

THE DEAD MAN'S TALKING BLUES

by J.G. Edwards

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FADE IN:

EXT. MAYFIELD KANSAS - NIGHT (JULY 1941)

CHURCH TOWER P.O.V.: the glow of streetlamps outlines the trees and rooftops of the silent town.

A dog lies across a sidewalk, barely breathing. On front porches, old people slump in wicker chairs, or sprawl on the floor as if dropped in their tracks.

In the distance, a storm brews. Green lightning silhouettes the wall of grain silos at the edge of town. Horn-shaped streamers arc high into the sky from the shifting glow.

A FAR-OFF SIREN ECHOES through the streets. It climbs the scale to a high pitch, descends, and climbs again.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Venetian blinds open a crack. Anxious eyes peer out.

INT. RESIDENCE SECOND FLOOR - BEDROOM

A rosy-faced girl with golden blonde hair turns from the window. PATSY BLAUTER, 15, creeps to the door and slips out.

INT. RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR LANDING/STAIRS

Patsy stands at the top of the steps, looking down.

CANNED LAUGHTER RIPPLES from downstairs. A BIG CONSOLE RADIO CRACKLES WITH STATIC. It's a 1941 radio show.

Patsy yawns. She grips the balustrade for balance.

THE RADIO SHOW DISSOLVES IN WHITE NOISE, which dwindles to an OSCILLATING DRONE broken into morse-code-like beats.

Patsy rubs her eyes with the heel of one hand.

Descending the stairs, she watches her brown-and-white saddle shoes land on each next step, as if from a distance.

At the bottom, she moves doorway to doorway, checking into...

INT. HALLWAY/PARLOR

ON PARLOR: Patsy's parents, HARLEY and ORPHA, (both in their late 30s), are sacked out in an easy chair and on the floor.

Harley wears jumpers and has grizzled gray hair. Orpha has on a well-worn dressing gown.

A BIG CONSOLE RADIO DRONES OFF AND ON, vacuum tubes shining from the open back onto the wall behind.

Patsy leans against the door frame. She looks like she's about to fall asleep. A Voice comes from the kitchen:

ARTIA (O.S.)

Hurry! Or you won't be able to recall a thing.

Patsy shivers and crosses the hallway to...

INT. KITCHEN

A red-haired girl, maybe ten years old, sits at the table between the kitchen sink and icebox.

ARTIA TOTÁLIA wears a purple velvet gown patterned with red stars, and a ruby tiara. Hands folded in front of her, she sits primly upright as if balancing a book on her head.

Patsy's shoulders sag. She looks ready to drop.

ARTIA (CONT.)

Hurry up, Patsy! I saw you put it at the back of the breadbox. Hurry, or you'll become like one of them!

PATSY

Maybe it's best not to be aware.

ARTIA

If you're not aware, you won't know when he comes to town.

PATSY

When he who comes to what town?

ARTIA

The one who'll stop bad things from  
happening, and make everyone in  
Mayfield happy to be alive again.

Patsy lurches to a breadbox on the cabinet. She opens it and  
fetches out a small tin-foil wrapped packet.

Peeling back the foil reveals a wallet-sized brownie.

ARTIA (O.S.)

Be sure to eat the right amount.

PATSY

Sure sure.

Patsy breaks off maybe a third of the brownie, puts it in her  
mouth and chews. She wraps up what's left and puts it away.

PATSY (CONT.)

There. Happy?

But the kitchen is empty. Artia has left the building.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS RAILYARDS - TRAIN - DAY (SUNNY)

A SUPER CHIEF STREAMLINER pulls into the depot.

A PORTER places steps on the platform and helps down a MAN in  
Panama hat and boat shoes, carrying a valise.

ROYAL PRYCE, 25, appears well-fed and comfortable in a pin-  
stripe suit with waistcoat and watch fob. He has fair auburn  
hair and a steady, confident manner.

The Porter hauls down a big travelling trunk.

ROYAL

Take it into the station, my good  
fellow.

Royal is intercepted by a man in business suit and fedora:  
HOLLISTER ("HOKE") ABSHIRE. Royal exchanges tentative  
handshakes with the dried-out-looking church Deacon.

HOKE

I'm Deacon Abshire of Calvary  
Baptist. You the new Minister?

ROYAL

Doctor of Divinity Royal Pryce.

HOKE

Doctor. I trust you understand.  
Ours is not a wealthy congregation  
such as in your big Eastern cities.

ROYAL

I came on a call, not for wealth.

The Deacon eyes Royal skeptically as they continue inside.

EXT. TRAINYARD - FREIGHT TRAIN (MOVING) - DAY (SAME)

A stick figure of a man chucks a bundle from an open boxcar,  
then jumps off.

IGNACE PRYCE 23, is thin to emaciation. His skin is chalk  
pale. His hair -- deep red, coarse. He wears workmen's  
dungarees and an old slouch hat.

Ignace fixes the bundle to a staff, sets the staff on his  
shoulder, and starts across the tracks. His gait is shaky,  
like that of an alkie suffering from the jim-jams.

RAILROAD BULL

Hey you! Get over here!

A RAILROAD BULL'S WHISTLE SHRILLS. Ignace takes off running.

EXT/INT. STREET - SEDAN/PARSONAGE - DAY

A black Packard Club Sedan stops in front of a shabby two-  
story Vic. Behind the wheel, Hoke turns to Royal.

HOKE

I'm afraid the Parsonage is a bit  
of a fixer-upper.

Beyond a sagging picket fence, weeds choke the front yard.  
The Vic itself is shuttered, gray, in need of paint.

HOKE (CONT.)

Can you do carpentry, Doctor Pryce?

ROYAL

Certainly. Would I receive  
assistance in the endeavor?

HOKE

That remains to be seen. Your  
predecessors didn't stay long  
enough to address the issue.

EXT. MAIN STREET - PHARMACY/FOUNTAIN - DAY

Ignace tramples in. The COUNTER GIRL stares.

IGNACE

Do you have a pay telephone?

She points to a stall under a Bell Telephone sign in back.

Behind a counter, the PHARMACIST -- white tunic, Brylcreemed  
hair -- watches with a wary eye as Ignace enters the...

INT. PHONE BOOTH

Ignace searches through the phone book under the coin-op box.

INSERT - PHONE BOOK

"CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH/28 AVENUE C/MAYFIELD..."

BACK TO SCENE -

Ignace exits the booth. Tipping his hat, he hurries on.

EXT/INT. AVENUE C - CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - SEDAN - DAY

The Packard stops in front of a big stucco Meeting Hall lit  
by peaked stained glass windows. The hall forms the leg of  
an "L" with the redbrick Sunday School building behind it.

A brick planter displays raised brass script to the street:  
"CALVARY BAPTIST OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH."

HOKE

You see, Doctor, up until 'Thirty  
Nine, we had old Preacher Carmody.

With each (beat) Hoke takes a breath and seems to search for  
what he's going to say next. Somehow, he always finds it...:

HOKE (CONT.)

With us for nigh unto half a  
century. Started off strong, to  
hear my Father tell it --

(beat)

-- but ended up marking time, doing  
the same sermons again and again.

(beat)

We spoke to him. And he'd change a  
sentence here, a paragraph there --

(beat)

-- but not the substance. He was  
like a college professor doing the  
same lectures year after year.

(beat)

But we never graduate From the  
school of life, now do we? So his  
message became tiresome. And  
the tithes dried up.

(beat)

We have around four hundred  
members. You may see half that many  
on Easter Sunday.

(beat)

And if half them tithed the Bible  
ratio, you wouldn't have to fix up  
the Parsonage all by your lonesome.

ROYAL

Should I stay here until I get  
the Parsonage repaired?

HOKE

Oh no. I can put you up for now.

EXT. AVENUE C - CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

The Sedan turns the corner. Ignace emerges from a side street, crosses to the terraced front pavilion of the church and tries the cross-bar door latch. It's locked.

Ignace retreats down the steps and follows a narrow sidewalk around the Meeting Hall to...

EXT/INT. SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING - REAR

The screen of one low bulkhead window has a tattered edge.

Ignace reaches behind, undoes the hook latch, raises the window, tosses in his bundle, and follows it to the floor.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - SUNSET

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Royal looks up from folded hands.

MRS. ABSHIRE (OS)  
 Doctor Pryce? Supper's ready.

ROYAL  
 Thank you. I'll be down directly.

INT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - CELLAR - STORAGE ROOM - SUNSET

Ignace sits Indian-style against the wall. A handkerchief, spread on his lap, serves as a table. He bows his head.

IGNACE  
 For what's on the plate that we'll  
 shit out again tomorrow --

Picking inside an open tin with an unfolded pocket knife, he extracts a dripping vienna sausage and wolfs it down.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

The childless Abshires sit opposite each other.



Deacon Hoke, absent his fedora, has a bald head. MRS. ABSHIRE is a wistful blue-eyed blonde gone to fat.

On the side between them, Royal winds up his prayer.

ROYAL

In Christ Jesus' Name amen.

Hoke spoons out green beans and passes the dish to Royal.

HOKE

Think we oughta jump from the frying pan to the fire of this European War, Reverend?

ROYAL

I think we better stay out if we know what's good for us.

HOKE

Yes. I can't see us fighting on the same side as Red Communists.

ROYAL

At least Hitler lets the churches stay open.

HOKE

Exactly. There's hope for the Germans, given time.

A slightly wilted smile flickers across Mrs. Abshire's face.

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING - STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

A skeleton glows in the dark. Startled, Ignace retreats. He peeks around the doorframe.

A Christmas crêche, witch gowns, Peter Rabbit costumes, angel garb, and ceramic Jack-O'-Lanterns emerge from the shadows.

IGNACE

Living proof Christians is bigger heathens than the heathens.

INT. PANTRY

By moonlight through the high window, Ignace fetches down a box of crackers and a jug of grape juice from the cabinet.

IGNACE

The store-bought Bread and Blood.

INT. MEETING HALL

Ignace stands at the podium. He flicks on the reading lamp and finds a passage in the huge Bible open on the lectern.

IGNACE

"Take thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go to the Land of Moriah, there to offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show unto thee." And this is the contemptible horseshit of the Lord.

INT. BELL TOWER - ANTEROOM/STAIRS/BELL CHAMBER

Ignace climbs into a chimney space hung with ropes. Rungs lead up one wall. He takes hold and continues up into...

INT. BELFRY

An open cupola hung with cocked brass bells. He peers out the nearest arched opening.

ON TOWN: rooftops, backlit by yard and street lights, march away toward the wall of grain elevators at the edge of town.

IGNACE

Brother, how could you exile yourself to such a squalid junction? As punishment for what, and why?

INT/EXT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Royal sits on the edge of his bed, reading from the Bible.

From below comes the sound of ...:

GABRIEL HEATER (V.O., RADIO)

President Roosevelt won re-election promising to keep America out of the War. But with the fall of France and the approaching collapse of Soviet Russia, our nation must soon decide if it shall -- indeed, if it should -- enter a conflict in which victory may no longer be possible. This is Gabriel Heater on the Blue Network. Good night!

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC COMMENCES.

Royal shuts his Bible, removes his glasses and massages the bridge of his nose with thumb and forefinger.

He pulls the lamp chain. Outside lights make the darkness only partial.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Royal stirs. After a moment, he sits up in bed.

THE RADIO, STILL PLAYING BELOW, SURGES AND FADES several times before being replaced by a TELEGRAPHIC PULSING HUM.

Green wisps dance on the walls, reflections of lights in the windows. In pajamas, Royal goes to look out.

ON STREET: strobing floodlights might generate the manic shadowplay he sees below -- if those lights were green.

Royal closes the blinds and flicks on an end table lamp. He jumps into his trousers without removing his pajamas.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT (LATER)

THE CONSOLE RADIO HUMS OFF AND ON. DOT DASH DOT DOT DASH.

In an easy chair: the Deacon sprawls, out cold, a newspaper across his lap. His wife founders on the sofa, still clutching an embroidery ring and threaded needle.

Royal steps into the hall doorway from upstairs.

ROYAL (CONT.)

Deacon and Mizziz Abshire? Deacon?  
Please, sir. Wake up.

Royal steps close enough to push Hoke with a forefinger. The Deacon does not stir. Royal turns away.

INT. KITCHEN

THE CRANK OF THE OLD-FASHIONED PHONE RATTLES AND CLINKS as Royal spins it. He speaks into the mouthpiece on the wall.

ROYAL

Hello? Operator? Operator?

FROM EARPHONE: DOT DOT DASH DOT DOT DASH DASH DOT DOT.

Royal turns to face the flashing window.

EXT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD/STREET - NIGHT

Royal rushes out. The nearby grain elevators resemble a dam holding back a churning mass of bright sea-green water.

FAR-OFF SIRENS WAIL.

CLOSER AT HAND: huge chunks have been bitten out of the scene, leaving behind yawning black depths.

The effect is like that of a dioramic painting on which black ink has been hurled in random, Rorschach-like bursts.

A shard of house hangs over an open pit. A piece of car stands by itself in the driveway, somehow not falling over.

Trees sprout, in mid-air, from nothing at all. The roof and corner posts of a house enclose perfect darkness.

The gaps are fractal and shaped like the outlines of clouds. The smallest is perhaps ten feet across. The largest extends across the sky, opposite the glow behind the grain elevators.

Royal retreats back into the Abshire's undamaged house.

INT. CHURCH - SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING - NIGHT

On tiptoe, Ignace peers out the high bulkhead window.

IGNACE

What the pluperfect hell -?

EXT. CHURCH - STREET - NIGHT

Ignace comes around the building to face the green aura backlighting the grain elevators. The ink-splotch cut-outs which drove Royal off the street are no longer visible.

IGNACE

Don't that beat Billy Ned!

Ignace rushes to the intersection. Nearby, a Model T fights a tree: bulling forward, falling back, and pushing on again.

He rushes over to find a DRIVER slumped behind the wheel.

Ignace yanks open the door to haul the Driver out. The man is too heavy for him, and falls into the street.

Ignace climbs behind the wheel. He pops the clutch into park. The Model T settles back on its suspension.

He jumps out and nudges the man with the toe of his shoe.

IGNACE (CONT.)

See what drinking does for you?

