

CHILDREN OF THE CORN

Screenplay

By

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Based on the short story

By

Stephen King

Second revision

8/5/83

FADE IN:

UNDER RELIGIOUS CHOIR MUSIC

EXT. CHURCH LETTERBOARD SIGN - DAY

An old, wooden sign in front of an equally old but sturdy, salt of the earth church with a towering steeple. This is the GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH of Gatlin, Nebraska and the sign proclaims the topic of today's sermon: CORN DROUGHT AND THE LORD

CAMERA PANS

As the choir music continues, picking up the DOORS TO THE CHURCH as they open to allow the CONGREGATION to exit.

ANGLE - A CHILD'S POV

We see only the legs of pants and hems of dresses from this little person's perspective. The parishioners are in their "Sunday" clothes. We don't see the upper bodies or faces. OVER THIS SHOT we hear:

JOB (VO)

I don't remember everything that happened cuz I was only five then and now I'm eight.

ANGLE - THE CHURCH ENTRANCE

An adorable little boy of about five, his hand firmly in the grasp of an adult's hand, is led out of the church. This is JOB, and he is dressed appropriately for worship. He comes up to his father's waist, and this is all we see of the father and the MINISTER in front of whom the father stops for a BEAT. Job stands there looking around while his father apparently talks with the minister. Legs continue to file out past them.

JOB (VO)

I was about the only kid in church that day, on account of all the other kids had been excused to go listen to Isaac, who was this boy preacher who'd come to Gatlin a few days before.

ANGLE - JOB

AN ADULT, also whom we only see from the WAIST DOWN, bangs into Job, who goes flying but doesn't fall because the strong hand of his father hangs on to him and lifts him into the air, setting him back down in place again.

THE HAND of THE MAN WHO BUMPED HIM gives Job a vigorous but apologetic rub across the hair.

JOB (VO)

Sarah was home sick with mom. Dad decided to take me so he could talk about the drought with some of the other men. That's all everybody was talking about then, the drought.

ANGLE

Father finishes his brief conversation with the minister and starts down the steps with Job. It's hard for little Job to keep up with his dad and he's constantly whisked off his feet whenever he lags too far behind.

INT. HANSEN'S COFFEE SHOP - JOB'S POV

The door is pushed open by the unseen hand of his father and Job is led into the coffee shop. Hansen's is a small, comfortable, homey place that caters strictly to the locals. The furnishings are modest but everything is clean and neat. Booths with red vinyl cushioning line the walls and the floor holds eight or ten tables. There are also stools at the Formica counter, behind which MR. and MRS. HANSEN work busily.

ANGLE

The coffee shop is crowded, mostly with ADULTS but also with A HALF DOZEN BOYS between the ages of 15 and 18. The two waitresses, SALLY and MARIE HANSEN, are about 17. They are being kept quite busy.

ANGLE

Four of the boys are crowded around a video MACHINE. They're keeping very much to themselves.

ANGLE

Job's father lifts him onto a stool at the counter and walks towards the PAY PHONE.

JOB (VO)

Dad was worried about Sarah, so he went over to the phone as soon as we got in.

ANGLE

CAMERA FOLLOWS JOB'S FATHER as he walks across the room to the pay phone. We never see him fully, only the fact that he is very average and non-descript.

As he passes the four boys at the machine, one of them looks up and follows him with his eyes. This is WILLIAM RENFREW.

JOB (VO)

There were some other kids there.
I thought they were all in the corn
with Isaac. Billy Renfrew looked at
my dad, then smiled at me kinda
funny.

ANGLE - RENFREW - JOB'S POV

After studying Job's father for a beat, he turns his gaze on Job and smiles in a malignant, leering way.

ANGLE - JOB

He averts his eyes quickly and spins on the stool so he won't have to return the older boy's look.

JOB (VO)

Dad sure was taking a long time.

ANGLE

A STRAWBERRY SHAKE is set down with a loud bang by kindly Mr. Hansen, who smiles at how startled Job is by the noise. Job glances up at him fearfully.

QUICK SHOT- JOB'S FATHER

A concerned look on his face, he continues on the phone.

INT. JOB'S FAMILY HOUSE

SARAH, an angelic blonde haired girl of four years, is tossing and turning in bed. Her face is feverish and flushed.

ANGLE - INCLUDING SARAH

HER MOTHER is visible in another room on the phone, talking with her husband, Job and Sarah's father. Semi-conscious in her fever, Sarah spills a box of CRAYONS and clutches a BLACK one. Without looking, she begins scrawling on a piece of MANILA PAPER.

QUICK SHOT - THE PAPER

What she's drawing is not yet discernible, just a patch of black in the middle of the page.

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Job is sucking with all his might on a straw protruding from the strawberry shake. He glances towards his father. Something catches his eyes and causes him to FREEZE.

EXT. THRU FRONT WINDOW - JOB'S POV - DAY

Thru the window, beyond his father, beyond the boys by the Pac Man machine, stands ISAAC. A gaunt boy of 12, he has a face right out of the Old Testament and eyes that burn like coal. He is dressed in black robes and a wide-brimmed hat. He is staring into - through -the coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP

The straw slips out of Job's mouth. He is frightened to death of the vision before him but he can't take his eyes off of Isaac. Few, if any, of the adults in the room take notice, but the boys by the Pac Man do.

ANGLE - THE BOYS

They turn and scan the room full of adults.

SALLY AND MARIE

Look at the boys conspiratorially.

MARIE

Has four cups of coffee on a tray. She slips a white powder into them from a packet in her hand.

TWO MORE BOYS

Step out of the kitchen. They have "farm instruments" with them - HAY HOOKS and SICKLES.

MR. HANSEN

Looks at the boys, confused by their presence.

JOB

Is now terrified, trembling as he continues to stare at Isaac.

SEVERAL ADULTS

All of whom have been drinking coffee, begin to gag and choke. They lurch forward out of their seats, gasping for breath as they fall.

THE FOUR Boys

All whip out hooks, knives, scythes and other deadly WEAPONS. They block the door.

JOB'S FATHER

looks at the boys in complete bewilderment. For a moment he forgets about the phone.

QUICK SHOT - SARAH

She is scribbling like mad, seemingly unaware of what she's doing or drawing.

ANGLE - THE DRAWING

It is beginning to take shape. A PERSON, a childish stick figure, but unmistakable nonetheless, pointing....

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Mr. Hansen raises his hands in a futile gesture to ward off a sickle that is arching through the air towards him. The point of it buries in his chest and a splatter of blood hits Job.

JOB'S FATHER

tries to pull A BOY off an ELDERLY WOMAN. He grabs the youth from behind but barely gets his hands on him when A HAND HOLDING A SCREWDRIVER plummets INTO FRAME and into his back.

JOB

screams but nothing comes out. It is a scream from the deepest part of his being, and it is silent. Mr. Hansen's blood is still sprayed across his face.

WIDE ANGLE

The interior of the coffee shop has turned into a scene of complete carnage, with all of the adults who are still alive being either cut down or finished off by the Children Of The Corn. Chairs and tables are over-turned, dishes and glasses broken all over the floor, and blood everywhere.

EXT. THE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Isaac, standing fixed in place, is gradually encircled by his devoted followers. CHILDREN, from four to 19, gather around him, instruments of death in their hands all dripping with fresh blood. Like him, they face the coffee shop and wait.

JOB (VO)

That's how Isaac came and taught us
about He Who Walks Behind The Rows.

ANGLE - COFFEE SHOP DOORWAY - ISAAC'S POV

The largest, most muscular, and most murderous of the boys inside the coffee shop emerges, his BUTCHER KNIFE dripping with blood. This is MALACHAI. He remains there, looking down at Isaac.

JOB (VO)

Isaac and Malachai.

INT. JOB'S FAMILY HOUSE - SARAH'S BEDROOM

Sarah is still in bed but is resting quietly now. CAMERA ZOOMS IN SLOWLY to the PICTURE she has completed.

THE PICTURE - CLOSE-UP

It shows stick figure representations of Isaac, surrounded by the other children, facing Malachai. Behind Malachai is a large splotch of bright red where the coffee shop would be. Although the drawing is obviously the work of a child, there is an eerie, primitive quality to it.

JOB (VO)

That's when Sarah started drawing
these pictures.

CAMERA BEGINS TO PAN ACROSS THIS PICTURE OPENING CREDITS ROLL UNDER MUSIC

A SERIES OF PICTURES - UNDER CREDITS

All done by Sarah in the same crayon style as the one we have just seen, they reveal part of the story of Gatlin, Nebraska. Some are captioned.

ANGLE - THE FIRST PICTURE

Shows a cornfield wilted and dry. A MINISTER with gray hair is holding a REVIVAL MEETING in a clearing.

CAMERA PANS TO:

THE NEXT PICTURE

Shows the same Minister from the previous picture being pushed aside and supplanted by the now familiar figure of ISAAC. The caption underneath reads: AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

CAMERA PANS TO:

THE NEXT PICTURE

Shows everyone at the meeting kneeling in prayer to Isaac, who holds his hands aloft triumphantly. The corn all around is large and green and glowing.

CAMERA PANS TO:

THE NEXT PICTURE

The Grace Baptist Church. Hanging from its steeple is the gray haired Minister from the first picture. His eyes bulge horribly, almost comically, and his tongue is sticking out. A caption at the bottom: THOU SHALL WORSHIP NO FALSE IDOLS

CAMERA PANS TO:

THE NEXT PICTURE

A FAMILY, with the parents lying bloodied and dead next to happy, smiling children.

CAMERA PANS TO:

THE LAST PICTURE

That of a HOTEL, a simplistic version in red brick with black windows, and a BLUE THUNDERBIRD prominently parked next to it.

CREDITS END

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - MORNING

ESTABLISHING SHOT. It is red brick, two levels; a real life version of the hotel in Sarah's picture.

ANGLE - PARKING LOT

A BLUE THUNDERBIRD sits quietly in the parking lot.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Morning light filters through the curtains of the room, which is a standard DOUBLE OCCUPANCY. There are a couple of suitcases lying around, some clothes scattered about, and a STEVEN KING PAPERBACK on the night table. BURT STANTON, an attractive young man of 28, is lying in bed fast asleep.

ANGLE

Someone is sneaking through the room towards Burt. We do not see who it is, but there is a sense of danger counter pointed by the peacefulness of the sleeping figure. CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY, STEADILY, TOWARDS BURT.

CLOSE-UP - BURT

As the figure sneaking up on him reaches bedside and stands over him for a beat, then leans down closer and closer and with more danger and...FWWWTTT!!!

VICKY
SURPRISE!!!!!!

ANGLE

Burt jumps up with a start. His girlfriend VICKY BAXTER is a foot away from him shouting and blowing a party-blower in his face. The feathered end of it unfurls and tickles his face. Vicky is about Burt's age, wearing a sexy, flimsy nightgown and a party hat. She throws her arms around her frightened lover.

VICKY
Happy birthday, darling!

She's giggling mischievously over the fright her little surprise has caused him, and assuages any damage done with a seductive kiss. Burt's heart rate begins a slow descent towards normal as Vicky hands him a SHEET OF PAPER, rolled into a scroll and wrapped in tissue with a ribbon around it.

VICKY
Present number one.

Burt laughs self-consciously and takes the paper. He unwraps and unrolls it and looks at what it is.

QUICK SHOT - THE PAPER

It is a TUITION BILL from NORTHWESTERN MEDICAL SCHOOL. It is stamped PAID in big, red letters.

VICKY

Ta da!

ANGLE - TWO SHOT

Burt is as pleased as he is surprised, and he's very surprised.

BURT

But honey, how...I thought your last paycheck....

VICKY

It did. But I had a little nest egg I was saving just for this....

She pulls out another wrapped gift, this one a long, rectangular box.

VICKY

And this....

Burt can't believe the windfall. He opens the box with even more self-conscious delight. He holds up a beautiful WATCH. His jaw drops. Vicky is equally delighted and excited by his reaction.

VICKY

Look on the back.

Burt turns the watch over and looks closely.

THE INSCRIPTION - CLOSE UP - BURT'S POV

FOR BURT STANTON M.D. - My Darling - LOVE VICKY

TWO SHOT

Burt pulls her close and kisses her tenderly.

BURT

Oh Vick....

After the kiss she reaches for a small CASSETTE PLAYER and punches the button. The mischievous smile returns to her face as she straightens up and prepares to serenade him.

BARRY WHITE, singing LOVE DOCTOR, begins to play. Vicky silently mouths the words in a wonderfully ridiculous caricature. Burt starts laughing and Vicky can't keep a straight face. Burt hits her with a pillow affectionately.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR INTERRUPTS THEM.

ANGLE

Vicky makes no move to answer the door. In fact, she looks as if it's completely unexpected. Burt, still in his under shorts, walks over.

BURT

Yes?

BELL GIRL (VO)

Room service.

Burt opens the door a crack and looks.

THE BELL GIRL - BURT'S POV

An exceptionally attractive YOUNG WOMAN is standing outside the door holding a plate with a bran muffin on it. A SINGLE CANDLE, lighted, sticks out of the muffin.

ANGLE

Forgetting he's wearing only his under shorts, Burt opens the door and faces the bell girl. She makes no move to enter but instead starts singing HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

BURT

Is obviously attracted to her, almost to the exclusion of Vicky, who arranged the whole thing. He stares at the young woman, waiting for her to finish.

ANGLE - INCLUDING VICKY

When the bell girl does finish, Burt is beside himself looking for a couple of dollars to give her as a tip. Vicky watches, as he fumbles through his pants pockets, the bell girl not completely oblivious to his attentions.

VICKY

Watches quietly as he hands the woman the tip. There is a hurt, knowing expression on her (Vicky's) face.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Burt and Vicky are on the road in the blue T-bird. The back seat is filled with CLOTHES, SPORTING EQUIPMENT, A COOLER, PAPER BAGS, etc., and empty FAST FOOD CONTAINERS AND WRAPPERS are threatening to overflow from a garbage bag and the ashtray.

BURT
(Contrite)
C'mon, honey. You're making something out of nothing.

VICKY
To me it's something. To you it is nothing.

BURT
How would you like to be standing around in your underwear while some cute guy sang you happy birthday?

VICKY
(Relenting)
I wouldn't mind if it was you. As a matter of fact, it sounds kinda kinky.

She gives him a slightly grin, which he smiles at. The tension evaporates. Burt reaches across the seat and hugs her to him, driving with one hand.

BURT
I know what you're thinking. You put me through med school, I'm on my way out to a good internship position in California, and now maybe I don't need Vicky so much anymore. Right?

Her silence answers affirmative.

BURT
Wrong. I still need Vicky as much as I always have, and I love her very much. Maybe I'm not as ready to settle down as you are, but that doesn't mean I love you any less. Got it?

VICKY
Got it.

He gives her a reassuring hug.

BURT
Good. Welcome to Nebraska.

Vicky looks out the window.

EXT. ROAD SIGN - THEIR POV - DAY

A large official sign welcoming drivers to the state. WELCOME TO NEBRASKA THE CORNHUSKER STATE PLEASE DRIVE SAFELY PAY TOLL ONE MILE

EXT. THE CAR - DAY

It continues past the sign, burrowing into a vast sea of cornfields.

