

WRITING SAMPLES

by
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SAMPLE #1 "NOWHERE MAN"
SAMPLE #2 "ACT OF GOD"
SAMPLE #3 "PIRATE HUNTER"
SAMPLE #4 "DEAR JOHN"
SAMPLE #5 "SPARROW ON THE ROOF"

(SAMPLE #1: "NOWHERE MAN")

FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. SUBURB - NIGHT

One of the pristine blocks of brownstones where even the garbage seems gift wrapped. We move in on a particular building where a DOORMAN is holding open the door for a dowager and her bite-sized poodle.

TITLE CARD OVER: WASHINGTON D.C. -- 1993

INT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

A miniature Las Vegas, complete with music, drinks, tuxedoed dealers and croupiers -- roulette wheel, crap table, black jack. Wall to wall people.

The fact that casino gambling happens to be illegal in the nation's capitol doesn't stop these Georgetown slummers, hollow-cheek nightlifers and junior wiseguys from having a good time.

AT A CARD TABLE

JOHN PATRICK (JACK) O'NEILL is trying to pull a winning hand. Mid-twenties, he has the sort of quiet good looks which generally takes an extra glance to appreciate.

His suit is wrinkled, his shirt is open at the collar and O'Neill could care less. He's been losing.

Two other players are still in the game. One of them is a lithe, sly-looking, obviously rich YOUNG WOMAN. She's surrounded by an entourage of giggling girl friends and handsome, vapid men.

The pot is considerable. O'Neill tosses his last hundred dollar chip into the pile.

O'NEILL

One on the top.

DEALER

House sees.

2ND PLAYER

I'm history.

Flips his cards. It's down to O'Neill and the Young Woman. She gives O'Neill a look you could pour syrup over.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm in.
 (holds up a chip)
 And one to chase it home...

O'Neill shakes his head.

O'NEILL

You're trying to buy the game.

YOUNG WOMAN

It'll cost you a hundred to find
 out.

O'Neill reaches into his wallet, pulls out a carefully
 folded, paper-clipped C-note. Throws it in.

O'NEILL

Okay Barbie...Ken calls.

The young woman slowly turns over three-of-a-kind - all aces.

YOUNG WOMAN

(deliberate smile)
 The Holy Trinity...are you a
 religious man?

O'NEILL

(throws his cards)
 Not any more.

He had two pair; nines and Jacks. Not even close. Heads to
 the bar. Bartender lays down a Bourbon, neat. O'Neill just
 gets the glass to his lips when --

THE DOOR

splinters! The bouncer steps back as four helmeted emergency
 service officers - the first members of the police sting
 operation - rush in.

Pandemonium. People scurry for the exit -- any exit. An
 OLDER COP, a grizzled DC veteran, 'harrumphs' over to
 O'Neill.

OLDER COP

Hey Jack.

O'Neill doesn't even look up from his bourbon.

O'NEILL

Sam.

The cops are taking everybody into custody. The Young Woman is pulled by, along with her friends. The money she's just won, confiscated. Looks at O'Neill:

YOUNG WOMAN
You got friends downtown, huh?

OLDER COP
Not any more.
(looks around)
This is a very bad place for
someone on probation to be Jack...

He reaches inside O'Neill's jacket, pulls out a BADGE!
Tosses it on the table. O'Neill's a detective on the
Washington D.C. Police force.

He holds out his hand and Jack reaches back, produces a Glock
pistol and holster. Drops it on the table as well. The
Older Cop smiles at the Young Woman.

OLDER COP (Cont'd) (CONT'D)
Jack's our golden boy. Aren't you
Jack?
(cheesy smile)
Of course, I think that's about to
change. Oh, by the way, did you
hear?

O'Neill looks at him sideways.

O'NEILL
What?

OLDER COP
The college girl -- she's dead.

O'Neill now looks stunned.

O'NEILL
What?

OLDER COP
Suicide. Left a note.
(slow smile)
Mentioned you.
(pulls O'Neill up)
You're going to be famous Jack...

He cuffs O'Neill, whose face suddenly looks ten years older.
As we slowly...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS, NEVADA - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

The neon wasteland that is the American Dream. Palm trees in silhouette against a cherry sky. City lights twinkle. The place where anything is possible. A place where fantasies come true.

TITLE CARD OVER: LAS VEGAS -- THE PRESENT

As the sky darkens, search lights begin to sweep back and forth in front of --

THE BELAGIO CASINO

A SIGN in the EXHIBITION HALL reads: "The Impressionists" Limited engagement. Exhibit open daily...

MOVING INSIDE

some of the world's greatest paintings. The masters, the paintings staring back from the walls of the casino's permanent gallery. Each is an impressionist chef d'oeuvre, a one-of-a-kind original: Degas, Monet, Pizzaro, Renoir.

A FLASHLIGHT BEAM suddenly plays across the paintings, moving with them. Such beauty and grace. Priceless art -- timeless masterworks.

Suddenly, red paint slams against the canvas of a Monet. Black paint across the Renoir. Foot steps withdraw, getting softer as the unseen attacker leaves.

The eyes of the Monet subject staring out into the void - almost as if they were going to cry. The red paint, like tears, slowly runs down...

EXT. LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD - DAY

The jumbled cacophony of sounds. The Strip at ten in the morning: Treasure Island, The Mirage, Ceasar's Palace, New York New York, Excalibur.

Nieman Marcus shoppers, tourists snake around each other on the crowded sidewalk. Gamblers, families, teenagers, bikers all one moving mass of humanity.

A black man curses his bookie on a cell phone.

Homeless man panhandles the neophyte gamblers disgorging from the Luxor in the hot Nevada desert wind.

A cab nearly nails some guy walking against the light. Angry words exchanged.

EXT. LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD ART GALLERY - DAY

Hustle and bustle as feet, dozens of them pass by. A pair of old shoes, worn Florsheims circa the 1960's, walk toward the entrance of the gallery. Lettering on the window reads: "Le Gallerie - Las Vegas"

INT. GALLERY - DAY

A very chic gallery. A few well heeled patrons browse. Million dollar furnishings.

The shoes belong to a man -- an old man, (EMIL LUTZ) late 70's, with snowy tufts of hair peeking out from under a faded snap brim hat. His face is deeply lined. Carries a long round cardboard container.

He stops by a post-modern impressionist painting. Looks at it: eyes crying blood tears over a black background. Disturbing image.

From the office, CHRISTIAN BAXTER, early 30's with dark good looks. Sincere eyes, the kind you trust. Sizes up the old man, smiles genuinely.

BAXTER

Good morning. May I help you?

LUTZ

Perhaps.

BAXTER

Yes?

Lutz takes the container, lays it ever so gently on the glass.

LUTZ

I would like your opinion of this.

Baxter takes the container, pops the top. Pulls out a canvas. Carefully he unrolls it, holds it up. His eyes widen to about twice their original size. Reaches over, touches a button under the counter.

In a moment a woman steps out of the office: Meet MAGGIE MURDOCK. Late 20's, red hair, figure to die for. Wears a simple but elegant designer original. Effortlessly beautiful woman.

MAGGIE

Christian...?

BAXTER

Look at this.

It's a painting of a young woman and a small girl coming through tall grass. Maggie's eyes widen as well.

MAGGIE

"Path Through Long Grass."

BAXTER

It can't be.

MAGGIE

Look.

She touches the bottom edge, it reads: Auguste Renoir. Both turn to Lutz. The old man smiles faintly.

LUTZ

I was wondering what it might be worth?

BAXTER

If it were genuine -- five million at the least.

LUTZ

It is genuine.

BAXTER

Impossible. It's on display at Musee' de Orsay in Paris.

The old man looks at them, shakes his head.

LUTZ

No. The Musee' has the fake.

Off his smile...

INT. GALLERY OFFICE - LATER

It is an expansive, tastefully decorated office. The dominant fixture is a six-foot safe in the corner.