Ignace flops the man over, and leans in, sniffing the air. He feels the man's neck then stands back, scowling in perplexity.

Ignace heads for the nearest house with lights on.

EXT/INT. HOUSE - ENCLOSED PORCH - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

Ignace RATTLES THE OUTER SCREEN DOOR.

IGNACE

Hey, people! There's a man needing medical attention out here.

ON DOOR GLASS: A WOMAN IN A NIGHTGOWN curls up on the floor of the outer vestibule, as if taking a long winter's nap.

IGNACE (CONT.)

What in blue tarnation is wrong  
with you people?

EXT/INT. STREET/CAR

Ignace drags the Driver out of the gutter.

IGNACE

If you can hear me, buddy, I'll  
return your ve-hicle when I find  
out what's going on in this crazy-  
ass town.

Ignace climbs behind the wheel and backs into the street.

EXT/INT. HIGHWAY/GRAIN ELEVATORS - CAR - NIGHT

The highway out of town makes an end run around the silos.  
The Model T shudders as Ignace shifts into third.

The wall of grain elevators cartwheels by, revealing a wide  
ravine further on, illuminated from below by a string of  
green lights. Here, the highway turns away.

He pulls the car off the road, kills the headlamps and  
engine, and exits the vehicle.

Ignace wriggles through the barb wire fence by the roadside,  
then sets out for the big shout of light from the ravine.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT

ON DEACON ABSHIRE. Water drops fleck his face. Bubbles form  
and burst in the corner of his mouth. But he does not stir.

ROYAL starts to fling the full glass of water but hesitates.

ROYAL

Deacon Abshire? Please, sir!

Royal yawns. He sets the glass aside and stumbles to the...

INT. STAIRWAY

Royal sinks to his knees. Head nodding, he shuts his eyes.

EXT. FAR SIDE OF GRAIN ELEVATORS - FIELD - NIGHT

Ignace is close enough to see the angled seam in the earth where emerald light blazes like green magma.

THE SIRENS START UP AGAIN. Louder than before, up and down the rollercoaster of sound. Balls of green flame shoot from underground to form arcs in the sky before fading.

Ignace hugs the ground. He clenches his eyes shut and begins breathing with slow regularity. He's asleep.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SUNRISE

Royal sits upright. He rushes out, in his pajamas.

INT. PARLOR - SUNRISE

No one is there.

ROYAL

Deacon Abshire? Hello?

HOKE (OS, UPSTAIRS)

We're up. Be down directly.

Royal frantically scratches the back of his head.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD KS - MEADOW - SUNRISE

Ignace finds his hat and wedges it on his head, then pushes himself to his feet. He looks to the highway.

A truck lumbers past the spot where the Model A was parked, the night before. It's now gone.

Frowning, Ignace sets out toward the dim ravine.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Hoke dishes up some grits, and passes the bowl to Royal.

ROYAL

I heard a commotion outside last night.

HOKE

Commotion? What sort of commotion?

ROYAL

Sirens. And I saw searchlights in the sky behind the grain elevators.

HOKE

Sure you weren't dreaming, after all our talk about Europe?

ROYAL

If so, I dreamed I came down and couldn't wake up either of you two.

HOKE

I woulda woke up. I'm a light sleeper. Hopefully my wife's cooking is gonna agree with you, preacher. That dream came entirely from indigestion.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD KS - RAVINE - DAY

Ignace makes his way to the bottom of the ravine.

The shallow side, toward town, is easily accessible. The steep side, now facing him, ends in a cliff face that overhangs in places.

A seam of green porcelain wends along the bottom of the ravine. Here and there, gaps open in the green fissure.

Ignace follows the ceramic vein to where it terminates, in an hole six feet across, under the jutting rock face.



ON CAVE: Emerald wisps play on the slick jade-green surface inside. There's a hint of brighter radiance further on.

He creeps to the cave mouth. In the distance, he hears a DULL CRASH and A MUFFLED MECHANICAL STUTTERING: "EH-EH-EH-"

EXT/INT. MAIN STREET - SEDAN - DAY

Deacon Abshire steers his '38 Studebaker onto the street by the grain elevators. Royal, in suit and tie, rides shotgun.

HOKE

You one of them guys who see things? Like a monk, or a mystic?

(beat)

Do you think Scripture ended with Revelations or can you get an update on it every once in a while?

ROYAL

What I saw last night had nothing to do with Scripture.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD KS - CAVE/TUNNEL - DAY

The green radiance is reflected in swimming spots on the walls, from a point around the bend.

Ignace creeps on. The ceiling above soars out of sight.

BOOMING CONCUSSIONS, like freight cars bumping together, march down the tunnel.

A commotion in the air sends Ignace's hat spinning away overhead. An unseen force grabs him. He claws at the slick porcelain wall as that force lifts him bodily off the floor.

Ignace shouts in terror as he drops... UPWARD....

INT/EXT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - OFFICES - CAR - DAY

Hoke's Studebaker stops at the side of the Meeting Hall.

HOKÉ

Go on in. The Church Secretary is  
always around this time of morning.

INT. CHURCH OFFICES

Royal ventures into a waiting room furnished with a couch,  
some padded chairs, and a desk where sits ...

POLLY GREENE: a black-haired, blue-eyed 30-something spinster  
with a spray of freckles across her oversize bent nose.

POLLY

Aren't you the early bird! I'm  
church secretary Polly Greene.  
You must be Reverend Pryce.

Polly stands. She wears a floral print dress whose tight  
belt accentuates a figure too voluptuous for a spinster.

POLLY (CONT.)

Allow me to show you your office.

She leads through a back vestibule to...

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE

Step down onto a spotless white carpet and there's a desk  
with an open Bible on top.

The end of the room offers a one-way view into the Meeting  
Hall. On an adjacent wall: a bronze crucifix big as a sword.  
Opposite: a bas-relief of the Last Supper.

ROYAL

It's quite -- ornate.

POLLY

That's what the last pastor said.  
He lasted two months.

ROYAL

What was his problem?

POLLY

I think it was nerves. But can you imagine?! Little old Kansas scaring off a supposed Man of God?

ROYAL

He found you folks spooky, eh?

POLLY

You can find me at my desk. If the phone rings three times without me picking up -- you come answer it.

ROYAL

Say, before you go. What was that fireworks display out North of town last night?

Polly studies him, a bright cold smile on her face.

POLLY

I must have slept through it. We Kansas folk do retire early.

INT. UNDERGROUND - CREVASSE - DAY/NIGHT/LIMBO TIME

Ignace crawls over a rumpled yellow surface like beaten gold. The blue ceiling reflects the floor, tinting his skin green.

AHEAD: the uneven plane he's snaking across narrows as the roof bows down closer on both sides. The incline steepens.

He slips forward and tries to scoot back, hands thrashing, but he's gone too far. He slides faster and faster...

INT. UNDERGROUND - CHUTE

Ignace bursts to the end of a narrow conduit.

A translucent film forms a tube around him. He pushes at the glassy surface. His mouth yawns in a soundless scream.

The tube, with Ignace inside, flies off into the darkness.

INT. CALVARY CHURCH - PASTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

At his desk, Royal reads from the Bible and sketches the three dimensions of a cube on a yellow pad.

VOICES come from outside.

HARLEY (O.S.)

Is the new boss in?

POLLY (O.S.)

What is that, Harley?

HARLEY (O.S.)

I found it in a store room.

POLLY (O.S.)

He's here. Go introduce yourself.

The door to the reception room opens. A man with a seamed complexion dark as an Indian's enters with Ignace's bundle under one arm. We've seen him before. It's Harley Blauter.

HARLEY

Excuse me, Reverend. I'm Harley Blauter, church custodian.

ROYAL

Doctor Royal Pryce.

Harley grasps Royal's extended hand and quickly lets go.

HARLEY

Brother Pryce. Say, I was making my rounds and I found this.

Harley holds up the bundle. Seeing it, Royal blanches.

ROYAL

You found it in here or outside?

HARLEY

In a cellar storage room. They also got into the juice and crackers. You know, for the Lord's Supper.

ROYAL

Any idea how they broke in?

HARLEY

Through a cellar window. I'll  
secure all the windows from now on.

ROYAL

That would seem advisable.

Harley bows out. Royal opens the bundle on his desk.

In the unknotted kerchief: a can and bottle opener, a couple  
of tins of vienna sausage, a bar of soap, and a wash cloth.

ROYAL

Ignace, Ignace. Will I never see  
the end of you?

INT. UNDERGROUND - RECEPTION CHAMBER - LIMBO TIME

The tube carrying Ignace pops into a hole in a wall that's  
covered with a grid of similar holes.

A steel TABLE WHOOSHES out, under Ignace's head. The tube  
extends, depositing him whole on the supporting gurney.

Ignace flops free as the clear shell withdraws around him.

Artia stands beside the gurney, dressed as before, with her  
hands folded primly on her tummy.

ARTIA

Do you need help getting down?

IGNACE

Where the tattooed blue hell am I?

A tread-driven contraption trundles up. It extends forklike  
arms, sandwiching the table, and lowers it to the floor.

Ignace crouches, staring. Glass panels array the walls on  
either side. At the far end stands a door.

ARTIA

I'm Artia Totália. And you're  
Ignace Pryce.

IGNACE

I need to get back upstairs.

ARTIA

Kansas isn't upstairs anymore. In  
fact, it's now on the other side  
of the world. Let me show you.

INT. UNDERGROUND - CONTROL ROOM

Artia leads Ignace onto a mezzanine above a cavernous room dominated by a horseshoe-shaped conference table.

She descends the terrace steps. Floats down actually. She shows none of the lurching gait of someone going down stairs.

ARTIA (CONT.)

I know everyone in Mayfield Kansas.  
But none of them have proven to be  
of much use to me. That's why I'm  
hoping to be able to use you and  
your brother you to fix this --

With a sweep of the hand, she lays out a virtual screen on the table top, and punches numbers onto the keyboard beneath.

The surrounding two-hundred-seventy degrees of wall lights up in a blinding full-color diorama of ...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - UKRAINIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (MOS)

Waves of soldiers in their thousands trample over a field of standing wheat. In turn, they're mowed down in rows by swastika-emblazoned tanks, firing machinegun and cannon.

INT. UNDERGROUND - CONTROL ROOM

Ignace dives to the floor and shields himself with his hands.

ARTIA

Don't worry. You're in no danger.

She extends her hand. Ignace tries to take it but his own hand passes right through. He draws back in terror.

IGNACE

Are you a ghost -?

ARTIA

I'm a holographic projection.

She gestures magically. The diorama above twists around itself. Ignace is yanked up, out of the frame again.

EXT. "BUSY BEE CAFÉ" - SIDEWALK/STREET - SEDAN - NOON

Hoke swaggers out, toothpick in his mouth and thumbs hooked in his belt. He eyes the street with satisfaction. Polly joins him. The two step to the curb.

HOKE

Where's Reverend Sunshine?

POLLY

Finishing his dessert.

HOKE

What did Harley bring for him to look at, this morning?

POLLY

Something wrapped in a bundle. When Pryce saw it, he looked like he was ready to pass out.

HOKE

Maybe it was a dead foundling.

Royal emerges. Hoke continues without dropping a stitch:

HOKE (CONT.)

No sir. Can't beat the tranquility of a small MidWestern town. But even in this corner of Paradise we have to endure the daily grind.

ROYAL

Deacon Abshire, I'd like to spend the rest of the day working to restore the parsonage.

HOKE

Well. Have you got any tools?

ROYAL

Those would have to be provided.

HOKE

I don't care much for the "have to be provided" part of that.

(beat)

Tell you what. You can acquire what you need at my store. Put it on the Calvary Church account and pay it back in installments. How's that?

Polly exchanges an amused glance with Hoke as Royal opens the car door for her.

EXT/INT. STREET - SEDAN/PARSONAGE - DAY

From the Studebaker's trunk, Royal fetches a carpenter's belt fitted with tools, plus a work tray. He slams the trunk.

HOKE

Now you can build a regular old hotel for yourself!

Laughing at his own joke, Hoke drives away.

EXT/INT. THE PARSONAGE

THE FRONT DOOR.

Royal drapes the belt on his shoulder and fits a skeleton key to the lock. The door opens on...

THE FRONT HALLWAY.

Crisscrossed by dusty mouse trails. He goes on, checking...



## THE LIVING ROOM.

Furniture hidden under dropcloths. Window blinds festooned with tattered spiderwebs. Royal continues upstairs to...

## THE SECOND FLOOR LANDING.

The first door at hand opens on a room narrowed to an aisle by stacked crates. He tries the next door. It does not open.

He releases the knob latch with the skeleton key, and turns the door wide upon...

## THE BEDROOM.

A chapel whose stained glass window, opposite, illuminates:

A table set up as an altar, with an open Bible on it, a bas-relief crucifix on the wall, wash pan on the floor, and a bunk bed set against the wall across from the crucifix.

Royal sits on the bed, pokes up dust from the cover and rubs it between his fingers with a kind of happy astonishment.

## EXT. UKRAINIAN COUNTRYSIDE - WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Ignace and Artia stand on a field of beaten-down wheat, watching Russian soldiers fall, not a quarter mile away.

An 88 shell spins by, on its flat trajectory. Ignace ducks and stays down. Artia smiles with shy serenity at him.

ARTIA

We can watch the most awful things  
with complete impunity.

IGNACE

Maybe you can. I ain't no holo-  
whattayacallit.

ARTIA

Pick up a stalk of wheat. I'm  
serious. Fetch a stalk of wheat.

Ignace grasps a flattened sheaf. It doesn't move.

ARTIA (CONT.)

We're in an avoidance bubble provided by what's called an "elusion field device." Nothing can touch you unless you let it, so as to have an effect on this side.

He tries to dig his fingers in. He can't budge the stalks.

ARTIA (CONT.)

"And why would I want to have an effect here?" you ask.

Nazi tanks bull forward, scattering a few surviving Russians.

Germans rise from concealment and follow the tanks, putting down the wounded with bayonets and rifle shots.

IGNACE

Let's get the hell out of here.

The German tanks loom larger and larger. They're submerged in the shadow of the nearest one.

ARTIA

We want to change things in this time and place so they're different in a future time and place. And I'd like an answer. Will you join us in changing history for the better?