CUT TO:

EXT. GATLIN NEBRASKA - DAY

We have seen glimpses of Gatlin before, but things now - three years later - are far more tranquil and idyllic. It is just a tiny farm community not even on the map, out in the middle of nowhere. Like everything else in this state, it is surrounded by cornfields.

A BARN

stands at the edge of where the cornfield meets the town. Three children are hiding behind it, pressed against the side. They are Job and Sarah, whom we've met, and JOSEPH, who is much older and larger at 14. All three are dressed in black cloth clothes of simple design, not unlike the Amish or Mennonites. Joseph has a suitcase with him and appears extremely nervous, to the point of desperation. As CAMERA MOVES IN SLOWLY, we hear JOB'S CONTINUING VOICE OVER NARRATIVE.

JOB (VO)
We were with Joseph when he ran away. He was pretty scared. I wasn't.

ANGLE - THE THREE KIDS

JOB
(whining, frightened)
I'm scarrrrrrred!

SARAH
Me tooooooo.

JOSEPH

There's nothing to be afraid of. I said I'd come back for you. I promise.

JOB

Can't we go with you? Pleeeeeease?

JOSEPH

No! I'd never make it with you two.

SARAH

But we don't like it here!

JOSEPH

I said you'll be alright.

(beat)

As long as nobody finds them pictures you been drawing.

Sarah averts her eyes and tugs sheepishly at her dress.

JOB

She can't help it.

JOSEPH

That won't matter to Isaac and Malachai. They'll take it as a sign. Anyway, you know crayons and drawings are forbidden... just like having a record player.

JOB

But we like it! Isaac doesn't let us do anything.

JOSEPH

Well you just better mind him 'til I get back, or else you know what happens.

He punctuates his conversation with constant glances towards the town and, more particularly, the corn. Job picks up on this.

JOB

You're not goin' through the corn, are you?

This apparently bodes ill. Joseph swallows hard and looks out over the field.

ANGLE - THE CORNFIELD - JOSEPH'S POV

It is serene, but dense and unyielding. A threat.

ANGLE - THE THREE KIDS

JOSEPH
Can't go no other way.

SARAH
But what about....?

She doesn't finish. She doesn't need to.

JOSEPH
It'll be alright, unless you tell
anybody I'm gone.

JOB
We won't.

JOSEPH
Cross your heart and hope to die,
stick a needle in your eye?

JOB AND SARAH

nod in agreement like two good little soldiers. They cross their hearts with their fingers and then motion as if sticking something in their eyes. It is a children's oath, taken in the way of children - with the utmost solemnity and sincerity.

THREE SHOT

JOSEPH
Okay. You know what that means. If
you tell you're gonna burn on the
lake of fire for all eternity.

Their eyes widen in fear at the prospect. Joseph turns his attention to the cornfield. He's sweating profusely.

JOSEPH
Make sure nobody's looking!

ANGLE

Job and Sarah race to the town side of the barn and look cautiously around. Simultaneously they shout back to Joseph at the tops of their lungs.

JOB AND SARAH

OKAY!!!

ANGLE - JOSEPH

He cringes at the volume and rolls his eyes in disbelief. One deep breath and he's off into the corn.

ANGLE - JOB AND SARAH

They stand there watching disappointedly as their friend makes good his escape. They remain fixed, frightened and silent.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A long, flat, straight, strip of black tape separating a sea of golden-tipped, green corn on either side. There is something alien, remote, about this landscape. A DOT appears in the distance, growing larger.

THE DOT

Becomes the blue Thunderbird, which whips by. CAMERA FOLLOWS IT, picking up a faded WOODEN SIGN by the roadside.

THE SIGN

Reads GATLIN 7 MILES.

INT. CAR

Burt and Vicky are bored and quiet, lost in separate thoughts.

EXT. CHURCH - THEIR POV - DAY

Deserted, dilapidated, a roadside skeleton that hasn't been attended in years.

INT. CAR

BURT

So now we know. The back roads are even less interesting than the highway.

Vicky smiles sympathetically. She reaches for the radio.

VICKY

Maybe they've discovered music...

She flips the knob and a PREACHER'S VOICE fills the car.

PREACHER (VO)
Hallelujah!

BURT AND VICKY
Hallelujah!

PREACHER (VO)
The Lord has said that there are
many mansions in His house. But
there's no room there for the
fornicator!

Burt and Vicky give each other a look. This is a goof.

CONGREGATION (VO)
(loud)
NO ROOM!

PREACHER (VO)
No room for the hommasexshull!

CONGREGATION (VO)
NO ROOM!

PREACHER (VO)
No room for the abortionist, nor
the drug abuser, no room for rock
and roll music!

CONGREGATION (VO)
NO ROOM!

PREACHER (VO)
When are they gonna find out that
the wages of sin are paid in the
hot, hot halls of...

Vicky turns the dial sharply before the preacher can finish.
All she gets is static.

VICKY
Hallelujah, amen, peanut butter,
white bread, and Donnie and Marie.

BURT
No room for the college graduate!
No room for people who watch public
television!

VICKY
No room for commitments.

BURT

Amen!

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Joseph is running scared through the corn. He struggles against the thick, unyielding stalks and is sweating and breathing heavily. He stops every few yards to listen for sounds of pursuit and also to get his orientation.

ANGLE

He stops, changes direction, stops again and looks up at the sun. He is lost and fighting against his panic. The corn begins to RUSTLE ominously. Joseph does an abrupt about face and runs face first into a heavy ear. It thuds against his cheek, raising a welt.

CUT TO:

EXT. THUNDERBIRD - DAY

It continues to run the steady, gauntlet of corn.

ANGLE

CAMERA IS LOOKING OUT FROM the cornfield, as if the plants themselves were watching. The car goes by.

ANGLE - HEAD ON

With the approaching vehicle. It abruptly slows down and pulls over onto the narrow shoulder that separates the asphalt from the corn. There is a claustrophobic sense about proximity of the stalks. Burt's door opens.

INT. CAR/EXT. ROAD - DAY

Burt gets out. Vicky remains inside but the windows are open.

VICKY

What are you doing?

BURT

Corn looks a little dry.

VICKY

Can I watch?

BURT

Better not. It leads to insanity.

He walks up to the wall of corn. It's imposing, and it stops him.

VICKY
That's okay. I'm crazy about you
anyway.

Burt is transfixed by the corn. He doesn't respond, or even turn around.

VICKY
Burt? Is anything wrong?

That snaps him out of it. He looks back at her and smiles.

BURT
No. Be back in a sec.

He starts to go into the field.

ANGLE

The corn rustles ever so slightly in front of him, but there is no breeze. Burt stops like he's just walked into a wall of glass.

BURT
(to Vicky)
Did you see that???

ANGLE - INCLUDING VICKY

She's still in the car, leaning out the window.

VICKY
No. What?

A beat.

BURT
I guess it was nothing.

VICKY
Oh boy! Somebody's been in the car
too long.

BURT
(not convinced)
Yeah. ...

With a hint of apprehension, he submerges into the field. It swallows him instantly.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - ANOTHER-SECTION - DAY

Joseph is utterly terrified. He's moving quickly through the corn, suitcase in hand, like someone who knows he's being followed. He hears what sounds like giggling up in front of him. He runs to the side but is stopped by DELIBERATE and TAUNTING NOISES in that direction. The SOUNDS ARE GLEEFUL and seem to be made by children. Joseph turns again and again, but every-time is stopped. A circle is closing around him. He is trapped, and covered with parts of corn plants.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE THUNDERBIRD - DAY

Vicky gets out of the car and walks towards the corn.

VICKY

Burt? Are you alright?

Nothing.

VICKY

Say something. Anything. I'm all ears.

(beat)

Burt, that was supposed to be funny.

The only answer is a SOFT, RUSTLING SOUND from the impenetrable field. It's almost like a whisper, and it spooks Vicky a little.

ANGLE - BURT

is standing in the corn listening to that rustling. Something touches his shoulder and he whips around. A CORNSTALK is leaning on him. As he shoves it aside, A CORN LEAF pokes his neck. Burt is starting to get agitated. He begins to RUN.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - ANOTHER SECTION - DAY

Joseph is running also, but now with a sense of futility. His direction changes constantly and his terror is even greater than before. He trips over an ear of corn and falls down.

Before he can get up, A HAND ENTERS THE FRAME and grabs him by the shoulder. Joseph utters a squeak of fright, the sound of a bird caught in a hunter's snare.

CUT TO

EXT. CORNFIELD - ANOTHER SECTION - DAY

Burt is still running. The corn seems to be rustling all around him, but that might be from the commotion he's making. He shoves ears and stalks and leaves out of his way frantically. SUDDENLY...

ANGLE

Vicky crashes into him from the blind side. He grabs violently in a reflex reaction.

VICKY

Well, if this is how it affects you, we'll have to come here more often!

Burt stares at her, catching his breath. He continues clutching her shoulders.

BURT

Vicky!

VICKY

You were expecting maybe Jaqueline Bisset?

Burt wraps his arms around her. It is at once a gesture of relief, friendship, protectiveness and sensuality.

VICKY

I knew you were kinky.

BURT

Let's get out of here.

VICKY

Why? Things are starting to get interesting.

(beat)

You alright?

BURT

I just got turned around a little. But let's go.

VICKY
(reluctant)
Okay....

He starts to guide her straight ahead. She pushes him on an angle.

VICKY
That way.

They exit the cornfield.

ANGLE - THE THUNDERBIRD

Burt and Vicky emerge from the cornfield and get into the car. Just before Burt ducks into the driver's side, he give the corn a long, last look.

THE CORN - BURT'S POV

It is silent and still.

ANGLE

Burt gets in and the T-bird drives away.

THE CORN
Begins to rustle quietly.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CLEARING IN THE CORNFIELD - DAY

Joseph is flat on his back, panting and struggling, trying to get away from Malachai, who has pinned him to the ground with a knee and an arm. Others must be holding Joseph by the feet from the way he's stretched out. Corn silk is plastered to his neck and face, glued there by the sweat.

ANGLE

A CIRCLE OF CHILDREN tightens around Joseph. They begin humming in an eerie, atonal way. A HAND grips Joseph's hair and jerks his head back. The boy's eyes widen, a look of sheer terror coming over him. Malachai raises a cornhusker's knife over him. The humming increases in intensity.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Safe within the car, Burt and Vicky have calmed down considerably.

BURT

I don't know what came over me. I never had claustrophobia before.

VICKY

Maybe it was just cornophobia.

BURT

It sure could've been that. I'm even ready to get back on the highway.

VICKY

I think it wasn't too far on the map.

EXT. THUNDERBIRD - DAY

CAMERA TRACKS the car as it slams past us from right to left. It passes another old SIGN.

ANGLE - SIGN

In the shape of an arrow and made of rotting wood. It reads: GATLIN

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Joseph is staggering TOWARDS THE CAMERA, which is PULLING BACK, KEEPING PACE. His eyes are blank and bulging. His hands are up to his throat and blood is flowing through his fingers, bright and sparkling. The front of his shirt is sodden with the red fluid. In effect, he's dead on his feet. He's heading out of the cornfield although he doesn't know it. Behind him we see a trail of twisted, broken corn plants with blood splashed on them. In the far background is Joseph's SUITCASE.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Vicky is fishing through the glove compartment, looking for the map. She has PAPERS, TISSUES, HAND-WIPES, A COMB, THE CAR REGISTRATION, everything in her hand but the map.

VICKY

Here it is.

She extracts it from a STUCKEY'S BAG on the floor. A WAD OF DRIED KETCHUP stains the front.

She begins unfolding it across the dash. She studies Burt with a knowing smile.

VICKY
I wonder how it got in there....?

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Joseph, reeling like a drunk, comes to the edge of the cornfield. He looks inhuman, like a macabre doll.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Vicky and Burt are studying the map, which partially obscures their view through the windshield. Vicky is pointing.

VICKY
You see? This way goes to Grand Island, and this looks like it cuts out towards the highway.

BURT
Where's this "Gatlin" we've been seeing signs for?

VICKY
I don't know. It's not on here.

Burt leans over closer.

BURT
It has to be...

Something causes Vicky to look up.

ANGLE - VICKY

Shock, then horror, registers on her face. She's speechless for a beat.

EXT. ROAD - DAY - VICKY'S POV

Joseph staggers out onto the road, directly into the path of the onrushing car. His hands are still at his throat and his knees are already buckling.

INT. CAR

Vicky barely has time to scream.

VICKY
BURT!!! LOOK OUT!!!

Burt jerks his head up, sees the boy, hits the brakes and goes into a swerve all in one motion.

BURT
JESUS!!!

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Everything happens extremely fast. Amidst the sound of screeching tires and brakes, the T-bird begins to skid. There's a loud THUMP as it strikes Joseph's body, which was crumpling even before impact.

ANGLE

The car continues to skid and we can't see whether it actually runs over the body or just hits it, but we can see that it's in grave danger of overturning.

INT. CAR

Burt is fighting the wheel. The tires are still screeching. Vicky is one long, piercing scream. As the car comes to a shuddering, quivering halt, she is thrown face first into the windshield. Burt, wearing his seatbelt, goes forward and back sharply. There's silence except for the sound of the idling motor.

ANGLE

Burt moves quickly. He rips off his seatbelt and cradles Vicky in his arms, examining the nasty bruise that has already formed on her cheekbone.

BURT
Are you alright??? Can you feel my
hand???

Vicky hasn't really composed herself yet. She's whimpering softly. Burt runs his hand over her face.

BURT
There's a contusion and swelling.
It doesn't feel like anything's
broken.

VICKY
That was an animal, right Burt?
Please tell me it was an animal.

Burt suddenly remembers the boy.

BURT
I've got to go back there. You
stay here and sit quietly. Don't
move.

ANGLE - REAR VIEW MIRROR - BURT'S POV

Burt knows it was no animal he hit. He stares at the heap lying in the road about 100 feet back that is reflected in the mirror. He prays silently for a sign of movement, but there is none.

ANGLE

Burt gathers himself quickly and bolts from the car.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Joseph's body lies face down, turned away from Burt, who kneels beside it. He puts his hand to the boy's neck, feeling for a pulse, and is confused when he withdraws his hand.

ANGLE - BURT'S HAND

It's covered with blood.

ANGLE

Burt turns the body over. It flops boneless, lifelessly, on its back. The eyes are open and we can see very plainly that Joseph's throat has been cut from ear to ear.

ANGLE - TWO SHOT

Burt grimaces and loses his breath for a beat. Then he closes Joseph's eyes - a deeply tender gesture - and makes a momentary calculation. Vicky's voice interrupts.

VICKY
Is he....?

BURT
Oh yeah.

ANGLE

Vicky turns away suddenly and gags. Burt rushes to her.

VICKY
Oh my God....

Burt comforts her and starts leading her back to the car.

BURT

Vick, there's something terribly wrong here. I want you to get in the car and wait for me, and keep the doors locked no matter what.

VICKY

Why? What are you going to do?

BURT

I'll tell you when I get back. Just do what I say.

Vicky is alarmed, both by what he isn't telling her and what he is.

VICKY

No! Where are you going???

They reach the car. Burt opens the door for her.

BURT

I have to get the body. And I want to look at something.

VICKY

What?

BURT

Vicky! Please!

She debates for a beat, then slips into the car. She is terribly shaken and pale.

