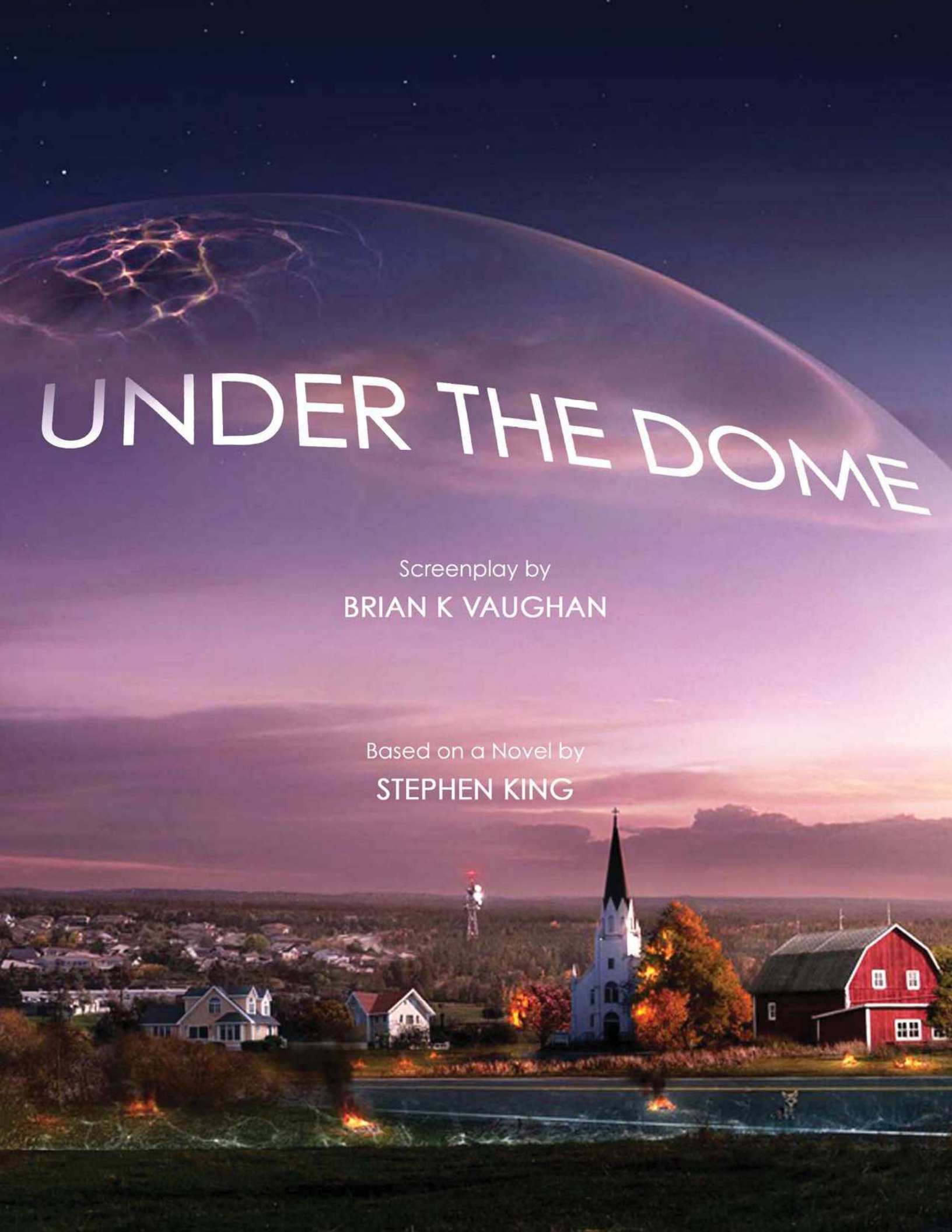

UNDER THE DOME
Screenplay by
BRIAN K VAUGHAN
Based on a Novel by
STEPHEN KING

UNDER THE DOME

Stephen King's #1 *New York Times* bestseller…

"A clever blend of *Lord of the Flies*, Malthus, Machiavelli and *Lost*…A wildly entertaining trip."

-People

"King knows that the biggest danger comes not from the outsider from bombs, from war, from Islam – but from the mob-growing within. We are all under the dome."

-Esquire

"One of those works of fiction that manages to be both pulp and high art, that successfully-and very improbably-captures the national zeitgeist at this particularly strange and breathless period in American history…Stephen King, at his best."

-Associated Press

"Irresistibly compelling…King handles the huge cast of characters masterfully but ruthlessly, forcing them to live (or not) with the consequences of hasty decisions…A nonstop thrill ride as well as a disturbing, moving meditation on our capacity for good and evil."

-Publishers Weekly

"King is masterful at knowing the nature of people, and how a small thing can escalate into a very large one as nerves grate and tempers grow short."

-St. Louis Post-Dispatch

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Open tight on a light blue DOME, fragile and perfect.

All is still, until this dome's exterior CRACKS. Something inside is starting to break free. At first, the emerging creature looks like a MONSTER -- a writhing lump of flesh with gummed-shut eyes and a screaming yellow maw.

But as we pull back, it becomes clear that our dome is actually an EGG, and that the creature inside is a baby EASTERN BLUEBIRD, one that will presumably grow up to look much like the gorgeous MOTHER BIRD we can now see watching over this nest.

With her newborn chick already demanding food, the mother bird launches into the air, flying past a faded green metal sign by the side of the road:

CHESTER'S MILL
Pop. 1,976

As the bird cuts across Chester's Mill, so do we, following as she gives us a pre-dawn tour of what seems to be a typical small town in contemporary America... in that it's just barely scraping by. Some of the bucolic houses are marred by FORECLOSED signs, but most are still occupied by the same families that have carved out lives here for generations.

Flying past the steeple of HOLY REDEEMER CHURCH, the bluebird swoops through the town's central thoroughfare, where a mix of chain stores and local mainstays like the SWEETBRIAR ROSE DINER and BOWIE'S DRUGS have weathered the economic downturn with varying degrees of success.

Flapping hard now, mama bird presses deeper into the dark heart of Chester's Mill, the Black Ridge Woods.

EXT. BLACK RIDGE WOODS - NIGHT

Entering this vast forest in search of crickets, the bird stops at a tree overlooking a clearing, where she notices a COMPACT CAR parked next to a fresh HOLE in the ground. **SHUNK.** A clump of dirt flies out of this pit, startling mama bird, who disappears into the night.

And that's when a HAND appears at the lip of this freshly dug grave.

A SHIRTLESS MAN drenched in sweat pulls himself out of the earth. DOG TAGS glisten around his neck. As we'll later learn, this 30-something Army veteran is DALE "BARBIE" BARBARA.

Barbie's face is bruised and cut. It looks like he's just survived the worst night of his life.

Exhausted, Barbie ambles over to his car and opens its small trunk. Inside is the CORPSE OF AN ADULT MALE, hurriedly wrapped in bloodstained bedsheets and duct tape. We can't see the deceased's face just yet, but as Barbie lifts the body, he notes that it's wearing only one shoe, a distinctive BLUE SNEAKER.

Shit. Frustrated, Barbie looks for the shoe's missing partner, but it's not in the trunk. Oh, well. Clock's ticking. Carrying the corpse to its final resting spot, Barbie unceremoniously DUMPS the body.

As it hits the earth, the corpse's sheet becomes undone, revealing the face of the deceased, a 40-something WHITE MALE. The body's lifeless eyes stare up at Barbie, who takes this opportunity to say a few words:

BARBIE
You had it coming.

With that, Barbie picks up his shovel, and gets to work refilling the hole.

EXT. POLICE STATION - EARLY MORNING

Sunrise is still an hour away as we cut to Chester Mill's small-but-modern police department.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Inside, DEPUTY LINDA EVERETT (20s) turns on the lights in the station's jail, which has a row of three small cells. Only one of them is occupied.

LINDA
Duke?

Inside an open cell, the local sheriff, DUKE PERKINS (50s), is resting on one of the jail bunks with his hat pulled low over his eyes. He doesn't stir when Linda enters, just responds calmly from beneath his brim.

DUKE
Testing our accommodations.

LINDA
Right. Uh, sorry to bother, but Sam Verdreaux called.

Duke grunts.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Yeah, he sounded good and sauced, but he also wanted us to know he heard some kinda bang.

DUKE
(still not moving)
A bang like a generator backfired or a bang like Tommy Anderson finally shot his wife?

LINDA
Didn't specify. Wasn't too sure about the when of it all either. He's the only one who called it in, so I didn't want to overreact...

But now Duke sits up, and as he pushes back his hat, we can see the sheriff's world-weary face for the first time.

DUKE
Nah, you were right to get me, Linda.

The stoic man then straps on his old-school GUN BELT.

DUKE (CONT'D)
You never know with this goddamn place.

EXT. SWEETBRIAR ROSE - EARLY MORNING

Across town, a lone customer is eating an early breakfast in a local 24-hour diner.

INT. SWEETBRIAR ROSE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, we find JAMES "BIG JIM" RENNIE (50s), an awesome presence in every sense of the work. He's reading a Tom Clancy military thriller over his epic meal, as owner ROSE TWITCHELL (40s) stops by to top off his coffee.

ROSE
Anything else, Selectman Rennie?

BIG JIM
(gregarious)
Spare me the formalities, Rose. I'm off-duty for the weekend.