IGNACE

Yes! Please! This is bad for my --

INT. UNDERGROUND - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

IGNACE (CONT.)

-- nerves --

Ignace falls out of the diorama, in slo-mo, to a platform in front of the conference table.

Artia floats down after him.

ARTIA

You should see what we had to put  
up with. Unstoppable plagues.  
Atomic wars. Reciprocal genocide.  
But we've made things better, a  
little at a time.

IGNACE

"Made things better" -- for who?

ARTIA

For people where I come from,  
silly. In the Twenty-second  
Century.

EXT/INT. ABSHIRES' HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - SUNSET

Royal scales the stoop and arrives at the front door out of  
breath. He raps, a little too quietly, at the screen.

The interior door is open. Voices come from deeper inside:

MRS. ABSHIRE (O.S.)

You shouldn't speculate about a  
matter as serious as that.

HOKE (O.S.)

What else wrapped in a bundle would  
make him too nervous to talk?

MRS. ABSHIRE (O.S.)

Doesn't make sense. If Harley found  
a dead child, he'd let us know.

HOKE (O.S.)

Harley's a poor man. Ten dollars  
and he'd zip his lip. But why would  
Pryce be so determined to hide a  
dead infant?

Ignace raps hard enough at the screen to shut them up. Mrs.  
Abshire appears. She puts her hand over her mouth.

ROYAL

I found a fully appointed room at  
the Parsonage, where I can stay.

Hoke appears behind her, flapping an open newspaper.

HOKE

Come in! You're our guest.

ROYAL

That's all right. I have no further  
reason to stay here.

MRS. ABSHIRE

Have dinner with us first. And we'd  
be honored if you'd have every meal  
here, until you're better situated.

ROYAL

Certainly. I'll contribute half  
a dollar for my food, each visit.

MRS. ABSHIRE

You don't have to pay. Please. It's  
the least we can do.

HOKE

Don't refuse honest money, wife.

MRS. ABSHIRE

Stop it. You and your money. We'll  
take no payment for his meals.

Swallowing a bitter grimace, Royal enters and heads upstairs.  
Mrs. Abshire makes a face and turns away.

EXT/INT. PARSONAGE/SEDAN - NIGHT

The Studebaker stops in front of the dark Parsonage.

HOKE

You got a light, so you don't break  
your neck in the dark?

ROYAL

I'll borrow some candles from  
the church.

Hoke fetches a flashlight from the glove compartment.

HOKE

Use this. Go ahead. Take your  
suitcase in. I'll give you a ride  
to the church, after.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD KS - RAVINE/FIELD/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The ravine spits ghostly meteors that fade skyward. A Man in  
an overcoat, carrying a bag, moves against the light.

REVERSE SHOT: the Man walks away from us, his shadow from the  
green radiance behind stretching off into the darkness.

EXT/INT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - OFFICES/SEDAN - NIGHT

The Studebaker pulls in next to the church office building.

HOKE

Call me when you're done.

ROYAL

It'll be too late. I'll walk back.

HOKE

Reverend Pryce. Are you ordinarily  
this mysterious in your activities?

Royal climbs out. He looks up the street, where the green  
radiance arches above the grain elevators. Hoke peers over  
the steering wheel with mild interest.

HOKE (CONT.)

Those Northern Lights are a sight.

ROYAL

Do Northern Lights usually come  
with sirens wailing?

HOKE

That was a train passing through.

ROYAL

Must have been some train. With a locomotive big as a small mountain.

HOKE

You're an imaginative fellow Pryce.

Hoke drives on. Royal continues into the building.

INT. CHURCH OFFICES - BASEMENT - STORAGE ROOM - MIDNIGHT

With Ignace's bundle in his lap, Royal sits on a wooden chair behind a string of racked-up choir robes, snoring.

Flashes in the bulkhead window provide fitful illumination. The window shakes as a CONCUSSION echoes in from outside.

A shadow fills the doorway. It's Ignace, in trenchcoat and walking boots, with a bag slung under his arm. He steals over and parts the robes in the corner.

Royal sleeps there, holding the flashlight atop the bundle Ignace left behind.

Without further ado, Ignace grabs the flashlight and bundle.

Royal falls to the floor. Ignace glares the flashlight in his face.

ROYAL

Get that out of my eyes.

Royal sits with a groan. Ignace places the flashlight on a high window ledge to illuminate them both. He unzips the bag and brings out a small iPhone-like communications device.

IGNACE

The wonders I've seen today,  
brother. Marvels and visions far  
surpassing any I ever heard from  
that grim black book of yours.

ROYAL

Not interested. I've found a place that will provide me with a Godly future. You may return to whatever den of iniquity you came from.

IGNACE

What about the fun we was going to have after all them years under the Old Man's thumb, on our knees praying from morning to night?

ROYAL

You dishonor our parents' memory in the name of having "fun?"

IGNACE

You blame me for them getting typhoid. Maybe they shoulda washed their hands more.

Royal raises a fist to strike Ignace, but he's out of reach.

IGNACE (CONT.)

See what's in my hand now?

Ignace turns the comm. device in the flashlight glow.

IGNACE (CONT.)

An Alladin's lamp. Lo and behold!

Ignace rubs the device with one hand, while clicking a power switch on a console underneath it.

A strange figure magically materializes between them. Artia Totália smiles benevolently. Royal grinds his eyes with his knuckles, and looks again.

ARTIA

Doctor Pryce. You Christians dote so much on the end of the world. What if someone showed you how to bring about happiness if not Heaven on Earth, without ending anything?

ROYAL

Who are you?

ARTIA

My name is Artia Totalia. And you're Doctor Royal Pryce.

ROYAL

Are you an angel?

ARTIA

Sort of. I come from an unhappy time and place directly descended from your own. But I'd like to make things a little less sad for all of us. Let me show you --

She whirls her arm around. From her fingertips, a swirling diorama spreads through the darkness.

Royal watches, aghast. He sees...

TO PROJECTION: fallen cities littered with broken buildings and heaps of skeletons.

ARTIA (V.O.)

This is the Twenty-Second Century, last stop in a downward spiral that began with the Victory of the so-called Axis Powers in your own time.

A human wreck shambles on crutches into the camera. This "survivor" has a skull-like face pitted with scars and fringed with white hair. Its eyes are sunken, dead.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

And this is the face of humanity circa A.D. Twenty One Ten. Ten to twenty million such creatures now endure lives of starvation and misery that wild animals would have once found intolerable.



EXT. PLANET EARTH (FROM A HUNDRED THOUSAND MILES)

A gray and black half-Earth hangs in the void: the ashy remains of the blue and white world that was.

ARTIA (V.O., CONT.)

The World Revolution of Twenty One  
oh One came too late to reverse the  
damage of two centuries of decadent  
Hitlerism.

INT. RESEARCH INSTALLATION - EXPERIMENTAL DEVICE - DAY

At the far end of a huge chamber turns a great shiny sphere with fins looped around it. Tesla lightning leaps from the surface of the sphere to coils looping down from above.

ARTIA (V.O., CONT.)

Yet just when Humanity seemed  
doomed, breakthroughs in electronic  
computing provided one last hope.

A plexiglass cylinder connects the ball to the floor. Inside squats a reclining jump seat a lot like a dentist's chair.

Technicians in white bring in a silver-clad Man. They place him in the chair and strap him down, from forehead to feet.

ARTIA (V.O., CONT.)

"Artia" -- short for Artificial  
Intelligence Assemblage -- with an  
I.Q. a million million times that  
of an average human, cracked the  
secret of limited time travel into  
the past.

The technicians retreat from the containment.

The ball turns faster and faster. Crackling veins of lightning kick it to a blinding velocity.

Then it stops. In the chamber, the chair remains. But the Man who was in it... is gone.

END PROJECTION. Artia turns to Ignace. Her face is grave.

ARTIA

Problem is, we need to go further back than Nineteen-forty-one to spark changes that happen not a hundred fifty years in the future but right now: a Revolution in America as well as Russia.

ROYAL

You mean, Communism in America?

ARTIA

It's the only sure way to recover the future of the human race. Every other path ends in disaster.

IGNACE

Think what she's offering, Royal.

ROYAL

Jesus was offered the same, after spending forty days and nights in the wilderness. By the Devil.

IGNACE

Put my brother on that battlefield. Then hear what he has to say.

ROYAL

I'll take that as my cue to leave.

Royal pushes past the clothes rack, bypassing his brother. Ignace steps out and fixes him in the flashlight beam.

IGNACE

She needs both of us. As a team.

Ignace pulls out another, wafer-shaped mechanism. He points it in Royal's direction and presses a clicker.

Wires jump the space between Ignace and his brother. Royal turns, flailing. Ignace presses a button.

Royal stiffens and falls: first historical victim of a taser.

ARTIA

He needs to come of his own accord.  
Try the other way we discussed.

Artia fades into thin air.

Returning to the bag, Ignace brings up a syringe the size of a veterinary hypodermic. He carries it to Royal and kneels on his brother's shoulders, pressing his arms to the floor.

IGNACE

This capsule will keep you aware of every little change that happens, as it happens -- until you see fit to take a walk out North of town to where the future has broken through to our time. Go there and I'll welcome you to a new past and fantastic tomorrow for both of us.

Ignace drives the hypodermic into the nape of Royal's neck.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS - STREETS/SIDEWALK - NIGHT (LATER)

Royal stumbles streetlight to streetlight. The green aura surges from behind the grain elevators high into the sky.

Inkblots large and small invade the scene, remove houses and vehicles, and drop new depths into lawns and the street.

Royal runs on, detouring around a hole in the roadway.

EXT. PARSONAGE - NIGHT

Patsy sits with her elbows on her knees and her hands propping her chin, in the shadow at the top of the stoop.

Royal emerges from the shadows and almost falls over her.

ROYAL

What are you doing there?

PATSY

Waiting for you. I'm Patsy. Harley  
Blauter's daughter.

ROYAL

Am I going mad, or is everything  
changing around us as we speak?

PATSY

Don't you want to know why we're  
not knocked out like the rest?

(beat)

She wants to make use of us.

ROYAL

You mean Artia? That one has red  
revolution in mind for this  
country.

PATSY

Only if we let it happen like that.

ROYAL

So what are you proposing?

Patsy grins with toothy mischief.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD KS - UNDERGROUND - CHUTE - NIGHT

Ignace emerges -- POP! -- at the end of a narrow conduit.

A translucent film forms a tube around him. The tube, with  
Ignace inside, flies off into the darkness.

INT. RESEARCH INSTALLATION - EXPERIMENTAL DEVICE - NIGHT

Ignace enters the chamber under the globe. He now wears a  
silver jumpsuit and skullcap.

Artia follows him in. The entry portal seals itself shut.

ARTIA

Get in. Stretch out.

He lowers himself between the padded arms of the seat.

ARTIA (CONT.)

Secure your ankles and legs.

Ignace straps his legs down. He tests the bond. It holds.

Artia gestures. Other loose bands, activated by sewn-in magnetic wires, secure his chest, arms, and forehead.

ARTIA

You'll find a bag containing a change of clothes, money, birth certificate, and detailed plan of action, at Union Station in Washington DC.

IGNACE

Washington DC? How do I get there?

ARTIA

When you fall through time, the machine can alter your motion with reference to that of the Earth. Backtracking eight years, we'll put you just where we want you.

INT. WASHINGTON DC UNION STATION - CLOSET - NIGHT (1933)

A SUDDEN BUZZING SHUFFLE. Racked uniforms, in the half-light provided by a door hanging ajar, lift their cloth arms.

IGNACE (V.O.)

Why not send back ten or fifteen others, along with me?

ARTIA (V.O.)

We only have enough power to transfer and maintain a very few of you.

A MAN abruptly fills one of the uniforms. He falls off the rack and rolls out into...

INT. PORTERS' VESTRY

It's a clean tile room full of lockers and changing benches.

Ignace tears the silver skullcap off his head and crams it in a pocket of his porter's jacket.

A PORTER spruces his hair in a mirror set in an open locker door. His eyes widen as Ignace steps into the reflection.

The Porter whirls around. Ignace displays a key.

IGNACE

Where's locker forty-nine B?

PORTER

Nobody ever use that locker.

Ignace follows the Porter's stare. He goes to locker 49-b, releases the padlock, and drags out a long floppy bag.

IGNACE

Someone left this for me.

The Porter stops buttoning his shirt. He swaggers over.

PORTER

Yeah? Lemme see that.

Ignace scoops an object from his pocket, switches it open, and faces the Porter with a shiny blade. All in one motion.

The Porter steps aside. Ignace skedaddles.

EXT. UNION STATION - STAIRS/MAIN CONCOURSE

Ignace rushes up the NEGRO EMPLOYEES ONLY stairs and out into the multitude thronging the station concourse.

He dwindles slowly amid the crowds going this way and that.

IGNACE (V.O.)

Will I ever be able to return  
to my own time?

ARTIA (V.O.)

When conditions are right, you'll  
come back the same way you went.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS BLAUTER HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT (1941)

Patsy crosses to the garage. Royal hesitatingly follows.

PATSY

Raise the garage door. We'll take  
my Dad's Plymouth.

ROYAL

Do you drive?

PATSY

Of course I drive.

Patsy enters through the side. Royal hoists the garage door.

EXT/INT. MAYFIELD KS STREETS - CAR - NIGHT

Patsy speeds away from the Parsonage.

ROYAL

Have you been out North of town?

PATSY

Yes. When I was there, she gave me  
a brownie that kept me aware of  
what others here forgot.

ROYAL

Like that capsule my brother  
injected into my neck.

Patsy turns at the grain elevators and makes for the highway.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD KS - HIGHWAY/FIELD - Night

The Plymouth sits nearby, off the road. Royal holds the wire  
apart for Patsy to climb through, then follows her.

They set out for the green-glowing cleft in the landscape.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

TO THE RIGHT: the ravine winds on like a seam of green lava for a half mile or so until going out of sight around a bend.

TO THE LEFT: the ravine terminates in a hole in the jutting rock face. There's a hint of brighter light further inside.

Royal creeps to the cave mouth. Out of the distance, SIRENS WAIL. Patsy steals up behind, and pushes him.

Royal stumbles, flailing, into the cave.