ANGLE

Burt opens the trunk and rearranges things to make room. He takes out a BLANKET, then turns and looks back at the body, and also takes out a TIRE IRON.

ANGLE - THROUGH THE CORN - MALACHAI'S POV

Although we don't see who it is at first, someone watches as Burt goes back to the body and gently covers it with the blanket.

ANGLE - BURT

Walks over to the mangled portion of the cornfield where Joseph exited. He studies the twisted, broken and blood-covered stalks. All of his senses are alert.

THE CORNFIELD - BURT'S POV

Deep in, he spots Joseph's suitcase.

ANGLE

Burt makes a decision. He checks the car, looks all around, and finally, tentatively, walks into the corn-field.

INT. CAR - VICKY'S POV - INCLUDING VICKY

Vicky is in shock, resting dazedly in the front seat. Her head is back against the headrest and her eyes are closed. She's sobbing softly.

If her eyes were open, she would see Malachai emerge from the corn about 50 feet ahead. She would see him pause, the bloody cornhusker's knife still in his hand, and then approach the car. She doesn't see this, BUT WE DO.

EXT. CORNFIELD - BURT - DAY

He is moving carefully, alertly, through this jungle. He holds the tire iron ready and turns in every direction as he moves forward. The suitcase is just up ahead in a clearing.

INT. CAR/EXT. ROAD - VICKY'S POV - INCLUDING VICKY

Vicky comes out of her stupor and looks through the windshield. She sees Malachai standing in front of the car with his malignant stare. VICKY SCREAMS and lunges for the car horn. She pounds on it, frantically looking behind her for any sign of Burt, then whips around to see that, Malachai is gone.

EXT. CORNFIELD - BURT - DAY

He is kneeling by the suitcase. HE HEARS THE CAR HORN but doesn't respond immediately; perhaps thinking she is just getting impatient. The suitcase is in a clearing. There is much blood here, still fresh. The suitcase is splattered with it. Suddenly, the corn begins to rustle in that weird way again. Burt looks up at the towering stalks. They seem to be closing in on him.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Vicky is unglued. She gets out of the car, near hysteria. She begins to walk back towards the body.

VICKY
Burt? Burt, where are you?

WIDE ANGLE - VICKY'S POV

There is no sign of Burt. No sign of Malachai either. In fact there is no sign of anyone or anything other than that endless, ubiquitous corn and the blanket covered body lying stubbornly in the middle of the road.

ANGLE

Vicky approaches the body. She cups her hands to her mouth and begins to cry. She is unable to take her eyes off of it. She kneels next to it.

VICKY
(to body)
You poor thing. You poor, dear boy.

And suddenly, violently, Joseph lurches up, causing the blanket to fall away from his hideous, blood drenched body and deathly white face. He reaches for Vicky's neck. She screams and jumps back, continuing to scream and back peddle until....

ANGLE

Someone grabs her from behind and she whirls with a start, finding herself face to face with Burt. She aborts another scream when she sees who it is.

BURT
Vicky!

She stares at him, all the trauma beginning to be too much for her. Burt realizes this. He puts down the suitcase and shakes her.

BURT
VICKY!! VICKY!!! Get a hold on yourself!

She flings herself at him. Burt holds her closely.

VICKY
Oh Burt! Where'd you go??? I kneeled down next to...

She suddenly remembers and whips around.

JOSEPH'S BODY - BURT & VICKY'S POV

It remains how and where it has been. The blanket covers it.

TWO SHOT

Vicky looks at Burt again, genuine confusion in her eyes.

VICKY

He sat up. He tried to grab me...

BURT

(gentle, compassionate)

It's alright. Everything's going to be alright. I'm here now.

But the look on his face tells us he isn't quite convinced himself. He hands Vicky the suitcase.

BURT

Take this. Come on, we'll go back to the car. I've got to get the body.

VICKY

Don't go-leave him.

ANGLE

Vicky takes the suitcase. Burt goes to the body, securing the blanket under it. They walk grimly to the car.

ANGLE

Vicky waits while Burt puts the body in the trunk along with the tire iron, which he's had tucked into his belt. Vicky hands him the suitcase in the front seat. He and Vicky get in quickly.

ANGLE

As the t-bird accelerates down the road, dwindling out of sight, Malachai steps out of the cornfield. He stares after the car.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - GATLIN - DAY

Establishing shot. An American Gothic, like many of the houses in Gatlin. CAMERA ZOOMS IN SLOWLY to an open window. We hear Job's VO NARRATION.

JOB (VO)

Me and Sarah were playing. We played lots. Malachai said it was forbidden, but I think it was cuz nobody liked to play with him anyway.

INT. BEDROOM

Job and Sarah are playing MONOPOLY. They're dressed to the hilt in the clothes of some former adult residents. The clothes are far too large and the garnishing far too elaborate, which make them perfect for these two hams. Job is swimming in a suit and tie outfit complete with hat, pipe and a handkerchief in the pocket. He looks absolutely dashing. Sarah is in a glittering gown, also a hat, jewelry and lots of makeup. A small, battery-powered record player is grinding out TONY BENNET'S "I LEFT MY HEART IN SAN FRANCISCO" next to them. On the floor by Sarah is a piece of manila drawing paper and a bunch of crayons. As they play.

JOB

When I grow up I'm gonna have all the money in the world.

SARAH

Me too.

JOB

You can't.

SARAH

Why not?

JOB

Cuz I'm gonna have it.

SARAH

I'll get it first.

JOB

Will not.

SARAH

Will too.

JOB
Oh yeah? How?

Sarah PLACES A HOTEL ON BOARDWALK. Job's face registers shock and dismay, but Sarah is well within her rights, He picks up the dice and counts. A SEVEN will land him on the dreaded Boardwalk. He jiggles the dice and throws them.

ANGLE - THE DICE

A seven.

ANGLE

Sarah giggles deliriously while Job counts off the spaces with his piece, THE COWBOY ON HORSEBACK. He purposely miscounts and places his player on GO. Sarah catches him immediately. She moves the piece back to its rightful place - on Boardwalk.

SARAH
Uh-uh, Job.

JOB
How much is it?

SARAH
Thirteen thousand, hundred dollars.

She puts out her hand for the payoff. Job gives her twenty and some ones. Still, it's painful for him to have to pay anything, least of all to her. He covers this up with a child's ploy: diversion. He grabs the piece on Boardwalk.

JOB
Let's pretend this is Isaac.

ANGLE

He places the piece on the board four spaces from the GO TO JAIL spot and throws the dice.

ANGLE - THE DICE

They total 11.

ANGLE

Job quickly reaches down and changes the numbers so they come out to 4. He and Sarah squeal with delight as Isaac is trudged off to jail.

SARAH

What if he gets a "Get Out Of Jail Free" card?

Job quickly fans through the pile of CHANGE CARDS and extracts all of the GET OUT OF JAIL FREE CARDS. He tosses them over his shoulder.

JOB

What cards?

They're laughing and giggling at this when their fun is abruptly halted by a LOUD BANG.

ANGLE - JOB AND SARAH

They look towards the door at the same time. There is fear in their expressions.

ANGLE - MALACHAI - THEIR POV

Malachai stands there glaring at them, having slammed the butt end of his knife into the doorframe to get their attention.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Aftershock. Burt is driving. Very fast. Vicky is still reeling from the imagined (?) encounter with Joseph. She is becoming hysterical again.

VICKY

...and then he sat up and tried to grab me and I could see...Oh God...it looked like his throat had been cut.

BURT

You must have taken the blanket off and looked at him.

VICKY

I didn't! Why are you insisting that???

BURT

Vicky, you must have. Otherwise how could you know? When I got there the blanket was covering him.

VICKY
How could I know what?

Burt realizes he's given something away, and now he has to tell her what happened. He doesn't know how to say it.

BURT
Uh... Umm... About his throat.

VICKY
What do you mean? What are you saying?

BURT
How could you know that his throat was cut unless you lifted the blanket and looked?

He's beginning to wonder that himself. Could Joseph have risen up the way she described? It's too farfetched for Burt, but it chills him. Vicky is horrified.

VICKY
Then it's true! He did...

BURT
Don't do it, Vicky. Don't even think it. You've had a traumatic experience. You're in shock. Now you've got to get a grip on yourself.

VICKY
(ignoring him)
But how could getting hit by a car...?

BURT
It didn't.

He looks at her grimly, allowing her to figure out for herself just how the boy died.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE

It is very dark. Light filters in only through partially drawn curtains. The furnishings are sparse, austere, but of good quality. There are religious artifacts all about, most of a conspicuously pagan nature; knives, scythes, symbols hewn from corn plants, crosses; and in the middle of all this sits Isaac.

He is less frightening now in this quietude, almost scholarly. He is writing something by the light of a single shaft of sun that penetrates the room. One gets the feeling Isaac is a holy man.

ANGLE

Malachai enters with Job and Sarah, still dressed in their comical outfits. Isaac's and Malachai's clothes are in stark contrast - the simple, black cloth we've seen before. Malachai salutes his leader with a touch of the knife to his forehead. It is a pagan, barbarian gesture.

MALACHAI

I found these two in one of the old houses. They had a game, and music, and this....

He hands THE SHEET OF MANILA PAPER that was next to Sarah over to Isaac.

ANGLE - THE DRAWING - ISAAC'S POV

Not a bad likeness of the thunderbird. Burt and Vicky, unmistakable, are standing next to it.

ANGLE

Isaac stares at the picture for what seems like a long time. Meditatively. Reflecting.

ISAAC

They came already.

He looks at Sarah with a hint of warmth.

ISAAC

You have the gift of sight, child.
This is a blessing.

Sarah doesn't reply. She and Job are scared out of their wits.

MALACHAI

I have seen this car upon the road.

ISAAC

Go to the old man. Make sure he tells them nothing.

MALACHAI

What about these two?

Sarah and Job stand absolutely rigid at attention. Maybe if they don't catch anybody's eyes their worst fears won't be fulfilled. Isaac decides their fate.

ISAAC
(calmly)
Take them back where they were.

MALACHAI
But they had music! And a game!
These things are forbidden!

ISAAC
Question me not, Malachai. I act
according to his will.

Malachai withers under the reproach. He bows his head reverently, touches the deadly blade to it, and then turns on Job and Sarah with that killing gaze.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Burt and Vicky are trying to make some sense of it all. Joseph's suitcase is on the seat between them.

VICKY
But why? Why would anybody do that
to a...a kid?

BURT
He wasn't that young. About 18 I'd
say.

VICKY
Could it have been an accident?
Some kind of farm machine, maybe?

BURT
Not a wound like that. His throat
was cut ear to ear. That was
deliberate. He was already dead
when I...when he stumbled into the
road.

VICKY
Whoever killed him...do you think
he saw us?

Burt doesn't answer.

VICKY

I felt like we were being watched.

BURT

Possibly. Blood starts to coagulate in four minutes, and the blood on the corn, even on the suitcase, was still fresh by the time I got to it.

VICKY

Then the murderer might have been in there when you...Didn't you realize???

BURT

I couldn't leave it there. Besides, I thought it might hold some clue.

VICKY

Let's open it.

BURT

No. Let's just get to a phone. Or a house. Or something for God's sakes. Even a trucker with a CB.

VICKY

Funny how we haven't seen another car or truck.

BURT

We should be hitting this place Gatlin pretty soon.

VICKY

I wonder if he lived there.

BURT

We may never know.

VICKY

I'd like to know. I think we have a right to know. In fact, maybe we ought to.

Burt looks down at the suitcase.

BURT

I guess it won't hurt to look.

Vicky immediately turns it around so that the locks are facing her. She reacts to all the blood.

VICKY
Yech

Burt reaches for the radio.

BURT
Maybe we can get some news.

He hits the button just as Vicky gets the latches unlatched and starts to open the suitcase. Suddenly:

RADIO PREACHER (VO)
ATONEMENT!!!

Burt and Vicky both jump. The lid of the suitcase drops shut.

RADIO PREACHER (VO)
Only by the blood of the lamb are
we saved I Only by His watchful eye
are we kept from the sins of the
world!

Burt turns the radio off with a punch. He shouts to the air.

BURT
I have enough of this shit.

VICKY
(echoing)
And does it get into the corn?

EXT. THE ROAD - DAY

The car. The corn, and another sign.

ANGLE - SIGN GATLIN 3 MILES

INT. CAR

Vicky fishes through the suitcase, reaching underneath the top layer of CLOTHES. She finds something, and recoils in fright.

VICKY
Oh my God!

BURT
What is it?

She extracts and holds up for him to see A CORNCOB CRUCIFIX. THE CHRIST FIGURE is done in raised relief, the kernels around it having been picked out. The cob has been cut in half lengthwise and notched at the top into a cross. It's a monstrous corruption.

BURT
Jesus!

VICKY
Not in my book.

BURT
That's an authentic American
Primitive.

VICKY
I think it's repulsive.

Burt's eye catches something up ahead.

BURT
Hallelujah.

EXT. GAS STATION - BURT'S POV - DAY

A VERY OLD MOBIL STATION, attested by the fact that the sign out front bears the ancient RED PEGASUS LOGO and accompanying FLYING A. There are two ANTIQUATED PUMPS on the island and a THIRD PUMP near the station house for DIESEL.

ANGLE

The t-bird turns into the station just in front of where the main road veers off to the right and a SECONDARY ROAD juts off to the left. The secondary road is rutted and only two lanes so that cars going opposite ways would have to creep past each other.

INT. CAR

Burt drives over to where CHESTER DIEHL is working on a 63 CHEVY PICK-UP.

BURT
(the crucifix)
Better put that away. No need to
involve this guy.

Vicky nods gravely in agreement. Burt touches her cheek gently.

BURT
Everything'll be alright.

The look in her eyes wants to believe him, and almost does.
Burt exits the car.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Chester withdraws from the bowels of the pick-up. He's in his late 60's, slow-moving and looks like an old prospector. His bib overalls are stained with grease and his eyes are magnified tremendously by his thick glasses. He walks towards Burt. So does SARGE, an old HOUND DOG who barks a friendly greeting and jumps up on Burt. The dog's tail is wagging.

DIEHL
At ease, Sarge. Maybe he don't want
no beer.

ANGLE

Sarge's collar has a cold can of OLD MILWAUKEE BEER attached to it where a Saint Bernard would have a keg. The dog backs off at Diehl's command. Burt pets him.

BURT
Next time, Sarge...
(to Diehl)
What I really need is...

DIEHL
(interrupting)
Don't got no gas.

BURT
Oh. No, I...

DIEHL
Don't got no diesel neither. Tanks
are dry. Expectin' the truck any
day now.

BURT
That's alright. I just wanted to...

DIEHL
Don't buy no gas, can't use the
restrooms.

BURT
Telephone! I just want to use the
phone I...

Diehl starts to reply but Burt knows what's coming and beats him to it.

BURT
Don't got no phone.

ANGLE

Burt looks to Vicky. Burt sighs heavily. Diehl takes a closer look at the stranger. Diehl squeals at Burt.

ANGLE - BURT - DIEHL'S POV

He sees the flecks of dried blood on Burt's hands and clothes.

ANGLE - THE CORN

Cornfields surround the gas station. The stalks begin to rustle and sway, as if a wind or force were in them. This force is threatening and immensely powerful.

