

# TERMINUS AMERICANA

Written by  
Matt Pelfrey

[SAMPLE PAGES]

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### **Kind words for TERMINUS AMERICANA...**

“Tapping into the Zeitgeist of worldwide violence, Lodestone Theater Ensemble’s production of Matt Pelfrey’s play throbs with dark urgency and wit, a fever dream of political/economic/sexual paranoia. The creative density of Pelfrey’s vision is impressive, positing an alternative America where mutant babies swim in corporate zoos. The heartland is literally a Marlboro Country populated by cancerous, hacking Marlboro Men, where a vicious Uncle Sam runs the show as a sort of malignant Elvis.”

### **-L.A. Weekly (PICK OF THE WEEK)**

“The appeal of Pelfrey’s piece is his clever, comic explosion of the media portrayal of violence into an absurd, yet somehow truthful, vision. His point is not so much that America is besotted with violence, but that American media is besotted with violence. Needless to say, shows that feature people being mauled by animals, and the Fox network in particular, take it on the chin.”

### **-Back Stage West (CRITIC’S PICK)**

“Matt Pelfrey’s “Terminus Americana” emerges as one of those rare works that actually gains clarity in light of recent catastrophes... indeed, with its emphasis on insane conspiracy theories and the American apocalypse, Pelfrey’s darkly comic play seems eerily prescient.”

### **-Los Angeles Times**

### **BIO**

Matt Pelfrey is the author of Pure Shock Value, An Impending Rupture of the Belly, Cockroach Nation, Terminus Americana, Honkies With Attitude, Gore Hounds, Monkey and A Feast of Famine. His plays have been produced in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Portland, Louisville, St. Louis, and Miami by such companies as the Actors Theater of Louisville, Furious Theatre, Artists Rep, Roadworks, American Theater of Actors, Stark Raving Theater, (Mostly) Harmless Theater Company, Moving Arts and the Lodestone Theatre Ensemble. His play Drive Angry was produced in the 1999 Humana Festival and is published by both Smith and Kraus and Samuel French. His play Jerry Springer is God was also recently published by Smith and Kraus. His play An Impending Rupture of the Belly and Freak Storm are published by Broadway Play Publishing. He is the recipient of the Heideman Award (National Ten-Minute Play Award) and has been nominated for an American Theater Critics New Play Award and a Los Angeles Ovation award. He received his BA degree in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University and his M.F.A in Playwriting from UCLA. He is currently on faculty at Point Park Univeristy as Program Director for the MFA in Writing for Screen and Stage.

## **CHARACTERS**

ACTOR #1: MAC WINCHELL

ACTOR #2: FELIX OSBORN / MARLBORO MAN #2

ACTOR #3: BRENDA / CHILI / CLERK

ACTOR #4: MURDEN / BIG HULKING MAN / UNCLE SAM /  
NAMELESS AMERICAN

ACTOR #5: HALLOCK / MARLBORO MAN / NAMELESS AMERICAN

ACTOR #6: GARDETTO / MAN IN FILTHY SHORTS / MAN WITH MEAT/  
NAMELESS AMERICAN

ACTOR #7: CHARLIE / JASON / NAMELESS AMERICAN / CO-  
WORKER / NAMELESS AMERICAN

ACTOR #8: EMMETT SHELL / NERVOUS WOMAN / B.K. / JILL /  
CO-WORKER / NAMELESS AMERICAN

\* With double and triple casting this play can be performed with as few as 5 men and 3 women. Any race or ethnicity can play any of the characters. When this play premiered, the entire cast was Asian American, including the actor who played Uncle Sam. Anything goes.

## **TIME AND PLACE**

America. Now.

## **SCRIPT HISTORY**

West Coast Premier: Lodestone Theatre Ensemble. Los Angeles, CA.

Nominated for the L.A. Ovation Award for Best World Premier Play.

CHAPTER 1

IN DARKNESS, the sound of a beautiful, healthy baby.

BRENDA APPEARS in a shaft of bright, golden light. She holds the baby. It cries and coos as she rocks him.

BRENDA

Mac? This okay? Should I call back?

LIGHTS RISE on Mac at his desk in his office. He's got a headset on and he's looking over some papers.

MAC

No, just got out of a one-on-one with Kirby. Something's up.

BRENDA

Yeah, like?

MAC

Dunno, but lately he's been... "chatting" with me.

BRENDA

Chatting how?

MAC

Little talks. Stuff we never discuss. What we're becoming. What we're about as an organization.

BRENDA

Think it's gonna happen?

MAC

Hours I put in here? Better see something by the end of the quarter.

BRENDA

Or--?

MAC

(With a smile)

They might make me mad.

OSBORN ENTERS holding a wrapped gift. He stands there. Mac notices.

MAC

Ah, anything else?

BRENDA

Gotta go?



OSBORN

My secret Santa has yet to show his or her face.

Mac nods. Osborn sits there. An awkward silence grows.

MAC

(Picks up gift)

Didn't go over the ten dollar limit, didja?

OSBORN

(Abruptly)

Julia's cheating on me.

MAC

Jesus. Felix. I...

OSBORN

Yeah.

MAC

...don't know what to say... this is...

OSBORN

(A pained smile.)

Tell me 'bout it.

Another long silence infects the room.

MAC

How, ah, are you going to handle this? I mean...any idea who it is, or --?

OSBORN

(Sharp, alert:)

The mail man. Found a postage stamp stuck to her inner thigh...

MAC

...a stamp?

OSBORN

(With significance)

Young Elvis.

MAC

Okay, let's think about this a second. How do you really know? Just a stamp -- that's not much to go on.

OSBORN

Mac. How long have you and Brenda...?

MAC

Ten years, February.

OSBORN

And you couldn't tell if she was stepping out?

Mac just looks at him.

OSBORN

I can smell the cum emanating from the pores of her skin. She's filled to the brim with his fluid. She cries his semen.

Mac shifts in his seat.

MAC

Maybe you need to talk to someone.

OSBORN

I'm talking to you. Aren't you someone?

MAC

You thought about counselling or...?

OSBORN

Won't work.

MAC

C'mon, Felix, you don't know that.

OSBORN

Ever heard of Marriage Encounter?

MAC

No.

OSBORN

It's a Catholic thing. You meet with other couples. Discuss your marriage in a helpful, supportive environment. Find out what others do to work past problems. Every night Julia and I pick a subject relating to our relationship and write our true feelings about it. We dig inside our thoughts, our hearts, our emotions. We burrow and burrow and burrow...then we share what we wrote.

MAC

Sounds... healthy.

OSBORN

Mac. Was the worst thing ever happened to me. Well...second worst.

(Turns inward)

The examined life is... terrifying.  
Don't dig deep... find answers...  
Better to stay on the surface, like those pond bugs.  
Punch your time clock,  
pretend your wife loves you,  
pretend this is the best country in the world.  
Beneath the beautiful lake lurk the predators.  
Slime covered monstrosities.

(MORE)

OSBORN (cont'd)

Waiting for each and every one of us to make a mistake.  
To get pulled under.

MAC

Felix, shit, I wish there was some way -- something I could do...

OSBORN

It's okay. I don't expect you to fix my life. That's my responsibility. I'm no victim Mac.

Osborn jerks slightly, as if he just heard someone.

OSBORN

Think I hear my secret Santa. Better go.

MAC

Listen, maybe we should go for a drink some time.  
I mean, if you ever want to, need to bend an ear...

OSBORN

Sure, that would be great.

(Sincere)

You're very kind.

(Like it's a revelation)

You're a kind man, Mac. People like you are in short supply.

Mac smiles, feeling awkward.

Osborn EXITS.

Mac picks up Osborn's gift. He considers it a moment, gives it a little shake.

MAC

(Sits, considers the gift)

Huh.

MUFFLED POPPING SOUNDS from  
somewhere.

Mac gets up from his desk. MORE POPPING  
SOUNDS. But now they're closer. Mac stops and  
listens.

THOSE SOUNDS AGAIN, THIS TIME,  
CLEARLY GUNSHOTS. And now, YELLING,  
SCREAMING, CRYING.

Mac walks over to investigate when JILL, a fellow  
worker, BURSTS INTO THE ROOM, drenched in  
blood.

MAC

Jill!

...run... JILL MAC  
Jill -- what??

Jill collapses, dead.

MAC  
HELP ME!!  
Jesus -- SOMEBODY!!!

Osborn steps from the darkness. A blood spattered  
angel of vengeance. BEAUTIFUL GUNS in each  
hand. He aims both at Mac.

OSBORN  
On! Your! Knees!  
NOW!

Mac holds up his hands, falls to his knees.

MAC OSBORN  
Don't shoot! I found the cameras in my office!

MAC  
Felix!

OSBORN MAC  
I am not a digit! If this is about your --  
When I bleed, numbers don't flow from  
my veins!

Osborn places a gun against Mac's head.

OSBORN  
(his tone suddenly rational )  
Listen very carefully Mac.  
We have only a few seconds.  
I'm here to pass on important information.  
America is not the United States.  
You're the next piece of the puzzle.  
You're part of the lineage.  
We're all part of the same structure.  
Follow every strand!  
One secret leads to the next.  
We're human dominoes, Mac, nothing more, we all fall down.  
My job is to tell you my secret.

MAC  
Get away -- stop this!!

Osborn leans down, whispers something to Mac.  
WE HEAR MILLIONS OF WHISPERS IN THE  
DARKNESS, BILLIONS MAYBE, A NATION

OF SECRETS BEING TOLD...it's almost  
beautiful.

OSBORN

Now this part, you're not going to like.

Osborn presses both weapons against his head, a  
barrel to each temple.

OSBORN

America's asleep.  
Be careful of the dream.

Osborn shoots himself as --

-- we BLACK OUT.

The darkness EXPLODES with GUNFIRE which  
then SLOWLY ECHOES out like apocalyptic  
thunder...

CHAPTER 2

A DINGY SPOT LIGHT reveals Mac slumped in a chair.

His clothes are spattered with blood.

He looks like he's just been dumped there.

Slowly, he looks up. Sees a desk with a phone on it. He stumbles over, picks up the receiver, tries in vain to get an outside line.

FRANK MURDEN, a Senior Executive, walks in.

Calling someone, Mac?	MURDEN
My wife.	MAC
What for?	MURDEN
What for...?	MAC
Simple question.	MURDEN
I think she might find it comforting to know her husband's brains aren't sliding down a cubical wall.	MAC
Uh-huh. Let's table that idea for a moment.	MURDEN
Something's wrong with the phones...	MAC (Hitting buttons)
Grab some chair, will ya?	MURDEN
Brenda's probably hysterical...	MAC
She's not.	MURDEN

MAC

(Shoots him a look)

Sees this on the news? -- how come I can't get an outside line?

MURDEN

This little glitch isn't on the news.

MAC

My entire team was gunned down in cold blood!

Where're the cops?

The investigators?

MURDEN

We're handling this "in house."

Murden goes to the phone, hits some buttons, then speaks.

MURDEN

Send Hallock and Gardetto in here.

It's "go" time.

Murden hangs up.

MAC

How ... how did you do that?

MURDEN

Mac, we need you to relax.

Mac goes to the phone, picks it up.

MAC

It's dead.

(He punches some numbers)

It's...what code did you punch?

Mine's not working...

EDDIE GARDETTO and NORA HALLOCK  
ENTER. They are both slick Junior Executives.  
Human eels.

HALLOCK

Mac, we're just as sorry as can be about this morning.

GARDETTO

It was an unfortunate occurrence.

MAC

For starters.