Rose smiles, drops off the check.

ROSE
You working the lot today?

BIG JIM
Big sale on all our pre-owned stock. Hoping we're a little busier than here, no offense.

Rose looks at the empty tables with resignation.

ROSE
First shift's been brutal ever since they opened up that Denny's over in Lewiston. What the holy hell is a Moon Over My Hammy, anyway?

Big Jim smiles, pays his tab.

BIG JIM
Well, you hang in there.

But as Jim heads out, Rose notices his payment, calls after him.

ROSE
Jim!

She holds up the HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL he left for her.

ROSE (CONT'D)
What is this?

BIG JIM
Me buying your next vote.

ROSE
(calling bullshit)
Says the guy who always runs unopposed?

Jim just gives her a knowing look.

BIG JIM
We're all in this together.

With that, the enigmatic selectman is out the door, headed for the expensive black SUV parked out front.

EXT. OLD HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Elsewhere, a PRIUS speeds towards an old house on top of a small hill. A local woman named ANDREA GRINELL is waiting on her porch, expecting the incoming vehicle.

The Prius comes to a stop, and out hops JULIA SHUMWAY (40), an effortlessly attractive woman with a confident gait and an expensive digital camera slung over her shoulder.

JULIA
Andrea Grinell?

The older woman nods.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Julia Shumway. I got your message. You said you needed to speak with me?

MRS. GRINELL
You're the newspaper woman?

JULIA
I'm the new editor of *The Independent*, yeah. But if there's a problem with your delivery, you can just call--

MRS. GRINELL
I get my news online, sweetheart. Like everybody else. I called you because I've got a <u>tip</u>.

Julia looks more confused than intrigued.

JULIA
About what?

MRS. GRINELL
That.

Mrs. Grinell gestures down at a nearby WAREHOUSE visible from her hilltop vantage point. Julia's not impressed.

JULIA
A nondescript building. This is my Pulitzer for sure.

Grinell glares at the younger woman.

MRS. GRINELL
You're in from Philly or something?

JULIA
Chicago. I used to work at the Trib. My husband got a job at your med center, so I relocated with him. Been looking for a change a pace anyway, you know?

MRS. GRINELL
Well, you're about to get one.

Suddenly, a large PROPANE TRUCK approaches the warehouse.

MRS. GRINELL (CONT'D)
See that truck down there? That's the fourth delivery it's made to that building this week. Last week, it made six.

What? Suddenly intrigued, Julia raises her camera.

JULIA
Why does anybody need that much propane?

MRS. GRINELL
That was my question. Either somebody's planning a hell of a barbecue or...

Mrs. Grinell pantomimes a little EXPLOSION. Julia is horrified.

JULIA
Jesus. You think this might be related to terrorism?
(then)
Mrs. Grinell, we have to tell the police.

MRS. GRINELL
Already did.

Confused, Julia squints at this woman.

MRS. GRINELL (CONT'D)
I called Sheriff Perkins three days ago. He looked into it... and turns out everything's above board. Town Hall is just restocking its "emergency reserves."

Julia lowers her camera.

JULIA
I don't understand.

MRS. GRINELL
Me neither. Because here's the thing. When he told me all this, Duke sounded nervous.
(then)
I don't know how well you know that man, but believe me, he's never sounded nervous a day in his life.

Not totally convinced, Julia snaps one more photo, mostly out of politeness.

JULIA
Well. I'll do some digging.

Mrs. Grinell stands to walk back into her home.

MRS. GRINELL
You do that. But whatever you find... you leave my name the hell out of it.

And as Andrea Grinell steps back inside, Julia returns her gaze to the warehouse in the distance. She remains skeptical, but her curiosity's definitely been piqued.

INT. APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Inside a modern studio apartment, an attractive young couple is still in bed, passionately making love. The woman on top is ANGIE, and beneath her is an athletic college freshman who everyone just calls JUNIOR.

As she finishes riding him, a satisfied Angie rolls off Junior, who stares at her like she's a goddess.

JUNIOR
God.

ANGIE
I know, right?

JUNIOR
No, you don't. Angie... I love you.

Angie takes a moment. She's not entirely comfortable with this declaration.

ANGIE
Yeah.
(beat)
It's been a fun summer.

That hits Junior like a gut punch.

JUNIOR
Ouch.

Angie climbs out of bed, pulls on her drab waitress uniform.

ANGIE
Junior, we both knew this was just fun. You're going back to school in a few days.

JUNIOR
Not necessarily.

Angie freezes.

ANGIE
What does that mean?

JUNIOR
I'm dropping out. Dropped out. I'm done.

ANGIE
Are you <u>insane</u>?

JUNIOR
You haven't been there. Trust me, college is just another... bullshit pyramid scheme.

ANGIE
They hand you a free ride out of this place, and you just throw it away?

JUNIOR ANGIE
This is about *us*, not some-- Please don't.

JUNIOR
No, listen to me. We should have done this a long time ago. I have loved you since third grade, all right? You're the only person in the world who knows the real me.

ANGIE
Yeah.
(then; softer)
That's why I can't be with you.

Junior darkens.

JUNIOR
What did you say?

ANGIE
Whatever, I'm gonna be late.

JUNIOR
Why are you acting like this?

Angie starts to leave, but Junior GRABS her wrist.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)
Talk to me!

Flinching in pain, Angie hauls off and SLAPS Junior as hard as she can. She stares at her old friend in disbelief.

ANGIE
You can let yourself out. And take your stupid electric toothbrush with you.

JUNIOR
Angie, wait!

Junior yells after her, but Angie is already gone, leaving the crushed young man alone with his thoughts.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - SUNRISE

As dawn begins to break, Barbie finishes scattering leaves and branches over his makeshift grave, doing a pretty decent job of covering his tracks.

He stuffs the shovel next to the only other object in his small trunk, a military-style DUFFEL BAG. Grabbing a fresh shirt from his car's back seat, Barbie puts on sunglasses to try to cover the CUT above his eye.

Jumping behind the wheel of his shitty car, he inches out of the forest and down an empty dirt road, eventually GUNNING IT out onto one of the Mill's main thoroughfares.

INT. BARBIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Barbie absentmindedly flicks on the radio, which comes to life with the voice of local disc jockey PHIL BUSHEY:

PHIL (FROM RADIO)
--with you all weekend long at WKIC, your only locally owned emporium of rock and--

And just as quickly, Barbie flicks the radio off. He rides in silence for a bit, only to be startled by the sound of his ringing CELL PHONE. Barbie picks up, though we can only hear his side of the conversation:

BARBIE
Hey. No, I'm fine. Look, don't freak out, but the deal went south... No, your seller showed, he just turned out to be a colossal asshole. I brought the money to his place like you said, but he tried to renegotiate, *aggressively*.
(beat)
Well, what do you think I did?

Suddenly, Barbie notices another car traveling down this road, headed his way on the opposite lane and moving at a good clip. It's still far away, but Barbie can already make out the red and blue LIGHTS mounted on the vehicle's roof.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
Eloise... I'm gonna have to call you back.

Slapping his cell shut, Barbie reaches for the glove compartment, pops it open. Inside is a HANDGUN.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Duke is behind the wheel of this approaching squad car, with Deputy Linda Everett in shotgun.

LINDA
I'm just saying, if they were both in their primes, Tyson would destroy Ali.

DUKE
You're out of your mind. Ali could take Tyson *today*.

LINDA
Whatever. Rusty used to box and he agrees a hundred percent.

DUKE
Another reason you never should have said yes to a meathead fireman.

Linda smiles, looks down at her ENGAGEMENT RING with pride.

LINDA
They prefer meathead fire*fighters*, thank you very much. And their insurance plan blows ours to shit.

That's when Duke spots Barbie's car headed their way.

DUKE
Incoming. No front tag.

LINDA
Definitely not local. Little early for the tourist crowd. You want me to pop the lights?

DUKE
Let's do our homework before we start harassing Sunday drivers.

Linda picks up their dashboard's two-way radio.

INT. BARBIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Barbie, meanwhile, keeps his eyes dead ahead as the police cruiser closes in... and eventually blows right past him.

Is he in the clear?

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

As Duke keeps driving, Linda cranes her head back to read Barbie's rear plate to a dispatcher.

LINDA
This is 102. You on, Jackie?

FROM RADIO
Go ahead, 102.

LINDA
Do us a favor and run an Ohio plate? Boy Adam Boy, One Six Two.

INT. BARBIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Barbie keeps his eyes on the rearview, fully expecting the police car to SKID AROUND and start pursuing him... but it just keeps going.

He EXHALES for the first time in almost a mile. But the second Barbie takes his eyes off the rearview, he finally notices what's directly in his path: a COW that has wandered into the middle of the road.

BARBIE
SHIT!

Barbie jinks the steering wheel hard, narrowly dodging this cow. Careening into a nearby pasture, the car speeds towards the rest of this animal's HERD.

EXT. ROUTE 119 - CONTINUOUS

The lazy cows barely attempt to get out of the way as Barbie's car narrowly misses them. Finally, the vehicle comes to a stop, one of its front tires blown to hell.

Jumping out of the vehicle to inspect the damage, Barbie then rushes to his compact car's small trunk, only to realize that he REMOVED the spare tire to make room for the body, shovel, duffel bag, etc.

BARBIE
(darkly)
Perfect.

