FRIENDLY

by

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EXT. DESERT - DUSK

A painted desert landscape. The sky is a palette of reds. In the distance, a ranch house is the sole building evident.

Passing you slowly, a Golden Retriever trudging back home.

EXT. DESERT RANCH HOUSE - DUSK

A YOUNG GIRL, 7, comes out, onto the front porch: the essence of innocence, exuberance and joy. Her eyes light up.

YOUNG GIRL
Casey! Mom, dad! Casey’s back!
(rushes down porch steps)
Casey! Where have you been?

She embraces the Golden Retriever that comes into the arc of the porch light.

INT. DESERT RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

The Golden Retriever lies on its side near the fireplace: mangy, dirty, its breathing ragged. That doesn't stop the Young Girl from lavishing attention, petting and hugging it.

The GIRL'S FATHER and MOTHER, 40's, watch on, concerned.

YOUNG GIRL'S MOTHER
You think he's okay?

Father kneels down, and pets the dog's head. The dog is huffing and puffing. A vacant stare to its eyes.

YOUNG GIRL'S FATHER
He's just dehydrated. I think so.

YOUNG GIRL
Bad Casey. Don't you ever run away again. Don't you ever.

INT. DESERT RANCH - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Father takes a look inside, from the doorway:

Young Girl sleeps with an angelic smile, one arm draped over the still panting dog. He closes the door on them.

INT. DESERT RANCH - MASTER BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Father and Mother are in bed. A POUNDING.... and AGAIN. Father awakes. He shakes his head... and hears a POUNDING.

INT. DESERT RANCH - HALLWAY - MORNING

Father, in pajamas, walks down the hallway. The door to the bedroom is open - he peeks in. The girl and the dog are not there. A trail of toys. A POUNDING, from down the hall.

INT. DESERT RANCH - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Father walks into the living room. Empty. A POUNDING, coming from outside. He crosses to the front door.

EXT. DESERT RANCH - PORCH - MORNING

Father opens the front door. He looks to his left.

The dog is on the porch, but hardly a dog anymore. It's difficult to tell where fur becomes meat, where meat becomes blood streaming off the porch. Blood is upon the Young Girl as well, whose nightie is splashed and speckled in red.

She smashes the bat into the dog's head one more time, and turns, hearing her Father. He looks at her. Bright eyes shine forth, glazed, from a face dripping with gore.

YOUNG GIRL
Hi, daddy. When's breakfast?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
“Absolute destruction of the pathogen, is key to survival....”

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - NIGHT

STALKING P.O.V.

Approaching a building. A light in a room on the third floor.

LEE (V.O.)
“*Muscador albus* fungi, for example, has proved in studies....”

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

The female voice belongs to LEE, 20’s, an attractive blonde. She speaks into a small recorder.

LEE
“... to act as just that sort of anti-fumigant in plants....”

Lee, goggles and gloves, is close at work, hunched over a small plastic “aquarium”.

LEE
“... Destroying sixty-percent of all harmful microorganisms....”

DOCUMENTS are scattered on either end of her work station. One sheet bears an NIDP logo, a research grant.

Lee intently searches through her notes.

LEE
“There is no reason not to assume, therefore, that the same cannot be replicated in living creatures....”

INT. LAB DARK CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

STALKING P.O.V.

Coming down the hall.

LEE (V.O.)
“... A strain of *Muscador*, or some as yet unknown fungal organism, that works in tandem with its host....”

There is a light, coming from under a CLOSED DOOR.

INT. LAB

Lee opens the top of the aquarium, revealing...

THE AQUARIUM IS LAID WITH ROTTING MEAT, SEETHING WITH MAGGOTS

LEE
“Fighting off predatory and other unfriendly microorganisms, to the overall benefit of the species....”

Using tweezers, she drops in... A FLY, its wings clipped.

Lee shuts the top, and stands back, clicking off the recorder.

LEE
Of course, all experiments have resulted in the host subject getting its teensy little ass kicked.

THE FLY DARTS, TRIES ESCAPING - BUT IS CONSUMED BY THE MAGGOTS

LEE
(to fly)
You need new friends.

The LIGHTS turn off. Lee starts.

LEE
... Five more minutes?

The lights go back on. At the switch stands a SECURITY GUARD.

SECURITY GUARD
You ran out of five minutes hours ago, Lee.

LEE
Please? I think I’m on to something.

The Security Guard comes close, looking in to the aquarium.

SECURITY GUARD
(grunts a laugh)
What? The eating habits of flies and maggots?

LEE
Not exactly.

Lee kneels, peering through the aquarium.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

LEE (V.O.)
The biology of friends and enemies.

FIVE YOUNG CUB SCOUTS are busy setting up a campsite, in an empty desert camp ground, while Cub Scout leader...

FRANK VAN VLIET, 30’s, fine in his blues-and-yellows, binoculars wound round his neck, crosses the camp towards...

The avuncular DON, 60’s, exits a sleek SILVER MOTOR HOME, parked nearby.

DON
Hey! There you are. Don Barker.

FRANK
(shakes his hand)
Frank Van Vliet.

DON
Nice troop you got there.

FRANK
Oh, great bunch of boys. Love them.

MARY (O.S.)
Don?

Sweet-natured MARY, 60’s, leans out of the silver trailer.

MARY
Is that Frank? Tell him the boys need anything, they holler.

DON
They’re on a camping expedition, Mary. They don’t have time for quiche and crumpets.

MARY
When are you going to be back? I’m mixing
(eyes the cub scouts)
um, cereal.

DON
Just showing Frank here the mine. Keep mine crispy.
(leans in to Frank)
High-balls. You take up all sorts of hobbies when you’re retired.

FRANK
Mum’s the word.
(turns to Cub Scouts)
Guys? We’re checking it out right now. Meet me up when you’re done.

The cheery Cub Scouts RESPOND with enthusiasm, and go back to work. Frank and Don make their way to the edge of camp.

DON
You felt that trembler? Don’t want you guys to go poking around in that thing if it isn’t safe.

FRANK
Absolutely, Sir.

He taps his belt. Don sees a holstered side-arm. Frank winks.

FRANK
Safety first.

DON
That shaker’s the most excitement we’ve had all year.

FRANK
Oh, I doubt that.

They reach a faded trail head. The ancient sign: MINE --->.

DON
Not less you count that dog chasing rabbits through camp the other day.... After you.

A breeze kicks up, as both men wander away up the trail.

THE SOUND OF AN ELEVATOR “DING!”

INT. LAB CORRIDOR - MORNING

Hands full of documents, cell phone wedged between ear and shoulder, Lee walks down the corridor.

LEE (IN PHONE)
... Kira, honey, girlfriend. Stop worrying. I'll be right there next to you in my hideous bridesmaid dress like you planned. Have I ever let you down before?... Okay. Right. See you in a few.

She sees the elevator doors are about to close. She makes a run for it, and jams her foot in the doors just in time.

They re-open, revealing JAKE, 20’s, good-looking, slightly built, carrying a knapsack and backpack.

He sees Lee. It’s tense, and awkward.

LEE
I’ll wait for the next one.

JAKE
You do that.

Her cell RINGS. Documents fly, as she fumbles to answer it.

LEE
Shit.
(into cell)
Yes, Steve, on my way. Love you.

She crouches to pick them up. Jake drops his backpack against the elevator door and jumps in to help.

LEE
I can handle it.

JAKE
And I was kidding --

LEE
I said I can handle it!

JAKE
So make me stop.

INT. MOVING ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Lee fumbles to keep her papers straight, and away from Jake.

JAKE
Why you backstabbing b....

Jake has one of her papers. Lee snatches it back from him.

LEE
It’s a totally different proposal.

JAKE
Really?

LEE
Yeah, really. All new. From scratch.

JAKE
There’s no way. Deadline’s in two weeks. The only way you can make it is if you send in <u>our</u> proposal.

Jake’s cell RINGS. He flips it open.

LEE
Would you let me?

JAKE (INTO CELL)
Babe, I swear, two minutes and I’m there. Ciao....
(flips it shut, to Lee)
Hell no.

LEE
Fine. I’m doing my own thing.

JAKE
Of course. It’s always about you.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

Jake and Lee exit the building, Jake ahead of her.

LEE
Why do we have to do this?

Her CELL rings again. Jake turns.

JAKE
Why, what? Fight? Because we’re not together anymore. Compete? Because we’re not together. Shall I go on?

He turns, and makes his way for a parked orange Volkswagen CAMPMOBILE, parked at the curb.

Now his CELL is ringing again. Lee catches up to him.

LEE
Not together? Are you kidding me?!

They both answer their cells at the exact same moment:

JAKE
I’ll be there!

LEE
I’m coming!

They both hang up. Jake throws his things into the back - the rear windshield re-opens - he bangs it down shut.

Lee opens her mouth - Jake throws up his hands.

JAKE
What?!

She looks at him. And pulls a key-chain, dangling them.

LEE
Are you driving, or am I?

Jake grabs the keys from her, and goes to the driver’s door.

Lee makes a gun with her fingers, aims, and “shoots” him.

O.S. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

EXT. DESERT LOCATIONS - DAY

P.O.V. - A HAND SHAKILY HOLDS A GUN

Staggering down a tiny trail, HEAVING, GROANING.

CUT TO:

Staggering towards the sleek silver trailer.

FRANK (O.S.)
Don! Don! Open up! Now, Don!

Gropes for the door to the trailer - turns the knob - opens the door - it’s too dark inside to focus.

FRANK (O.S.)
... Don?...

MARY, INSANE WITH RAGE, GOES FOR OUR THROAT.

O.S. - BLAM!

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

A VOLKSWAGEN CAMPMOBILE RACES AWAY FROM US

Down a deserted stretch of road, along a shallow cliff-face. Some rocks have spilled into the road. The van has hit one.

The wheels smoke, as it fish-tails. The back flies open, a cooler flies out, hits the pavement, and smashes all over the highway. Bottles of beer break and spill their precious cargo.

The van slows to a stop. All the doors open.

CLOSER

Lee and Jake come out from the cab, Jake from the driver’s side, Lee the passenger. Coming out from the side door are:

KIRA, 20’s, cute in that sweet-girl’s-probably-wild way.

CODY, 20’s, caught in a Nick-Nolte mugshot-moment, one that must have lasted all night.

STEVE, 20’s, Adonis-perfect, tanned, chiseled, ivories gleaming even from afar.

BRITNEY, 20’s, a stacked-and-packed peroxide blonde.

They mill and react (AD-LIB).

CODY
Goddamnit every bottle of beer we had! What's wrong with you, man?!

JAKE
Do you see all these rocks, Cody?

LEE
I told you about the twine.

CODY
And where the hell's I-40?

JAKE
Kiss me if you two're gonna gang me.

KIRA
Do we have to fight the whole way?

CODY
(puts an arm around Jake)
Did I mention yet, worst bachelor party ever?

BRITNEY
Hey!

CODY
No offense, Brit. You were bomb. When you weren’t all over Jakey-wakey here.

Britney smirks, kissing Jake on the cheek. Lee makes a face.

CODY
But me, I got two days till I drag ball and chain here down the aisle...

KIRA
Such an asshole.

CODY
Fine, our, “big wedding.” Now first stop out, my best friend loses all our suds?! Dude. You're fired.

LEE
I told you that tie would break.

JAKE
It wasn't the tie for two-hundred miles, it was those rocks, okay?
(to Steve)
How's it look?

STEVE
(inspecting tire - stands)
Seems fine. I don’t hear anything.

Steve kicks the tire. The rusted rear hood-flap falls off.

KIRA
Lee. Your car has leprosy.

JAKE
So great. No big. Let’s go.

CODY
Fuck me, no big! I'm looking at fifty bucks in the road!

KIRA
Cody! Fucking was an accident!

JAKE
(grabs a map)
Fine. Let's find the next town, I'll pay for whatever we lost.

BRITNEY
Guys, I told you, I've got back-up.

She shakes a baggy of weed. Steve moves closer to kiss Lee, but Lee arches her neck, resisting his advances. Jake grunts.

JAKE
(muttering)
Loo. Zer.

STEVE
What did you say to me?

LEE
Hey, HEY! Time out here!... Look. I know it's supposed to be a friendly little road-trip, but we got six of us crammed together in my van, it's hot, Jake's driving a little crazy --

JAKE
I was not driving crazy! Christ!

LEE
And six people was never my idea. But, Jake decides to tag along --

KIRA
Lee? Honey? Girlfriend?
(puts an arm around her)
You might want to drop it.

Jake fumes. He consults the map, shrugging Britney off.

LEE
Well, it's getting late. Do we really want to drive all night to Kingman?

JAKE
(studies map, odometer)
There’s a camp spot - let's see - odometer's eighty - we left Williams at five, no, six....

CODY
Yo, Rainman. Where you taking us?

JAKE
What she said.

Jake swivels and pushes the map forward, pointing.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

JAKE (V.O.)
"Friendly."

The Volkswagen Van, the rear window hatch flapping loose, turns off I-40, and onto a narrow road that leads due South. An ancient wooden sign reads: FRIENDLY/2 MILES.

A spindly DOOBIE BROTHERS-LOOKIN' MUTHERFUCKER, with a backpack, is coming towards them along the roadside. The hitchhiker grins and thumbs a ride.... The van passes. His grin disappears, as his thumbing hand becomes the bird.

INT. VOLKSWAGEN VAN - MOVING - DAY

There's an attempt at better spirits. As MUSIC pumps, Britney smokes weed and does a mock-strip tease. Steve and Cody urge her on. Kira looks uncomfortable.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Music still pumping, the van slows to a stop and Cody emerges from the side-door, clutching his crotch.

CODY
Well, I’m thinking about the goddamn beer! Sorry!

He runs as fast as someone who really has to go can.

IN THE CAB OF THE VAN

Jake and Lee sitting next to one another. It’s hot, they’re sweating, the MUSIC is going. Both are unhappy.

JAKE
Why aren't you back there keeping an eye on stud-muff?

LEE
Why aren't you?

JAKE
I'm driving.

LEE
I'm keeping an eye on your driving....
(grunts)
A stripper. How very original.

JAKE
We hit it off.

LEE
Let me guess. Wannabe actress finds out your dad's Mr. Big Hollywood Producer. Have you even slept with her yet?... At least do that, Jake. Get something out of it.

JAKE
So where's the point when we're friends again?

LEE
Most couples, when they break up? Don't go on road-trips together.

JAKE
Cody’s my best-friend --

LEE
Kira’s mine! You promised you were going to fly out --

JAKE
And we didn't break up, Lee.