INT. CAVE/TUNNEL

SIRENS BLARE ALL AROUND, LIKE MECHANICAL BANSHEES. Something seizes Royal and Patsy. They fall. UP.

INT. CREVASSE

Royal drags Patsy downward by the arm. The incline steepens. They slip forward faster and faster. Patsy shuts her eyes...

INT. UNDERGROUND - CHUTE

Royal and Patsy pile out at the end of a narrow conduit. A clear film forms a tube around both of them, side by side.

INT. UNDERGROUND - RECEPTION CHAMBER - Day

The tube pops into a hole in the wall. It sets Royal and Patsy down next to each other, and withdraws.

ARTIA

So. It's you two finally.

Artia Totália stands before them. Patsy tries to climb down and falls to the floor. Royal jumps off and helps her up.

PATSY

Hello, Artia.

ARTIA

Doctor Pryce. Have you experienced what is called a change of heart?



ROYAL

I think you need more than my  
brother's help for a good outcome.

INT. RESEARCH INSTALLATION - DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Royal and Patsy change clothes behind different screens.

Royal pulls the long sleeves of his silver jump suit tight,  
and thrusts his head into the skullcap. He gathers his  
clothes and exits to find Patsy also in silver, waiting.

Artia glides by and motions for them to follow.

INT. RESEARCH INSTALLATION - EXPERIMENTAL DEVICE - DAY

Artia leads Royal and Patsy into the room under the globe.

ARTIA

One at a time. Patsy first.

Patsy lowers herself into the dentist's-chair-like jump seat.  
Artia gestures. The loose bands secure her from top to toe.

ROYAL

Why are we going back to Nineteen  
thirty-five instead of where you  
first sent my brother, in Nineteen  
thirty-three?

ARTIA

Nineteen thirty-five is when the  
changes your brother make start  
to snowball. I'll guide you as to  
making any adjustments from there.

ROYAL

Where will we meet him?

ARTIA

In his bivouac at Wimpie Party  
Headquarters in Philadelphia.

She notices Royal's look of confusion, and explains:

ARTIA (CONT.)  
"Wimpies" are the Wobblie  
International Party of the Masses.  
The main revolutionary organization  
in the United states.

She hands him a small silver module.

ARTIA (CONT.)  
Click on that, and it provides a  
close elusion field all around you.

PATSY  
Why don't I have one?

ARTIA  
There are only three. I keep one  
for myself.

ROYAL  
Ignace has one of these doohickies?

ARTIA  
He doesn't keep it close by. He's  
gotten quite confident in himself.  
Are you ready, now?

PATSY  
See you later, alligator.  
(uncomprehending beat)  
It's an expression. You're supposed  
to say, Not too soon, baboon.

ROYAL  
That one must come after my time.

EXT. EXPERIMENTAL DEVICE

All trussed up, Patsy waves goodbye with an opening-and-closing scrunch of the fingers of one hand.

The globe above the jump room turns faster and faster. Lightning bolts kick it to blinding speed. There's a final dazzle of white light.

When spots stop dancing before our eyes, Patsy is no longer present. Artia says to Royal:

ARTIA

It's your turn, now.

INT. PHILIDELPHIA PA WIMPIE H.Q. - PENTHOUSE - NIGHT (1935)

It's a split-level caveman-modern vault with a swimming-pool-like pit in the middle, accessed by stairs.

The penthouse is dark, lit by reflected gleams from ...

A screen set up at one end of the pit. A MOVIE PROJECTOR WHIRS, throwing images in a blue-white cone onto...

ONSCREEN: PEOPLE BY THE THOUSAND ram their arms out straight, but palms-up, so there's a giving/taking motif going on, as opposed to the raw aggression of a Nazi salute.

THE SCENE CUTS between adoring crowds and Ignace high atop a streamlined podium, saluting in response with an appreciative grin.

IGNACE lounges in the pit, drinking champagne as he watches the film with gleeful relish.

A GLASS DOOR SLIDES ASIDE. The curtains above the pit bulge. Royal emerges to stand overlooking the room.

IGNACE

Well I'll be goddamned.

THE PROJECTIONIST -- a big man in a red uniform -- aims a sidearm at Royal. Ignace motions for him to hang fire.

ROYAL

You've done well for yourself.

Royal descends the stairs. Ignace stands in the projector light. He looks heavier, healthier, and infinitely more confident: the ultimate beneficiary of Power Therapy.

Ignace motions for the Projectionist to lower his weapon.

IGNACE

I've done well for everybody. But war is coming. I'll lead America first to victory over Fascism, then to domination of the whole world. And be known henceforth as the man who brought Heaven down to earth, where it belongs.

ROYAL

Artia wants me to be your advisor.

IGNACE

She does, does she? What happened to you playing the Christlike role of walking away from such proposals?

ROYAL

I found that approach inadequate. Where's Patsy?

IGNACE

Patsy?

ROYAL

The Blauter girl was supposed to have arrived before me.

IGNACE

I don't know anything about that.

ROYAL

What's really happening, Ignace?

IGNACE

I have no idea what you mean. Maybe you should go back and consult with Artia. Everything's fine at this end. We're going to save the world and make it a saner and happier place in the bargain.

"Psst" comes from somewhere up above. Royal looks back to see...

The silver crest of Patsy's skullcap, peeking around the corner of the solid stairway banister. Her finger crooks into view, signaling him to return.

Royal faces his brother.

ROYAL

All right. I'll go back and see what Artia has to say.

Ignace strolls forward to within an arm's length of Royal.

IGNACE

Now I'm starting to think you have got something to hide.

The Projectionist aims his pistol again.

IGNACE (CONT.)

Summon the Praetorian Guard.

With one hand, the Projectionist maintains his aim. With the other, he presses a button on the console of an intercom on the wall.

FROM OUTSIDE: THE TROMP OF HEAVY BOOTS APPROACHES.

Royal brings up the elusion device and clicks it on.

ROYAL

I'll get back to you directly.

He turns and rushes up the stairs.

The lights come up. A door bursts open. Red-clad Praetorian Guards rush in. Ignace points to Royal.

IGNACE

Stop him at all costs!

Royal bolts back the way he came.

EXT. PENTHOUSE - BALCONY TERRACE

Royal breaks out to find Patsy cowering under the balcony balustrade. He reaches for her, and she bounces away.

ROYAL

Dammit!

He switches off the elusion device, sweeps Patsy up and makes a beeline for a concrete guardhouse overlooking the terrace. He reaches the door and flings it open just as...

The Praetorians erupt onto the scene.

Royal turns, flicks on the elusion device, and waves his arms to cover Patsy as she disappears into the guardhouse.

THE GUARDS UNLEASH A VOLLEY OF PISTOL FIRE in his direction. THE ROUNDS CHINK harmlessly off the elusion field.

Royal dives into...

INT. GUARDHOUSE

He never hits the floor. Instead, he swirls around himself, like a cloth being wrung dry, generating a bright blue glare.

When the glare fades, the Praetorians stand in the doorway, aiming their guns every which way. Royal has disappeared.

INT. RESEARCH INSTALLATION - EXPERIMENTAL DEVICE - DAY (1941)

First Patsy, then Royal tumble into the chamber under the spinning globe. They sprawl together, breathing heavily.

The door to the outer room opens. Artia stands watching.

ROYAL

Have you got any coffee?

INT. RESEARCH INSTALLATION - CONTROL ROOM

Artia leads them onto the mezzanine overlooking the big room.

ROYAL

It didn't work out like we hoped.

Patsy's face crumples. Tears run down her cheeks.

PATSY

I didn't have one of them elusion doohickies, so I waited for Brother Pryce to arrive. And I overheard his brother talking to these bad bad men about killing hundreds of thousands of people. Turning New York City and Los Angeles into big concentration camps. Starting wars against everyone who won't accept their rule. It was horrible!

Artia points to a door behind the row of control booths.

ARTIA

We should have coffee in there.  
I'll take care of Patsy.

PATSY

No! Don't leave me alone with her.

ARTIA

Just give us a minute.

Royal ducks into the commissary. Artia turns to Patsy.

A beam of blue light passes from her eyes into Patsy's. The Janitor's daughter calms visibly, as the blue light subsides.

INT. RESEARCH INSTALLATION - CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Royal and Patsy sit with coffee, side by side at the conference table. Artia, standing behind them, waves an arm.

A DIORAMA BLAZES TO 270 DEGREES OF LIFE, all around them.

ONSCREEN: STALIN'S ORGAN-PIPES PLAY THEIR WHOOSHING, ZINGING MUSIC. German troops flee in manic panic as gigantic explosions march in on them.

BEHIND THE MARCHING EXPLOSIONS: swarms of low-slung, sleek Russian tanks grind forward, sweeping all before them.

ARTIA (V.O.)

The Soviet Union will win the war  
for the Revolutionary Front Nations  
but emerge too damaged from the  
conflict to dominate the world.  
With Stalin's death in Nineteen  
Fifty-three and the murder of Mao  
Tse-Tung by agents of the American  
K.C.I.A., only one victorious  
wartime leader will remain.

ONSCREEN: phalanxes of regimented red-, blue-, and black-clad  
Citizens gather under a podium like a streamlined rocket.

Wearing red with blue and black trim, Ignace climbs the  
podium. At the top he turns to survey his audience.

He raises his arm, as in a Hitler salute, but with the palm  
up, as if giving or taking away something.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

Your brother's rise to Supreme  
Global Leadership will result in  
the outlawing of all religions.

The throng lifts their own arms, palm-up, with shouts of joy.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

Belief in God, acknowledged or not,  
will become punishable by death.

ROYAL (V.O.)

"Belief in God, acknowledged or  
not?"

ARTIA (V.O.)

That means, as one writer in  
another Nineteen Forty-eight put  
it, the Thought Police.

ROYAL (V.O.)

And all of this happens -- just  
fifteen years from now?



ARTIA (V.O.)

History moves fast as a cat when  
power is concentrated in one man.  
But soon after that --

ONSCREEN: smoke boils over one MidEastern city after another.  
Cars and businesses burn. People run amok in the streets.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

Rebellion breaks out in the Islamic  
world. It spreads to --

ONSCREEN: Rome burns. And Paris.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

Catholic European countries. Then --

ONSCREEN: Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Rio -- up in flames.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

South America.

ONSCREEN: masses of red-clad police roll in, scattering  
protestors, leaving behind heaps of dead in the ruins.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

Rebellions, of course, can be put  
down. But police can't stop a  
rebellion from going underground.

ONSCREEN: armored vehicles flying "G-D OVER MAN" flags roll  
through the debris of Washington D.C. Moscow. And Tokyo.

ARTIA (V.O. CONT.)

By the early Sixties, the rebels  
will win. Your brother's inevitable  
response --

ONSCREEN: Atomic bombs explode over New York City.  
Leningrad. Beijing. And London.

TO SCENE: gigantic mushroom clouds freeze all around them.

ARTIA

Thus the world ends even sooner --  
by Nineteen-seventy rather than in  
the Twenty-first Century.

ROYAL

So how come you're still here?

ARTIA

I'm separated from space-time by  
a non-causal bubble. If I leave it,  
I'll cease to exist. So I have to  
make use of instrumentalities like  
yourself.

ROYAL

What is it that you want from me,  
as an instrumentality?

ARTIA

You're familiar with the God thing.  
You can reconcile your brother with  
those who will otherwise turn  
against his World Government.

ROYAL

How is that even possible?  
Everything we do seems to make  
things that much worse!

ARTIA

The closer we get to a perfect  
solution, the worse the temporary  
damage may appear.

Patsy picks up her cup. Her hands shake so badly that most  
of the coffee spills before the cup reaches her mouth.

PATSY

May I please be excused now?

ROYAL

Next time, we may end the world  
before we even realize it.

ARTIA

No. That's impossible. I'll give you some time to think about it. But be aware that the longer we leave your brother in place, the more he's likely to do irreversible damage. You should consider that.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS STREETS/CAR - NIGHT

Royal drives Patsy back into town. She hunkers down on the passenger's side, her face in her hands.

PATSY

Why can't we just take off and leave this all behind?

ROYAL

Once we get it right, we'll have all the time in the world, and the whole world to spend it in.

INT. MAYFIELD KS - PARSONAGE - UPPER BEDROOM - DAY

Royal sprawls on the cot in his day clothes. A red cylindrical lump rises at the nape of his neck.

RUMMAGING NOISES come from below. SQUEAK. CLUNK. CLUNK.

ROYAL

Hello?

Instant silence. Followed by FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS.

REV. JOE (O.S.)

You the new minister at Calvary?

ROYAL

Royal Pryce, D.D.I.V. Who are you?

The door swings wide and a stocky man in work clothes, with shaggy blond hair outlining a red porcine face, appears.

REVEREND JOE

The previous preach. Reverend  
Joseph Jamolka.

ROYAL

And what are you doing here?

REVEREND JOE

Collecting a few items before  
I get underway.

ROYAL

I don't recall much in the house to  
be worth saving.

REV. JOE

I'm here for the books. You can  
keep the tableware.

Rev. Joe steps away. HIS HEAVY FOOTSTEPS lead downstairs.

INT. PARSONAGE - SECOND FLOOR LANDING - STAIRS - DAY

Royal pauses, open-mouthed at the changes displayed by  
sunshine through the window at the end of the landing.

The dust-free carpet is has a new art-deco pattern. Brass  
and porcelain gleam in the bathroom at the other end.

Royal shambles into the bathroom and shuts the door.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - STAIRS/PARLOR/DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Royal comes downstairs. His eyes widen with surprise.

The house looks like it's been attacked by a platoon of Merry  
Maids. Everything is spotless, buffed, burnished, glossy.

There are doily-covered occasional tables in the foyer, throw  
rugs scattered across every floor, fresh new curtains in the  
windows, and a suite of bulky furniture in the parlor.

Royal continues from the parlor into the dining room, where  
Rev. Joe spoons up cornflakes at a big table covered  
with a bright white cloth.

REV. JOE

Man, you don't look too hot!  
Grab some java.

Royal goes into the kitchen -- now furnished with a humming frigidaire, a gas range, and smooth linoleum cabinet top.

He brings down a cup and saucer and fills the cup with the last dregs from a percolator on the stove.

Royal shuffles into the dining room and sits across from Rev. Joe. He takes a sip, makes a face, and sips some more.