GARDETTO

Don't get combative, Mac.

I'm not! MAC

C'mon, Mac, please... HALLOCK

Be a team player. GARDETTO

Let's keep this friendly. HALLOCK

Jill and the others... how are they? MAC

How should they be? GARDETTO

You have a preference...? HALLOCK

I want answers. Wanna talk to the police. MAC

Mac, we've covered that. MURDEN

That's tilled soil. HALLOCK

I want to talk to my wife. MAC  
(Starting to lose it)

Look at me! (looks at his suit)

Christ, Mac, you're sounding like a broken record. MURDEN

PEOPLE ARE DEAD!  
ONE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES WENT CRAZY!!  
DON'T YOU CARE? MAC

'Course we do, Mac. HALLOCK

Entire company aches after a tragedy of this nature. GARDETTO

And we want to get to the bottom of it. MURDEN

Good! We agree on something! MAC

So you're willing to help us? HALLOCK

Of course! Why wouldn't I? MAC

That's what we'd like to know. GARDETTO

Huh? MAC

You knew Osborn. MURDEN

Somewhat. MAC

...was a key member of your team?  
Did good work? GARDETTO

Yes. Absolutely. MAC

Talk much? HALLOCK

No more than anyone else. MAC

But you did talk to him today? HALLOCK

Yeah. MAC

Twice. HALLOCK

What's that tone? MAC

Gardetto? Wanna take this? MURDEN

Love to. GARDETTO  
Mac, you spoke with Osborn in your office and during the shooting.

MAC  
How you know that? I mean -- yes -- you're right.  
But how did you know we talked?

GARDETTO  
(over "we talked?")  
Why shouldn't we?

HALLOCK  
Trying to hide it?

MAC  
No...

HALLOCK  
Then paint the picture for us...

GARDETTO  
Sculpt it with just the right words, make us live it, babe.

HALLOCK  
What went down?

MAC  
He just started shooting.  
From nowhere... blood... confusion...

MURDEN  
You seem to be avoiding one crucial element...

HALLOCK  
...He whispered something to you.

GARDETTO  
Had the guns to your head, then he leaned down...

HALLOCK  
In what we couldn't help notice was a rather intimate manner...

GARDETTO  
Mac, he whispered in your ear.

HALLOCK  
His breath carried moist information from his orifice to yours...

GARDETTO  
What did he say?

MURDEN  
The Old Man is very interested.

MAC  
The... Old Man?

MURDEN

That's right. Home Office been burning high octane on this one.

GARDETTO

E-mail, faxes, phones, fucking video teleconferences, pigeons with little notes on their claws.

HALLOCK

Pigeons don't have claws.

GARDETTO

The fuck they don't...

HALLOCK

They have talons.

GARDETTO

Eagles have talons.

HALLOCK

So do pigeons.

MURDEN

(To Hallock and Gardetto)

Hey, you can reserve a conference room and discuss the burning pigeon issue later.

(Back to Mac)

Core deal here Mac, the Old Man has concerns.

HALLOCK

Hell, we all do.

MURDEN

And we need you to address them.

MAC

I've told you everything.

MURDEN

Right. Except what he whispered.

An accusatory pause hangs in the room.

MAC

I don't remember.

Murden adjusts his power suspenders with pronounced disappointment.

Gardetto breathes deeply through his nostrils.

Hallock purses her lips, clearly concerned.

MAC

I'm sorry.  
I don't.  
If I did, I'd tell you.  
In a heart beat.  
But to be honest, at the time, that gun, cold steel pressed against my skull...  
seconds away from dying...  
could only hear my body screaming...  
my cells scrambling for cover...  
skin trying to rip away from my bones in a desperate bid to survive.

HALLOCK

All well and good, Mac...

MURDEN

Very poetic...

HALLOCK

Extremely fuckin' poetic.  
But that doesn't put out the fire we got...

GARDETTO

We've gotta put this fire out...

MURDEN

It's an inferno, Mac...

GARDETTO

That's right -- a blazing, all consuming, Mother of God hell fire...

HALLOCK

...and if the Old Man doesn't see it squelched, and squelched good, we're all gonna wish  
we were fish food.

GARDETTO

If he's gotta grab the Airstream, come down here, piss on this himself...  
(He pauses at the enormity of  
the thought)

...it's over. No pension.  
No bonus.  
Nothing.  
We'll be thrown to the jackals.

HALLOCK

And we don't want that to happen.

MURDEN

It would be an unfortunate situation.

MAC

What do you expect from me?

Performance. HALLOCK

A commitment to excellence. GARDETTO

We want to know what he said!  
FUCK!  
AM I TALKING TO MYSELF OR WHAT??!!!!

MAC  
Why would I lie to you?  
I'm a team player!  
What is this?  
Huh?  
Now it's my turn to ask the questions, WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON HERE??

The phone CHIRPS. Murden answers without  
taking his eyes off Mac.

MURDEN  
(into phone)  
Yap.  
Yap.  
Yap.  
Back atcha'.

Murden hangs up.

MURDEN  
Boys and girls, that's a wrap for right now.

MAC  
(Gets up from chair)  
Thank God.

MURDEN  
You sit tight.

MAC  
I'm going home.

MURDEN  
What you're going to do is prepare a presentation for the big dogs, detailing what  
happened...

HALLOCK  
...And going into specifics about the verbal transaction you and Osborn had.

MAC  
You can't be serious...

HALLOCK

What, because I'm a woman I can't be serious, Mac?  
That what you're saying?

MAC

No, I --

HALLOCK

Just fucking with you Mac.

Hallock EXITS.

Gardetto and Murden chuckle.

GARDETTO

You really are acting like a pussy.  
You want to go home?  
What's with you?  
Not even noon yet.  
Whatever happened to the eight hour work day, babe?

Gardetto EXITS.

Mac looks at Murden like a cornered rat staring  
into the eyes of a snake.

MURDEN

Get to work.

Murden EXITS.

Mac terrified, mind racing, tries to figure out what  
to do. He sees his jacket and briefcase in the  
corner.

He takes a deep breath, staggers over, grabs his  
things, peers out into the hallway to make sure the  
coast is clear, then EXITS.

LIGHTS SHIFT...

CHAPTER 3

Mac ENTERS, scurries down a hallway towards the elevators.

He shoots nervous, agitated glances at the various CO-WORKERS who pass him by, themselves moving like desperate little ants.

Some of them shout out to him as they pass.

CO-WORKER #1

Mac! Heard about the shooting. Bummer!

CO-WORKER #2

Heya Tiger, feelin' better?  
Oh! And great work on the Marlboro account!

CO-WORKER #3

Since you're not dead, we still on for Thursday?

CO-WORKER #4

Mac, I guess you got some openings in your department, think of me!

Another co-worker passes by, sees Mac, grabs him by the arm. Mac immediately yanks back...

CHARLIE

Whoa, easy Macadatiuous...

...then looks relieved to see it's his friend and co-worker CHARLIE.

MAC

Chuckie, Jesus...glad to see you--  
(Looks around suspiciously)

Come with me.  
Don't ask questions, just -- let's go.  
Let's get out of here --

CHARLIE

We can't leave --

MAC

Come on! I'll explain later.

Mac tries to pull Charlie towards the elevators, while keeping an eye out. Charlie resists.

CHARLIE

Hold on, hold on -- I'm in the middle of a project --

MAC

You don't understand --

CHARLIE

Well, take a deep breath, step into my hampa-trail, help me to do just that. Okay?  
Come, come...

LIGHTS SHIFT to Charlie's cramped little office.

CHARLIE

Now, sit...take a load off...

MAC

Something's wrong -- something's really, really wrong --

CHARLIE

Want some mud? I got a mini-pot brewing. An Indonesian blend...

MAC

Charlie, fuck! I--

CHARLIE

This about the shooting?  
'Cause I got the E-mail on that -- extremely uncool.  
Fuckin' Osborn, man -- I knew that goofy bastard was trouble.

Mac stares at Charlie a beat.

CHARLIE

What's the look?

MAC

They've gotten to you.

CHARLIE

Nobody's "gotten" to me.  
I'm the Chuckster.  
Always have been, always will be.  
Now take a seat and let's chew the fat.  
You need to get centered.  
Hey, these shootings can be a real adrenaline rush and it's hard to come down...so sit--

Mac goes for the door. Charlie rushes over and  
grabs him.

MAC

(Rips away)

Don't!

CHARLIE

Man, what is with you?

But Mac isn't paying attention to Charlie anymore.  
For the first time, he notices something out the  
window.

MAC

What's that?

CHARLIE

Uh, what's what?

MAC

That thing? In the sky?

CHARLIE

Okay, are you talking about, like, the sun?

MAC

Can't be the sun. Looks like a bullet hole. Red. Infected. Yellow around the edges.

CHARLIE

Just the smog layer, plus I hear eco-terrorists blew some refineries off the coast, so...  
you know... the usual.

Mac goes to the window and stares out. Charlie  
reaches into his jacket, takes out a handgun.

MAC

This morning, when I rolled out of bed, it was seventy eight degrees out.  
Not a cloud in the sky.  
When I got up this morning, an office rampage was not treated as an inconvenience.

Mac turns. Sees Charlie holding the gun. He  
freaks, yells, cowers back.

MAC

NO! DON'T! DON'T!!

CHARLIE

Dude, it's for you. It's an enabler.  
That's what they're calling 'em these days.  
Just picked it up. Take it.  
Borrow it for the week.  
Make you feel better.

MAC

.....

CHARLIE

Oh, come on, feel it.  
It's Gucci.  
The Executive Avenger.  
Very choice.  
No kick. Here.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Grab.

Charlie presses the gun into Mac's hand.

CHARLIE

Nice, huh?  
And that handle?  
Smooth.  
A perfect fit.  
Like a cheerleaders ass.  
Huh?  
Remember cheerleaders, Mac?  
I bet you do you horny bastard.  
Keep it.

MAC

No...

CHARLIE

Yes, come on...  
make you feel better.  
Surprised you don't already got one.  
Coulda snapped off a few against Osborn.  
Hell, everyone vice president and above packs heat these days...

Mac tosses the gun to the floor.

Charlie looks annoyed.

He sighs.

Beat.

CHARLIE

They're saying shit.  
About you and Osborn.  
Conspiracy theories.  
I'm taking a grunt, two executives in the next stall muttering your name.  
That kind of stuff.

MAC

Something's happened, Charlie.  
Something horrible...something...  
that I can't explain.  
And maybe somehow you're a part of it...  
or maybe you're a victim of it...  
I'm not sure.  
Not sure about anything...

CHARLIE

Mac.  
Mackey.  
Big Mac.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Pretend something weird has happened -- it hasn't, I wanna be clear on that -- but let's pretend. Here's my advice: play along.

Keep it to yourself.

Don't go running around like some psycho saying the sky's falling.

Don't go run off the job.

Don't get hysterical.

You know who does that?

Homeless guys.

Don't be a homeless guy.

This is between us, kid.

Friend to friend.

Mac nods vaguely, turns away, considers something...

CHARLIE

Hey! Onwards and upwards, right?

Let's get you set up in some fresh digs until they finish hosing down your old office.

LIGHTS RISE on Mac's new desk. Charlie steers Mac to it.

CHARLIE

We'll rustle up a hot looking temp, get this place in shape. Everything is hunky dory. Keep your cool. Stay positive man!

Charlie EXITS. Mac sits there.

CHAPTER 4

Mac at the desk. He stares at his papers,  
bewildered and frazzled.

From somewhere, WHISPERING...