LEE
Yes, I did, Jake.

She glares out the window. He stares straight ahead. Beat.

LEE
And I resent the “it’s always about me” thing... it’s not....

JAKE
I take it back. You can’t help that.

Lee turns on him. But he’s grinning at his joke.

Lee pretends sulk for a bit. Then smiles to herself --

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! They turn, startled:

Cody is there, slapping the window and smearing his lips against the glass, to be funny. He laughs, and jumps back in the van. Lee and Jake exchange glances....

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The van zooms past us.

INT. VW VAN - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Jake notices something.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

The Volkswagen van slows to a stop, where the road runs through an old ranch. The ranch house is decrepit, machinery and junk scattered all around. The area looks abandoned.

Jake and Lee exit. The sliding door opens, and the others exit. A breeze soughs, a barn door swings lazily.

AN OLD WOMAN, 70's, exits the ranch house, and slowly makes her way towards them. She smiles, and waves.

CODY
Friendly? Population one?...

The van CREAKS and bounces. They all step back, exchanging glances - it came from around the side.

Jake makes his way around. He turns the corner of the Van...

A MONSTER JUMPS IN HIS PATH! Jake darts back - they start.

The DEFORMED MAN, 30's

is a monstrous Dr. Frankenstein reject: built like a brick sh*t-house, skin seeps down over ugly bulbous features in Silly-Putty folds, almost hiding a mindless, little-boy grin.

The deformed man laughs, and laughs, at his obvious joke.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)
Bobby John, what are you doing to those young people? Shame on you!

The Old Woman smiles warmly. She wears a flowered skirt, a crocheted shawl, granny-glasses, and carries her knitting.

OLD WOMAN
Don't mind Bobby John. Just a big ol' bunny rabbit, wouldn't swat a fly. I said shame on you, Bobby! Now what do you say to these folks?

Bobby John looks ashamed, staring at his toes.

BOBBY JOHN
Sorry, Mama.

OLD WOMAN
You finish with those eggs?

Bobby John lifts an egg basket. It has one egg in it.

OLD WOMAN
I thought not. Go on, now! Get.

Bobby John mopes away, like a lumbering Quasimodo, towards a fading red barn. The Old Woman turns back to the others.

OLD WOMAN
Mr. Van Vliet come in this morning, he and Barker are checking the mine out. We had that shaker.

They exchange confused glances. She points to a side road.

OLD WOMAN
This road goes right on through to the campgrounds. You could walk it --
(lowers her glasses)
My, but those Cub Scout uniforms have changed, haven't they?

JAKE
We're - not Cub Scouts.

OLD WOMAN
Oh? You with that Church thing?

LEE
We're not with anyone, ma'am.

KIRA
We're from the highway.

CODY
Here for the beer, grandma!

Kira smacks his arm.

OLD WOMAN
Well the highway’s another mile on if you keep going --

JAKE
What about Friendly? That way?

Jake points down the road they’re already traveling.

OLD WOMAN
Well, yes, but... Friendly's not really a town, not anymore.

The others look askance at Jake. He shrugs back at them.

OLD WOMAN
Hasn't been for years --

CODY
A store? Is there any kind of store?

OLD WOMAN
There's Lomy's place, I guess. He's probably closing in - gosh, you won’t make it --

CODY
Got it. Thank you. Let’s roll.

They all pile quickly back into the Volkswagen van. The Old Woman follows them, coming to the driver's window.

OLD WOMAN
Say, you kids hungry? I can whip up something nice. Used to call me "Cafeteria Queen" - Florence-Eyeman? You like mac-and-cheese? Oh, I do a mac-and-cheese, those girls still write me on my mac-and-cheese.
(off Jake, grinding gears)
I'll make some tea, Bobby John'll kill a chicken for supper - BOBBY JOHN! KILL SOMETHING, WILL YOU?

Too late. The van speeds away from the ranch, down the road. The Old Woman just grins widely, waving to them.

She looks over. Bobby John appears in the barn doorway, an ugly meat cleaver in hand, clutching a chicken by the neck.

OLD WOMAN
Sorry, Bobby. False alarm.

EXT. FRIENDLY - DAY

"Friendly" is a small Main Street town, the cardboard cut-out of hundreds of Main Street towns across America, a cross of sensible 19th-Century planning and modern 1950's styling. Friendly is clearly dried-up and abandoned: boarded shops long gone, empty houses, flaking paint, weeds on the move.

Down the street near a classic white spired church, gathered PARISHIONERS are busy readying an event, unloading banners and supplies from a long yellow school-cum-church BUS.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

The Volkswagen comes up the road that becomes the central thoroughfare, and skids to a stop in front of GENERAL STORE.

Everyone piles out. Cody makes a bee-line for the store.

CODY
Trust me, soon as we all get some Vitamin Beer in our system....

Jake tosses Cody a wad of bills.

JAKE
I said I'd pay for it.

CODY
My MAN!

Cody heads into the general store.

Steve frowns at the tire again.

STEVE
We got a spare if we need to...?

LEE
A spare. There’s no tire iron.

STEVE
We're driving across three States with no tire-iron?! Lee, honey....

He moves closer to kiss her. Again, she resists, with a smile.

STEVE
I'll see if they have one.

He makes for the store. Kira comes up close to Lee.

KIRA
(quietly aside)
God, Lee. Side of beefcake or what? You sure he’s not gay?

LEE
Oh, stop.

KIRA
Make’s a nice sub for Jake, that’s all I’ll say.
(off Lee’s look)
Better make sure Cody doesn’t buy out the store.

Kira leaves Lee, going for the general store. Lee makes a face. She sees Britney, pointing and jumping. Bounce, bounce.

BRITNEY
Oh, Jake, look! Antiques!
(takes Jake's arm)
Let's go check it out.

Jake resists, but she drags him away. Lee is alone.

She stares out at the church group. They are stretching a banner across the street, that reads: HIS BLOOD SAVES.

Her foot touches something. She looks down at...

A “DAISY CHAIN” OF MUSHROOMS, growing in a ring in the dirt.

A breeze kicks up... a sudden SHIFTING. Lee turns.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Kira stares around her: the general store is nearly wall-to-wall, ceiling-to-ceiling antlers, animal heads, all things hunting-related. She is aghast at the gaudiness.

Cody tromps up the aisle, flabbergasted.

CODY
Goddamit, I don't believe it, this is not happening. They've got no, repeat, no, beer.

SHERMAN (O.S.)
Of course not. And God bless it.

SHERMAN, 40's, appears: hair slicked down, brown suit and tie, grinning and smoking a pipe like a cheery Bob Dobbs.

SHERMAN
Welcome to Friendly.

Cody and Kira gape at him. He extends a hand to shake.

SHERMAN
Sherman Kleberg.

CODY
No beer? You run this store?

SHERMAN
(chuckles)
My wife thinks she helps. Judy!

JUDY, 40's, appears: June Cleaver reborn, with pink gingham skirt and coiffured pink-tinted hair. She grins wide.

JUDY
Hey there! Looking for the sodee pop?

EXT. GENERAL STORE - STREET PORCH - DAY

Lee moves towards the SHIFTING sound... a FIGURE in a creaky rocking chair, on the far-side porch of the general store.

LEE
Oh. Hi there.

FIGURE
Hello. Enjoying Friendly?

LEE
No. Just passing through.

He seems to be looking out to the church. She approaches.

LEE
So what's going on over there...?

She stops. The Indian (LOMY, 40's) is a weathered hulk. And clearly blind, by the boiled-egg eyeballs staring emptily away.

He pets a tiny CHIHUAHUA in his arms. It growls quietly at Lee.

LOMY
Oh, church folk again. Friendly's good for Christian services. We got a nice old church for that.

LEE
Ah.

LOMY
I'm not Christian myself.

LEE
Me neither. Not that I'm anything, really.

LOMY
That's too bad. Yes, that's a shame.

LEE
Why? What are you?

Lomy chuckles, and swivels his head to "observe" her.

LOMY
I'm cursed.

EXT. ANTIQUES STORE - DAY

Jake and Britney approach the decrepit antiques store. All the windows are covered in old newsprint: out of business.

BRITNEY
Darn! It's closed.

JAKE
Permanently, looks like.

Jake puts a hand to her hair, and brushes it aside....

Britney turns. And the smile is back, broad and rehearsed, like an actor stepping on stage. She pushes up against him.

BRITNEY
It's so cool you taking me to meet your dad in Cali - hey! I got an idea. Let's do it. Right here, up against the wall, in front of those churchies over there.

Jake pulls away.... She touches his chin with her finger.

BRITNEY
You are mine, Jakey-wakey.

She sashays across the street, back to the Van. Jake watches her move. He turns, facing the shop... and frowns.

LEE (V.O.)
Cursed?

EXT. GENERAL STORE - PORCH - DAY

Lee stares at Lomy, who grins and taps his forehead.

LOMY
With the sight. I saw the Earth, displeased. Now the Earth will take back what it's lent out.

LEE
I'm sorry, I'm not following you.

LOMY
Us. It will take back us.

Lomy smiles, and rocks. Lee watches him: *Oooh-kay.*

LEE
Well, I'll - be watching for it.

Lomy grabs her as she tries to exit. He stands.

LOMY
The scouts go first. Then the rest. That’s how it works.
(off Lee, frightened)
It says... you are mine. Mine.
(leans in closer to her)
So when it comes, you resist. Resist!

Lee pulls away, darting down the steps. He "stares" after her.

LOMY
Resist, and welcome it in....

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Sherman rings up various sundries for Cody and Kira, both of them amazed by all the animal heads and hunting gear.

SHERMAN
Friendly's been Mormon for, gosh, most of my lifetime anyway. Till they built that Wal-Mart over near Williams. Everyone's up and gone. Judy and I are all that's left....

Judy strides up the aisle with Steve, carrying a huge tire-iron like a brandished weapon.

SHERMAN
But Friendly still serves so many fine Christian retreats.

JUDY
Always will be a God-fearing oasis.

SHERMAN
I like to call it a "Holy Ghost-town."

WHAM! She drops the tire-iron onto the counter.

JUDY
Now don't go busting kneecaps with that thing.

Lee comes in, setting off chimes. Kira and Cody jump.

KIRA
Jesus, Lee!

LEE
Let's get out of here. This place is freaking me out.

Steve puts his arm around Lee, as they move away. Cody pauses to look in the bag, shaking his head.

CODY
Not even fucking Zima, god bless it.

EXT. ANTIQUES STORE - DAY

Jake stares at the OLD NEWSPAPER ARTICLES, pasted to the glass: lots of tight type, but the photos seem to be 1800's era, showing grimy workers posed near, or inside, mines.

JAKE
Friendly. A mining town.

He turns, to read another headline: <u>QUAKE-TRAPPED MINERS' HORROR</u>. Sub-heading: <u>Sole Survivor Killed By Rescuers</u>.

A GHASTLY FACE appears reflected in the glass. Jake turns.

THE PREACHER, 50's, is pocked and scarred and weathered, as if he'd been exhorting the Lord in Death Valley during a heat-wave. His eyes glint with life, and a mischievous good-humor.

The Preacher sips the last of a tiny bottle of Puerto Rican Rum, tosses it, and claps a hand on Jake's shoulder.

THE PREACHER
I'm a man who likes to get right to the point. Do you know Jesus?

JAKE
I - know <u>of</u> Jesus.

THE PREACHER
Would you like to know Him?

JAKE
I'm uh, still searching, actually.

THE PREACHER
(nods)
Now that's out of the way, I want to welcome you and your friends over there to the First Holy Spirit Church of South Fork's Second City Revival.
(off Jake's blank look)
Missioning the State, Friendly's number two. Our theme tonight is, "His Blood Saves."

JAKE
We're really just passing through --

He turns - but three PARISHIONERS stand there, blocking Jake's way like a strait-laced zombie committee. SISTER RUTH, the foremost member, carries a Tupperware potato-salad.

SISTER RUTH
Please join us. There's going to be some real revival going on.

PARISHIONER #1
You'll be possessed of the Spirit.

PARISHIONER #2
We promise you a real transformation.

LEE (O.S.)
Jake!

The others load into the Van. Lee, impatient, waves him over.

JAKE
Maybe some other time.

He rushes off. The Preacher stares after him....

INT. VW VAN - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

SLAM! The doors shut, they’re all back together in the van.

Lee turns in her seat.

LEE
Okay, new plan. Crazy lady said that other road goes through to the highway.

They’re all nodding, all in agreement already.

LEE
We drive all night to Kingman, motel room, Cali in the morning.

CODY
Don’t get stuck in some B horror movie set, got it.

JAKE
That leaves us no time to be alone.

Lee looks at him. He offers a sarcastic grin.

EXT. ROAD OUT OF FRIENDLY - DAY

The VW van tears through and back out of town.

JAKE (V.O.)
We’re all stuck together.

LEE (V.O.)
Like six peas, in one pod.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The Volkswagen van roars past a sign: Friendly Campgrounds.

JAKE (V.O.)
If you are even blaming me again --

CODY (V.O.)
Christ almi.... When are you two going to have sex again and finally GET OVER EACH OTHER?!

P.O.V. - A HAND AIMS A GUN AT THE PASSING VW - AND FIRES

The VW’s tire is blown. It swerves, kicking up dust.

EXT. CAMPGROUNDS - DAY

The VW turns off the road, and enters the campgrounds.

INT. VW VAN - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Jake kills the engine. He looks at Lee. Turns.

JAKE
Everyone alright?

CODY
Yeah. What was that?

JAKE
That tire must have blown.

They all look at Steve. He raises his arms.

STEVE
Hey! I never said it was fine!

LEE
Never mind. We fix it and get the hell out of here, stat.

STEVE
You mean I fix it. Yessir, yessir, right away sir.

EXT. CAMPGROUNDS - DAY (MINUTES LATER)

Lee surveys the campgrounds, wandering around the VW van.

The remains of a tent flap in the breeze, where someone abandoned camp in a hurry. Nearby, a dusty silver motor home is parked, like a lost animal that died where it fell.

It’s like an ominous desolation. She feels it.

She is near a sign: <-----MINE. She stoops, and picks up....

A CUB SCOUT HAT. There’s... blood on it? She frowns.

Scouts? Mine?...

AT THE VAN

STEVE
Alright. Let’s just get this thing changed and get out of here.

He drops the jack, and goes to work on the tire.

Kira, with cell phone, and Cody exit the van, mid-argument.

CODY
... Baby, please don’t bother your mother, we’re fine.