Lutz sits quietly sipping tea. Baxter, in shirt sleeves, pores over the painting with a magnifying glass. Finishes his examination. Maggie continues to look at it.

BAXTER

It is a good forgery. A very good forgery.

(MORE)

BAXTER (CONT'D)

The canvas, everything but I've seen the original in Paris. I'd be willing to give you \$5000 for it though. It's a perfect salon piece.

Lutz carefully sets the teacup aside, stands.

LUTZ

No. Thank you for taking the time.

Maggie has rolled the canvas carefully, reinserts it into the tube. Baxter dons his suit coat again. He smiles at the old man.

BAXTER

It is extraordinary. Thank you for coming in. If you'll excuse me.

Lutz nods, Baxter exits. Maggie hands him the tube.

MAGGIE

Why are you so certain?

LUTZ

There are reasons.

MAGGIE

I could spend some time and truly authenticate it. If you really want to know the truth.

LUTZ

I already know the truth.

He hands her a card.

LUTZ (Cont'd) (CONT'D)

Perhaps we could speak of this later?

MAGGIE

Of course.

He bows, leaves. Maggie's face a mixture of disbelief and wonder.

EXT. WEST SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Emil Lutz walks slowly toward a rundown motel. The neon light blinks "...olden Slipper Motel" The "G" is burned out.

He gets to the parking lot when a car suddenly pulls out from across the street, lights off! Engine guns as it roars down on the old man.

Lutz has only enough time to look up -- his eyeballs the size of hubcaps. Car barrels into him and his body is a rag doll. "Thuds" with a sickening crunch on the pavement. His face cut, bleeding. The eyes lifeless...

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING/DOWNTOWN VEGAS - DAY

Hot. Windy. Old buildings are the predominant feature. One is a very drab four-story affair, erected about the time that Herbert Hoover was building the big dam with his name.

INT. O'NEILL'S OFFICE - DAY

Dingy. Rundown. Large desk, file cabinet. A calendar from 1998 on the wall, still on March. Drop all your belongings out of a plane -- they'll land like this.

In one corner of the room is a beat up CD player and a stack of dusty disks. An equally beat-up PC is on the same table.

Next to them is the desk. Actually it's a "secretary's desk" - two facing full-sized desks - occupying the center of the room.

PLAYING CARDS

snap into position. Game of solitaire. Black ten on the red nine.

THE DOOR

opens and a gaunt, smallish accountant-type walks in. Wears an expensive three piece suit. Coke-bottle glasses and a receding hairline. His name is DELAVEGA.

DELAVEGA

Are you Mr. O'Neill?

Jack O'Neill looks up from his solitaire game. In his mid-30's now. Wrinkles set a little deeper, the eyes a little harder...like chips of stone with an odometer attached. More mileage.

O'NEILL

Yeah.

Delavega sits in front of him. Pulls out a manila envelope. Drops it on top of the cards.

O'NEILL (Cont'd)
I was winning.

DELAVEGA
I have money.

O'NEILL
I'm happy for you.

He gives Delavega another once-over, picks up the envelope and pulls out a single --

B&W PHOTO

of a young woman. Dark hair. Attractive. Early twenties.

DELAVEGA
My name is Norbert Delavega. I need to find this young woman.

O'NEILL
Okay.

DELAVEGA
As quickly as possible.

O'NEILL
Okay.

The unctuous little man reaches into his Armani coat and retrieves a smaller, wider envelope. Opens it -- cash. More green than the PGA tour. O'Neill looks at the money, then to Delavega.

O'NEILL (Cont'd) (CONT'D)
What?

DELAVEGA
Excuse me?

O'NEILL
What's the story?
(nothing)
The girl?

DELAVEGA
Oh, of course. Her name is Mickey Talbot. She's a cocktail waitress at the Belagio. Or was. She disappeared without a trace three days ago.

O'NEILL
That's it?

DELAVEGA
Yes.

O'NEILL
Not much to go on. You been to the
cops?

DELAVEGA
No.

O'NEILL
Why not?

DELAVEGA
Do you want this job or not?

O'NEILL
The police have a way of finding
out things too. I don't want to
end up on their bad side.

DELAVEGA
As I understand it, that's the only
side of the police you've ever
"ended up on" Mr. O'Neill.

O'NEILL
A series of unfortunate
misunderstandings.

DELAVEGA
No doubt.

O'NEILL
I need to know the score Mr.
...Delavega is it?

DELAVEGA
The score, as you put it, is very
simple:
(nods)
There's five thousand dollars.

(SAMPLE #2 "ACT OF GOD")

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN VALLEY - DAY (PRE-HISTORY)

TITLE CARD: VALLEY OF THE HUNTERS - 10,000 B.C.

We are above a long Mountain valley. Muted colors. Forested on either side as far as the eye can see.

Thick, rolling, snow-laden clouds over the mountains on the horizon. Very cold.

ON THE VALLEY FLOOR

Movement. Dark shapes making their way, single-file, across sparse tundra-like green growth. Miniscule growth, but there nonetheless.

The shapes are HUNTERS. They carry various crude weapons. Animal skin coverings pulled around them like cloaks. Hard to distinguish who or what they are.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Stone age. Ten thousand years ago. Surrounded by a crude "wall" of odd-sized limbs and branches.

People dressed in all manner of animal skins. Breath clouding the crisp air.

Huts, perhaps a dozen. Skin coverings, crude wood frames. We see a mingling throng, shapes really. About 100 of them milling around.

The Hunters appear at the gates. Enter. Everyone moves toward them.

REVEAL: The entire populace, including the Hunters, is made up of only women! All shapes, sizes, descriptions.

Waiting for something. Expectation in their eyes.

One of the Hunters is a tall, large-boned woman, maybe 30. She is LEADER WOMAN and is clearly in charge. She strides up to one of the huts, peers inside.

INT. HUT - DAY

On a pile of soft skins, a young woman, no more than 14, is giving birth. Around her four other women. Older in varying degrees.

One, a KRONE about 50, acts as mid-wife. Glances up at the Leader Woman in the opening, shrugs.

A scream from the girl giving birth. The Krone works her way in closer, starts to pull out the fetus.

The Girl's face is contorted in pain. Sweat glistening on the forehead.

The BABY is emerging... The head...the shoulders...

The Leader Woman watches intently. Staring with the rest as the baby is born

...An umbilical cord and we see it's a BOY.

Huge gasp from the assemblage. Various reactions from the multitude of women. Leader Woman blanches, but composes herself quickly.

The old Krone slaps the baby smartly on the back. First gasp of air for the newborn. The baby boy's mouth yaws open -- explodes with a piercing scream.

EXT. HUT - DAY

Leader Woman strides with great purpose to the other side of the village to a hut which occupies a position next to a enormous rough-cut stone, half buried in the ground.

EXT. 2ND HUT - DAY

Leader Woman stops, looks at two Older Women at the entrance to the small hovel. They shake their heads.

She glances over at the stone. On it, a very crude pictograph. Two figures, a man and a woman. At the top another female. At the bottom - strange characters.

Leader Woman nods. Enters.

INT. 2ND HUT - SAME

In the corner, an ancient body lies fetal-position, back to us. Leader Woman bends down, touches the body ever so softly.

The head turns around, it's a woman. A very, very old woman. His eyes flutter in recognition. Struggles to speak. The language is guttural, strange-sounding.

SUBTITLES OVER:

OLD WOMAN
It has happened?

LEADER WOMAN
A male.

The old woman's eyes water a bit. Nods. She lies back, staring up. Looks at Leader Woman, smiles.

OLD WOMAN
It has come.
(touches her)
I will miss you.

She nods, touches her softly, gently. She looks at the Leader Woman- for a long moment -- then stops breathing. Just like that. Dead. Eyes gape straight ahead.