And just when Barbie is sure things couldn't get worse, the ground begins to TREMBLE.

CHESTER'S MILL - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CONTINUOUS

CUT AROUND TOWN as the locals experience this surreal jolt:

*Now in her newspaper's modest bullpen, Julia notices her coffee cup begin to RATTLE.

*Sitting at a desk adorned with a bust of his hero Winston Churchill, Big Jim is plunged into blackness when the LIGHTS GO OUT inside his car lot offices.

*Though they're now walking on opposite sides of town, Angie and Junior both feel the earth MOVE under their feet.

*Finally, Duke GRABS HIS CHEST, slamming on the brakes of his police car as he winces in extreme pain.

EXT. ROUTE 119 - CONTINUOUS

Back at his car, Barbie is still reeling from this shaking when he hears a TERRIBLE NOISE coming from the pasture.

He turns to see a COW just as its body is SPLIT IN HALF LENGTHWISE. The half closest to Barbie slumps to the grass, but the other somehow REMAINS UPRIGHT, giving us a Damien Hirst-style cutaway view of the animal's still-pumping innards.

BARBIE
...the fuck?

EXT. PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

Running to inspect the bisected cow, Barbie kneels down in a puddle of the beast's blood. He reaches out to touch the spot where... *something* split this animal in two, and Barbie is SHOCKED -- figuratively and literally -- when he connects with an INVISIBLE BARRIER.

He yanks his palm back, but his bloodstained HANDPRINT is still there, glistening in midair, like a warning.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Back in the halted police cruiser, Linda is understandably concerned about her boss.

LINDA
Jesus, Duke. Are you...?

But Duke catches his breath, waves her off.

DUKE
I'm fine. Just my damn pacemaker skipping a beat.

LINDA
And that's supposed to make me feel better?!

FROM RADIO
102, you still on?

Duke tries to answer, but Linda grabs the radio from him.

LINDA
Forget the tag, we got a bigger problem.

FROM RADIO
I know, my whole switchboard's out. All our landlines are dead.

LINDA
What...?

Before the dispatcher can respond, TWO DIFFERENT MALE VOICES broadcast over competing frequencies. Annoyed, Duke snatches the radio back from Linda.

DUKE
One at a time, geniuses. Freddy, you first.

FROM RADIO
Sorry, Duke. We got a downed power line over by the health center.

DUKE
George?

FROM RADIO
Yep, same story at the Food City. Sparks and everything!

Linda looks at Duke with concern.

LINDA
Those are on either side of town. What could even do that? A twister...?

But when Duke looks out his window, all he sees in the bright clear sky is a single SMALL PLANE flying high above them.

INT. SENECA AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

Inside its cockpit, a middle-aged woman named CLAUDETTE is getting flying lessons from her tanned instructor CHUCK.

CLAUDETTE
Whoa, little wiggle on the stick.

CHUCK
Just a bump, you're doing fine. Let's drop on down to eight hundred, take her out to Route 119.

Claudette flashes her teacher a mischievous smile.

CLAUDETTE
I just wanted to say, thanks again. For last week. Andy hasn't gone down on me since our honeymoon. He calls it "sodomy."

CHUCK
(a nervous laugh)
Well, I'm glad to help. We just have to be careful.

But Claudette lets go of her tandem controls, starts moving closer to Chuck.

CLAUDETTE
Screw careful.

Her head disappears into Chuck's lap, as he looks out at the cloudless sky with contentment.

CHUCK
(to himself)
Beautiful goddamn day.

EXT. PASTURE - CONTINUOUS

Back at the halved cow, Barbie is still struggling to wrap his brain around what just happened, when someone calls out:

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
What the hell, man?

Barbie spins around to see JOE McCLATCHEY, a lanky teenager who's looking down at the cow with horror.

JOE
What the hell did you do?

Giving this groggy kid the once-over, Barbie notes the crudely hand-rolled JOINT in Joe's hand.

BARBIE
These your animals?

JOE
(shaking his head)
I live up the road. I just come out here to... think.

BARBIE
Careful. Don't touch the--

But a stoned Joe has already pushed past Barbie to inspect the bloody handprint, which still appears to be FLOATING in place. The teenager's jaw goes slack as he touches the barrier for himself.

JOE
Holy...

BARBIE
I know.

JOE
What <u>is</u> it?

BARBIE
Some kinda... invisible fence.

JOE
What, like, for dogs? No, this is some Star Trek shit. This is--

WHUMP. That's when something FALLS right next to Joe. He "whoas" with surprise as -- *whump whump whump* -- MORE land by his feet. The fallen objects are black and limp.

Joe reaches down to pick one up. It's a CROW, its neck SNAPPED by some unexpected impact high above.

JOE (CONT'D)
Wait, <u>what</u>?

That's when Barbie hears something. It's our TWIN-ENGINE PLANE, only the aircraft is now about to fly directly OVER Barbie and Joe.

Barbie looks down at the birds, then up at the rapidly incoming plane. Doing the awful arithmetic in his head, he looks to Joe and says one word:

BARBIE
RUN.

But it's too late. The airplane EXPLODES directly above them as it CRUMPLES against the towering invisible barrier.

Frozen in terror, Joe stares up at the incoming FLAMING WRECKAGE.

And just as a shorn wing is about to flatten the boy -- Barbie TACKLES Joe, just barely knocking him out of the way.

Debris continues to RAIN DOWN all around them. Joe screams with horror as a MAN'S LEG lands inches from his face. Dressed in denim, the leg's side-seam has been blown wide open, revealing white flesh and wiry hair.

JOE
(in shock)
What the hell is happening?!

But an equally shaken Barbie has no idea how to respond.

EXT. BIG JIM'S USED CAR LOT - DAY

Back in town, Jim Rennie steps out of his office and onto a car lot decorated with banners declaring "BIG JIM'S BIGGEST DEALS OF THE YEAR!"

He's just noticed a CROWD OF ONLOOKERS staring at something in the sky.

BIG JIM
God Almighty.

It's the distant IMPACT POINT of the small plane, now a smoldering smudge that appears suspended high in the sky. Big Jim grabs one of the stunned ONLOOKERS.

BIG JIM (CONT'D)
What are we looking at?

ONLOOKER
No clue. But somebody said they saw a piper cub explode in midair.

BIG JIM
Explode...?

ONLOOKER
Yeah, they don't know if it got shot down or what.

BIG JIM
A plane crash?
(then; almost HOPEFUL)
Here?

The onlooker is still transfixed by the smudge, which is slowly fading away like a spent firework.

ONLOOKER
What is it?

But Big Jim is already racing for his vehicle. This is the moment he's been waiting for. Preparing for.

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

SMALL FIRES now dot the area where Barbie is still recovering with Joe McClatchey. They're standing on the outskirts of the crash site, trying to process what just happened.

JOE
Those people are dead. I... I saw those people die.

With a trembling hand, Barbie takes out a pack of cigarettes, lights a smoke.

BARBIE
You know where to score E?

JOE
What?

BARBIE
You obviously know where to get weed in this town, you know anyone with ecstasy?

Joe reluctantly nods, wondering what the hell kind of grown-up this guy is.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
(knowingly)
Trust me, it'll help when the dreams start.

JOE
Um, look, we need to tell somebody, right? About this?

Snapping back to reality, Barbie nods. But when he flips open his cell phone, he doesn't like what he sees.

BARBIE
You getting service?

Joe takes out his iPhone, frowns at the screen.

JOE
Uh-uh.

Barbie is considering what this might mean when he notices another vehicle charging their way, this time from the OTHER side of the barrier. It's a FIRE TRUCK, loaded with half the department, responding to the crash. Like the pilot before him, the truck's DRIVER has no clue about the invisible BRICK WALL waiting in his path.

BARBIE
No.

Abandoning his cigarette, Barbie runs full speed as he waves his arms and screams:

BARBIE (CONT'D)
IDIOT! SLOW DOWN!

But the fire truck is still thundering towards the scene of the crash, the driver obviously not hearing Barbie.

Left with no other choice, Barbie races to the MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, directly in the truck's path. Joe can barely watch. If it smashes through the barrier, Barbie is DEAD.

But at the last second, the man behind the wheel SLAMS ON HIS BRAKES, stopping inches short of annihilation. Strangely, Barbie can't hear wailing sirens or screeching tires. The fire truck stops with almost surreal SILENCE. Apparently, the barrier prevents even SOUND from getting inside.

Wondering why the hell some idiot is standing in traffic, an older FIRE CHIEF climbs out of the cab and charges at Barbie.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
Hold up! You're gonna hit the--

And though Barbie tries to warn this man, the fire chief STRIKES the transparent barrier face-first, knocking the helmet right off his stunned face.

Joe rejoins Barbie, who takes a little ADDRESS BOOK from his back pocket. He rips out a page and starts scrawling a note to the flummoxed fire chief.

JOE
What are you writing?

BARBIE
I'm telling them to call the F.A.A. Somebody's got to shut down this entire airspace.

Barbie SLAPS the note against the barrier. The fire chief reads it with bewilderment before finally reaching for his own wireless radio. A conspiracy-minded Joe looks worried:

JOE
The feds? But, what if the government built this thing?

BARBIE
They didn't.

JOE
How do you know?

Barbie stares at the black smoke, which is now climbing the inside of the transparent impenetrable wall.