KIRA
If we’re running late, we’re not fine, and she’ll make sure I know we’re not fine - fuck shit fuck!
(flips her cell shut)
I can’t get a fucking signal.

CODY
Just forget it.

KIRA
(turning on Steve)
How long is this going to take?

STEVE
I’m going as fast as I can --

KIRA
(turning back on Cody)
I will not just forget it.

CODY
Fine - fine! Come on.

He practically drags her away, but Kira resists.

KIRA
And where exactly are we going?

CODY
To that trailer, over there, so you can use their goddamn phone and get off my goddamn back! Dear.

KIRA
Love it, dear, let’s go --

JAKE
We all go. You okay here, Steve?

Steve, pissed, nods. Jake looks at Lee... she’s not there.

He looks around. Lee comes out of the van, with a flashlight.

JAKE
... Lee?

Lee just walks right past Jake, and heads up the path.

JAKE
Lee! Where are you going --

LEE
Stay there. I won’t be long.

She strides away.

Jake looks back at the others. Britney looks at him.

BRITNEY
Go on.

CODY
Hey, whoa. Remember? Let’s not get caught up in some let’s-all-split-up bullshit --

BRITNEY
Shut-up.
(to Jake)
But when you get back, you’re with me the rest of this trip. Got it?

She stares at him. Jake nods. He’s gone after Lee.

Steve, pausing, looks up at Britney: *What the fuck?!*

BRITNEY
Oh get over it, Steve. Neither one of them is into us.... Shall we?

She indicates the lonely silver trailer to Cody and Kira. They look at her, shocked. And move away, Britney following.

KIRA
(leaning in to Cody)
I like her.

BINOCULARS P.O.V.

Jake disappears up the trail after Lee.

P.O.V. quickly goes back to pick up Cody, Kira, and Britney, headed towards the silver trailer.

P.O.V. turns back... to Steve, alone, jacking the van.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Here comes Jake.

JAKE
Lee! Where are you?

LEE APPEARS BEHIND HIM - JAKE JUMPS.

JAKE
Jesus, Lee!

Lee looks up the hillside only a few paces away. There's a dark hole in the rock.

LEE
Stay with the others, I’m coming right back.

JAKE
What? What are you doing?

LEE
Nothing, I just...

She pauses, and relents. Showing Jake the Cub Scout hat.

Jake looks from the hat, up at her, confused.

EXT. VAN - DAY

Steve angrily grumbles to himself as he pumps the jack.

STEVE
You don’t have to put up with this, Steve. You can get any guy you want.
(pauses)
Girl you want. Girl you want.

EXT. SILVER TRAILER - DAY

Cody, Kira, and Britney stand beside the trailer. There is a light on in the rear, and faint BIG-BAND music seeps out.

A breeze sounds some WIND CHIMES, spookily. Kira shudders.

KIRA
... Maybe mom can wait.

CODY
Nonsense, dear. Since we’re this
(knocks on the door)
far alrea...

The door swings inward, at his knock. They exchange glances.

EXT. MINE TRAIL - DAY

Jake follows after Lee, making her way up the trail.

JAKE
The insane ravings of some old nut?
That’s what this is all about?!

Suddenly, they find themselves at the MINE ENTRANCE:

It’s unexceptional, a simple man-made arch of wood marking a way into the earth. There are scattered rocks.

A SOUND. Fresh pebbles spill down. Lee shines her flashlight.

EXT. VAN - DAY

Steve drops the bad tire aside, turns to the new one... but turns back to the old one. He puts his finger against it.

STEVE
What the...?

He touches a PUNCTURE, like a bullet-hole, at the white-wall.

CODY (V.O.)
Hello? Anyone? We need a phone.

INT. SILVER TRAILER - DAY

The light in the main room comes on, as Cody, Kira and Britney enter, Britney flipping the switch. They all cough and wave at the SWIRL OF DUST choking the air.

CODY
Jesus Pieces! There's more dust in here than all Arizona.

JAKE (V.O.)
Look, I want to get this straight.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Lee is about to enter, when Jake turns Lee around.

JAKE
You plugged in a few variables, right? Fixed some numbers, killed a few more flies and maggots?

LEE
What are you talking about?!

JAKE
The New Independent Discovery grant! You just modified <u>our</u> proposal. Is that it?

LEE
You’re obsessed with this! For once, it’s not about you, Jake. Can’t you get that? Your name is nowhere near my new proposal.

JAKE
Right. You just got rid of me.

Lee is at her wit’s end. She moves away - Jake pulls her.

JAKE
We had something good, Lee. You know we did.

LEE
Is this about Steve? Are you that jealous --

JAKE
Are you that stupid? I know you, you don’t care two shits about him.

Lee opens her mouth to yell back at him, but...

Her eyes fall upon - and she retrieves - another crumpled Cub Scout hat, lying there in the dirt.

She shows it to him. They look at each other.

INT. SILVER TRAILER - DAY

Cody, Kira, and Britney survey a typical trailer living room, decked out to the tastes of old people manning the helm to anonymous oblivion. A plaque reads, The Good Ship Barker.

KIRA
I don’t see a phone out here....

Kira lifts a framed photograph. She wipes away a film of YELLOW DUST, revealing a smiling couple in their 60's, the man holding a trophy. The frame reads: HAPPY RETIREMENT!

Cody coughs, and nearly stumbles over something. He picks up an empty bottle of J&B.

He indicates it sardonically to the others, as he spies a rear doorway, open onto darkness. The MUSIC emanates.

CODY
Hello!... Anyone back there?

INT. MINE - DAY

Inside it's featureless rock, the ceiling high up. There's a steady DRIP, DRIP, DRIP.

LEE
Kids?... Is anyone in here?

Jake enters, coughing. Behind him, Lee coughs as well.

They both wave at the DUST, as Lee shines her light on the back wall, only a few feet away: it's blocked off by a cave-in, either man-made or natural, but probably long ago.

Lee frowns. She has her flashlight trained on the rock, where the fine YELLOW DUST is caked. She runs her finger along it.

JAKE
I don’t think anyone’s in here....

Fine pebbles shower down. Lee shines her flashlight, up.

EXT. VAN - DUSK

<u>BINOCULARS P.O.V.</u>

Steve tightens the last nut, drops the tire-iron, and stands, wiping his brow. He moves away from the van.

STEVE
Guys! Tire’s fixed!... Lee!

No one’s around. Steve stares away, at the silver trailer.

INT. SILVER TRAILER - DAY

Cody, Kira, and Britney reach the dark bedroom door. The BIG-BAND music comes from a radio back here, on low volume.

Cody pushes the door open. It CREAKS. It's only dimly lit.

CODY
Hello? Anyone?

EXT. VAN - DAY

Steve stares away, at the silver trailer - he turns. His eyes are wild, alert - even feral --

WHUMP! The tire-iron hits him in the head, and he's down.

INT. MINE - DAY

Jake and Lee cough from the DUST. Lee’s light shines up at the ceiling, where it's a darker black. Jake frowns.

JAKE
A recent earthquake. That’s why those rocks were in the road.

LEE
“I saw the Earth, displeased”....

Her flashlight picks out a shear of rock, where bits of rock are jagged and cloudy.

LEE
The quake brought the ceiling in.

JAKE
(coughing)
Look, Lee. I can’t take any more of this dust. Let’s go.

He makes for the entrance. Lee just stares at the ceiling.

LEE
Or opened it up - oh my god. Jake.

Her flashlight picks up a fissure in the rock. Something pours out around the edge of the fissure:

A HIDEOUSLY BULBOUS BLACK SWATH OF MUSHROOMS

Slick and streaked with yellow veins, covered in bumps and boils, gooey black like rotted skin. Thin tendrils hang down like miniature stalactites.

JAKE
Holy Christ.

Both are repulsed, fascinated. The tendrils seem to quiver and ooze. The earth around is flecked with thick yellow dust.

LEE
What did we just find?...

INT. SILVER TRAILER - DAY

Cody and Kira are at the doorway, Britney primping at a mirror in the hallway. There seems to be a bed inside, and two figures lying upon it.

Kira squeezes Cody's arm. As he reaches out for the light.

INT. MINE - DAY

Lee stares at the bulbous black mushrooms seeping from the ceiling. One seems to bubble outward. It pops, releasing a fine mist of YELLOW DUST into the air.

Jake touches a mushroom. His finger is caked in yellow dust.

JAKE
We’ve got to get samples of this.

Lee sees this. She pulls her hand from the wall. Noticing, with dread, her own fingers... caked in the same yellow dust.

LEE
No. We’ve got to get out of here.

INT. SILVER TRAILER - DAY

Cody's hand finds the light switch. He flips it on. The J&B bottle drops from his hands, and rolls along the floor.

The room is choked in YELLOW DUST, only thicker. TWO CORPSES are within, the two from the photo, Don and Mary:

Mary lies sprawled, her face locked in horror - or ferocity - blood-stained from a gunshot wound to the head.

Don is recognizable only by his outline. His visible body is a bulging layer of OILY, TUMOR-RIDDEN MUSHROOMS AND TENDRILS that seem to bubble up from his skin. The photo's trophy is jammed through his forehead. He is locked in a scream.

Kira SCREAMS. Cody slams off the light, and pulls her out of the room. They rush past Britney, turning from the mirror.

BRITNEY
What?... Wait! Hold on!

INT. MINE - DAY

Lee turns to leave - Jake stops her.

JAKE
What are you doing?

LEE
There’s something bad. About all of this. We have to leave.

JAKE
Are you crazy? This is unbelieva...

He blanches: her trailing flashlight has picked up something. She looks. She raises the flashlight, shining the beam upon

A CRUMPLED PILE OF BODIES.

Cub Scouts, bloodied and shot and bleeding and twisted in death and DRIPPING crimson gore.

Lee stares, transfixed. Jake pushes Lee out of the mine.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Cody, Kira, and Britney race back to the Van.

BRITNEY
Wait! What did you guys see?

CODY
Steve. Get the others, we --

A HAND THREATENS THEM WITH A GUN.

Cody, Kira, and Britney stop. They back off slowly, just as

Jake and Lee appear, from the trail head. They too stop dead.

FRANK (O.S.)
Stay away! All of you!

REVERSE - A CRAZED FRANK

Bruised and wounded, sallow and bloodshot, dark circles under his eyes; his uniform torn, tattered, bloodied. He brandishes his gun, an insane tic and taint to every gesture.

FRANK
I'll shoot anyone that gets near me! You hear? Stay back!

LEE
Steve!

She moves towards the prostate form - Frank FIRES near her feet. The gun picks up an instinctively protective Jake.

FRANK
I mean it! I'll kill you!

JAKE
Like those kids in the cave?

Frank laughs, bitterly.

KIRA
And the two in the trailer?

FRANK
Only the old lady in there - back!

Cody drifts forward, but Kira pulls him back, and holds him. They remain in a circle, about fifteen feet away.

CODY
Hey. Easy. We're cool.

FRANK
They attacked me. Got it?

JAKE
Whatever you say, man.

FRANK
They were crazy, out of their minds. You tell them that. They wouldn't stop.... Barker, in the trailer? His wife killed him too. I know. Because when I got there for help, she came at me.

Jake and Cody move - Frank shakes the gun at them.

CODY
Whoa. Okay.

FRANK
There was something up there! I'm infected.... Who's got the keys?
(off their looks)
I just shot five kids and an old lady, you think I'm shitting here?! The keys! Throw them! Now!

Lee reaches into her pocket, tosses the keys at Frank’s feet.

LEE
There. Just don't hurt anyone.

KIRA
Please, mister. Can I just get my wedding dress out of there? It’s a Vera Wang, I’m sure you underst --

Cody pulls her aside, glaring at her.

FRANK
I need help... I gotta get help....

Frank climbs into the van... and is arrested by his hand.

Only he can see a mushroom bulb forming like a bubble on his skin, then popping a fine mist of dust, oozing blood and pus.

Frank grunts in panic, and fires up the engine, and tears out of the campsite. Cody chases after it, but Jake stops him.

The van disappears into the darkness.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT (A LITTLE LATER)

Still in shock, Kira dials her cell phone, listens, shuts it.

KIRA
Still nothing.

Unconscious Steve is laid flat on a blanket. Lee attends to him. Cody and Britney watch, as Jake puts on his jacket and stands.

JAKE
Forget it. I'm going back to that old woman’s ranch for a phone.

KIRA
I think we should wait for a cop to come by.

JAKE
Does it look like they come by? Besides, this freak might come back.

CODY
Maybe <u>he</u> went to grandma's.

JAKE
I guess I'll find out.

Cody looks at Kira, shrugs, and puts on his own jacket.

CODY
Alright. I'm coming too.

JAKE
Don't be stupid. Stay with them.

KIRA
Yeah, Cody. Let Jake be stupid.

JAKE
How's Steve doing?

Lee turns to him. She sighs, and stands.

LEE
I don't know. Not good.... What was he talking about, infected?

CODY
He's insane. We're lucky he didn't kill us.

LEE
He didn't look insane. He looked...

CODY
Insane.

LEE
Scared.

KIRA
(close to tears)
Insane, scared, what does it matter?!
(fights off Cody)
Godammit, he has my wedding dress!

Jake takes the flashlight. Britney grabs his arm.

BRITNEY
Wait. I'll go with you.

JAKE
Stay here.

BRITNEY
No. I'm going. The end.

She tosses her cigarette, and moves away out of the campsite.

JAKE
Nobody leave.

He’s looking at Lee... then he’s gone. The campsite is quiet, as a cold breeze blows. Kira shivers, whimpers.

KIRA
My Vera Wang....

CODY
Honey. It’s a knock-off.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Jake and Britney move quickly, using the flashlight to guide.

JAKE
Shouldn't be too far.... I guess this trip isn't what you expected.

BRITNEY
Better.
(off Jake's look)
Seven people dead? Kids? Shit, do you even know how big this is going to be?! That’s what I wanted to talk to you alone about - we need to jump on this. First thing we hit Cali, we pitch something to your father in-between interviews.

His look to her is incredulous. She smiles, and slaps him.

BRITNEY
After I do you, silly.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Cody and Kira stare into the fire, as Lee mops Steve's brow.

KIRA
It’s supposed to be perfect, not.... How am I supposed to go down the aisle without my wedding dress?!

CODY
Dear. Lee lost her whole car.

KIRA
We’re never going to get there, are we? We’re going to be stuck here --

CODY
Honey - honey! Listen to me.
(takes Kira by the chin)
We stick together, we get through this.