The Leader Woman stifles a barking sob. Then gently closes the eyes. Great love and respect for this old woman.

EXT. 2ND HUT - DAY

All the women have gathered around, expectantly. Wait in silence for the Leader Woman to speak.

LEADER WOMAN
The revered one is gone.

The crowd reacts as a single tear finds its way down her cheek. No more. Just that one, rolling down...

EXT. BRAZILIAN AMAZON - DAY (THE PRESENT)

TITLE CARD: PRESENT DAY BRAZIL

A LAND ROVER slams down a non-existent road. Through thick green foliage, bouncing like a rodeo bull. In the distance, a small village. National Geographic stuff. Exotic sounds echo over...

INT. VILLAGE - DAY

The Land Rover pulls in. A Man and Woman get out.

He's middle-aged, slender. She's younger. Plain-looking, absorbed. Scientists from the look of their equipment. They survey the village.

MAN
This is the fifth one.

WOMAN

Yeah...

The indigenous tribal culture. To one side, two very old MEN. In their late 80's.

The rest of the village is mostly comprised of women. All ages. Some holding nursing infants. No male children. Only female.

The Scientists head toward one of the small huts. As they get to the entrance a large boned woman bolts out holding up a newborn - a baby girl.

Crowd reacts to this. Women chatter to one another.

The men are silent.

The Scientists take out cameras, notebooks, etc. Start making notes, talking with the Large Boned Woman, looking at the newborn.

As we slowly --

DISSOLVE TO:

IMAGES

flickering on a screen. Scratchy, black and white 16mm film from a time long gone by - the 30's maybe. A pith-helmeted Man digs in a grotto of the Dead Sea.

We know it's the Dead Sea because the sub-titles tell us. No sound. Only the rhythmic "ka-chunk" of the film going through old, loose sprockets.

We see the Man dredge up about two gallons of "gunk" from the bottom of this inland salt-laden sea. He is very excited about something, points to the muddy mixture, gesticulates.

Watching the scratchy film...in the darkness...are eyes. Absorbed by the flickering images. Feminine eyes. Troubled. Intense on the hypnotic pictures.

The screen changes from the Scientist at the Dead Sea to a woman on her hands and knees by a stream bed. Sub-titles read: New Zealand - 1953.

The Woman is holding something. Snails. A handful. Her face perplexed as she speaks to an unseen companion. We hold on the snails until...

The projector suddenly stops, goes dark. No sound. A single lamp is flicked on. Illuminates the woman who was watching the newsreels.

She is dark, attractive, slender. A shock of blue-black hair frames her intelligent features. NORA WEBSTER fiddles with a newspaper clipping from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

We can't read it but there's picture at the top of the clipping; a young girl, about 17, with doe-eyes and beautiful pale skin. Her hair a blonde cloud. Plays tennis.

The caption reads: "Immaculate conception?"

Nora re-reads the article, then looks at the projector. Her eyes clouding again. Searching...

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

Another baby is being born. C-section. Mother is sedated, unconscious. Doctor holds the baby up -- a girl.

Blood sample is taken immediately. A drop is placed in a culture. The culture turns a cloudy blue color.

Doctor looks at the result. Eyes concerned above the mask he wears. Turns to a couple of MEN wearing suits under hospital gowns.

Their rough, rubber-gloved hands take the still wriggling infant from the Doctor. Off the Doctor's look...

EXT. SEATTLE, WASHINGTON - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Fall. October. Low clouds obscure Elliot Bay. Seagulls caw at one another. The skyline literally rises, wraithlike, above the clouds rolling through.

It's cold. People are bundled up as they make their way.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Small, well kept. Older two-story Victorian homes. Mostly with postcard sized lawns. There is a song playing. A slow ballad.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

On the vanity is a small CD unit. The room is neat, with the memorabilia of a high school girl on the walls. One wall is nothing but tennis awards. Dozens of them.

One of the pictures, shows a girl - the same girl from the news clipping - playing tennis. Very good player it's obvious.

We find that girl, MATTY STEVENS, sitting on the bed, crying. Softly. Painfully. In a moment she stands and is silhouetted in the window. Her final days of pregnancy.

She dabs her eyes with a tissue, tosses it. It flutters into the wastebasket with about a thousand others.

The door opens, an attractive woman, LAURA STEVENS, 40's peeks in. Matty's mom. Her face soft and compassionate.

LAURA

Ready?

MATTY

(almost inaudible)

Yes.

LAURA

Daddy's pulling the car out. Get your suitcase.

Matty stands, picks up a small valise, looks around her room once more, follows her mother out.

INT. HOSPITAL ADMITTING - DAY

Matty and Laura sit on the couch, waiting.

At the front desk, the father, DOUG STEVENS, late 40's, pear shaped, finishes with the admitting nurse. Walks back to the women.

DOUG

It'll be a few minutes.

LAURA

When will we know?

DOUG

Sixty seconds after the baby's delivered.

They look at each other. This has been tough. Doug takes her hand, squeezes it reassuringly. Laura may lose it. Sucks in air to stop the sob that's coming...

Matty, sits mute at the other end of the couch. Eyes, swollen from crying, holding a thousand yard stare. Something makes her look up.

A Priest -- Father JACK MCGUIRE, 30's, slender, handsome. Well built. A sharpness about him that you feel right off. Confident but edgy. Wears a sport coat, priests' collar and Levis.

MCGUIRE
You guys alright?

Both Matty and her mother stand and embrace him. Heartfelt.

LAURA
Thanks for coming Father Jack.

MCGUIRE
It'll be fine.
(glance upward)
The fix is in.

Laura and Doug smile. McGuire looks at Matty.

MCGUIRE (CONT'D)
How are you doing?

MATTY
Okay.

She doesn't really look at him. Too embarrassed. Deep breath.

MATTY (CONT'D)
I'm scared.

MCGUIRE
Me too.

MATTY
Huh?

MCGUIRE
Sympathy pains.

MATTY
Sympathy pains?

MCGUIRE
I get 'em. When I see people in pain -- I feel the exact same thing. Sympathy pains.
(sees her look)
I'm not making this up. That's what they call it.

MATTY
It's a C-section. I'll be under.

MCGUIRE
I won't.

She looks at him, surprised.

MATTY
You're coming in?

McGuire looks at Doug and Laura. They nod to Matty.

MATTY (CONT'D)
Now I'm really embarrassed.

MCGUIRE
Why? I'll probably faint.

She smiles. Takes his hand, squeezes it.

MATTY
Thank you.
(searches his eyes)
Did you ever believe me?

He chews on his response a moment before answering.

MCGUIRE
Yes. Because I know you believe
it.

A DOCTOR strides in. Tall man, gunmetal gray hair. Mid 50's. AMA poster boy. Very much in charge.

DOCTOR
We're ready.

Matty, Doug and Laura all file past him toward the Delivery room. Matty gives McGuire one last look, goes. The Doctor appraises McGuire...

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Don't usually see Priests in the
delivery room.

McGuire looks at him. This guy's a hard ass. He smiles.

MCGUIRE
New policy. The Church wants us to
grab their souls in the beginning,
instead of the end.

Doctor isn't amused. Nods toward the...

DOCTOR
...Nurses' station. Tell them
you're going in for a delivery.

MCGUIRE
There isn't a lot of blood is
there?

Doctor stops, looks back. Shakes his head "no." Leaves.

MCGUIRE (CONT'D)
Good. That's good...

He heads out down the other hall.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

Delivery well underway. Doctor is carefully extracting the fetus. McGuire's eyes are saucers over the hospital mask.

The BABY'S head appears first, then the rest. Umbilical chord attached. It's a girl. Perfect little thing.

McGuire smiles so broadly you can see it under the mask. The surrogate proud father.

A tap or two and the baby sputters to life. Screams her head off.

A NURSE, gowned and masked, comes up with an instrument tray. Same setup we've seen before. Blood testing paraphernalia.