BARBIE
'Cause it works.

EXT. RADIO STATION - DAY

The call letters "WKIC" light up as generators hum to life beneath Chester Mill's only 50,000-watt radio tower.

INT. RADIO STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Inside a dimly lit little studio, we meet the voice behind the local DJ Barbie heard earlier, eccentric indy rock devotee PHIL BUSHEY (30s). He grabs a microphone as his console again powers up.

PHIL
Apologies for the technical difficulties and difficult technicalities, but we are back on your airwaves, rocking another scrumptious playlist home-cooked by your old friend Phil, not ladled out by some corporate stooge. Eat up, my lovelies...

He hits a switch, and the studio fills with the sound of LED Soundsystem's "North American Scum."

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Phil!

The studio door is flung open by Phil's only colleague, hipster radio engineer DODEE WHEELER (20).

PHIL
Dodee, hey. Have you heard this new--

DODEE
(ignoring him)
We're the only thing on the air right now. AM, FM, anywhere.

PHIL
Yeah, the blackout, I know.

DODEE
No, listen, even if that were statewide, every station our size has its own generator. Why is the whole dial still static?

Phil gives this serious consideration.

PHIL
I don't know... but our ratings are going to be amazing.

And as he cranks his hand-picked music, CUT TO:

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

Back at the pasture, the same police cruiser that earlier blew past Barbie now skids to a halt, as Duke and Deputy Linda Everett hop out to survey the smoldering wreckage.

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Sheriff Perkins!

Duke turns to see Joe coming towards them with Barbie, who eyes the police officers with trepidation.

JOE
(mile-a-minute)
Sheriff Perkins I almost got killed by a plane but then this guy saved me and I think there's maybe a--

DUKE
Joe, clear on out of here. We'll get a statement from you later.

SCARECROW JOE
But--

DUKE
Now, son.

Joe looks back at Barbie, who gives him a little nod. "Go on, I'll be fine." The teenager complies.

Linda, meanwhile, has just spotted her ruggedly handsome fiancé, RUSTY, who's standing with his fellow firefighters just outside the barrier.

LINDA
RUSTY!

She calls out to him, but the young man doesn't even look her way. He and the other firefighters are all staring up at something with confused disbelief.

BARBIE
I don't think he can hear you.

LINDA
The hell are you talking about? Why's everybody just standing around?

DUKE (O.S.)
Jesus God.

And now Linda turns to look at Duke, who's finally noticed what the firefighters are looking up at: shimmering AIRPLANE FUEL still dripping down from the sky, which makes a portion of this barrier SEMI-VISIBLE.

DUKE (CONT'D)
What...?

BARBIE
I don't know.
(then; matter of fact)
But it's big.

Reaching out to touch the transparent wall for herself, Linda is startled by a strange TINGLING sensation in her fingers.

LINDA
Whoa.

On the other side of the barrier, Rusty has finally noticed his bride-to-be. He charges to greet her, and though he feels the same initial SHOCK when his fingers hit the invisible wall, Rusty nevertheless keeps his palm pressed flush against Linda's. Though separated by less than a millimeter, the couple might as well be on different continents now.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Baby! Baby, you all right?

Rusty gives a breathless response, but Linda can only watch his lips move in silence.

Before we can decipher what's being said, a concerned fire chief starts yelling at Rusty. The fire chief starts to DRAG his subordinate away from the potentially dangerous barrier. Clocking this, Duke does this same with his deputy.

DUKE
Linda, get away from that thing!

LINDA
It's like... some kind of force field.

DUKE
Yeah, I get that. I don't know what it means, but I get it.
(then; re: the fires)
The hell are the rest of our pumpers, anyway?

LINDA
Town Hall sent 'em to Castle Rock. For the parade.

DUKE
(shaking his head)
Goddamn Big Jim...

As if on cue, a familiar SUV roars into the scene. Big Jim hops out, takes in the debris field with astonishment.

BIG JIM
This was Chuck Thomson's plane. Is he...?

BARBIE
For what it's worth, he died the second he hit it.

Big Jim squints at this outsider.

BIG JIM
Hit what?

Before anyone can respond, the radio in Duke's police car SQUAWKS to life with the voice of one of the male officers.

FROM RADIO
Duke, you there?

BIG JIM
You're still getting reception?

DUKE
Only from inside the Mill.

Duke reaches into his car, keys the handheld mic.

FROM RADIO
Sir, we got a real bad accident on Pretty Valley.

DUKE
It's gonna have to wait until--

FROM RADIO
Duke, it's Freddy. I've got one, too, over on Motton. A minivan versus... I don't know what, but the thing's flat as a dime.
(then; somberly)
Whole family is D.O.A.

Big Jim is aghast.

BIG JIM
Dead? Did he say they're dead?

Linda looks at where Rusty's fire truck was forced to stop.

LINDA
The roads. Whoever did this, they cut off all our roads.

But Duke shakes his head as he notices the subtly curved LINE OF DESTRUCTION stretching far beyond this crash site, downing power lines and slicing trees in half.

DUKE
It's not just the roads, it's everything. The whole town.

Barbie doesn't like it, but he's pretty sure Duke is right.

BARBIE
(simply)
We're trapped.

On the other side of the barrier, Rusty breaks free from the other firefighters long enough to race back the force field. Shouting at his fiancée, he begins POUNDING on the invisible wall in frustration. A heartbroken Linda can only watch this with growing dread.

LINDA
But, whatever this is, the folks out there will be able to... airlift us all out or something, won't they?

Duke honestly doesn't know.

DUKE
Right now, let's just worry about the folks in here.

And off Barbie's increasingly troubled expression, CUT TO:

EXT. MILL GAS & GROCERY - DAY

Elsewhere in the Mill, a RENTAL CAR has stopped to refuel.

Three women get out to stretch their legs, life partners ALICE CALVERT and CAROLYN HILL (40s), and their rebellious teenage daughter NORRIE. She sarcastically reads aloud from a guidebook.

NORRIE
"The town of Chester's Mill is legendary for its fried clams, always whole, never in strips."
(then)
Horrific. Seriously, can we please stop somewhere else? There's no way I'm eating my last meal here.

Her mother Carolyn doesn't even look up from her Blackberry, which she's frantically thumbing.

CAROLYN
We're taking you to camp, not your execution.
(then; to her Blackberry)
How the hell am I still getting no bars?

NORRIE
Waterside isn't a "camp," it's a glorified prison for screw-ups with rich parents.

ALICE
It's a wonderful program, Norrie. And as soon as they say you're ready, you can come right back home.

NORRIE
To Los Angeles? Is that supposed to be incentive? I *despise*--

Before this squabble can get out of hand, two local POLICE CARS come screaming past the Gas & Grocery.

NORRIE (CONT'D)
Holy shit.

CAROLYN
Language.

But Alice looks genuinely concerned about all those sirens.

ALICE
Actually, maybe Norrie was right about stopping somewhere else. We can always do lunch when we get to Bangor, yeah?

Norrie nods with quiet appreciation, and the women soon SPEED OFF, unaware of the death sentence waiting in their path.

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

A large paper MAP OF CHESTER'S MILL is unfolded across the hood of our SUV. Big Jim, Duke and Linda are inspecting every inch, while Barbie hangs back, trying to remain on the sidelines.

BIG JIM
There are twenty-four roads in and out of Chester's Mill.

LINDA
Not counting dirt ones.

DUKE
My guys are already setting up roadblocks, but it'll take hours to button up the whole town.

BIG JIM
Do what you can, I've got a contingency plan for the...

Big Jim hears a WHIRRING, and he looks up just as Julia Shumway's Prius zooms into the crash site. Duke and Big Jim exchange UNCOMFORTABLE GLANCES the second they see her.

Julia is out of her car in a flash, snapping photos with her Nikon. Barbie subtly shields his face, not wanting to end up on any front pages, while an incensed Big Jim races over to put his hand over her lens.

BIG JIM (CONT'D)
No cameras! This is a national security matter!

JULIA
You touch me, I will sue you out of existence.

BIG JIM
I am a duly elected selectman and I'm ordering you to leave.

JULIA
I don't give a shit if you're an alderman or an emperor, you can't just--

DUKE
Enough! We don't have time for this.

Realizing he's right, Big Jim runs for his SUV while Duke hops behind the wheel of his squad car.

JULIA
Now you're all leaving?

Ignoring her, Duke calls out to his deputy.

DUKE
Linda, commandeer Ms. Shumway's vehicle. We'll cover more ground in two cars.

JULIA
What the hell is happening?

But Linda's already behind the wheel of Julia's idling Prius.

DUKE
You want to help, get some medical attention for our guest.

And as the vehicles all PEEL OUT, Julia turns to Barbie, noticing the handsome stranger for the first time.

BARBIE
Um, thanks, but really, I'm fine.

A forward Julia gets right in Barbie's face, inspects the gash above his eye.

JULIA
Bullshit. You've got a head wound and you're probably in shock. Come on, their hospital isn't far. You can tell me what the hell that was all about on the way.

BARBIE
Look, my insurance isn't exactly--

JULIA
Relax, my husband's a doctor, it's on the house. I'm Julia, by the way. Who the hell are you?

Realizing this persistent woman will never settle for "no comment," Barbie reluctantly reveals his name.

BARBIE
Barbie.
(beat)
People just call me Barbie.