Osborn APPEARS from a shadow.

His face a ruined joke of humanity. Blood.  
Tissue. Bone.

He does his best to smile.

Mac sees him and promptly freaks.

MAC  
...leave me alone... get away.... STAY BACK....

Osborn moves in on Mac.

MAC  
STAY THE FUCK AWAY!!!

OSBORN  
You forget?

Mac grabs stuff from his desk and throws it at  
Osborn.

OSBORN  
I'm asking you a question: did you really forget?

MAC  
LEAVE ME ALONE!!!

Mac crawls under his desk and hides.

Osborn goes over and tries to pull him out by the  
legs.

Just as Osborn is making progress, he hears  
something and quickly DISAPPEARS.

A moment later, EMMA SHELL ENTERS. She  
uses hand braces to walk.

She is a woman with many, many wounds.

LIGHTS CHANGE BACK TO NORMAL.

Emma looks around.

EMMA SHELL

Mr. Winchell? My name's Emma. The temp?

Mac slowly peers from under the desk.

EMMA SHELL

Can I ask what you're doing under there?

MAC

What d'you want?

EMMA SHELL

These are from your office...

She has some files and reports. Included is the gift  
Osborn gave to Mac.

MAC

(As he gets up from under the  
desk.)

Put 'em over there and...go do whatever you do.

She puts the things down on his desk.

Mac stares at Osborn's gift.

He's lost in his thoughts for a beat.

MAC

(Noticing she's still there)

Said you can go. Okay? Bye.

EMMA SHELL

He was a hero, you know.

MAC

Who?

EMMA SHELL

The shooter. Felix Osborn.

Beat.

MAC

Are you sick?

EMMA SHELL

He was a martyr in the war against the Great Evil.

MAC

Try a cold-blooded murderer!

EMMA SHELL

Some day you'll thank him. He was putting things in motion. Striking out against AmeriCO and the Old Man...

MAC

What he struck against were innocent people!

EMMA SHELL

I know this is tough on you...

MAC

You have no fucking idea what I'm feeling.

EMMA SHELL

Not true.

MAC

Ever had a gun pressed against your face?

EMMA SHELL

Yes.

Beat.

MAC

(Suddenly worried)

You're not the temp are you?

EMMA SHELL

Don't be afraid. I'm here to help.

(Beat)

These office shootings -- they're happening every day. And it's just the beginning...

MAC

If you know... what's going on, you better start talking.

As Emma starts the following monologue,  
LIGHTS GRADUALLY SHIFT -- BULLET-  
HOLES SLOWLY APPEAR EVERYWHERE, a  
tinge of red light seeps in.

NAMELESS AMERICAN'S ARE REVEALED,  
backs to us, guns in hand.

EMMA SHELL

A new religion has spawned, Mac. Out there in our American cities, prophets of the Church of Christ, Office Shooter are emerging. Somewhere, perhaps in a by-the-hour hotel near skid row, a man, or quite possibly a woman, stares at their reflection in a toothpaste specked mirror. And slowly, that individual looks down, realizes he or she holds a gun. Feels the weight. Shifts it from sweaty palm to sweaty palm. And that individual receives a moment of clarity. Blood soaked clarity. You see, Mac, with every gun wielding berserker, a new piece of the puzzle falls into place. Like you, I barely survived a rampage...

(MORE)

EMMA SHELL (cont'd)

(Beat)

That's right. I've been there with you. Suffered the same price. Tasted the blood in my mouth. Saw my life fluids seep into the office carpet. Watched the light drain from my fiance's eyes, there to meet me for lunch. Like you, Mac, I wondered why. And then I received the answer. Just like you have.

MAC

I haven't received anything.

EMMA SHELL

There. On your desk.

Mac looks at Osborn's gift.

EMMA SHELL

Open it.

Mac unwraps Osborn's gift.

He takes out a thick, crudely bound volume of about five-hundred pages. WE HEAR A MILLION WHISPERS, like a gust of air blowing through the room, then they quickly die.

MAC

What is this thing?

EMMA SHELL

The Terminus Americana.

LIGHTS go back to normal, the Nameless American's DISAPPEAR.

Mac looks at this strange book. He's about to open it--

EMMA SHELL

Not here. Put it away. I'm positive your employers won't like you spending business hours on... personal reading.

Mac holds Emma's gaze for a moment, then takes the Terminus Americana and puts it in his briefcase.

EMMA SHELL

Excellent.

(She starts to move back to the door.)

Now Mac. I have to go. Be strong.

Murden, Hallock and Gardetto HUSTLE IN past Emma Shell.

MURDEN

Mac! How's the report?

Emma Shell EXITS.

Murden sees her out of the corner of his eye,  
trades a look with Hallock and Gardetto.

MURDEN

Who's that?

MAC

Just the temp...

MURDEN

What were you two talking about?

MAC

Nothing. Just--

MURDEN

(To Hallock and Gardetto)

Check her out.

Hallock and Gardetto EXIT.

MURDEN

Sinister shit afoot here Winchell. Double agents within AmeriCO. Gotta keep a good eye on everybody. Especially the fucking temps. This whole company's probably infected. Wouldn't know anything about that would you Mac?

MAC

Never saw her before...

MURDEN

Everything's a double cross these days. Hell, triple crosses aren't uncommon. And you want some more advice: Nobody's what they seem. Half expect you to pull off that wig and mask and show your true self to me... that is your real hair, isn't it?

Mac can't even respond to that. Just stares at  
Murden.

MURDEN

(Sigh, his paranoia seems to  
pass)

But don't you worry about it. We won't let any more nuts bother you.

Hallock and Gardetto COME BACK.

HALLOCK

No sign of her.

MURDEN

She was a fucking gymp! How far could she get?

GARDETTO

Sorry boss. Turned a corner and she was just... gone.

Murden turns to Mac.

MURDEN

See what I have to deal with here? See the kinds of vicious high-pressure situations I gotta deal with every second of every day!?

(Beat)

So. About the report. Making progress? How about it?

MAC

I'm... just... it's hard to organize my thoughts and --

MURDEN

That a joke? Is that -- very fucking funny. The big dogs are howling, Mac. They want that report. From me. They're smelling my ass, Mac, and frankly, they're not pleased.

(Beat)

I need it. Pronto. Let me take a look at what you've got.

(Beat. Mac doesn't move)

What the fuck? There a problem here?

Pause.

MAC

I'm not writing a report.

MURDEN

Hah?

MAC

(Barely able to suppress his growing rage)

Fuck your report. Okay? Clear enough? Fuck you. Fuck your report.

MURDEN

That what you want me to tell the Old Man? Yeah, that's right, the Old Man is coming. Gonna work out of the top floor. Taking a personal interest in your situation. So is that your answer? Should I tell him that? Huh? Stupid? Huh? Is that your answer...

MAC

Going to see my wife...

MURDEN

How long you been with AmeriCO? Eighteen years?

MAC

M'going home, gonna see my wife, then I'm going to the authorities...

MURDEN

Leave early your ass is fired. Gone. No pension. No health care. Nothing. N'you do need that healthcare, don't you. I mean, taking care of a sick, mutant baby isn't cheap, is it?

MAC

What? Mutant what?

Mac grabs Murden.

MAC

What're you talking about?

MURDEN

Mac, let go!

MAC

How can you say this, how can you -- the gall!

MURDEN

You calling me a bird, Winchell?

MAC

Not gull, gall... the --

MURDEN

Mac, control yourself -- you're wrinkling my suit!

MAC

I've given everything to this company, and, and you just ... fuck you!

Hallock and Gardetto pull Mac off and hold him.

MURDEN

Listen to me, you lactating fuck: you're lucky things are hot around here. Up to me, half of you'd be in a dumpster right now. Cut open. Big hairy rats rolling around n'your intestines, that kinda thing. And listen good, 'cause that can still happen. You can disappear any time. Only reason you're alive right now, we don't have all the pieces of the puzzle yet.

Hallock and Gardetto grab Mac.

MURDEN

Get 'im outta here!

They start to leave.

MURDEN

Whoa! One last thing.

(Gets in Mac's face again)

Since you're so fucking dumb, wanna make this totally crystal: YOU'RE FIRED!!!

Murden SLUGS Mac in the gut, then he's  
HAULED AWAY.

LIGHTS TRANSITION.

We HEAR the sound of TRAFFIC and the DIN  
OF CITY NOISE, then find Mac pulling himself  
off the hot sidewalk in front of the office.

MAC

(Ranting to various  
passerby's)

Anyone see that? See what these bastards did? Worked for this company year after year, sweat and blood, they fire me! Throw me away like human trash! I supposed to die in that shooting? Huh? That how you're handling cutbacks? Wanna cut me back, that it? Am I the fat? Think I'm the fucking fat? Got news for you, I'm muscle, nothing but muscle. YOU CAN'T CUT INTO ME!!

(Coming down hard from  
the adrenaline, out of breath)

I'm nothing... nothing... but muscle...

CHAPTER 5

Mac's home. A place with bars over every window, reinforced doors, barbed wire coiled around the security fence outside.

We find Mac's wife BRENDA, bathed in the flickering glow of an unseen television. Grotesque laughter blurts from the program.

She seems somehow hypnotised by the assault of images that flood her brain. She smiles sadly, nods knowingly.

Mac RUSHES IN, throws his stuff down and goes to Brenda.

He grabs her, buries his face in her, clutching her like a drowning man.

She doesn't return the embrace, and doesn't take her eyes away from the flickering light for an instant.

You hear? Was it on?

MAC

Owie. My shoulder...

BRENDA

Beat.

Hon, look at me.

MAC

Please?

BRENDA  
(A gesture at the TV)

Something happened...

MAC

Can it wait 'till the commercial?

BRENDA

Turn that off.

MAC

BRENDA  
But it's "Carnage, American Style" ...and after comes "Animal Terror on Tape", followed by "Real Life Bloodbaths Volume Four." The commercial shows a helicopter crashing into a crowd at one of those airshows.

MAC

C'mon.

BRENDA

...at nine we've got a movie of the week. The title escapes me, but Ted Danson plays a father who fucks his daughter's best friend, then pours Drano down her throat when she blabs.

MAC

Was a shooting. At work. Almost killed.

BRENDA

Go upstairs, draw a bath.

MAC

WILL YOU TURN THAT THING OFF NOW PLEASE??

Brenda finally looks at her husband.

BRENDA

Know what? When you raise your voice, it makes me not care what you have to say.

MAC

M'lucky to be alive.

BRENDA

I heard you the first time...

(A glance)

You look fine.

Mac squishes his eyes shut, looks away, lost.

BRENDA

What do you want me to say?

Mac shakes his head.

BRENDA

Come here.

Mac looks at his wife. She gets up, goes to him, they embrace.

BRENDA

I'm sorry. But my shows, you know? Wasn't expecting you home so early, I like to be able to focus...

She holds his face, looks him in the eyes.

BRENDA

Now. Back up. You had some unpleasantness at work?

Mac nods.

But you're okay?  
BRENDA

No. I'm not. Not even close.  
MAC

You weren't shot...  
BRENDA

No.  
MAC

Well, there you go.  
BRENDA

That's all you have to say?  
MAC

BRENDA  
Obviously, I'm doing everything wrong. Why don't you tell me what you want to hear, then I'll parrot that back? That what you want?

(Beat)  
Or is this an elaborate sympathy ploy so you can get some sucky tonight?

Mac steps back, teeth clenched. JUST THEN, a strange, slurping, inhuman CRYING STARTS from somewhere in the house.