McGuire watches, fascinated. Never witnessed anything like this before.

A sample is dropped into the vial. Nothing. No color change.

Doctor nods and the delivery team jump-start back to their work. Baby is cleaned, wrapped, ready.

On the far side of the delivery room - a two-way glass. We see the delivery team - backwards. In the b.g. near the top corner of the mirrored image...partially hidden EYES.

McGuire is handed the baby. Takes the infant, holds her as if she were glass.

Off his beaming look...

INT. HOSPITAL ADMITTING - DAY

Nora Webster is at the desk. Been there awhile. Getting nowhere with the DAY NURSE in charge of admitting:

A blocky, middle-aged woman, her hair cinched in a tight bun. Granite-like resolve in the eyes...

NORA

Then, can you tell me if she's still a patient?

DAY NURSE

No.

NORA

"No" she's not a patient or "no" you won't tell me.

DAY NURSE

"No" as in "no comment."

NORA

Who was the attending physician?

DAY NURSE

No comment.

NORA

What was the condition of the baby?

DAY NURSE

No comment.

NORA

Boy? Girl?

DAY NURSE

No comment.

NORA

Alien? Mutant? Demon from hell?

DAY NURSE

No comment.

Nora starts away, stops. Pulls out her notebook.

NORA

May I quote you on that?

DAY NURSE

What?

(SAMPLE #3: "PIRATE HUNTER")

FADE IN:

From the BLACKNESS - before the first images - we hear a young woman's tortured SCREAM, muffled by her own will.

We see a cloud of honey-blonde hair, her mouth open in agony; her face beaded with sweat. Her name is JENNIFER GOODE and she lies in --

A CABIN BUNK

where her hands are bound to the head board. She is dressed in splendid brocades and silk. On the floor a bouquet of wildflowers wrapped in a lace napkin. Like these blossoms, she herself is young and fresh and innocent.

Beside her is a man (STRANG) tall, angular, with the diamond hard look of a murderer. His eyes are dead, shark eyes. In his hand is a white-hot iron. He pushes it towards her face.

STRANG

'Ave to mark ye, don't we now?

His breath is foul, the cockney-laced words hot on her face. She gasps, turns her cheek away as far as she can.

It's no use, the restraint makes it impossible to avoid the glowing metal as the heat waves shimmer in the darkened cabin. The firebrand is almost to her skin when --

A HAND

snakes out, snaps the iron from Strang's grasp. It clatters to the deck.

MCCALLISTER (O.C.)

Get below!

Strang whips around, confronts his Captain JOHN "BLACK JACK" MCCALLISTER, a handsome, imposing man. Ram-rod straight with jet black hair. In his right hand a rapier dangles carelessly, ready to snap into action...

MCCALLISTER (Cont'd) (CONT'D)

Don't make me tell you again.

Strang scuttles back toward the cabin door.

STRANG

I wasn't going to hurt 'er
Cap'n...jes' a little show...

(MORE)

STRANG (CONT'D)

(toothless crooked smile)
 You know, keep 'er in 'er place, so
 to speak?

He slinks out his grin never fading. McCallister picks up the hot iron, douses it in a bucket, looks at the woman: she *is* beautiful, effortlessly so.

MCCALLISTER

Our ransom has not yet been answered. If the Crown would only pay, I could free you.

JENNIFER

They won't pay a farthing. This ransom will do you no good.

MCCALLISTER

On the contrary, that much gold would do me a great deal of good...
 (smiles)
 ...Miss Goode.

The pun amuses him but his look is deadly...

MCCALLISTER (Cont'd) (CONT'D)

One day is all that remains. Make no mistake, I will hang you from the yardarm as an example.

JENNIFER

(her eyes blaze)
 May you burn in hell!

MCCALLISTER

I've no doubt your wish will be granted gentle lady...
 (a humorless smile)
 But not before you.

He bows slightly, leaves. She strains at the hemp. No use. She is very near tears.

EXT. LAGOON - DAYBREAK (ESTABLISHING)

The mist rises slowly from the water. The sun just making its way into the morning sky.

EXT. JUNGLE UNDERBRUSH - EARLY MORNING

On an emerald patch of moss in the shade beneath the spreading limbs of the palms, numbers of small animals gambol. The sun is almost to the sea line on the horizon.

A FIGURE makes his way through the underbrush. We can't see a face but he moves with grace and ease of a jungle cat. He stops, sees...

A PIRATE ENCAMPMENT

with about 20 or so sea-faring freebooters...drinking, gambling, swearing and puking. There are make-shift tents, lean to's scattered about.

The Figure slides soundlessly through the underbrush. Closer. Closer... One of the MEN on the perimeter is keeping guard. He drinks from a flask of rum, getting smashed in the process.

His bloodshot eyes focus on nothing in particular when a BLADE whips across his neck! It's so sudden, it's hard to believe it even happened until --

BLOOD

sprays out of the carotid artery! His hand grabs at the wound as if he could staunch the flow. He can't...he gags and a discordant "squawking" noise rattles in his throat. He sinks out of sight...

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A few more pirates are just dragging a dinghy onshore. Six hard, dangerous men. They finish, head into the undergrowth two by two.

EXT. JUNGLE FOLIAGE - DAY

The men are following a well-worn trail through the dense undergrowth. The rear-most pirate is suddenly yanked off the trail, as though a giant invisible hand just snatched him. No one notices.

ON THE GROUND

the Man looks up just in time to see a huge dagger being plunged into his chest! His eyes fly open, a deep groan escapes his lips.

Blood seeps out of the wound and onto his filthy white blouse like the Nile at flood stage. He's dead before his eyes can close...

EXT. LAGOON - LATE AFTERNOON

The Figure swims alongside the ship rocking at anchor. On his back, a saber. The assassin climb up the anchor rope...

EXT. PIRATE ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The armed frigate rides at anchor. Atop the main mast flutters the SKULL AND CROSSBONES pennant.

INT. FRIGATE - DAY

Jennifer is standing at the portal. Alone. Beautiful in the light, her face almost ashen, the blush of youth and beauty gone.

The cabin door opens abruptly. Strang is there, flashes a lascivious, toothless grin. It covers his wrinkled visage. Two other Men, big and brutish, flank him.

STRANG

Mornin' Miss 'igh-and-mighty.

(spits)

Be that time...the appointed 'our.

Jennifer Goode straightens, erect. She is frightened to death but will not allow this vermin to see it.

EXT. MAIN DECK - DAY

The yard arm. Stark against the agate blue of the tropical morning. From it dangles a rope, a hangman's NOOSE carefully knotted and tied at the end. The place of execution...

McCallister accompanies Jennifer to the bridge deck, directly under the swaying rope.

MCCALLISTER

I'd hoped to avoid this.

She can say nothing. Her full attention is focused on the swaying rope -- like a mongoose on a cobra. Fear fixed in her eyes...

EXT. AFT DECK - DAY

Tucked out of sight under a tarp, the unseen intruder has an unobstructed view of the proceedings. Illuminated by the morning light his eyes are so blue they're almost black...a raw, fierce determination burns in them.

EXT. MAIN DECK - DAY

McCallister stands in front of his rag-tag cutthroats.

MCCALLISTER

I want all to make known what happens here today.

(MORE)

MCCALLISTER (CONT'D)

Let it be said that we will carry
out our intentions to the letter
when they are not complied with.

He nods to one of the men, a hairy specimen who is acting as the executioner. He is called BURGOYNE. He takes Jennifer roughly, pulls her under the noose.

MCCALLISTER (Cont'd) (CONT'D)

Gently.

Burgoyne looks sheepish, becomes more gentle with her as he wraps hemp bands around her wrists and pins them to her back. He pulls the noose down, places it loosely around her neck.

Burgoyne lifts the blonde hair, places the thick knot under the left ear, then steps back. He takes her arm, proceeds to pull her up on a cargo crate. A precarious perch at best.