LEE
Infected....

Cody and Kira look over at her. She is lost in thought.

LEE
Why did he think he was infected?...

CODY
You want to see what he did in that trailer? Nuckin' futs.

LEE
He said he didn't kill that man.

KIRA
He killed the lady.

CODY
Futs, Lee. I don't know what's worse, crazy-train there or losing my load back on the highway.

KIRA
Those shrooms. That’s what’s worse.

LEE
Shr... Mushrooms? In the trailer?

CODY
The dead guy was covered in them.

LEE
You didn’t say anything about that.

KIRA
We didn’t say anything about the dust, either, but that whole place was crawling with... Lee?...

Dust. Horror dawns upon Lee. She stands, and leaves the campsite, marching away towards the silver trailer.

CODY
Wait. Where are you going?

LEE
Keep an eye on Steve.

KIRA
Lee!

Too late, Lee’s gone. Neither one wants to go after her.

CODY
Fuck! What is wrong with everybody?!

O.S. - KNUCKLES KNOCKING ON WOOD

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Jake and Britney are at the door, Jake knocking. The door opens, and the Old Woman is there, with her knitting again.

OLD WOMAN
Goodness, you scared me --

JAKE
We need a phone! My friend's hurt, there's people dead. Someone killed them.

OLD WOMAN
Oh! Oh, oh my.

INT. SILVER TRAILER - NIGHT

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)
Come in, come in.

THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN - A FIGURE IS SILHOUETTED

Lee pauses, tying her sweater behind her head, covering her mouth and nose. She moves through the dust-choked trailer.

THE BACK ROOM

Lee turns on the light. Her eyes go wide, in immediate horror, and revulsion. She gags, turns away... turns back.

The scientist takes over. Lee enters, taking it all in.

The dead man is a carpet of frothing black fungoid growths. But the fungus has spread, like a great swath, away from the chair around the corpse, to the wall behind and up to the ceiling: like black wings, engulfing the room.

The dead woman appears locked in fear... rage? A bullet wound to the head has leaked blood, rimming her eyes a mascara red.

Lee notices... the tendrilous fungus has spread across the floor. But it has conspicuously avoided the dead woman.

As well as the J&B bottle Cody dropped. She picks it up from where it rolled, where the black fungus has encircled it.

She turns again. As she watches, a fungoid bubble appears on the dead man, and discharges its YELLOW DUST.

She backs away, looking at the walls, at the yellow dust.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)
People dead?! Oh no, oh dear....

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Old Woman shuts the door, extremely flustered.

OLD WOMAN
I - are we in danger? Is --

JAKE
The phone, ma'am.

OLD WOMAN
Over there.

JAKE
Where?

OLD WOMAN
My Bobby John's in the barn, I need to get him inside - oh, oh dear --

BRITNEY
Jake.

Jake takes the Old Woman's hand just as Britney does, sensing she's about to faint away with the stress.

JAKE
No, no. It's going to be alright.

OLD WOMAN
But Bobby John's out in the barn - I was making my tea - oh my --

JAKE
Tea, good. Britney, take her in the kitchen to get her some tea.

BRITNEY
That's right, yes. Let's go get us all some nice, hot tea.

OLD WOMAN
But, but, Bobby John --

BRITNEY
Come on, it's going to be just fine.

She leads the Old Woman through the swinging kitchen doors, mouthing to Jake "Call your father" as the door swings shut.

Jake darts his head this way and that, scanning piles of tchotchkes and gewgaws for a phone.

INT. SILVER TRAILER - NIGHT

A MEDICINE CABINET OPENS. Lee searches. She finds Isopropyl alcohol, Q-tips, a tweezer. And a Bic lighter.

CUT TO:

Back in the fungoid bedroom, Lee kneels against one wall. She dips the tweezer into a cap-full of rubbing alcohol.

She tries the Bic, to sterilize it. But it won't ignite.

She brings the alcohol-coated tweezer directly onto a patch of black fungus, willing to get something at all cost.

The fungus PARTS as the tweezer touches it. Lee is stunned.

She goes for the fungus once again. Again it parts, refusing to get scraped. Lee looks at the tip of the tweezer. She frowns.

She stands. Steps away from the fungoid-covered wall. And

SPLASHES THE ALCOHOL AGAINST IT

It SIZZLES and smokes, parting like mucous-slimy worms, wriggling and oozing and popping at contact with the liquid.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jake finally locates the phone, an old black upright. He grabs the handle - just as Britney bumps backwards out of the door, holding a tea tray.

Jake looks up. He opens his mouth, as Britney turns around.

A knitting needle protrudes from either eyeball. She quivers and jerks, like she's been short-circuited. Then falls flat to the floor, smashing the tray to pieces.

JAKE
Oh sh--

The Old Woman SCREAMS into the room, going right for Jake!

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

STEVE

Unattended, stirs slightly, and emits a low groan.

CODY AND KIRA

Huddle near the campfire when -

LEE SUDDENLY APPEARS! Like a phantom, and ashen-white.

CODY
Jesus! Don't fucking leave, okay?!

LEE
That wasn't dust in there.

CODY
Forget it, just wait here --

LEE
That wasn't dust. They're spores.

KIRA
What?

LEE
Did you breathe it in?
(off their confusion)
The dust! Did you breathe it in!

CODY
Yes! We breathed it in! So what?

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

LEE (V.O.)
Then we're all infected....

As Jake stands, the Old Woman grabs him around the throat, and pushes him back onto the sofa by sheer force. She SCREAMS incoherently, eyes glazed, sheer hatred.

Jake kicks out at her midriff, and she falls to the floor. He jumps up, but she catches his calf, and he falls as well.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

STEVE, still unattended, stirs, and opens his eyes....

LEE (O.S.)
The dead man. His body is infested with it. And it's spreading.

KIRA AND CODY AND LEE.

KIRA
What - what's spreading?

LEE
Something, a fungus of some kind.

CODY
Stop it, Lee. You're freaking Kira out. What are you trying to say here?

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Old Woman claws her way up Jake's leg.

LEE (V.O.)
I don't know! I don't know. But two people were infected and....

KIRA (V.O.)
And what? Killed people?

Jake kicks, but the Old Woman holds on tight.

Jake reaches out - pulls a knitting needle from Britney's head - and with the eyeball still attached

STABS THE OLD WOMAN THROUGH THE HAND, INTO THE FLOOR.

She SCREAMS, Jake scrambles up and away.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Kira and Cody stare dumbfounded at Lee, lost in thought.

KIRA
But if we're so infected, then... why aren't <u>we</u> killing each other?

LEE
It might be the other way around. What if it's not us? What if it's the infected?

CODY
What if what's the infected?

LEE
Take a dog. It senses danger. It goes after the source, kills it. But there's <u>nothing wrong with the dog</u>.

Huh?! Cody and Kira are confused, as Lee turns to them.

LEE
What if it’s the <u>infected</u> they kill?

A MOVEMENT. They all start, and turn.

Steve stands there, limned by campfire light. His muscles are tense, blood trickles out his nose. His eyes are glazed.

LEE
Steve?...

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As the Old Woman writhes, pulling at the needle in her hand, Jake reaches the door...

But he sees Bobby John, through the window, lumbering up to the ranch house. With his cleaver.

JAKE
Oh Jesus....

Jake thinks quickly, then turns and rushes through the living room and into the kitchen, just as...

Bobby John opens the door. His eyes go wide, as he sees his writhing, screaming mother upon the floor.

BOBBY JOHN
MAMA!

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jake reaches the back door, and slams against it. It's locked by a key-entry dead-bolt. And there's no key.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The others back away from Steve, who drifts forward.

KIRA
Lee. What's wrong with Steve?...

LEE
Everyone stay back from him.

Steve picks up a log from the fire, its end burning merrily. His gaze fixes upon Lee. Rage seems to suffuse his features.

He shouts and charges her. Lee darts back. Cody slams into Steve before he can reach her.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jake darts his head: nowhere to go. He picks up the bread maker, and smashes it through the window.

He climbs the counter as - Bobby John bursts into the kitchen!

Still clutching the meat cleaver, he grabs Jake by both legs, pulls him away, and slams him into the wall opposite.

Jake tries to defend himself, but Bobby John just looks at Jake. He is confused, and crying, tears streaming down.

BOBBY JOHN
Why you hurt mama?!

The Old Woman's mad SHRIEKS come through, as... Bobby John's eyes roll back in his head. He looses his hold on Jake. Jake senses something terrible happening, and struggles harder.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Cody holds down Steve, struggling mightily, as SHOUTING Steve thrashes upon the dirt, waving the burning log uselessly.

CODY
Run, Kira!

KIRA
Cody --

CODY
I SAID RUN, GODDAMMIT! NOW!

Kira backs away, as Steve pushes hard against Cody, knocking him back into the dirt.

Lee looks desperately about, and finds - the tire-iron.

Cody is momentarily dazed, as Steve grabs the burning ember, and raises it high above him --

LEE
Steve!

STEVE TURNS HIS HEAD - LEE SWINGS THE TIRE-IRON - THWACK!

The tire-iron connects with Steve's face. He goes down.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jake pounds through the door... the Old Woman, now standing, SCREAMS and stabs him with the knitting needle.

He darts aside, but the needle pierces the side of his arm.

Jake is thrown off balance, into a side-table.

The Old Woman's arm goes back, the needle is raised --

The kitchen door bursts open. Bobby John's cleaver comes down, at an angle, neatly severing the Old Woman's head from her shoulders.

A fountain of blood sprays Bobby John's face, eyes glazed, now a rictus of deformity, rage and horror.

Jake turns, nearly hitting the floor, as the cleaver comes up and down again, smashing the upright phone to pieces.

Jake pushes himself up in a crawling run, and makes it to the front door.

A HOWLING Bobby John is right on his heels. He cleaves the door frame as Jake stumbles outside.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

Jake looks about desperately.

He spies the barn, and makes a mad dash for it.

As Jake reaches the barn door, Bobby John exits. He grunts and sniffs the air, his face twitching.

His head turns towards the barn, and he makes a loping run.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

The door slams shut behind Jake. He gropes for a bar to lock it... but there's nothing.

JAKE
No no no...

He scans the barn quickly: rows of clucking CHICKEN coops.

Stalls housing old and rusted farm equipment. A ramp leading to an upper loft. A single bulb casting everything into shadows. And no exit.

He darts up the ramp, and behind some machinery, in the dark.

The door bursts open. Bobby John enters. He is silhouetted by bulb light, the cleaver glinting evilly in his hand.

The chickens cluck and squirm, sensing danger.

Jake sees him, and turns. As quiet as he can. He spies a square hole serving as a window in the wall behind him.

Bobby John staggers through the center of the barn.

He grunts and sniffs the air. Drool dribbles down. His deformed features quiver and glisten with uncontrolled fury.

Jake reaches for the empty windowsill. He grasps the edges, and pulls himself up....

THWACK! The flung cleaver smashes into the wall, just above his head. Startled, he falls away, down to the floor.

Bobby John makes a lumbering run, straight up the ramp.

As Jake stands again. He turns --

Bobby John barrels into him. They fall off the edge, bodies twisted in mid-air.

Jake lands on top of Bobby John, who crashes into a chicken cage. Feathers and nesting fly up into the air. The chickens scream fear.

Jake falls back, staggering, trying to get his bearings.

Bobby John staggers, stands. Twisted remnants of cage, chicken and chicken shit cling to him, like a bad tar-and-feathering.

He's up, and he swings a balled-fisted ham at Jake, who ducks.

His balled fist crashes into a cage.

Again, and another cage is smashed. The chickens go nuts.

Jake backs into the ubiquitous barn pitchfork. He hurls it...

... at Bobby John. It sticks shallowly into his chest.

Bobby John pulls it out, and throws it back.

It SMASHES into the wall, catching Jake through the jacket.

Jake tries to pull free, but is momentarily caught. He struggles out of his jacket. He’s trapped.

Bobby John smashes a chicken coop to smithereens, and pulls a huge, ugly, pointed plank free. He lumbers closer.

The plank is raised, and ready to brain Jake. Jake pulls....

Jake swings the end of the pitchfork into Bobby John. It only knocks him a little, but it's enough to throw the blow off.

The plank hits the pitchfork. It SNAPS in half, one end still secure through Jake's jacket.

Jake has one second to pull as hard as he can --

The stump of the pitchfork comes loose, impaling Bobby John.

Bobby John is immediately distracted by the wound, and staggers backwards.

He drops the plank. And stares at the pitchfork, inserted the wrong way into his body. Blood seeps.

Jake tries to figure out a move past Bobby John. Who looks merely dazed, trying to figure out the pitchfork in his body.

Bobby John looks at Jake. Bobby John's stupefied features re-configure - the glaze, the hate, returns to his eyes - Bobby John lets loose a GRUNT, and charges Jake!

With the pitchfork jutting from his belly. Jake ducks under him, diving for the floor, scrambling along.

Bobby John hits the wall - the pitchfork thunks back into it - the stump goes through him, punching out his other side.

Jake makes a run for the barn door.

Bobby John pulls himself off the impaling pitchfork.

He staggers, as a flow of blood drenches his lower body.

His swaying head, struggling to retain consciousness, catches sight of a loose chicken.

Bobby John picks it up. And tries to wipe the blood off of him with it... until his eyes roll up, and he falls face first to the floor.

EXT. RANCH - NIGHT

Jake exits the barn, making a mad dash away from the ranch....

He slips and slides, rushing along in the dark, over scrubby brush and flats.

He slips, rolls halfway down a small hill and back onto a dirt road, right into the path of...

THE TWIN HEADLIGHTS OF A VOLKSWAGEN VAN BLIND JAKE!

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

EXTREME C.U. - STEVE'S FACE

He looks like hell, and there's a large makeshift bandage over his nose, stained with blood and wrapped round his face.

He is unconscious, but his woozy eyes open....

REVERSE - STEVE'S P.O.V. - BLURRED, LEE, CODY, AND KIRA

Are around him. They come into focus, staring warily at Steve. Lee bears the tire-iron, Cody a log, Kira a bottle of Nehi.

Steve opens his eyes, gathers his bearings. He sees Lee, and puckers his lips... until consciousness fully kicks in... and he sees the three in a threatening stance before him.

STEVE
OH SHIT!

He scurries backwards along the dirt away from them.

STEVE
What are you doing?! Oooh....

He groans, as the pain hits him, and he feels for his face.

CODY
Hit him again, Lee.

LEE
Stop it, Cody.

