlight lying near her purse. It's out of her line of vision, behind her head. He only hesitates for half a second before his hand shoots out for the purse, conceals it under his jacket, and gets to his feet.

INT. EXIT/AREA/MAIN CABIN/727 - SECONDS LATER (NIGHT)

LESLIE is helping ANOTHER MAN out the exit.

LESLIE

Get away from the plane quickly.  
It may explode.

Now she's alone. Heroically she turns back and probes the smoky interior with her flashlight.

The blade of light is blunted by the smoky darkness. There's nothing.

LESLIE hesitates. Should she run, save her own life or...?

Suddenly BERNIE steps into the beam of her light, emerging from

the thick smoke hauling GALE over his shoulder, his face smudged, unrecognizable, AN HEROIC VISION SHE'LL REMEMBER!

BERNIE

Gimme a (cough cough) hand, willya,  
honey?

EXT. BRIDGE/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

SIRENS scream and lights FLASH as more Emergency Vehicles join the ones already parked close to the bridge at a safe distance from the burning tail of the plane. A FIRE CAPTAIN shouts "Move that piece-a junk" at three FIREMEN who are already pushing BERNIE'S Toyota off the bridge and away from the airplane while a confusion of PARAMEDICS and POLICE hurry to the aid of dazed PASSENGERS in torn and bloody clothing.

FIREMEN train hoses on the fiery tail of the plane while the FIRE CAPTAIN shouts...

FIRE CAPTAIN

GET 'EM BACK! GET 'EM BACK!

ANGLE ON RICHIE

Staring at the smoking plane in horror when a hand grips his shoulder. Turning he finds himself looking up at the MAN whose back we saw LESLIE push out of the plane... FLETCHER!

RICHIE

DAD! OH, DAD!

FLETCHER

Son! Thank God! I couldn't find  
you. I was terrified... terrified.

They're hugging.

INT. EXIT AREA/727 CABIN - NIGHT

LESLIE and BERNIE are awkwardly pushing GALE'S limp body out the exit to a FIREMAN, DENTON in an asbestos suit just outside.

FIREMAN DENTON

(to Leslie)

You too, miss! Right away!

LESLIE turns to BERNIE.

LESLIE

I've lost (cough) lost count. I  
think (cough) everybody's out.

But BERNIE isn't there! He's disappeared into the smoke. As she stares in dismay, she hears him yelling...

BERNIE'S VOICE  
HEY, FLETCHER! SPEAK UP, WILL YA?

INT. MAIN CABIN/727 - NIGHT

Coughing and choking BERNIE struggles through the cabin, his light nearly useless now.

BERNIE'S VOICE  
HEY (cough cough) FLETCHER!

Nothing! Darkness. BERNIE can see orange in the black near the tail. Fire!

This is crazy! Time to turn back! He's turning toward the exit. when suddenly...

A VOICE  
Here! Over here! Help me, please.

At last! BERNIE waves the light in the direction of the VOICE and stumbles that way through the smoke.

BERNIE  
Where the (cough cough) hell are  
ya, buddy?

VOICE  
Over here. My leg's broken (cough  
cough). I need help.

BERNIE finds an injured MAN crawling along the floor.

BERNIE leans down and grips him under the armpits.

BERNIE  
Fletcher, right?

The MAN cries out in pain as BERNIE half drags him over seats.

MAN  
Aaaaaaaah! Smith!

BERNIE  
You're not Fletcher?



BERNIE lets him go.

SMITH  
Please help me. My name's Smith.

BERNIE looks around with the light.

Thick smoke. Flames back toward the tail.

BERNIE  
I'm looking for Fletcher! HEY,  
FLETCHER!

BERNIE waves the light at the darkness and...it goes out.

BERNIE  
Shit!

BANG! BANG! BERNIE bangs the flashlight against a seat.

SMITH  
Don't leave me. Please don't leave  
me.

BERNIE  
Awright, awright.

Angrily BERNIE grabs him and hauls him urgently toward the exit while SMITH cries out in pain.

BERNIE  
Don't count yer chickens here,  
Smith. I can't see shit.

EXT. AIRPLANE/RIVER - NIGHT

A dazzling worklight shining down from the bridge illuminates the fuselage and the partially opened exit as TWO FIREMEN in asbestos fire suits splash through the water carrying GALE from the plane.

FIREMAN DENTON stands at the narrow exit, too narrow for him to enter in his bulky asbestos suit and shouts through his helmet.

FIREMAN DENTON  
You've gotta come outta there, miss.  
Right now! This thing's gonna go.

LESLIE squeezes out of the exit, looks back...

LESLIE  
There's another...

FIREMAN DENTON  
(grabbing her)  
RIGHT GODDAMN NOW! COME ON!

As LESLIE and FIREMAN DENTON splash the ten yards to the riverbank flames eat their way toward the wings where the fuel is stored.

Suddenly BERNIE'S VOICE cuts through the chaos...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)  
HEY! GIMME A HAND HERE. HEY YOU!  
IN THE BUNNY SUIT.

LESLIE looks back and sees BERNIE awkwardly pulling SMITH out of the narrow exit.

FIREMAN DENTON slogs back to BERNIE.

FIREMAN DENTON  
I'll help him, buddy, you run for it.

FIREMAN DENTON tries to grab SMITH but BERNIE won't let go.

BERNIE  
I gat this guy, you go get the guy who's still in there.

FIREMAN DENTON is lifting SMITH bodily.

FIREMAN DENTON  
Get out of here, pal, she's gonna blow.

BERNIE  
You're not goin' in? There's a guy in there! You got a fucking suit.

FIREMAN DENTON  
SHE'S GONNA EXPLODE, YOU DUMB SHIT.

FIREMAN DENTON starts to stagger away from the plane, carrying SMITH.

BERNIE looks back at the plane, sees the fury of flames and suddenly he splashes through the water after FIREMAN DENTON.

EXT. RIVERBANK - SECONDS LATER (NIGHT)

FIREMAN DENTON is staggering up the slope carrying SMITH when he glances back.

He sees BERNIE poking around at the edge of the riverbank.

FIREMAN DENTON  
HURRY 'UP, BUDDY!

In the orange glow of the fire, BERNIE gives a delighted grunt as he finds half of what he's looking for... a single shoe.

FIREMAN DENTON  
COME ON, YOU STUPID SHIT!

BERNIE  
I LOST MY GODDAMN SHOE!

BERNIE is looking around frantically when...

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

BOOOOOOOOOOM! BERNIE is knocked backward by a tremendous explosion. Suddenly he's sitting in the mud, the night around him bright with flames.

BERNIE  
Holy shit!

Then he's running, clutching one shoe, no longer worried at all about the other...

BAAAAAAAAAAAAA-DOOOOOOOOOOM! A SECOND BLAST! MUCH BIGGER!

EXT. ACCIDENT SCENE/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

From the relative safety of the road, CHUCKY's pointing his vidpak with the Channel Four logo at the exploding plane. Panning the camera from the furious mountain of flames he picks up a marvelous image.

CHUCKY  
(excited, under his  
breath)  
Tight on fire, yes, yes, pulling  
back, flame everywhere, find  
survivors backlit in orange glow,  
yes, yes, yes, awesome, major award,

cameraman of the year, go Chucky, go,  
baby, how you shoot it.

A Flight Attendant (LESLIE) in a torn uniform is staggering up the slope followed by an heroic FIREMAN (DENTON) carrying a Crash Victim (SMITH) on his brave shoulders. What a shot!

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

BERNIE stands on the riverbank in the pouring rain and looks back at the burning plane. He shakes his head sadly, imagines FLETCHER in the inferno.

BERNIE

Sorry, pal. Woooo! What a way to  
go!

EXT. ACCIDENT SCENE/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

TWO PARAMEDICS are struggling with GALE who's trying to get off the stretcher they're putting into an ambulance.

GALE

I'm okay. Please, I'm okay, I'm  
a reporter, I...OW!

PARAMEDIC

Lady, you're not okay.

GALE gets off the stretcher in spite of their efforts and staggers a few feet, grabs one of them for support.

PARAMEDIC

Miss, please, you've got a broken  
arm.

GALE

It's my leg. My leg hurts...

(suddenly shouting)

CHUCKY! OVER HERE, CHUCKY! CHUCKY!

ANGLE ON CHUCKY

Taping SURVIVORS, when he hears GALE'S voice and looks around for her.

CONKLIN, the reporter with him, spots her first.

CONKLIN

Holy shit! It's Gayley!

ANGLE ON THE AMBULANCE

Where GALE is half on the stretcher as CHUCKY and CONKLIN rush up to her.

CONKLIN

Gayley! You were on the plane?

GALE

This is my story, Conk. I did the research.

PARAMEDIC

Please, she's injured, she's gotta go to the hospital...

CHUCKY is already pointing the vidcam at her, taping as the PARAMEDICS shove her onto the stretcher and into the ambulance with her talking all the way.

GALE

Get the Flight Attendant, the one who manned the door. Also some guy, a passenger, pulled me out. Talk to him. Then get down to the hospital and I'll do an interview and an intro and close. Make sure...

BANG! The PARAMEDICS slam the door behind her.

CONKLIN shakes his head as CHUCKY lowers his camera and the ambulance pulls away.

CONKLIN

She's a real piece of work!  
Unbelievable! "It's 'my story, I did the research."

CHUCKY

You're not going to believe the shot I got back there. Major Awards!

ANGLE ON BERNIE

wearing only one shoe he limps right past CHUCKY and CONKLIN, unnoticed in the confusion of FIREMEN, PARAMEDICS, and SURVIVORS.

ANGLE ON RICHIE AND FLETCHER

Standing between an ambulance and a firetruck, father and son are hugging each other warmly. They don't notice Bernie trudging past them and he doesn't notice them.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

reacting with sudden horror at something he sees.

ANGLE ON THE BRIDGE

The spot where BERNIE left his car. FIREMEN are spraying retardant on the firey fuselage of the plane. No sign of the car!

BERNIE

Christ! My car! Where's my car?

BERNIE moans mournfully and suddenly a STATE POLICE OFFICER is at his side.

STATE POLICE OFFICER

Where are you hurt, sir?

BERNIE

Huh? Hurt? What?

BERNIE is urgently concerned with the purse poorly concealed under his jacket.

STATE POLICE OFFICER

How about coming over to the ambulance, sir, let the medical people check you out.

The STATE POLICE OFFICER has a hand on the arm BERNIE is using to keep the purse under his jacket.

BERNIE

(pulling away)

Hey, I don't need no ambulance. I'm just looking for my car... It musta burned up or something.

The purse is visible though the OFFICER hasn't yet noticed it. He's patronizing BERNIE, insisting.

STATE POLICE OFFICER

You weren't in your car, sir, you were in an airplane crash. But everything's going to be okay, we'll just go see the doctor and...

Just then MRS. BROWN rushes up and clutches the OFFICER, grabbing his arm.

MRS. BROWN  
Please, please, my husband's been  
waiting for medical attention...

As she pulls the OFFICER away, BERNIE hides the purse deeper under his coat, breathes a sigh of relief... and notices something!

BERNIE'S POV OF HIS CAR

Virtually unrecognizable, moved to the side of the bridge, buried under a mountain of fire retardant foam.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Limping up to his car, wiping the foam off the windshield.

BERNIE  
This shit has gotta be great for  
the paint job!

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM/EVEYLYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark except for the eerie flicker of the TV set.

JOEY is in bed, surreptitiously watching the TV, turned very low.

BANG! CRACK! Gunshots? Not from the TV, from outside.

JOEY scrambles out of bed and heads for the window.

JOEY'S P.O.V.: EXT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BERNIE is getting out of his Toyota in the glow of a streetlight. It's still raining. BERIE is soaking wet, wiping off his face. He trudges toward the house wearing only one shoe.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - LATER (NIGHT)

The door swings open violently, revealing EVELYN standing in the doorway looking furious. She's thirty-five, tough, plain, not ugly.

EVELYN  
He waited for you three hours!

BERNIE

You are not gonna believe this,  
Evelyn! Absolutely fantastic! I'm  
on my way --

EVELYN

I am so tired of your bullshit,  
Bernie.

BERNIE

Ev, it's not my fault! I'm trying  
to tell you this incredible --

EVELYN

It's never your fault, Bernie!  
Never ever! You screwed up my life,  
now you're gonna screw up Joey's  
life, but you're never gonna accept  
responsibility for anyth--

BERNIE

Is he here, your friend. The  
fireman?

EVELYN

He had an emergency call... a real  
emergency.

BERNIE

Why doncha let me in so we don't  
wake everybody in the  
neighborhood?

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Suburban. Inexpensive furniture. EVELYN and BERNIE ranting...

BERNIE

Willya lemme talk for Chrissake?  
I'm trying to tell you what  
happened. What happened is...

EVELYN

The same thing that always happens!  
You blew it!  
And this time you broke your son's  
heart instead of mine! He was so  
proud, looking forward to going to  
a movie with his father... and you  
let him down! Like you let



everybody down, always! What did you do, take a mudbath?

ANGLE ON JOEY

eyes wide, crouched at the top of the staircase in his pyjamas, spying on his parents in the living room below.

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND EVELYN

BERNIE

That's what I'm trying to... to... okay, nevermind. Just lemme talk to Joey to... to apologize.

EVELYN

He's in bed! You're not gonna wake him and make him crazy, do you understand? He comes home from the zoo, he wants to know if Elliot's a "war hero" like you... he wants to know how many people you killed...

BERNIE

"Elliot"? The heroic goddamn fireman?

EVELYN

I had to explain your tendency to "exaggerate", How you were actually "in country" all of two weeks and how you killed about as many people as the other clerk-typists in your outfit, no more, no less...

BERNIE

Three weeks, Ev. I didn't tell him I killed anybody...

EVELYN

Maybe not,... but you let him believe it! And then I gotta explain about the homeless...

BERNIE

The homeless!

EVELYN

How not all of them own apartment complexes, how not all of them play the stock market, how not all of

them rent babies when they're panhandling. He's ten years old, Bernie! Impressionable!

ANGLE ON JOEY

Watching from the staircase.

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND EVELYN

BERNIE

Listen, it's important, Ev, I gotta see him, I got my reasons, very goddamn important...

EVELYN

Use the phone, Bernie, call him tomorrow, he'd like to hear from you. Where's your other shoe? Never mind! I don't want to know. Some fantastic adventure, right? Something really crazy.

BERNIE

I was giving him some advice is all. Preparing him for life. You don't want him to grow up soft, Ev, it's tough out there, it's a goddamn jungle.

EVELYN

(firmly, opening the door)

Back to the jungle, Bernie. Good night.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BERNIE steps out and the door slams hard behind him. He pauses, sighs, starts toward his car...

EXT./INT. BERNIE'S TOYOTA/PARKED - A MOMENT LATER (NIGHT)

As BERNIE gets in the car he notices the purse sticking out from under the passenger seat where he hid it. He reaches down, takes the purse, rummages in it, pulls out the Silver Mike, glances at it, might be worth something, pockets it moves on to the wallet, the credit cards, the cash... some hundreds, fifties', twenties...

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

EVELYN is shutting off the last of the lights and starting up the stairs when the doorbell rings. EVELYN scowls. She's furious.

EXT. FRONT DOOR/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The door opens and EVELYN stands there scowling.

BERNIE holds out a twenty dollar bill.

BERNIE

Sorry, Ev, to bother you again.  
This is for Joey, his reward... for  
this wallet he found. When I, uh,  
returned it I told the guy he hadda  
give my kid something for finding  
it, for the honesty. So the kid  
would learn how honestly pays.

Eyes meet. She doesn't believe it for a moment and he knows it.

BERNIE

Just give it to him, okay, Ev?

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER (NIGHT)

An AIRHORN BLARES, a truck thunders past BERNIE, who's pushing his Toyota to the side of the road, steering one-handed from outside.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER YET (NIGHT)

A blonde GIRL tosses an empty beer can from the window of a speeding car full of laughing TEENAGERS.

The can clatters to the road beside BERNIE who lowers his "hitch-hiking thumb" as the car speeds off leaving him alone.

EXT. HEAVY TRAFFIC/FREEWAY - DAWN (HOURS LATER)

Rush hour! Bumper to bumper TRAFFIC oozing toward the city.  
We HEAR A VOICE!

BUBBER'S VOICE (O.S.)

You actually went into it? A  
burning airplane?

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)  
"Into it"! "Into it", for  
Chrissake! I was practically living  
in the goddamn thing... every time  
I turned around, some other person  
wants me to save 'em.