ANGLE - GAS STATION

Sarge picks up on this "presence." His ears prick up and he growls deeply. This signals a change in Chester Diehl. He studies the dog for a moment, then seems to be anxious about something although Burt can't quite figure out what. Maybe it's just that he starts to move faster. He gives Burt a cover-up smile.

DIEHL
Sarge, you be still now. In fact,
why don't you go give that nice
lady a Coke.

Reluctant and whining, Sarge trots back towards the station house. Diehl turns his attention to Burt. He points to the fork in the road.

DIEHL
What you wanna do is go to
Hemingford, Mister. About 19 miles
down the right fork here. Can't
miss it.

BURT
What about Gatlin?

DIEHL
Ain't nothin' in Gatlin...
(mutters)
Nothin' for you.
(MORE)

DIEHL(cont'd)

(normal)

You'll find everything you need in
Hemingford.

INT. CAR

Vicky is watching the men. Sarge POPS UP by her window, scaring the breath out of her. He is slobbering over a can of COKE that he holds in his mouth. He drops it in her lap. She pats him on the head.

VICKY

Thanks, fella.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Whatever the hell is moving the corn around like that seems to be getting closer to the station. The sky seems to darken and an eerie wind picks up.

ANGLE - FAVORING SARGE

He still has his paws up on the car but is sniffing the air wildly. He barks loudly, again giving Vicky a bit of a fright, and clambers out towards the corn-field.

ANGLE - BURT & DIEHL

Diehl is definitely worried about something, and not only Sarge, on whom he's keeping a close watch.

DIEHL

Sarge, You stay right here!

BURT

What do you mean 'nothing for you
in Gatlin?

DIEHL

Well, folks in Gatlin got religion.
They don't cotton to outsiders and
you probably won't find a phone.

He looks around Burt towards Sarge, who is whining and sniffing at the edge of the cornfield. Burt turns also.

ANGLE - BURT & DIEHL' S POV

The corn in front of Sarge is waving vigorously in the
"wind."

TWO SHOT

DIEHL

Mister, I'd sure like to stay here and shoot the breeze with ya, talk about politics and farm futures, but right now I got work to do. You get on that right fork over there and you'll be in Hemingford in no time.

(sudden, vehement)

Sarge! I said AT EASE!

BURT

(sarcastic)

Well thanks a lot. You've been a real help.

Diehl watches as he gets back into the t-bird.

ANGLE

Diehl is standing in front of the car, torn between apologizing to Burt and wanting to get back to Sarge.

DIEHL

Hey, you got a busted headlight, Mister. Looks like some blood on it.

Burt leans out the window. Diehl is increasingly nervous.

DIEHL

You have some kinda oxidant or somethin'?

BURT

Why? You have time to fix it for me?

He's letting the old man know that he knows something is wrong here.

DIEHL

No, but you can get it fixed.

BURT

In Hemingford.

Diehl nods affirmative with smile, then looks for Sarge. What he sees alarms him. He goes running towards the dog.

DIEHL

Sarge!

INT. THE CAR

Burt pulls out of the station just a bit too fast. Something about Diehl has agitated him.

BURT

Either that guy was terrified of something, or he's been out in the sun too long.

EXT. THE CAR - DAY

The t-bird drives up to the fork in the road, pauses momentarily, then takes the right fork towards Heming-ford.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Sarge, barking feverishly, runs into the cornfield. Diehl arrives at the edge of the corn just a moment too late. He dares not follow even his beloved dog.

DIEHL

(angst)

Sarge! Sarge....

EXT. THE CAR - DAY

It whips past a sign for GATLIN - 2 MILES.

INT. CAR

Vicky has begun taking things out of the suitcase and folding them neatly on the seat.

VICKY

There's nothing much in here. Just kid's stuff. Clothes, a compass, a pocket knife, matches and an apple.

BURT

Smart kid. He must've figured he might have to sleep out a night or two.

Vicky holds up a COLLEGE T-SHIRT with the NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS and number 19 emblazoned on front. The thought of it makes her start crying again.

VICKY

Oh, Burt...Look, maybe he was hoping to go to the university...

BURT

Might have been...

VICKY

Why...Why?

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The t-bird screeches to a halt as it COMES INTO FRAME. It BACKS UP TOWARDS THE CAMERA. From this angle, we can see a WHITE SIGNPOST with GATLIN ROAD marked in BLACK LETTERS. It stands at the corner of A TINY, ONE LANE ROAD that is not easily seen.

INT. THUNDERBIRD

Burt and Vicky consider the road through the windshield.

BURT

This has to go to Gatlin. Every sign we've seen has been for Gatlin and none for Hemingford. We can't be more than a mile away.

VICKY

What about what the gas station guy said?

BURT

That crazy old coot. I can't believe there isn't a public phone in an entire town, I don't care how small it is.

VICKY

Well, let's just do whatever's fastest.

Burt drives forward and turns left onto Gatlin Road. It's EXTREMELY NARROW, even more claustrophobic than the one they were just on.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Chester is still calling to Sarge, but, there's neither sight nor sound of the dog. Diehl's call has become a lament.

DIEHL

Ah, Sarge...Why'd ya hafta go after
'em...

The only reply is the rustling of the corn.

ANGLE - FAVORING PICK-UP TRUCK

THE HAND OF A CHILD pulls a cross-shaped lug wrench out of the back of the truck Diehl was working on when Burt and Vicky first drove up. The hand clangs the wrench against the side of the truck.

ANGLE - FAVORING DIEHL

He whips around, knowing he's heard something, but not seeing any sign of what it was. He looks back to the corn, as if to call Sarge one last time, but is too bothered by the noise he's just heard. Instead, he takes a few tentative steps towards the pick-up.

DIEHL

(fearful)

Izzat you...Izzat you? What da -
What are you doin' in there?

The answer he gets is ANOTHER NOISE, this time coming from his office. He turns and faces that way, craning his neck to see. His breath is quick. In a word, he's terrified. He takes a few steps towards the office.

ANGLE

The corn all around the station is beginning to rustle even more furiously than it had been.

ANGLE - DIEHL

He approaches the office. Another few feet to go.

ANGLE - THE CORN

Still moving, weird and ominous.

ANGLE- DIEHL

Chester reaches for the office door. His hand is shaking. Just as it swings open we....

CUT TO:

INT. CAR/EXT. FIELD - BURT & VICKY'S POV - DAY

The car comes to the top of a rise and Burt and Vicky are treated to a panorama of...MORE CORN. Burt puts on the brakes.

BURT
Something's wrong. That last sign
said Gatlin was one mile.

VICKY
That sign was damaged in the last
ice age.

BURT
It's got to be around here some-
where.

VICKY
(spooked)
Why don't we just go back and take
the road to Hemingford?

BURT
Because it's silly to go nineteen
miles when you only need to go one.
It's worse than silly. It's
suspicious.

VICKY
When you have a body in the
trunk....

BURT
And a broken headlight with blood
on it.

He proceeds on. 50 yards ahead is another left turn.

BURT
Okay, let's try this one.

He turns onto yet a smaller road. They are going deeper and deeper into the corn.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - GAS STATION

Chester Diehl breathes a sigh of relief. He's standing inside the door to his office and mercifully, he's alone. There's nothing but the usual mess.

DIEHL
 Musta been the wind.

And just as he says this there's a loud CRASH!

DIEHL
 Oh Lordy! Please be the wind!

He exits the office, again taking those short, frightened, tentative steps.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

He walks over to the pick-up. He's whimpering softly, talking to himself, trying to keep his nerve.

DIEHL
 'Course it's the wind. Them hood
 latches ain't worth a damn. Blow
 over in a bad fart...

ANGLE

He reaches the truck and starts fighting the hood, which is stuck. Suddenly, the HUMMING we have heard before - pagan, atonal and eerie - breaks the silence. Chester jerks around but sees nothing. HE WALKS TOWARDS THE CAMERA.

DIEHL
 Who is it? Who's there? I didn't
 tell them anything! I swear it! I
 kept our bargain, just like
 always!!

But the humming has stopped and no one appears. Diehl waits. Nothing happens. By and by, he figures maybe this too was the wind. Now he goes back to the truck.

ANGLE

He lifts the hood with a mighty heave. As it opens, it reveals something that makes Chester Diehl scream.

ANGLE - THE ENGINE - DIEHL'S POV

Sarge's head, cut off at a bloody stump of a neck, is resting squarely on the engine. The eyes have rolled backwards and up and the beer can from his neck ring has been stuffed in his mouth, giving the decapitated beast a comically macabre look. There's blood all over the engine.

ANGLE

It takes Chester a moment to stop screaming. The shock has caused him to stumble back, away from the truck. After a few steps, he staggers around in circles, looking on every side for danger. He continues to move back until he comes to the garage bay door.

ANGLE

He's standing next to the door, looking around wildly, when he spots a long handled WRENCH. He picks it up protectively and waits. Nothing happens for a beat. Then, the bay door clatters up behind him and Chester whirls around, the wrench raised over his head. He stares into the darkness.

DIEHL

You bastards I You killed my Sarge!
I'll get you for what you done to
him!

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The t-bird bounces along the tiny road. The corn seems to be moving in on it; two giant, green walls about to crush a darting insect.

INT. CAR

Both Burt and Vicky are nervous now, spooked and disoriented. Both speak with a frantic edge in their voices.

VICKY

This isn't the way! I'm telling
you!

BURT

It's got to be! We made a left and
a left!

They drive on further. Burt is intense, speaking to calm himself as well as Vicky.

BURT

These roads are straight. No
curves. If anything, this one has
to let us out by the station.

Vicky doesn't answer.

ANGLE

They come to a wall of corn where the road ends in a perpendicular T. Burt squeals the brakes and he and Vicky hear things toppling in the trunk.

VICKY
What was that?

BURT
It was just my golf bag.

VICKY
Are you sure?

BURT
What do you mean 'Am I sure?' Of course I'm sure!

VICKY
I mean about the boy. Are you sure he was dead?

BURT
Vicky!

He looks at the road in front, then behind them, trying to gauge their direction. He decides to go left again.

EXT. THE CAR - DAY

We can tell from the way the tires screech that Burt is a man who is quickly losing control. The car fish-tails into the turn.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE BAY

A battle is going on, more like a kill with a pack of wild animals taunting their surrounded prey before they move in. The garage bay is fairly large, strewn with old tires, boxes, oil cans, rags, hoses and various other instruments and acquisitions of the trade. In the center shiny red 1960 MERCURY SEDAN sits over the single LIFT.

ANGLE

Chester Diehl is the surrounded animal and he isn't going down without a fight.

He is flailing wildly with 'his long handled wrench, trying to hit the black clad children who dart in and out of his reach. They are all armed with farm tools. They are led by Malachai. Diehl focuses on him.

DIEHL

You murderin' little devil. I done everything you said. I never told anyone. Not once in three years.

He swings the wrench clumsily. Malachai steps sprightly out of the way. He can kill Diehl any time he wants.

DIEHL

(contemptuous)

Call yourself the Lord's Children.

MALACHAI

We do his bidding, from shine to shadow.

DIEHL

The devil's!

MALACHAI

He Who Walks Behind The Rows!

Diehl swings again, this time causing himself to trip and stumble forward. Malachai kicks him backwards into a GROUP of his accomplices. They begin to beat and hack at the old man. He scatters them with the wrench.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The t-bird is chewing up road, barreling along at close to sixty. We get a sense from this shot of desperation, as if the vehicle itself were frightened. It rips over bumps, turns and dips.

ANGLE - THE CAR

It is strewn with corn silk and leaves, which cling despite the air drag.

INT. CAR

Burt and Vicky are silent. They come to another T. Burt hits the brakes, suddenly coming to the realization that the corn is his adversary.

VICKY
 (losing it)
 Oh God! We're never going to get
 out of here!

BURT
 Stop it, Vicky! We will too!

VICKY
 Then tell me where we are!

He answers with another left turn.

BURT
 Right back where we started.

ANGLE

They've turned onto a bigger road, one that looks vaguely familiar.

VICKY
 I think you're right! This looks
 like the first one we were on.

BURT
 I told you.

They continue along, picking up speed.

EXT. THE CAR - HEAD ON SHOT - DAY

The t-bird comes hurtling TOWARDS THE CAMERA. As it fills the frame, it slows to a halt. Burt and Vicky sit motionless, staring in disbelief at something that is BEHIND THE CAMERA.

ANGLE

The car doors open on both sides. Burt and Vicky get out and move towards something OFF SCREEN. Their expressions show bewilderment and revulsion.

ANGLE - THE CORNFIELD - BURT & VICKY'S POV - DAY

In front of the car, we see the SWERVE MARKS where the car tried to avoid Joseph. This is definitely the spot, The corn, from where he was murdered out to the road, is now an oozing, blackened version of its former self. Where it was green and strong (and bloody), it is now rotting and wilted. It has not been burned. Rather, it has become diseased and decayed in this short period of time. This area has become a cancer on the other-wise healthy, green landscape.

BURT AND VICKY

stare at it, comprehending only on a subliminal level. Vicky is cringing, beyond words. Burt steps forward. He looks at Vicky.

ANGLE - VICKY - BURT'S POV

Her eyes have the look of a crippled gazelle that knows it's being pursued by lions. She has somehow read her own death sentence in this.

TWO SHOT

Burt walks over to her. He has found a reservoir of strength in all this horror. He rejects Vicky's obvious fatalism.

BURT

We're going back to that gas station. I want some answers, and I think that old man has them. We're driving in circles. Let's go back.

Vicky gazes at him blankly; a frightened, hopeless look about her.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The car pulls into the station. A quiet kind of danger pervades the place.

ANGLE

Burt gets out of the car resolutely but stays near it for safety. He scans all around. There's no sign of Chester, Sarge, or anyone else.

BURT

Hey! Old Timer!

Nothing. He reaches in through the window and hits the horn.

BURT

I want to speak to you!

Still no reply, unless the very loud silence counts.

BURT

(to Vicky)

He's got to be around here somewhere.

ANGLE

Burt walks over to the pick-up. He looks inside the cab, then notices the hood is ajar, mostly down but with six inches of gap. Reflexively, he goes to lift it but before he does...

ANGLE

Vicky gets out of the car and calls to him.

VICKY

Maybe he's inside, in the bathroom or something.

ANGLE

Burt forgets the hood (and under it, Sarge's head) and walks around the side of the station to the door marked MEN. He knocks on it.

BURT

Hello? Anybody in there?

Nothing. He tries the handle but it's locked. He walks back towards the front office. Vicky meets him.

BURT

How about you wait in the car.

VICKY

Not on your life.

BURT

Alright. But stay behind me. And keep your eyes open.

They head for the office, Burt leading the way.

INT. OFFICE

Burt and Vicky enter the office. It is exactly as it was when we saw Diehl in p.t except for one, glaring incongruity. THERE IS CORN EVERYWHERE. Ears, leaves, stalks and silk} piled on the desk, stuffed in the water cooler, heaped in the garbage pail, etc. It is macabre, eerie. Vicky gasps; Burt tightens.

ANGLE

Burt puts his face up to the glass window on the door that separates the office from the garage bay.

The bay is dark inside, and Burt had to wipe the dirt off the window to see what little he can do.