What is that?  
MAC

BRENDA  
Yeah right. The "Little Emperor" is up. Go check on him.

MAC  
...something's in the house.

BRENDA  
Yes, silly. Your son. Probably wet himself again... or started regurgitating. Go see.

Mac looks terrified.

BRENDA  
Mac, what? Fine. I'll do it.

Brenda EXITS.

Mac sits. Takes a few deep breaths.

Osborn STEPS FROM A SHADOW.

MAC  
You... You don't give up... do you?

OSBORN  
(Points to his head wound)

This look like I give up?

MAC  
Here to finish me off? Huh? Here to take me with you? Fine then. Stop fucking around. Do it! Kill me.

OSBORN  
Got it all wrong. You and me -- we're on the same side.

MAC  
Yeah, right!

OSBORN  
You still have work to do. Important work.

MAC  
If this is about what you whispered...

OSBORN  
I know. It slipped your mind. Can't tell you how pissed off that makes me. Last things I utter before shirking off the old mortal coil and you forget? Gut shot.

MAC  
Can't you just repeat what you said?

OSBORN  
At this point, I don't think it'd matter. You're clearly not ready yet. But we'll take care of that. Emma. You talked? She give you the book?

MAC  
That ugly thing. "Terminus" something...

OSBORN  
Read it. Devour it. It's all there.. imbedded in every page... Got some studying to do.

Osborn hears something.

OSBORN  
I'll check back when I can. Read it! Prepare yourself for the Truth.

Osborn VANISHES INTO THE SHADOWS.

Brenda ENTERS holding a bundle that makes VERY STRANGE BABY NOISES.

BRENDA  
(Speaking to the bundle)  
...there you go... smile time... want to see da-da?

Brenda gives the bundle to Mac. Mac looks at it, horrified.

BRENDA  
Why're you making that face? Your son make a smelly?

MAC  
This... this isn't my son...

BRENDA  
Not funny.

MAC  
This... no...

BRENDA  
May not seem like he can hear or understand, but when you say stuff like that, it lodges in his mind...

MAC  
My son is normal... this thing...  
(Offers it to Brenda, she steps away)  
This thing has gills! This thing has dead eyes!

BRENDA  
Mac!

MAC  
Take it away!

BRENDA  
Mac stop!

THE BABY WAILS and CRIES in its strange, wet, mucousey way.

Mac lays the bundle on the floor and backs away.

Brenda scoops the baby up, glares at Mac--

BRENDA  
I hope you're happy! Probably scarred the "Little Emperor" for life.

Beat.

MAC  
I'm sorry.

Brenda nods, seems to be satisfied.

BRENDA  
Now, wanna tell me about your shooting?

Mac is silent.

BRENDA

Mac?

Mac turns away from her.

MAC

Maybe later.

CHAPTER 6

SOUNDS of someone scanning through various television programs.

Mac slowly REVEALED in front of the television as he tries to drown his sense of dislocation and dread with booze.

He fills a glass with whisky, takes desperate gulps.

Outside, we hear the occasional crackle of machine gun fire, sirens, rabid dogs barking, screams.

NAMELESS AMERICANS appear and become the voices from the television.

NAMELESS AMERICAN #1

(News Person)

“Semi-automatic weapons fire peppered the White House today, corresponding with rumors regarding the President’s venereal disease. White House Chief of Staff Maxine Finks denied the rumors, stating the president’s recent bouts of erratic behavior was the result of tainted flu medication the president received while visiting the war-torn city of Quebec...”

Mac turns the channel with the remote.

NAMELESS AMERICAN #2

(Announcer)

“Tonight on Fox: Prime Time executions. Five convicted murderers get what’s coming to them in a live execution from San Quentin's New Sparky with special live performances by Don Henly and The Eagles...”

Mac, with growing sickness, clicks the channel.

NAMELESS AMERICAN #3

(News Person)

“...in local news, health experts fear another bacteria cloud will pass over the city by the weekend. Mandatory gas mask alert for all children under ten years of age...”

Mac turns the channel.

Osborn APPEARS somewhere behind him. He seems disappointed.

NAMELESS AMERICAN #4

(As Public Service  
Announcement with  
wheezing voice.)

I used to smoke fifteen packs a day, then I started spiking nicotine straight into my veins...before long, was homeless, living on the street begging for Marlboro enemas...

(MORE)

NAMELESS AMERICAN #4 (cont'd)

but then the AmeriCO Anti-Smoking Outreach Volunteers found me, gave me a job at the zoo, turned my life around. Thanks AmeriCO!

NAMELESS AMERICAN #5

(As Announcer)

AmeriCO is committed to volunteer efforts in all fifty states, and are leaders in the fight against teen smoking. But if you have to smoke, why not enjoy the new Marlboro Millenniums, talk about smooth! Talk about satisfaction! The Marlboro Millenniums are for you!

He turns the channel. Osborn finds Mac's  
briefcase. Takes out the Terminus Americana.

NAMELESS AMERICAN #3

(News Person)

...today's tally: 47 office rampages, 743 armed robberies...

He turns the channel.

NAMELESS AMERICAN #1

(News Person)

...unconfirmed reports from Honduras allege a group of women have given birth to living shotguns. Gun control advocates are racing to verify this shocking news.

Mac slumps down in his chair, tries to fight back a  
total sobbing breakdown.

Osborn places the Terminus America in Mac's lap.  
Mac doesn't notice Osborn or the book -- his eyes  
are smashed shut, lost in his own torment.

Osborn backs away UNTIL HE'S DEVoured  
BY SHADOWS.

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE until Mac is in total  
darkness...

nameless american #2

(Announcer)

“...this news break brought to you by the new  
Volkswagon Exterminator. Bumper to bumper  
traffic got you down? Sick and tired of being run  
off the road? The new four wheel drive  
Volkswagon Exterminator is what you want. Oil  
slick counter measures, front mounted machine  
guns, two inch thick high density plastic shell,  
puncture proof tires...

Slowly, the night is beaten back by infected shards  
of dawn, revealing Mac asleep in his chair.

Brenda rushes in wearing her bathrobe, holding Mac's jacket and briefcase.

BRENDA

Mac! Jesus... Mac, up up up! We overslept!

Mac jolts awake.

She throws the jacket at him, then pulls him up from the chair.

BRENDA

Comeoncomeon...

MAC

No let go--

BRENDA

...and the traffic is killer. Multiple tripple-digit pile ups....The Pedestrian Action Committee bazooka'd the 6th Street off-ramp -- the 101 is choking on SUV's!

MAC

M'not going.

BRENDA

Course you are...

MAC

No, listen--

BRENDA

Why're you saying this shit?

MAC

I'm trying to--

BRENDA

We have goals. Those goals will only be achieved if you get the promotion. If you move up in the company. It's been eighteen years. Don't lose traction now. We have to move from this neighborhood. Find a walled community with its own security force. I don't tell you everything that goes on here. You know the barbed wire in back was cut through last week? They're trying to get in, Mac. Keep finding dead cats tossed on the driveway. Like warnings.

(A moment)

We need a better life. Can't keep taking time off, something doesn't go your way.

(She gives him a slight kiss.)

Now, baby, whatever you're feeling, swallow it down. For us. For the "Little Emperor."

MAC

Your lips.

So? BRENDA

Taste like postage stamps. MAC  
(He breaks away)

Mac. March to work. BRENDA

THEY FIRED ME!!! MAC

Then go in there and beg, goddammit. Beg. Get on your knees, suck someone's dick, I don't give a shit -- get your job back. Hear me? I'll say it again: GET. YOUR. FUCKING. JOB. BACK. BRENDA

Who are you? MAC

...you just too lazy to work? BRENDA

Are you even...really my Brenda? MAC

Don't be stupid... BRENDA

That your real hair? Or a wig and disguise? MAC

Mac... BRENDA

TAKE THAT WIG OFF! MAC

The strange, slurping MUTANT BABY WAILING starts again. It's like a slap to Mac's face... he focuses on the sound.

Hear that? Your son needs a da-da who earns money. BRENDA

My son is a healthy! He's -- that monster didn't come from your body! And this place, this house isn't where we've been living the last eight years...and my Brenda wouldn't make me go back out into that nightmare! MAC

BRENDA

You expect me to just indulge you? Pamper you and allow you to flush our lives away?  
Because you're having a bad day?

Brenda goes to the front door. Hits the button. WE  
HEAR LOCKS AND BOLTS SLIDE OFF AND  
THE DOOR OPEN.

BRENDA

Now go.

MAC

No.

Brenda grabs him, shoves him towards the front  
door.

BRENDA

If you're not man enough to support your wife and son, then get out!

Brenda pushes him again.

MAC

I thought coming home...

BRENDA

What...

MAC

Nothing.

BRENDA

Exactly.

Mac EXITS. Brenda hits the button and we hear  
THE BOLTS AND LOCKS SLAM INTO PLACE.

## CHAPTER 7

We HEAR the DIN OF THE CITY, then LIGHTS  
RISE on a dismal street....FRANTIC  
PEDESTRIANS rush by.

Mac is among them, clutching the Terminus  
Americana to his chest, looking at each person  
with suspicion.

A few of them BUMP and JOSTLE Mac.

Mac makes his way to a graphiti-drenched park  
bench.

He settles down, then opens the Terminus  
Americana...

The CITY NOISE fades away, and LIGHTS  
TIGHTEN on Mac as he begins to read...

Each time Mac turns a page, a NEW NAMELESS  
AMERICAN appears and speaks.

### NAMELESS AMERICAN #1

1979. A paper is published by Alexander Lindros. At the time he was senior analyst for the Department of Infectious Diseases. His paper detailed the research of four staff scientists providing evidence that up to 32 percent of all adult Americans were suffering from massive parasitic infestation...

Mac turns a page.

### NAMELESS AMERICAN #2

These parasites are not life-threatening in any obvious way. Rather, the abundance of these organisms, some of which reach 35 feet in length within our intestines, can result in feelings of anger and tension. These parasites gain entrance through tap water.

Mac turns a page.

### NAMELESS AMERICAN #3

In 1982 Ronald Regan signed legislation that cut back on oversight and regulation of drinking water. This legislation impacted urban centers, with its biggest effect being on the inner cities. Reagan bows down to the worms. They are his master. He crossed the worms and look how he ended up. We must all be de-wormed.

Mac turns a page.

### NAMELESS AMERICAN #2

(American Colonist)

The Indians seem shocked we made contact with America so soon. Took them many generations to establish communication. They know we're in negotiations with the Great Beast. Can see the fear in their eyes. They know what we're planning. They'll resist. They're brave and they're strong. God help them, but we have a country to build.

Mac turns another page. This time, Osborn  
APPEARS.

OSBORN

You're sitting here, absorbing these pages, and it's like reading your own thoughts. As if every ink stain on the page is from your heart. Eyes begin skipping whole paragraphs, you know what's going to come next...

Mac turns pages rapidly, no longer reading, simply  
glancing.

OSBORN

The words and voices are the same, the time may be different. Decade wrong. But they are you. Speaking your truths. Telling you what you've long suspected...

As Mac turns the pages faster and faster, Nameless  
Americans appear in the shadows, talking over  
each other, some shouting, their voices a melting  
pot of ranting paranoia.

NAMELESS AMERICANS

(All)

Iraq has the bomb...the president has a venereal disease... my daughter is spying on me... there's something in Church's Chicken.... my cat has a camera in his head.... they're following me... they're in my walls.... they're trying to destroy me... my son is ten years older than I am...

MAC

SHUT UP!!!!

Mac SLAMS the book shut.