EXT. SHIP - DAY

The Figure is nowhere to be seen until...we catch a brief glimpse of the MAN scurrying across the bridge...

EXT. DECK - DAY

McCallister and the others look at the woman. She is almost regal. Her head erect, back and shoulders straight. The leeward wind brushes her hair outward in blonde waves...

HER FEET

wobble, teeter back and forth working to keep their balance on the crate.

McCallister takes a deep breath.

MCCALLISTER

Any last words Lady Goode?

There is utter and complete silence, only the sighing of the morning wind and lapping waves...

JENNIFER

(stammers)

I go to God with a clear
conscience...

She is pale, quailing, as she's perched on the crate. It's as if she thought this moment would never actually come. McCallister sees her fear:

MCCALLISTER

Well said. I will make it merciful
and quick M'lady.

He nods to Strang. He holds a long pole which he now
positions against the crate - ready to push forward -
springing the makeshift "trap" that will send her to her
death...

THE PIRATES

as each face turns up to witness the spectacle before them.
They are quiet. Subdued. Waiting for the word.

McCallister looks at Goode, the fear in her is overwhelming
now, her eyes flit back and forth as if praying some unseen
force will come and save her. McCallister raises his arm
when --

A SHOT

discharges behind them.

STRANG'S CHEST

literally explodes in a fountain of blood. A one-ounce lead
ball piercing it. He looks down dumbly, crumples.

For a second no one moves. Then pandemonium. Everyone claws
for a cutlass or dirk or some other weapon. McCallister
pulls a saber.

Jennifer struggles mightily to keep her footing. The crate
tipping and yawing. Her eyes flutter about trying to see
what's happening.

The pirates have recovered and rush to the aft deck. No one
is there. McCallister looks about...what manner of ghost is
this?

AN EXPLOSION

rocks the ship. The main gunpowder magazine goes up.
Splinters and debris rain down. Half the crew is blown away.

The other half rush to put out the ensuing flames.
McCallister regains his footing in time to see someone
holding the crate. Goode looks down as best she can.

A HAND, holding a saber reaches up to cut the rope when --

MCCALLISTER

is there, sword in hand. The two men duel. Her savior is forced to battle the pirate. McCallister is very good with a blade but so is the Intruder.

Steel clangs against steel. The sound ringing out. The fight is deadly and in earnest. The stranger is prevailing when the unthinkable happens --

A BOOT

kicks the crate!

SLOW-MOTION:

as Jennifer's FEET swing out and down...and come to wrenching stop at the end of the rope. Her feet quiver and then sway free.

The boot belongs to Strang! Blood burbles out of his mouth. A last, desperate gesture of hate and revenge as he dies...

THE EYES

of the unseen Man scream first silently -- then his voice:

MAN (O.C.)

Nooooo!

A wail which echoes over the water...

EXT. SHIP - DAY

Another EXPLOSION rips the bow of the ship. A charge, well-placed before the fight. Men overboard, dying, swimming.

A frantic scramble as the pirates try to save themselves. The wounded crying out. The dead float in the water. As the entire scene slowly fades into blackness...

TIME DISSOLVE:

EXT. SKY - DAY

We're moving through a cloud, then the sky at a dizzying pace. We start down to Earth, dipping, soaring, dropping lower as the...

MAIN TITLES PLAY OVER

A VAST STRETCH OF OCEAN

filling the screen. Unbroken, infinite, luminous and mysterious it stretches away, meeting and blending with the sky in pale ribbons of pearl and misty light. As waves ripple on to the white strand, which now gives way to --

A DENSE TROPICAL FOREST

lush and verdant, girdled by the bone-white sandy beach which streaks away as an emerald blanket covers the immense island. The speed seems to increase as the deep green melts into --

A SETTLEMENT

of clapboard buildings and innumerable crude dwellings.

A BAY

where a diverse assortment of ships and merchant vessels on lay anchored. It is here we see the warship H.M.S. Ulysses rocking at anchor.

TITLE CARD OVER: Two years later. Kingston Bay -- 1715

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAY

At the top of a hill over-looking the bay, is an imposing structure - a MANSION with perfectly manicured lawns and gardens.

A whip cracks as a carriage rattles onto the flagstones of the courtyard entrance to the mansion. BOOTS step out, tall, black and shiny...

They belong to THOMAS DONOVAN, ruthlessly brilliant, lean and powerful he wears the uniform of a Captain in the Royal Navy. Years of experience are engraved on his face.

A FOOTMAN expeditiously ushers him to the entrance as...LT. SIMON VAUGHN steps out of the carriage behind him. He is Donovan's first officer. Tall, gaunt, ice-eyed. Gazes at the surroundings then follows his Captain inside.

INT. MANSION - DAY

Governor PETER HANSON makes his way through the landed gentry and merchants of the crown colony. He's an effete little man with a powdered wig and pasty skin. He holds a gold-knobbed cane as he weaves past --

ATTRACTIVE YOUNG ADULTS

strutting about in the extravagant attire, the men like peacocks, the ladies in gowns that seem to squeeze their entire bodies up into their bosoms. Hanson collars a hapless Jamaican servant.

HANSON

We need more brandy...

Before the servant can answer Hanson shoves him away.

HANSON (Cont'd)

Never mind. Bring the fruit and pastries, then serve the brandy.
(the man doesn't move)
Now moron!

The servant scurries away. Hanson sees Donovan enter and bustles over to his guest of honor.

HANSON (Cont'd)

Captain Donovan. Welcome to Jamaica. We are so pleased at your arrival.

He raps the cane smartly. Sounds like a pistol shot.

HANSON (Cont'd) (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen may I present Captain Thomas Donovan of His Majesty's Royal Navy. Captain Donovan has been sent to quell the uprising of privateers attacking our merchantmen.

The room erupts in applause as Donovan bows slightly. Behind him Vaughn's eyes never stop searching, probing the room as if there were unseen danger lurking in every crevice.

EXT. KINGSTON STREETS - DAY

Through the streets of Kingston gallops a dashing FIGURE, his cloak flying behind him, catching the waning afternoon light. The horse's hooves clattering along the cobblestones as the rider dodges the beggars living in the filthy shadows and other passersby.

A group of NUNS hurries out of his way...

He's a magnetic sight, riding the horse as easily as if they were racing across an open field. He guides the stallion as though its grace and power came, not from the animal, but from the rider.

Then we see his eyes - the same eyes we've seen before: the "Pirate Hunter", CHRISTOPHER COLLINS. His epaulets evidence that he's a lieutenant in the Royal Marines. Handsome, erect and unambiguous in his courage, he wheels the magnificent animal toward the Governor's mansion.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

Collins dismounts, throws the reins to the waiting Footman, dashes inside.

INT. MANSION - DAY

Governor Hanson is leading Donovan and Vaughn toward a long table when Collins strides in. He goes straight to Donovan.

COLLINS

I'm sorry to be late Captain. My horse was not ready when I --

Donovan raises his hand, cuts him off.

DONOVAN

Later.
(to Hanson)
You were saying?

HANSON

Yes, I was saying that Lady Stanton is the largest plantation owner on the colony.

DONOVAN

The woman who lost her father?

HANSON

Yes. Voyage to London three years ago. She inherited his land...
(a hand to side of his mouth)
...and his debts.

He turns, motions to ELIZABETH STANTON. She is a tall, willowy beauty with sable hair and snapping eyes. Gives a slight curtsy.

HANSON (Cont'd) (CONT'D)

Lady Stanton you are looking radiant this afternoon as always.

ELIZABETH

You are too kind.

(SAMPLE #4: "DEAR JOHN")

FADE IN:

INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Huge day room of a metropolitan newspaper. Cubicles as far as the eye can see. Deserted. Not a soul in sight, except for GRACIE MAXWELL.