Steve feels his bared chest: his shirt is gone, ripped up for bandages around his nose. He feels his nose.

KIRA
I think it's better if he's out.

CODY
(raises the log)
I concur, honey-bunch --

LEE
No! Wait.

They all just stare at Steve. Who looks up at them, blood on his hand from his bandage.

STEVE
What the fuck happened to me?...

LEE
How do you feel?

STEVE
Like shit! My head... my nose....

CODY
He's getting violent.

KIRA
Smack him good, Cody.

LEE
Would you stop it?! He's fine!

CODY
He tried to kill me!

STEVE
What did you do? Get away from me!

LEE
Steve.

As Steve tries to crawl away, Lee goes to him, and pulls him around. He looks at the tire-iron in her hand.

STEVE
Are you going to hit me again?

LEE
How do you feel?

STEVE
How?! You tell me how!

LEE
Look at me! Answer me. How do you, Steve, feel about me, Lee, right now?

STEVE
Like you're insane!

LEE
Do you want to kill me?

STEVE
Hell, yes!

LEE
Steve.
(holds his shoulders)
Do. You. Want. To. Kill. Me?

STEVE
No, God! I want to get the fuck out of here and back to Burque in one piece without any of you back-stabbing mutherfuckers-ow-FUCK!

As he staggers to a stand, Lee just turns away from him.

LEE
... He's no longer affected.

KIRA
Affected?

LEE
It’s got to be a pheromone effect.

KIRA
Phero-what?

LEE
Chemicals picked up by the nasal sense organ. It's like an odor.

CODY
That makes people attack us.

KIRA
And you know this how, Lee?

LEE
I don't. Not for sure. But...

A groping, moaning Steve falls over a log with an "Ooof!"

LEE
I know I smashed his nose in, and now he's fine. And I know we all went somewhere we shouldn't have.

KIRA
But you're saying we're infected.

LEE
With a spore that mingles with our body chemicals to give off a scent that makes others want to kill us? Yes, I guess I’m saying that.

CODY
Wonderful! So all we do now is smash everyone's nose in? And we're hunky-dory? Who's buying this?!

Steve picks himself up, as Kira shivers.

KIRA
But what happens to us if we're infected...?

Lee looks at Kira. As Steve staggers again to a stand.

THE SOUND OF A MOTOR - HEADLIGHTS APPEAR

The Volkswagen van whips around the trail, approaching. It clips Steve, who falls to the dirt with a groaning thud.

Lee, Cody, and Kira brandish their weapons, as they circle the van defensively. The van skids to a stop, still running.

The driver side door opens. Jake peers over the top at them.

LEE
Jake! God, are you alright?

JAKE
Get in.

CUT TO - MOMENTS LATER

Lee opens the side door for Jake and Cody, who carry an inert Steve inside the van, as Kira, inside, opens a dress box.

KIRA
Thank you GOD, it’s in one piece.

JAKE
That crazy Cub Scout was right.
We're driving straight to Kingman.

They roughly drop Steve inside.

CODY
So what happened to nutjob?

They’re all looking at Jake....

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Jake goes around the Volkswagen van, it's headlights blazing. The driver's side door is open. Jake looks at it, and away.

There is a GURGLING....

He moves into the brush, pulls aside wild oleander branches, revealing: the bubbling horror, melting away, that was Frank.

O.S. - THE SCREECHING OF TIRES, BRAKING

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

The van skids and stops abruptly, near a battered old sign: INTERSTATE 40/1 MILE. The rear engine panel FALLS OFF.

A TREE has fallen across the road, blocking their escape.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - FARTHER AWAY - NIGHT (SAME TIME)

That Long-haired Doobie-mutherfucker again, camping out by the side of the road, using a hatchet to whittle a walking stick. He sees, in the distance... the VW stop. He stands.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - VW VAN - NIGHT

Lee, Jake, Cody and Kira work on moving the tree aside.

KIRA
Who leaves a tree in the road?!

CODY
Shoulda tried running over it.

JAKE
Blame the quake. It’s responsible for everything.... Come on, guys! Pull harder, Lee.

LEE
We’ll change. Like that cub scout.

They all look at her, horrified, as Lee works it out.

LEE
... He came in this morning. That's what the old woman said. They both went to that mine, cub scout and the man from the silver trailer.
(off their confused looks)
What is that, ten hours? Twelve?

CODY
And then it's us?!

JAKE
No! We make it to the highway, to Kingman, we get help.

LEE
How will anyone know what to do?

CODY
And how are we going to get someone to help without trying to kill us?

JAKE
We can't worry about that! We just need to stay together - unh!

The tree is finally moved. They catch their breaths.

JAKE
We're fine if we stick together.

LEE
No. We quarantine ourselves.
(off their reactions)
We have no clue what this thing does!

JAKE
It obviously kills you.

CODY
And gives everyone else the same idea!

LEE
But that doesn't make any sense. Biologically-speaking, why would something that kills you make others want to kill you first?

JAKE
Lee, we don’t have time for this.

LEE
And we don’t infect anyone else without knowing what --

KIRA
Stop! Stop! Stop it!
(into Cody's shoulder)
Please, Cody, take me away....

CODY
There, come on, it's okay.
(to Lee)
Would you just shut up and get back in the van?

JAKE
We do this my way, Lee.

Lee stares at him, smouldering.

She marches away, past the side of the road.

Jake curses under his breath, and goes after Lee.

CODY
HEY! We don’t have time for this!

Cody hugs Kira and sighs, exasperated.

CODY
Those two will get us killed.

JAKE CATCHES UP WITH LEE

He keeps behind her. She stops walking. Closes her eyes.

LEE
I can't just fight you every step of the way, Jake.

JAKE
We'll be okay. Let's go.

LEE
You're not supposed to be here.

Lee turns suddenly, and faces Jake.

LEE
I'll tell you why I broke up with you. It was the night Kira told me he proposed. They had this whole life, all perfectly planned out.

JAKE
Now we're talking about this?!

LEE
But they've been through their whole lives together. They know.

JAKE
They had time to find out.

LEE
Then I'm just a bitch, okay? I cut, I ran. I'm sorry. Let's go.

She tries to move past him. He blocks her.

JAKE
The closer you get, the more you feel someone else inside. And you don't like that. I know you, Lee --

LEE
Bullshit.

JAKE
-- this is all about control.

LEE
And how does anyone know anyone?

JAKE
I guess you take a walk down the aisle, and find out.
(beat)
How about, when this thing is all over... joint discovery, both our names, we file the NIDP together.

He holds out his hand to shake: *Deal?* She looks at him... and can't help but laugh, shaking her head. They shake hands.

CUT TO - THE VAN, MOMENTS LATER

Cody throws up his arms (*Finally!*). All four pile back in.

INT. VOLKSWAGEN VAN - CONTINUOUS

Jake gets behind the wheel, Lee beside him, Cody and Kira in back, near a prostrate and unconscious Steve.

CODY
Okay then. No more surprises?

THE BACK WINDOW SMASHES INWARD - A GURGLING ROAR

The glaze-eyed Doobie-mutherfucker smashes his way in with the hatchet, and grabs the first available human - Steve.

Everyone reacts, as Steve SCREAMS awake. Doobie-muther pulls Steve back out the window, wildly waving the hatchet.

Cody leaps for Doobie-muther, who bitch-smacks him in the jaw- then buries the hatchet into Steve's leg above the knee.

Steve screams. Jake lunges for Doobie-muther, but with a hand to his jaw, he throws Jake aside.

Lee thinks quickly - she grabs the tire-iron.

LEE
Hey!

Doobie-muther looks up. Lee vaults into the back of the van, and rams the tire-iron straight through his teeth, down his throat. He falls back outside the van.

EXT. VOLKSWAGEN VAN - CONTINUOUS

Doobie-muther jerks and quivers just outside the van, struggling to pull the tire-iron from his mouth....

Doobie-muther falls face-forward, into the Volkswagen's exposed motor, grinding head and stick into the machinery.

CUT TO - A LITTLE LATER

Jake and Cody and Kira are outside the van. Jake peels Doobie-muther's face from the motor, and lays him flat, as Cody kneels to inspect the engine. He pulls out a broken belt.

CODY
Great! Fucking fan belt's snapped.

JAKE
Kiss Kingman goodbye.

CODY
Because she had to stop and bitch. What do we do now?

JAKE
Wait for a cop?...

CODY
To Swiss-cheese our asses next?! What's behind door number two?

The door opens. Lee exits the van. She has a LONG OBJECT, wrapped in a blood-stained blanket, a sneaker sticking out.

LEE
I couldn't save it.

They react, revolted. Kira turns her head, and vomits, as Lee rifles through the Doobie-muther's backpack, finds a blanket, and wraps Steve's leg a second time.

LEE
(during)
He probably smelled all of us at once and couldn't distinguish. The first person in range was Steve. "Why?" is the question I don't like.

CODY
You don't like it? You think we like fucking "Dawn of the Dead"?

LEE
Stop painting it like that. These are evolutionary responses rooted deep in the human psyche. You'd be doing the same thing too if you didn't have whatever it is in you --

KIRA
Can we please just figure something out?! I'm supposed to be getting married, not dealing with zombies!

She starts to cry. Cody comforts her.

Lee looks out, into the dark silent desert....

LEE
Friendly.

CODY
Go back?!

LEE
Anywhere else is too far.

JAKE
What's in Friendly?

Lee drops Steve’s leg into the back of the van.

LEE
A general store, a phone. We break in if we have to and call for help.

CODY
Then what, fight off whoever we call?

LEE
We go from there....

JAKE
Will the engine make it?

LEE
We don’t have a choice.

Lee jerks the tire-iron from Doobie-muther’s face. He jerks, with a thin spray of blood. She wipes it off on him.

They watch her, appalled. Kira sniffs, and pushes Cody away.

KIRA
Let's go. I’ve got a ball-and-chain to drag.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

The Volkswagen shoots past, its motor now smoking...

... headed once more for the quaint, unlit desert town of Friendly. Friendly's main church is a tall, dark spire.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

Revival is in full swing. On stage, Sister Ruth leads the CONGREGATION in a rousing, hand-clapping, soul-raising bit of Christian Fellowship....

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY - NIGHT

Just off the main altar, through a slightly ajar door:

The chiseled, tattooed Preacher, in flowing white and purple robes, opens a bottle of wine with a corkscrew.

He looks askance, at a STATUE OF JESUS, pointing at his Sacred Heart. The Preacher closes his eyes. He takes a swig.

THE PREACHER
Please. Give me the strength I need,
to make it through one more time....

He turns his head. Over the singing of the fellowship... there's a RUMBLING... like a loud automobile.

EXT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

The exit door opens, and the Preacher sticks his head out.

He just misses the twin rear brake-lights of the Volkswagen van, whipping around the corner.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

The Volkswagen van coasts to a stop beside the general store, in a dark alley. The engine's off, but SMOKING heavily.

Jake and Cody exit the van. Cody waves at the smoke.

CODY
Kiss this bad boy goodbye.

Jake shushes him... but it's only distant SINGING, coming from the church down the road. He looks at Cody.

JAKE
Can you get us in?

Cody nods, indicating the tire-iron in his hand.

CODY
Most handy thing we’ve had all day.

Kira exits, with her dress box under her arm. He looks at her.

KIRA
... What?

Cody pulls her away to the door.

Lee exists, and hears the SINGING.

LEE
Think the church heard us?

JAKE
Over that?... How’s Steve?

LEE
He'll have a nasty shock when he wakes up, but he'll survive.

SNAP! The door's lock breaks, and it CREAKS open.

CODY
Guys! We're in.

LEE
(stays Jake)
Are we sure no one's here?

JAKE
It's closed, isn't it?

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

The back door shuts behind the four of them. Kira goes for the lights. Jake stays her hand.

JAKE
No lights. Make sure everything's secured. I'll find a phone.

KIRA
We're locking ourselves in?

JAKE
No one comes in except through one door. And we make sure they have their nasal passages blocked.

Kira wants to laugh... but Jake is serious. Lee nods.

LEE
No one gets near us.

KIRA
We don't even know who can help us --

CODY
Stop! We did this part already.
Kira, find some food or something,
I'll check the windows.
(off Kira's glare - he
kisses her)
Darling. One true love of my life.

KIRA
First things first.
(locates the restroom)
Be right back.

She kisses Cody on the cheek, and goes to the rest room.

Cody sighs, shrugging at the others. Lee looks at Jake.

LEE
Find a phone?

JAKE
911, I'm on it.

He disappears into the dark store. Cody goes to each window, checking it for security.

Lee turns, to see all the animal heads, baring their teeth from the walls. She turns... and starts.

A HUGE STUFFED BEAR threatens her in the dark, locked in a pose of eternal ferocity. She frowns at it, touches its paw.

INT. VOLKSWAGEN VAN - NIGHT

Steve, alone in the back of the dark van, stirs. He tries to sit up, putting his hand on an object to get his bearings....

It's a leg, wrapped in blanket. A foot, still lodged in its Sketchers, sticks out of one end. <u>His</u> Sketchers. <u>His</u> foot.

He looks down at himself. There is only one leg to look at.

Steve's eyes go wide. He faints.

INT. A ROOM - NIGHT

FOLLOW THE CHIHUAHUA

The tiny dog whines, as it moves through a small living-quarters, and finally into a bedroom. It goes to the bed.

Blind Lomy lies there in bed, his eyes wide open.

LOMY
Yes, Brutus. I feel it too.

The Chihuahua puts its head in Lomy's lap. It shivers.

LOMY
The stars are right....
(pets Brutus)
... The time has come. It is finally risen among us.

Lomy stares down, at the floor.

LOMY
If we are worthy, you and I, we will be able to resist its stench.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

LOMY (V.O.)
Resist, and welcome its arrival....

Lee gropes in the dark, and reaches out, about to try a door. Jake appears beside her, startling her.

LEE
Jesus!

JAKE
There's no phone.

LEE
There has to be. I saw a box.

JAKE
I saw three outlets.

LEE
Well, there can't just be no phone.

JAKE
Unless it's upstai...

A SOUND, a shifting, upstairs. They start, backing slowly away from the door Lee was about to open.... Cody appears.

CODY
What is it?

Then he hears the SOUND, from somewhere above.

LEE
There's someone up there.

CODY
Shit. Those crazy fucking Mormons.

JAKE
They're here?

CODY
Up there, obviously.

LEE
But can they smell us?...

THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN - THE BLIND LOMY APPEARS!

His boiled eyes are glazed, his features quivering and wet, as he grabs whatever’s there - Cody’s the first in range.