INT. GARAGE BAY - OFFICE DOOR - CAMERA'S POV

The door between the bay and the office opens and, after a brief hesitation, Burt and Vicky enter the dim room. It is illuminated from light coming from the outside and the office, but shadows fall everywhere.

ANGLE

Burt AND Vicky enter cautiously, making as little noise as possible. They look around. The place is a mess, having been torn apart during Diehl's struggle with the Children. Only THE MERCURY remains untouched, an island of stability amidst the destruction. Burt and Vicky move towards it.

ANGLE

Vicky's elbow hits a HUBCAP on a WORKBENCH. It falls to the floor with a loud CLATTER! She and Burt jump simultaneously, stifling their alarm the instant they realize what it is.

ANGLE

They reach the Mercury. Burt peers inside.

INT. MERCURY - BURT'S POV

Nothing. A nice red interior, an empty pack of Camels and a loaded ashtray, but no bodies, bogeymen or Chester Diehl.

ANGLE

Vicky taps him on the shoulder. She points to a corn leaf protruding on a funny angle from the underneath the car. Burt kneels down and looks under the car. It is piled with corn, which he tries to pull out but can't.

ANGLE

Burt gets up the dust off his pants. Vicky looks at him quizzically. He doesn't say anything, instead goes over to the LIFT CONTROL and pushes down the lever.

ANGLE

The Merc begins to float upwards as the hydraulic machine hums.

ANGLE - THE PIT

The rising lift reveals THE BODY OF CHESTER DIEHL, bludgeoned and bloody, lying dead in the pit. His body is festooned with corn plants and his arm, which is bent grotesquely away at an unnatural angle, holds aloft a hand that clutches another of the CORNCOB CRUCIFIXES. Vicky screams. Burt swoons.

JOB'S VOICE OVER NARRATION COMPLETES THIS SCENE

JOB (VO)

I think his name was Mr. Diehl, but once I heard Malachai say it was Judas.

CRASH CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROAD - FAVORING SCREECHING TIRES - DAY

The tries belong to the thunderbird, and it is getting as far and as fast away from that gas station as is possible. The rubber cries out for traction as the rpm's exceed their ability to grip the asphalt. As a result, they protest with blue smoke.

ANGLE

The car starts to follow the right fork again but suddenly jumps the triangular dirt divider and shoots onto the rutted, secondary road. Towards Gatlin.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CLEARING IN THE CORN - DAY

The arm of someone living is holding up a corncob crucifix. CAMERA PULLS BACK and WE FIND OURSELVES at another religious gathering. There are about 50 BOYS AND GIRLS between the ages of 8 and 18, along with SEVERAL NEWBORN INFANTS. Everyone is dressed in black or gray except Isaac, who is the one holding aloft the crucifix. The group is humming that bizarre chant we've now come to associate with them.

ANGLE

Isaac is facing the others, about to lead a sermon. Behind him is the wooden base of what we will later see is a LARGE CRUCIFIX. Isaac lowers his hand abruptly and the humming cuts off.

ISAAC

Behold! A dream did come to me in
the night and the Lord did shew all
this to met

GROUP

Praise God. Praise the Lord.

ISAAC

A time of tribulation has come. A
test is at hand. The Final Test.

MALACHAI

What has the Lord commanded.

ANGLE

Isaac turns and looks up at the crucifix that towers behind him. CAMERA PANS UP, following his gaze, and we see the decaying body of a CRUCIFIED MAN on it. A few tattered BLUE RAGS of clothing hang off of it, and on the skeletal head is a BLUE POLICE CHIEF hat. Most of the skin has been picked clean by crows, but the eyes are left, bulging and sightless. The body has been festooned with dried corn leaves and corn husks are piled around its feet like an offering.

ISAAC

In the dream, the Lord did come to me, and He was a shape. It was He Who Walks Behind the Rows, and I did fall on my knees in terror and hide my eyes lest the fierceness of His face strike me dead. And He told me all that has since happened. He said, 'Joseph has taken his things and fled this happy place because the worship of me is no more upon him. So take you his life, and spill his blood, but let not his flesh pollute the corn. Cast him instead upon the road.'

GROUP

Yea, and so it was done. Joseph the Unbeliever was cast upon the road

ANGLE

CAMERA PANS THE FACES of the group as they speak. They are robots. Unquestioning. Fundamentalist. Future Moral Majoritarians. They listen raptly to their Ayatollah.

ISAAC

And He Who Walks Behind The Rows
did say, 'I will send outlanders
amongst you, a man and a woman, and
these outlanders will be un-
believers and profaners of the
Holy, and the man shall sorely test
you, for he has great power, even
greater than The Blue Man.

CAMERA PICKS UP The Blue Man on the crucifix, with its
grotesquely jaunty cap. All eyes have turned to it. CAMERA
ZOOMS IN to its face as the ceremony continues.

GROUP (VO)

The Blue Man. . .Yes. . .The Blue
Man.

ISAAC (VO)

And we shall not fail Him, for He
is the true God, the only God, and
His message has been planted within
us as the corn seed is put into the
ground.

(rising)

Make sacrifice unto Him. Bring Him
the blood of the Unbelievers 1

Malachai jumps to his feet and shouts in a killing fervor.

MALACHAI (VO)

Make sacrifice!

The group, stirred by this, rises to its feet also.

GROUP (VO)

Make sacrifice! Yes!

They start their chanting again.

The CAMERA is by now on a CLOSE-UP of The Blue Man's face.
It FILLS THE SCREEN, those bulging eyes staring out at us.
The humming grows in intensity.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PORCH - GATLIN - DAY

Job and Sarah are sitting on the dusty porch of the house
where we first saw them (inside). They're still dressed in
their costumes. They look like caricatures of two
anachronistic, broken down aristocrats.

SARAH
Now what do we do?

JOB
I wanna get out of here.

SARAH
How?

JOB
Like Joseph.

SARAH
No.

JOB
Why not? If he can do it, so can
we.

Sarah leafs through a pile of manila paper she has next to her. She extracts one and hands it to Job.

ANGLE - THE DRAWING - JOB'S POV

It shows us, in Sarah's innocent style, what we DID NOT see happening to Joseph - Malachai (in stick figure) pulling an oversized knife across the helpless boy's throat. A number of other children watch gleefully. There is blood everywhere, spewing out into the corn.

ANGLE - TWO SHOT

Job starts to whimper.

JOB
I don't like Malachai. I want my
mommy and daddy!

SARAH
They're gone, Jobie. They're in
the corn.

JOB
It's not fair! I wish Isaac never
came here!

SARAH
(resigned)
He's always been here. Just like He
Who Walks Behind The Rows.

They sit there on the edge of the porch, legs dangling over the side, Job pouting and Sarah contemplating.

CUT TO:

EXT. A ROAD SIGN - DAY

Another old and weather-beaten sign. It reads: YOU ARE NOW ENTERING GATLIN, NICEST LITTLE TOWN IN NEBRASKA POPULATION 968.

ANGLE

CAMERA PULLS BACK to show the highway and the corn. The t-bird ENTERS THE FRAME and we follow it down the road. We see A BARN rising above the edge of the corn-field in the near distance. Written on it in large, white letters is the legend: ONLY JESUS SAVES

INT. CAR

Vicky is leaning against the door staring out the window. She looks haggard and beaten.

BURT

We should've come this way the first time.

VICKY

Would it have saved that old man?

Burt looks at her, surprised by the question and concerned by the tone.

BURT

I don't know. Hopefully the police will be able to figure that out.

They drove for a moment. Vicky begins to giggle. Burt looks at her with even more concern. The giggle is a stream that turns into a river. She presses her hand to her mouth, trying to suppress a hysterical laughter, a laughter of catharsis and relief.

BURT

What are you laughing at?

VICKY

Did you see those signs? The ones on the side of the road?

Gales of laughter now.

VICKY

There! There are some more. Slow
down.

EXT. THE SIGNS - BURT & VICKY'S POV - DAY

They border the right side of the road. There's a single
word stenciled on each wooden "board. The entire set reads:
A/CLOUD/BY/DAY/A/PILLAR/OF/FIRE/BY/NIGHT

INT. THUNDERBIRD

Vicky's laughter is subsiding, but slowly. She's had a much
needed belly laugh. Burt doesn't really think it's funny, but
he's glad Vicky does.

VICKY

(wiping tears)
They only forgot one thing.

BURT

What's that?

VICKY

"Burma Shave."

BURT

Honey, are you sure you're alright?

She finally stops laughing, but dabs her eyes with a tissue.

VICKY

I will be. Just as soon as we're a
thousand miles from here in sunny,
sinful California with the Rocky
Mountains between us and all this.

(beat)

Look, here are some more.

EXT. THE SIGNS - DAY

AND/HIS/NAME/SHALL/BE/IN/THEIR/FOREHEADS

ANGLE - THE CAR

Breasting a hill. Gatlin appears in the distance.

INT. CAR

As Vicky and Burt get their first glimpse of the town.

BURT

Looks like a swingin' place.

EXT. GIATLIN - BURT & VICKY'S POV - DAY

We get our first full glimpse of the town. It's in a dip at the bottom of a hill. There's ONE MAIN STREET, a few cross streets, A PARK in the center and a few dusty elms. Just a sleepy little town dozing in the summer sun.

INT. THUNDERBIRD

Burt and Vicky are checking out the town. There's a quiet, tense apprehension about it that they share.

VICKY
Looks like The Twilight Zone.

EXT. THE TOWN - INCLUDING T-BIRD - DAY

The car is cruising at a moderate speed. It passes a few residential side streets. The houses are American Gothic - wooden, white paint, porches - but nothing moves. So it seems. There are no cars, trucks, bicycles, people; no kids playing stickball or retired farmers smoking corncob pipes on their porches.

ANGLE - A HOUSE

What Burt and Vicky don't see, however, are eyes that are upon them. A FACE, watching from an attic window, disappears behind a lace curtain.

ANGLE

The car now passes a BRICK BUILDING. This sign on the yellowed, patchy, front door reads: PUBLIC LIBRARY. With luck it contains 500 books. TWO BOYS rise slowly from a crouched position by the side of it. They watch the passing t-bird intently.

INT. FEED & SUPPLY STORE

It is old, dusty, and locked up. Bags of feed and fertilizer are piled high. FIVE CHILDREN, three males and two females, stare through the window.

THEIR POV - THE STREET - DAY The thunderbird rolls by.

INT. THUNDERBIRD

Burt and Vicky are feeling more and more apprehensive. There's obviously something wrong here. Burt is going very slowly, almost reluctant to proceed further into this place.

BURT
I guess nobody told them we were
coming.

VICKY
I hope not.

BURT
Ah, hell, they're probably all out
under a tent somewhere singing
Praise The Lord.

Vicky isn't convinced.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

The car slows to a stop in front of HAN SEN'S COFFEE SHOP,
scene of the opening carnage. Like every other place in this
town, it looks empty and deserted.

INT. CAR

Burt and Vicky are checking it out.

BURT
Let's see if there's a phone.

VICKY
Unless a ghost is using it.

Unlike when we last saw it, there is no sign of what went on
here. All of the tables and chairs are set up, the booths
clean and the counter spotless. The only thing lacking is
any sign of recent use.

ANGLE

As Burt and Vicky enter. The door closing behind them
muffles a sound from the kitchen.

ANGLE - KITCHEN

A BLACK SLEEVED ARM reaches to a butcher block and picks up a
CLEAVER.

ANGLE - THE FRONT ROOM

Burt is trying the pay phone with no luck. Vicky is looking
at the CHALKBOARD on the counter. It says: TODAY'S SPECIAL
MEAT LOAF CORN FRITTERS MOM HANSEN'S HOMEMADE PIE \$2.74.
Vicky runs her finger along the counter and looks at the
dust. Burt hangs up the receiver disgustedly.

BURT
Nothing. Not even a dial tone.

PARKING LOT - DAY

TWO BOYS sneak along the side of the car. They carry sides and keep low, out of sight.

INT. COFFEE SHOP

Burt and Vicky are about to leave when they hear a NOISE in the kitchen. Burt starts towards the kitchen door but Vicky grabs him.

VICKY
Burt! Please! Don't go in there.

BURT
Why not? It might be somebody.

VICKY
Please! Something's wrong. I can feel it. I've been feeling it ever since we got here. Let's just get in the car. Now. We'll drive to Hemingford. Or Grand Island. Anywhere.

BURT
Vicky, you're really spooked. Come on, take it easy.

VICKY
Please. Humor me. I don't want you to go in there!

The urgency in her voice, her insistence, wins him.

BURT
Alright. But at least let's look around some more. There's got to be somebody.

And just as they turn towards the front door, Burt spots the two "somebods" messing with the car. They've got the door open and are trying to sneak in.

BURT
Hey! Get away from that car!

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The boys, both around 12, dart off, leaving the door open. Burt dashes out after them, several steps ahead of Vicky, but isn't quick enough to catch them

BURT
See that? Just like "back home.
Leave your car for two minutes and
look what happens.

He hurries back to the driver's side and gets in.

BURT
Get in. I don't want to lose them.

She follows him into the car quickly.

INT. CAR

It lurches forward in the direction the boys ran.

VICKY
What are you going to do when you
catch them?

BURT
Ask them where I can find some
help. What else?
(beat)
Damn! Where'd they go?

EXT. TOWN - BURT & VICKY'S POV - DAY

There's no sign of the boys. No sign of anyone. Up ahead we see the main part of town. There's a REXALL, a FIVE & DIME, the GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH with its towering steeple, and next to that, the three-story GATLIN MUNICIPAL BUILDING.

VICKY
(nervous)
Look, we're already in the car. Why
don't we just continue on to
Hemingford. It'll take us twenty
minutes.

BURT
But we've found people.

VICKY
Yeah. A couple of kids who tried
to break into our car.

Burt debates.

BURT
There is something strange about
this place. After the way the old
man acted...

VICKY
And what happened to him.

The thought chills her.

BURT
Maybe you're right. We might be
better off in a larger town anyway.

He makes a U-turn in the middle of the street and starts
heading out of town. Something stops him OFF SCREEN.

BURT
Over there!

VICKY
What?

BURT
I saw a door open and close. That
house.

VICKY
I didn't see anything.

BURT
Let's check it out.

VICKY
Why? I thought we were going.

BURT
Yeah, but if we know somebody's
here....

VICKY
We don't know anything. I was
looking over there. I didn't see
it.

BURT
Vick...Settle down. This is not a
lab experiment, we don't need all
the answers...

He starts driving towards the house.

VICKY
Don't patronize me, Burt.

BURT
I'm not. I saw the door swing open.
A quick look. It can't hurt.

Vicky doesn't answer him. They pull up in front of the house.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Burt is up the steps to the porch in two bounds. Vicky takes longer. She's nervous and sullen. Only a SCREEN DOOR separates them from the inside. Burt shouts through it.

BURT
Hello? Anybody home?

He bangs on the frame a few times.

BURT
Hello? We've had an accident. We'd like to use your telephone.

VICKY
You see? I told you. Now can we go?

Burt frowns. He pauses for a beat, then opens the door and pokes his head in.

VICKY
Burt! This is somebody's house!

BURT
Precisely. And all we want to do is use their phone.

He enters the house. Reluctantly, Vicky follows.

INT. HOUSE

There's a living room off to the left, a dining room to the right, and a staircase straight ahead. Other rooms are in back.