Looking for the VOICES, we MOVE IN on a single lane of crawling  
traffic and finally FOCUS ON a battered, rusted 76 Chevy with  
a crumpled fender, a trunk tied closed and cracked windows...

INT. CHEVY/MOVING/FREEWAY - DAWN

BERNIE is sitting on bare springs and tatters of upholstery in  
the passenger seat, muddy, rumpled, weary...

BERNIE  
(continuing)  
Couldn't see a fucking foot in front  
of me, smoke... then boooooom! It  
explodes! I could be dead!

JOHN BUBBER is at the wheel, a shabbily dressed, tired, haunted  
man. He gives BERNIE a look. Should he believe?

BUBBER  
And you pulled people out?  
You're... a hero.

BERNIE  
Nah, I fucked it up. I was tryin'  
to impress this kid, don't ask me  
why. I was gonna rescue his old  
man, but I couldn't find the poor  
bastard. He musta blew up.  
(then...)  
I got the hell outta there. I  
didn't have the nerve to face the  
kid.

BUBBER  
(thoughtful, serious)  
A lotta people wouldn't have tried.  
It was pretty brave even trying...

BERNIE  
Try stupid.

BUBBER brakes for traffic and a cardboard box from the back seat hits BERNIE and cascades crushed cans all over him.

BUBBER

Sorry about that. Just toss them in back.

(very serious)

A lot of people would say that's what heroism is... stupidity. Doing something that if you thought about it, you wouldn't do it, it's not in your... interest.

BERNIE indicates the clutter of cans.

BERNIE

You got a drinking problem or what?

BUBBER

I sell them at the recycling center. Gives me a little for gas and food.

BERNIE

(considering the back seat)

Looks like you live in here, for Chrissake!

BUBBER

In bad weather, yeah. Mostly I camp out in the woods. I thought maybe you were down on your luck too when I picked you up.

BUBBER indicates BERNIE'S muddy, torn clothes, stocking foot.

BERNIE

Down on my luck! Hey, I toldja, a goddamn plane fell on me outta the sky. In America, for Chrissake! See this shoe! Hundred dollar pair of shoes. One shoe!

BUBBER glances at the shoe BERNIE'S waving.

BUBBER

You should give it to someone with only one leg.

BERNIE

One leg! Like the Red Cross or something?

BUBBER

I know a guy who only has one leg.

BERNIE drops the shoe on the floor, shakes his head, disgusted.

BERNIE

Sell it to him. You get a couple bucks, it pays for the ride.

(a beat, then...)

I got a job, nice apartment. I do okay.

BUBBER

They interview you or anything?  
At the plane crash?

BERNIE

Hey, do I look crazy? I don't go for that shit... interviews, media. They're manipulators. "Keep a low profile," that's my motto.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAWN

The Chevy inches forward as the traffic moves again, heading slowly toward the city.

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

(continuing, grandly)

Besides, I got these legal problems. My attorney don't want me giving statements to the press.

Traffic is still crawling.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

GALE sits up in bed in spite of an I.V. in one arm and a cast on the other. There's a big bandage across the bridge of her nose and her left leg is also heavily bandaged...

GALE.

I don't understand. You can't find him?

She stares incredulously at her trio of visitors, CONKLIN, CHUCKY, and DEAKINS. DEAKINS, uncomfortable outside his office, is awkwardly trying to vase a bouquet of flowers.

DEAKINS

There's a lot of confusion around what went on last night, it's not clear...

GALE

You said all the passengers were accounted for...

DEAKINS

Apparently the guy who pulled you out wasn't a passenger...

A NURSE gracefully relieves DEAKINS of the flowers he's destroying and skillfully vases them while GALE questions...

GALE

A paramedic? A fireman? He didn't have a uniform...

CONKLIN

From what we could get, there's a kind of... sort of... "mystery guy"... involved.

DEAKINS

We're piecing together different accounts and...

GALE

A "mystery guy!" "Not a passenger." Who?

CONKLIN

We don't know who he is, he...

DEAKINS

He disappeared.

GALE

(incredulous)

A non-passenger, non-rescue-worker went into a burning plane and pulled me out and... disappeared?

GALE starts to get up, struggling with covers, I.V., etc.

CONKLIN

Not just you. Apparently this guy is the one who opened the emergency exit from the outside...

DEAKINS

Everybody! He saved everybody on the plane! Because of him, no fatalities! I don't think you're supposed to move around like that, Gale. You're attached there...

GALE is getting out of bed, the I.V. still inserted in her arm.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER (DAY)

LESLIE looks directly into the camera as CHUCKY tapes her over GALE'S shoulder.

LESLIE

And all of a sudden, this...  
"civilian"... rushed into the plane. Next thing you know he's hauling Freddy... he's the other flight attendant... out and then he goes back in.

(a beat, a tear,  
then... )

That's what gave me the courage to hang in there even though I knew the plane could blow any minute...

GALE

What did he look like?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER (DAY)

MR. SMITH is being interviewed in his bed. He's emotional...

MR. SMITH

It was just this face, all dirty, it just appeared. I really thought I was going to die.

GALE

Did he say anything to you?

MR. SMITH

He... asked if I was "Fletcher."

INT. OFFICE/CARPET CARE - DAY

A man named ROBINSON, fifty, sloppy, screams apoplectically...



ROBINSON  
ONE WORD! ONE WORD, LAPLANTE, AND  
YOU'RE FIRED! GOT THAT? ONE WORD!

Exhausted, shoeless BERNIE follows ROBINSON in the cluttered  
Carpet Care Office...

BERNIE  
Bill, I...

ROBINSON  
DON'T SAY "BILL," BERNIE! DON'T  
SAY ONE WORD! DIDN'T I SAY "ONE  
WORD AND YOU'RE FIRED?"

BERNIE  
I...

ROBINSON  
YOU KNOW WHY? BECAUSE IT'LL BE AN  
EXCUSE! IT'LL BE "BERNIE LAPLANTE  
EXCUSE NUMBER FOUR THOUSAND ONE  
HUNDRED AND SIX." NO, FOUR THOUSAND  
ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE. THAT'S HOW  
MANY EXCUSES YOU HAVE GIVEN ME, I  
KEEP TRACK OF THEM ELECTRONICALLY.  
I HEARD THEM ALL, BERNIE.

BERNIE  
Bill, I got some legal problems and  
I...

ROBINSON  
THAT'S IT! YOU TALKED! YOU'RE  
FIRED! OUTTA HERE! GET OUTTA HERE!

BERNIE  
Bill, listen...

ROBINSON  
OUT! I TOLDJA. JESUS CHRIST, I  
GOT CUSTOMERS WAITING! AN' YOU WERE  
GONNA GO OUT LIKE THAT? AN' MEET  
THE PUBLIC IN STOCKING-FUCKING-FEET?

BERNIE  
Bill, I got financial problems  
and...

ROBINSON  
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS,  
I'M GONNA THINK ABOUT MY PROBLEMS.

YOU'RE ONE A MY PROBLEMS. GET OUT!  
OUT! OUT!

EXT. CITY STREET - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

BERNIE is trudging wearily up the busy sidewalk, dirty, tattered and shoeless, BERNIE doesn't notice BUBBER staring in the window of an electronics store where dozens of television screens show the burning fuselage of Flight 104.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FLETCHER HOME - DAY

CHUCKY shoots over GALE'S shoulder as she interviews FLETCHER in his living room.

GALE

He was asking for Mr. Fletcher...

FLETCHER

My son and I got separated in the confusion and smoke. The very courageous stewardess at the exit told me my boy had got out so I got out too. But my son had already told this... man that I was still in there.

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE/CITY STREET - DAY

Disheveled, in stocking feet, BERNIE trudges wearily up the front steps of the shabby apartment house where he lives, enters.

INT. RICHIE'S ROOM/FLETCHER HOME - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Posters, youthy icons. CHUCKY shooting GALE interviewing RICHIE.

RICHIE

I thought my dad was still... still in there. So I asked the man to save my father.

GALE

What did the man say, Richie?

RICHIE

He said... uh... he said...  
(not sure, thinking,

then... )  
"I'll save him." He said, "I'll  
save your father."

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The door opens and BERNIE enters. He pulls the contents of GALE'S wallet from his pocket and tosses them on a table... the plastic windows full of credit cards and cash. Then he pulls off his jacket, ruefully inspecting a tear in the muddy sleeve. He's about to toss it on the ratty sofa when he notices it felt funny. He reaches in another pocket and pulls out the Silver Mike Award, considers it for a moment. What's it worth?

Sitting on the sofa, he leans back... and starts to doze off.

VIDEO IMAGE/EXT. "EXPLODING" PLANE - NIGHT

FRAME BY FRAME the image inches forward, sweeping off the fire that fills the screen to the riverbank... frame by frame... fire ... fire... fire... then faster as the riverbank is darkening the frame and then LESLIE and the THIRD FIREMAN sweep into the foreground as the camera discovers them... the dramatic shot we remember of them coming up the riverbank.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Back. Go back. You missed it.

Zip zip zip the image highspeeds back to the exploding plane.

Again the screen is filled with fire...

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Now. Go forward again.

Frame by frame the blossom of fire blooms consuming the plane.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Keep going.

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

REVEAL: GALE in an editing bay at Channel Four, peering intently at the fiery scene on the video monitor while the young tape editor, JOAN, operates the controls.

CONKLIN, DEAKINS, PARKER, CHUCKY flank GALE.

GALE  
There! Right there.

ON THE SCREEN (EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT)

A tiny silhouetted FIGURE appears in the far right corner of the frame. Then, as one more frame clicks off, the FIGURE appears near the center of the next frame of the pan.

The picture freezes there, a startling dramatic image of an UNRECOGNIZABLE FIGURE (BERNIE) in silhouette, dwarfed by the gigantic explosion. IT'S AN AWESOME IMAGE. NO ARTIST OR AD MAN COULD DO BETTER... A TINY, ANONYMOUS FIGURE, ALONE, AGAINST A GIGANTIC MOUNTAIN OF PURE FIRE. AND FROM NOW ON IT WILL BE REFERRED TO AS "THE IMAGE."

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

DEAKINS

That's him?

GALE

Who else? We've accounted for everyone else. That's our hero!

She stares at "The Image." It's powerful, stirring.

CHUCKY

I didn't see the guy when I shot it. I thought I was getting the last survivors when I panned over.

DEAKINS

Any chance we could do some kind of electronic enhancement, you think? Get a clear picture, identify him?

JOAN

(peering closely at the screen)

There's no face really, nothing to work with. Big dots, that's all you'll get.

GALE

Look at the guy! He just saved fifty people. Now he's going to disappear. Who is he?

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

UUUUHHHHOOOOOOW! BERNIE snores loudly, asleep on his sofa,

still in his ruffled, torn clothes. He SNORES again.

MONTAGE: TELEVISION SCREENS IN CARS, HOMES, TV STORES

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

ON THE SCREEN, RICHIE is talking directly at the CAMERA, the interview in his room on videotape...

RICHIE/TV

He said... uh, he said... "I'll save your father."

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

LESLIE appears ON SCREEN, her interview...

LESLIE/TV

-- all of a sudden, this... civilian... He rushed into the plane.

VIDEO IMAGE: FREDDY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Freddy appears talking directly at the CAMERA...

FREDDY/TV

I woke up in an ambulance. Leslie, the other flight attendant, told me the guy dragged me to the exit.

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Leslie appears ON THE SCREEN again...

LESLIE/TV

"Here, give this guy a hand," he said. The next thing I knew, he was going back in there, into all that smoke...

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

MR. SMITH appears ON THE SCREEN...

MR. SMITH/TV

I was crawling around on the floor. I thought I was a goner!

OFF THE SCREEN/MONTAGE

YOUNG PEOPLE, OLD PEOPLE, RICH PEOPLE, POOR PEOPLE, CONVICTS,

DENTISTS, BLACK PEOPLE, BROWN PEOPLE, WHITE PEOPLE, CHINESE PEOPLE are watching the report in...

-HOME

-BARBERSHOP

-ELECTRONICS SHOWROOM

-JAIL CELL

-SKID ROW HOTEL LOBBY

-SHADOW LOUNGE

CHICK watching the report.

-CLASSROOM

JOEY watching the report in a classroom.

-EVELYN'S KITCHEN

EVELYN watching the report in her kitchen.

-ALLEY

BUBBER is listening to the report on a radio in an alley.

ON THE SCREEN

VIDEO IMAGE: INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

GALE, bandaged, casted, stands in front of a BLUE SCREEN.

GALE/TV

-- out of the darkness... out of  
the smoke and the fear... came a  
man with no name... no uniform...  
but an abundance of courage.

The CAMERA ZOOMS IN SLOWLY on GALE and simultaneously DISSOLVES SLOWLY TO... "THE IMAGE". It fills the screen as GALE narrates VOICEOVER...

GALE'S VOICEOVER/TV

A man who was thinking not about  
himself but about others, risking  
his own life for ours...

(a beat then...)

He's out there now somewhere...  
and... whoever you are, I, and the  
other survivors of Flight 104, say,  
"Thank you! God bless!"

MUSIC SWELLS as the CAMERA ZOOMS IN on "THE IMAGE" emphasizing the tiny FIGURE alone in the frame surrounded by fire...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

Flanked by GALE and CHUCKY, DEAKINS is watching the preceding material on the monitor.

DEAKINS

Not bad. But if you gotta wear a cast, you oughtta feature it more it's parta the story.

(seeing Wallace enter the room)

Network's taking everything we give 'em. They wanta feed off our six o'clock whether we find the mystery guy or not. We're very big nationally.

WALLACE

It's a wonderful piece. Emotional. I love it.

DEAKINS

We're gonna feature Gale's cast more. The trick is gonna be keeping the upper hand on this piece. As long as we have Gale and there's no mystery guy, we're the center of the story. But if he shows up and somebody else gets him first or exclusive...

WALLACE

What about a reward for coming forward?

DEAKINS answers a RINGING phone. GALE frowns, frets.

GALE

There could be problems with something like that Mister Wallace. What if...?

DEAKINS

(into phone)

WHAT? THEY FOUND WHAT?

Everybody looks at DEAKINS.

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ignoring the open schoolbook on the floor in front of him, JOEY is sprawled on the floor, eyes on the TV screen.

ON THE SCREEN: EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT

A CLOSE-UP of a muddy shoe WIDENS to REVEAL the shoe nestled

in GALE'S sling on top of her cast. She addresses the camera from a spot directly in front of the crash site while behind her WORKMEN comb the wreckage under bright halogen lights.

GALE/VOICEOVER/TV

A phone check with survivors has confirmed that the shoe does not belong to any of the crew or passengers of Flight 104. Several witnesses recall the mysterious man who saved fifty-four people referring to his missing shoe. The conclusion; the unknown hero, know to many as "The Angel of Flight 104," wears a size 10B shoe.

EVELYN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Joey! Dinner! Now! Turn that thing off.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ELLIOT is at the table with EVELYN as JOEY joins them.

JOEY

He lost a shoe!

EVELYN

Who lost a shoe? Wash your hands.

JOEY

The "unknown hero." They found his shoe right beside the plane crash.

ELLIOT

Superman, you mean? Lost a shoe! What next?

EVELYN

Elliot! The man saved hundreds of people!

ELLIOT

Fifty-four! I was there, remember? You know why I didn't rush into that plane? Because I'm a trained fireman, that's why! Part of a team! A disciplined team. We take risks all the time, save people. But we don't take crazy chances. This guy does something really dumb



and he lucks out. So the media go crazy about his shoe for god's sake! What kind of message are they giving to youth?

EVELYN

(indicating Joey)

What kind of message are you giving to youth? Sneering at someone for sticking his neck out. You sound like my ex for heaven's sake... Mister Cynicism.

ELLIOT gets up, shrugs.

ELLIOT

So what can I say? Give your ex credit for being smart enough not to do something stupid. Maybe the man's not all bad. I'm gonna watch TV, hoping it's not all this "Superman stuff."

ELLIOT walks over to the TV and turns it on, leaving JOEY and EVELYN alone. JOEY is excited.

JOEY

My father didn't have his shoes on when he... when he came here.

EVELYN

(surprised)

You were in bed. Weren't you?

JOEY

I... I saw him out the window.

EVELYN frowns, hesitates a moment. Was the kid listening? Then...

EVELYN

You think your father would do something like that? Rescue people?

(sadly)

Your father is Bernie LaPlante, Joey. It's against his religion to stick his neck out.

ANGLE ON THE TV (INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT)

Where an ANCHORPERSON speaks from a news set.