A striking woman. Early 30's. Eyes that snap with intelligence and fire. Very attractive.

A quick glance over her small domain reveals: A computer, printer, stacks of books, diploma from Vassar, a poster of Albert Einstein. And a solid oak desk with a framed picture of an attractive older woman.

She looks at her computer screen. Tons of e-mail. All letters to be answered.

GRACIE

I hate this job.

She pushes her chair back, reaches under the desk and retrieves a hidden Oreo stash. Munches on one as she reads:

GRACIE (CONT'D)

"Dear John: Sometimes my boyfriend and I go at it so hard that I'm afraid his 'unit' will snap right off! That would ruin everything for me.

Does a take. Eyebrows arch.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Not to mention my boyfriend, who probably wouldn't be all that happy either.

Finishes the cookie.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

We're desperate here. What should we do? Yours truly...Snap Crackle and Pop!"

Gracie stares for a moment. Sighs.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

For this I got a Masters'...

She turns to the computer - types rapidly. Very rapidly considering she only uses the index finger of each hand.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

"Dear Snap Crackle and Pop: If it does snap off -- call Lorena Bobbit. She'll know what to do."

She stops. Shakes her head. Painstakingly deletes what she just wrote. Scratches her head with a pencil, flips it, catches it. Starts again.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

"Honey, you're going to hurt yourself if you keep this up. Tell Mr. Blue Steel to slow down. Enjoy the ride. Both of you. Just because life's short - doesn't mean everything else has to be. Signed...John."

She whacks a couple of keys on the keyboard, which in turn starts the printer.

Paper comes out, she snags it, shoots down the hallway.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

No knock - just Gracie slamming through the door. Throws the paper at NICHOLAS SINCLAIR. Early 30's. Well built. G.Q. poster boy...not a hair out of place.

GRACIE

I can't do it anymore Nick. Give me something. Anything. I don't care.

(sits on his desk)

You owe me Sinclair.

NICK

Nice to see you too Grace.

GRACIE

C'mon. Anything. What do you say?

Nick smiles, enjoying the show.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

You know I'm better journalist than any of those bozos you call reporters up front. Take Dear John, shove a stick of dynamite up his ass, and blow him to hell Nick.

(MORE)

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I hate doing this. You know I hate doing this...

NICK

But you're so good at it.

GRACIE

Nick - which rhymes with "prick" - get me out of there. Do something.

NICK

Okay, I will do something.

She can't believe it.

GRACIE

You will?

NICK

15% raise. Retroactive to August.

GRACIE

It's not the money and you know it!

She picks up his stapler, which he promptly takes away from her.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

I just want to write a story about something important.

NICK

No can do.

GRACIE

Bullshit. You can do. You "no wanna' do."

NICK

Blame your success - not me.

(pulls ledger)

Look at this. Since you took over "Dear John" we've quadrupled the billing. Everybody wants to be on the society page with you.

(blows kiss)

Sweet one...you are irreplaceable.

GRACIE

City Editor my ass.

NICK

What? You think you can do my job?

GRACIE
(tosses his pencils)
A chimpanzee could do your job.

NICK
Sticks and stones...

GRACIE
How did you get through college?

Nick smiles, puts his hands behind his head. Loves this little game they play - nods to the diploma on the wall.

NICK
Probably saw me on ESPN. All American. Notre Dame.

GRACIE
Oh that's right. First string hunchback.

NICK
Anything else?

GRACIE
Yeah. I quit.

NICK
Contract. I own you for one more year...my dearest...John.
(looks at watch)
You've got twenty minutes to finish tomorrow's column.

She drops the paper she printed, on his desk.

GRACIE
May a weird holy man juggle your figs.

NICK
I love the way you think.

He reaches in his desk drawer. Holds a ring case. Tosses it to her. She catches it - one handed.

NICK (CONT'D)
I love you.

She looks at it for a time.

GRACIE
Let me do a real story.

He smiles, stands up. Takes the ring from her, slides the three-carat beauty on her left hand.

NICK

Five hundred words about the singles scene.

(smile fades)

On my desk tomorrow morning.

GRACIE

(adjusts the ring)

I don't love you. I'm just stupid.

And she's gone. Nick smiles broadly to himself. Exalts in having this power over her.

INT. CONDO - NIGHT

A discriminating but comfortable place. Not unlike it's owner -- LEO TUCKER. 30's, good looking. Rumpled. Not a slave to fashion. And a romance novelist.

Barry White rumbles romantically in the background...

On the floor next to him, a little terrier - Bernie. Dog watches him quizzically. Leo talks what he types:

LEO

...As he entered the room, there she was...the most exquisite woman on the planet. Here, just to be with him...

His imagination he's actually seeing Gracie Maxwell. He doesn't know it yet.

Shoves his hand into a bowl of popcorn, crams a fistful into his mouth. Sways to the music. Has absolutely no rhythm. Zero. Starts typing again.

LEO (CONT'D)

He caresses her name with a breathy seduction and she is overpowered. He can only gaze into the fire of her agate eyes.

Leo stops, closes his eyes. Waits for the inspiration:

LEO (CONT'D)

Responsive to his touch, her own hands and lips eagerly sought out and explored his being. His soul. His body...

Leo gets up - dances around the room slowly.

INTERCUT/DAYDREAM:

In his mind he sees his love - someone who happens to look exactly like Gracie.

The dog watches him bemused.

Leo dances into the kitchen. Barry White rumbles on. There's a crash. Glass breaks.

LEO (O.S.)

Dammit!

(more pieces clatter)

My new crockpot!

Bernie the dog cocks his head. Off his canine look...

EXT. MICHIGAN AVE - DAY

The sky, lead gray and threatening. Now the rain. Sheets of it. Leo runs across the sidewalk carrying Bernie. Both are soaked.

On the wall is a listing of companies. One is Cole McKenzie Publishing.

AT THE REVOLVING DOOR

Leo hustles through with Bernie - plows into Gracie. Full on. Down she goes. Leo tries to help her up...

LEO

I'm really sorry about...

Then he sees her face. Hits him like a dump truck. The woman of his dreams!

LEO (CONT'D)

This...

Stunned, he lets go of her hand. She goes down like a bad habit. Second time.

Leo stands dripping on her. When she does finally right herself, there's fire in the eyes.

GRACIE

What the hell are you doing!

LEO

I know you.

Exasperated, Gracie brushes herself off.

GRACIE
No you don't.

LEO
What's your name?

GRACIE
See?

She notices how he's dressed: high top work boots. No belt. Baggy Levis and plaid shirt. Mayberry RFD.

GRACIE (CONT'D)
Gee, where are Barney and Aunt Bee?

LEO
Huh?

She's gone.

LEO (CONT'D)
Oh, no his name's Bernie.
(holds dog up)
Bernie...
(to the dog)
That was her.

Bernie gives him the same look Gracie did.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Hot Latin number plays through the elevator speakers. Leo taps his foot. Missing the rhythm. Doesn't care. Now the shoulder lifts. Sets the dog down.

Boogie city. He's cool. He's a dude. He's "Leo of no Rhythm"...as the door opens on:

Three executive assistants; young, hip women. Everything the 'dancing machine' in front of them, isn't.

When Leo finally notices his audience, it's thirty seconds too late. Made a total jackass of himself. He bends down, grabs Bernie, shoots past them.

The young women look at each other -- crack up.

INT. COLE MCKENZIE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Leo is staring again. This time at a beautiful young woman, VALENTINA. Maybe 25, with crimson, collagen injected lips.

Under the tight pink sweater, breasts roughly the size of Vermont, swell in unison.

LEO
Hey, Valentina.

VALENTINA
Hi, Mr. Tucker.

LEO
Leo.

VALENTINA
Huh?

LEO
I'm Leo.

VALENTINA
(broad smile)
Yeah? I'm a Pisces.