ANGLE - THEIR POV

What isn't broken or cracked is worn, torn or faded. The upholstery on the couch in the living room looks as if someone took a knife to it.

The stuffing has been gouged out of the seat. A cracked picture frame hangs lopsidedly over it.

TWO SHOT

Burt and Vicky look at each other. Neither likes the feeling about this place.

BURT
I'll check the back.

CAMERA FOLLOWS BURT behind the staircase and into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

In disrepair and disuse, like the rest of the house, it does contain one item of interest to Burt. A TELEPHONE. He grabs the receiver and raises it, but never gets a chance to dial.

THE WIRE - BURT'S POV

Cut. It dangles uselessly from the receiver.

ANGLE - FOYER

Vicky watches as Burt walks out holding the useless phone with its severed wire.

BURT
I found a phone.

VICKY
Well, it certainly goes with the decor.

BURT
Back door was open too. Whoever I saw must've slipped out. Probably one of those kids I chased off.

VICKY
Yeah. Who else would avoid us! I mean, it's not like we've got a body in the trunk.

BURT
Now, now.

VICKY
Why don't we sit down and make ourselves comfortable.
(MORE)

VICKY(cont'd)

I'm sure nobody'll mind if we pour
the first drinks. Then when the
City Council shows up....

BURT

Okay, I surrender. We're going.

He moves towards the front door under her triumphant stare, conceding tacitly her right to be annoyed. They're about to leave when A FLOORBOARD CREAKS above, They hear it and FREEZE simultaneously.

VICKY

Don't you dare.

Burt is like a puppy who's spied a squirrel up in a tree. Or thinks he has. He shushes her, his eyes never leaving the ceiling as he moves towards the staircase.

VICKY

Burt! This is ridiculous! I'm
getting really angry.

BURT

(whispering)

Come on, Vick! Don't you want to
know who it is? Why they're hiding
from us? This whole thing is so
bizarre.

VICKY

(shouting whisper)

All the more reason to get out now!

Burt is already walking up the stairs. Very slowly and quietly, his eyes constantly on the landing above. Vicky pouts and sulks and sighs and fidgets at the bottom, knowing she's unable to stop him. His curiosity is contagious as much as she'd like to deny it.

ANGLE

Burt slinks up the staircase like a cat stalking an unsuspecting bird. ANOTHER NOISE, FOLLOWED BY FOOT-STEPS. He stops and looks at Vicky.

ANGLE - VICKY

As her eyes meet Burt's. Someone is sneaking around up there. They both know it, but Vicky fears it more.

ANGLE

Burt gets to the first landing. He checks ahead -the stairs now reverse direction - then looks back at Vicky one last time. He is visibly more tense now. He's starting to sweat and his breath quickens. He takes a step forward, and creaks a floorboard himself. It freezes him to the spot. After a beat, he continues.

UPSTAIRS - BURT'S POV

TWO BEDROOMS and a BATHROOM are visible. A SHORT STAIRCASE leads up to a MASTER BEDROOM.

ANGLE

Burt steps on another loose board. It CREAKS VERY LOUDLY. Anybody waiting for him has to know where he is by that one. He sucks in a breath. MORE FOOTSTEPS FROM ABOVE.

ANGLE

Burt is at the top landing between the two bedrooms. He looks into one of them, then disappears into it.

INT. BEDROOM

We recognize from the bed and bulletin board that this is the bedroom Sarah was sick in three years ago when her father was on the phone with her mother, x just before he was murdered. Only now, on that bulletin board, are tacked ALL OF THE PICTURES we've thus seen of her" stick figure prophesies.

The bedroom looks like it hasn't been used in a long time, or at least cleaned, and is dusty and full of cobwebs, but those crayon drawings on the manila paper are a child's illustrations of the nightmare that took over Gatlin.

ANGLE - THE DRAWINGS - INCLUDING BURT

Burt studies the drawings. He is seeing them for the first time and they chill him to the marrow. He rips off the rendition of HE WHO WALKS BEHIND THE ROWS and stares at it.

QUICK SHOT - THE PICTURE

As Burt stares at it. The evil figure stares back out at him.

ANGLE - HALLWAY

Just as Burt turns out of the doorway, he comes face to face with. . . . Vicky!!! Each jumps and gasps at the same time, their hearts racking and their eyes widening.

Before they have a chance to rebuke each other, another NOISE FROM UPSTAIRS. They look towards the master bedroom and nod in silent agreement.

ANGLE

They get to the top of the short staircase and are about to look into the master bedroom, in fact are craning their necks and gripping each other with white knuckles from the tension when a TREMENDOUS, HORRIFIC SHRIEK scares the daylights out of them.

VOICE
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA...WIPE OUT!

Vicky loses it. She screams before she can realize that it's a record as the MUSIC of the oldie WIPE OUT, continues playing. Burt charges into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

Burt stops dead in his tracks, finding himself staring down an equally frightened and surprised Sarah. Vicky enters the bedroom a BEAT later. Burt begins to laugh. Vicky joins him. They laugh almost as hard as Vicky did in the car when she saw the signs outside Gatlin, but they stop themselves when they realize how frightened the child is.

BURT
I'm sorry. Don't be afraid. We didn't mean to scare you.

Sarah is staring at them like they're from another planet. She warms to Vicky, though.

VICKY
Well hello! What a darling little girl. What's your name?

SARAH
(sheepish)
Sarah.

VICKY
Sarah. That's a lovely name. I'm Vicky, and this is Burt.

Sarah won't look at Burt. She steals a glance at Vicky.

BURT
Are you alone here, Sarah?

She doesn't answer.

VICKY
Do you live here?

Sarah shakes her head no.

BURT
You just come here to play?

Sarah looks down at the floor. Her record finishes and she takes it off the turntable.

ANGLE

Burt notices the manila paper and crayons next to her, registering the connection to the terrible pictures he's just seen. He says nothing for the moment.

WIDE ANGLE

VICKY
Are your mommy and daddy around,
Sarah?

Sarah answers as if that's a stupid question, but the thought of the answer saddens her anyway.

SARAH
They're in the cornfield.

VICKY
What are they doing there?

SARAH
All the grownups are there.

BURT
Well, are they working? Or are they
having some kind of meeting?

SARAH
(frustrated, a little
frightened)
Noooo! Isaac put them there!

BURT
Isaac? Who's Isaac?

Sarah shrugs defensively. She doesn't want to answer.

VICKY
Tell us who Isaac is, darling.

SARAH
Our leader.

Now Burt is getting frustrated and a little impatient.

BURT
Leader of what?

SARAH
Of everybody.

Burt throws up his hands and walks over to the window. He's had enough of this conversation, and frankly so have I. Vicky keeps at it with Sarah, turning even sweeter and more patient in the wake of Burt's reaction.

VICKY
Could you take us to Isaac?

SARAH
(very grave)
Uhhhh-uhhhh.

ANGLE - BURT

While the conversation continues in the B.G. we watch as Burt looks out the window and sees something that bewilders him.

VICKY (VO)
Why not?

EXT. CORNFIELD - BURT'S POV - DAY

That same, immense, invisible force we saw in the cornfield just before Chester Diehl was killed is now moving towards the town. The corn is shaking wildly and the sky darkens at a tremendous rate. A HOWLING WIND accompanies this. It sounds ALIVE.

INT. BEDROOM - BURT

He looks away for a second, blinking his eyes in disbelief.

SARAH (VO)
He's scary!

Burt looks out at the cornfield after his momentary respite.

VICKY (VO)
(to Sarah)
(MORE)

VICKY(cont'd)

Sarah, it's very important that we speak to some grownups as soon as possible. Is there anyone around that you can think of?

EXT. THE CORNFIELD - BURT'S POV - DAY

Nothing. No sign of what Burt saw a moment ago.

INT. BEDROOM

Burt rubs his eyes and accepts the possibility that stress is getting to him. He walks back to Vicky.

SARAH

They're gone.

VICKY

Gone where?

SARAH

Into the corn!

Burt intervenes.

BURT

We're not getting anywhere with this, Vick.

VICKY

Give her a chance, honey. She keeps saying the townspeople are out in the cornfield.

(to Sarah)

Right, sweetheart? All of the grownups are in the corn?

Sarah nods affirmatively. There is a chilling quality to the innocence with which she does this.

BURT

I tell you what, then. You stay here with her. I want to go look in that municipal building.

VICKY

(alarmed)

Why?

BURT

Why? Because we've got a double murder to report and we're standing here with a pint sized version of Catherine the Great trying to make sense out of what happened to all the people in this town.

VICKY

I just thought she could help us.

BURT

I know. Maybe you're right. She's all we have for the moment anyway. At least let's not lose track of her.

VICKY

Alright. Maybe somebody will come for her.

BURT

If they do, you just bring them over to the car and hit the horn. I'll keep an eye open.

He kisses her lightly and heads for the door. The reality of his departure suddenly makes Vicky nervous.

VICKY

Burt?...Do you think it's...safe?

A beat. Burt isn't sure, but he doesn't want to scare her.

BURT

For who?

VICKY

For either of us?

BURT

Yeah. Weird, but safe.

He smiles, and is gone.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Burt closes the front door, the wooden one behind the screen, and makes sure it's locked securely. He gets into the car.

EXT. GATLIN - BURT'S POV - DAY

Burt walks towards the center of town, checking everywhere for signs of people. The sidewalks are empty, storefronts dark and silent. There's no one to be seen anywhere. Only a sense at Burt being followed.

ANGLE - STALKERS POV

CAMERA TRACKS Burt ACROSS THE PARK in the center of town. We see THE POND in the middle of this park.

ANGLE

The solitary car passes the Grace Baptist Church. Cornshucks have been heaped in the doorway. The letters in the front sign haven't changed for three years. They read CORN DROUGHT AND THE LORD

ANGLE

As the car goes by, A PREGNANT TEENAGE WOMAN steps out of the shadows and glares at it. She hurries inside. This RACHEL DEIGAN.

BURT BEING FOLLOWED - STALKERS POV

Burt turns to look behind him, CAMERA hides as Burt turns onto the main drag and studies the buildings.

EXT. FIVE & DIME STORE - BURT'S POV - DAY

Wares are displayed "but we can barely see them for the dirt on the window. Something has been written in the dirt.

ANGLE - WINDOW - CU

The message: HE WHO WALKS BEHIND THE ROWS SEETH ALL

ANGLE - GATLIN REXALL

The next building over. Cornshucks and corn leaves have been piled in the doorway and inside the display cases.

ANGLE - THE CAR

It continues its Stygian journey.

ANGLE - FAVORING GATLIN GRADE SCHOOL

He passes the Gatlin Grade School. HE MOVES UP THE STEPS AND INSIDE.

INT. SCHOOL

APPROACHING THE BLACKBOARD from the door, we see A CORNCOB CRUCIFIX hanging in the center of the black-board. Underneath, in chalk, is written: I HAVE WITHDRAWN MY HAND FROM THEM SAITH THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS, AND THEY SHALL PAY IN BLOOD FOR THEIR INIQUITIES

BURT REAL

EXT. MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

Burt pulls up in front of the building. He climbs the steps to a pair of WOODEN DOORS. There's A DRIFT OF CORN HUSKS at the top step and another CORNCOB CRUCIFIX hung on each of the doors. Burt looks at these thoughtfully for a moment, growing more grim by the second. He goes inside.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - SARAH & VICKY

Sarah is sitting on the floor, Vicky on the bed. Vicky tries to calm herself by calming Sarah.

VICKY

Well, I guess it's just you and me.

Sarah smiles at her. She is a lot less nervous than Vicky.

VICKY

So tell me, what were you doing here all by yourself? Just playing records?

Sarah balks, tugs at her dress.

VICKY

Ah, come on. You can tell me.

Sarah looks at her, wondering if she can trust her, then gives in. She points to her paper and crayons.

VICKY

Drawing? What's so secret about that?

SARAH

Not supposed to.

VICKY

You're not supposed to draw?

Sarah nods affirmative.

VICKY
Says who? Isaac?

A negative shake of the head from Sarah.

SARAH
Malachai.

VICKY
Malachai? Now who's....Never mind.
I tell you what. You draw me a
picture and we'll just not tell
Malachai, or Isaac, or anyone at
all. How about it?

SARAH
(brightening)
Okay.

She arranges the paper and crayons and begins drawing. She's so sweet and adorable that Vicky can hardly take her eyes off of her.

CUT TO:

INT. MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Burt pushes through the doors and steps into the LOBBY of the building. What we see is not what he sees. We see, briefly, a scene from three years ago.

A LARGE ROOM - BURT'S POV

off of which are several doors, all with frosted glass and black lettering. One says: BUREAU OF REGISTRATION, another is: DEEDS and a third says: DOG OFFICER. In the back is a SIGN that designates: RESTROOMS.

ANGLE

The room is lively and full of people. THE MUNICIPAL WORKERS of Gatlin, country folks in casual attire, are crowded around A TRIO OF YOUNG CHILDREN who are handing out LEMONADE, and charging quarters for it. The kids have brought a PORTABLE STAND into the room, complete with pitchers, ice and a sign and a cup for change, and the adults are finding themselves amused and refreshed.

It takes a moment for the deadly poison in the drink to take effect, and as the shocked and confused people are trying to figure out what's happening to them, AN OLDER GROUP of TEENAGERS, led by Malachai, charge in with their slaughtering weapons. They cut their helpless victims down mercilessly.

ANGLE

The RESTROOM DOOR opens and POLICE CHIEF BILL HOTCHKISS comes out straightening his belt. He sees the carnage and freezes. So do the murderers. They hadn't expected this. Hotchkiss is dumbfounded and horrified, but he has the presence of mind to flee just as a half dozen of the demonic kids leap out at him with their weapons.

ANGLE

Malachai expertly throws a knife after the police chief, but Hotchkiss has slammed shut the door. The knife buries itself in the wood.

ANGLE - BURT

As he scans the quiet, empty room. There are no bodies, but the place is a shambles. Desks, chairs and tables are overturned, filing cabinets are down, and everywhere is CORN; dried, brittle and yellowed with age.

ANGLE

Burt passes a BULLETIN BOARD upon which are several notices. Prominent among them is one that advertises: OLD FASHIONED REVIVAL MEETING COME TO THE TENT IN SOWERS MEADOW HEAR REV. CARL BRUCKNER "OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD" HEAR LILY TREMENT, THE SINGING MARVEL PLUS "THE GOSPEL SIX" PRAISE THE LORD JULY 1-3 7:30 PM.

ANGLE - BURT

As he reads this, something flashes in his mind.

QUICK FLASH

to Sarah's drawing of the revival meeting in the corn where the child usurper (Isaac) shoved the minister aside.

ANGLE

Burt turns away and goes to the door marked BUREAU OF REGISTRATION. He begins to open it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The house in which are Vicky and Sarah. A BLACK HAT COMES INTO FRAME, and then the body of the BOY wearing it. He is dressed in the black, cloth uniform we have seen. CAMERA WIDENS TO INCLUDE more than A DOZEN COMPANIONS. They are the oldest boys we have seen, between 15 and 18 years old, and some of them are pretty big. All of them are scary. They have a hungry, lethal glint in their eyes. They've formed a big semi-circle around Malachai, and they're humming their weird song as they close in. All are armed.