CHANNEL 4 ANCHORPERSON/TV

-- where the leader of a religious group claimed today that the mysterious hero is, in fact, an angel who is anticipated in scripture.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

Washing glasses behind the bar, CHICK is watching the same show on the TV over the bar when he turns to see BERNIE enter (wearing a brand new pair of cheap running shoes.)

CHICK

Bernie, how'sa kid?

BERNIE

You don't wanna know, Chick, you don't wanna know. Those guys been in here?

CHICK

(pouring a 7&7)

You in business with those guys or what? I wouldn't want a problem for the establishment, Bern.

BERNIE

You couldn't have a problem, Chick, because I personally have got them all. I cornered the whole goddamn market. You wouldn't believe... Oh, how ya doin'...?

ESPINOSA and VARGAS have entered the bar. They have another guy with them, MENDOZA.

ESPINOSA

We bring our frenn this time, okay?

Something about MENDOZA spells trouble. it's almost palpable. BERNIE doesn't notice, but CHICK does. He looks worried.

BERNIE

Excuse me here, Chick, I gotta do these guys a little favor.

ANGLE ON BOOTH

As BERNIE, MENDOZA and ESPINOSA slide into a booth intent on business, ESPINOSA looks around for VARGAS and spots him

lingering back at the bar watching the TV.

ESPINOSA  
(calling out to Vargas)  
Hey, vato! Vamos.

ANGLE ON THE BAR

Where VARGAS and CHICK are staring at the screen.

ANGLE ON THE TV SCREEN: INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT

Where the ANCHORPERSON is introducing WALLACE who stands there in a suit and tie looking ill at ease...

CHANNEL 4 ANCHORPERSON/TV  
-- bring you a special announcement  
from Channel Four station Manager,  
James Wallace.

Framed alone now, WALLACE smiles awkwardly at the camera.

WALLACE  
Good evening. We at Channel Four,  
like you, have been stirred by the  
courage and...

ESPINOSA'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Hombre! Por aqui!

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON VARGAS

Eyes lingering on the TV, backing toward the booth.

ANGLE ON BOOTH

BERNIE has spread GALE'S credit cards on the table in front of ESPINOSA and MENDOZA. ESPINOSA examines them, questions BERNIE...

ESPINOSA  
How many you got there? Eight?  
Ten?

VARGAS slides into the booth before BERNIE can answer.

VARGAS  
They offer him a million dollars  
reward.

MENDOZA

Who?

VARGAS

The "plane crash guy".

ESPINOSA

(to Bernie)

Is that all of them? Eight?

BERNIE

(distracted)

What "plane crash guy"?

VARGAS

The one-shoe dude who saved all those people, man. Channel Four gonna give him a million for an interview.

ESPINOSA tries to turn BERNIE'S attention back to "business."

ESPINOSA

Come. on, hombre, we doin' business here. You got more or not?

ANGLE ON CHICK

Watching the TV

ANGLE ON THE TV SCREEN (INT. NEWS SET - NIGHT)

Where WALLACE is concluding...

WALLACE/TV

The offer is absolutely unconditional. All he has to do, is satisfy our reporter, Gale Gayley, and the other passengers who had contact with him that he is indeed the brave man who...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

(yelling)

HEY! WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON CHICK

Turning, seeing a commotion at the booth.

ANGLE ON THE BOOTH

Where MENDOZA is handcuffing the outraged BERNIE while ESPINOSA reads him his rights...

ESPINOSA

You have the right to remain silent,  
you have the right to --

BERNIE

Hey, this is bullshit! Do you guys know who I am? You know where I got the goddamn plastic? I got a million bucks coming. I'm the guy who...

ESPINOSA

(continuing)

You have the right to the counsel  
of an attorney...

ANGLE ON CHICK

Watching BERNIE being hustled out of the bar, handcuffed, protesting loudly.

BERNIE

CHICK, CALL MY ATTORNEY! THIS IS  
BULLSHIT! ENTRAPMENT! I GOT A  
MILLION BUCKS COMING, FOR CHRISAKE!

MONTAGE: PRINTING PRESSES - DAY

Newspapers roll off the presses one after another.

THE TIMES features "The Image" with a headline over the firey scene trumpeting "AN ANGEL FOR FLIGHT 104?"

THE MIRROR is tighter on the image featuring an enlargement of the silhouette of Bernie with a headline asking "WHO IS HE?"

THE HERALD features a full page photo of the single muddy shoe with a headline supered over it announcing "SEARCH FOR MR. CINDERELLA!"

and finally THE TRIBUNE screams in massive black letters "ONE MILLION DOLLAR REWARD!"

EXT. STREET CORNER/CITY - DAY

A NEWS VENDOR is waving a paper and shouting...

NEWS VENDOR  
ONE MILLION DOLLAR REWARD TO THE  
UNANIMOUS HERO! ONE MILLION BUCKS  
FOR THE "ANGEL" WHO SAVED FIFTY  
PEOPLE AND TOOK OFF!

A WOMAN walks by with a tee-shirt featuring "The Image." The spectacular picture looks great on the contours of her chest!

EXT. TV STATION - DAY

PARKER, the youthful Channel Four gofer/runner, moves along a seemingly endless line of WANNABE HEROES that stretches along the sidewalk outside Channel Four and disappears around the corner. He's addressing them at the top of his lungs...

PARKER  
PLEASE, IF YOUR FOOT ISN'T A SIZE  
10-B, DON'T REMAIN IN LINE. WE'RE  
ONLY SEEING SIZE 10-B "HEROES."

GROANS and CATCALLS from the WANNABES, as we MOVE ALONG the line, eavesdropping on various WANNABES...

AFRICAN AMERICAN  
Thass a racist perspective, assuming  
that because something heroic was  
done that a white man done it. A  
man with mud on his face could be  
a man of any color, most likely was,  
which is true in this case cause  
it was me! With mud all over me.

Two other WANNABES are squaring off to fight...

1ST FIGHTER  
You call me a liar, I'm gonna kick  
your ass.

2ND FIGHTER  
Hey, it's not just me sayin' you  
ain't no hero. Everybody in the  
goddamn line says you ain't the  
hero.

ANOTHER WANNABE  
Can you believe this? Must be more  
than a thousand phonies after my  
reward.

A WANNABE with mud smeared on his face spots GALE approaching the front door of the station, a look of amazement on her face at the length of the line.

MUD-FACE WANNABE  
HEY, MISS GAYLEY! HEY, GALE!  
REMEMBER ME? I'M THE GUY! I SAVED  
YOUR LIFE! REMEMBER --

Rolling her eyes good naturedly, GALE walks briskly up the steps to the front door of the station, passing PARKER who's measuring a TALL WANNABE'S feet. The TALL WANNABE calls out to her.

TALL WANNABE  
My foot's only eight and a half but  
I wear a ten B for the comfort.  
I swear!  
(she keeps walking)  
Hey, Miss Gayley, I saved your life!

Just as GALE is about to enter the TV station, PARKER catches up to her.

PARKER  
Hey, Miss Gayley, there's a cop  
looking for you. From Robbery  
Detail, Inspector Dayton. He wants  
you to call him.

GALE  
What about?

PARKER  
I didn't ask him.

GALE  
Call him back. Ask him.  
(indicating the line)  
I'm a little...busy.

GALE disappears into the TV Station.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

WALLACE is looking down at the line of WANNABES.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE GOINES is addressing a miserable looking CRIMINAL...

JUDGE GOINES

Bail in this matter will remain  
in the sum of five thousand  
dollars. Next.

DISCOVER MENDOZA, ESPINOSA AND VARGAS

carrying on a whispered discussion with an African American  
detective (DAYTON) in the spectator section (AS THE COURT  
PROCEEDINGS CONTINUE IN THE BACKGROUND). MENDOZA indicates  
something at the rear of the room to DAYTON who follows his  
look.

DAYTON'S P.O.V.

A group of PRISONERS have just been led in the side door from  
a holding cell and a BAILIFF is removing the handcuffs that  
tied the PRISONERS together. One of the PRISONERS is BERNIE  
LAPLANTE. DONNA approaches him as the BAILIFF uncuffs him.  
She speaks to him but her words are inaudible to DAYTON.

ANGLE ON DAYTON

as he watches BERNIE from a distance, nods affirmatively to  
something MENDOZA whispers in his ear. We realize we'll be  
seeing DAYTON again...

ANGLE ON DONNA

astonished, reacting to BERNIE in a sharp whisper...

DONNA

"The Angel of Flight 104!" You're  
telling me you're the A...?

BERNIE

(whispering)

"Angel!" I didn't say "angel,"  
that's a little strong. Listen,  
here's the thing, I gotta get over  
there to the TV station to collect  
my million bucks.

DONNA

Mister LaPlante, I really want to  
help you, but crazy stories are  
only going to make it worse. The  
D.A. is asking your bail be set  
at twenty-five thousand dollars  
because you were arrested again  
while you were out on bail...



BERNIE

Twenty-five grand is peanuts! All you gotta do is get me outta here long enough to collect.

BAILIFF

The People versus Bernard LaPlante.

JUDGE GOINES scowls at the sight of BERNIE moving toward him talking already.

BERNIE

Your honor, my attorney here says the prosecutor there wants twenty-five grand bail...

DONNA looks horrified, the JUDGE furious...

JUDGE

Mister LaPlante, you will be silent unless the court recognizes you...

BERNIE

(continuing grandly)

--which is fine by me. I got no problem with that at all. In fact, your honor, I'd be proud to double it. Fifty grand! A tip for "the people," your honor, if I could just...

GOINES is banging his gavel angrily, glaring at BERNIE, not noticing a SECOND BAILIFF hurry into the courtroom.

JUDGE GOINES

Mister LaPlante, unless you stop chattering immediately, I am going to ask the Bailiff to...

JUDGE GOINES breaks off, eyes furious, as he spots BAILIFF CLAY, the Court Reporter, DE TAGLIO and the SECOND BAILIFF engaged in urgent whispering.

JUDGE GOINES

DAMNIT! I SAID I WANTED ORDER!

CLAY

Sorry, your honor...

SECOND BAILIFF

We got carried away.

DETAGLIO

They found him.

JUDGE GOINES

Found who?

CLAY

The "Angel of Flight 104".

SECOND BAILIFF

It was on the news! Just now! He's  
gonna be on Channel Four at noon!

BERNIE reacts, jaw sagging in disbelief. The JUDGE sneaks a  
hasty look at his watch.

JUDGE GOINES

We'll sustain bail at twenty-five  
thousand dollars. That ought to  
keep Mister LaPlante out of trouble  
for a minute or two...

DONNA

But your honor, my client is a  
responsible family man with limited  
resources who...

[PAGE 66 IS MISSING FROM THE SCRIPT]

GALE

But finally you did come forward.  
Why?

BUBBER looks her right in the eyes, gives a sheepish grin.

BUBBER/TV

The money, Gale. I wouldn't have  
come forward at all if it wasn't  
for the reward.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Cut right there, right on that look!

INT. EDIT BAY - DAY

REVEAL GALE in an editing room looking over editor JOAN'S  
shoulder as JOAN freezes the image and makes a note.

JOAN

You didn't mention he was cute.

GALE is staring intently at BUBBER'S modest, humble face frozen  
on the screen.

GALE

He saved my life.

VIDEO IMAGE (INT. TV STUDIO)

The humble, honest face of BUBBER, freeze framed as GALE'S  
VOICE narrates...

GALE/TV VOICE OVER

--were shocked to learn that the  
hero who appeared out of the smoke  
and the fire and pulled them to  
safety was indigent and tragically  
hadn't slept in a bed in more than  
three years.

INT. DAY ROOM/JAIL - DAY

Seeing BUBBER'S honest face on the TV screen in the day room  
enrages BERNIE...

BERNIE

The guy's a fake, for Chrissake!  
He's a goddamn homeless bum. He  
ain't no here, trust me on this,  
buddy.

PRISONERS, standing in a group under the TV turn from the screen to BERNIE, like "who's this asshole?" A BIG PRISONER glares at BERNIE ominously...

BIG PRISONER

"Trust you"!

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - DAY

The office has become command-central. REPORTERS hurry in and out, tearing off faxes, answering the phones, chattering at each other, GALE among them. WALLACE is fretting to DEAKINS...

WALLACE

I thought they'd all go "It's him!  
It's him!" and hug the guy or  
something.

DEAKINS

Relax, Wally. He had the shoe and  
the shoe checks out.

WALLACE

Does this mean I can stop worrying?  
Where'd we put him?

DEAKINS

Drake Hotel, Penthouse Suite. Never  
stop worrying. I figure we'll do  
a sidebar on what it's like to go  
from sleeping in your car and  
collecting cans to sleeping in the  
poshest suite in town. Also Gale's  
onto something, digging into his  
background.

PARKER rushes up to GALE...

PARKER

Excuse me, Ms. Gayley. That guy  
Inspector Dayton... he's recovered  
a bunch of your credit cards and  
he wants...

GALE

Who?

PARKER

Inspector Dayton, the cop from  
Robbery Detail who was looking for

you. They caught the guy who stole  
your credit cards trying to sell  
them and he wants...

GALE

Nobody stole my credit cards. They  
burned up in the crash. Which  
reminds me, did you get me cash?  
And what about the reservations?

[PAGES 69-71 ARE MISSING FROM THE SCRIPT]

INT. COMMON ROOM/JAIL - NIGHT

Surrounded by the jailhouse cacophony, BERNIE stares glumly at a  
plate of shit on a shingle in front of him while close at hand a  
TOUGH PRISONER snarls at ANOTHER PRISONER...

TOUGH PRISONER #1

You mess with me, I'm gonna cut yer  
heart out and eat it.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The CAPTAIN finishes scribbling and seizes the menus.

CAPTAIN

Very good, sir. It's a special  
privilege to serve you.

BUBBER smiles uneasily as the haughty CAPTAIN glides away.

BUBBER

Uh, er... I...

GALE

(amused and charmed)

You were saying you don't want a million dollars.

BUBBER

(blurting)

Well, I'm not entitled to a million dollars. I... I... didn't expect... I didn't expect...

GALE

All the adulation? It makes you feel like a fake, doesn't it?

BUBBER

Uh, actually... yes... I... should never have come forward and presented myself as --

Just then a distinguished MILLIONAIRE on the way to his table barks gruffly at BUBBER...

MILLIONAIRE

You're a credit to the goddamn human race. Coulda been me in that plane. Or my family.

BUBBER

Uh, thank you.

GALE

Instant celebrity is overwhelming to anybody. You've known John Bubber all your life, you're used to him, you know you're the same human being you were before all the excitement. So you feel like a fraud...

BUBBER

Yes.

GALE

...unworthy of the adoration. We all do.

A bluehaired MATRON, extravagantly bejeweled, pauses to loom over BUBBER on her way out.

MATRON

I'm going to donate a half million to charity in your name. Would small animals be all right?

BUBBER

(startled)

Uh, "small animals"?

MATRON

(delighted)

I knew a man like you would adore small animals. God bless you, Mister Bubber.

(to Gale)

And you, my dear, you do so much for women.

And then she's gone in a swish of silk, leaving BUBBER stunned.

BUBBER

Is she... serious? A half a million dollars? In my behalf?

GALE

You're a celebrity, John. People are going to want to please you... or use you... or both.

Bubber hears this, digests it, considers it. He takes a bite of food, thinking.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As the door to the restaurant opens, BUBBER finds himself blinded by winking electronic flashes and sun guns. A CROWD OF FANS and MEDIA engulf him and GALE. It's overwhelming. WE SEE EAGER FACES and BLINDING FLASHES from BUBBER'S P.O.V. and HEAR the CACOPHONY OF QUESTIONS.

GALE too is adrift in a churning sea of MEDIA and ONLOOKERS.

POLICE OFFICERS move close to help guide GALE and BUBBER to a waiting limo.

ANGLE ON BUBBER'S P.O.V.

Again we see the chaos from BUBBER'S P.O.V., A POLICEMAN is reaching to help him. Just then BUBBER glimpses something else... beyond the CROWD in the fringes... HOMELESS PEOPLE in the shadows, some applauding him, too shy to come forward. In particular, BUBBER'S eyes fall on an ungainly MAN, his own age, dressed in rags and carrying a big garbage bag and another net sack full of cans. IT'S A STUNNING IMAGE! It's as though BUBBER is looking at himself!

The door to the limo is open. GALE and several POLICEMEN are trying to get BUBBER into the limo and out of the clutches of the enthusiastic CROWD.

GALE  
Come on, John.

But BUBBER isn't paying attention to her. He's turning to face the eager CROWD, raising his arms.

BUBBER  
Hey, hey, uh, take it easy.