REV. JOE (CONT.)

Running you ragged at the church?

ROYAL

It's been a bit of a merry-go-round. Mayfield is a funny town. Nobody here can recall a blessed thing right.

REV. JOE

And you do. So who's winning the war?

ROYAL

The Germans. Word is, they're fixing to invade Britain.

REV. JOE

That's how it is now. Check again tomorrow, you'll find yet another yesterday. Know what I mean?

Rev. Joe stands. He carries his dishes into the kitchen, then stands in the doorway looking grimly amused.

REV. JOE (CONT.)

You have only two choices: do as Artia says, or get the hell out.

ROYAL

So you know about her.

REV. JOE

I'm cognizant of the situation.

ROYAL

And if I stay and don't obey her?

REV. JOE

You'll vanish into thin air. Which is all I'll say about the business, thank you very much indeed.

INT/EXT. PARSONAGE - FOYER/PORCH - DAY

Rev. Joe and Royal haul a big trunk out to a dusty olive-green sedan parked in the street. They lower the trunk beside the vehicle.

REV. JOE

Let's see if we can fit this rain barrel in the back seat. Open it.

ROYAL

I thought it was your automobile.

REV. JOE

Nope. Check your pockets.

Frowning, Royal digs in his trousers. He brings out a set of keys. His expression heads somewhere south of astonished.

REV. JOE (CONT.)

I've given up making sense of it.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - STREET/LOBBY - DAY

Royal stops in front of the train station. Porters rush out to take the trunk.

REV. JOE

Put it in baggage, fellows.

(to Royal)

You. Smarten up. Catch the next train out.

ROYAL

How did you get this attitude?

REV. JOE

I was another experiment that failed. You think you're the first one she tapped for her scheme?

ROYAL

I hadn't considered that yet.

REV. JOE

The outcome only gets worse. When she started, there was peace on Earth, goodwill to some men anyway. Now look at us. Nazis up the ying-yang! Communists out the wazoo!

ROYAL

But why here, in this little town?

REV. JOE

A simple accident. It's where the timeline breaks the sharpest, so she can easily get in and out. The good thing about it is, you can leave here and never look back.

ROYAL

Which is what you're doing.

REV. JOE

Bottle up and go, Kokomo. Unless you want all of time and space to fall down around your ears.

(turns away)

Don't forget: she ain't your friend.

Then he's gone, leaving Royal to stare at the closing door.

INT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - OFFICES - DAY

Royal walks down the hallway, eyes open for changes. It all seems the same until he enters the reception room.

ROYAL

Have I gotten any call --

Polly is already out of her chair and upon him. She wraps her arms around him and plants a big kiss on his lips.

POLLY

Did you miss me last night?

ROYAL

Miss you? Miss Greene. Please --

POLLY

Do you want to come over tonight, or should I come to you? If you can't wait, I could make up a pallet downstairs.

ROYAL

This is unacceptable behavior.

Royal squirms his arms loose and pushes her back. The strange heat in her eyes turns livid.

POLLY

Unacceptable? And what you were doing to me last night, was that praise-worthy Christian conduct?

Polly looks by turns outraged and befuddled.

ROYAL

I can't answer for that. Miss Greene, I think it's best we start off again, as if this -- whatever it is -- never happened.

A dawning realization gleams in her eyes.

POLLY

Why, you found another honeycomb to poke! And I know who it is.

Polly rushes to the desk and gathers things into her handbag.



POLLY (CONT.)

Harley's brat must have cleaned more than your house while I wasted away at the office collating your stupid sermons. That Little Goody Two-Shoes is no more than a moppet. You landed yourself in a big shit of beans, buster, and I'm gonna make sure you cook in your sorry sauce, if it's the last thing I do.

Polly shoulders her purse, and storms out.

EXT. CHURCH - OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Royal hurries out to the parking strip by the side of the building. He looks for Polly, but she's long gone.

From the grain elevators comes a SERIES OF ECHOING BOOMS, like freight cars running together in a chain reaction. Holes appear in the sky and landscape all around him.

Then, much sooner than before, as if by an existential sleight-of-hand, everything shifts and changes.

The sky fills with fluffy clouds where it was clear before.

Cars appear and disappear, change makes and models, on streets and in the driveways. His sedan morphs into a weather-beaten 1935 Ford roadster.

And a big bowtie blooms like a clown's prank, at his collar. Royal clutches his throat, aboutfaces and rushes back inside.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Royal sits with his back to the door, gazing through the one-way glass into the bright empty nave of the Meeting Hall.

SOMEONE KNOCKS. He spins and rolls his chair to the desk. Hoke enters, twenty pounds heavier and now wearing glasses.

HOKE

Brother Pryce? Want to go to lunch?

EXT. MAIN STREET - CAR - DAY

Hoke still owns a 1938 Studebaker. They drive in it past...

The marquee of the ORPHEUM THEATER: "ANIMATED DOUBLE  
FEATURE/DUMBO & SNOW WHITE/PLUS NEWSREELS & SHORT SUBJECTS."

HOKE

Something serious has come up.

ROYAL

If it's anything Miss Greene said,  
I have no credible response.

HOKE

"Miss Greene?" Who is that?

ROYAL

The secretary. Of Calvary Baptist-?

HOKE

We don't have a church secretary.

(beat)

It's why you get five dollars extra  
every week, to do the paper work.

ROYAL

Okay. Anything you say.

HOKE

Jimminy Crewcut! You're being  
awfully flip. No.

(beat)

They found Reverend Jamolka's body  
over in Cimmaron County. He was  
pastor before you came, remember?  
The one who disappeared?

(beat)

They said every bone in his body  
was broken. Like he got run over by  
a steamroller, or dropped from  
an aeroplane.

Royal has gone ashy white. He bites at his fingertips.

HOKE (CONT.)

But look at you! It's nothing for you to worry about. For Heaven's sakes.

EXT. PARSONAGE - DAY

Royal's Ford roadster pulls into the driveway. He climbs out, toting his valise, and trudges up the walk to the porch.

The door to the Parsonage opens. Patsy appears, hauling out a bucket filled with cleaning implements, a mop, and a broom.

PATSY

Hello, Brother Pryce.

Smiling broadly, Patsy lurches down with her cleaning gear.

ROYAL

Hello Patsy. Heard anything more -?

PATSY

I've got to eat some more of that brownie. Things are starting to get fuzzy. But I haven't seen Artia. I would have remembered that.

ROYAL

We need to make a decision as to what we're going to do.

PATSY

I thought we already decided. Best not to rock the boat.

She teeters on her way, headed for the house next door.

PATSY (CONT.)

Oh. I left Daddy's newspaper on the coffee table. I thought maybe you'd like to see the latest headlines. See if they gibe with what you recall.

INT. PARSONAGE - PARLOR - DAY

Royal enters and drops his valise like a dead weight. He crosses to the coffee table and picks up the morning's edition of "THE DODGE CITY DAILY GLOBE."

ON FRONT PAGE: a black-and-white photog of a grinning President Roosevelt and his jutting cigarette holder.

INSERT -

HEADLINE: "FDR SEZ NEW DRAFT LAW IS 'PLAIN COMMON SENSE.'"

BACK TO SCENE -

Royal tosses the newspaper aside and flops on the couch.

EXT. MIAMI FL - BAYSIDE PARK - NIGHT (FEB 15, 1933) (MOS)

SUPER: THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT-ELECT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT/TAKE 1/BAYFRONT PARK/MIAMI FL/FEB 15 1933.

PRESIDENT-ELECT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT stands stiffly in the back of an open touring car, gesturing as he delivers a speech.

CHICAGO MAYOR ANTON CERMAK perches on the running board beside him, obviously enjoying the Southern evening.

IN THE CROWD: ASSASSIN GUISEPPE ZANGARA, a short man, jumps on a chair and takes aim. He fires once, then his arm is deflected by a WOMAN standing beside him.

The gun fires a few times at random, as though of its own accord. Zangara is buried in a melee of onlookers.

BESIDE THE CAR: Mayor Cermak collapses, shot in the abdomen.

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - ALLEY/STREET - DAY (FEB 3, 1933)

SUPER: THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT-ELECT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT/TAKE 2/FEBRUARY 8, 1933/WASHINGTON DC.

Ignace stands in the alley, dribbling a ball off the ground with one hand and holding the comm. device with the other.

ON COMM. DEVICE: "5-4-3-2-1 -- MODERATE THROW TO NEAR LANE/JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY."

Ignace chucks the ball into the street, and runs away.

A YELLOW CAB, avoiding the ball, swerves head-on into a delivery truck marked "Washington National Airport."

A MAN in the truck cab EXPLODES through the windshield.

INT. WASHINGTON DC AREA HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

A somber-faced emergency room Doctor covers the bloody, staring face of the Man with a sheet.

INT. WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT - HANGAR - NIGHT (MOS)

A SUPERVISOR with a pencil behind his ear and a clipboard in hand, scoops up a telephone. He listens with a scowl.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT (LATER) (MOS)

A dopey-looking GREASE MONKEY works on the undercarriage of a Boeing 80-A biwinged airliner.

His wrench slips. Oil runs down. The Grease Monkey waves the work away in aggravation and walks off.

EXT. WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT - RUNWAY - SUNRISE

The big biplane lifts off the runway. One side of the undercarriage hangs by a single bolt.

EXT. CHICAGO NATIONAL AIRPORT - AIRLINER (IN FLIGHT) - DAY

The airliner comes in for a landing. On a nearby highway, a limousine flanked by motorcycle policeman tools along.

The airliner touches down. The undercarriage collapses. A wheel breaks loose and hurtles off the runway, across a bordering grass strip, over a fence and onto...

The limousine. Which flips onto its roof. One motorcycle cop lays down his bike. The other dodges the accident, makes a U-turn on the highway, and races back to the wreckage.

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - STREET CORNER - NIGHT (MOS)

A NEWSIE holds aloft a newspaper with the headline: "CHICAGO MAYOR CERMAK KILLED BY AIRPLANE WHEEL IN FREAK ACCIDENT."

EXT. MIAMI FL - BAYSIDE PARK - NIGHT (FEB 15, 1933) (MOS)

PRESIDENT-ELECT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT stands stiffly in the back of an open touring car, gesturing as he delivers a speech.

ZANGARA jumps on a chair and takes aim. He fires once, then his arm is deflected by a WOMAN standing beside him.

The gun veers this way and that, discharging at random. Zangara is buried in a melee of onlookers.

IN THE BACK OF THE CAR: President-Elect Roosevelt collapses, shot through the heart.

INT. PARSONAGE - PARLOR - SUNSET

A TELEPHONE RINGS. Royal fetches the phone earpiece and speaks into the horn on the wall.

ROYAL

Reverend Pryce residence.

(eyes wide)

I am sorry. I must have fallen asleep. I'll be right over.

Royal returns the earpiece to its hook. He grabs his valise, jacket, and tie, and barrels out the door.

ON: THE NEWSPAPER ON THE COFFEETABLE. The headline reads: "GEN. SEC. STRYKER DECLARES EMBARGO OF BOTH UK AND GERMANY."

INT. SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING - CELLAR REFECTORY - SUNSET

Prayer Meeting Night. Long tables have been set end to end, covered with white cloth, and adorned with covered dishes. Church people mop up ambrosia and jello desserts.

Royal rushes in, his valise at his side. He spots Hoke, sitting with his wife. He takes a couple of deep breaths, visibly slowing down, and goes to greet them.

ROYAL

Good evening. Sorry I'm late.

Hoke makes a sour face and motions to DEACON WAITE -- an intellectual-looking man wearing a pince-nez -- who rises and claps Royal on the back as they shake hands.

Hoke CLINKS A TEA GLASS WITH A SPOON, ending conversation.

DEACON WAITE

Doctor Pryce has decided to grace us with his presence. "Professor," if you'll kindly deliver a few words before we adjourn to our meeting --

Royal nervously switches the valise from one hand to another.

HOKE

(low, to Royal)  
Say a prayer.

ROYAL

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, Thank you for the bounty which you have bestowed on us. We beseech you to defend this nation and in particular to place a shield of protection over President Roosevelt, so that he may lead us safely through the storm clouds that now threaten us --

Half those present raise their heads and stare at Royal. The others squint in disbelief.

ROYAL (CONT.)

And continue to lead, guide, and direct us in our Christian lives. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

CHAIRS SCRAPE and FEET SHUFFLE as everyone heads to the next room. Deacon Waite and Hoke push in close to Royal.

DEACON WAITE

Was that President Teddy Roosevelt  
you invoked in your prayer?

ROYAL

Of course not. I meant Franklin  
Roosevelt.

HOKE

Franklin Roosevelt was assassinated  
before ever being inaugurated  
President. But you do know the name  
of the current President?

ROYAL

I don't actually follow the news.

HOKE

Hoo boy. We got a real winner here.

DEACON WAITE

(to Royal)

Go home. We'll talk tomorrow.

ROYAL

I don't understand.

HOKE

He doesn't understand. Eight years  
of civil disorder, the British  
threatening us from Canada, the  
Germans from South America, and he  
doesn't understand.

DEACON WAITE

Enough. That's all for tonight.

EXT/INT. MAIN STREET - ROADSTER (IN MOTION) - NIGHT

Royal rips off his bow tie and hurls it across the dashboard.



Looking up, he sees the Orpheum Theater pass slowly by.

ON MARQUEE (highlight): "NEWSREELS & SHORT SUBJECTS."

Polly Greene sits in the box office reading a magazine.

EXT. ORPHEUM THEATER - BOX OFFICE - NIGHT

Polly gazes up from "SCREEN ROMANCE" as Royal walks up.

ROYAL

Are you still Polly Greene, or are  
you someone else now?

POLLY

Do I know you or something?

ROYAL

Didn't you used to be secretary  
at Calvary Baptist Church?

POLLY

I don't go to church much. Do you  
want a ticket or something?

He slaps down a quarter. Polly doles out a ticket.

POLLY (CONT.)

And don't look at me like that. I  
don't know you from Adam.

INT. THEATER - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The Orpheum is moderately full, with most of the attendees  
clumped in the middle part of the theatre toward the front.

Royal enters with popcorn and a soft drink through the lobby  
curtains, and sits at the back.