CUT TO:

INT. REGISTRATION OFFICE

Burt is exploring the office. It's a shambles, like the other room, and corn is heaped everywhere in here too.

ANGLE - BURT

He takes all this in with growing bewilderment. Then he looks up at the far wall and we see his eyes widen with surprise.

THE WALL - BURT'S POV

It's dominated by the strangest PORTRAIT OF CHRIST we've ever seen. We know it's Christ but even so, there's a stronger resemblance to Lon Chaney in "The Phantom Of The Opera." This Christ is grinning and he has green hair but, after a moment, we see it really isn't hair at all but rather corn plants.

ANGLE

Burt crosses the room to the picture and takes it off the wall, standing on a chair to do so. He stares at the hideous corruption for a moment and then smashes it on the floor. He isn't out of control, but the image has affected and offended him deeply. He heads for the door.

ANGLE

CAMERA LINGERS on the window as Burt exits. Slowly, one by one, THREE BOYS, all crowned in BLACK RIMMED HATS, look in at us and scan the now vacant office. They hold a brief, whispered conversation and then duck OUT OF VIEW.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Shadows are beginning to fall across Gatlin as the sun is getting low.

The ominous circle of boys moving towards the house has broken up into two's and three's. A few are at the front door, which is locked.

ANGLE

Two more find a basement window ajar and wriggle in.

ANGLE

Another group applies a crowbar to a living room window.

HOUSE - BEDROOM

Sarah is still working on her picture. Vicky enters from another room.

VICKY
How's it coming?

SARAH
Fine.

VICKY
What is it?

SARAH
(innocent, angelic)
You.

VICKY
(delighted)
Oh! Can I see?

SARAH
Yes.

She finishes a couple of strokes and hands the picture to Vicky.

ANGLE VICKY CU

Her face goes from bemused to horrified to repelled as she looks at the picture.

ANGLE

We can tell from Sarah's expectant face that she has absolutely no idea that what she's drawn is bad in any way. Vicky is about to rebuke her when we hear the sound of GLASS BREAKING. Vicky whips around and looks out the doorway.

CUT TO:

INT. MUNICIPAL BLDG. STAIRWELL

Burt climbs the stairs to the THIRD FLOOR. He's tired, sweating heavily, and beaten. He pulls the door open and exits into a dark corridor.

ANGLE - CORRIDOR WALL

PAINTED IN RED along the wall, which ends at a FIRE ESCAPE DOOR, are the words: THUS LET THE INIQUITOUS BE CUT DOWN THAT THE TRUE GOD MIGHT COME FORTH Burt follows the words along the wall, arriving at a pair of OFFICES on either side. One belonged to POLICE CHIEF BILL HOTCHKISS (The Blue Man) and the other to MAYOR JOHN D. REESE.

ANGLE

Burt turns into the police chief's office and gets a fright.

ANGLE - BURT'S POV

A MOLDY SCARECROW, festooned with corn, is propped up in the chair behind the desk. A POLICEMAN'S BADGE is pinned on the cloth shirt.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE

Vicky comes out of the bedroom and stops at the top of the stairs.

VICKY
(anxious, tentative)
Burt? Is that you?

She walks down the short staircase. The answer, at first, is silence. Then, softly, the humming. Vicky listens, and clutches in her right hand the picture Sarah drew. Curiosity gets the better of her. Ever so slowly, she tiptoes down to the top of the second landing and looks down.

ANGLE - THE FIRST FLOOR - VICKY'S POV

The humming gets louder. The Children Of The Corn begin to congregate at the bottom of the stairs. They stare at Vicky through rabid eyes. Their weapons and their intent are plainly visible.

VICKY
(shouts)
Who are you?

They hum steadily. Vicky shouts even louder. She's terrified.

VICKY
What do you want?

The humming stops abruptly.

ANGLE

Malachai steps forward from the rear. He looks up at Vicky with a blissed-out expression.

MALACHAI
We want to give you peace.

ANGLE

Vicky figures that one out in a hurry. She lunges back upstairs, tripping and stumbling in her haste.

ANGLE

Malachai lets slip his pups of war.

MALACHAI
Seize her!

And with a gleeful shout, the boys rush the stairs all at once. They fall over each other in their haste to do Malachai's bidding.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Vicky runs into the bedroom SCREAMING AT THE TOP OF HER LUNGS. She slams the door and frantically pulls a CHEST OF DRAWERS against it just as the first wave of boys arrives. Their initial charge is dulled by the unexpected weight of the furniture, but it is obvious they won't be stopped. Vicky, still screaming, pushes against the door with all her might. A HATCHET blasts through, cutting her arm and splintering the wood. Vicky screams again and clutches at her arm.

ANGLE

The door gives way and the boys, like giant black rats, pour into the room. Vicky picks up a lamp and throws it at them. Sarah remains seated on the floor, frozen, staring fearfully at the proceedings.

ANGLE - SARAH'S POV

Vicky is dragged, literally, kicking and screaming from the room. Her clothes are torn, she's bleeding from the mouth and arm and her face is badly bruised. She has dropped the crumpled picture on the floor.

ANGLE

Sarah is left untouched and alone in the room. She hasn't moved through the whole thing. Her wide, terror-stricken eyes tell the whole story. Her lip trembles.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE CHIEF'S OFFICE

Burt is still there, trying to figure the foreboding scarecrow, but has decided he's had enough of trying to figure anything in Gatlin. He turns around and sees a picture on the wall behind him.

THE PICTURE - BURT'S POV

It's the VIRGIN MARY, withering back from the onslaught of a monstrous DRAGON. Underneath is a caption: AND WHEN THE DRAGON SAW THAT HE WAS CAST UNTO THE EARTH, HE PERSECUTED THE WOMAN WHICH BROUGHT FORTH THE MAN CHILD

ANGLE - BURT - CU

As he reads the caption, he senses something.

ANGLE

He begins to move on, but something about this picture pulls at him. He stares at it again.

THE PICTURE - BURT'S POV - CLOSEUP

His eyes study the dragon, and then the woman, and then the threatening dragon again....

ANGLE

And then Burt begins to run. He flies out the door and into the....

CORRIDOR

Running as fast as his legs can carry him, slipping on the slick floor....

THE STAIRCASE

He "takes the stairs three at a time, two flights, and bursts through the doors to the main lobby.

THE LOBBY

Burt streaks across it and crashes through the door.

EXT. MUNICIPAL BLDG. - LATE AFTERNOON

The first thing Burt sees stops him momentarily.

THUNDERBIRD - BURT'S POV

It's wrecked; slashed, battered, the hood is up and the wires ripped out; and the engine is stuffed with corn husks and plants. Burt enters frame.

ANGLE

Burt bolts down the stairs and past the car at a dead run. His path is a trip in time. Various buildings he runs past give us a brief glimpse of their terrible history.

ANGLE

Burt runs past the library.

QUICK FLASHBACK

A GROUP OF "CHILDREN" are burning its books in a big bonfire outside. DOZENS OF BOOKS are tossed out the windows by those inside while the ones outside heap them on the flames. ISAAC supervises.

ANGLE - BURT

He doesn't see this flashback, of course, but instead keeps running. His footsteps and the steady sound of his breathing are the only things we hear. He passes the REXALL.

ANGLE - THE CHURCH

As Burt runs past the church, we see another scene of horror.

QUICK FLASHBACK - THE STEEPLE BELLTOWER

The minister is being manhandled by Malachai and ANOTHER GROUP. They have already beaten and bloodied him. Now they roughly put a noose around his neck. He pleads with them in vain. They shove him out of the bell tower and he plummets until the thick rope catches, snapping his neck.

He hangs there with his eyes bulging and his tongue sticking out, just like in Sarah's drawing.

ANGLE - BURT

He remembers the drawing and stops for a beat to look up at the steeple. The rope still hangs but the noose is empty. Burt gulps at the air and continues on.

ANGLE - THE PARK

Cutting through the park, Burt leaps over THE POND.

ANGLE - THE POND

A DOLL floats face down in the water.

ANGLE

And finally, Burt arrives at the house. He sees the broken windows and kicked-in front door.

INT. HOUSE

Burt nearly rips the screen door off its hinges, smashes thru the door. He looks around wildly, very much out of breath.

BURT
VICKY!!!

He runs up the stairs.

BURT
VICKY!!!

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Burt charges in, wild eyed and maniacal. The sight that greets him is Sarah, who is shaking and whimpering in the corner. A LINE OF BLOOD shows where Vicky was dragged out of the room. Burt kneels next to the little girl.

BURT
Where is she? Where have they taken
her??? Please I

Sarah is severely traumatized at the moment. She looks at Burt blankly.

BURT
(pleading)
If you have any idea you've got to
tell me. She's in danger.
(MORE)

BURT(cont'd)

She could be your mother. Please!
Please!

The urgency in his voice, perhaps that last line, reaches something in Sarah. She surfaces briefly.

SARAH

Malachai....

BURT

Who? Malachai? Where do I find him.

Sarah stares at him for a moment, then looks over to the crumpled picture Vicky dropped just before she was taken. Burt grabs it and uncrumples it.

THE PICTURE - BURT'S POV

Just like all of Sarah's other drawings, in crayon, it shows an obvious likeness of Vicky - same clothes and hairstyle although in stick figure - crucified on a cross in the cornfield. There is blood dripping from several wounds, including the one we saw her get in the arm. We cannot tell if the Vicky in the picture is dead or alive.

ANGLE - BURT

As he reacts to the picture.

BURT

No!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - LATE AFTERNOON - VICKY

CLOSEUP. Vicky is lying on something, flat on her back, somewhere in the cornfield. It's a large clearing. She is only semi-conscious. Bruised and bloody, she drifts in and out of awareness. She seems to be hearing voices, which we also hear.

MALACHAI (VO)

Does He speak to you, Isaac?

ISAAC (VO)

He speaks to me always, but today
He is displeased.

Vicky isn't sure whether this is just a bad dream. She tosses her head from side to side, trying to awaken herself.

ANGLE - MALACHAI & ISAAC

We now see that this is indeed no dream. The two are there with her.

ISAAC
He is displeased with you,
Malachai.

MALACHAI
(nervous)
What have I done?

ISAAC
(angry)
Question Him not in vain! Do you
not know you did sacrifice Joseph
without an offering? Did you not
spill the blood of the old man when
his oil and gasoline were still
useful to us?

MALACHAI
We have our own fuel now. In the
still. From the corn.

ISAAC
Shew not your pride, Malachai. We
have not enough.

MALACHAI
(vindictive)
And is the Lord not displeased that
we have not offered Him Sarah and
Job?

ISAAC
Sarah has the gift of Sight! She
warned us of the coming of the
interlopers. Question not my
judgment, Malachai. I am the giver
of his word.

Malachai glowers at Isaac. For the first time, we see him
unafraid of the younger boy, even a bit scorn-ful and
resentful.

ANGLE - VICKY

She struggles to open her eyes and see where the voices are
coming from.

ISAAC (VO)

Now go you and bring me the husband. VJe must offer them tonight. When Amos leaves us.

Vicky suddenly feels herself being pulled, jerked, up into the air. She snaps out of her daze enough to see what is going on around her.

ANGLE

She is being raised into the air. She sees Isaac below, and the departing Malachai. There are several other CHILDREN around, helping with the erecting of her cross. Only now does she realize that she is tied to a large, WOODEN CRUCIFIX. It is turned as it's raised, and she finds herself....

ANGLE - VICKY'S POV

...face to face with The Blue Man.

ANGLE - VICKY

Her horror and revulsion are too intense even for a scream. She presses back as hard as she can against the cross, back away from her fate.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE CORNFIELD - DAY

Burt is running - along a wall of the corn, frantically screaming for Vicky. He is hot, tired and out of breath. He is also intensely determined. He rips the corn plants out of the way.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Burt is lost, or at least he doesn't know where to begin. All he knows is that Vicky may be out here somewhere, undergoing some unspeakable torture. He tries another direction.

ANOTHER ANGLE

ANGLE - BURT

He's pressing his way through another row. The corn seems to have thickened, as if Burt was at the bottom of a giant, green pool. There are no longer discernible rows, just one giant wall of corn.

ANGLE

The plants themselves are beginning to resist Burt physically. Leaves swat him in the face. One cuts him with its razor edge. A stalk bends over in his path, wrapping itself around him. Burt is getting panicky, but mentally fighting the idea that this stuff has a will of its own. He finally loosens the tenacious stalk.

BURT
Jesus Christ!

He struggles on, sure of only one thing. His will to find Vicky. And then he spots something that may help him.

ANGLE - CHURCH STEEPLE - BURT'S POV

He spots the highest place in Gatlin, from where he can look out over the entire cornfield.

ANGLE - EDGE OF THE FIELD

Burt emerges from the corn, fighting his way to the very last. He is plastered with plants - leaves, silk, husks - and is bloody and exhausted. He tears the stuff off of him. He finds himself next to a BARN, and decides to check it out.

EXT. BARN - LATE AFTERNOON

It is quite large, made out of wood, and painted red. THE DOORS ARE OPEN so Burt approaches carefully. There is no sign of anyone about.

ANGLE - BURT - STALKER'S POV

Someone is watching Burt as he walks towards the barn. He is still brushing corn plants off himself. The watcher makes no move towards him, but keeps pas with him at a distance.

INT. BARN

Burt pokes his head in to make sure no one is there.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BARN

Same POV as Burt's, but three years ago. At first we think this is what Burt is seeing, just as in the Municipal Building, but we will quickly realize it is from the past. Police Chief Hotchkiss - sweating, disheveled and out of breath - is alone in the barn.

He looks at A PAGE FROM A BOOK very briefly, then stuffs the piece of paper in his shirt pocket.

ANGLE

He goes to a STILL which is housed in the barn. Next to it are SEVERAL 500 GALLON METAL CONTAINERS marked GASOHOL. He finds some HOSES, cuts off the metal ring fastners at the ends and connects them to the spigot on one of the drums. He's starting to unwind the hose out of the barn when...

ANGLE

Suddenly, he's jumped by SEVERAL TEENAGE BOYS. They beat him unconscious with ax handles, but not until after a fierce struggle. During the melee, his shirt is ripped and the piece of paper falls to the ground.

ANGLE

After the boys have dragged their unconscious victim away, a figure steps into the barn and picks up the paper. It is Job.

PRESENT TIME:

INT. BARN

Burt looks around. He sees the gasohol drums, the still, A FAIRLY MODERN TRACTOR, and basic FARM IMPLEMENTS. But no Vicky. He heads to the church.

EXT. GATLIN - LATE AFTERNOON

Burt is nearing the church.

ANGLE - BURT - STALKER'S POV

Again we see Burt through the eyes of whomever is stalking him, maintaining that careful, respectful distance. Burt starts to go in the front, then thinks better of it and walks around the side. We follow Burt from THIS POV.

ANGLE

Burt creeps up the back steps to the church and listens at the door for a beat, then tries the handle. It's open.

INT. CHURCH - CORRIDOR

Burt enters from behind the pulpit. He walks along a narrow CORRIDOR, stops, and looks into the sanctuary.

FLASHBACK TO:

CHURCH SANCTUARY - (BURT'S POV)

The same place Burt is looking at, only three years prior. The gray haired MINISTER, whom we saw depicted in one of Sarah's drawings and also later hanged from the steeple, is kneeling in prayer at the pulpit. Isaac, Malachai and their cohorts walk up behind him.