She looks at him askance.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
Yeah. I know.

JULIA
And how do you fit into all this?

BARBIE
I don't. I was just... passing through when it happened.

JULIA
When *what* happened?

And as Barbie struggles to find the right words, CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Elsewhere in Chester's Mill, our tourists' rental car kicks up dust as it speeds down an unpaved road.

INT. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Alice is behind the wheel, her wife Carolyn is in shotgun, and Norrie is between them in back, listening to her iPod loud enough that we can overhear the atonal Skrillex song through her headphones.

ALICE
Norrie! Take those out for the rest of the trip, please.

Norrie removes a single earbud.

NORRIE
Why?

CAROLYN
Look, your mother and I are using vacation days for this excursion, so I think we're owed at least one normal family conversation.

NORRIE
We're not a normal family. And I don't feel like talking, I just want to listen to music.

ALICE
(a little frayed)
Fine, we can listen to music *together*.

Alice hits SEEK on her radio dial, but Norrie is already sneaking her other earbud back in as an indy rock song comes over the car's speakers.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Cut to this song's source, where DJ Phil Bushey is watching his engineer Dodee fiddle with a television in their break room. She's just getting the old "blue screen of death."

DODEE
See, television, too. I can't even get a regular broadcast signal.

PHIL
Maybe it's, like, solar flares or something.

DODEE
Solar flares? Phil, something <u>massive</u> is going down out there.

PHIL
Dodee, the cable is out, that doesn't mean it's the end times.

Annoyed, Dodee mutters under her breath.

DODEE
Whatever. When the roving packs of mutants start swarming this place, you're gonna--

BAM BAM BAM. Dodee and Phil are both startled by a sudden POUNDING on their locked station door.

BIG JIM (O.S.)
This is Selectman Rennie! Open up!

PHIL
Who?

BIG JIM (O.S.)
Open the damn door, Bushey!

PHIL
Uh, look, unless you have some kind of warrant--

WHAM. An impatient Big Jim kicks the door open. Phil tries to stand in his way, but Big Jim LOOMS over the smaller man.

BIG JIM
I need to make an emergency broadcast. You're going to put me on the air right now, or I pull your license for good.

What else can Phil do? He nods at Dodee, who leads Big Jim to their broadcasting room.

INT. JUNIOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

Across town, WKIC is playing on a battery-operated radio in Junior's childhood bedroom, still decorated with high school football trophies and other ephemera from the popular local kid's past.

Junior is sitting on the edge of his bed, carefully balancing a HUNTING KNIFE by its sharp tip on his extended finger. He flips the knife into the air, catches it by the handle.

For a beat, Junior just stares at his reflection in the polished blade. With frightening calmness, he then holds the blade directly over his left wrist. He contemplates ripping into his own flesh, starts pressing the knife against a raised blue vein...

That's when the song is interrupted by an urgent voice:

FROM RADIO
Everyone, please stop what you're doing and listen.

Junior pauses, cocks his head. Did he really just hear that?

INT. DINER KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

In the back of the Sweetbriar Rose, a BUSBOY turns up his radio as waitress Angie stops working to listen.

FROM RADIO
This is Selectman Rennie. Uh, Big Jim Rennie. But this isn't a commercial.

EXT. HOLY REDEEMER CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

And in the parking lot of the Holy Redeemer Church, a DRIVER has turned up the radio in his pick-up truck for the rest of the PARISHIONERS now exiting morning service.

FROM RADIO
We have a... a serious situation in town, and it's very important that every motorist listening to my voice stops their vehicle NOW.

Clearly, everyone in town has started to pay attention.

INT. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Or *almost* everyone, as back in their rental car, Carolyn is arguing with her daughter Norrie while Big Jim's voice plays quietly beneath them.

NORRIE
You're the one who's addicted!

CAROLYN
I use my phone for *work*, not for sending naked pictures of myself to random boys.

NORRIE
For the millionth time, I was wearing underwear. And it was a joke!

Ignoring them, Alice turns up the radio.

FROM RADIO
Once again, every car that can hear my voice needs to pull over immediately. This is not a drill.

ALICE
Is anyone else hearing this?

FROM RADIO
I can't tell you if this is an act of terror or an... an Act of God, but I promise to keep everyone updated as we learn more.

NORRIE
It's just some stupid viral marketing thing, mom.

ALICE
I don't know...

Carolyn has just noticed another vehicle headed their way, a DELIVERY TRUCK about to make a stop in Chester's Mill.

CAROLYN
She's right, Alice. There are other people on the road. This is probably just some stunt to keep tourists in town a little--

Before she can finish that thought, the incoming delivery truck SMASHES against the invisible barrier's exterior. The ensuing blast COATS the outside of the barrier in a fiery collage of foodstuffs.

Seeing this, Alice SLAMS on the brakes, and the rental car stops just inches from the inside of the invisible wall. The tourists are now TRAPPED... but at least they're alive.

EXT. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

The understandably shaken women get out of their stopped car to inspect this impossible tableau.

ALICE
Is everyone all right?

CAROLYN
What is this? What... what are we seeing here?

And as if things couldn't get any worse, Norrie's body suddenly begins to TREMBLE.

ALICE
Norrie?

The girl COLLAPSES, and her parents both race to her side.

CAROLYN
NORRIE!

Norrie is convulsing on the ground, but it doesn't appear to be an ordinary seizure. She stares up at us with eyes WIDE OPEN, as she repeats a seemingly nonsensical phrase:

NORRIE
The pink stars are falling. The pink stars are falling in lines. The pink stars are falling...

Off Norrie's mothers, terrified by this gibberish, CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

On the other side of town, Julia is leading Barbie across an open field on their way to the hospital. As she walks, an overwhelmed Julia runs her fingers along the unending barrier, looking in vain for gaps.

JULIA
Christ, what <u>is</u> it?

BARBIE
No idea. Some kind of... experiment, maybe.

JULIA
And what, we're the guinea pigs? What the hell would anyone have to learn from Chester's Mill?

BARBIE
You tell me.

JULIA
Please, I'm a transplant, not a local. This gig was supposed to be temporary.

Julia looks at the seemingly endless barrier with concern.

JULIA (CONT'D)
It <u>is</u> temporary, isn't it? I mean, if this thing appeared out of thin air, maybe it'll disappear, too.

BARBIE
(doubting it)
Maybe.

JULIA
You think we might be stuck in here a while?

Barbie nods.

BARBIE
Even if what's wrong suddenly becomes right, the Army's apt to quarantine the whole town, at least for a while.

JULIA
What makes you say that?
(then; working it out)
You're military, aren't you?

Barbie gives Julia a flirtatious smile. The lady's sharp.

BARBIE
Fifteen pounds ago.

JULIA
Iraq?

He nods. Right again.

JULIA (CONT'D)
What'd you do over there?

Weighing how to answer, Barbie stares off at nothing in particular.

BARBIE
You know.
(then)
Shot a lot of hoops.

And just when Julia is about to call him on this dodge...

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
...help me...

...she and Barbie turn to see a BLOODSTAINED WOMAN shambling their way. She's used her own belt as a makeshift TOURNIQUET, but her right forearm is still bleeding from where her hand was SEVERED when the barrier came down.

WOMAN
(meekly)
I think I had an accident.

With that, she COLLAPSES to the grass.

JULIA
Jesus!

Julia and Barbie both race to her side.

JULIA (CONT'D)
How...?

BARBIE
She must have been reaching across when... whatever.

Barbie checks for a pulse.

JULIA (CONT'D)
But she's gonna be okay, right?
(beat)
We can still help her, right?

Barbie just looks up at Julia, and his expression says everything.

INT. MCCLATCHEY HOUSE - DAY

Having run the whole way home, teenager Joe McClatchey bursts into the foyer of his family's modest house.

JOE
Mom? Mom!

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Joe?

Startled, Joe turns to see ANGIE, still dressed in her waitress uniform. She looks as freaked out as the young man we now realize is her younger brother.

JOE
Ange. Where the hell is mom?

ANGIE
I don't know, you're the one who lives here. Where's dad?

JOE
Still on the road.

ANGIE
You're sure? A customer at the diner said there might have been some kind of chemical spill. I was worried maybe it was dad's rig or--

JOE
Chemical spill? Retard, it's nine-eleven outside!

Angie tires to make sense of this, as a frantic Joe keeps looking for signs of his mother's whereabouts.

ANGIE
I... I should get to the hospital. They'll need volunteers. They'll need--

JOE
Jesus.

Angie looks over at her brother, who's just found a NOTE left on a nearby table.

ANGIE
Joe? What is it?

JOE
Note from mom. She's having brunch with Uncle Steve. At Denny's.

ANGIE
So...?

Joe processes this, not yet sure whether to be depressed or excited about his future.

JOE
I'm on my own.

And off Angie, wondering what the hell she's missed, CUT TO:

INT. CHESTER'S MILL HEALTH CENTER - AFTERNOON

It's bedlam inside the local hospital, where a handful of NURSES and VOLUNTEERS struggle to triage the incoming wave of CASUALTIES. In the crowded waiting room, a young nurse is trying to bandage an older man's head.

NURSE
You gotta stay still for me, Mr. Dinsmore.

OLDER MAN
I just don't get it. What did my tractor even hit?

The waiting room's front doors whoosh open to reveal Julia and Barbie. The patients fall silent as they see that this duo is carrying the CORPSE of the handless woman.