The VOICES STOP. The Nameless American's  
ARE GONE.

Osborn, however, is still there.

OSBORN

You don't close the book. The book closes you.

Osborn reaches over Mac's shoulder and opens the  
Terminus Americana for him, then grabs the back  
of Mac's head and forces his face into the pages--

BLACKOUT.

Mac's muffled SCREAMS are met by millions of  
ranting, paranoid VOICES.

The VOICES continue to flood through the  
darkness, until reaching an unbelievable pitch,  
then SUDDENLY CUT OUT with a thunderous  
echo...

CHAPTER 8

In darkness, we hear WHISPERING coming from all around us.

A warehouse somewhere in the city. Mac APPEARS in a shaft of light. He's curled on the ground, wrapped in a ratty blanket, using the Terminus Americana as a pillow. He hears the whispering and jerks up, peering into the musty shadows.

MAC

Hey! Who's there...? Hello!

Something slowly appears in the darkness, getting brighter, radiating light, until we finally see it's a crucifix made of welded handguns, shotgun barrels and machine-guns.

It appears above the stage. It's a beautiful, frightening vision.

Emma Shell ENTERS from the darkness.

EMMA SHELL

You've been asleep a long time, Mac. Are you finally ready to wake up?

Mac scrambles to his feet.

MAC

You...

Mac looks for an exit.

EMMA SHELL

Where will you run to now? Home? Work? Friends? You really think you can find sanctuary? Wouldn't it be nice to fight back for once?

MAC

Maybe you're the one I need to fight against!

(He goes to the crucifix, pulls a handgun from it)

I should put a bullet in you!

He aims the gun at Emma's face. She doesn't flinch.

EMMA SHELL

You delved into the Terminus.

Beat. He lowers the gun.

MAC

Thing's nothing but ranting. Pages and pages of... lunatic ravings. Insane journal entries.

EMMA SHELL

It's our bible. A manifesto of madness that once looked at with pure vision, makes all things clear.

MAC

Only to a complete psychopath!

EMMA SHELL

You've been chosen, Mac. You will lead the final shooting spree that --

MAC

Shooting? That's what this's about? You want me to be like Osborn? Brainwashed? A gun-toting freak who snuffs out lives?

EMMA SHELL

Try "hero". Try "savior".

Mac backs away, then jams the gun under his chin.

EMMA SHELL

Mac! Stop! Don't you want your life back?

MAC

(To Emma)

Stay away from me!!

(Praying)

...God, give me the strength... to just do this one thing...

EMMA SHELL

You could have it all again, Mac. Your happiness. That's all any of us want. It's what I want. Don't you?

We hear A BABY CRYING. Not mutant gurgling, but a healthy sounding baby.

Mac looks up. Somewhere far away, Brenda APPEARS in a beautiful shaft of light, rocking the baby. She looks as she did at the beginning of the play.

MAC

Honey...?

BRENDA

When are you coming home?

MAC

I'm...I'm trying...

BRENDA

Mac, there's a hole. A huge hole just opened up. Don't know what's happening... but I need you... we both do.

MAC

How's baby?

BRENDA

Sick. When can you come back?

MAC

Now...

BRENDA

Mac?

MAC

Right now...

BRENDA

Mac!

Brenda and the baby ARE SWALLOWED BY  
DARKNESS.

MAC

Wait -- BRENDA!

EMMA SHELL

She's gone. Back to a better place, waiting for you to finish your mission. Waiting for you to join her.

Pause.

MAC

What do I have to do?

EMMA SHELL

Hear me out.

Mac nods.

EMMA SHELL

The violence and hatred in the real world...has helped to spawn something new. A cancerous outgrowth, a tumorous alternate world that threatens to take over the real one. This world around us, this disease, must be destroyed. Only then will the real one be safe. Only then can you get back to your family. You want that, don't you? Isn't that worth fighting for?

MAC

Yes...

EMMA SHELL

Don't you want to strike back against this evil?

MAC

Tell me everything. Now.

EMMA SHELL

We believe you to be our savior. A prophet for the Church of Christ, Office Shooter. Sent to us to commit the final rampage. Your bullets, at just the right time, in just the right place, will be the final act of violence that will burst this lie. That breaks the camel's back. Your bullets will drain this world of its poison, until it withers away and disappears.

MAC

And then?

EMMA SHELL

We can all go home.

Mac nods. He's ready.

MAC

What do I have to do?

Emma SHELL

What Osborn whispered. You know, don't you?  
You've always known...

Osborn STEPS FROM THE DARKNESS.

OSBORN

The pulsating red muscle screams for a new world. It looks at us with crushed glass eyes. It begs for oblivion. Open the rib cage and pull the trigger.

EMMA SHELL

Perfect.

MAC

I still...don't know what that means.

EMMA SHELL

The translation is in the Terminus.

MAC

How? I don't--

EMMA SHELL

Just open it Mac. Feel the ink with your fingers. Feel the words under your skin, let it absorb into your flesh...

Mac opens the Terminus Americana. Like a blind man reading Braille, he feels page after page,

absorbing each word, sensing each letter, then  
looks at the page he's settled on.

MAC  
(A revelation)

Here...Osborn's words.

(Reads)

Slip into the blood stream. Stay off the beaten path. Travel to the dark heart of  
America and with new eyes you'll see the sign. Get inside and pull the trigger.

(Pause)

I'm going on a journey...

EMMA SHELL

That's right Mac. They'll try to stop you. They'll come at you from every direction.  
The Old Man has too much invested to go down without a fight. You must prevail.

MAC

How do I find the heart?

EMMA SHELL

Follow your instincts. You have to find the trail yourself. Everyone has their own path.  
Only you have the power to do what must be done once you get there.

As Mac speaks, Emma and Osborn SLOWLY  
VANISH.

MAC

I'll do this. But not for you. Not for either of you. Brenda? Can hear me? I'll do  
whatever I have to do to get home again. I'm ready to fight. For you. For baby. No  
matter what the cost.

(Looks at the gun in his  
hand. Shifts it from his left  
hand to his right. Grips the  
handle with determination.)

I'm ready to be a hero...

LIGHTS FADE on everything but the crucifix of  
guns. It glows in the darkness, like a beacon...

INTERMISSION

CHAPTER 9

A dingy bus terminal. GARBLED ANNOUNCEMENTS over the loudspeaker. VARIOUS LOSERS, TRANSIENTS and HUMAN DRIFTWOOD shuffle to and fro. Mac is among them. He makes his way to the counter where a CLERK toils. Mac has a duffle bag slung over his shoulder.

MAC

Um, ticket to the heartland, please?

CLERK

Can you maybe narrow it down?

Beat. He squints at the board.

MAC

Medicine Lodge, Kansas. The line that goes to Medicine Lodge.

CLERK

Okay. That's got two transfers. You'll start on the Interstate 12...

MAC

Must be an Native American thing.

CLERK

What's that?

MAC

The name. Medicine Lodge.

CLERK

Right. Transfers's printed on your ticket...American Express, Visa, MasterCard or cash?

Mac takes out his wallet. Only has a few bills.

MAC

(Hands Clerk an American Express.)

Amex.

A WOMAN stands in line behind Mac. She Watches him rather closely. Mac notices. Other BUS STATION DENIZENS stare. Mac notices this as well.

One of the denizens, A NERVOUS WOMAN, steps forward. Agitated, perhaps mentally ill, ratty hair.

NERVOUS WOMAN

If he asks you into the managers office, don't do it!

A MAN IN FILTHY SHORTS, probably  
homeless, glares at the woman.

MAN IN FILTHY SHORTS

Shuddup, bitch! Shut yer wound!

NERVOUS WOMAN

Don't go--

MAN IN FILTHY SHORTS

You! I'm talkin'! You shuddup! SHUT THAT DAMMED WOUND!!

A FIGHT ERUPTS between these two pathetic  
bus station lurkers. It's a slapping, scratching,  
awkward tussle. Nobody seems to care.

Clerk finishes with the card. Oblivious to the  
ruckus.

CLERK

Yeah um sir, got another? This one's crap.

(Gestures at swipe machine.)

"Not authorized."

MAC

Swipe again.

CLERK

Swiped twice. I always swipe twice.

(Off Mac's befuddled  
expression)

Or... if you want, can always speak to the manager...

MAC

Manager?

CLERK

-- see that door with the fire damage?

As if on some unheard cue, the crowd suddenly  
notices the Nervous Woman's plight, and everyone  
starts to YELL AND CARRY ON. THEY  
SCREAM FOR HELP AND SHOUT FOR THE  
POLICE.

CLERK

(Suddenly noticing)

Oh my god what're you doing just standing there help her!!

Mac turns towards the scuffle.

TWO TRANSIENTS grab Mac, DRAG HIM kicking and screaming into a back room as the rest of the people watch the woman howl in outrage.

LIGHTS SHIFT to a dimly lit back room at the station. Mac tossed to the floor. The two Transients shirk off their grubby jackets and hats -- it's Murden and Hallock.

HALLOCK

Hey there Mac. Murden, frisk the bitch.

MURDEN

(Pats him down, takes his gun.)

Finally scored an enabler. Cunning.

HALLOCK

Really thought you'd get away? You and Osborn and your sicko scheme? Thought you'd just do your industrial sabotage shtick and waltz into the sunset? Murden said we might need to squeeze you like an ingrown hair. After the Old Man got into town... well...

MURDEN

(Asking permission)

Sir?

Hallock nods.

MURDEN

There was a bloodletting. Mass firings. Profound restructuring. People sobbing near the Sparklets machine. Suicides in the Xerox room. Prayer vigils in the commissary. Lives ruined, Mac. Careers dropped in the shredder. Careers like mine! Turns out firing you was bad strategy. They wanted to keep you close. I musta missed the memo on that one. But you don't give a shit about that, do you?

HALLOCK

Of course not. It's all about him.

MURDEN

Haven't been working eighteen hour days, seven days a week for the last fucking decade just so some piss-ant from marketing can get me busted down to field agent!

Beat. Murden, shakes with rage, takes a deep breath, looks away.

HALLOCK

We've talked to your wife...

MURDEN

...oh, did we...

HALLOCK

...The Old Man had us confiscate that mutant son of yours.

Wants to put him in the corporate zoo.  
Executives'll watch it swim around with the seals  
during luncheons. Told the Old Man, "anything  
that leaves snail tracks when it crawls should just  
be killed", but he's got other plans...

MURDEN

...we've gone through all your belongings... the stroke rags, the weird poetry... the  
erotic haiku...

MAC

I'm not afraid.

HALLOCK

Oh, really?

MAC

AmeriCO can't stop me. None of you. Not strong enough. I'm a bullet cutting through  
the air towards the dark heart. My impact will be horrific.

HALLOCK

Bet you've been waiting a long time to say that. Can picture you sitting on the can, pad  
of paper, composing. Don't fool yourself. You're not a bullet. You're a BB. You're a  
blank. You're a fucking starter pistol at best.

Man with Filthy Shorts ENTERS. Shirks off some  
of his grubby clothes. It's really Gardetto.

HALLOCK

Take care of things out there?

GARDETTO

It's covered. Hey Winchell.

HALLOCK

Murden? Device. Now.

Murden gives Hallock a look, then EXITS.

GARDETTO

(to Hallock)

What's the game plan, boss?

LIGHTS become TAINTED. Hallock and  
Gardetto start to have a conversation.

Osborn APPEARS. Only Mac can see him.

OSBORN

Mac. What is this? What made you think you could stroll into a bus station and, and...? My god, you honestly think what you're looking for is on a major highway? Think there's bus stops where you're headed?