ANGLE ON GALE

looking alarmed, then amazed.

The CROWD is still alive and buzzing, but they're respecting BUBBER'S space as he accepts an autograph book from a young woman, SYLVIA, and speaks shyly.

BUBBER  
You, uh, want me to sign this? Uh,  
what's your name?

SYLVIA  
(weak in the knees,  
smitten)  
S-sylvia.

BUBBER  
(almost shy)  
Hey, if I sign this, will you do  
me a favor?

Her COMPANIONS are already teasing her as they thrust pieces of paper, magazines at him to sign.

ANGLE ON GALE

watching in disbelief.

ANGLE ON BUBBER



signing one after another as he addresses all those close to him.

BUBBER

What I'd like is...

(addressing the group)

-- maybe some of the rest of you could help Sylvia here -- what I'd like is if you'd scrounge up some blankets -- used ones, fifty maybe -- and take 'em to the folks down at the corner of Fifth and Grand. Pass 'em out.

Cameras are rolling, GALE watches, amazed.

FAT KID

Fifth and Grand!

SKINNY KID

He means the homeless people. The bums.

BUBBER

It gets cold down there at night. And you'll feel warmer for every person you give a blanket to.

GALE'S knits her brow, trying to reconcile this performance with the apparent yokel she had dinner with a short time ago.

INT. LIMO/MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

BUBBER looks back at the CROWD as the limo pulls away.

BUBBER

I'll bet they do it. I'll bet they get some blankets.

GALE looks at BUBBER, reevaluating him.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER - NIGHT

As BUBBER and GALE cross the luxurious lobby, again the center of attention, a GORGEOUS BLONDE, very leggy, practically plasters her plunging neckline against BUBBER.

GORGEOUS BLONDE

Uplifting! What you did was so

uplifting! You're a saint, John  
Bubber!

BUBBER has trouble untangling his eyes from her tits.

BUBBER

Uh, no. But I, uh, wonder if you  
could up support... support a  
program to help the needy and...

GALE

(hackles raised)

John, I'm sure she could support  
just about anything.

(steering him away)

I think I'll see you to your room.  
A sort of bodyguard. Make sure no  
harm comes to you.

GALE ushers the dazed BUBBER toward a bank of elevators and  
prevents others from joining them in the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - SECONDS LATER

GALE'S mood changes to amusement as she and BUBBER ascend alone.  
Giggling, she "points" her chest at BUBBER.

GALE

Uh, if you could, just, uh, support,  
uh, a small airfield...

BUBBER

(embarrassed)

It's been sometime since, uh, I  
received any, uh, of that kind of,  
uh... attention. A couple of...  
years.

GALE stops giggling. Their eyes meet. A charged moment.

GALE

Years?

(then...)

There are going to be lots of...  
opportunities.

BUBBER

Gale... you're a very nice person.  
I wouldn't want to hurt you... in  
any way...

They're struggling against an embrace that seems inevitable...

GALE

I... I know that, John...

BUBBER

You... you think I saved your...  
life. I can't take advantage....

GALE

You did save my life! And it's me!  
I'd be taking advantage of you! I'm  
a reporter, John, an experienced  
professional... I...

Inevitably they embrace, KISS, can't help themselves.

BUBBER disengages suddenly, distraught.

BUBBER

I... no... I don't have the right...  
I...

GALE

No, I don't have the right. You're  
a news story!

BUBBER

Uh, right. A... news story.

She pushes him out the elevator door.

GALE

I know the truth, John. I'm flying  
in some guys from your unit in  
Vietnam tomorrow. Interviewing them  
live on network hookup!

BUBBER

(stunned)  
Vietnam!

GALE

Goodnight, John.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE

BUBBER wanders into the bedroom of the fabulous suite... in  
a daze. He stares at BERNIE'S shoes on the floor. He shakes  
his head as if to clear it.

TELEVISION SCREEN: INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

A fortyish black man, TOM WELLER, appears on the screen...

TOM/TV

Next thing I know, I'm in this medical unit an' I see the other dude, the one who was with me when we got jumped, the one who I thought was dead. There he is in the next bed. I says "How'd we get here, brother? We dead or what?" He says, "That crazy white brother, Johnny Bubber, he come back for us, hauled us out." He shoulda been wrote up, got a medal, but it was fate. Wasn't no officers around to observe it or nothing.

TELEVISION SCREEN: INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

A fortyish redneck type, CHARLIE BACON, is speaking to camera.

CHARLIE/TV SCREEN

The sonofagun goes out in the paddies, pulling us outta there, one after the other, six guys. Hey, it don't surprise me one bit it was Johnny Bubber went into that plane!

BERNIE VOICE (O.S.)

Fifty bucks says the asshole was never even in Vietnam.

INT. DAY ROOM JAIL - DAY

BERNIE is furious, glaring at the TV, surrounded by PRISONERS.

TOUGH PRISONER #2

Shut your face, dirt bag... That guy's a goddamn hero and you're nothin' but a cynical little turd.

ON THE SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY)

BUBBER is embracing WELLER, CHARLIE and several other VETERANS as GALE narrates...

GALE/VOICE OVER/TV

After an emotional reunion, Bubber's fellow veterans watched as station

manager James Wallace presented  
Bubber with a check for one million  
dollars...

Surrounded by applauding MEDIA TYPES, SPECTATORS and VETERANS,  
BUBBER is accepting the check...

GALE/TV

As Bubber reacted to his sudden  
wealth, word came that the  
Secretary of the Army, responding  
to an urgent resolution from the  
Senate has conferred on John  
Bubber the Medal of Honor.  
This for his actions in Vietnam more  
than 20 years ago, heroism that was  
not acknowledged at the time because  
it was not witnessed or reported  
by a ranking officer. Later I spoke  
to him about his sudden change in  
circumstances...

BUBBER appears full screen, head and shoulders, interview  
footage. He's shy and awkward at first... tentative... then  
gaining confidence as he speaks...

BUBBER/TV

Well, I don't feel... right... about  
all that money, Miss Gayley. That's  
too much money for one person. What  
I'm gonna do is donate, uh, most  
of it to different organizations  
like the Homeless Vets and stuff,  
and start up some programs... to  
help people. See, when you're out  
there in the cold like I was, on  
the streets or sleeping under  
bridges or in your car, the worst  
thing, even worse than the hunger  
and the cold, is the... feeling...  
that you're just plain... useless.  
You don't matter to a single soul  
in this world, nobody needs you,  
nobody wants you.

MONTAGE: TELEVISION SCREEN AND VIEWERS

BUBBER'S INTERVIEW appears on screens in...

-HOME  
-MOTEL ROOM  
-WHITE HOUSE

The PRESIDENT watching.  
-CHEAP HOTEL LOBBY  
-SHADOW LOUNGE  
CHICK watching.  
-JAIL  
BERNIE watching.  
-EVELYN'S LIVING ROOM  
JOEY, EVELYN, and ELLIOT watching.  
-PRISON  
INMATES, their tough faces momentarily solemn, watching.  
-WINSTON'S APARTMENT  
WINSTON smacks the TV he bought from Bernie to adjust the color.

ON THE SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY)

BUBBER/TV

I guess when I... did what I  
did... I was trying to save my  
own life more than anything else.  
Trying to connect myself with  
people again and be... part of the  
whole. You have to help others  
to do that, you need a role to,  
play... even if it's a very humble  
role, it gives you self worth.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE

(NOTE: Bubber dialogue, additional or as above continues  
throughout scene)

GALE, her editor, JOAN, DEAKINS, WALLACE, CHUCKY, PARKER, and  
CONKLIN are crowded around the monitor staring at the screen.  
JOAN catches GALE surreptitiously hiding a tear and whispers  
to her...

JOAN

Is he like that in real life? So  
gorgeous?

GALE

He's pretty... remarkable.

JOAN

(eyes widening at the  
thought)  
You didn't... get it on with him?

GALE

Don't be ridiculous. I'm a reporter.

JOAN

Reporters don't have hormones?

GALE

Reporters... have to... rise above  
their hormones.

ANGLE ON DEAKINS, WALLACE

reacting to BUBBER on TV. WALLACE is impressed.

WALLACE

The guy's... a natural.

DEAKINS rolls his eyes, a cynical, hardened newsman.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. TV STUDIO - DAY)

GALE/TV/VOICE OVER

I asked John Bubber about the  
Medal of Honor.

BUBBER/TV

As far as the medal goes, well...  
that medal's for something me and  
my buddies did almost twenty years  
ago in Viet Nam. So if I'm a war  
hero today then I was a war hero  
last week when I was selling cans  
and sleeping in my car... when I  
didn't have a medal. I don't think  
a medal makes a hero. You don't  
need machinegun fire or burning  
planes to be... brave. People do  
heroic acts every day only there's  
nobody around to take their picture  
or decorate them. Little things  
can be heroic. Helping someone  
day in and day out, giving up your  
life a little every day instead  
of all at once... to help.  
Maybe... maybe we're all heroes.

MONTAGE - DAY

Across the nation solemn FACES reflect the glow of the TV screen.  
YOUNG FACES, OLD FACES, BLACK, WHITE, BROWN, YELLOW...

-HOME

-BARBERSHOP

-ELECTRONICS SHOWROOM

-BAR

-JAIL CELL  
-SKID ROW HOTEL LOBBY

INT. DAY ROOM - JAIL - DAY

...And BERNIE LAPLANTE'S FACE. He's glaring at the screen in the Day Room of the Jail, sputtering helplessly...

BERNIE  
We're all heroes, huh? Asshole!

Just then a GUARD enters the Day Room and belows...

GUARD  
LAPLANTE, BERNARD. LAPLANTE?

BERNIE  
Me?

GUARD  
Ya made bail, Ace. C'mon, let's go.

BERNIE looks startled.

WELLESIAN VIDEO - TV SCREEN

News coverage of the crash and photos of Bubber are ZOOMED, DISSOLVED, WHIRLED and SPUN into a glittering promo while a stentorian WELLESIAN VOICE brays excitedly...

WELLESIAN VOICE/TV  
John Bubber himself! Along with twenty of the real survivors of flight 104! See the real life participants re-enact the terrifying drama inside the burning plane.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE HOTEL - DAY

BUBBER is staring at the TV screen wide-eyed with amazement as the promo continues on the screen

ON SCREEN (WELLESIAN VIDEO)

WELLESIAN VOICE/TV  
Out of the darkness, out of the fire, out of a nightmare of fear... came The Angel of Flight 104. John Bubber saved fifty-four



people. This is his story and theirs. A drama featuring the actual people who actually lived those moments of terror. No make-up, no music, no actors. This is the real thing. Thursday night. Channel-Four. Be there!

On Screen the Channel Four logo blends exotically with "The Image".

INT. SUITE/DRAKE HOTEL - DAY

A dismayed BUBBER dials the telephone.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

DEAKINS and WALLACE walk, deep in conversation, WALLACE upset.

WALLACE

Upset! What's he upset about?

DEAKINS

Said he's not an actor.

WALLACE

He's not supposed to be an actor, that's the whole point. He's a real life hero, all he has to do is act like a real life hero. That's the beauty of the concept, the whole freshness of it. Did she call him back?

DEAKINS

She's talking to him now.

WALLACE

We paid him a million dollars. You'd think he'd want to cooperate a little, help our ratings.

DEAKINS responds eagerly to GALE entering the office.

DEAKINS

How'd it go?

GALE

He'll do it.  
(to Wallace)

You really-should have talked to  
him first.

WALLACE

He might have said no.

INT. CORRIDOR/HALL OF JUSTICE - DAY

BERNIE charging through the crowded Waiting Room having just been released on bail. He doesn't actually shove the WOMEN and CHILDREN waiting to visit inmates out of the way, but he doesn't slow down either as he weaves rapidly among them with DONNA on his heels, barely able to keep pace. He doesn't look back as he speaks rapid-fire. He's really pissed.

BERNIE

Whaddaya mean they didn't reduce  
the bail? If they didn't reduce  
it, how'dja spring me?

DONNA

(a deep breath,  
embarrassed)

I took a loan on my car and my  
computer.

BERNIE

(actually stops, faces  
her)

You whaaaaaat? You paid it? You  
gave a bondsman ten percent?

DONNA

I was inspired by the hero, how he  
stuck his neck out for others, how  
he took a chance...

BERNIE

(apoplectic)

That fake inspired you to loan a  
guy who's been fired off his job  
twenty-five hundred goddamn dollars?  
A guy you say is probably gonna do  
time! You're s'posed to be an  
attorney for Chrissake! You're  
s'posed to have good judgment!

DONNA

(fighting tears)

Well, as you like to point out,  
Mister LaPlante, I'm relatively

inexperienced. My naivete may have worked to your benefit in this instance.

BERNIE frowns at that, starts walking again.

BERNIE

Well, you're right, I'm glad you got me out, I appreciate that.

BERNIE charges out the door, exiting the building with DONNA right behind him.

EXT. HALL OF JUSTICE - DAY

Hurrying down the steps, BERNIE barks over his shoulder at DONNA.

BERNIE

Listen, now that I owe you twenty-five hundred bucks plus, how about loaning me twenty for cab fare?

DONNA

So you can call me "naive," Mister LaPlante.

BERNIE

Hey, you could call me "Bernie," forget the "Mister LaPlante" stuff.  
(seeing Donna open her wallet)  
You are naive.

DONNA

I read the probation report. It's not good. I think you're going... going to prison, Mister... Bernie. I know that scares you but..

BERNIE

TAXI! HEY, TAXI!  
(turning on her)  
Well, at least I'm gonna get my goddamn million bucks.  
(screaming at a cab)  
TAXI FOR CHRISSAKE!

A cab pulls to the curb and BERNIE jumps in, talking.

BERNIE

I seen on the TV where that  
do-gooder asshole's gonna go visit  
sick kids at three-thirty.

(to the Cabbie)

Children's Hospital, on the double.

DONNA

(alarmed)

You mean John Bubber?

BERNIE speaks out the window of the cab as it pulls away.

BERNIE

(then, through the  
window)

That bozo don't just owe me a  
million bucks for my shoe, he's a  
goddamn menace! Look what he done  
to you! He's makin' people insane.  
He's a whacko, he' gotta be stopped.

Stunned, DONNA watches the cab disappear in traffic with BERNIE  
raving from the open window.

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - LATER (DAY)

Limos are parked out front of the hospital and there is a  
gathering of TV vans as BERNIE exits a cab and charges toward  
the entrance of the hospital, a tiny figure dwarfed by the huge  
building. He disappears inside.

INT. CORRIDOR/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

We discover BERNIE wandering around, lost. A NURSE gives him  
a glance in passing and BERNIE suddenly is aware that his  
appearance is unusual. Disheveled. Unshaven. He tries to  
smooth his hair a little as he turns into a doorway.

INT. SPECIAL CHILDREN'S WARD/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Stepping through the door BERNIE is immediately horror stricken.

Rows of beds. A room full of seriously SICK CHILDREN. Palsied.  
Eyes out of sync. Motor disorders, spasms. Terrifying  
paraphenalia... tubes, machines, monitors, bags of fluid. A  
place of suffering. To BERNIE it's a vision of a leper colony!

A SEVEN YEAR OLD spots him, clutches at him with clawlike hands,

jerky movements.

BERNIE recoils in horror, backing away.

A FIVE YEAR OLD, "blinded" by the gauze wrapped around his face "looks" toward BERNIE and speaks.

"BLIND" CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Is that him? Is he here yet, Miss  
Roberts?

An EIGHT YEAR OLD with a bandaged arm responds, looking at BERNIE.

EIGHT YEAR OLD  
Naw, it's just some guy.

A nurse MISS ROBERTS, appears from behind a curtain suddenly and restrains the SEVEN YEAR OLD as she addresses BERNIE...

MISS ROBERTS  
Excuse me, sir. Can I help you?

BERNIE  
Uh, well I... what I...

Looks "wrong," acts "wrong." Looks like a child molester!

MISS ROBERTS  
You'll have to leave, ,sir. This  
ward is off limits. If you want  
to arrange a visit...

Just then a couple of CAMERAMEN back through the door shooting. It's the head end of an entourage of REPORTERS, CAMERAMEN, HOSPITAL PERSONNEL and a couple of SECURITY GUYS that are traveling with BUBBER.

BERNIE is bumped backward by a CAMERAMAN just as he sees BUBBER enter surrounded by MEDIA PEOPLE.

BERNIE'S P.O.V.

seeing BUBBER unhesitatingly reach out to the grotesque SEVEN YEAR OLD and lift him into his arms, eyes shining with warmth, smiling genuinely like he likes picking up hideous looking kids.