"THE MARCH OF TIME" BLARES FROM THE SCREEN. WITH A RUFFLE OF  
DRUMS, ANNOUNCER HARRY VON ZELL BRAYS:

HARRY VON ZELL (V.O.)

The March of Time -! July  
Fifteenth, Nineteen Forty-One. The  
Monroe Doctrine hangs in tatters as  
the British army reinforces the  
border between Canada and the  
United States.

ONSCREEN: Tanks marked with the British roundel roll off  
freighters. Heavy Lancaster bombers land on airfields.

HARRY VON ZELL (V.O., CONT.)

In London, British Prime Minister  
Oswald Mosley said England will  
welcome German troops to Palestine,  
to prevent Jewish infiltration of  
the oil-rich region.

A man in black shirt and beret gives the stiff-arm salute.

HARRY VON ZELL (V.O., CONT.)

In Washington, General Secretary J.  
Jason Stryker responded:

IGNACE appears, in a double-breasted red cowboy shirt,  
sporting a black armband with blue lightning-bolt insigniae.

IGNACE

If Fascist Europe continues its  
remorseless expansion into the  
Americas, we shall have no choice  
but to ally ourselves with Soviet  
Russia. And if a second American  
Revolution is needed to bring the  
Russian and America peoples closer  
together, thus facilitating that  
alliance -- so be it!

ROYAL sits up, spilling popcorn and soda on the floor. No  
one notices the commotion. They're all fast asleep.

INT. PARSONAGE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Royal flicks on a light and faces the medicine cabinet mirror. He pops buttons to open his shirt, grabs a straight razor from the edge of the sink, and turns with his shirt rolled over his arms to see...

IGNACE (V.O.)

This capsule will make you aware of every little change as it happens --

ROYAL

Omigod. Omigod.

The nape of his neck shows a livid scar, but no protrusion. Royal pats down the fading injury with a trembling hand.

ROYAL (CONT.)

Where did it go? Where did it go?

He strips off his clothes in search of the missing implant.

INT. PARSONAGE - DINING ROOM/HALLWAY/STAIRS- NIGHT

Royal sits naked at the table, slumped over a glass of warm milk as if it were a tumbler of liquor. The straight razor lays beside the milk, its blade folded into the handle.

Overhead lights flicker. CONCUSSIONS BOOM IN from outside.

Royal creeps to the window and looks out. The existential shell game is winding up as he arrives.

WINDOW P.O.V.: the holes in the landscape blink shut. And...

Porch and house lights go on or off. A car sitting in a yard with its motor running vanishes. A couple materializes on the sidewalk, strolling arm-in-arm.

ROYAL draws the curtains. He scurries about, shutting off lights before racing upstairs practically on all fours.

INT. PARSONAGE - UPPER BEDROOM - SUNRISE

Accelerating shallow breaths. WHEEZE WHEEZE WHEEZE. Stacked pillows prop up the side of Royal's face.

ROYAL'S P.O.V.: THE PURPLING FACE OF A TERRIFIED ELDERLY MAN STARES BACK AT HIM.

The oldster's eyes bulge. He gulps the air frantically.

ROYAL yells, jumps up, sees he doesn't have a stitch on, and yanks a blanket off the bed in time to cover himself as...

Polly Greene bursts in, wearing nursemaid candy stripes. She sees Royal and shrieks. Royal shrieks.

The old man does not shriek. He doesn't breathe at all.

EXT. PARSONAGE - DAY

Royal bursts out the front door with shoes in hand and a dingy old-man's suit draped over him. He runs down the walk.

Polly sings, from the front porch of the Parsonage:

POLLY

Stop, pervert! That pervert killed  
Brother Carmody!

Royal hops from one foot to the other, cramming on his shoes.

The front door to the Blauter's house opens. Patsy appears. She gestures frantically for him to come over.

Royal crosses to the porch. Patsy whisks him inside.

INT. BLAUTER'S RESIDENCE - FOYER/HALLWAY

She holds Royal steady by the elbow as she closes the front door. Harley Blauter's voice comes from further inside:

HARLEY

Patsy? What's the commotion?

PATSY

It's nothing, Daddy. Finish your breakfast.

(to Royal)

That little monster Artia's messing with you, isn't she?

Harley appears in a hall doorway, riffling a newspaper.

PATSY (CONT.)

He won't recognize you.

HARLEY

Why are you being so friendly, Patsy? Come away from that man.

Royal grabs at whatever straw of credibility he can find.

ROYAL

I'm Reverend Pryce. I was visiting Brother Carmody when he suffered an apoplectic fit.

PATSY

Call Doctor Jeeter, Daddy.

Harley blinks. He folds up his newspaper, and retreats.

Royal buttons up his shirt and quickly ties his shoes.

PATSY (CONT.)

You don't know what Artia can do.

ROYAL

I'm not gonna play her game any more. I intend to stand my ground.

INT/EXT. STREET/PARSONAGE - DAY (LATER)

A brown-and-white sedan stops in front of the Parsonage.

The SHERIFF climbs from the car. It's the same Pharmacist who once stared askance at a new-to-town Ignace. The big guy with the Brylcreemed hair now wears khakis and campaign hat.

Royal comes over, followed by Patsy. Polly shrills:

POLLY

It's him! That pervert murdered  
Brother Carmody!

The Sheriff unlatches handcuffs from his belt. Royal turns obediently. The Sheriff handcuffs him.

Harley Blauter emerges from his house and storms over.

SHERIFF

Harley. This one's under arrest for  
Murder in the First Degree.

Harley grabs Patsy's wrist and drags her aside.

PATSY

But he didn't do anything! It's  
a tragic mistake.

The Sheriff crams Royal into the back of the sedan.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - HOLDING TANK - DAY

Royal hunkers down on a bare crust of mattress.

IN THE OFFICE: WHACK! The Sheriff practices his phone book  
bashing skills against a wooden support column.

His back to the wall, a DEPUTY chaws a toothpick.

DEPUTY

Let me try my hand at it. I'll  
get him to see the stars and bars.

SHERIFF

Hold your horses. He swears that  
one of the Deacons at Calvary  
Baptist will vouch for him.

Royal spots something on the outer room wall. He frowns.

A big portrait of the sort used to display Communist leaders  
hangs behind the Sheriff's desk.

It depicts Ignace, in a red tunic with blue tie and armband patterned with black fists.

The front door opens. Hoke enters.

HOKE

It's a sad morning, gentlemen. The founder of our town's oldest church has entered into his eternal rest.

SHERIFF

The nurse found this man naked as a jaybird in the Reverend's bedroom.

HOKE

God forbid.

SHERIFF

He claims that he was sent as a replacement for Brother Carmody.

HOKE

Our Music Director has served as preacher since Brother Carmody's setback. We haven't had the heart to seek another minister. Brother Carmody was such a precious soul.

SHERIFF

So you don't know this guy.

HOKE

Well, let me get a gander at him.

The Sheriff leads Hoke to the barred gate of the holding tank. Hoke peers in, his eyes like beads in two creases.

ROYAL

Recognize me, Deacon Abshire? I stayed overnight at your house.

HOKE

No. I don't know this man.

Over Hoke's shoulder, the Deputy gives Royal a fiendish grin.

INT. INTERROGATION CELL - DAY

WHAP! Royal is jarred by the broad side of the phone book. He bounces off the wall and slides to the floor.

SHERIFF

Gimme that phone book. Prop him up.

The Deputy hands the phone book to the Sheriff and hauls Royal up by the armpits.

The Sheriff takes the phone book in both hands and lines up the next shot. He hesitates as Royal laughs uproariously, with blood running out his ears.

SHERIFF (CONT.)

Find something amusing about this, you Yankee sot-weed?

ROYAL

No. Keep it up. Maybe you'll squash the bug they planted in my neck and I'll stay here for good.

SHERIFF

What the hell you on about, boy?

ROYAL

Otherwise I'll continue to play musical chairs with reality.

SHERIFF

To hell with this --

The Sheriff hurls the phone book at Royal. It bounces off his head and falls to the floor.

SHERIFF (CONT.)

Put him back in the tank.  
Something's wrong upstairs with that sonofabitch.

The Deputy drags Royal, laughing uproariously, from the room.



INT/EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE/HOLDING TANK - DAY

THE THUMP AND CLANGOR OF A MARCHING BAND PLAYING "HOORAY FOR THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE" BLARES IN FROM MAIN STREET.

Royal goes to the cell gate and pulls himself up the iron bars high enough to see through the...

WINDOW P.O.V.: A BRASS BAND duded up in red, black, and blue colors marches in place.

A DRUM MAJOR struts back and forth in front of the band, flourishing a baton, then sets off, stepping high, down the street. The band follows, trombones and trumpets flashing.

CROWD

(singing)

We know three Big Brothers  
 We bet you know them too  
 For one is red  
 And another is black  
 And another is blue hoo-hoo  
 Hurray! For the three Big Brothers  
 Hurray! For the Red, Black, and  
 Blue  
 Hurray! Hurray!  
 Hurray! Hurray!  
 Hurray! For the Red, Black, and  
 Blue

(repeat to the end)

Huge banners float by, featuring portraits of Marx on a black backdrop, Stalin on red, and "J. JASON STRYKER" on blue.

Royal laughs hysterically as he sings to a similar tune:

ROYAL

Be kind to your web-footed friends  
 For a duck may be somebody's mother  
 She lives by a pond in the swamp  
 Where the weather is very very damp  
 Now you may think this is the end  
 But it's gonna start again --

WHACK! The Deputy's night-stick nails his fingers as they clutch the cell bars. Royal collapses with a howl of pain.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - HOLDING TANK - DAY

Ignace lays on the bunk with his face to the wall. He wrings his bruised fingers and weeps quietly.

The Deputy raps on the bars with his night stick.

DEPUTY

Hey! You sober in there?

Royal turns over and wipes away his tears.

ROYAL

I don't drink.

DEPUTY

That's not what I heard. But if you can walk a straight line --

Royal rises and paces up and down in a fair approximation of a straight line.

DEPUTY (CONT.)

Good enough.

The Deputy unlocks the cell gate. Royal steps out.

ROYAL

Thanks a million.

DEPUTY

Don't mention it. I know what it's like to tie one on.

EXT. PARSONAGE - DAY

Royal shambles to a halt in front of the rundown house. No car is parked in the driveway. The blinds in one window hang down at the corner. The place looks deserted.

Royal draws his wallet from his back pocket. He opens the bill pocket and shuffles out a few singles and a fiver.

Royal puts away his billfold and closes his eyes to think.

PATSY (O.S.)

Hey, you!

Patsy stands on the front porch of the neighboring house.

PATSY (CONT.)

They let you out already?

EXT. PARSONAGE - DAY (A MINUTE LATER)

Royal and Patsy confer in front of the Parsonage.

ROYAL

Won't you get in trouble talking to me?

PATSY

My Father already forgot what happened.

ROYAL

I should go speak to Artia now.

PATSY

You oughta think twice about helping her. Artia, I mean. She's a little atheist and a big-time Communist. That's why everything she touches falls apart. I don't think you can help her -- no way, no how.

ROYAL

Maybe you're right.

PATSY

You consider where things stand. I'll bring you something from our table, so you don't starve.

INT. DEACON ABSHIRE'S HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT

Hoke kicks back in his easy chair and rummages through a newspaper. Mrs. Abshire attends to her embroidery.

THE RADIO PLAYS A SPEECH BY "LEADER STRYKER" (Ignace).

LEADER STRYKER (V.O., RADIO)

I have been asked, What would I  
sacrifice on the altar of the  
Revolution, to assure the future of  
the American people? My answer is  
simple: I would sacrifice  
everything, beginning with myself.  
And I would expect each and every  
American to say and do the same.

Abruptly, Hoke's newspaper falls over him. His arms hang off the easy chair. Mrs. Abshire folds up atop her embroidery.

THE VOICE ON THE RADIO DISSOLVES IN PULSING STATIC. SIRENS WAIL IN THE DISTANCE.

INT. PARSONAGE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Green flashes come through the unevenly opened window blinds. Royal peeks out.

WINDOW P.O.V.: across the street, an older couple slump in lawn chairs on their front porch.

A KNOCK comes at the front door to the Parsonage.

INT. FOYER/FRONT DOOR

Patsy stands there holding a covered plate, a thermos bottle, and some candles. Royal takes what's offered.

PATSY

I waited until they's all knocked  
out to bring this over. Oh. In case  
you don't have a light --

She hands him some matches.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CORNER

Royal places the food on the floor, leaving enough room to scoot down into the junction of two walls.

He takes the cover off the plate and picks up a fork hidden inside.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS/STATION - ARMORED TRAIN - SUNRISE

A RED LOCOMOTIVE hauls three steel coaches and a flatbed with sandbagged machine guns at either end, into the station.

The train halts in a gust of steam.

The engine and coaches are emblazoned with a stylized raised-fist insignia in black inside a blue circle on a red field.

A banner featuring a stencil portrait of General Secretary Stryker (AKA IGNACE) is draped midway down the short train.

No one greets the new arrivals.

Ominous figures in red trenchcoats and ranger hats disembark. Levelling tommy guns, they sweep through the station.

From each coach, solitary but authoritative-looking COMMANDERS step onto the platform to oversee the operation.

The Commanders are costumed in red, with double-breasted cowboy shirts, hats, and boots. They have twin six guns with the grips reversed, holstered at their hips. The fist insignia decorates their hats and shirts.

The Commanders would look ridiculous if they weren't so dead serious in their demeanor: they resemble patrons of a Communist gay bar, from another 1980s.

One of the roaming Guards drags out the STATION MASTER and hurls him to the feet of a scowling COMMANDER.

STATION MASTER

Please. I have a wife and kids.

COMMANDER

The Revolution has authorized us to arrest all pastors, priests, and rabbis in this town. In particular, the minister at --

(checks document)

"Calvary Baptist Church." Doctor of Divinity Royal Pryce.

STATION MASTER

I don't know nothing --

COMMANDER

Then what good are you?

The Commander draws his pistols cross-handedly and fires both guns point-blank into the Station Master's head.

COMMANDER (CONT.)

Sic semper booshwah bourgeois.

The Station Master pitches face-first onto the platform and disgorges a lake of blood.