The Chihuahua, at Lomy's heels, leaps and bites Cody's arm.

Jake grabs the nearest thing, a chair, and smashes it over Lomy’s head. Cody reels, the tiny rat dog attached to his arm.

Lee barrels into Lomy. He falls against the stairs behind the doorway. She slams the door shut, and leans against it.

WHAM! The blind Lomy comes back at the door, SCREAMING for blood. Jake goes to lean against it, beside Lee.

JAKE
Cody! Get a chair!

Cody waves and works to free the Chihuahua.

CODY
I got my own problems right now!

The little dog is insane with rage. Cody shouts, and smashes it against a table. Again. The dog won't let go. And then

KIRA ENTERS, IN HER WEDDING DRESS

Exquisite, flowing, pearly-white, gloves-and-beads-and-all.

CODY
Kira! Get this little shit off me!

WHAM! The blind Lomy throws himself against the door again.

JAKE
Kira! Get something to block this!

CODY
Fucking get off me you little fuck!

LEE
Hurry, Kira!

Cody keeps banging the dog, as Jake and Lee keep themselves against the door. Kira watches all, arms akimbo.

She grabs the Chihuahua from Cody. It growls and snaps in mid-air. She throws it like a football.

The tiny dog smashes through a window. There is a last THUD and WHIMPER.

Kira grabs a chair, and slides it over to Jake and Lee. Lee jams it against the door handle.

Jake pushes a huge credenza, and Lee helps him, until it is in place, further securing the door. Lomy POUNDS and SHOUTS.

Missions accomplished. Jake, Lee, and Cody collapse, panting. Kira smiles, and sashays, indicating her dress.

KIRA
So? What do you think?

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
Brothers! Sisters!...

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

The tattooed Preacher preaches from the altar.

THE PREACHER
Where we are, giving praise this evening, is a town called Friendly. But the world... the world isn't too friendly, now, is it?

MURMURS OF ASSENT from the assembled Parishioners.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

The dark hollow mine, open like a wound. The fungus seeps around the outer lip, spreading like a cancer....

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
We all got some unfriendliness, creeping up on us, on our lives....

INT. SILVER TRAILER - NIGHT

The back room, where Mary still lies dead. But the fungus, totally covering dead Don, now seeps out a broken window.

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
Coming into our homes, ripping up our marriages, putting us down....

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

The doors bang open and shut, like a haunted house. The black fungus is running through it.

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
That Devil's always busy, working to spread his dark mischief...

INT. VOLKSWAGEN VAN - NIGHT

Steve, loose leg in hand, slides, wincing, toward the door.

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
That Devil kicks out our supports from under us... loses us our way.... frustrates all our good works....

Steve slips, and hits the floor on his head - OOF!

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Lee and Jake sit near the door, now blocked by many objects, and still being pummeled violently from behind.

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
But you got to keep that Devil where he is! You can't let him in!

It’s clear the fungi-infection is taking effect: Lee and Jake look sallow, pale, rings of black around their eyes.

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
He's friendly like the world is. But he is <u>not</u> your friend....

JAKE
... Lee. You can have it.

Lee looks at him. Jake looks at her.

JAKE
The proposal we worked up. It’s yours, take it.

LEE
Why?

JAKE
You're the researcher, the scientist.
The one who's got her life together.
Who always gets just what she wants.

LEE
I don't know what I want, Jake.

JAKE
I know what you don't want.

She looks at him. A weary smile.

LEE
Wants evolve too....

A paler Cody enters scene, drinking from an absconded Nehi.

CODY
Okay, this is stupid. Let's find
some other place with a phone.

LEE
What place, Cody? Where?

CODY
We're under a time constraint here!
I'm gonna be sprouting toadstools
if someone doesn't kill me first!

JAKE
What they must have thought.
(off their looks)
Whoever had this before. When they
came back to town, to camp... their
friends and family turning on
them... wanting to kill them....

LEE
It's called survival of the
fittest. It's been around awhile.

CODY
Christ! Somebody think of something
now or I'm walking!

Jake stares away, seeing.... An idea. He stands.

He goes to a shelf, grabbing: a roll of duct tape. He turns.

JAKE
Where’s that fan belt.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - JAKE, WINDING DUCT TAPE

Around the broken fan-belt in his hand, a Mickey-Mouse fix.

CODY AND JAKE

Cody at the window, keeping watch, as Jake repairs.

CODY
Is that thing going to work?

JAKE
It’ll help.

KIRA, AT A FULL-LENGTH MIRROR

She primps, and poses, in the full-length mirror. She too is paler, bloated, a disheveled, hollowed-out cast to her face.

LEE ENTERS SCENE, BEHIND HER

KIRA
Do you think I should keep it this long, or maybe lose an inch here?

LEE
Isn’t the groom supposed to wait to see the Bride?

KIRA
Cody?! Please!... Besides, you may never get to see me in this.

LEE
We’re going to make it, Kira.

Lee smiles, squeezes her shoulders for support. She exits.

A defiant Kira adjusts her mop of hair...

KIRA
Someone this stunning has to.

... a huge clump of hair comes out in her hand. She gapes.

KIRA
NO!

JAKE AND CODY - LEE ENTERS SCENE

She pauses at the window.

LEE'S P.O.V. - THE CHURCH

Is a silent black marker, with a tall dark spire. The huge banner still sways across the street, dimly lit by a light from the church. "His Blood Saves".

LEE
"His blood saves...."

Lee stares out at it. Jake finishes taping. He stands.

JAKE
Alright. Let’s do this.

CODY
Oh sh - too late.

LEE
Duck!

They drop to a squat, as

THROUGH THE WINDOW, Sherman and Judy are seen approaching.

Jake makes a low run for it, and slams the front door’s one-way dead-bolt, seconds before the key goes in.

JUDY (O.S.)
What's wrong, Sherms?

SHERMAN (O.S.)
Key's not working.... Lomy? Y’in there? The alarm went off at our house again. Did you get that thing fixed yet?

JUDY (O.S.)
Lomy? Sweetie?... Well, hello.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Sherman, and Judy who kneels, to a dazed, confused Brutus.

JUDY
What's Brutus doing out here in the street?...

The Chihuahua disappears down the alley. Judy follows him.

JUDY
I better go get that snicker-doodle.

SHERMAN
Okay. I'll go around back.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Jake looks at Lee. He points to the back. Lee goes racing for the back door, and slams the one-way dead-bolt into place.

She sighs relief, and looks back at Jake, nodding --

SHERMAN (O.S.)
Well, I'll be.

Sherman appears, from the dark beside the doorway: he had already entered, unbeknownst to Lee, and steps from shadows.

Lee backs away from him, as Sherman comes into their midst. He casually packs the tobacco in his pipe, and lights it up.

JAKE
Lee. Get away from him.

SHERMAN
Now, why would you nice kids want to rob us for?

LEE
Don't get near us. We're infected.

SHERMAN
Alright, lassie, calm down. Probably all high on angel dust. Things just never do change, do they....

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Looking for Brutus, Judy finds....

The VW van. And Steve, nearly falling out the side door. He leans against a wall, waving his severed leg at her.

STEVE
They - they took my leg off.

He staggers away into the alley. Judy follows him.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Sherman advances upon Lee, and Jake, Cody, and Kira. He seems surprised at their evident fear. He blows out smoke.

CODY
Stay away!

SHERMAN
I'm not going to hurt you, boy.

LEE
Call the police. We need medical attention.

SHERMAN
You just need to work those drugs out of your system.
(inspects a nearby shelf)
Huh. I'm out of moist-its.

CODY
We're sick, man! We need a doctor!

SHERMAN
Where’s Lomy?

KIRA
Please call a hospital or something!

SHERMAN
Did you hurt Lomy? He's just a caretaker, a poor old blind man....

Sherman pauses, tilting his head, finally hearing the blind Lomy struggling, SCREAMING, like a rabid dog behind the door.

CODY
That your Lomy? Fucker wants us dead. Now go call for help!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Judy finally manages to stop a mind-numbed Steve from hop-staggering his way, feeling along the walls of the alley.

JUDY
There, there. Goodness you're a mess! Is that your leg you've got?
(off Steve, nodding)
Come. Give it to Judes.

INT. GENERAL STORE

Sherman inspects his wall of antlers and animal heads. He seems perfectly calm. The others stare at him, frozen.

KIRA
Is he going to attack us, Lee?...

SHERMAN
I said I'm not going to hurt you.

CODY
Are you even listening, man? What part of "call for help" don't you get?

SHERMAN
And what part of Holy Ghost town don't you, mister? There's no phone lines out here no more. Just what kind of crack are you all smoking, breaking in here and - ah.

He takes a wicked, twisted tangle of antlers down from the wall. He looks them over, satisfied.

SHERMAN
Now these.... these are a beaut. See, I'm not planning to hurt you young folks. No, I'm just gonna BASH YOUR FUCKING HEADS IN!

Sherman, eyes rolled back in his head, leaps out and smashes the antlers down at Kira. She darts back, falling: the antlers pierce through her dress, pinning her to the floor.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Steve, clutching his severed leg, looks at Judy, unsure. She winks at him.... Steve hands his severed leg to her.

JUDY
Now, how hard was that?

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Kira tries crawling away, the antlers pinning her tight. As she claws, her nails CRACK and bend back, oozing black goo.

Kira SCREAMS. Jake and Cody pull Sherman off the antlers, but an enraged Sherman throws them off to either side.

Lee in his sights. He takes two hunting knives, from shelves to either side, and charges, knives high, bringing them down.

They pierce through her shirt, pinning her to the floor.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Judy, lugging the leg, puts her arm around Steve's shoulders.

JUDY
Don't be scared now. Judes is here for you. Everything's going to be --

A YELP! From the dark of the alley behind her. She turns.

JUDY
Brutus?...

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Jake loops the fan-belt around a possessed Sherman’s throat, as Lee squirms away. Sherman leers and spits, the smoking pipe still in his mouth.

SHERMAN
Where you off to so fast, cunt?

Jake pulls Sherman to the floor, but Sherman kicks and fights.

Cody leaves Kira's side, grabs a rifle, rushes toward them. Sherman kicks out, smacking Cody to the floor. Sherman jerks, snapping the belt, and lithely arches his body over Jake's.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Judy drifts deeper into the alley. There is a DARK SHAPE.

JUDY
Hello?... Brutus? Come here, cutie.

Her hand comes away from the wall. The walls of the alley are now covered in the horrible black fungus.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Sherman now has his hands around Jake's throat, as he pushes him along the floor, crashing Jake's head into the wall.

Kira stares at her oozing, ruined fingertips --

LEE
Kira!

Kira’s closer, so Lee tosses her a tire-iron. They exchange glances: a split-second plan has formed.

Jake is dazed, losing consciousness, as Sherman chokes. He pulls Jake up against the wall, pressing his fists into him.

KIRA (O.S.)
Hey, asshole.

Sherman turns his head. Kira pounds his kneecap with a tire-iron. He gasps, falls to his knees.

Jake recovers and kicks Sherman in the ribs. Down he goes.

Sherman writhes, turns, and looks up from the floor at

THE HUGE GROWLING BEAR, LEE RIGHT BEHIND IT.

His eyes go wide. She pushes. The heavy angry bear falls

AND LANDS ON HIM WITH A CRASH.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Steve hops as he follows Judy a pace.

STEVE
Can I please have my leg back?...

He sees the fungus as - his leg kicks something. He looks:

Brutus, is now a mushy little bloody ball of fur.

STEVE
(dazed)
My new sh... shoe.

Judy gets a little farther into the alley, Steve's leg still in her arms. A MOAN, as something MOVES in the dark. She sees... her eyes go wide in horror... she SCREAMS.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Jake, Lee, Cody and Kira, breathing hard, hear Judy's scream.

LEE
... Steve?

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

ANGLE ON - STEVE

Judy SCREAMS O.S. Steve turns tail, and hops as fast as he can away. But not fast enough, as SOMETHING GRABS HIM.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Lee quickly works to unlock the front door.

JAKE
Lee, don't go out there!

Too late, she's gone. He goes after her. The rest follow.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Jake, Lee, Cody and Kira rush outside.

Nothing, but a disturbing SLURPING sound. Lee gropes for her flashlight, and shines it into

THE ALLEY - ILLUMINATING FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT - FRANK

Bloated, deformed, skin glossy with black mushrooms, one arm holding a barely conscious Judy, blood pouring from her mouth.

His other arm holds Steve tightly, KISSING HIM fully on the mouth... more like, sucking him dry --

Kira SCREAMS, and Lee, reacting, drops the flashlight. They pull reflexively back. To the sound of a SHUFFLE-DRAGGING.

Jake grabs the flashlight, and shines it back into the alley.

Nothing is there. Only walls teeming with black mushrooms. And poor Steve’s lonely severed leg, lying like dead meat.

The four are shocked, frozen. Jake turns, looks at Lee.

JAKE
<u>That's</u> why they have to kill us.

INT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT (A LITTLE LATER)

Jake, Cody, and Kira (still in her wedding dress) are dazed.

LEE
... It's like a kind of evolutionary response. Kill us before we pass on to a more threatening gestation.

JAKE
Where the fungus so rapidly drains the body of heme, it reanimates.

CODY
<u>Fucking</u> zombies! What did I say!

KIRA
That thing, it was... sucking Steve.

LEE
The fungal entity thrives in a human environment. So it's only natural given highly invasive tendencies that it would turn its host into a meat-eating drone --

KIRA
Stop, stop it! Stop being so level-headed - scream or shout or cry or something - SHOW SOME EMOTION!

She breaks down into tears against Cody, comforting her.... Cody finds Kira’s rotted-away ear, resting on her dress. He grimaces, but snakes it away, before she notices it’s gone.

JAKE
So you don't just die from it.

LEE
That would be the threatening part.

Lee stands, and goes to the window. They are silent, and the room is quiet, except for the occasional RUCKUS from Lomy.

JAKE
... So, what now?

LEE
We figure out a way to stop that transformation in ourselves, or...

CODY
Well there's only an "or," because there's no way to stop it, right?
(off Lee's look)
What? We just kill ourselves?

Lee says nothing. Cody looks at Jake. He looks away.

CODY
Fine. Buy me that beer you owe me and I'll drink myself to death.

Kira sniffles and tries to shush Cody, as Lee turns away.

JAKE
There has to be a way to stop this.

KIRA
Maybe those holy-rollers can help.

LEE
Jesus can.

She smiles sardonically, staring away out the window.