ANGLE ON MISS ROBERTS

tapping one of the SECURITY OFFICERS on the shoulder and indicating BERNIE to him.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

remembering why he's here. It's not going to be as easy as he thought. He starts to move through the entourage looking very out of place.

BERNIE

Excuse me, pal. Uh, couldja lemme through here? Thanks I...

THE SECURITY OFFICER is suddenly between BERNIE and his destination.

SECURITY OFFICER

You gotta press pass, sir?

BERNIE

Press pass? Uh, hey, I lost it. Listen...

ANGLE ON BUBBER

holding the SEVEN YEAR OLD. Smiling broadly, the child radiates joy in the warmth of BUBBER'S embrace, his grotesqueness miraculously minimized by his mood.

BERNIE

(O.S., diminishing)

GETCHER GODDAMN HANDS OFFA ME. ALL I WANNA DO IS TALK TO THE GUY.

BUBBER and everybody turn toward the sound of the commotion.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.

of an unidentified MAN (BERNIE), obscured by the bodies of the two SECURITY OFFICERS who are hurriedly hustling him off the ward.

BERNIE (O.S.)

HEY, HOLD ON, BUDDY. THIS IS AMERICA FOR CHRISAKE! I GOT RIGHTS!

BUBBER

is frowning when a DOCTOR reassures him...

DOCTOR

All under control. An unfortunate man. Security will look after him.

BUBBER nods and turns back to SICK KIDS who seem transfigured from BERNIE'S gruesome vision to children radiant with hope. Much of their appearance, at least, was attitude, despair.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

A solitary figure.

INT. WARD/HOSPITAL - DAY

A 14 year old ALLEN lies comatose in an intensive care room, tubes in his nose, arms, and chest, monitors all around him, his arms and legs in casts and traction.

BUBBER leans over the unconscious boy speaking intensely while a DOCTOR hovers next to him and REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN jockey for position at the foot of the bed.

BUBBER

Listen, kid, you gotta hang on.  
I know you're scared, we all get  
scared, but that's when you have  
to fight...

DOCTOR.

I'm afraid he can't hear you. He...

BUBBER

He can hear me...

As he leans closer to ALLEN, BUBBER puts a hand out without turning away from the boy, and waves away CHUCKY who has oozed in close with his camera. This is private. Understanding, GALE puts a hand on the lens and pushes the camera aside.

BUBBER

Listen...  
(eyes flicking to  
Allen's I.D. bracelet)  
Allen, you're in the darkness there  
and it's scary. The doctors are  
working on you but the tough part  
is for you. You can't quit!

GALE can't hear what BUBBER is saying as he leans even closer to ALLEN and grips the boy's hand.

CLOSE ON BUBBER AND ALLEN

BUBBER

I know you don't know it, but

you're a hero. Sometimes you don't know how brave you are... and sometimes you don't know... you can do something... until you... until you surprise yourself and... do it. But I know you've got the stuff, I know it in my heart. I want you to struggle kid... for yourself, for all of us.

(vulnerable)

For me. I... I really need you to do this for me. I need you to get well, Allen.

Did an eyelid flicker? Did the boy hear?

GALE'S eyes glisten with emotion as BUBBER rises, shaken.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A CROWD is waiting for BUBBER, MEDIA PERSONNEL among them.

BERNIE comes up behind a TV CAMERAMAN and taps his shoulder.

BERNIE

Hey, buddy, you're with the media, right? I got a story for you. Something fantastic. That guy Bubber, he's a fake, he...

THE CAMERAMAN is turning to consider BERNIE when there's a sudden EXCITEMENT. The CROWD surges toward the hospital entrance. VOICES cry out "He's coming! Here he comes!"

THE CAMERAMAN turns toward the doors leaving BERNIE helpless, caught in a surging tide of people.

BERNIE

HEY! WATCH OUT! HOLD ON! FOR CHRISAKE!

INT. LOBBY/CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

BUBBER and his entourage of DOCTORS, MEDIA PEOPLE and SECURITY GUARDS are surging toward the front door of the hospital like an excited amoeba. GALE is close to BUBBER in the crush.

GALE

(emotional)



You were... very... inspiring.

BUBBER

(alarmed)

A script! I thought we just walked through everything...

GALE

Read it. It'll be fine.

They're being swept through the front door of the hospital, the whole amoeba. A CHEER GOES UP.

EXT. FRONT STEPS/HOSPITAL - DAY

BERNIE is being tossed about like a cork in stormy seas. Buffeted about by happy ONLOOKERS full of good will, only BERNIE is surly, obnoxious.

BERNIE

Quit shovin', lady. Hey, watch yer elbow. YOU'RE ALL NUTS FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! WHATSA MATTER WITH YOU?

ANGLE ON BUBBER

being jostled as his BODYGUARDS are shoved back into him, CAMERAS push toward his face, HANDS reach out desperately for him. But, in a dramatic contrast to BERNIE, BUBBER thrives on the energy, laughing, reaching out to touch the hands that reach for him, thriving on the vibe.

TEENAGE GIRL

I LOVE YOU, JOHN BUBBER!

BUBBER

HEY, WE ALL LOVE EACH OTHER, DON'T WE?

OLD WOMAN ONE

GOD BLESS YOU, JOHN! GOD BLESS YOU!

BUBBER

GOD BLESS US ALL!

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

YA GODDAMN PHONY!

BUBBER stiffens imperceptibly. Did he hear that right? Was there a discordant note in the cacophony of VOICES singing his praises from every direction?

BUBBER'S POV

A sea of shining faces filled with love and admiration surges in front of him. And yet, that VOICE again, a sour note of contraction...

BERNIE'S VOICE (O.S.)  
BUBBER, YA GODDAMN FRAUD! THAT'S  
MY SHOE AND MY MONEY!

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Hearing it, looking around urgently, but all he sees are ADMIRERS thrusting at him as he's borne, as if on a tide, toward his limo. Nobody else seems to have noticed BERNIE'S VOICE.

INT. WAITING LIMO

As the door slams shut, the cheering is suddenly faint. BUBBER sinks back in the opulent seats while FACES distort themselves against the smoked glass, trying to peer into the sanctuary.

Then, as the limo pulls away, BUBBER hears the VOICE again muffled by the thick glass. He turns, looks out the rear window. He sees the CROWD receding behind him, a confusion of SPECTATORS and... is that that hitchhiker (BERNIE) being restrained by a COP?

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Shaken and frowning with concern, he turns away from the scene now out of view behind the moving limo.

Alone in the luxurious leathered sanctuary, he realizes his hands are shaking as he reaches for the manila envelope GALE gave; him and tears it open.

He stares at the script titled THE ANGEL OF FLIGHT 104.

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

As the happy CROWD disperses, an enraged BERNIE is facing a COP.

BERNIE.  
Don't tell me what I can and can't  
say. This is America.

COP  
(laughing)

Hey, suit yourself, buddy. If it makes you feel better to insult a man who's worth about a thousand of you, go ahead. Like he says, "We're all heroes," pal. Even you.

BERNIE

Bullshit! What a lotta bullshit!

COP

Okay, have it your own way: you're not a hero.

[PAGE 92 IS MISSING FROM THE SCRIPT.]

ANGLE ON BERNIE

blinking, as the T-shirts magically feature BUBBER again, smiling, heroic. BERNIE wonders if this is hell.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

Behind the deserted bar, CHICK looks from the TV set as BERNIE enters, weary and bedraggled, the strut gone. Bernie holds up his hands defensively.

BERNIE

Hey, I don't blame you for bein' sore. I know I screwed up gettin'

busted in here. You got a right  
to throw me out.

CHICK

I'm not gonna throw you out, Bernie.

CHICK is fixing a seven and seven. He puts it on the bar.  
BERNIE hesitates, then steps to the bar, takes a drink.

BERNIE

Thanks, Chick. I appreciate it.

REPORTER/TV (O.S., VOICEOVER)

The doctors who had believed the  
boy had little or no chance for  
survival, now predict a slow but  
complete recovery.

CHICK glances up at the TV screen and BERNIE looks too.

ON THE TV SCREEN (INT. WARD/HOSPITAL - DAY)

news footage shows young ALLEN in his hospital bed, still  
engulfed in tubes and life support equipment, but conscious now,  
smiling bravely for the CAMERA while a REPORTER narrates.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON CHICK

eyes on the TV, shaking his head in wonder.

CHICK

Helluva guy, ain't he? Vietnam,  
plane crash, now miracles.

BERNIE stares at the screen lost in thought.

EXT. VIDEO STUDIO - DUSK

A sign over the door says "STAGE ONE/CHANNEL 4." Further down,  
on the door itself a sign says "NO ADMITTANCE/ AUTHORIZED  
PERSONNEL ONLY"

UNIFORMED POLICE linger around the door, surrounded by FANS and  
BUBBER'S limo waits at the curb, his DRIVER lounging by the  
door.

DAYTON (we saw him earlier in the courtroom), is making his way  
through the knot of ONLOOKERS and MEDIA PERSONNEL gathered

around the limo and in front of the entrance.

Approaching as if to enter, he is confronted by one of the several UNIFORMED POLICEMEN guarding the doorway.

POLICE OFFICER

Sorry, sir. Closed to the public..

(Dayton is reaching for  
his fold)

No media either, sir, they're taping  
a show and... Oh, right. Sorry  
about that, Inspector.

DAYTON is flashing his badge fold as the POLICEMAN hastily opens the door for him.

INT. STAGE ONE - NIGHT

DAYTON enters the sound stage and sees the mock-up bathed in hot light in the middle of the darkened stage, surrounded by shadowy cameras and TECHNICIANS. The SURVIVORS are visible in the skeletal plane, rehearsing.

DAYTON settles in the shadows, out of earshot, watching.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Approaching GALE who's lying "helplessly" among the seats. He looms over her, his face obscured by "mud" make-up, hesitates. She whispers helpfully...

GALE

Now you lean down and free me from  
the seat. I was caught and...  
that's it. Good.

BUBBER bends down, starts to "free" her, a troubled look on his face. He is struggling with something emotionally.

GALE

Now you help me up. Boy, you  
seem... taller. It must be  
psychological... now that I know  
you saved my life...

BUBBER

(lifting her)

Gale! I can't go through with this!  
It's... it's all wrong!

GALE

You're doing fine. You didn't actually lift me though. It was more like you supported me.

BUBBER  
(supporting her)  
That's not what I mean...

GALE  
There, like that. Kind of, uh, sexy.  
(with meaning)  
You can support me anytime, John.

BUBBER  
Gale...

GALE  
(giggle)  
I just remembered. You were talking about bodybuilding and swearing.

BUBBER  
Bodybuilding!

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE booms over the speaker from the booth.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE (O.S.)  
WE DON'T WANT ACTING, AS I SAID.  
BUT WHEN WE DO A TAKE, GUYS, PLEASE  
DON'T LAUGH, OKAY? IT HAS TO PLAY  
SERIOUS. IT WAS A VERY SERIOUS  
THING...

(a beat, then...)  
UH, ALSO, JOHN, MAYBE YOU COULD LIFT  
HER MORE, SORT OF CARRY HER. I KNOW  
THAT MAY BE BENDING REALITY JUST  
A TEENSY BIT, BUT IF YOUR  
JOURNALIST'S INTEGRITY CAN HANDLE  
IT, GALE, I THINK IT WOULD "PLAY  
BETTER" ON THE SCREEN.

(then, to all of  
them...)  
OKAY, GANG, LET'S RUN THROUGH IT  
FROM THE TOP ONE MORE TIME, THEN  
WE'LL DO A TAKE.

ANGLE ON DAYTON

Watching, impassive.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Lifting GALE, uncomfortable.

BUBBER

It's not right, Gale...

GALE

(misunderstanding again)

It's no big deal, it just looks  
better carrying me. Oh, you mean  
because I wasn't carrying my purse  
at the time.

GALE has a purse under one arm.

GALE

(suddenly serious, eye  
contact)

You're an inspiration, John. You're  
making us better human beings. Less  
cynical. More open, more giving.  
Do you realize that?

BUBBER starts to say something again, but the moment for  
confession has passed, they're approaching LESLIE who is  
applauding along with the other SURVIVORS, tears in her eyes.

LESLIE

You leave her here... and you (sob)  
go back in again.

BUBBER nods and starts grimly back up the slope, trapped in his  
heroic role.

INT. SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is sitting moodily at the bar while CHICK washes glasses  
and the TV DRONES. BERNIE is wrestling with a thought. He  
breaks the, silence finally.

BERNIE

What wouldja say if I toldja I ran  
into a burning plane an' saved a  
buncha people, Chick, an' risked  
my goddamnlife?

CHICK

You mean like Bubber? The hero?

BERNIE

Yeah, like that. Same thing.

CHICK

Well... I mean... what am I supposed to say here, Bern? Is this a riddle or what?

BERNIE

I mean, if I said it, wouldja believe me?

(then...)

Ya wouldn't, would ya?

CHICK

It's a character thing, Bernie. I mean, you wouldn't do it. No offense. Me neither. I mean, a guy like Bubber, he's a certain kinda guy. Heroic. You and me, we're not... heroic. It's not our nature. It don't mean we're bad or nothing. We're just not so inclined. What about it?

BERNIE

Nothin'.

CHICK

I wouldn't be depressed about it, Bern. A guy don't have to be heroic to be a human being.

BERNIE

The thing is, Chick. I'm goin' down.

CHICK

Down. You mean jail? For that credit card stuff? For Chrissake, Bernie, your lawyer...

BERNIE,

Not jail. Prison. And not that credit card bullshit, that's nothin'. I got a conviction. Sentencing tomorrow. Some cases of paint I got involved with. Latex. I see this parole officer, he writes a report to the judge says I'm "anti-social."

CHICK



"Anti-social." Jesus, Bernie.  
How much paint are we talking  
about?

BERNIE  
(grimly)  
A lot.

INT. STAGE ONE - NIGHT

DAYTON unnoticed among the shadows, as the YOUTHFUL DIRECTOR  
addresses the assembled SURVIVORS. DAYTON focuses on GALE.

YOUTHFUL DIRECTOR  
That's a wrap, guys. I want to  
thank you all. I think we did  
something very important here this  
evening.

BUBBER is looking for GALE, spots her fifteen yards away.

BUBBER'S P.O.V. - A BLACK MAN

is showing GALE something, a badge fold, saying something to  
her.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

reacting. A frown. he starts to move toward them but a MAKE-UP  
ARTIST approaches him insistently...

MAKE-UP ARTIST  
Just let me get that gunk off your  
face, Mister Bubber.

BUBBER  
Uh, it can wait, I...

His eyes on GALE and DAYTON, BUBBER is disengaging from the  
MAKE-UP ARTIST when SUSAN suddenly blocks his way, holding up  
a DOLL, a shy KELLY in tow.

SUSAN  
Mister Bubber... uh, John... Kelly  
wants you to sign an autograph for  
John Jr.

BUBBER finds himself facing a JOHN BUBBER DOLL, sees KELLY  
peering up at him hopefully. What can he do? He's a patsy.

ANGLE ON GALE

as DAYTON speaks to her.

DAYTON

Won't take more than ten minutes.  
Fifteen at the most. I'll buy you,  
a cuppa coffee down the street.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Handing the autograph to KELLY and looking toward the spot where  
GALE was.

BUBBER'S P.O.V. - DAYTON AND GALE

walking toward the exit.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

calling out, starting after them.

BUBBER

Gale!

Just then SMITH rushes up to him, blocking his way.

SMITH

I breathe, I see the sun, I thank  
you. God bless you. I'm alive  
because of you, every moment of life  
I owe to you.

BUBBER looks at his grateful face. What can he say? He looks  
toward the exit.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.

GALE and DAYTON have disappeared.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

eyes full of despair as other grateful PASSENGERS engulf him...

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER (EVENING)

Credit Cards are spread out on the formica table top in the  
booth where GALE and DAYTON face each other.

GALE

How... how does this, whatsisname,  
the "sleazebag," say he got my  
cards?

DAYTON

LaPlante? Ha! Which version? This bozo has more stories than a newspaper. In one of them, he's "the angel of Flight 104!" He pulls you off the plane, saves your purse for you, but forgets to return it. That's Version 63. In Version 64, he kept it to pay for his "hundred dollar shoes." The guy's a bullshit artist, he's already got a sentence pending for dealing stolen goods.

(leaning forward,

whispering)

Listen, I know. this is pretty off the wall... that guy, the hero, Bubber... he was a homeless guy, right? Down on his luck? He couldn't have swiped the wallet, could he? While he was rescuing you? And sold it to this guy LaPlante?