MAC

You said follow my instincts!

OSBORN

Maybe Emma's wrong. Hope not... God, I hope this isn't some mistake... Better not've pissed my existence away on you--

MAC

ENOUGH! Just stop it!

OSBORN

Hey --

MAC

No! Don't "hey" me. What've you done!? Huh? Mr. Ghostman!? Except for being totally fucking cryptic about everything you've been completely useless! Now listen and listen good: You go out and get me some fucking help! You get me some back-up! Use your little "spirit world" powers or whatever! I don't care! Just get me some results.

OSBORN

That's not--

MAC

NOW!

Osborn looks scared, and after a beat, he SLINKS INTO THE SHADOWS and is GONE.

LIGHTS BACK TO NORMAL.

Murden ENTERS with a SICK, SAVAGE LOOKING TORTURE device.

HALLOCK

Put it on.

Murden and Gardetto grab Mac and strap the torture device on his neck.

HALLOCK

Time for brass tacks. When you first get contacted by Emma? How many members of the Church are inside AmeriCo? What's the Big Plan about to go down?

GARDETTO

We know you guys got something ready to rock.

MURDEN

But why? Where's this headed? Why give Osborn the go ahead to butcher the people under your supervision.

HALLOCK

What's the agenda?

Mac chuckles.

HALLOCK

Find this amusing, Winchell?

MAC

How's it feel to be discarded? AmeriCo's thrown you all away, like they did me. We should be on the same side.

Hallock nods at Gardetto. He points a remote control at Mac. The torture device makes a noise and Mac SCREAMS in torment.

HALLOCK

Don't make me lose patience with you Mac. You don't want that to happen. AmeriCo takes damn good care of its employees...

(A glance at Murden)

...as long as they don't fuck things up.

(To Mac)

And you can bet your ass I'm not fucking this up. I've fought my way up the food chain and I'm not going back down. Now. You better start puking up solid leads here, or thing are gonna get real ugly, real fast.

MAC

(To Murden and Gardetto)

The Old Man doesn't care about any of us. Wants to smoke us up like cigarettes until we're nothing but ashes.

HALLOCK

Turn the power up. Give this slug another jolt.

GARDETTO

It's already on eight.

HALLOCK

Then turn it to nine!

Murden and Gardetto share a look.

HALLOCK

Yeah, that's a direct order, genius!

Gardetto turns a knob on the remote, turning the torture device up to nine.

HALLOCK

Winchell? What's Emma's plan? You the trigger man? Just a decoy? Give me something!

MAC

Not gonna happen.

Hallock nods to Gardetto. Gardetto presses the button. Mac WAILS in pain, slumps down, seems to be near unconsciousness.

HALLOCK

Want some more, Mac?

MAC

...no...

HALLOCK

Didn't think so.

MAC

...I'll talk...

HALLOCK

Smart boy.

MAC

...but not...to you...

HALLOCK

What's that?

MAC

Did I stutter?

Pause. Looks.

MAC

Not saying shit to you. I'll talk to Murden. Know why?

(Beat)

'Cause you're a woman.

Murden smirks.

HALLOCK

Little piece of shit... you think you're gonna--

MAC

Hey! Relax. Just fucking with you, Hallock.

Beat. Nobody quite understands what Mac is up to.

GARDETTO

Musta shocked him silly.

HALLOCK

Think this is a game? Huh?

MAC

You're right, I'm sorry. That was irresponsible. But seriously this time, would really rather just interface with Murden. Kinda hard to take you seriously in a position of power. Just being honest.

HALLOCK

Gardetto. Turn it up to ten. You fucked with the wrong woman. I'll give you something to take seriously.

(To Gardetto)

Hit it.

GARDETTO

Ten might fry his brain.

HALLOCK

Tough. Zap him.

MURDEN

Wait!

HALLOCK

Now!

MURDEN

Hold on!

HALLOCK

Do it Gardetto!

MURDEN

Will you listen!? This needs to be discussed.

HALLOCK

Wrong! It's my show, I'll make the call. Gardetto!?

MURDEN

Our action plan has specific instructions to--

HALLOCK

Gardetto. Shut. Up. What part of this don't you get?

MURDEN

Gardetto, don't even think about it.

(To Hallock)

He said he'd talk. Now maybe he's yanking us and maybe he's not, but let's find out. Give me five minutes alone with him.

HALLOCK

I'm not leaving this room.

MAC

Not much of a team player, are you Hallock?

HALLOCK

(To Gardetto)

Give me that controller, I'll juice him myself.

Hallock moves towards Gardetto. He steps away.

HALLOCK

That's a direct order, Mister. Give me the control.

GARDETTO

Maybe Murden's right? Let's just --

Enraged, Hallock grabs for the controller.

Murden pulls a gun, aims at Hallock's face.

MURDEN

Sorry Hallock. Don't think so.

Hallock grabs Gardetto, pulls his gun and uses Gardetto as a human shield, gun trained on Murden.

A standoff.

HALLOCK

You really think you got a pair of brass balls, don'tcha? Well let me tell you something: I got brass tits, and pound-for-pound, you put 'em both on a scale, mine weigh more.

GARDETTO

You guys, hold on! Let's control our egos for a moment and focus on the prize! Actin' like rabid dogs...

HALLOCK

I'm the boss. Whether you can handle that or not, I don't really give a shit. I'm making an executive decision. It's my call. Drop the gun. Give me the control. Let's achieve our mission objective.

Something starts to POUND and SLAM against the door leading to the bus terminal --

Murden takes advantage of the distraction and FIRES at Hallock, but KILLS Gardetto --

Bus Station Denizens BURST IN --

Hallock BLASTS Murden, turns to the Bus  
Station Denizens who also have guns --

Nervous Woman is one of the denizens. She  
SHOOTS Hallock --

Another denizen, JASON, looks like a young  
drifter, rushes to Mac and gets him out of the chair.

JASON

Mac... it's okay, we're with The Church. Gotta make a break for it -- come on!

Mac puts an arm around Jason's shoulder and they  
hustle out as THE SOUND OF A FREIGHT  
TRAIN CLANKING AND RUMBLING  
THROUGH THE NIGHT kicks us into the next  
scene...

CHAPTER 10

LIGHTS UP on a crusty old freight car.

Mac stands in the open door watching the landscape scream past.

Jason sits on his ass near the center of the car.

JASON

...so yeah, turns out Paul Vicks, the senior class prez, nabbed some hellish shrooms, thought like, Mick Jagger was stalking him an' fucking his girlfriend an' leaving these notes in the bathroom for him n'shit. So he freak'd, stole an axe an' a shotgun from Big Five. Decides to waltz into school, do a Jack Nicholson slash Columbine type deal on everyone. I hid in the cafeteria trash can for six hours 'til the SWAT dude found me.

MAC

One helluva story.

THERE'S A JOLT and Mac almost pitches forward.

Jason rushes to Mac and yanks him back.

JASON

Easy way to die, standin' where you are. Slack action'll jolt this puppy. Before you know it you've been thrown off an eighty mile an hour train. Get over here. Sit down. Emma'll have my ass I fuck this up. You're my responsibility now. Gotta make sure you get wherever you're going in one piece.

Mac sits.

MAC

How long you been with the Church?

JASON

Just like you. After it went down. Things changed. Thought I was going crazy. Then Emma found me.

(Beat)

You gotta succeed, man. For all of us.

(Slight beat)

'Member what it was like? Before the violence? That's what I want back. Smoke some stash, chill at the drive-in, try to get inside Missy Fredrick's pants. That's the kind of shit I should be worried about... Not this kinda stuff.

Mac nods.

JASON

Good life in the real world?

MAC

Beautiful wife. Baby boy. Things were... perfect.

Freaks me out. JASON

What? MAC

Kids. The idea that I could be someone's Old Man some day. JASON

(Beat)  
I mean "father." Bad choice of words... Don't wanna mention his name...

JUST THEN, a BIG HULKING MAN emerges  
FROM THE SHADOWS. Quick, predatorial, like  
a spider --

-- in an instant he has Mac from behind, a nasty  
looking knife to his throat.

Gotcha! BIG HULKING MAN

Hey--!!! JASON Aaaaaggg--!!! MAC

Watcha' doin' in my car? BIG HULKING MAN

It's cool it's cool it's cool-- JASON

Asked you a freaking question-- BIG HULKING MAN JASON  
Nothing, riding, nothing--

Yer trespassin'! BIG HULKING MAN

Fine! JASON

...this belongs to me! BIG HULKING MAN

Okay alright, we'll -- don't freak -- we'll hit another car! JASON

Naw, naw, naw -- whole train's mine! Whole track's mine! BIG HULKING MAN

Cool -- yours -- all yours -- JASON

Don't sound impressed. BIG HULKING MAN

No, I am -- totally --

JASON

Prove it.

BIG HULKING MAN

...uh...

JASON

I SAID PROVE IT!!!

BIG HULKING MAN

Do what he says!

MAC

Okay okay what okay what???

JASON

Big Hulking Man licks his lips, his eyes narrow, considers for a moment...

Pray to me.

BIG HULKING MAN

Pray--?

JASON

PRAY TO ME!

BIG HULKING MAN

Okay, okay...

JASON

Git on yer knees, fold them hands, pray to me.

BIG HULKING MAN

Fine, hey, whatever -- just be cool....

JASON

Jason drops to his knees, folds his hands as if in church.

Mac struggles, but Big Hulking Man holds the blade close against his Adam's apple.

Mac stops his squirming.

God bless--

JASON

BIG HULKING MAN

Naw you fuck -- not for me. I don't need prayers for me! Think I care what that fuck thinks 'bout me? Think I care what heaven thinks? Pray to me. I'm the only god on this train.

JASON

Dear...uh... big hulking person... uh... please be nice.

BIG HULKING MAN

Think you can do better than that.

JASON

Dear big hulking person, god of this freight train, show mercy on two lost souls who've strayed into your domain...

BIG HULKING MAN

...yeah...

JASON

...keep your world destroying wrath in check. Help these weak mortals understand the errors of their ways. Send them off into the world healthy, unharmed, with a new respect for your kingdom, for they will be your new disciples, telling the world of your power... Amen. Hallelujah... um... glory be to... you.

There's this strange moment as Big Hulking Man stands there, his bloodshot eyes crawl between Jason and Mac. His expression is totally unreadable.

Finally:

BIG HULKING MAN

(Takes knife away, shoves  
Mac forward)

Yeah... that was pretty good... that was damn swell, all things considered.

Big Hulking Man paces around the freight car.

Jason and Mac exchange a quick, nervous look.

BIG HULKING MAN

I grant you both life, fer now.

Mac and Jason looks only slightly relieved.

Big Hulking Man grabs their bags and digs through them.

JASON

Aw, fuck dude, you gonna rob us?

BIG HULKING MAN

Ain't robbin' if it's already mine.

Big Hulking Man finds the Terminus Americana.

BIG HULKING MAN

What's this?

MAC

Nothing. Just a... book.

BIG HULKING MAN

I can see it's a book! Don't think I can't tell what the fuck a book is?

He starts to open the book.

MAC

Don't...

BIG HULKING MAN

Why? Huh? Think I'm some ignorant fuck? I can read! You think I can't?

Big Hulking Man KICKS Mac in the gut. Laughs as he writhes and gasps for air.

Big Hulking Man opens the Terminus and begins to read. As he does, LIGHTS SLOWLY WARP AND TWIST, and that WHISPERING starts to rise...