LEE
"His blood saves"....
(thinking)
Her blood. Her blood was red... the fungus didn't touch her... or the whiskey bottle... or....

CUT TO - SILVER TRAILER - FLASHBACK

Lee throws the Isopropyl at the fungus. It reacts.

CUT BACK TO

LEE
Alcohol! It’s alcohol.

CODY
What is?

LEE
It reacted to the Isopropyl I threw on it.... In the silver trailer?

CODY
So?

LEE
Follow me on this. The whiskey bottle was empty....
(to Jake, working it out)
She's locked in with her infected husband. She attacks him like they're attacking us. Despondent, she drinks.

JAKE
But then - she attacks crazy Cub Scout when he shows up --

LEE
Reacting to his pheromones --

JAKE
Because - she was <u>still</u> <u>normal</u>.

LEE
Alcohol kills this thing off!

CODY
Are you two shitting me?!

LEE
She should have been covered in that fungus. Right?

JAKE
It's as good a guess as any.

CODY
Hot damn!
(jumps up)
Find me some NyQuil.

CUT TO - MINUTES LATER

A SHELF OF SUNDRIES ARE SMASHED TO PIECES.

Cody knocks an entire shelf of sundries to the floor. The others are nearby, searching the shelves as well.

CODY
Friggin' Mormons! I got nothing!

LEE
It's no use. Nothing here either.

CODY
(grabs a bottle)
What about 409?

KIRA
No, honey. Remember the last time?

CODY
So we just die like this?!

JAKE
Not die. Turn into monsters.

CODY
And you're the first one I French kiss, asshole! You got us into this!

JAKE
Me?!

CODY
Yeah, you! You were supposed to fix that window on the van!

JAKE
Hey, I'm the one who --

LEE
Hold it!... Stick together, remember?

She looks at Jake. And grips his hand.

LEE
Now let's think a minute. Someone come up with something.

CODY
Maybe there's more whiskey in that trailer.

LEE
It's too far back just to check.

JAKE
... The preacher! He had a bottle.

CODY
The guy down the street?

JAKE
He had one of those little bottles of whiskey or something.

KIRA
Maybe he's got more?

CODY
Maybe not. Meanwhile, we get slammed by a bunch of Jesus-freaks sniffing out our "fairy-moans" --

JAKE
"His blood saves."

Jake turns from the window. Lee frowns - gets it - Jake nods.

JAKE
It's wine. They have wine. For the services.

KIRA
Do we even know this will work?...

Cody is the first to act: he goes to a wall, grabs a semi-automatic RIFLE, and a SHOTGUN. He comes back, pumping it.

CODY
Okay. Here's the plan.
(tosses shotgun to Kira)
We break in and make them hand over whatever they got. We take their bus. And we get the hell out.

KIRA
(looks down at the gun)
I don't like that plan.

LEE
I agree.

She follows suit, grabbing a PISTOL, checking for ammo.

LEE
We do it quick and quiet. Sneak in, take what we find, find a safe-place, get better, call for help. But we do not put anyone in jeopardy.

KIRA
Actually, I meant --

THE BACK DOOR BURSTS OPEN - THE BLIND CRAZED LOMY ESCAPES

He goes right for them. Kira reacts first: she turns, and fires the shotgun point-blank, spraying Lomy's skull to mist. He falls backwards and lands like a sack of shit.

Kira pump-cocks the shotgun shell free one-handed.

KIRA
-- we shoot everyone we have to.

They look at her. Kira wipes a drop of blood from her dress.

KIRA
Anyone else got a wedding to go to?

EXT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN

Jake, Lee, Kira, and Cody, guns ready, backs to each other, come out the front door, crossing the street, watching for trouble and moving tactically as they make their way to the Church down the street... passing unnoticed....

A simple DAISY CHAIN OF WHITE MUSHROOMS, growing in the dirt.

O.S. - GOSPEL SINGING BLEEDS THROUGH

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

There's a HOLY GHOST REVIVAL going on! The choir is singing, the parishioners are singing, everyone's clapping and pacing and dancing in place. Satan's nervous in the service!

But the Preacher is quiet and subdued, standing back from a boisterous Sister Ruth, who’s belting out the Gospel HYMN.

The Preacher, conversely, has his hands interlaced, his head down against his chest, sweating. Mumbling to himself:

THE PREACHER
Lord, please... this cup is too great... lend this servant your blessed strength, and courage... that I make it through this night... without succumbing....

The Preacher looks up, at the GOLD CROSS on the altar, as if for him alone. He closes his eyes, and turns his head away.

He watches the RAISE-THE-ROOF REVIVAL....

The holy-rollers are so lost in their ecstasy, they don't notice, as he slips away, off the altar, to the vestry.

INT. VESTRY - NIGHT

THE DOOR OPENS - THE PREACHER ENTERS,

looking out, to make sure no one sees him. The Preacher turns as he shuts the door... to face the barrel of a gun.

CODY (O.S.)
Don't. Say. Anything.

The Preacher looks up. Hands press a length of duct-tape against his face, securely over his nose - but not his mouth.

REVERSE - JAKE, LEE, CODY AND KIRA

Are ranged around the small vestry, their weapons out and trained upon the Preacher. The Preacher searches their eyes.

THE PREACHER
You're... not taping my mouth?

JAKE
Not if you stay quiet.

Jake waves his PISTOL for the Preacher to sit in the chair.

THE PREACHER
My brothers and sisters, know that Jesus desires under his wing even the most scarlet of sinners --

CODY
Shove it, holy man. We're here for one thing. Your booze.

LEE
We're not thieves. This is serious.

Preacher looks at her. He sees raw desperation in her eyes.

THE PREACHER
It would seem so.

CODY
The alcohol! Now!

LEE
Stop it, Cody.

THE PREACHER
Do you mean...

His eyes find the impossible-to-miss bottle of wine on the table-top. They all look at it as well.

THE PREACHER
That's non-alcoholic.

CODY
Yeah, we just found that out.

Cody smacks the bottle SMASHING away with his rifle's barrel.

CODY
So where the fuck's the rest of it?!

THE PREACHER
There is no more --

SMACK! Cody thumps the Preacher's face with a fist.

The others are shocked, but they train their weapons more closely on the Preacher, anticipating trouble from his side.

The Preacher merely smiles, shaking the stars from his head.

THE PREACHER
Nice left.

LEE
Lay off him.

CODY
Maybe you don't want to live, Lee, but he's a goddamned lying drunk. There's more in here.

THE PREACHER
It is an abomination to lie in the house of the Lord. I was going to say, there is no more, of that wine.

CODY
Stay funny, you piece of shit, while I blow your head to Kingdom come --

LEE
Stop it!

KIRA
He needs to tell us, Lee.

LEE
(to the Preacher)
Please. Listen to me. Do you have any alcohol of any kind in here --

CODY
-- Manischewitz, Everclear, White Lightning --

LEE
-- it's a matter of life and death.

The Preacher studies her, and seems to trust her. He nods.

LEE
Give us what you have, we'll leave right now, we won't hurt anyone.

THE PREACHER
What's this about?

KIRA
They're trying to kill us --

CODY
Just get it, fuck-face!

The Preacher looks at them. He stands, and goes over to...

The statue of Jesus, pointing at his heart. He lifts the statue... there’s a small bottle of Scotch, in the hollow.

Cody grabs it from him.

CODY
Scotch-whiskey, God, damn, I've never been so happy to see you!

JAKE
Where's the rest of it?

THE PREACHER
That's my whole stash. Sister Ruth would kill me if she knew. The spirit is willing, but the flesh....

CODY
(to Lee)
Is it enough?

LEE
I don't know.

JAKE
It's got to be.

CODY
Right.

LEE
Let's go.

CODY
(looks at Kira)
Honey?...

Kira nods. She points her shotgun at Lee, just as Cody turns and points his rifle at Jake.

CODY
Sorry, guys. Kira and I were really hoping there'd be enough in here.... Drop those things.

JAKE
You'd shoot us? Are you kidding me?!

CODY
Between the eyes, if I have to.

He indicates the weapons. Jake and Lee, reluctantly, toss their firearms to him.

Kira keeps her shotgun leveled, as Cody tucks one pistol in his back belt, one in his front.

JAKE
Don't do this, Cody. There's enough there for everyone.

CODY
Can't take that chance, bro.

KIRA
We'll get help, Lee. Promise.

Lee just glares at her. Kira smiles, sweetly.

KIRA
I still want you as a bridesmaid.

CODY
Oh, F-Y-I, change of plans. We need the keys to that bus out there.

The Preacher doesn't move. Cody cocks the rifle.

CODY
Now.

The Preacher reaches slowly into his pocket. He pulls out... a ring of keys. Cody grabs it from him.

Cody and Kira back up to the door. Jake looks like he's about to make a move, but the Preacher stays him.

JAKE
Come on, Cody, take us with you.

CODY
And get eaten? No can do, buddy.

LEE
What happened to sticking together?

Cody grins. He pulls Kira closer to himself.

CODY
Survival of the fittest. It’s been around a while.

KIRA
(to Lee)
I-M you later?

They turn, and make for the door.... Lee glares at Kira.

LEE
F-Y-I? That dress makes you look like a fat pig, you fucking bitch.

Kira turns - she looks like she's about to pull the trigger - Cody pulls her out the back door, and slams it shut on them.

EXT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY DOOR - NIGHT

Cody takes the shotgun from Kira, raises it high, and SMASHES it down on the door knob. Cody pulls her away.

CODY
We'll make new friends.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY - NIGHT

Jake, Lee, and the Preacher have heard Cody smashing the door. Jake rushes to it, tries it: it's bent, jammed shut.

JAKE
CODY!... He smashed the door knob or something, I can't open this.

Lee pushes the door with Jake, but it's no use. Lee sees the Preacher put his hands to the duct tape at his nose....

LEE
NO!

EXT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

Cody and Kira move away from the church, guns drawn. Cody stops her, squinting into the dark.

CODY
I thought I... do you see anything?

KIRA
You dead if we don't get down that aisle.

Cody and Kira take another step - SCRUNCH.

They look down. The ground is littered with the black fungus.

They exchange worried glances.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

The SINGING and PRAISING on is still in full swing.

Sister Ruth, behind the altar, places the chalice. She looks, and notices the Preacher is absent.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY - NIGHT

The Preacher freezes, his hands near the duct tape.

JAKE
Don't take that off.

THE PREACHER
Why not?

LEE
Because you'll kill us if you do --

SISTER RUTH (O.S.)
Preacher?

Lee sees movement at the inner door. She rushes to it, and slams it shut, throwing the lock. The door rattles.

SISTER RUTH (O.S.)
Are you back there? We're getting ready for the wine.

Lee and Jake give the Preacher the silent signal, to say nothing. Their fear sways the Preacher to their side.

THE PREACHER
I'll be there shortly, Sister Ruth.

SISTER RUTH (O.S.)
What's going on?

THE PREACHER
Nothing. Please. Give me a moment.

SISTER RUTH (O.S.)
Yes, Preacher.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY DOOR - NIGHT

Sister Ruth doesn't leave though. She listens, but strains to hear over the loud gospel singing.

INT. BUS - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

SLAM. The door shuts. Cody throws both absconded PISTOLS onto the dash, Kira setting rifle and shotgun aside, as both settle in their seats.

Cody is about to unscrew the Scotch. Kira stays his hand.

KIRA
Remember rolling my Bug in the creek?

CODY
Remember turning into a zombie?

KIRA
Just drive us out of range of...

She indicates the church. He nods, and fumbles for the keys.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY - NIGHT

Lee turns to the Preacher.

LEE
Listen to me --

THE PREACHER
No! You listen. You break into my Church and threaten me with violence, which I will forgive. But I will not endanger my flock. And I've got about two minutes to lock those church doors out there to keep out two more lunatics that are about to find out I gave them the keys to my parish in South Fork --

JAKE
You gave them the wrong keys?!

CODY (V.O.)
Fuck!

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Cody throws the keys out the window.

CODY
Can’t even trust a man of God nomore....

He grabs his rifle, and pulls the lever, OPENING the door.

CODY
And back in we go.

KIRA
In that case....

Using a layer of organza from her wedding dress, Kira attempts to unscrew the stubborn top of the Scotch.

KIRA
Goddammit.

CODY
Just gimme that.

He grabs for the Scotch. She pulls it away.

KIRA
“Gimme that”? Is this how it’s going to be after we’re married?

CODY
No, because when we’re married, I’ll be eating you and you’ll be eating me if we don’t DO THIS RIGHT NOW!

The forceful man. She shakes her head, hands the Scotch --

A HORRIBLE DARK SHAPE RUSHES PAST THE DOORS

Kira SCREAMS, and lets go.

The Scotch drops, bounces past Cody, down the steps, and lands outside the bus, in the dirt.

LEE (V.O.)
You've got to get us to that bus.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY - NIGHT

Jake slams himself against the door into the church as the Preacher reaches for the doorknob. He glowers at Jake.

THE PREACHER
Son. Don't make me resurrect my prison-ministry.

JAKE
If you open that door, we're dead.

LEE
Those people out there will kill us.

THE PREACHER
I'm going through that door. And through you, if I have to.

They stare each other down. But Jake looks at Lee, who nods. Jake moves aside. The Preacher softens.

THE PREACHER
Trust me. You have nothing to fear, from me or my assembly.

He pulls the lock and opens the door --

SISTER RUTH, IN A FEROCIOUS RAGE, BARRELS INTO HIM!

But she claws to get past him, her eyes glazed, frothing at the mouth and moaning like a feral beast.

He tries to pull her away, but she slashes his face with her nails - THE DUCT-TAPE RIPS LOOSE - then pulls herself free and body-slams Lee. They go down together.

Lee tries to push her off. Jake dives into Sister Ruth, and both go rolling along the floor, bumping into the table.

A demonic energy finds Sister Ruth. She lands on top of him, grabs a shard of bottle, raises it high to cut Jake's face --

JESUS PUNCHES THROUGH HER MID-SECTION!

She looks down at the bloody statue. Then falls over.

Lee helps Jake up. The Preacher looks down at the prostrate Sister Ruth, and pulls the Jesus statue out of her.

THE PREACHER
Forgive me, Sister.

Lee and Jake look at the Preacher, horrified. But they are indicating.... The Preacher feels the duct-tape, dangling free, on his face. He nods, and reattaches it, snugly.

The Preacher goes over to a side-drawer.

THE PREACHER
I lied.

He pulls out a new ring of keys - and three pistols.