GALE

(raised eyebrows)

John Bubber risks his life to save me and fifty-four other people and... swipes my purse?

DAYTON

Too far-fetched? I mean, I'm not trying to make problems for John Bubber, I just want to make sure this creep LaPlante does some meaningful time. If we can't figure out how he got the cards, it makes it more difficult.

GALE

Tell me more about him.

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

JOEY is sprawled on the living room floor, surrounded by homework, his eyes on the TV set.

EVELYN, on the sofa, looks up from her book and catches JOEY watching the TV.

EVELYN

Homework. You're doing homework,  
remember?

The phone rings and EVELYN gets up and goes for it.

EVELYN  
(to Joey)  
Homework, homework, homework! No  
homework, no zoo trips, no movies.  
(into phone)  
Hello.  
(then, very cold...)  
He's doing his homework.

JOEY looks up from his homework.

INT. PHONE BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is talking into the phone urgently...

BERNIE  
Look, I'm going away, I just wanna  
say goodbye to... never mind where.  
I just wanna say... He can't call  
me back later, my phone's  
disconnected...

INT. LIVING ROOM/EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

EVELYN covers the mouthpiece and turns to JOEY...

EVELYN  
It's your father. If you don't talk  
to him, he's going to call all  
night.

INT. PHONE BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE  
Hey, Joey, how ya doin', pal, it's  
me. Your old man. You get the  
twenty dollars? What?  
(listens...)  
Well, she's right on that, Joey,  
that's the best place for it, a  
college fund. I was gonna tell ya  
that myself. Look, about how I  
didn't show up the other night I...  
what?

(he listens)  
You seen me out the window....  
(listens)  
One shoe, yeah and the mud... So  
you thought I mighta been the heroic  
guy, huh?  
(a beat, then...)  
An' what'd she say when you...?  
"Against my religion," huh?  
(he struggles, then...  
decisive)  
Well, you know Joey, this kinda  
stuff, we gotta talk about it some  
time, man to man. But I gotta go  
off on this -- this damn business  
trip now... for a while. So...  
so I won't be seein' you. What you  
gotta do, you gotta listen to your  
mother, she's smart, very smart,  
knows what's best for you and...  
(reacting)  
No, no, no, it ain't 'cause I don't  
like you, Christ! I mean, not  
"Christ," you know... I mean I don't  
wanna go on this business thing,  
I love you Joey, but I gotta!  
That's part of growing older, all  
these goddamn (pardon the  
vulgarity) business things you have  
to do. Which reminds me, this  
"hero" business... one of the things  
you learn as you get older is that  
life gets very complicated...  
weird actually... people aren't  
exactly like they seem... nothing  
is... life gets unbelievable...  
this is normal as you grow older  
and... huh? I was talking to Joey.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

EVELYN  
Your son actually wants to spend  
time with you. If you let him down  
this time after popping back into  
his life...

INT. PHONE BOOTH/SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

BERNIE

Ev, you gotta understand, it's this... this goddamn business trip, no wait, don't hang up, Ev, just a sec, listen, I just wanna say one thing, okay? One thing!

(with some effort)

I know I kinda act like an asshole sometimes. I know that. I know you were a good wife. I know I fucked it up. I had a good thing an' I blew it. I just want you to know I know that, okay? I gotta go now. Business trip. It's gonna be a while.

BERNIE hangs up.

INT. EVELYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

EVELYN stares at the phone as though it had changed into a piece of fruit before her eyes! Bernie said that?

INT. HALLWAY/APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

WINSTON (who bought Bernie's TV) has opened his door just a crack to address GALE and CHUCKY. It says "Manager" on the door.

WINSTON

LaPlante! That asshole! I don't... Hey, is that you, from the tee vee? In person?

GALE

We're from Channel Four, yes. We'd like to find --

WINSTON

"This is Gale Gayley for Channel Four News!" Incredible. Unbelievable! For Bernie LaPlante! He's a celebrity now? 'Cause he stole paint?

GALE

We couldn't find his name on the buzzer or on the mailbox, but...

WINSTON pushes past them out the, door and into the corridor.

WINSTON

"Low profile." That's his big motto! He don't put his name on anything. Come on, we'll go look.

GALE sees WINSTON trundling down the corridor toward the stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

WINSTON waddles up the stairs with GALE and CHUCKY on his heels.

GALE

Shouldn't we have buzzed him to let him know --

WINSTON

Half the time he don't answer even if he's home. Know why? 'Cause he don't want no bill collectors to find him. I don't mean to be judgmental, but he's a scumbag. He don't have no friends. Who's gonna like a creep like LaPlante? I was doin' him a favor on the TV outta kindness, and he screwed me. You know what color skin you get on my set, Miss Gayley? Purple! That's what color skin you got on the tee vee LaPlante sells me!

During the climb, GALE'S BEEPER goes off. She shuts it off.

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR/APT. BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

BANG! BANG! BANG! WINSTON pounds on the door to 5A while GALE and CHUCKY hover behind him anxiously.

WINSTON

Bernard! Bernard! Hey, LaPlante, open the door. Television Interview! Fame and fortune. Open up, Bernard.

WINSTON pulls a ring of keys from his belt and unlocks the door.

WINSTON

Hope the silly bastard didn't kill himself. He's all upset about this sentence he got. He's going to prison.

(to Chucky)  
That a camera you're carrying? If  
he killed himself, you could take  
pictures.

INT. BERNIE'S APARTMENT

WINSTON, GALE and CHUCKY enter the tiny charmless living room.  
As WINSTON disappears into the bedroom; GALE glances around,  
notices something.

A cheap commercial photo of BERNIE with JOEY at the zoo.

Studying it, she considers BERNIE'S face.

WINSTON re-enters from the bedroom.

WINSTON  
No dead body. Too bad. Not too  
often you guys get pictures of a  
body even before the cops get there.  
Exclusive!

GALE  
I wonder if you'd mind if we waited  
for him here, Mister Winston...

Surprised, CHUCKY gives her a sharp look, like "what's up?"

WINSTON  
What's he gonna do, sue? You  
people, you're the media.

WINSTON exits, closing the door behind him.

CHUCKY  
We're gonna wait here? The guy  
could be hours.

GALE  
Maybe, maybe not. I have a feeling  
this guy is important somehow.

CHUCKY  
Hey, listen, great that you're a  
career-fiend, I got a wife and  
family, I...

GALE  
You're lucky, Chucky, you... OW!



GALE has flopped down on BERNIE'S ratty sofa.

CHUCKY  
What's the matter?

GALE  
This sofa is a lethal weapon. The  
springs... are... the springs...  
what...?

GALE is digging behind her on the sofa. She pulls out The  
silver Mike Award and stares at it, dumbfounded.

CHUCKY  
What is it?

GALE  
(stunned)  
The...Silver...Mike...Award!

CHUCKY  
This guy LaPlante won an award?

GALE  
(staring at the  
inscription)  
"For Excellence in the Pursuit of  
Truth."

CHUCKY  
(amazed)  
LaPlante!

BERNIE  
Who the hell are you? What's goin'  
on here?

BERNIE is standing in the doorway, scowling at CHUCKY. But  
before the astonished CHUCKY can respond, GALE turns, revealing  
her face.

BERNIE  
You!

GALE  
Camera, Chucky. Are you Bernard  
LaPlante, sir? What is your  
relationship with John Bubber?

BERNIE  
(indicating chucky)

Turn that thing off.

GALE

(holding up the Silver  
Mike)

How did you acquire this, Mister  
LaPlante?

BERNIE

How do ya think I got it, for  
Chrissake?

(to Chucky, indicating  
the vidpak)

Hey, put that thing down. This is  
my goddamn apartment, you can't  
just...

GALE

What's your scheme, Mister LaPlante?  
What are you forcing John Bubber  
to do? What are you -- ?

The door bursts open and WINSTON rushes in hysterically.

WINSTON

HE'S GONNA JUMP! BUBBER'S GONNA  
JUMP! IT'S ON CHANNEL THIRTEEN!

CHUCKY

Thirteen!

TV IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - P.O.V. OF LEDGE - NIGHT)

Weirdly distorted colors. A shaky long lens shot (news camera)  
reveals a bright green BUBBER standing on a ledge fifteen  
stories up while a REPORTER narrates urgently...

CHANNEL 13 REPORTER (V.O.)

-- say that they cannot rig a net  
below him because they are afraid  
it will trigger his decision to  
jump. Bubber has said repeatedly  
he will only talk with Gale Gayley  
a local television reporter.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Oh my God!

REVEAL: INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Where GALE, flanked by BERNIE, CHUCKY, and WINSTON, is staring  
in horror at the lurid color image on the TV BERNIE sold to

WINSTON.

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE - NIGHT)

CHANNEL 13 REPORTER/TV  
(continuing)  
So far, attempts to reach Ms. Gayley  
have not succeeded.

INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ANGLE ON GALE

GALE  
(to Winston)  
Your phone! Quick.

As WINSTON shows her the phone, BERNIE scowls at the TV.

BERNIE  
He's green for Chrissake!

As GALE punches digits on the phone, WINSTON turns back to BERNIE.

WINSTON  
No shit! You took advantage of me,  
LaPlante. It's a piece of shit.

BERNIE  
You gotta tune it, ya bozo. You  
gotta adjust it.

BERNIE is adjusting the television color.

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT)

CHANNEL 13 REPORTER/TV  
Meanwhile, as you can see, a crowd  
has gathered here at the hotel, many  
of them in tears, pleading aloud  
with John Bubber not to jump.

INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ANGLE ON GALE

speaking urgently and privately into the phone.

GALE

For God's sake, tell him I'm on my way.

(she slams down the phone)

Let's go, Chucky. A police escort is gonna pick us up en route. You too, LaPlante.

BERNIE

Me!

GALE

If you're not in the car in ten seconds, I'll have the cops pick you up.

BERNIE

The cops! What kinda bullshit is this? Is this America or -- ?

GALE

(urgent, inspiration)

Here! Here... ten, thirty, fifty bucks. How much have you got, Chucky? Give Mister LaPlante your money.

GALE shoves cash into BERNIE'S hands as CHUCKY obediently reaches for his wallet.

GALE

Come on! Let's go! John's in danger.

Confused, BERNIE looks at the cash, then follows them out the door.

BERNIE

(pocketing the cash)

Christ, you media people think you can just buy people. Cheap.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

SIRENS SCREAM. An escort of POLICE MOTORCYCLES precedes the speeding Channel Four van through the dark streets.

INT. SPEEDING CHANNEL 4 VAN - NIGHT

CHUCKY is at the wheel of the van, GALE beside him. BERNIE sits

back in the confusion of equipment and monitors that show the news coverage of Bubber on the ledge. BERNIE is addressing GALE indignantly, trying to be heard over the SCREAMING of the SIRENS.

BERNIE

My fault! My fault! This nut case goes out on a ledge and it's my fault?

GALE

If anything happens to John BUBber, Mister LaPlante I'm going to see you prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

BERNIE

What, is everybody in love with this, bozo? I don't get this. What about...?

GALE

Yes, everybody is in love with John Bubber. The whole country, in fact. And they're not going to be happy if he jumps to his death because he was harassed by a lousy little money-grubbing low-life fence...

BERNIE

"Harassed." Cause I yelled at him when he's riding in his limo? The guy's a thief, he took my...

GALE

(erupting)

He had one tiny, uncharacteristic moment of weakness. That's not the same thing as a lifetime of petty crime...

BERNIE

(stung)

Hey, lady, I got faults, I know I'm not perfect but I don't get this at all, your attitude. I saved your...

GALE

(interrupting)

A lifetime of petty crime climaxed by your sleaziest accomplishment

yet... blackmailing a national  
hero...

BERNIE

-- saved your... whaaaaaaat? What?  
Blackmailing...?

GALE

You think I haven't figured it out?  
Just because the cops aren't on to  
you yet doesn't mean you're home  
free. I'm a veteran reporter. I've  
seen your kind before, the  
underbelly of crime.

BERNIE

Underbelly!

GALE

In all that smoke and fire, John  
had a moment of weakness. He'd been  
down and out, destitute, living in  
his car. It was just an impulse,  
stealing my purse.

BERNIE looks thunderstruck. CHUCKY too.

CHUCKY

Swiped your purse! While he was  
saving you? You gotta be kidding!

GALE

(a triumphant 190k at  
Bernie)

And sold it to Mister LaPlante, the  
fence, who's now trying to blackmail  
poor John.

BERNIE is too stunned to speak.

CHUCKY

He's gotta be a nut! He saves all  
those people and swipes a purse?

GALE

(emotional)

Because he was a real hero, Chucky.  
He was acting out of a deep  
instinctive decency, not out of some  
ego thing. He didn't expect the  
media to lionize him. He didn't  
expect a million dollar reward.

He saved fifty-four people because something inside him, some fundamental love for his fellow man, made him rush into that plane when "good sense" told him otherwise. He was willing to settle for some credit cards he sold to LaPlante....

(to Bernie)

For how much, LaPlante? A couple of bucks? Did you give him enough for a decent meal?

BERNIE, who's been listening to the description of his own deeds with slack-jawed amazement, is too taken aback to answer.

The van zips past dark city streets populated by DERELICTS and HOMELESS PEOPLE as GALE continues her emotional outpouring.

GALE

All this is off the record, Chucky, because if John Bubber lives, Mister LaPlante is going to give him his assurance that there will be no more "misbehavior" on his part. What's more he's going to apologize.

BERNIE

I'm going to apologize to Bubber?

GALE

I could deny I had those credit cards on the plane with me, LaPlante...

BERNIE

(amazed)

Lie, you mean...

GALE

Well, maybe I wouldn't lie...but I could tell the story the way I did just now, so that people could understand that John is even more of a hero, and that you... you're the lowest thing that ever crawled. Your name will be synonymous with cynical opportunism and blackmail. You won't get a cent.

BERNIE

(alarmed)

I got a kid, you know. I'm a person, for Chrissake.

GALE

Well, for your child's sake, show some decency then, rise above your sleazy instincts.

(a sob)

You may have already killed him!

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

POLICE buck the tide of the excited CROWD, making a wedge to get GALE, CHUCKY, and BERNIE to the hotel entrance. A COP grabs BERNIE, thinking him a spectator.

GALE

No! He's with us, Officer.

REPORTERS, on the fringe of the crowd, address their cameras.

CHANNEL 8/CHANNEL 13/CONKLIN

Police are escorting Reporter Gale Gayley to the fifteenth floor where she will be able to talk to Bubber.

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - CROWD'S POV OF BUBBER ON LEDGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BUBBER

A tiny figure on a narrow ledge fifteen floors up.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

GALE rushes into the suite now jammed with POLICE, FIREMEN, and DIGNITARIES and heads straight for the open window, dragging BERNIE with her. CHUCKY follows, Vidcam raised.

At the window she encounters the POLICE CHIEF and a PRIEST.

POLICE CHIEF

He'll only talk to you, Ms Gayley.  
Just lean out and we'll hold you from behind.

EXT. LEDGE/FIFTEENTH STORY/DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

Alone on the ledge twenty feet from the open window, BUBBER is



looking down at the CROWD below. They're chanting...

EXT. LEDGE - BUBBER'S P.O.V. OF CROWD - NIGHT

CROWD  
NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!

EXT. LEDGE - DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

GALE  
John! Don't do it! Everything's  
okay.

BUBBER has tears in his eyes. He turns at the sound of GALE'S voice and sees her leaning out the window, calling to him.

Pulling an envelope from his pocket, BUBBER moves a couple of steps toward GALE and bends down to place the envelope on the ledge.

BUBBER  
Gale! This is for you. I want you  
to know I never meant to hurt you.  
This will explain everything.

GALE  
John, I know all about it.

BUBBER  
(horrified)  
You do?

Straightening up, he... LOSES HIS BALANCE!

CROWD  
NNNOOOOOOOOOOO!

GALE  
It's all right, John! It's nothing!  
A little mistake. Everybody will  
understand!

BUBBER  
"A little mistake"!

GALE  
No, John, you're too hard on  
yourself. I've got the creep here,  
the guy who's...

GALE breaks off as BERNIE suddenly shoulders his way to the window...

BERNIE  
Hold on! Hold on! Lemme talk to  
him for Chrissake!

INT. SUITE/DRAKE

BERNIE pushes past the astonished GALE and scrambles awkwardly out onto' the ledge, kicking back at the FIREMEN who grab at his ankles until...

ANGLE ON FIREMEN

exchanging a look, the FIREMEN realize their efforts are more likely to knock BERNIE off than save him.