JULIA
Does anyone know her?

NURSE
I, I think her name's Myra. From the library. Is she...?

Barbie nods, as two EMTs reverently take the woman's still-warm body. Meanwhile, a male orderly rushes over to greet Julia. He looks relieved to see her.

ORDERLY
Mrs. Shumway, thank God. Is the doc with you?

JULIA
What are you talking about? I thought he was here. Peter always works Sundays.

The orderly grows uncomfortable, not sure how to respond.

ORDERLY
Ma'am, your husband hasn't worked weekends in months.

Julia goes white. Whatever this means, it can't be good. Still, Barbie puts a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

BARBIE
Probably just a miscommunication. I'm sure he's home, worried sick about you.

Julia nods, but she doesn't look too convinced.

EXT. PRETTY VALLEY ROAD - AFTERNOON

Later that day, Deputy Linda Everett has diagonally parked her commandeered Prius at a makeshift roadblock close to the edge of the barrier. She's looking out beyond it here.

LINDA
Holy...

Arc around to reveal that Linda's staring at a massive throng of CABLE NEWS REPORTERS who have just started to arrive on the other side of the barrier. They're shouting questions at Linda, but she can't hear through the soundproof divide.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Stop screaming and help us!

Instead, the reporters turn to see a fleet of MILITARY TRUCKS roaring their way. Linda looks relieved to see the cavalry.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Finally.

But as this caravan comes to a halt, dozens of soldiers wearing LEVEL A HAZMAT SUITS leap out. First, they corral the angry reporters, then the soldiers begin establishing a fifty yard PERIMETER around Chester's Mill. Starting to grow concerned, Linda waves her arms, trying to get their attention.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Hey! You got people trapped in here!

One of the soldiers looks right at Linda, only to then TURN HIS BACK on her. The hell?

Off the troubled deputy, starting to wonder whether she's ever going to see her fiancé again, CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN HALL - AFTERNOON

Outside a surprisingly modern Town Hall, Duke's squad car is parked next to Big Jim's SUV. A gasoline GENERATOR is now loudly powering the building's electricity.

INT. TOWN HALL - CONTINUOUS

Inside Town Hall's spacious lobby, Big Jim walks out of his office to greet the sheriff.

BIG JIM
Duke.

DUKE
Jim. Appreciate your help with the roads. You saved some lives today.

Those words mean the world to Jim, though he does his best to downplay it.

BIG JIM
Well. Just doing my job and all that. How are your men holding up?

DUKE
Stretched thin, but they'll soldier on.

BIG JIM
For now. But what if this goes on days? Weeks?
(MORE)

BIG JIM (CONT'D)
We're going to need more manpower to maintain the peace.

DUKE
Jim--

BIG JIM
Just hear me out. During emergencies, selectmen have the power to authorize *auxiliary deputies*.

But Duke is already shaking his head.

DUKE
Look, I know you just want to help, but I'm the head law enforcement officer here, and you have zero official standing. At all. Until we hear otherwise from the county or above, you're not authorizing anything, understood?

Frustrated, Jim pushes his anger down someplace deep.

BIG JIM
Understood.

Duke gives a shallow tip of his hat before turning to leave, when Jim calls out after him.

BIG JIM (CONT'D)
One other thing. What should we do if people start asking about the propane?

Duke stops in his tracks. He turns back to glare at Jim.

DUKE
That's got nothing to do with this.

BIG JIM
Oh, <u>I</u> know that. But some people might find it hard to swallow that we just *happened* to start stockpiling generator fuel right before some Act of God took out all the power. Some people might get the idea that we saw this coming.

DUKE
We <u>didn't</u>.

BIG JIM
So we tell them the truth?

DUKE
That's your business. I have no idea what the hell you wanted with all that shit.

BIG JIM
Please. You may have been happy to turn a blind eye, but you're not dumb. You know exactly where that poison was headed.

Incensed, Duke gets right in Jim's face.

DUKE
I know I did what I had to do to keep this town solvent. To keep it safe.

BIG JIM
Of course. And I'll do my best to protect your secret.

DUKE
Are you threatening me? You?

BIG JIM
Not at all. Just reminding you what the lay of the land is.
(then)
We're all in this together.

Jim echoes what he told Rose in the diner, but now the words sound more like a WARNING than a source of comfort.

With nothing left to say, Duke can only storm off, leaving a quietly triumphant Big Jim to contemplate his next move.

EXT. HEALTH CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON

Later that day, a freshly stitched-up Barbie is smoking outside the hospital.

He's staring at the undeveloped land across the road from this place, another dense cluster of trees like the woods he fled this morning.

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Can I bum one?

Barbie turns to see Angie, Junior's (now ex) girlfriend.

BARBIE
Little young to be a nurse, aren't you?

ANGIE
Just a lowly candy striper.
(then)
I heard you came in with Dr. Shumway's wife. Julia?

He nods, hands her his pack.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
So you saw it?

BARBIE
What there is to see.

ANGIE
Some of the patients are describing it like we're stuck in a, a giant fishbowl.

Barbie shrugs. Maybe?

Angie looks into this attractive stranger's eyes as he lights his cigarette for her.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
I used to have fish. Goldfish. Won a pair at the carnival when I was five. But then one of them got sick and the other one... the other one fucking ate him, just pecked away at his friend until he was, like, dust. Did you even know they did that? Goldfish?

Barbie shakes his head, not quite sure how to respond. Angie just laughs, darkly. What a fucking day.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

And now we're watching this same meet-cute from across the street, where JUNIOR is spying on Barbie and Angie from behind the cover of the dense treeline. The young man clearly doesn't like what he sees. He nervously thumbs his belt, where his KNIFE is now sheathed at his side.

EXT. HEALTH CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Meanwhile, a flirtatious Angie reaches out to touch Barbie's face, brushes his hair back to inspect the fresh stitches.

ANGIE
Cancer, right?

BARBIE
(taken aback)
Sorry?

ANGIE
Your sign. You're a cancer, yeah?

BARBIE
I don't really believe that shit.

ANGIE
And yet...

Barbie relents with a smile.

BARBIE
How'd you guess?

ANGIE
Just the vibe you give off -- sad little crab, always looking for a home other than that big bad shell you hide behind.

Barbie almost laughs at that, shakes his head.

BARBIE
Trust me, all I want is out of here.

ANGIE
Yeah. You and me both.

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Help!

Barbie and Angie turn to see our LOS ANGELES TOURISTS, Norrie and her two mothers.

CAROLYN
Please, we need help!

ALICE
I, I don't understand what's going on here, but our daughter's had some sort of... episode.

CAROLYN
"Episode?" It was a goddamn seizure!

ALICE
I know what a seizure looks like, Carolyn. I'm a doctor.

CAROLYN
You teach history!

Ignoring them, Angie reaches out to touch the shaken Norrie.

ANGIE
You okay, gorgeous?

Norrie nods, appreciative of this friendly new adult presence.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
Come on, let's get you looked at.

As she escorts the girl and her parents into the hospital, Angie looks back at an understanding Barbie. He bids her farewell with a little salute, before heading out, unaware of Junior still watching his every move...

EXT. JULIA'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

On the outskirts of town, Julia has finally arrived at her cottage-style house. She pulls out the electronic opener attached to her keychain, says a little prayer to herself as she aims it at the garage.

JULIA
Please God, just let his stupid car be in there.

And much to her relief, the door opens to reveal another hybrid still parked inside. Thrilled, Julia races into her home through the garage door...

INT. JULIA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

...only to find her foyer dark and silent.

JULIA
Peter? Peter, you home?

ARK ARK ARK! Startled, Julia turns to find HORACE, her husband's loyal Welsh Corgi. The dog comes bounding up to her, and a crestfallen Julia scratches behind his ears.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Where is he, boy? Where'd he go?

But the dog just whines for his supper, as a deeply troubled Julia is left wondering what's become of the one person in Chester's Mill she thought she knew.

INT. RADIO STATION - DUSK

Back inside WKIC, engineer Dodee is straining to listen to something on headphones, adjusting sliders at her console while Phil watches with interest.

DODEE
Huh.

PHIL
You got something?

DODEE
So regular receivers aren't strong enough to pull a signal through whatever's cut us off, but I used to use our broadcasting tower like an oversized *antenna* to grab cool-sounding feedback loops for my--

PHIL
Dodee, just tell me what you heard.

DODEE
This.

Flipping a switch, Dodee plays her intercepted transmission over speakers. The studio is instantly filled with an ETHEREAL VOICE.

PHIL
(mesmerized)
Sounds like an angel.

DODEE
Actually... I think it's Björk.

And as Dodee turns up the volume, we can indeed hear that singer's unique voice. But then it disappears.

DODEE (CONT'D)
Comes and goes like that. Sometimes it's music, sometime's it's, like, people's cell phone conversations.

PHIL
So who's filtering what gets through?

As Dodee considers this question, a MAN'S VOICE starts to cut through the static.

PHIL (CONT'D)
What now?

DODEE
I dunno, but I've been hearing some "victor bravo" shit. Military transmission, maybe?

PHIL
Turn it up.

Dodee does, and she and Phil can now hear the voice of a 40-something Army official we'll eventually learn is named COLONEL JAMES COX:

COLONEL COX (OVER SPEAKERS)
--but our best guess puts the dome over Chester's Mill at roughly forty thousand feet in height and--

The faint signal again craps out, as Dodee looks at her colleague with disbelief:

DODEE
Hold up, did he just call it a **dome**?