A WHISTLE SHRILLS. Red-outfitted Praetorian Guards detrain. Avoiding the spilled blood, they form up on the platform.

INT. PARSONAGE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Royal curls up in the corner.

OUTSIDE: A SIREN WAILS. A HARSH AMPLIFIED VOICE DECLARES:

AMPLIFIED VOICE

By order of our Revolutionary Team Leader Jason Stryker: all residents are hereby ordered to assemble at the train station at twelve noon today, for transport to designated processing centers. Resistance to, or failure to comply with, this order is punishable by execution on the spot.

EXT. STREET/PARSONAGE

A red armored car sprouting horn-shaped speakers drives by the Parsonage, repeating the above harangue. Royal bursts out in time to see the armored car fade down the street.

Next door, the Blauter parents and Patsy emerge, rubbing their eyes. Harley calls to Royal:

HARLEY

Hey! What are you doing over there?

ROYAL

You should be more worried about your family getting sent to a concentration camp than what I'm doing over here.

PATSY

Hold on, Daddy.

Patsy jumps off the porch and comes over.

ROYAL

Did you hear what they said?

PATSY

I was too busy sleeping.

ROYAL

They want everybody at the train station at noon, ready to travel.

PATSY

What are you gonna do?

ROYAL

Someone has to deal with Artia. We need to get you out of here first.

HARLEY

Patsy. Come back over here.

PATSY

Come with me.

INT. BLAUTERS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Royal sits at a table between Blauters, with Patsy opposite. Coffee cups and untouched sticky buns litter the table.

HARLEY

If you're a preacher, what does  
Ephesians six one say?

ROYAL

"Children, obey your parents in the  
Lord, for this is right." What does  
it say in Matthew nineteen four?

HARLEY

You're the preacher. You tell me.

ROYAL

"Jesus said, Suffer the little  
children and forbid them not to  
come unto me; for of such is the  
Kingdom of Heaven."

MRS. BLAUTER

Patsy is hardly a little child.

ROYAL

All the more reason to let her go.

HARLEY

Her Mother and I wouldn't last  
a day out on that prairie --

PATSY

And I wouldn't last a day in  
a concentration camp!

Mrs. Orpha Blauter -- a formidable middle-aged woman with  
white-streaked blonde hair -- says:

ORPHA

We was warned these times was  
coming. The Book says people should  
flee without ever looking back.



HARLEY

Those who could flee, should --

ORPHA

Maybe we can't. But she can.

Harley leans over the table and squints hard at Royal.

HARLEY

And are you a true man of God, whom  
we can trust with our only child?

EXT. BLAUTER HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

The Blauter parents stand in the open backyard gate with  
Royal and Patsy.

Royal wears a different jacket and has a knapsack hitched to  
his shoulders. Patsy wears boys' denims and cowboy boots.

Orpha hugs her daughter.

ORPHA

Just lay low out there for awhile.  
This craziness can't last forever.

HARLEY

They say the British and Germans  
may invade at any time.

ROYAL

The British and Germans?

HARLEY

Anything is better than this run-  
amuck Red Communism that Stryker  
has brought down on our heads.

ROYAL

But how would they get over here  
to invade in the first place?

HARLEY

Don't you follow the news? The British occupied Canada last year, after the Germans took over Mexico. We didn't do nothing about it.

ROYAL

What about the Russians?

HARLEY

They're barely hanging on, fighting Hitler. Where have you been lately?

THE SOUND OF MOTORS RUNNING FAST COMES FROM THE STREET, followed by the SQUEAK of BRAKES.

HARLEY (CONT.)

You two better make tracks.

Patsy hugs her Father one last time, then breaks away and flees with Royal down the alley.

EXT. STREET/PARSONAGE

Two commandeered brown-and-white police vehicles pull up in front of the Parsonage, followed by a big red armored car.

PRAETORIAN GUARDS pour out and storm the house. They crash through the front door without bothering to try to open it.

EXT. ALLEY

Royal and Patsy scurry past garbage cans and fences. She pushes him into a space between a garage and side fence.

EXT. STREETS

They pause inside a hedge on a parallel street, to peek out of an opening in the boxy shrub.

The street is clear. Patsy jogs across, followed by Royal.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS - EDGE OF TOWN - ALLEY - DAY

Royal and Patsy creep from garbage can to garbage can until they reach the mouth of an alley opening on a vacant lot. On the far side of the lot, a stand of trees leads off toward a farm house.

A stone's throw away, on a dirt road continuing out of town, a red-uniformed Praetorian Guard with a rifle stands picket.

A watch line of soldiers, separated from each other by a thousand feet or so, surrounds Mayfield.

PATSY

I don't know. Not everybody dies in a concentration camp.

ROYAL

You would.

PATSY

I know that's what I said.

ROYAL

Maybe you've got people you'd like to help back in Mayfield --

PATSY

No. My Father's a poor man, and that counts as much against him in this town as if he was black as the ace of spades.

ROYAL

Then let's go. Don't look back.

He unhitches his knapsack from his shoulders.

ROYAL (CONT.)

Keep low.

Royal drops to his belly. He squirms to the end of the fence abutting the alley, and peeks out, looking both ways.

Pushing the knapsack ahead of him, Royal crawls across the alley and into the weeds. Patsy follows, stopping every few yards to whisper a prayer.

EXT. TREELINE - DAY (LATER)

Royal tries to recoup his strength, kneeling against a tree. Patsy flops flat on the ground, breathing hard.

Royal offers her a bottle of water from his knapsack. She twists off the cork and drinks thirstily.

He peeks around the tree at the Praetorian Guards, standing with their backs to them, watching something...

Above the rooftops, pillars of smoke join to make a massive gray-black column blotting out that side of the sky.

EXT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Fire envelopes the church meeting house, and leaps from the windows of the Sunday School building behind.

BULLETS BANG AND WHING. Praetorian Guards laugh as they toss rounds into the fire.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH

The parish edifice is a blackened shambles already collapsing in on itself.

EXT. METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist church steeple plunges into the inferno below.

EXT. TREELINE - DAY

Patsy raises her head enough to take in the conflagration.

PATSY

Are they burning down Mayfield?

ROYAL

I think it's the churches.

PATSY

Oh God. I pray. Please stop them.

ROYAL

If He's gonna do it, He better do it fast.

PATSY

He will. The Germans or British will show up before it gets worse.

ROYAL

Let's get going.

Royal dives to the ground. The two new refugees crawl on.

EXT. MILES FROM MAYFIELD - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Royal and Patsy hike along the road.

ROYAL

Remember what it was like before? Roosevelt was President, and Hitler had attacked Britain and Russia?

PATSY

I know it ain't like that now.

ROYAL

Bring any of that brownie with you?

PATSY

No. I ate the last of it when they took you to jail. I didn't want to forget about you.

ROYAL

There's no telling what's going to happen. Artia's like a dim-witted surgeon operating on world history. She doesn't have a single solitary clue what she's doing. Not a clue in hell.

PATSY

For shame. A minister like you  
cussing like that.

(beat)

But it's all right. It just shows  
you're human like the rest of us.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - FARMHOUSE - SUNSET

Royal and Patsy come to an abandoned farmhouse swamped by  
an old sandhill.

PATSY

You know what? I can hardly  
remember a darn thing now. And it  
feels good!

ROYAL

We'll stay here for the night.

Patsy gives him an impish look. She takes the lead going in.

INT. FARMHOUSE - ROOM TO ROOM

It's a wooden shell, not much else. The windows are gaping  
holes, the scant furniture piled in a corner. The only  
salvageable item is a portrait of Jesus on a hallway wall.

Patsy opens a creaking door to a boarded-up bedroom.

The last sunshine, filtering through cracks, lays slats of  
dusty light over a mattress on the floor.

PATSY

At least we'll be out of the wind.

Royal drops his knapsack and digs out a candle and matches.  
He fires up the wick. A cozy yellow glow fills the room.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Two tins of Vienna sausage, some bread, and a bottle of water  
are placed before Royal and Patsy. They sit, backs to the  
wall.

ROYAL

Bless this food as nourishment for  
our bodies and ourselves to Your  
service. Amen.

Patsy cuts some bread with a paring knife. She plucks vienna  
sausage from the tin with her fingers.

PATSY

Are we going to drink from the  
same bottle?

ROYAL

Sorry. I didn't bring any glasses.

PATSY

How about sleeping arrangements?

ROYAL

We have two blankets.

PATSY

Lucky it's summer. Or it'd be so  
cold we'd have to sleep together.

ROYAL

We could start a fire first. Before  
we did anything like that.

PATSY

Where? I don't see no fireplace.

ROYAL

We don't have to do the obvious.  
Especially if it involves  
the possibility of sin.

Patsy gives him a sulky look, and washes her bread and  
sausage down with bottled water.

INT. FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

They unroll blankets. Royal pushes the knapsack in Patsy's  
direction.

ROYAL

You can use this for a pillow.

PATSY

Could you give me a goodnight kiss,  
to make me feel better?

ROYAL

Oh, all right --

He creeps over and puts his face quickly to hers for the  
kiss. She throws her arms around his neck.

PATSY

Mmmmm-waah!

Royal pulls away, totally flustered.

ROYAL

Don't do that! I promised your  
parents --

PATSY

I don't recall a darn thing about  
my parents one way or the other.

ROYAL

Do you recall why we're on the run?

PATSY

From Communists.

ROYAL

And -- Artia? What about her?

PATSY

Who's that? Orsha?

ROYAL

You don't remember visiting my  
brother in Nineteen thirty-five?

PATSY

Nineteen thirty-five? You're crazy.



ROYAL

No. You're just forgetting.

PATSY

Okay, then! Leave me alone!

ROYAL

Yes. I think that's advisable.

Royal snatches up the blanket, and candle, and heads for another part of the house. Patsy turns away and puts her head on the knapsack.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - SUNRISE

Royal sets out, away from the sunrise. Patsy trails behind, looking like she'd rather be anywhere else.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Patsy traipses along a hundred feet behind Royal.

OUT OF THE DISTANCE COMES THE SOUND OF A MOTOR. Patsy hears it first. She stops and turns, face lighting up.

Royal hears the RACING ROAR, and abandons the road.

ROYAL

Get out of sight!

PATSY

Why don't we see who it is first?

ROYAL

If you can see them, they can see you. If it's commies, you'll be caught.

Muttering to herself, Patsy trudges off the road.

IN THE DISTANCE: a car comes into view, moving fast.

It's a chop-top convertible roadster. As it gets nearer, the WHOOPS and HOLLERS of the KIDS inside become audible.

PATSY

Them ain't Communists! Communists  
don't carry on like that.

Patsy stands just as the convertible streaks by, filling the air with dust. She runs out to the middle of the road, waving her arms. The vehicle skids to a halt.

PATSY (CONT.)

Hey, ya'll. Come on back here!

The roadster reverses, fishtailing as it returns. Patsy steps aside as the vehicle plunges to a stop in front of her.

There are three guys and two girls inside. All wear denims and smoke cigarettes. They look like country kids -- rawboned, sun-burnt, big-toothed.

DRIVER

What I tell you? We ain't the only  
ones hitting the road.

GIRL IN FRONT SEAT

Hey, honey. You looking for a ride?

PATSY

I sure am. Where ya'll headed?

DRIVER

We're going down South, to meet  
them Germans that's marching up  
from Mexico.

IN THE ROADSIDE WEEDS: Royal lays low, breathing heavily.

PATSY

"Germans marching up from Mexico?"

GIRL IN BACK SEAT

Them and the Texans -- them Texans  
as are White, anyway -- joined  
forces. They're headed this way to  
unite with the British coming down  
from Canada.

GIRL IN FRONT SEAT

You could lead the parade, honey,  
with those golden locks.

PATSY

That sounds swell!

DRIVER

Well, climb aboard. I'll get us  
there before the next sun comes up.

Patsy puts her hand to her mouth and calls:

PATSY

Preacher! You coming?

DRIVER

Preacher? We don't have room for  
another fellow in this boat.

PATSY

Me and him travel together since --

Royal takes a deep breath and pushes himself to his feet.

ROYAL

Come on, Patsy. You don't need to  
run off with people you don't know.

PATSY

I didn't know you until we got  
stuck in the same jam together.

ROYAL

Your parents gave me charge of you.

PATSY

I don't have any parents thanks to  
the Commies. I want to join them as  
will do something about it.

GIRL IN FRONT SEAT

You tell him, girl. Don't listen  
to that sorry wad.

ROYAL

Patsy. Please. Don't you remember  
the good times we had together?

Patsy frowns. But her eyes remain vacant.

PATSY

Sorry, Mister. Time for me to move  
on. I'm grateful to you for --  
(thinks, can't recall)  
Whatever it is. Anyway. Good-bye.

Patsy climbs into the back of the roadster.

DRIVER

Get that gal a beer!

The Big Guy in back cracks a can with a church key.

The roadster accelerates down the road, with those inside  
raising a continuous ruckus, until it fades in the distance.

Royal stands, alone at last. A tear runs down his cheek.

EXT. SECOND FARMHOUSE - FARMYARD/DOORSTEP - DAY

It's another deserted-looking hulk out in the big nowhere.

Royal plies the lever of a water pump in the farmyard. IT  
CREAKS AND SQUEAKS, but the arched pipe yields no water.

He picks up his knapsack and crosses to the sagging wood  
porch. The front door hangs open. Royal goes inside.

INT. SECOND FARMHOUSE - ROOM TO ROOM/CELLAR

The interior is dusty. THE PLANK FLOORS SQUEAK, but are  
solid underfoot. Beyond a doorway...

IN THE PARLOR

Furniture has been pushed about and left at odd angles.  
Royal tries a light switch. The overheads remain dark.

## IN THE KITCHEN

The cabinets are empty. Water standing in the sink is green. He tries the faucet. It coughs a few times, and stays dry.

Royal continues through a door down a flight of stairs to...

## THE CELLAR

Dirty brown light comes through the high bulkhead windows. Oil-cloth-covered furniture is heaped all around. Under a window, a sewing machine sits on a table next to an antique hand-cranked radio.

Royal crosses to the radio. He works the crank and tries the selector dial. Turns the crank again.