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

BUBBER stares in amazement as BERNIE emerges onto the ledge on all fours, yelling toward him.

BERNIE  
Hey, Bubber, c'mere! I gotta talk  
to you, buddy.

BUBBER  
LaPlante!

BERNIE  
Come on, John, don't be an asshole.  
I don't like heights.

Hastily, BUBBER backs further from the window (and the envelope lying on the ledge).

BUBBER  
Listen, LaPlante, I'm really sorry.  
It's all in my letter to Ga... uh,  
Miss Gayley. I was all wrong.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

CHUCKY is wedged beside GALE in the window, pointing his vidpak at BERNIE'S ass. Suddenly BERNIE sees BUBBER looking past him at the cameras and, turning awkwardly, he snaps at GALE...

BERNIE

Turn that thing off! You want him  
to jump?

GALE and the OTHERS step back from the window hastily.

EXT. LEDGE/DRAKE - NIGHT

BERNIE turns back to BUBBER.

BERNIE

I just wanna talk with you for a  
minute. Then you can jump. You  
can jump twice for all I care.

BUBBER

Talk from there. You can talk from  
there.

BERNIE

In private. They got cameras and  
alla that crap in there.  
Microphones.

INT. HOTEL SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

Rather than leaning out the window, GALE and OTHERS in the suite  
are following the drama on the TV monitor.

GALE'S P.O.V.: TV IMAGE (EXT. LEDGE - FROM BELOW - NIGHT)

CONKLIN narrates while the SHAKY CAMERA FOCUSES on BERNIE and  
BUBBER who are continuing to argue on the ledge, BERNIE  
motioning for BUBBER to come closer, BUBBER resisting.

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)

It looks like someone is out on the  
ledge with John Bubber. We can only  
presume this is a rescue specialist  
of some kind from the police or fire  
department.

(excited)

He... he's moving toward Bubber,  
crawling. He does not appear to  
have a safety rope tied to him and,  
as we've explained, the fire  
department has been unable to rig  
a net.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

BACK TO GALE

Ironically, she's "seeing the events" happening fifteen feet from her on a monitor showing...

ON THE TV SCREEN (EXT. HOTEL - P.O.V. OF LEDGE - NIGHT)

a camera angle fifteen stories below, a SHAKY ZOOM attempting to isolate BERNIE on the ledge.

INT. SUITE/DRAKE - NIGHT

Her face shows surprise at BERNIE'S courage. Did she misjudge?

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

Inching forward, BERNIE is just reaching the letter BUBBER left on the ledge.

BUBBER

(indicating the letter)

That's for Ga... Ms. Gayley.

BERNIE

What am I, a goddamn postman? I'm way the fuck up here, I'm scared a heights, and you want me to deliver a letter? Put a stamp on it for Chrissake!

BUBBER

That's close enough. It's a confession. The truth. Jesus, I'm sorry, LaPlante. I had the shoe, you said you didn't want, publicity because of your legal problems.

BERNIE

I don't recall saying I didn't want a million bucks...

BUBBER

I never really thought they'd go for it. And then... you didn't come forward, they investigated my war record... I kept expecting you to show up and expose me...

BERNIE

I was in the can, for Chrissake.

BUBBER

The bathroom! For two days?

BERNIE

Jail! Listen, Bubber...

(looks down, fifteen  
stories)

This is crazy. We could fall off  
of here.

BUBBER

You should go in. You're risking  
your life again...

BERNIE

(sweating, trembling)

I'm beginning to... be aware of  
that, John. Listen, I'm not gonna  
do nothing heroic here, you can  
trust me on that, buddy. Whaddaya  
say we just sit down for a while.  
I don't have no tricks, I'm not that  
smart. You could, like, rest up for  
the jump.

BUBBER considers the situation, relaxes, lowers himself till  
he's sitting beside BERNIE. Then he helps BERNIE off his knees  
into a sitting position so they're sitting side by side on the  
ledge. BUBBER shakes his head sadly.

BUBBER

What have I done? I was dirt poor  
and useless... but I was honest.

BERNIE

Lighten up, John. You think you  
got problems for Chrissake?

BERNIE wipes the sweat from his forehead, unaware that he's  
smearing his face with black soot from the ledge.

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL

In front of the hotel in the midst of the confusion of emergency  
vehicles, POLICE, and ONLOOKERS, a cherry-picker has arrived  
and a TV CAMERAMAN from Channel 4 is riding in the rising  
pulpit.

TELEVISION IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL P.O.V. - NIGHT)

A shaky long lens shot from fifteen stories below shows BERNIE sitting beside BUBBER on the ledge while the REPORTER narrates urgently...

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)

-- still don't know why John BUBber,  
hero to the nation, stepped out onto  
the ledge fifteen stories above  
the street more than an hour ago.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOEY, wearing pajamas and headphones, is staring breathlessly at the TV from the bed in his darkened bedroom.

ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN (EXT. DRAKE FRONT STEPS - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)

(continuing)

But we now have the identity of the  
man who has been talking to him for  
the last fifteen minutes at great  
personal risk. He has been  
identified as Bernard LaPlante,  
former employee of Gumley's Carpet  
Care.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON JOEY

JOEY'S jaw sags and he sits up in bed as the REPORTER continues on the TV.

ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN (EXT. LEDGE FROM BELOW - NIGHT)

the lens ZOOMS TIGHTER, and therefore SHAKIER, offering a jerky image in which BUBBER and BERNIE are semi-identifiable as they sit on the ledge.

CONKLIN/TV (V.O.)

There is speculation that LaPlante  
is an old friend of Bubber's,  
perhaps a war buddy.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOEY has already sprinted out of the room, leaving the TV playing to his empty bedroom.

JOEY'S VOICE (O.S.)  
MOM! MOM! IT'S MY FATHER! MOM!

INT. DRAKE/PRESIDENTIAL SUITE

GALE is giving way at the window to CHUCKY who's leaning out to try and get a shot. Jammed in by the CROWD, her view blocked, she glimpses a TV monitor nearby.

GALE'S POV - TV MONITOR/VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT)

The SHAKY CLOSE-UP of BERNIE'S face, smeared with soot, fills the screen. The angle is very reminiscent of the glimpse GALE got of BERNIE in the crashed plane!

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

An arc light is switched on, lighting up BERNIE'S face.

INT. DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

BACK TO GALE,

stunned. Just then CHUCKY taps her on his way out of the room.

CHUCKY  
I'm gonna grab the high ground, get  
a hot overhead angle.

EXT. LEDGE/FIFTEENTH FLOOR/DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

Spotlights illuminate BERNIE and BUBBER as they sit on the ledge and converse, like a couple of guys on a park bench somewhere, oblivious to the CROWD below.

BUBBER  
(flabbergasted)  
You stole her purse! While you were  
saving her?

BERNIE  
What's the big deal? You decided  
to pretend you were me. A little  
moment of weakness, right? So I  
sorta swiped her purse. I got feet  
of clay too, bUddy.

BUBBER

And she thinks you're blackmailing me?

BERNIE

Right.

BUBBER actually sees humor in this, but BERNIE is thinking...

BERNIE

Which don't sound like such a bad goddamn idea, John.

BUBBER

Huh? Whadda you mean?

BERNIE

Well, we gotta work this thing out, John. It's a goddamn mess an' I'm halfway to doing serious time in the joint an' the TV lady's so stuck on you she don't want it to come out you stole her purse because it might break the heart of millions.

(indicating the chanting crowd below)

Looka those maniacs, willya? They love you, for Chrissake!

BUBBER

I don't need to be a hero, LaPlante, but I can't face people... the looks in their eyes... after the trust they gave me!

BERNIE

Great! You make this big goddamn mess, then ya jump. Beautiful! Listen, John, I was there at the hospital today, I seen you with those little bastards (pardon my vulgarity).

BUBBER

It was you! I thought I heard...

BERNIE

I'm not saying I hate sick people or anything but I hate being around them if you know what I mean. There you go, you inspire this kid to live. I probably woulda vomited



on him.

BUBBER

(stunned)

Allen? He... he's okay?

BUBBER is visibly affected by the news about ALLEN but BERNIE doesn't notice, rattles on...

BERNIE

See what I mean? You remember his name for Chrissake! I mean, I remember my own kid's name... but I'm always forgetting his birthday. Plus when they stick cameras in your face and ask all these stupid questions, you smile at them. You got a kinda... a kinda... "gift," there, John, if ya know what I mean. People wanna be saved by you. Even me! If I was gonna be saved I wouldn't wanna see Bernie LaPlante comin' outta the goddamn smoke an' darkness an' fear an' stuff. I'd wanna see John God Damn Bubber!

BUBBER is moved... but still has doubts.

BUBBER

You got those people out of the plane, LaPlante, not me.

BERNIE

You woulda gone in there, you wouldn'ta thought twice... Trust me on that, that's the kinda guy you are. For a guy like me, it's a momentary loss of sanity. I wasn't thinking clearly. Listen, I'm no hero, John. I just want some dough and maybe a little favor. How much didja spend already on all that do-gooder bullshit? You didn't spend it all didja?

BUBBER

Well, I donated a lot to different causes, uh... La...

BERNIE

Bernie. Call me Bernie.

BUBBER

--but there's a lot of it still  
left, uh, Bernie. Almost half.

BERNIE'S eyes glitter with interest.

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE/TV STATION

Several monitors show a variety of coverage of the drama on the ledge on their screens while, nearby, WALLACE hovers anxiously over DEAKINS' shoulder as DEAKINS rants into the phone...

DEAKINS

Whaddaya mean what do I wanna know?  
I wanna know everything. Who's this  
screwball LaPlante for Pete's sake,  
what the hell's he doing out there,  
auditioning for the priesthood?  
You're supposed to be on top of  
this, Gale, don't...

(he stops, listens,  
explodes)

"Quit!" You can't quit! It's  
unprofessional!

WALLACE

(alarmed)

Quit? She wants to quit?

DEAKINS

(ignoring Wallace)

Listen, Gale, I know you're  
emotionally involved. Don't be  
emotionally involved, be  
professional.

(listens, then...)

No, Gale, you are not a hardbitten,  
cynical hard-ass, you just think  
you are. You are a goddamn cream  
puff! Try and be a hard-ass!

DEAKINS hangs up the phone angrily and faces WALLACE...

WALLACE

She wants to quit?

DEAKINS

She can't quit.

INT. JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

EVELYN is staring dumbfounded at the TV screen, the volume full now, no longer coming through the headphones.

EVELYN

My God! It... it is him!

JOEY

Wh-why's he... why's he up there,  
mom?

EVELYN looks pale and stricken. Instead of answering, she makes a decision...

EVELYN

Where's your coat? Get your coat!

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

DEAKINS and WALLACE are watching a CHANNEL EIGHT REPORTER on one of the monitors.

TV IMAGE (EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT)

CHANNEL 8 REPORTER/TV

-- just learned that LaPlante is a convicted felon due to be sentenced tomorrow for trafficking in stolen goods. According to our sources, LaPlante knowingly purchased twelve cases of stolen latex paint which he subsequently sold to...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON DEAKINS AND WALLACE

DEAKINS

Gale shoulda aired that bit first, she's the one who found this clown LaPlante! She let Channel Eight get a beat on us.

WALLACE

(worried)

Listen, Deak, what if Bubber has got something to hide? What if he's the wrong guy, not really the hero...?

DEAKINS

Helluva story!

WALLACE

(suddenly firm)

No, Deak, not a great story. We backed this guy, he's our boy! We gave him a vote of confidence, we gave him a million dollars.

DEAKINS is chastened. He "gets it." Just then, excitement from the Channel Four monitor.

DEAKINS

Now what?

CONKLIN'S VOICE/TV

(excited)

Something's going on, Bubber is communicating something. Both men are...

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

Excitement in the CROWD, looking up, yelling. Something's happening. CONKLIN is speaking into his mike even as the surge of the CROWD engulfs him...

CONKLIN

-- still sitting on the ledge but Bubber is motioning to someone in the window, he seems to be calling out to them and now... now he's holding up two fingers. He's signalling something, holding up two fingers.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A Ford station wagon speeds toward the city.

INT. MOVING FORD/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

EVELYN is at the wheel, JOEY beside her, the RADIO on...

EVELYN

If I gave you the impression I hated him I didn't mean to. I... I hate

the way he behaves... he's selfish  
and self-centered and cynical...

JOEY

What's "cynical"?

EVELYN

It's when you say, "Everybody else  
cheats why shouldn't I?"

(emotional)

But I don't -- I don't hate -- him.  
I... loved him once, Joey. Very  
much. I just got... tired. Maybe  
it wasn't all his fault. He...  
What's happening? Oh, my God...

EVELYN is reacting to the live radio broadcast, a sudden urgency  
in the REPORTER'S VOICE, CROWD SOUNDS...

RADIO

-- FIREMEN LEANING OUT THE WINDOW!  
THEY HAVE WHAT APPEAR TO BE LONG  
POLES AND THEY'RE REACHING THE POLES  
TOWARD THE TWO MEN ON THE LEDGE,  
JOHN BUBBER AND HIS COMPANION,  
BERNARD LAPLANTE!

EVELYN

What's happening? What are they  
doing...?

RADIO

(continuing)

LAPLANTE AND BUBBER ARE REACHING  
FOR THE POLES! THERE'S SOMETHING  
AT THE TIP OF THE POLES. THEY'RE  
TAKING SOMETHING FROM THE POLES!  
IT LOOKS LIKE -- IT LOOKS LIKE...  
I THINK IT'S... WAIT A MINUTE, I  
HAVE A REPORT HERE...

EVELYN and JOEY are breathless, mesmerized, waiting to hear...

RADIO

COFFEE! IT'S COFFEE! WE'RE TOLD  
THAT BUBBER AND LAPLANTE ASKED FOR  
TWO CUPS OF COFFEE.

EVELYN

(relief)

Coffee! Just like your father to  
request something totally

inappropriate. Thousands of people watching and he wants a cup of coffee.

(remembering)

I remember when you were in the hospital, when you had the appendicitis, your father stayed all night by your bed... and he hates hospitals, always thinks he's going to catch something... and then that time when your Uncle Howard got hurt... It seems like your father is at his best in a crisis... when things go really wrong or there's some kind of emergency, your father forgets to be Bernie LaPlante and acts sort of like... a human being.

There are tears in her eyes as she drives. The RADIO continues.

RADIO

We've learned that the devices the firemen used to "deliver" the coffee... I described them as "poles"... are, in fact, oversized tongs used by the hotel staff to change difficult-to-reach lightbulbs...

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

BERNIE and BUBBER are distant figures sitting on a ledge as if it was a park bench, sipping coffee and visibly negotiating as in a pantomime.

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL

Closer now, we can hear BERNIE and BUBBER wrapping up the deal.

BERNIE

You got it? Four year scholarship to a top college, plus Medical School or Law School or whatever Joey wants; pay off the \$2,500 to my attorney, plus pay her fee in full, plus my annual consulting fee...

BUBBER

And give a deposition to the jUdge.

BERNIE

(sudden thought)

Listen, John, you better double my attorney's fee. She's very inexperienced, but she done a great job for me. And give her your autograph. She thinks you're some kinda holy man.

BUBBER

On the deposition for the jUdge, Bernie... I mean there's no way I can promise anything. I can't tell him what we're up to...

BERNIE

You'll tell him I talked you out of jumping, right? Just keep me outta prison.

BUBBER

I... I'll do the best I can, Bernie.

BERNIE

That's good enough for me. You better take that "letter" there and get rid of it.

BERNIE indicates the envelope on the ledge and BUBBER slides the envelope into his pocket surreptitiously.

BERNIE and BUBBER are shaking hands. Then they start to get cautiously to their feet.

INT. DRAKE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

GALE is watching the action on a TV monitor, trying to figure out what's going on.

GALE'S P.O.V./TV MONITOR (EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT)

BERNIE and BUBBER are shaking hands. Then they start to get cautiously to their feet.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The CROWD reacts to the action on the ledge while TV REPORTERS including CONKLIN chatter into their mikes...

REPORTERS

They're getting to their feet.  
They're standing up!

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BERNIE is on his feet, unsteady, terrified of the drop.

BUBBER, much more graceful, not as wobbly, is speaking to him.

BUBBER

After what I did, how do you know  
I'll come through? How do you know  
you can trust me?

Shakily, BERNIE indicates the CROWD far below...

BERNIE

Cause, bottom line, John, I ain't  
no different than all those dumb  
assholes down there. We all trust  
you for Chrissake! We...

ANGLE ON THE DROP/BERNIE'S P.O.V.