She bends over the desk so low he can see to her knees. She giggles with delight. Pets the dog:

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
Hello little Bernie. How are you
snookums?

The dog backs away. From his perspective this woman has three heads.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
He's so precious.

LEO
Yeah.

VALENTINA
Mr. Warrington will be with you in
a minute.
(thinks)
Maybe more than that. I'm never
quite sure.

The way she says it, Marilyn Monroe would be envious.

LEO
Sure.

He glances up at the small video camera mounted on the wall. Waves. Sits down.

Bernie pads over, a New Yorker magazine in his mouth. Drops it on Leo's lap.

LEO (CONT'D)
I've read this one.

Dog looks at him.

SAM WARRINGTON bustles in. Nice suit. Late 50's, physique like a sack full of doorknobs. Whole package is topped off with Hair Clubs' latest glue-on.

SAM
C'mon in Leo.
(to Valentina)
Hold my calls. And keep the dog out here. Makes me sneeze.

VALENTINA
Yes sir.
(bends over again)
C'mon Bernie I wanna' give you a love.

Bernie cringes behind the sofa.

Leo and Sam take a moment to admire the two leviathan scoops of a vanilla as she bends down to hug the dog...

LEO
Love to bury my head in those.

SAM
She has to cut her toenails from memory you know?

Sam leads him inside.

INT. OFFICE - SAME

The office reflects Samuel's money. Marble and mahogany. Jalousie glass. Distinctive and valuable objects d'art.

SAM
I need the damned book already Leo.

LEO
That's why you got me down here?

SAM
I need the book Leo. Today.

LEO
Why didn't you just call me?

SAM
Because you say whatever I want to
hear and still don't deliver.
(leans over desk)
The friggin' book Leo. Where is
it?

LEO
On my desk.

SAM
Finished?

LEO
(pregnant pause)
Sort of.

SAM
Is it done or isn't it?

LEO
Yeah. Kind of...

SAM
Is the sonofabitch done or not!

LEO
It's done.

SAM
Done, done?

LEO
Yeah.
(shrugs)
I don't know if I like the ending.

SAM
Ending schmending. Where is it?

LEO
I'll messenger it over.
(shrugs)
Monday.

SAM
Don't screw with me Leo.

(SAMPLE #5: "SPARROW ON THE ROOF")

FADE IN:

ON IMAGES

flickering in the dark. No sound other than the rapid "ticking" of 16mm film running through a projector.

The scratched black and white images on a screen -- an old Spanish newsreel.

A bullfighter young, daring. Sweeps the cape over an enraged bull. Spanish language sub-titles read: "Con El Guerrero, venceramos!"

His every move, fluid perfection. No wasted movement. No hint of hesitation.

The perfect killing machine.

We see dark, troubled eyes. Darting back and forth following every image on the screen. Feminine eyes. A slash of light illuminates their intensity.

On screen this young bullfighter from long ago, stands poised over his "muleta" cape.

His long, wicked killing sword in hand waiting for the exact moment.

Waiting...

Then, a blinding thrust of the blade. Perfect. The bull staggers back, mortally wounded.

The bullfighter, tall, thin...almost regal as the...LIGHT from the projector suddenly cuts off --

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

An explosion of lightning and thunder. The alabaster light piercing the night sky.

Rain - sheets of it - silhouetted in the brilliance.

Dark again. Shapes moving in that inky thickness. A sea of undulating horns! Hooves pawing, gouging the muddy ground.

A macabre dance with rolling thunder accompaniment.

Two BOYS, late teens, wearing soaked-to-the-skin shirts, holding lanterns, try to keep the animals calm. Frantic. Shouting in Spanish.

Losing proposition.

The deep guttural sounds of panicked animals - a chorus from the depths of hell.

NOW - HEADLIGHTS

illuminate the hill and valley below. A car in the storm.

Another blast of thunder and lightning. The animals break loose from their enclosure.

The beasts are a furrowed mass of muscle and bone, backs wet and shining in the eerie glow of the storm. A single heaving body of black and brown.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY:

Inside the car - MAN and WOMAN. The man, about 40. Craggy features. Thinning hair. Cranks the wheel hard right.

Looks at the woman. Damn near lost it that time. She is late 30's, pretty in an "Iowa-sort-of-way." Eyes open wide.

A quick look over the back seat of the car -- a young child, CHRIS, maybe 10, asleep.

Close cropped dark hair. Fair features. A girl, but almost looks like she could be a young boy. Her father's sport pulled coat over her.

The woman pulls out a crinkled "Euro-Atlas" road map. Spain. Searches. Not enough light. Pulls out a penlight. The shaft cuts through the dark.

Her finger traces the page from the mountains of Sierra de Guadarrama, North. Segovia.

The boys are overwhelmed, waving their lanterns futilely in the downpour.

The bulls have completely breached the fence. The massive beasts charge off in all directions.

Chris raises up from the back seat. Looks.

In the headlights a beast from hell! The horns upturned. Flared nostrils.

Chris screams. The Woman looks up, screams too. The Man, reacts, over corrects the wheel!

The car careens over the embankment. Rolls wildly down the steep hill side. The headlights making crazy searchlight patterns, rolling over and over.

Slams into a tree.

Bulls are everywhere. Running madly toward the car headlights.

The car's fuel tank is ruptured. A gasoline river snaking through the dirt.

The older Boy, sees the car lights, motions to his companion. They run over. Look in:

The man...dead? Can't tell. Blood on the dash. In the back, Chris, unconscious. The boys pull at the driver's door. Jammed!

The back door. It opens. They try to help, but this guy is gone.

Chris, unconscious, with the suit coat over her. Passport, credit cards, money spill out of the breast pocket.

The older Boy's eyes widen. Reaches in, takes the coat. The younger Boy drops his lantern - wants to see the money.

Older boy brushes him back, a last look. Nothing more they can do -- they're gone.

The bulls coming by the car now. Moving at a good clip.

Chris is coming out of it. Shakes her head, looks, sees the monsters. Shrinks back.

A hoof knocks over the lantern - a flame flicks out like a burning snake-tongue. Hits the gasoline, becomes a river of fire.

Chris scoots out of the car. Looks in the front sees her father's head against the wheel. The eyes no longer see. Staring at nothing.

She turns and -- is face to face with the beast!

Its eyes wild. Fire shining in the pupils.

She screams, runs. The car explodes -- a roman candle.

The explosion and resulting fireball bathe the entire scene in a hellish glow punctuated by the rain.

Chris is knocked flat. Hits hard. Out for a few seconds. When she regains consciousness it's like she's never seen this place before!

Dream-like she sees a figure wearing her father's coat. Far away. It scuttles away quickly. Lapels flapping. Something compelling about the coat...

Chris tries to speak. Her mouth is moving - but no sound. Touches her throat.

Lightning and thunder again. The behemoth explosion of nature makes her jump up.

She runs after the apparition. The sound of the thunder still muted.

Still ringing.

Ringring...

CROSS CUT TO:

INT. SMALL GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

OVER the ringing - and then another crash of thunder.

Through the window a frenzy of light and sound. It's like a photographer's giant flash-bulb going off.

Now we see - the greenhouse is also an office of sorts. Desk, computer, fax, etc. On the wall degrees, pictures of bridges, buildings.

Architectural designs. Old ones, mid-17th Century. The rest - a profusion of green PLANTS. Almost three quarters of the space.

A face raises up. DAVID JORDAN'S face. Looks like it's been chiseled out of granite, but not quite finished. Eyes calm.

Carefully he plants a small seedling, tamps it in gently with long graceful fingers.

Stands back. Wipes the dirt on his shirt. Sets the seedling on the shelf with about a dozen others.

He's raw-boned and tall. Big shoulders and a grace as he moves. Late 50's, maybe older. Stretches, hits the light.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Jordan walks through the kitchen, into his study. It's not a big house. Tidy. Masculine.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

The bed is mammoth. Beautiful European lace quilt covers it. On the quilt a suitcase, neatly packed. A passport, airline ticket, etc.