A STATICKY VOICE comes through the cloth speaker:

## VOICE

-- moving in columns toward the  
Kansas and Missouri state lines. We  
advise everyone not involved in  
this fight to stay indoors and obey  
the orders of the military  
commanders of whichever district  
you find yourself in --

The VOICE dies. Royal turns the dial until he comes to...:

## SECOND VOICE

(with a Texas accent)

The Godless Communists have made  
this fight personal. We won't back  
down until all of their Satanic  
breed is chased from these shores --

Royal sinks to his knees, and clasps his hands together.

## ROYAL

O God. What should I do? What  
should I do? What should I do?

(in response:)

Thy knowledge be my strength. Thy  
knowledge be my strength.

Royal gets to his feet. He heads back up the stairs.

EXT. MILES FROM MAYFIELD - COUNTRY ROAD - SUNSET

Royal hikes toward the flaming holocaust of a Western sunset.

THE MASSED DRONE OF PROP-DRIVEN PLANES RISES IN THE DISTANCE.  
Royal jumps into the shallow ditch by the road.

A FLIGHT of Messerschmitt 189s come on fast, at tree-top level. The dozen or so aircraft grow from fly-size to real-size, seemingly in the space of a few seconds.

One follows the road. It casts a huge shadow over Royal as it vaults overhead and is gone, sooner than it came.

THE ONLY SOUND LEFT IS THE FADING BUZZ OF THE AIRCRAFT.  
Royal stands. He sets out, into the glimmering sunset.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT (A MINUTE LATER)

The horizon toward which he's traveling lights up suddenly.

THE CRASH AND BOOM OF FAR-OFF EXPLOSIONS ECHOES OVER THE LANDSCAPE, JOINED BY THE CHATTER OF MACHINEGUN FIRE.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - WRECKED ARMORED CAR - NIGHT (MIDNIGHT)

A smoky mass pushes out of the darkness. It's a shattered armored car, skewed across the road. Bodies hang from the burst passenger bay and the blown-out cab in front.

Royal prowls the scene of carnage. Digging through pockets, opening backpacks.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - BEYOND WRECKAGE - NIGHT (AFTER MIDNIGHT)

Royal goes on his way, a rifle hitched to his shoulder and a Walther PK in his belt. As he walks on, he eats rations from a can with the fork attachment of a swiss army knife.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD - COUNTRY ROAD - DAWN

A shambles cuts off the road: a bombed-out barricade, with more bodies littering the ground thereabouts. In the growing light, their Praetorian Guard uniforms are plain to see.

Royal approaches with the rifle cradled in his arms.

A BIRD WHISTLES. He abandons the road, cutting across a field toward the low, scorched skyline of Mayfield.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD - VACANT FIELD - DAWN

The town line is clear, no sentries standing about. But every structure in sight has been put to the torch. The only things still mostly complete are trees too lush to burn.

Royal steps onto a paved street leading into town, and continues down the short side of a block of incinerated houses.

The few vehicles left behind are blackened shells. Bodies in the street wear the uniforms of Praetorian Guards.

EXT. DRIVEWAY

A CITIZEN sits dead behind the wheel of a pickup truck.

A single round through the driver's side window has sprayed the ceiling of the cab with his brains and blood.

THE DRIVER'S DOOR OPENS WITH A GROAN. The Driver pitches out onto the ground.

Royal rifles through the man's pockets. He spots the keys still in the ignition.

EXT/INT. MAYFIELD KS STREETS/PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Royal drives the truck toward the grain elevators.

At an intersection, he glances down the adjoining street to see Calvary Baptist Church, now a ragged hill of ashes.

EXT/INT. GRAIN ELEVATORS/PICKUP TRUCK

Several of the silos have blown up. Grain disgorges in steep slopes around the broken concrete barrels that remain. Hundreds of birds fly in and out of the ruins.

Royal swerves around huge pieces of concrete from the blown elevators. He turns onto the highway leading out of town. Crossing the tracks, he looks down the rails to see...

The coaches and locomotive of the armored train, laying on their sides like so many jackstraws.

A MILE ON:

The ravine comes into view.

Royal stops where the highway turns away. He kills the engine, fetches his rifle and knapsack, and climbs out.

Royal slams the truck door, crosses to the edge of the field, ducks through the barb wire, and heads for the ravine.

EXT. OUTSIDE MAYFIELD - RAVINE - DAY (TEN MINUTES LATER)

He strides downhill, gaining momentum until he stumbles the last few feet to the emerald-like seam at the bottom.

He drops to his knees and clasps his hands together around the barrel of his rifle.

ROYAL

Thy knowledge be my strength. Thy  
knowledge be my strength.

He creeps to the cave mouth. In the distance, he hears...

SIRENS. Royal unshoulders his rifle and goes in, following the cave as it curves out of sight on a downward arc.

INT. UNDERGROUND - RECEPTION CHAMBER - DAY

A tube pops into a hole in the wall, and extends to deposit Royal on a hanging gurney. The shell withdraws around him.



ARTIA

So you're back again.

Royal raises his head like a soldier peeking from a foxhole. Artia Totália stands front and center before him.

Royal jumps off and stands, squaring his shoulders and straightening his clothes. The weapons he came with are nowhere to be seen.

ARTIA (CONT.)

This time, we'll send you back  
to a week before the last visit.  
See if it makes a difference.

ROYAL

I just want this to be over with.

INT. PHILADELPHIA PA PARTY H.Q. - COMMANDER'S SUITE - NIGHT  
(1935)

It's a rec room, full of pool and ping-pong tables. One long wall is paneled with mirrors. In front of that wall ...

Ignace, in red leather trimmed with stainless steel brightwork, marches up and down, gesticulating as he rants:

IGNACE

Shoot these rabid dogs. Death to  
those who hide their rats' claws  
from the people! Down with vulture  
politicians from whose mouth bloody  
venom drips, putrifying the ideals  
of democracy! Exterminate the mad  
dogs of capitalism, who desire only  
to tear to pieces the flower of our  
new American revolution!

Royal quietly emerges from an adjoining hallway. He appears in the mirror behind Ignace.

The sight of Royal in the flesh seems to pull his right eye half out of its socket. He says to the mirror:

IGNACE

Well, I'll be goddamned.

ROYAL

Hello, Ignace.

IGNACE

Artia must have sent you. What's wrong now?

ROYAL

It's what you're going to do next, brother. The big leap to nowhere you're about to make.

IGNACE

Hey. I'm just along for the ride.

ROYAL

You don't care how it all ends up?

IGNACE

Has it ever occurred to you that if how things end up is really that important, they wouldn't keep ending up a million different ways?

ROYAL

It's like musical chairs. Eventually your ass occupies one or the other for keeps. And I don't think even you will enjoy seeing the human race die off by the year Nineteen Seventy.

IGNACE

Why would it do that?

ROYAL

Because of you, brother.

IGNACE

Bullshit. I'm going to be the best thing that ever happened to this world or history itself for that matter.

ROYAL

You could be. With a little direction.

IGNACE

Direction from who? You?

ROYAL

That's the idea we're working with.

Ignace turns to face Royal.

IGNACE

Fuck you. You had your chance, big brother. I can motivate myself by myself alone, thank you very much.

ROYAL

If the tables were turned and you paid me a visit, I'd at least listen to what you had to say.

IGNACE

Oh yeah. Like you have so many times before. Get the hell out. Do you hear me? This is my show now! Not yours, not hers, and least of all your fucking God's --

Royal starts toward Ignace. Ignace draws a silver plated revolver from a side holster.

IGNACE (CONT.)

Don't even think about it. I've been eating my pork and beans, in case you haven't noticed. But you aren't worth the time and energy to beat into submission. Now git!

Royal powers up the elusion bubble device, in his hand.

ROYAL

You can't win against her, Ignace.

IGNACE

It's a fucking machine, don't you understand? And I don't care if it's a trillion times as smart as me, the damn thing is not alive! It has no common sense.

ROYAL

Is it common sense to outlaw religion before the human race has the chance to grow out of it?

IGNACE

Is that what I'm gonna do? Well, good. The biggest let-down of my life was not when the parents died, but when you became a preacher. That was more obscene than if you'd ended up as one those fruit flies who suck other guys' juice--

Royal moves one step closer to Ignace.

ROYAL

Says the man with the typhoid hands.

IGNACE

Stop right there.

He brings up a whistle and PRODUCES AN EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK.

Royal hurls himself at his brother. The elusion bubble strikes Ignace, throwing him to the floor.

Royal bounces off and comes to rest floating a few inches off the floor.

Clumsily, he levitates himself to a sitting position.

Ignace backs away from Royal. He feels around for the gun, can't find it. He tries to yell for help, but the breath's been knocked out of him.

Royal powers off the elusion bubble. He plunks down on the floor, scoots himself upright, and jumps on Ignace.

The two go down in a scramble. For a moment the issue is in doubt. Then Ignace grips Royal's shoulders.

With a taut grin of triumph, he forces him back, and down.

Royal fidgets with the device still in his hand. The elusion bubble comes back on...

Smashing into Ignace like a body-wide karate chop, flinging him across the room onto a couch by the wall.

Before he can recover, Royal turns off the device, rushes around the table, and lands on Ignace with both knees.

He pummels his brother's face with his free fist, then, setting aside the avoidance device, grips Ignace's throat with both hands and digs his thumbs into his adam's apple ...

ARTIA (V.O.)

Stop it! You have to work together.

Royal presses down hard with knees and thumbs.

Artia appears. She flies at Royal wailing like a banshee.

And passes right through him. Royal grins in triumph.

Ignace's eyes roll up in his head. His face turns blue. A seam of pink froth appears between his twisted lips.

Artia shrieks Royal's ear:

ARTIA

If you do this, you'll have shown yourself unworthy. I'll start over again without either of you.

ROYAL

We are unworthy. See how quickly  
and easily we die --

Ignace's face is purple. The slits of his eyes have gone red. He's finished.

Royal pushes away from Ignace, who flops aside.

ROYAL (CONT.)

It had to be done. It's done.

He looks around. Artia is gone. But...

GUARDS appear in the doorway. They see what's going on, and reach for their holstered weapons.

Royal dives to the floor and scoops up the elusion device just in time. With a SERIES OF BLASTING REPORTS...

The air around him sparks. Bullets ricochet off the bubble.

A ROUND THUMPS INTO THE SIDE OF IGNACE'S HEAD, suppressing whatever life remains in the World Dictator-in-waiting.

Royal charges through an adjoining door. He dives into...

INT. CLOSET

And keeps diving. He's falling through the air.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS - SKY - NIGHT

Royal plummets through RAIN AND HAIL. THUNDER BOOMS NEARBY.

Artia materializes beside him. Both pick up speed as he falls faster and faster.

ARTIA

You knew this would happen. Why  
did you kill your brother?

ROYAL

We both needed to die.

ARTIA

I'll never understand human beings.  
I'm glad I'm not alive. Living  
seems to be bad for everyone  
concerned.

Royal grins and closes his eyes. He extends his arms as if he's trying to fly -- or imitating someone crucified.

HUGE IMPACT.

BLACK SCREEN.

FADE IN:

EXT. MAYFIELD KS STREETS - NIGHT

LIGHTNING FLASHES. THUNDER ROLLS. Rain gushes down thick as a vertical flood, scouring rooftops and trees.

A GALE WIND BLOWS. GARBAGE CANS CLATTER out of alleys, bounce into fences and houses.

Window screens fly through the air, along with torn branches, uprooted flowers, and myriads of leaves.

EXT. MAYFIELD KS STREETS - SUNRISE

It's a bright glorious morning, the streets of the town rinsed clean by the storm. Fallen leaves and branches add color to the gutters.

BIRDS SING IN THE TREES. IN THE DISTANCE, A LOCOMOTIVE HOOTS.

INT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - PASTOR'S OFFICE - DAY (SUNNY)

The NEW PREACHER sits with his back to us and his chair swivelled toward the one-way mirror window looking into...

The sunshine-splotched Calvary Church Meeting Hall.

INT. CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH - OFFICES - DAY

Harley and Patsy Blauter push a cart loaded with cleaning supplies down the corridor to the Meeting Hall.

Harley pulls up short, outside the Meeting Hall doors.

HARLEY

Go check the auditorium. I'll  
inspect the offices.

Patsy grabs a whisk broom and dustpan and continues on into the Meeting Hall.

The door slips shut. A moment later...

The door flies open again and Patsy rushes back out.

PATSY

Oh, Daddy, you have to come see  
-- I don't know what it is.

Harley sets his broom aside and follows Patsy into...

INT. MEETING HALL

WATER DRIPS WITH A SILVERY TRINKLING SOUND from the vaulted ceiling, accompanied by BIRD SONG from outside.

Because there's a hole in the roof.

A RAGGED, UNEVEN HOLE SHAPED LIKE A MAN with arms outflung.

HARLEY

What in tarnation -?

PATSY

Daddy. Look. Over in the pews.

Harley looks. He says with quiet urgency:

HARLEY

Go fetch Reverend Pryce. Now.



PATSY

What is it?

HARLEY

Go, girl! Now!

Patsy hurries out. Harley waits until she's gone, then rushes up the aisle to the middle of the church.

Directly below the hole in the roof, the pews have been smashed by a large falling object.

It lays now, belly to the floor, a sodden, ruptured mass, but with the head twisted around on a broken neck...:

THE FACE OF ROYAL PRYCE stares up with wide, startled eyes at an alien and unforgiving time and place.

The Meeting House doors adjoining the altar open and a figure in a conservative dark blue suit and tie enters.

He stops when he sees the grim expression on Harley's face. Ignace Pryce waves Patsy back.

IGNACE

It's all right. Your Father and  
I will take care of it.

Patsy retreats, hurrying through the door into the offices.

Ignace stands with Harley, gazing solemnly down at the remains of his brother.

IGNACE (CONT.)

Goodness gracious. Who could that  
be? And how did he get in here?

HARLEY

Could he have fallen from an  
airplane? Or -- a dirigible?

IGNACE

It was some kind of bad luck,  
either way.

For a moment, the Men stand stock still. Then they begin pulling away pieces of wood to free the body.

A SPARROW flutters into the high space of the nave.

CHEEPING IN PANIC, it flies as far as the nearest stained glass window, bounces off, and tumbles to the floor.

FADE TO BLACK.