Straight down, fifteen floors. A CROWD of "ants." Firetrucks,  
Police cars, TV vans.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

Suddenly BERNIE starts shaking like a leaf, trying to smear his  
body against the side of the building as he inches along the  
narrow ledge toward the window with BUBBER right behind him.

BERNIE

Th-this was really dumb, coming out  
here.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

As the CROWD looks up breathlessly, WE DISCOVER EVELYN pulling  
JOEY through the CROWD toward the hotel steps, their eyes on  
BERNIE and BUBBER.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

CHUCKY is cautiously moving under the neon sign on the roof,



first on all fours, then on his belly, moving toward the edge.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BUBBER is steering BERNIE toward the window.

BUBBER  
Slow and easy, Bernie.

BERNIE takes a cautious step. BUBBER tries to distract BERNIE from the drop by talking to him.

BUBBER  
What made you do it, Bernie? Go  
in the plane?

Another cautious step.

BERNIE  
I dunno. It was... an impulse.  
Me, wearing my good shoes.

BUBBER  
Same with me, pretending I was you.  
An impulse. Why not? I had this  
shoe.

BERNIE  
There was this kid there saying,  
"Go in there and save my father,  
mister." And I'm thinking about my  
boy Joey and this goddamn fireman  
my wife's seeing. It was like I was  
supposed to save myself.

BUBBER  
Yeah, and with me it was like I was  
supposed to pretend the shoe was  
mine.

BERNIE  
So now you gotta wear it, you poor  
bastard. Everyday you gotta be  
everybody's hero. People watching  
you all the time. Waiting for you  
to make... a slip. Slip up.

BERNIE glances down to indicate the CROWD and... takes a misstep.

EXT. DRAKE FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

A single audible gasp from the CROWD below as BERNIE, fifteen stories up, staggers.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BERNIE struggles to regain his balance.

BUBBER reaches out to help him.

BUBBER

Easy does it, partner. It's gonna be fine.

BUBBER'S hand remains on BERNIE'S shoulder.

ANGLE ON GALE

Watching from the window, holding her breath. Is it possible he's going to push BERNIE? What an opportunity!

GALE'S P.O.V.:

BUBBER'S hand on BERNIE'S shoulder.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Sweating, pushing his foot cautiously forward.

BUBBER'S VOICE (O.S.)

Don't look down. Keep your eyes...

BERNIE looks down!

BERNIE'S P.O.V. (EXT. P.O.V. OF CROWD - NIGHT)

AHHHHHHHHHH! He sees the tiny PEOPLE below and he STARTS TO FALL.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Wobbling unsteadily, arms flailing, falling.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

His eyes! He's looking down.

BUBBER'S P.O.V.:

He sees BERNIE clutching the ledge with one hand, looking up at him with pleading eyes as he dangles fifteen stories above the ground.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

It's slipping! He can't hold!

ANGLE ON BUBBER'S EYES!

staring at BERNIE'S hand. It must occur to him that life would be better without BERNIE.

ANGLE ON GALE

watching from the window, terrified.

EXT. DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

EVELYN and JOEY are looking up, love and fear in their eyes.

EVELYN

Oh my God! Bernie!

JOEY

Dad!

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

A FIREMAN is leaning out the window, reaching for BUBBER.

FIREMAN

Get in here, buddy. You can't help him.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

Slipping.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

BUBBER is looking into BERNIE'S eyes as BERNIE'S hand slips.

ANGLE ON THE FIREMAN

Leaning out the window, holding a rescue noose toward BUBBER.

FIREMAN

Don't reach out. He'll pull you  
over!

ANGLE ON BUBBER

BUBBER ignores the FIREMAN, his hand reaching out toward  
BERNIE.

CLOSE UP: HAND

reaching out to grab BERNIE.

INT. DEAKINS OFFICE - NIGHT

WALLACE screams at the TV set.

WALLACE  
NO! NEVER REACH OUT!

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON GALE

reacting, head out the window...

ANGLE ON FIREMAN

Reaching a NOOSE-DEVICE toward BUBBER.

FIREMAN  
Grab this! Now! Save yourself,  
you can't help him, he'll pull you  
over!

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The CROWD reacts.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

BUBBER is sitting, bracing himself.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

His hand slipping, his eyes full of fear.

ANGLE ON GALE

reacting.

ANGLE ON BERNIE'S HAND

losing his grip... when BUBBER'S HAND suddenly grabs his wrist.

ANGLE ON BERNIE

Looking up into BUBBER'S eyes. Their eyes lock.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

Holding BERNIE with great effort.

ANGLE ON THE FIREMAN

rescue noose in hand, crawling out the window.

FIREMAN

I'm gonna put this line around you.

BUBBER

(straining, indicates  
BERNIE)

Put...the...line...on...him.

BUBBER leans back against the building, struggling to keep BERNIE from plummeting fifteen stories.

FIREMAN

You can't hold him, he's gonna pull  
you off.

BUBBER

If he doesn't make it... I...  
don't... make it. Got it?

FIREMAN

(impressed)

Yessir! I got it! Loud and clear!

EXT. ROOF/DRAKE - NIGHT

CHUCKY has bellied out on the roof under the big neon sign and he's pointing his camera straight down at the drama below while he mutters under his breath...

CHUCKY

(his narrator voice)

Zooming in tighter yet, he captures  
the stark drama at great personal

risk.

(humbly responding to  
an imaginary  
interviewer)

"Was I afraid? Well, you don't  
think about yourself at moments like  
that. You think about the f-stop,  
you think about focus, you think  
about the 11 o'clock news, everybody  
counting on you."

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. HOTEL/STRAIGHT DOWN FROM ROOF - NIGHT)

"CHUCKY'S SHOT" is a CLOSE UP of BERNIE'S desperate face looking  
straight up, the enormous drop in the background.

A MONTAGE of different locations and TV sets featuring Chucky's  
CLOSE-UP of BERNIE.

INT. THE SHADOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

CHICK stares at the screen incredulously...

CHICK  
Bernie? Bernie?

INT. WINSTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The television set shows the drama in garish otherworldly colors  
as WINSTON mutters...

WINSTON  
LaPlante, you crazy bastard!

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A stunned DONNA is in bed with her BOYFRIEND, stares at the TV.

BOYFRIEND  
He's one of your clients?

INT. JUDGE GOINES BEDROOM - NIGHT

JUDGE GOINES frowns at the TV set, tries to place that name...

JUDGE GOINES  
LaPlante. Mmmmmmm. LaPlante.

VIDEO IMAGE (EXT. HOTEL/LOW ANGLE LOOKING UP AT BUBBER)

On the TV screen, a low shot looking up at BUBBER straining to hold on to BERNIE replaces "CHUCKY'S ANGLE."

MONTAGE

A SERIES OF TV SETS AND WATCHING FACES ALL OVER AMERICA, YOUNG, OLD, BLACK, WHITE, EVERYBODY IN AMERICA IS STARING AT THE SCREEN, MESMERIZED...

-HOME

-MOTEL ROOM

-CHEAP HOTEL LOBBY

-BAR

-JAIL CELL

EXT. LEDGE/HOTEL - NIGHT

TWO FIREMEN have almost secured a rope around BERNIE while BUBBER continues to hang on to BERNIE, speaking to him through gritted teeth.

BUBBER

Looking... good, partner. Hang in there.

BERNIE

(eye contact)

Y-you're a g-god damn saint, John.

INT. LIVING ROOM/DRAKE SUITE - LATER (NIGHT)

The suite is jammed with MEDIA PERSONNEL, many standing on sofas, tables, and chairs, all of them (and their cameras) focussed on JOHN BUBBER who's standing behind a bank of mikes making a "statement" that sounds sincere (perhaps because it is halting, awkward, painful...)

BUBBER

It was a moment of terrible weakness. I was feeling... I guess you'd call it "overwhelmed" by all the pressures and... the expectations of... fame... celebrity. I just didn't feel... adequate... to everybody's image of me... so... I took my despair out on that ledge with the intention of... jumping...

ANGLES ON REPORTERS, CAMERAMEN

a collective reaction, breathless silence.

ANGLE ON GALE

jammed among REPORTERS near the bedroom door, her eyes on BUBBER, frowning...

BUBBER

(continuing)

In doing that I endangered the lives of hardworking policemen and firemen who attempted to rescue me, not to mention the life of my dear friend, Bernard LaPlante...

BUBBER pauses and the room erupts in a chorus of REPORTERS' VOICES...

REPORTERS

Who is Bernard LaPlante? Did you know that LaPlante is a convicted criminal? What is your relationship with Bernard LaPlante...?

ANGLE ON GALE

glancing at the bedroom door guarded by a UNIFORMED COP.

ANGLE ON BUBBER

taking a deep breath, answering...

BUBBER

Bernard LaPlante is a close friend who came to me in a time of need... at considerable risk to himself.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

BUBBER is continuing on the TV set in the bedroom while BERNIE, all alone in the huge bedroom, stares at the TV.

ON THE TV (INT. SUITE/HOTEL - NIGHT)

BUBBER/TV

(continuing)

I guess Bernie's made some mistakes. I know I've made plenty myself. In fact I don't know



anyone who hasn't. I think Bernie wants to be a private person and I I'm going to respect that.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE

glances idly at the TV remote control... and pockets it almost automatically, still watching TV.

ON THE TV (INT. SUITE/HOTEL - NIGHT)

REPORTERS erupt again in a CACOPHONY of QUESTIONS.

REPORTERS/TV

What'd he say to you? What'd you talk about?

BUBBER/TV

Well, what he said to me was private. But he gave me confidence in myself. He told me I had a special opportunity, the chance to do some good in the world.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE

He raises his eyebrows. I said that? On impulse, he pulls the remote from his pocket to return it. He's setting it down when he turns suddenly to find he's not alone.

BERNIE

Hey! How'd you get in? Nobody's supposed to come in here!

GALE has just entered the room. Did she see his action?

GALE

I snuck in.

BERNIE

You media people, you think you can just go anywhere you want, spy on people.

GALE

Listen, Mister LaPlante... uh,  
Bernie... Who... are... you?

BERNIE

Who am I? You're asking me? You're  
the big expert for Chrissake! I'm  
what? The "Scumbag," right? The  
sleazebag something or other, the  
blackmailer, the...

GALE

(very intense)

Was it you? In the plane? Who  
saved my life?

BERNIE

(rattled)

Me? Listen, I don't give no  
interviews. That was John Bubber.  
You wanna ask me questions, you  
could talk to my attorney, Miss  
O'Day.

GALE

(imploring)

Mister LaPlante... Bernie... I...  
just for a few moments... I want  
to be a human being, not a reporter.  
I'm somebody who was going to die  
in a burning plane and I looked up,  
and some man came out of the smoke,  
his face smeared with mud, and soot  
and... and he... saved my... life.  
Off the record. Was it you? Why  
would you deny it if it was?  
Because you took my purse? Why?

BERNIE looks at GALE. She looks very human, very real, the  
reporter's veneer completely gone! He hesitates. How can he  
not tell the truth at a moment like this? He takes a deep  
breath...

BERNIE

Lady, do I look dumb enough to run  
into a burning plane and save a  
bunch of strangers? I ain't the  
type.

GALE stares at him. BERNIE tries to hold her look, daring her  
to doubt him. But he can't. His eyes "run." He's not a good  
liar this time. But just then CONKLIN'S VOICE on the TV saying  
Evelyn's name distracts BERNIE.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN is hovering over EVELYN and JOEY who are standing in a pool of TV lights while a CROWD presses close around them...

CONKLIN/TV

-- standing here in the lobby of the hotel with Evelyn LaPlante who says she is the wife of the mysterious Bernie LaPlante who was rescued from a fifteenth story ledge twenty minutes ago by John Bubber.

INT. BEDROOM/DRAKE SUITE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON BERNIE AND GALE

BERNIE

Oh shit! Ev! Joey! For Chrissake!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV

(continuing)

Mrs. LaPlante just told me that Bernard LaPlante spoke to her earlier today about "going away on a long trip" and wanting to say "goodbye" to his ten-year-old son, Joey.

EVELYN/TV

I didn't know Bernie'd try and jump off a building. I didn't understand. I just thought he was up to his old... I mean, I didn't even know...

BACK TO SCENE (INT. BEDROOM/HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE

TV! Christ Almighty! You cannot believe one word on TV! Not one goddamn word!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV

What kind of man is your ex-husband

Mrs. LaPlante?

EVELYN/TV

(bursting into sobs)

Bernie LaPlante is a wonderful  
decent human being. Deep down.  
You just have to know him...

ANGLE ON BERNIE (INT. BEDROOM/SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE

It's all bullshit! I swear to God!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV

I guess you love your father too,  
Joey?

ANGLE ON BERNIE (INT. BEDROOM/SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE

LEAVE MY BOY ALONE, YOU ASSHOLE!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

JOEY

Yeah, my dad's great. He took me  
to the zoo.

ANGLE ON BERNIE (INT. BEDROOM/SUITE - NIGHT)

BERNIE

(big love)

JOEY!

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. LOBBY/HOTEL - NIGHT)

CONKLIN/TV

How did you feel, Joey, seeing your  
father up there on that ledge?

JOEY/TV

I was scared but... but... but...

CONKLIN/TV

But what, son?

JOEY/TV

But I knew John Bubber would save  
him!

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

Chaos. BUBBER is trying to get to the bedroom door, the news conference over, but he's being mobbed by MEDIA PERSONNEL who are SCREAMING questions, scrambling over furniture, blocking his path, jamming CAMERAS and MIKES in his face...

VOICES

Were you afraid? Look this way,  
John. John, over here. Mister  
Bubber, do you believe in God?

BUBBER is struggling toward the bedroom door when he HEARS a VOICE cutting through the other VOICES.

GALE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mister Bubber! Mister Bubber!  
JOHN!

BUBBER turns, sees GALE through a "forest" of heads. Their eyes meet, she shouts a question.

GALE

John Bubber... how does a person  
know when he's a hero... and when  
he's not.

Their eyes are locked, as if they're the only two in this very crowded room. A private question in a public place. The room becomes quiet as everyone realizes BUBBER is going to respond. BUBBER speaks soberly, directly to GALE.

BUBBER

Well, like. I said, Miss... uh,  
Gale, I think we're all heroes.  
If you catch us at the right  
moment. We all have something  
noble and decent in us trying to  
get out... and we all have moments  
of weakness.

GALE'S eyes are locked with his as he continues...

INT. DEAKINS' OFFICE - NIGHT

DEAKINS and WALLACE are watching BUBBER continue on their monitor.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN (INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT)

BUBBER continues to CAMERA, GALE off screen.

BUBBER

It's the media that notices one moment and one person and not another. I'm just another human being like the next person, full of frailty with some courage and decency mixed in.

ANGLE ON DEAKINS (INT. DEAKINS OFFICE - NIGHT)

DEAKINS

What a crock of shit! Have you ever heard more bullshit and drivel from somebody who wasn't President?

WALLACE

It's not unthinkable.

DEAKINS

What?

WALLACE

The Presidency. The public loves him.

DEAKINS

For ten more minutes they love him, Wally. I'm sick of him and I'm always about ten minutes ahead of the public.

INT. MONKEY CAGE/ZOO - DAY

A "public" of MONKEYS clap hands, applauding a MONKEY who's making a "speech."

EXT. MONKEY CAGE/ZOO - DAY

BERNIE and JOEY appear, passing in front of the monkey cage, deep in conversation...

BERNIE

You remember where I said how I was gonna explain about life, buddy? Well, the thing about life is... it gets weird. See people are always gonna be talking to you

about "truth." Everybody always knows what the truth is, like it was toilet paper or something and they got a supply in the closet. But what you learn as you get older is, there ain't no truth. All there is is bullshit (pardon my vulgarity here). Layers of it. One layer of bullshit on top of another. So what you do in life, like when you get older, is you pick the layer of bullshit you prefer and that's your bullshit, so to speak. You got that?

JOEY

(totally confounded)

Uh, no.

BERNIE

Mmmmm. Well, it's complicated. Maybe when you're older. Anyhow, what I'm gonna tell you here is in strict confidence, okay? It don't go no further. What happened is, you remember that night I was gonna take you to the movies an' it was raining like a sonofabitch, (there's gonna be some vulgarities)..?

BERNIE puts an affectionate arm around JOEY'S shoulder as we NOTICE that BERNIE is wearing brand new shiny shoes very much like his former good shoes, but different colors. As he and JOEY walk off, BERNIE still talking, JOEY puts an arm around his father and an audience of MONKEYS fills the foreground. MONKEYS.

THE END