PHIL
Shut up a second.

Colonel Cox's voice returns, though less clearly than before.

COLONEL COX (OVER SPEAKERS)
--awaiting your authorization to fire a -kzzkt- with a medium-yield warhead at the exterior of the--

And now the signal disappears for good, but Phil's heard more than enough to suddenly look TERRIFIED.

PHIL
They're talking about a nuke.
(then)
They're talking about launching a goddamn nuke at us.

DODEE
And? That'll punch a hole in this thing, right?

PHIL
Maybe. But it'll also kill every living thing inside.

Dodee is understandably aghast.

DODEE
No way. They're on our side. Whatever's going on out there, those guys wouldn't risk killing civilians. Right?

Hearing the uncertainty in Dodee's voice, Phil just looks away. He's already weighing what to do with this information. Should they tell someone, and if so, who?

But as an Icelandic voice again ripples through the static, we CUT TO:

EXT. ROUTE 119 - DUSK

Barbie finally returns to his shitty compact car, still parked where he was forced to leave it earlier that day. He unlocks the passenger-side door and opens the glove compartment, looking around to make sure he's alone before stuffing the HANDGUN into his jacket pocket.

Barbie then opens the trunk, pulls out his military DUFFEL BAG. He slams the trunk shut, but when he does, he's taken aback to find JUNIOR standing right there.

JUNIOR
Evening.
(beat)
Need a hand?

Barbie shoulders his bag as he sizes up the ripped young guy standing before him.

BARBIE
I'm all right. Thanks.

JUNIOR
Hey, do we know each other?

BARBIE
Doubt it.

JUNIOR
You sure? Something about you looks so familiar. You're from around here, right?

Barbie just shakes his head, starts walking away.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)
I'm talking to you, asshole!

Hearing that word, Barbie stops. Drops his bag. Slowly turns around.

BARBIE
I don't know what I did to piss you off, but I promise... you don't want to start something here.

Clearly not aware he's dealing with a guy who put a man in the *ground* hours earlier, Junior gets right in Barbie's face.

JUNIOR
And what if I do?

Barbie is trying to maintain his cool, but he looks like he might actually beat this kid to death. Just when these two are about to come to blows, FLOODLIGHTS illuminate them both.

It's Duke, who's again driving with his deputy Linda in shotgun. Junior cools his shit the second he sees him.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)
Evening, Sheriff Perkins.

DUKE
Junior.

The sheriff turns his attention to a patched-up Barbie.

DUKE (CONT'D)
How you getting along?

BARBIE
All right.
(then; lying)
Everyone's been very welcoming.

DUKE
Well. Be seeing you.

With a nod, Duke drives off, and Barbie turns his attention back to Junior... only to find that the strange young man has already disappeared, having retreated back to the shadows.

INT. ANGIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Returning home after a long day of hell at the hospital, Angie flips on a light switch, but nothing happens. Shit, that's right, without a generator, she's in the dark.

Stumbling into her kitchen, Angie pulls out a book of matches. She lights one, illuminating a FIGURE standing directly behind her.

It's Junior. He grabs Angie, putting one hand over her mouth. With his free hand, he presses his hunting knife to the terrified woman's throat.

JUNIOR
Relax. Relax! It's me, Angie. It's me. Listen. My truck is right out back. If you do everything I say, I promise you won't--

No passive victim, Angie ELBOWS Junior hard in the sternum. He drops his blade, and Angie goes RUNNING for the door.

ANGIE
HELP ME! SOMEBODY--

That's when Junior TACKLES his smaller opponent. On their way to the ground, Angie's skull hits the edge of a Formica countertop with a sickening THUD.

Her body trembles for a moment, then falls still. Junior looks down at the unconscious woman with regret.

JUNIOR
I'm so sorry, Ange.

He kneels down, and kisses Angie on her bleeding forehead.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)
I didn't want it to go like this.

With that, he lovingly scoops her into his arms.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Back in the woods where his morning began, Barbie has hiked to a remote old CABIN. He drops his bag outside before venturing into the old structure's back door, already AJAR.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Barbie walks into what looks like the scene of some earlier STRUGGLE: furniture has been flipped, pictures have been broken, etc.

He goes to an overturned couch and pushes it back a few inches. Underneath, he finds the other BLUE TENNIS SHOE belonging to the man Barbie buried this morning. Must have been knocked off during their fight. Now that he's stuck in town indefinitely, Barbie's returned to the scene of his crime, one he was clearly forced to leave in a hurry.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pushing deeper into the cabin, Barbie now inspects its only bedroom, appointed with a little wooden chair and desk. He looks at the dead man's unmade bed, tries to imagine if he could actually sleep in it.

Barbie checks the closet, mostly empty. He opens a drawer in a night stand, nothing in it but some weird old porno magazines. Who the hell was this guy?

Spotting a little WASTEBASKET, Barbie tips out its contents onto the floor: candy wrappers and a few crumpled pieces of paper. Barbie picks up one of these scraps, unfolds it. It's just some random doodles and a few scratched out phone numbers. But when he flips the sheet over, Barbie FROWNS.

BARBIE
Shit.

The piece of paper is from a PRESCRIPTION PAD belonging to DOCTOR PETER SHUMWAY, Julia's missing husband.

Did this cabin belong to him? Is that who Barbie killed, the spouse of a fucking investigative reporter?

Realizing exactly how bad this might be for him, Barbie starts WIPING DOWN every surface he's touched, doing his best to eliminate any trace of prints.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

And with his best chance at shelter no longer a viable option, Barbie shoulders his bag and heads back into the night.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Elsewhere in Chester's Mill, teenager Joe McClatchey is sitting on the roof of the family barn, smoking another joint as he looks out at the small-scale military invasion unfolding on the other side of the barrier.

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Dude.

Joe turns to see one of his friends from school, an older kid named BEN DRAKE, who's just climbed onto this roof.

BEN
It looks like a movie.

Joe just takes another long drag.

BEN (CONT'D)
So both of your 'rents were really...?

JOE
Caught out. Yeah.

Ben takes a seat next to him. Tries some gallows humor.

BEN
Well, silver lining. Your house parties are gonna be sick.

But Joe doesn't exactly look elated.

JOE
You bring the stuff?

Ben hands him a little Ziplock. Joe opens the baggie and takes out two pills, dry-swallows them both.

BEN
You're hardcore. Tripping balls at the end of the world.

JOE
You think that's what this is? Armageddon?

Ben shrugs.

BEN
My mom thinks maybe it's natural, like some aurora borealis bullshit.

Joe shakes his head.

JOE
No. Feels more like we're under attack.

BEN
By who?

JOE
By whom. And I don't know. China? Martians? The goddamn future?

BEN
Christ. So, like, how do we fight back?

JOE
I've been thinking. This force field thing. It's gotta take a lot of energy to power it, right?

BEN
I guess?

JOE
Well, where the hell is all that power coming from? Is it somewhere out there, or is it....

Suddenly, Joe falls silent. His body is perfectly still.

BEN
Joe? Don't mess with me, man. That shit's not gonna hit you for another hour.

But that's when Joe's body begins to TREMBLE.

BEN (CONT'D)
JOE!

Like the teenage tourist Norrie before him, a convulsing Joe COLLAPSES, and begins repeating an eerily identical phrase:

JOE
The pink stars are falling. The pink stars are falling in lines. The pink stars are falling...

Ben is freaking out, but Joe just keeps repeating his mantra, over and over and over, as we CUT TO:

INT. FALLOUT SHELTER - NIGHT

Later that evening, Angie finally opens her eyes. She's horrified to learn that she's RESTRAINED to a small bed inside some kind of CONCRETE BUNKER. A single bare bulb illuminates a sink, toilet, and some old provisions.

A thick metal door creaks open to reveal Junior, who offers an apologetic smile.

JUNIOR
Hey, Angie.

As soon as she sees him, Angie begins to SCREAM.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)
Save your voice, babe. No one can hear us all the way down here.

ANGIE
Down...?

JUNIOR
My family's always been paranoid about security. This is our fallout shelter. You're safe here.

ANGIE
The hell are you talking about?

JUNIOR
I know how this must look, but I swear to Christ, in the long run, you're going to thank me for this.

Hearing the words "long run," Angie starts to CRY.

ANGIE
Oh my God. You've lost your goddamn mind.

JUNIOR
No, I'm the only person who understands what's really going on here. All I ask for is patience.

ANGIE
Moron! You don't think people will look for me? When they find out what you did, you're going to Shawshank for the rest of your goddamn life!

But Junior just looks at her with confidence.

JUNIOR
Patience.

Angie once again starts to SCREAM, as Junior exits, closing the thick door behind him and instantly MUTING her cries.

EXT. OLD SHED - CONTINUOUS

Above ground, Junior emerges from the shelter's entrance, an old steel shed in a BACKYARD somewhere in Chester's Mill. He's padlocking the entrance to this subterranean bunker when someone appears behind him.

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
Junior?

Junior wheels around to see BIG JIM RENNIE. But instead of freaking out, Junior gives this man a warm smile.

JUNIOR
Dad.

That's right, Big Jim is Junior's FATHER, and this is the backyard of the same house the men still share to this day.