BIG HULKING MAN

(Reads from the Terminus Americana)

...There're reasons the world doesn't make sense, there are realities being folded up like paper airplanes and lit on fire, there are hitsquads following me. There are reasons the trains don't run on time... The trains... the trains...  
AAAANKKKKKKKGGGKKKK!

Big Hulking Man looks like his blood has just changed direction, he yells out, throws the book aside. He pants heavily, then rips off his big jacket like he's on fire, then sheds his other clothes like a snake slipping out of his skin...

And suddenly, Big Hulking Man has transformed into a sinister and menacing version of UNCLE SAM.

UNCLE SAM

HELLO WINCHELL!

(Beat)

You want something done, gotta do it yourself.

Jason gets in front of Mac.

JASON  
(To Mac)

Get back!

UNCLE SAM  
Isn't that always what happens? You try to give your employees autonomy. You try and run your empire by delegating, but no. It always comes back to doing the dirty work with your own hands.

Uncle Sam slowly begins to stalk Mac and Jason.

UNCLE SAM  
Well, here I am. Standing right in front of you. Eyeball to eyeball. Got something to say to me? Some grievances? Don't like the way I run the company? Punk, I built AmeriCO with my bare hands. Built the organization from the ground up. And I didn't get any set asides. I took what I had to take and I built it all from scratch. But now Mac Winchell has a problem with it. Wanna join conspirators and destroy what I've built. Time to give up what you got.

Jason leaps at Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam restrains him with almost no effort.

UNCLE SAM  
Or would you rather this be one-on-one? Hey, I understand. Let's just take care of things.

Uncle Sam BREAKS Jason's neck.

Mac rushes at Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam grabs Mac by the throat, then bends his arm behind his back and hauls him to the open door of the freight car. Watches the landscape rush by.

UNCLE SAM  
Hell of a country we got here, yeah?  
(No response from Mac)  
Now why would you want this to go away? This beautiful land of ours?

MAC  
I see... shells of desolate farms... ravaged landscapes... Oil Wells pumping, hitting geysers of blood... I see... I see reservations... full of broken lives... I see huge tornados of violence...

Uncle Sam throws Mac aside.

UNCLE SAM  
Never ceases to amaze me, how many complainers there are. How many crybabies! Think AmeriCO or any of this would exist without the dirty work? Think everything you've ever loved isn't based on someone being stripped of their dreams? Just be glad you're on the winning team. You've cashed my paychecks for years. Ungrateful little cocksucker.

Mac moves towards the open door of the freight car.

UNCLE SAM

Not going anywhere Winchell. You heard what that kid said. Jump out this thing, splatter time.

MAC

Maybe, maybe not.

UNCLE SAM

You don't got the balls to take that risk. Now come here. I'll make this quick and painless.

(re: Jason)

You saw how I work. Very efficient. Not a wasted motion. Won't feel a thing.

Uncle Sam moves in on Mac.

Mac is at the edge of the freight car door.

UNCLE SAM

Mac, don't do it. Just prolonging the inevitable.

MAC

I'm going to stop you.

UNCLE SAM

No. You won't. NOW COME HERE!

Uncle Sam LURCHES at Mac.

Mac turns AND JUMPS FROM THE TRAIN.

UNCLE SAM

Okay, fine! Run all you want. I'm gonna track you down. You want me to pull out the big guns, fine, I'll pull out the big guns. It's my country, fool. Your visa's being revoked.

Uncle Sam DISAPPEARS. Lights SHIFT--

CHAPTER 11

A HACKING SOUND from the darkness. Mac on the ground, unconscious...

MORE HACKING.

Mac stirs. Slowly pulls himself to a sitting position.

Now, HACKING from all around him.

Mac gets up, not sure what's going on. He touches his forehead... he's got a cut from his jump.

A GAUNT LOOKING MAN dressed as a cowboy APPEARS behind him.

Mac snaps around, startled.

MAC

Jesus!

MARLBORO MAN

(Wheezing)

Didn't... mean to... scare you...

Marlboro Man hacks grotesquely, spits up some blood.

MAC

You alright...

MARLBORO MAN

(Coughing)

Gettin' by. Lost'er somethin'?

MAC

I dunno... More or less.

MARLBORO MAN

Well, right now you're on the edge of Marlboro Country, if that helps set your compass at all.

MAC

Not really.

MARLBORO MAN

Got yerself a coffin nail?

MAC

Don't smoke.

The Marlboro Man EXPLODES into a hideous burst of phlegm riddled COUGHING.

He falls to his knees.

Mac rushes over to help him up.

MAC

Easy! Easy!

The coughing fit ceases.

Mac pulls him to his feet.

MARLBORO MAN

Thanks, pardner...

Another MARLBORO MAN APPEARS.

MARLBORO MAN #2

He packin'?

MARLBORO MAN

Nope.

MARLBORO MAN #2

I'll be Goddamned!

Marlboro Man #2 walks to the edge of the light and yells into the darkness.

MARLBORO MAN #2

He ain't got none!

A CHORUS OF HACKING from the darkness.

MAC

How many of you're out here?

MARLBORO MAN

Lots a' Marlboro Men over the years. Thousands of ads and billboards -- you do the math. When we start to get too sick, tell us they're shooting a commercial, then just leave us to die. Thrown away by those corporate vampires.

MAC

Did the same thing to me.

MARLBORO MAN

Welp, welcome to the club. Guess we're all just a bunch a' disgruntled employees chewin' the fat, eh?

MAC

(Nods. Beat.)

Listen... I'm... I'm part of a group. We're fighting them. AmeriCO... and the Old Man.

MARLBORO MAN

You say "Old Man?"

MAC

Yeah...

Panicked MURMURS and new COUGHING  
FITS from the darkness.

MARLBORO MAN #2

Tell 'em to get outta here!

MARLBORO MAN

Don't mean to be rude but that'd be a good idea...

MAC

Wait -- join with me. Help me fight him.

MARLBORO MAN #2

Go on! Get movin' 'fore we all pay!

Marlboro Man guides Mac away from the others  
the best he can.

MARLBORO MAN

'Fraid none a' us would be much help to ya. We're on our last leg... or last lung,  
however you wanna look at it. But good luck. Put a bullet in him for me. An' if for  
some reason you find yourself passing through Marlboro Country again...how about  
droppin' off a couple cartons. Would really hit the spot.

Marlboro Man HACKS viciously, wipes some  
blood away from his mouth

MARLBORO MAN #2

Stop jawing with the fool and kick his ass outta here!!!

MARLBORO MAN

You best get... M'sorry, but we don't need more trouble than we already got.

The Marlboro Men recede into the darkness and  
DISAPPEAR.

Mac continues on his journey. LIGHTS SHIFT to  
indicate the passage of time and the travelling of  
many miles.

We hear the sounds of the WILDERNESS, then...

MAN WITH MEAT APPEARS. He wears a football helmet and pads over a flannel shirt and jeans. He has raw steaks and other food items smeared and strapped to his clothing.

MAN WITH MEAT

Better watch yourself there fella.

Mac just stares at this strange man.

MAN WITH MEAT

Seen it?

MAC

What?

MAN WITH MEAT

The Bear. Been some sightings 'round here. Big son of a bitch. Ate some hounds last week.

MAC

Haven't seen anything. Just those Marlboro Men a few miles back.

MAN WITH MEAT

Marlboro what?

MAC

Never mind. What's, uh, with all the meat?

MAN WITH MEAT

Ever seen "America's Funniest Animal Attacks?"

MAC

Sure.

MAN WITH MEAT

Seen the guy who got attacked by the buck? Wife videotaped while it knocked the living crap outta him with his hooves? That was Stan. My neighbor. Got five grand for that tape. Buck kicked his ass three ways from Sunday. Broke two ribs. Knocked a tooth out. Know the kind of ratings that show gets? Millions of people saw Stan. He's like a hero in town. Won't shut up about it. Everyone's buying him beers.

(Reflective pause)

He's sleeping with my wife. They don't know I know. But I know.

MAC

Not good.

MAN WITH MEAT

Nope.

(Pause)

Gonna top his crummy tape. Gonna go toe-to-toe with a goddamn bear. You wanna see ratings, I'm gonna score big time. Gonna win their contest too! Gonna send in the season's best tape. I'll be famous. I'll get that juicy cash prize! I'll show 'em.

(MORE)

MAN WITH MEAT (cont'd)

(Beat)

I can do this!

(Pumping himself up)

I CAN DO THIS! COME ON YOU STUPID BEAR! YOU DUMB ANIMAL! YOU IGNORANT BEAST! LET'S ROCK AND ROLL! LET'S GET DOWN!  
AAAAHHHHHHHGGGG!

(He starts pounding on his helmet, then turns to Mac)

I'm ready. Totally friggin' ready.

MAC

What if something bad happens?

MAN WITH MEAT

Like--?

MAC

It kills you?

MAN WITH MEAT

How's it gonna do that?

MAC

It's a bear. They're big.

MAN WITH MEAT

Don't think this helmet and pads can't handle a bear? Please. This is state-of-the-art plastic. Plus I got pepper spray. I'll get him in the eyes when I got enough good footage.

MAC

You don't wanna do this.

MAN WITH MEAT

Ain't a question of want. My back's against a wall here fella. Gotta fight for what's mine.

MAC

They'll find a way to screw you over.

MAN WITH MEAT

Maybe, maybe not.

MAC

This is the sickness they spread. Walk away. This won't get your wife back.

MAN WITH MEAT

The heck would you know?

(Beat)

I'm doing this. Ain't gonna get talked out of it either. So why not you just move along.

Mac looks around, not sure what direction to go.

MAN WITH MEAT

If you're lookin' for the Old Highway, try a few miles north of here...

A TERRIFYING GROWL from the distance.

MAC

Jesus... I guess that's your boy.

MAN WITH MEAT

(Suddenly less confident)

...Uh... Yeah...

MAC

I think I'll take your advice and, uh...

MAN WITH MEAT

...Smart thinkin'...

MAC

Well. Good luck anyway.

Mac starts to leave.

MAN WITH MEAT

Don't forget -- watch "America's Funniest Animal Attacks". It's on Fox. Saturdays at eight. Watch for me.

Mac starts to move away. Man with Meat starts slapping his helmet again.

MAN WITH MEAT

Come on! LET'S GO! YOU AIN'T NO BEAR! YOU'RE JUST AN OVERRATED SQUIRREL! C'MON!

We HEAR THE GROWL again. Close.

MAN WITH MEAT

(With less gusto)

Yeah...that's right...let's do it...

Another GROWL. Man with Meat EXITS, a little hesitant, in its direction.

SUDDENLY, we HEAR the sounds of an animal attacking: SAVAGE SNARLS and SCREAMS OF AGONY--

Mac looks back towards the screams and snarls, then RUNS OFF.

The SCREAMS die, followed by WET, SLOPPY, EATING SOUNDS.

LIGHTS SHIFT, Mac APPEARS, thumb out,  
trying to hitch a ride...

CHAPTER 12

LIGHTS RISE on a car plunging down a dark highway.

Mac in the passenger seat. CHILI behind the wheel. BK in the back seat.

CHILI

Look pretty stressed out.

MAC

Been a strange couple of months.

BK

Things okay?

MAC

Doing better. Thanks for picking me up. You ladies got a lot of confidence.

CHILI

How you figure?

MAC

Hey, hitchhikers. You never know...

BK

We aren't ruled by fear.

CHILI

Yeah yeah. We wanna pick someone up, why the fuck not? I mean, if the person looks hip, not some, like, freak from hell? What's it matter?