THE PREACHER
The rest of my stash.

He keeps one, tossing one to Jake and one to Lee.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

THE PREACHER (V.O.)
Now, let's get you to that bus.

Kira grabs a pistol. She and Cody freak-out with horror, looking for whatever it was that Kira saw.

KIRA
Do you see anything?...

CODY
I can’t see shit --
(suddenly realizing)
The bottle.

They turn their heads as one, looking down the steps

To the bottle of Scotch, laying in the dirt outside.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - VESTRY - NIGHT

Jake, Lee, and the Preacher are at the door - Lee stops him. They all notice, the church has gone strangely quiet.

LEE
The singing stopped.

The Preacher looks at Lee. She cocks the pistol. And nods.

He opens the door....

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The Preacher, Jake, and Lee enter, behind the altar.

THE PREACHER
Sweet mercy Jesus....

The Parishioners rapidly succumb to the pheromones: their eyes glaze, they hiss and writhe, as they drift forward....

KIRA (V.O.)
Almost there....

INT./EXT. BUS - NIGHT

Kira is trying to stay on the bus, reaching - reaching - her hand out, to grasp hold of the fallen Scotch.

Cody strains, holding her other arm.

CODY
Grab it already and get back here!

KIRA
I’m trying! Watch out for that whatever that thing was.

CODY
I told you, it’s gone --

He turns his head, and sees

JUDY - LEERING AT THEM THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

Riddled with mushrooms, smearing bloody lips along the glass.

He yelps - lets go - Kira goes sprawling outside in the dirt.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Lee, Jake, and The Preacher watch the inflamed Congregation, in horror.... One PARISHIONER rushes them, like a rabid dog. The Preacher fires, and sprays her skull to red.

The Parishioner falls back, and rolls down the altar steps.

The others crowd away now, wary, to either side of the aisle.

It’s Lee and Jake, like bride and groom, with the Preacher behind them, ready to make their processional down the aisle: writhing, crazed, murderous guests to either side.

Jake and Lee exchange glances. They nod to each other.

And take each other’s hand.

With the Preacher trailing - pistol and Jesus statue bared - they slowly make their way down the altar steps, to the aisle that leads through the church to the main double-doors.

The now-demonic Parishioners hiss and urge themselves on, but the threat of the violence keeps them in their pews.

Slowly but surely, Lee, Jake, and the Preacher move to the aisle. Jake grabs the gold cross, and uses it as a ward.

THE PREACHER
They're all possessed.

LEE
No. They're reacting to us.

A BRAVE PARISHIONER rushes them: he is shot by the Preacher, and down he goes. Jake swings the cross at another PARISHIONER.

THE PREACHER
God have mercy for what I do.

Yet another PARISHIONER rushes him from the other side. The Preacher brains him with Jesus, and he falls.

THE PREACHER
You too, Jesus.

EXT. BUS - NIGHT

Kira, clutching the Scotch, backs away from the bus.

JUDY approaches Kira, as friendly as an infected un-dead meat puppet can be. The lower half of her face is caked with blood and there is a PATCH OF FUNGUS around her mouth.

KIRA
Cody! Help me!

Cody struggles to get off the bus, aiming his rifle, as

Kira raises Lee’s pistol at the Judy thing as well.

Both FIRE at once. Judy throws off chunks of matter, as it SHRIEKS, and drops dead.

Kira and Cody stand for a moment. Blood pours down Cody’s chest from his shoulder, down Kira’s from her thigh.

Both have shot each other, when their bullets ripped right through the thing. Both fall to their knees in agony.

Guns drop. The Scotch falls in a patch of fungus.

LEE (V.O.)
Is this a good time to bring up something else that’s troubling me?

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Jake and Lee move down the aisle, wary at every moment, the equally wary Preacher just behind them.

JAKE
No.

A PARISHIONER barrels towards Jake - CRACK! Clubbed, down.

LEE
The fungus we saw. It was spreading.

JAKE
So what?

LEE
Think. Ectomycorrhizal fungi.

JAKE
Daisy chains. Very common.

Another Parishioner is whacked aside.

LEE
Feeding, spreading. Popping up. In different places. But always --

JAKE
-- one fungus --

LEE
-- one host --

JAKE
-- underneath.

LEE
“The mother.”

The Preacher begins to falter. He falls back.

JAKE
Lee? Dear?
(whacks away a Parishioner)
One muther at a time?

The Preacher chokes, as he fights the urge to succumb to the pheromones. He drops the Jesus statue. His hand fights to pull the tape from his nose... his eyes glaze over....

LEE
Jake!

THE PREACHER
I - can't - stop --

More PARISHIONERS rush them. Lee and Jake fire, as The Preacher raises his gun to his own head --

THE PREACHER
Get... out of here... now....

But Lee and Jake are too busy fighting off the invigorated Parishioners, as they swarm around them....

EXT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

Wincing, wounded Cody, arms outstretched, gets closer to a weeping, wounded Kira. A bride and groom, coming together.

CODY
Kira....

KIRA
Cody....

They are stepping over mounds of the fungus, that almost seems to ripple beneath their feet.

They reach each other, dazed, bloodied.

There is no time for anything else. Their lips search for each other’s. Parting, for one last desperate kiss....

Their eyes go wide in horror, as they SUCK uncontrollably on one another, lips locked tight. Blood spills around their mouths.

INT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

The Parishioners overwhelm Lee and Jake.

Lee is pushed to the floor. They claw over her. She sees the gun in the Preacher's hand turn away from his own head... and aim at Jake.

Lee grabs the Jesus statue and throws it, knocking the Preacher's aim aside. It blows away a Parishioner's head.

The Preacher's eyes go white. The duct tape is ripped away.

THE PREACHER
Kill - the - HERETICS!

Jake decks the Preacher with a right as he snatches his keys.

He grabs Lee, pulls her up. And - hand in hand, like Hoffman and Ross from *The Graduate* - they

RACE DOWN THE AISLE TO THE DOUBLE FRONT DOORS.

They slam against it, as Parishioners slam against them, clawing and moaning and thirsting for violence.

EXT. FRIENDLY CHURCH - NIGHT

THE DOORS OPEN - JAKE AND LEE PUSH THEMSELVES OUT

They push to shut the doors on the crazed Parishioners, Jake throwing the cross into the door-handles to keep it shut.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

As the Parishioners moan and claw, The eyes-glazed-over Preacher rises. He lifts his hands, imploring the heavens.

THE PREACHER
Brothers! Sisters! The time is ripe for the harvest! The Devil is here, and the Devil is not your friend!

He nearly spits, his face bursting with hate and rage.

THE PREACHER
The Devil is outside those doors!

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

THE PREACHER (O.S.)
KILL THE DEVIL! KILL THE DEVIL!

Jake and Lee are amazed at all the fungus. And at....

JAKE
Cody?...

LEE
Kira?...

REVERSE - CODY AND KIRA ARE JUST AHEAD KISSING

... or maybe not. They turn: there is blood and fungus around their mouths.

They MOAN, going for Jake and Lee.

Lee and Jake exchange glances. They turn their heads back. Raise their pistols. And

BLAM! BLAM! - CLICK! CLICK!

Down go Cody and Kira, a bullet hole each to their heads.

They drop their guns. Jake takes Lee’s hand, and they rush through the swelling patches of black fungus, to the bus.

Passing, Lee stops, near Kira. Jake, paces ahead, turns.

JAKE
Lee! Come on!

But Lee sees....

The discarded Scotch. Kira’s fallen beside it.

Jake rushes back, and grabs the bottle.

JAKE
Some scientist --

Kira’s eyes open, her hand latching around Jake’s arm!

Lee kicks Kira’s face in like mush.

LEE
Some girlfriend.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The Parishioners, frenzied over the pheromones, have taken the large stone altar, and are using it as a battering-ram against the church doors. The Preacher exhorts them on.

THE PREACHER
We have been called here for this moment, my brothers and sisters! The Devil is without these doors! Beasts are loosed upon the land!

BAM! BAM! BAM! goes the battering-ram.

THE PREACHER
Release us from this house of God that we may SLAY THE MUTHERFUCKERS!

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Lee and Jake rush to the bus, and climb aboard. Jake puts the keys into the ignition, shutting the doors. Lee drops into the seat, tense. The bus STARTS. They sigh relief.

The headlights go on. They see a great swath of fungus.

JAKE
All this... is from crazy cub scout?

LEE
Now imagine the rest of us succumbing.

JAKE
End of the world.

Before Jake puts it into gear, she stays his hand.

LEE
One for the road?

She hands the Scotch to him. He takes it --

AN ARM SWIPES JAKE - JAKE’S KNOCKED DOWN.

The Scotch bounces off the dash, and goes skittering back down the aisle.

Lee turns in horror, to see....

STEVE

His mouth a gaping wound, patches of fungus around it. On one leg.

Steve turns his head. And sees Lee.

Lee reaches for the pistol on the dashboard --

But Steve grabs her shoulder, and throws her into the aisle.

A stronger Steve gets the better of Lee, turning her around.

Steve writhes, push/pulling himself up against Lee. To kiss?

Lee grabs his face, as if to kiss - even fungi-thing Steve is surprised - but she pries his jaws, pushing him up to a stand.

Steve head-butts her. She falls on her back, in the aisle.

A dazed Jake, prostrate on the floor of the bus, comes to. He sees Lee, struggling against Steve.

Jake grabs the nearest thing: a fire-extinguisher.

JAKE
Who’s dating losers?...

He brings it down, but Steve’s hand stops it. He’s stronger than he looks. Jake is shocked....

Lee, on her back, is next to the Scotch. She grabs it.

Steve’s one leg kicks out at Jake.

Jake flies backwards, tumbling out the side door of the bus.

Lee rises. Steve grabs her, and pushes her against a wall of the bus. A FIRST AID KIT hanging there falls open, spilling.

Steve opens his wound of a mouth. It is a writhing pit of fungus. He comes in, for that kiss he’s been waiting for....

Her eyes dart - she sees the Isopropyl alcohol in the kit - an arm grabs it, and aims --

LEE
GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!

SHE SQUEEZES THE BOTTLE, SPRAYING STEVE WITH ALCOHOL.

He sizzles and melts and shrieks and hops back.

Lee kicks him hard. He hits the emergency bar --

A smoking Steve falls out the back of the bus.

EXT. BUS/CHURCH - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

Lee has her pistol back, and Kira’s forgotten shotgun. She leaps out the bus’s side door, and nearly barrels into Jake, already in a defensive crouch, handing him the shotgun before she even sees....

CRAZY CUB-SCOUT FRANK, “THE MOTHER,” LOOMS UPON THEM

Like a great mound rising from beneath a blanket of fungus. Frank’s features can be made out on the fungal “blanket.”

LEE
The “mother.”

JAKE
Fucker.

Jake aims the shotgun, FIRES. Matter sprays uselessly.

The thing rips the shotgun away.

Lee and Jake are trapped, nowhere to go.

It’s useless, but.... She cocks her pistol. Aims it.

SUDDENLY - THE CHURCH DOORS SMASH OPEN!

THE PARISHIONERS MAKE A MAD RUSH FOR THEM

JAKE
Back!

The Frank thing is distracted, as Jake and Lee rush back to the doors of the bus, and

A SWARM OF PARISHIONERS SMASH INTO FRANK!

The Parishioners surround it, pulling at the repulsive thing, torn to shreds in seconds by the insane church holy-rollers.

Jake and Lee watch, horrifically fascinated.

LEE
And so nature creates its own cure....

JAKE
Lee!

WHAM! Jake pulls Lee aside, just as the Preacher brings down the golden cross, smashing it stuck into the side of the bus.

He snarls. Jake and Lee dive into the bus, Jake first, Lee on his heels. She falls on the steps. Her gun falls inside.

The Preacher grabs her leg.

His eyes are blind with rage, he drools, he is lost in pure hate. He raises the Jesus statue high to impale Lee --

JAKE
Sorry, Preach.

Jake kicks the Preacher in the teeth. The Preacher flies back, as Jake sits and slams the lever, shutting the doors.

JAKE
Go with God.

Jake pulls Lee up. She nearly falls into him. He holds her.

LEE
Get us out of here.

She takes the other seat, as Parishioners struggle and fight to get on the bus after them.

Jake fumbles, jerks it back into gear. He GUNS the engine.

THE BUS RACES AWAY FROM THE MANIAC PARISHIONERS!

EXT. BUS - MOVING

THE FLEEING BIG BUS RUSH THROUGH FRIENDLY...

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

... AND AWAY, INTO THE NIGHT.

INSIDE THE MOVING BUS

Real calm at last. Jake drives. Lee takes a deep breath.

She pulls the bottle of Scotch out of her jacket pocket.

LEE
Do we say grace first?

She struggles to open it. Finally manages to.

JAKE
You think this will work?

LEE
We'll find out. Or not.

She offers the bottle to Jake.

LEE
Drivers first.

JAKE
To sticking together.

Lee smiles.... She holds the bottle up for a toast.

Lee drinks deeply. And coughs, grimacing at the taste. Jake laughs. She offers him the bottle --

The bus BUMPS again, VEERS. POW!, a tire blowing. Jake quickly pulls over to avoid an accident, and stops.

They exchange glances. Lee grabs her pistol. They pile out, defensively, only to find....

OUTSIDE THE BUS

The road is littered with rocks and the broken beer bottles they had lost earlier. Glass shards imbed the tire.

Jake and Lee can’t believe it.... They dissolve into uncontrollable laughter. Finally leaning against each other.

And kissing, gently.

Lee puts the Scotch to his lips. Jake takes the bottle.

JAKE
Bottoms up.

He is about to drink... when he spasms... starts to shake.

LEE
Jake? Jake honey?... What’s --

Jake wanders away from her. He drops the bottle of Scotch in the dirt. He’s staggering.

SUDDENLY - LEE DOUBLES OVER, IN PAIN

Dropping her pistol. She clutches her stomach, her head, gasping for breath.

Jake grasps the headlight for support. The beam picks up the BOILING BLACK FUNGUS, spreading over his arms, neck, face, eager to burst forth.

Lee desperately reaches out, for the bottle of Scotch...

... but finds her fallen pistol instead.

She COCKS the hammer.

Jake kneels beside the headlight. The fungus boils ooze.

Behind him, Lee’s form approaches, slowly.

She raises the pistol. It is aimed directly at the back of his head.

Her hand shakes. But her eyes are glazed over, suffused with hate.

She opens her mouth, in a final, terrible SCREAM.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK

BLAM!

The End