BIG JIM
The heck are you doing out here?

JUNIOR
I heard you on WKIC, sounded like we might need the old shelter. But it's... covered in mold down there, every inch.

BIG JIM
Least of our worries now. All that matters is you're okay.

Unaware that he's standing directly above the innocent woman Junior just imprisoned, Big Jim EMBRACES his son.

JUNIOR
Whatever's going on, I want to help.

BIG JIM
And I appreciate that, but your studies--

JUNIOR
No. School is out there, I'm in here. And I want to help. As long as it takes.

Big Jim looks at his only son with pride. He thinks for a moment, finally asks:

BIG JIM
You ever considered a career in law enforcement?

And off a gobsmacked Junior, already fantasizing about the possibilities, CUT TO:

INT. JULIA'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

With her dog Horace asleep at her feet, Julia is hard at work on her laptop. Refusing to let her husband's disappearance stop her from doing her job, Julia is mocking up tomorrow's 72-point headline. She can only think of one word to describe the day's unexplained horrors: **TRAGEDY**

Suddenly, Julia hears a noise downstairs. It's someone KNOCKING at her front door.

JULIA
Peter.

She leaps over Horace and races for the stairs, praying this might finally be her wayward husband returning home.

EXT. JULIA'S FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

But when she flings open her front door, Julia is surprised to see another man entirely standing before her.

JULIA
Oh.

It's BARBIE.

BARBIE
Sorry to bother. The hospital gave me your address. I just wanted to see if your husband...

Julia shakes her head.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
Shit. I'm sorry.

JULIA
No. It was... it was nice of you to think of us.

BARBIE
You're sure there's nowhere else in town he might be? You guys don't have a lake house or something?

Julia almost laughs.

JULIA
Peter and I can barely cover the mortgage on this place most months. Anyway, I already checked his usual haunts. No luck. I'm hoping he's out volunteering with the EMTs.

BARBIE
Makes sense. Your guy, what's he look like, anyway?

JULIA
Dark hair, good build, about your height.
(a little embarrassed)
You know, handsome.

BARBIE
Well, I'll keep an eye out.

He starts to leave, but after a beat, Julia calls out to him.

JULIA
Barbie.

He stops cold, turns to look back at her.

JULIA (CONT'D)
You have someplace to stay tonight?

Oh. Fuck. Barbie hadn't been expecting this.

BARBIE
Figured I'd just rough it. Not my first time under the stars.

JULIA
Don't be crazy. You said it yourself, this might be a while.
(beat)
You should stay here.

BARBIE
Oh, no, I couldn't--

JULIA
We've got a guest room and everything. Please. I insist.

Barbie takes a moment with this, considers the possibilities.

BARBIE
That's very kind of you. Thanks.

With a smile, Julia gestures for Barbie to follow her inside, unwittingly welcoming the man who may very well have murdered her husband into their home.

As the front door closes behind them, CUT TO:

EXT. PRETTY VALLEY ROAD - NIGHT

On the other side of town, Linda has returned to the invisible barrier with Duke. All the two of them can do is watch helplessly as countless SCIENTISTS and SOLDIERS continue surveying the perimeter around Chester's Mill without ever acknowledging its inhabitants.

Wistful, Linda reaches out to again touch the invisible wall.

LINDA
Rusty and I were supposed to be in Derry today. For the game.
(then; sadly)
But I told him if we were ever gonna afford a honeymoon, we both had to put in more overtime...

Duke isn't quite sure what to say to that. He already feels guilty as hell.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Why <u>us</u>? I mean, why the hell would anyone pick Chester's Mill for anything?

And now her boss just stares down at his boots.

DUKE
(softly)
Maybe we're being punished.

Linda turns to look back at him.

LINDA
Sorry?

DUKE
You're good police, Linda... but there's a lot I've tried to protect you from. About this place.

LINDA
Like what?

Duke clears his throat, trying not to get emotional. Then he looks at the barrier. For the first time, the sheriff reaches out to touch the strange force field for himself. The hair on his arm stands on end as he feels the initial tingle. Huh.

His curiosity satisfied, Duke looks back at his deputy:

DUKE
Last year, Big Jim Rennie came to me and--

But that's when something inside Duke Perkins begins to HUM.

Feeling a strange tingling sensation, he looks down at his uniform shirt... just in time to see his PACEMAKER come EXPLODING OUT OF HIS CHEST.

Splattered with a fine mist of blood, Linda looks at the fresh hole in Duke with horrified bewilderment. What the hell just happened?

Not quite sure himself, Duke Perkins collapses. He's dead.

As Linda opens her mouth to unleash a piercing scream, we HARD CUT TO:

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Silence. Barbie is alone in one of Julia's cozy, eerily quiet spare bedrooms, wondering how the hell his day ended here.

He tosses his duffel bag onto a fold-out bed, then begins looking for any more clues about Julia's husband. But this room's walls are lined with nothing but framed stories from Julia's days as a reporter in Chicago.

Returning to his duffel bag, Barbie UNZIPS it and finally reveals the item he was sent to Chester's Mill to obtain. It's not drugs or bricks of cash, but a SMALL BLACK BOX, about the size and thickness of a modern Apple TV.

It appears to be made of onyx or hard plastic, and the lid of the box is adorned with a UNIQUE SYMBOL, one that looks like an elaborate character from some ancient language.

Barbie OPENS the lid of the small box... to reveal that it's COMPLETELY EMPTY. He mutters under his breath:

BARBIE
Why the hell would anybody die for this?

CRASH. Barbie's startled by the sound of glass breaking elsewhere in this house, followed by SCREAMING.

Tossing the strange box back into his open bag, a concerned Barbie races out of the guest room.

INT. DEN - CONTINUOUS

Julia is sitting on the edge of a desk in her husband's DEN, which is decorated with various diplomas and medical credentials.

Entering this room, Barbie immediately notices the smashed remains of a framed picture that the clearly distraught Julia just threw against a wall.

BARBIE
Julia...?

JULIA
You must think I'm an idiot.

Uh-oh. Barbie tenses.

JULIA (CONT'D)
I'm a goddamn investigative reporter, and I can't see what's going on right under my nose.

BARBIE
What are you--

JULIA
I just found this hidden in the back one of Peter's drawers.

Julia holds up a CELL PHONE.

JULIA (CONT'D)
I've never seen this before in my life, but my husband's been using it for months.
(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)
He made hundreds of calls on this thing, all to the exact same person.
(beat)
A woman named Eloise.

Shit. Barbie tries to play it cool, but he recognizes this name immediately. It's the name of the woman Barbie called right before the dome came down.

BARBIE
(nervously)
You have any idea who that is...?

JULIA
Of course I do. It must be his mistress.

Relieved, Barbie reaches down to pick up the smashed picture. Inside its frame is a photo of Peter Shumway with his wife from happier times. No question about it, this is *definitely* the same man Barbie buried this morning. Shit.

BARBIE
This is him, huh?

A devastated Julia can barely muster a nod. Barbie tries to offer some solace.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
Look, there's no point in jumping to conclusions--

JULIA
I'm not. Things have been... off between us for a while now. I thought the move would help. A fresh start, you know? Christ, I gave up everything for him.

Barbie shakes his head, looks this woman in the eye, and tells her the truth:

BARBIE
Listen to me. A man would have to be out of his mind to step out on a woman like you.

For a beat, Julia simply looks at this younger man. Maybe it's just the aftereffects of this traumatic day, but something overtakes her.

She grabs Barbie, pulls him close... and KISSES him deeply.

At first, Barbie resists, gently pulling away. How the hell can he do this to the same woman he just turned into a widow? But as a smoldering Julia stares at him, whatever better angels Barbie once possessed are soon vanquished.

And as Barbie kisses her back with equally violent passion, our camera drifts away from this duo, craning out the den's open window.

EXT. CHESTER'S MILL - VARIOUS - NIGHT

As Arcade Fire's "My Body Is A Cage" (or something similarly operatic) starts to play, we float up and over the captive town of Chester's Mill. Each and every one of its houses looks like a story, a wellspring of secrets and lies bubbling beneath the relentless pressure of the dome.

We soar all the way across town until we reach the tall tree with the same BIRD NEST where our story began. The newly hatched chick has been joined by a few other hungry mouths, but their mother is nowhere to be seen.

WHAM. That's when Mama Bird flies straight for this nest, only to be REBUFFED by the invisible barrier. Heartbreakingly, this bird was trapped on the other side, leaving her young ones starving and alone.

But now we join this distraught mother bluebird by cutting OUTSIDE the dome for the first and only time in our series.

Zooming out, we pull past throngs of confused scientists, breathless reporters and worried loved ones, until the massive dome around Chester's Mill finally comes into view.

Though transparent, the dome starts to become visible as light is subtly warped at its curves. From this viewpoint, we can finally see the structure's terrifying scope.

And just as the Arcade Fire dies out, something extraordinary happens. A powerful military spotlights sweeps over the dome, and an IMAGE flashes across its transparent surface, shimmering like a mirage -- <u>it's the same UNIQUE SYMBOL that was on the empty box Barbie took from Julia's late husband</u>.

But the mysterious symbol soon fades from view as suddenly as it appeared. The military spotlight then sweeps past us, filling the frame with blinding whiteness, as we--

SMASH TO BLACK.

<u>END OF EPISODE ONE</u>