BK

The media and the world tell us every second to be afraid.

CHILI

The media and the world can go fuck himself.

BK

Got that right.

MAC

Well, more power to ya.

CHILI

Who's thirsty?

BK

I'm fine.

MAC

I'll take anything you got. I'm parched ...

B.K. rummages for the cups and pulls out a bottle of Mr. Pibb.

BK

Speaking of confidence, you're not too bad in that department yourself.

MAC

Sometimes you're pushed beyond the point of fear. That's kinda where I'm at.

BK

(Handing him a cup)

Here you go.

MAC

Thanks.

(Takes a drink.)

Hits the spot.

Pause. Mac takes another long drink of the beverage.

BK

So...you think God's a man?

MAC

Excuse me?

CHILI

She asked you if you thought God was a man?

MAC

Uh, I'm...I...I...oh, wow...

CHILI

Answer my question: Is God a man?

MAC

i....i....don't knnnnnn...

Mac slumps foreword, unconscious.

CHILI

Well you better hope so, sweet cheeks, cause he's the only one who can save you now.

Chili and BK high-five each other as LIGHT SHIFT to a POOL OF MOONLIGHT.

We HEAR CRICKETS and NIGHT SOUNDS.

After a moment, Mac is shoved into the light. His hands are tied behind his back. He stumbles to his knees.

BK and Chili walk in behind him.

BK

How you feelin' big stud?

CHILI

Heads throbbin' pretty bad, huh? Hey, I'm talking to you Pork Machine

BK

Your ears feel like there's junk inside. Wet paper. Doesn't it, stud muffin?

MAC

What're you doing...? Ahh, my wrist!

BK

Been tied up in the back of our car for a few hours.

MAC

...you spiked my Mr. Pibb.

BK

Rohypnol. That date rape drug? Knocks ya out cold.

CHILI

Ever hear of it?

MAC

Yeah, sure...

BK

Bet you have.

MAC

Don't know what you think -- you got something wrong here. I'm -- I didn't do anything --

BK

Do you have a fleshy extension between your legs?

MAC

A wha--?

BK

Fleshy extension?

CHILI

A dick, man!

MAC

What is this?

CHILI

Answer the goddamn question!

MAC  
Yes.

CHILI  
Yes, what?

MAC  
...I have a fleshy extension between my legs.

BK  
Then you're guilty. You're a criminal. And criminals must be punished.

MAC  
For WHAT?

BK  
The extermination of the female spirit.

CHILI  
Emotional torment.

BK  
Condescending attitudes.

CHILI  
Sexual harassment.

MAC  
Haven't done any of those things! You're CRAZY. This is--

BK  
Every glance and leer you make is an assault! Every dehumanizing joke you've made to a friend, every centerfold you've beaten off to, every thought you've had about a woman's body is sexual harassment!

CHILI  
Every time you make love to your wife without giving her an orgasm... that my friend is rape.

BK  
You're guilty of contributing to a pattern of systematic Vagina-cide! Genocide on the female soul!

MAC  
NOW HOLD ON!

CHILI  
Shut your man-hole! This is one conversation you will not dominate!  
(To B.K.)  
Lighter fluid's in the trunk.

BK rushes off.

CHILI

I know exactly the kind of man you are. A selfish lover. Always expecting things to be done for you and to you. Never reciprocating. Always so self involved. So needy all the time. Wanting to be reassured and told how wonderful and worthy you are, but never giving anything back. Laying in bed, demanding your poor wife scratch your rashes. The sheets covered with flakes of skin! You're like a black hole, you suck the energy and soul and life away into this dark pit. You talk like you want your wife to do more, to explore what she could become, but you undermine it every day and night in a million little ways. Until she's nothing but a crushed lump of empty meat and bone staring at a flickering television set.

MAC

Brenda...?

Chili whips off her wig, throws aside her glasses --  
Mac's right, it is BRENDA.

Mac staggers back.

MAC

THE HELL IS GOING ON???

BRENDA

What's it look like, honey?

(Pulls a gun)

I made a deal with the Old Man. I'm going to kill you Mac.

MAC

Put that down!

BRENDA

I don't think so, Mac.

MAC

Brenda, honey...

BRENDA

What do you expect? You destroy our lives with your melodrama, you leave me and your son out to dry, then what? I've got to work. I've gotta survive, Mac. So, when the company came around and dangled this little morsal in front of me, I took it. You know what hit-women make? It's a very comfortable living. Unfortunately, you're my first gig. Which is kinda why they hired me, but I see this as a chance to prove myself. Who knows, after this? Bigger and better, baby.

MAC

No...

BRENDA

I gotta. Who's gonna provide? Not you. That's been proven.

MAC

...think of our son...

BRENDA

Oh please. Don't even go there. It's going to take me months to get the "Little Emperor" out of hock. Now. Since at one point, long ago, I did feel something for you... I'll save the genital mutilation part. Get on your knees. I'll do this quick as I can.

MAC

...baby...

BRENDA

NOW!

Mac gets on his knees. Brenda presses the gun to his head.

BK ENTERS silently...

BRENDA

We had some good years together. I don't regret a thing...

MAC

...Brenda...

BRENDA

Hey, like they say... "till death do we part". Time to part.

She's about to pull the trigger -- suddenly BK whips her wig off -- she's actually the Nervous Woman we saw at the bus station. She aims a gun at Brenda.

NERVOUS WOMAN

Drop it, bitch.

BRENDA

Hey -- not fair!

Nervous Woman grabs Brenda's gun.

NERVOUS WOMAN

Mac, c'mon--

Mac gets up, backs away from both of them.

MAC

I'm confused.

BRENDA

Me too...

NERVOUS WOMAN

Double cross, triple cross, fourple cross! Mac, take her gun.

MAC

But --

NERVOUS WOMAN

No, come on -- I'm with the Church... You've gotta take care of business!

MAC

Not going to kill my wife...no way...

NERVOUS WOMAN

She was gonna do it to you!

MAC

But that was--

NERVOUS WOMAN

And she still will if you give her a chance!

Nervous Woman shoves the gun at Mac. He takes it.

BRENDA

Look, Mac, maybe we need to do some counseling. Have you heard of Marriage Encounter? It's a Catholic thing. We both sit down and write our feelings, then share them with each other in a helpful, supportive environment...

NERVOUS WOMAN

C'mon Mac! Pop her!

MAC

I...don't know if I can...

NERVOUS WOMAN

That what you want me to tell Emma? Huh Mac?

Mac looks at the gun, frozen.

NERVOUS WOMAN

Shit... Mac, you're fucking up.

(Becoming agitated)

I'm outta here...place is getting hot and we're behind enemy lines. I've done my part. You do yours Winchell! Don't let us down.

Nervous Woman RUNS OFF.

Brenda gets up, Mac brings the gun to bare.

MAC

No! Don't.

BRENDA

We both know you won't kill me. You're not that far gone.

MAC

Keep trying to trick me... go ahead...

A low THROBBING starts to rise...

BRENDA

C'mon, Mac. You must know, somewhere in that deluded brain of yours, that this isn't some weird fucked-up reality. It's just your perception. It's you who's been poisoned. It's you... you're the cancer, Mac. The world is fine. You're the disease. You're the one who's damaged. You're causing pain. You're causing horror. You're a germ. You're a germ who's about to murder his wife. How many more have to die for your delusions of persecution? For your poisonous ego?

MAC

I'm about to kill a hired assassin.

The THROBBING is louder now... it's a HEART BEAT...

BRENDA

You sad little man.

Brenda turns to walk away. Mac shoots her in the head.

The HEART BEAT gets even louder.

Osborn APPEARS.

OSBORN

You hear that?

(Pause)

Well, do you?

Mac stares at Brenda's corpse.

OSBORN

You did it. Found it. What you've been looking for.

The HEARTBEAT gets faster... Osborn is already moving away from Mac.

OSBORN

(Gestures to something in the distance.)

Do you see it? The vision promised, the vision delivered. Fifty stories tall. The home office of AmeriCO. Let's go to that hill for a better view...

CHAPTER 13

Mac and Osborn stand on a hillside looking into the distance. The sun reflects off an endless landscape of golden wheat, drenching them in a glorious amber light.

MAC

It's beautiful. In its own way. A monument of chrome, of glass, epic steel. It gleams like every inch's been hand polished by a nation of illegals, hungry to perform, to be hired for another day. Each one shedding blood to please the boss. Spitting, secreting, bleeding to give the surface more polish. My god. How has this place been hidden? Why aren't there roads leading to it? Who built it in the middle of this sea of..wheat... golden wheat. What kind of work could such an awesome building hold?

OSBORN

The nation's work.

MAC

How do I get in?

OSBORN

Like a germ.

Mac EXITS.

Osborn ALONE. THE CRUCIFIX OF GUNS APPEARS above the stage.

OSBORN

At the lowest level of the parking garage, near the dumpster, is a door leading to a hallway with florescent lights and a nightmarish rodent problem. You'll creep through this hallway, careful and silent. You'll find a garbage bin in the service elevator. Crawl inside and wait until it's brought to the upper levels. Then emerge from the trash and walk down a hallway carpeted with the skins of Indians. Here you'll realize the walls are constructed by the bones of slaves. You'll see the flesh wall of pain all around you. That's when you reach inside and find your enabler. Use this enabler to commit the final act.

Osborn DISAPPEARS as Charlie APPEARS at his desk. He wears an Uncle Sam costume -- not dirty or ratty like the "real" Uncle Sam. Mac ENTERS into his office.

CHARLIE

Mac! Jesus, guy, what're you doing...?

Mac shrugs.

CHARLIE

Well, how -- how you been?

MAC

Fair to rare.

CHARLIE

Hey, wow. I'm sorry, I mean, can't believe they let you go.

MAC

Sure they thought it was the right thing to do. Best for the company.

CHARLIE

Maybe, but still. Bastards.

MAC

Bastards.

(Beat)

Nice outfit.

CHARLIE

Hey, yeah -- Halloween party after work...

MAC

Halloween...?

CHARLIE

Uh...

MAC

But it was just Christmas.

CHARLIE

What're you talking about?

MAC

When I last saw you...

CHARLIE

Yeah, try like a year ago? Jesus, everything...okay?

MAC

Excellent question.

CHARLIE

How's Brenda?

MAC

Not so good.

CHARLIE

That's too bad... I mean, I'm sorry...

Something occurs to Mac.

MAC

How do you commute this far?

CHARLIE

I, ah, don't know what you mean...

MAC

Well, there aren't any roads leading here.

CHARLIE

Uh... okay, what the fuck are you talking about? You joking with me?

MAC

...surrounded by what can only be described as amber waves of grain? I mean, think about it... that's a lot of foot-traffic. Do they fly you in? A fleet of helicopters landing on the roof, vomiting out employees day after day?

CHARLIE

Mac, what's this?

MAC

I'm a hero.

Pause.

CHARLIE

Right. Why don't we go get a cup of coffee? I got this Dark Sumatra that's --

MAC

Sit down!

CHARLIE

Easy.

MAC

I'm a hero.

CHARLIE

I'm sure you are.

MAC

I come from another time. From a place far better than this. A place that doesn't reek. A place that isn't a cancer on reality.

CHARLIE

Mac, you're really freaking me out. And I don't like being freaked out. Do I have to call security?

MAC

Listen to me: heroes take dangerous journeys. They do what's right, regardless of the personal hell they must go through. Do you see?

CHARLIE

I'm starting to.

Mac pulls his gun.

**THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER.**

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works publishing for the complete  
text.**