Closes the suitcase. Carefully puts it in the top of the closet. Sits on the bed, picks up a magazine - "Aplausos." Spanish language bull fighting magazine.

ON THE COVER: the headline: "Senorita La Fiesta Brava -- Alternativa de Salarosa"

He pulls out his wallet, takes a crinkled, battered photograph and looks at it. We don't see the image, but it moves him. After a moment he carefully re-inserts it into the wallet.

He reaches over to a prescription bottle of medication. Opens the bottle, takes two small white pills without water.

LABEL READS: David Jordan. Take as needed for heart arrhythmia.

He closes the bottle slowly...while outside the window a small wind flute, rocks back and forth in the increasing breeze of the thunderstorm.

The ringing louder...

EXT. HILL ABOVE SEGOVIA - DAWN

The ringing continues as Chris touches her ear. It's all she hears as she stands looking at the city laid out below.

Nestled in the valley. The sun is a crimson blade touching each building in turn.

The city looks, for all the world like a land-locked ship -- Alacazar its prow the Cathedral of Santa Maria its mainmast.

EXT. ROADSIDE NEAR SEGOVIA - DAWN

Chris stands by the side of the road, gazing at the city below. Looks around, sees -- wildflowers.

Wild poppies actually. Beautiful red petals. Sparkle with the morning dew.

The little girl is absolutely captivated by them. Picks a handful, smells them as she walks down toward the city.

EXT. CALLE JUAN BRAVO - MORNING

Early. The awnings of the street still rolled. No one about this early.

Pigeons scattered around, rummaging. The pillars of the Church of San Martin behind her.

Chris runs up the cobblestoned street. The sun cutting across the buildings now. People here and there pay her scant notice.

Chris' face as she watches - a mother scolding a child in the street.

We hear what Chris hears - only the muted ringing in her ears. We see the words are mouthed by the woman. Not distinguishable as words - just muted sounds.

Chris touches her ear again, looks around, confused. Walks on...

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Where a group of kids - gypsies - play and roughhouse. This is a tough bunch. Chris watches, fascinated, from the corner.

Now to a boy walking up the street. Carries a loaf of bread. The gypsy children quickly go into a well organized routine.

The Boy comes to the alley, suddenly -- one of the gypsy girls falls in front of him.

Another, just as quickly - pushes the boy over her comrade and "Wham" - he crashes to the cobblestones.

Chris stares wide-eyed.

The gypsy children snatch the loaf, scare the now crying Boy away. The children laugh, start tearing the booty apart. Eating voraciously.

Chris has learned something...

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Chris, asleep, curled up in fetal position in the corner of a doorway on the dirty alley.

A single street lamp casting shadows over the tiny figure as we slowly...

DISSOLVE TO:

TITLE CARD: ONE WEEK LATER

EXT. CALLE DE LOS DESAMPARADOS - MORNING

Chris walks through the narrow confines of the street. Market day. She's dirtier now. Life on the street is showing in her eyes...

A bit harder?

People, kids, vendors...everybody. Moving to and from market in the PLAZA. Chris is captivated by what she sees. And hungry.

All the produce, baked goods staring at her. She slides out of FRAME, as people continue by...

A vendor with loaves of newly baked bread. Now a hand snakes up and over the portable counter - takes a loaf - zip!

Then slowly...a single wild poppy flower is pushed carefully into its place.

Guy never even notices.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Chris runs around the corner holding her precious cargo. Looks around. Safe. No one saw. Something catches her eye.

A coat! Just like her father's. Lying in the gutter.

Chris runs down the street. Reaches out to pick up the coat. Lifts it up very carefully.

It's dirty, stained. But she puts it on as though she's wrapping her father around her.

EXT. CALLE DEL SOCORRO - DAY

A cat. Quick. Small. Dashes out, in front of Chris. She pulls the coat around her, clocks the street: The palace of Alacazar in the distance. Magnificent structure. Beyond that, the ancient Roman aqueduct.

She starts walking...

EXT. CALLE JUAN BRAVO - DAY

Two streets the other way, Plaza Mayor with it bustling traffic and tourists.

The Cathedral of Santa Maria dominating like an aged matriarch. Chris moves on...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Small row apartments. Iron grates on tiny terraces at each level. And above, the oldest rooftop apartments.

She scans the roof. Her eyes light up - an idea.

EXT. BACK OF APARTMENTS - DAY

She is climbing up the back stairs quickly. Disappears in a wink.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

It's great up here. Small alcove with an overhang. On the roof level below - an entrance for the top apartment.

She walks to the alcove, looks around. It'll do. Thinks, as she gazes out toward the Plaza Mayor.

EXT. PLAZA MAYOR - DAY

Chris is walking toward an outdoor cafe. Near the wall, slips down, goes "underground" again.

THE OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Between and under each of the tables in turn.

Waits until the customer leaves, her hand is up and grabs the left-overs before the waiter returns.

This time -- two flowers in their place.

EXT. STREET CORNER MARKET - DAY

A quick, small hand "lifts" a wallet out of a pocket. One of the gypsy children we've seen earlier - a pickpocket.

Chris watches, fascinated. Studies the whole maneuver carefully.

A bustling overweight Tourist never has a clue. The young gypsy hustles back to the alley.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A small tattered blanket is laid out. Now - Wallets, credit cards, jewelry, money - pulled out of pockets, dropped onto the old blanket.

The kids chatter, point, plan. The blanket is quickly rolled up, a boy takes it, runs off.

The others head into the Plaza again.

EXT. PLAZA - DAY

Chris watches them fan out - falls in behind a GIRL about her own age. The Girl moves with practiced quickness. Bumps into an older Woman with a purse. Startles her.

The Girl jostles her "mark" with one hand while...the other hand snakes to the purse, unclasps it, pulls out the wallet.

Chris is amazed at how quickly it happens. The Girl is gone before the Woman realizes anything!

Chris stands there, mouth open. The young eyes a little harder.

EXT. PLAZA MAYOR - LATER

Chris follows a MAN, a tourist. Skinny American, 40's, with a huge camera bag. Full of stuff.

Guy stops at the front of the Cathedral. Fiddles with everything, pulls out 35mm camera. Focuses.

Chris sees her chance. Scoots over, reaches in and pulls out -- a sandwich! Tries again.

The Man is focusing, focusing, "click"...has the picture. Feels something. Spins around, sees Chris holding a sandwich, an electric razor, and a small notebook.

She half-smiles...

He half-smiles back. Can't help it. Then, goes ballistic! Too late. She's gone through the crowd.

EXT. ENTRYWAY TO CATHEDRAL - DAY

Chris holds up, breathless. Her first robbery has made her heart race. Calms, looks inside the Cathedral at a painting of the Virgin Mary and Child. Santa Maria staring straight at her.

Chris swallows hard. Touches her ear. Still ringing. She looks the other way and sees...

People, not many, going into the side entrance of the great cathedral. Something about this captures her attention.

To one side, they are putting money into the "Poor Box." Her eyes widen. Goes in, right behind a matronly woman.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Moving with the flow. Chris aims toward the little wooden box. Gets to it - a LOCK.

A man reaches over her, deposits a couple of pesetas. One of the bills catches on the corner of the drop-slot!

Sliding...sliding... She grabs at the dropping currency, when a HAND stops her -- a young man LUIS. About 14. Handsome, aquiline features.

He shakes his head.

LUIS

No.

Chris looks at him startled.

We see Luis talking, his mouth moving...but we hear what she hears - the muted ringing sound. And it's getting louder.

Chris hisses through clenched teeth. Both anger and fear in her eyes now. Pulls mightily. No avail.

LUIS (CONT'D)

No entiendo?

She points to her ears. The ringing is getting LOUDER. Chris is getting more desperate.