ANGLE

The Minister is unafraid at this moment. He has "been reading from his BIBLE, and rises and turns on the Children with a defiant stare. He turns the book around and holds it up to Isaac.

THE BIBLE - ISAAC'S POV

It is open to THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS. A page is missing.

ANGLE

Isaac holds out his hand and Malachai hurries to fetch him ANOTHER BIBLE. Isaac opens this one to the corresponding page and reads for a beat. He looks up at the Minister, who says something to him which we do not hear. Whatever it is, Isaac sneers at the older man. He takes something out of his pocket and holds it up for the Minister.

THE POLICE CHIEF'S BADGE - MINISTER'S POV

Unmistakably the real thing. It says: CHIEF OF POLICE and at the bottom: GATLIN

ANGLE

The Minister is shaken. Isaac rips the page out of the Bible and crumples it, dropping it to the floor. The Minister backs up, but the Children of the Corn are upon him. We've already seen what happened next.

PRESENT TIME:

INT. CHURCH - BURT'S POV

The first thing Burt sees is the destruction, even more vandalism than in the Municipal Building. The ICONS have been chipped, broken and painted upon; slogans have been painted on the walls in red: AND YE SHALL WORSHIP NO FALSE GODS BEFORE HIM and AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM; cornshocks and plants have been heaped everywhere; and THE CHRIST FIGURE has been completely redone in corn - a crown of corn, cornsilk for hair, etc.

ANGLE

And much to Hurt's surprise, there are PEOPLE. He hides in the shadows. A CEREMONY is taking place. Rachel Deigan, the pregnant girl who watched Burt drive by on his way to the Municipal Building, is there with her TWO YOUNG CHILDREN. Behind them, filling the first few pews, are a DOZEN ONLOOKERS, none of whom are older than 18. They are all watching as AMOS DEIGAN, a dark-haired boy of 19, is made ready for a very special occasion. He seems almost in a trance, and gives his wife a blissful, unseeing smile.

ANGLE

A BLACK ROBED GIRL steps up to him and offers him a COB-HANDLED KNIFE and a BOWL hollowed out of another cob. Deigan takes these and makes an incision in his chest, over his heart. He begins to draw a PENTAGRAM.

ANGLE - BURT

He is alternately fascinated, horrified and revolted by what he sees. He is hardly able to restrain himself from stopping Amos.

ANGLE

Amos finishes the last line of the symbol. He hands the girl back the knife and begins squeezing his blood into the bowl. When he has SEVERAL TABLESPOONS, the girl wipes the wound and hands him a QUILL PEN and a SCROLL. She holds the scroll unfurled while he dips the pen in his blood and writes something down. The girl takes the pen and the scroll away when he's done.

ANGLE

Deigan then turns to his family. The congregation begins to hum as he offers the bowl to his wife. She tastes it without hesitation, then prepares to give some to the children.

ANGLE

At that point, Burt can stand it no longer. He jumps out from his hiding place.

BURT

No!

He continues forward, stopping only at the edge of the pulpit.

BURT
 Are you out of your minds??? What
 the hell do you think you're doing?

ANGLE

The room is dead silent. Everyone stares at him with hateful eyes, everyone except Amos. He is too blissed out. He gives Burt the same vacant look he gave his wife.

AMOS
 Today's my birthday.

BURT
 You've got a pretty sick way of
 celebrating, it.

He turns on Rachel. He has suddenly assumed the role of a reproachful parent.

BURT
 And you! Are these your children?
 You ought to be locked up for even
 allowing them to see this much
 less....

The black robed girl shouts at him.

GIRL
 Silence, interloper! Your presence
 does profane this holy place. He
 will reckon with you I

BURT
 Well that's fine, whoever "he" is.
 I happen to be a doctor. Maybe
 "he'd" like to discuss the medical
 ramifications of carving yourself
 up with an unsanitary object not to
 mention what it would do to those
 kids to drink it!

Amos is confused. Someone is suddenly condemning what should have been his hour of triumph.

AMOS
 But it is as it should be. As it
 is written.

GIRL
 Speak you no more to him, Amos. He
 is an Unbeliever!

She looks to one of the boys in the pews.

GIRL
Hurry. Bring Isaac...No, Malachai.

The boy rushes out. Burt ignores this. He's making some progress with Amos.

BURT
What do you mean, 'As it is written? Written where?

Amos looks at the scroll.

ANGLE

The scroll is resting on a ceremonial TABLE. The knife lies next to it. Burt makes a move for the scroll just as the girl/priestess grabs for it. She gets the scroll first but Burt gets her wrist. He is a different Burt now, a man who has been pushed too far and is desperate. He twists her arm forcefully and takes the scroll from her.

ANGLE

Several of the OLDER BOYS in the congregation walk forward. Burt eyes them aggressively and they hesitate. He goes back to the scroll.

THE SCROLL - BURT'S POV

He unfurls it, revealing a list of names, all written in blood like Amos'. The difference is that theirs are dried and brown, his is fresh red. Beside each name is a birthdate and date of death. ZEPENIAH KIRK (GEORGE) B. OCT. 14, 1963 OCT. 14, 1982 YEMEN HOLLIS, (EDWARD) B. JAN. 5, 1964 JAN. 5, 1983 MARY WELLS (ROBERTA) B. JUNE 18, 1964 JUNE 18, 1983 and so on, until the last name, which is AMOS DEIGAN (RICHARD) B. OCT. 3, 1964 OCT. 3, 1983

ANGLE

Burt looks at Amos in confusion.

BURT
I don't understand. These kids all died so young?

AMOS
Not die. We go to Him, on the first night of our 19th year. Night is His time.

BURT
And what happens when you go to
him?

ANGLE

The BOY who ran out for Malachai bursts back in.

BOY
Malachai comes.

ANGLE

The girl/priestess commands the others.

GIRL
Seize him! Don't let him escape.

Burt starts to back up as the emboldened youths surge forward. The girl picks up the ceremonial knife and plunges it into Burt's right shoulder. He staggers backwards and falls into

ANGLE

A PILE OF BIBLES. They are all open to a particular spot - REVELATIONS - AND A PAGE HAS BEEN TORN OUT of each one at this spot.

ANGLE

Burt yanks the knife out of his shoulder, grimacing in pain. The onrushing youths stop when he points the knife at them.

BURT
(enraged)
Is this your religion?

He picks up one of the bibles with his left hand throws it at them, and another and another, until he pauses once, noticing the missing page.

BURT
What did you do? Rip out the ten
commandments, or just rearrange
them to suit your needs?

He rises to his feet, but staggers from pain and loss of blood. The boys inch forward. Burt stops again, threatening them with the knife. He backs out of the church...

EXT. CHURCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Burt exits the rear door...and begins to run. He tosses away the knife. After a BEAT, the hordes come running after him. The girl/priestess is last, exhorting them.

GIRL

Seize him! Don't let him escape

ANGLE - BURT - STALKER'S POV

Whoever this is who has been stalking Burt watches him run towards the main part of town. The stalker ducks away abruptly, hurrying himself to keep up.

ANGLE

Burt is running through town. He turns down a side street only to find Malachai and his bunch running towards him. Burt does an about face and heads the other way, narrowly avoiding the group that chased him out of the church.

ANGLE

Burt runs and runs, turning errantly whichever street or way presents itself. Finally, he has to stop for breath. He quickly finds himself surrounded by a HALF DOZEN BOYS, all of them armed.

ANGLE

Burt stares them down, turning all around so that he can see if and when any of them make their move. The boys are cautious. Burt is at least ten years older than the oldest of them, and he isn't any pushover. He is a wounded, desperate, adult and the boys sense this.

BURT

I'm warning you guys. This isn't a game. First one of you comes near me's gonna get his head knocked off.

CAMERA PANS THEIR FACES. These are children. The murder in their eyes is so incongruous with their physical selves that it is hard to imagine they are as deadly as we've seen them be.

ANGLE

One of them charges Burt and swings a sickle. Burt blocks it and knees him in the groin.

As the boy doubles over, Burt pounds him between the shoulder blades, sending him to the ground. Burt will make ingenious use of his medical knowledge before this day is over. He picks up the sickle and swings it, just in time to send two more attackers scurrying backwards.

BURT
God damn it! Now keep away from
me!

He walks towards them resolutely. They give ground, letting him pass. But just as he seems to be free...

ANGLE

Malachai and his little Huns round the corner.

BURT
Shit....

They explode after him, shouting and cheering in their killing frenzy. Burt takes off.

ANGLE - OUTSIDE MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Burt shows some agility, wounded shoulder and all. He catches the bottom of the fire escape after a running leap which only the tallest of his pursuers can match. Using his left hand, he pulls himself up and clatters

up the metal stairs. He carries the sickle in his belt.

ANGLE

Some of the taller boys follow him, others stream around to the front entrance.

ANGLE - ROOF OF MUNICIPAL BLDG.

Burt climbs to the roof from the top of the fire escape. He runs across it and without stopping, jumps to

ANGLE - THE ROOF OF THE REXALL

...the Rexall roof, and RIGHT INTO A PILE OF DECAYING, SKELETAL BODIES of the former adults of Gatlin. He lands face first in the grisly mess. He gasps and swoons from the sight and smell. He pauses until he hears the shouts behind him.

ANGLE - BURT'S POV

Several of the OLDER AND LARGER BOYS, led by Malachai, have reached the roof of the Municipal Building. They are running towards the jump-gap.

ANGLE

Burt notices that the ARMS AND LEGS of several of the bodies around him are jutting up at strange angles. With several swift, angular strokes, he cuts a number of these into SHARP, BONY SPIKES and points them towards where his pursuers will be coming from. He lops a final HAND off at the wrist and positions the protruding bone.

BURT
(to the corpse)
Thanks for the hand.

He runs to the edge of the Rexall roof. The only way off is to jump, about 20 feet down. He looks back.

ANGLE - BURT'S POV

The first assault wave from the Municipal roof lands in the pile of bodies after clearing the jump. One boy falls squarely on one of the "spikes" and is im-paled. Malachai gets one through the leg, and falls in agony. Two other boys, however, land with no problem although they first run to check on Malachai.

ANGLE

Burt climbs over the edge of the Rexall roof and hangs as far as he can before dropping. He falls into a tuck-and-roll, coming out of it with just a slightly sprained ankle. Suddenly, bottles, knives, rocks and other weapons begin to rain down upon him.

ANGLE

With glass breaking all around and the metal weapons striking the pavement by his feet, Burt hobbles away as fast as he can.

ANGLE - REXALL ROOF

The pursuers have already formed a "chain" and are lowering their horde to the sidewalk.

ANGLE - STALKER'S POV

The person who has been stalking Burt sees a new line of Children take up the pursuit. Burt heads to the left, and so does the stalker.

ANGLE - BY A HOUSE

Burt uses a 25-yard distance between him and the Huns to stop and gulp air. He's looking back, waiting for the first sight of the demons when he hears something from above.

UPPER WINDOW - BURT'S POV

TWO GIRLS, dressed in drab, gray dresses, have opened the window above him and are pouring something out of a kettle towards him. ONE OF THEM IS PREGNANT.

ANGLE

Burt dives out of the way, barely avoiding several gallons of BOILING CORN OIL. He looks up at the girls in disbelief. They stare down at him in blind hatred.

ANGLE

The boys are coming and it's time for Burt to flee. He runs past more houses. He's about to run back into the cornfield when somebody calls to him.

JOB

Hey Mister! Over here!

The size, age and innocence of the boy stop Burt.

ANGLE - JOB - BURT'S POV

Still in his oversized suit, he's a comically absurd figure.

JOB

C'mere! I know where to hide!

ANGLE

Burt looks back and sees the alternative. He decides to chance it and runs after the boy.

BURT

Who are you?

JOB

C'mon!

They run into the backyard of the house next door. This is the house where Burt and Vicky first found Sarah.

ANGLE

Job leads Burt to a pair of outside cellar doors, one of which is open. The little boy runs down them like the White Rabbit. Burt follows like Alice.

INT. CELLAR

There's danger here. It's dark and Burt's eyes are acclimated to the light. He sees Job reach up and close the door over them, then switch on a flashlight.

ANGLE

There's another door at the bottom of the steps and an old, unused one adjacent to this. Job opens the latter one.

ANGLE - STAIRWAY

Job leads the way with his flashlight.

JOB

Careful.

They walk down a short flight of creaky, wooden stairs towards a lighted room.

INT. BOMB SHELTER

In the dim light of a KEROSENE LAMP, Burt finds himself in a homemade bomb shelter. It is a 30 x 30 room packed with supplies - cots, food (canned and dried), medical supplies, books, tools, etc - everything a "survivalist" would stock for about three months. Sarah is sitting at a small table, staring at Burt. She is in her "adult" costume also. Burt scans the room with his eyes, finally coming back to the little boy in the strange outfit who says ecstatically:

JOB

Isn't it neat?

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING IN THE CORNFIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is low in the sky. It will be dusk in less than an hour. Isaac and Malachai are having a heated discussion. Malachai's leg is bleeding through bandages. Vicky, now unconscious, is still up on the cross next to The Blue Man. There are about A DOZEN BOYS present. They listen intently to the argument.

MALACHAI

The Lord will' be pleased enough
with Amos. We need the woman. She
will bring the man to us.

ISAAC

No! He must be taken without her.
We cannot remove her from this
place. It is Holy!

MALACHAI

To bring Him two we would not use
one?

ISAAC

(threatening)

Do not blaspheme, Malachai! You
know not the laws. He speaks them
only to me.

MALACHAI

(enraged)

I think not, Isaac I You are the
one who has lost favor with Him! He
is a God of blood and sacrifice,
not ceremony!

ISAAC

(shouting)

Lies! Sacrilege! Down on your
knees, heretic!

Malachai lashes out with his fist and knocks Isaac to the
ground. Malachai stands over him. The new Usurper.

MALACHAI

Command me not, Isaac, for you have
grown prideful, and apart from us.
He Who Walks Behind the Rows will
decide your fate.

Isaac, dripping with venom and utter hatred for Malachai,
turns on the assembled group. He screams invectives.

ISAAC

Don't just stand there! Seize him!
Punish him! Cut him down! I
command you. I am the Word and the
Giver of His Laws!

(MORE)

ISAAC(cont'd)

Disobedience to me is disobedience
to Him, He Who Walks Behind the
Rows, and He will slay you with a
thousand times a thousand deaths,
each more horrible than the last!!!

Isaac's words fall on deaf ears, or at least changed minds.
The boys gather around Malachai, not to seize him but to
accept him as their new leader. Malachai accepts the role
matter-of-factly.

MALACHAI

Cut the woman down. Put Isaac in
her place.

ISAAC

No! You dare not!

MALACHAI

We will see how he favors you.

Isaac is seized and dragged to Vicky's cross.

ISAAC

No! You blaspheme! He will punish
you! The jaws of Hell will devour
you. All of you!

He struggles violently but in vain. Vicky is cut down from
the cross. Malachai watches with vengeful approval, as Isaac
is put in her place.

ANGLE

A PROCESSION enters the clearing. It is Amos, followed by
his wife and children, escorted by candle bearing Children of
the Corn. Amos steps forward, that glazed look in his eyes.

AMOS

I'm ready to celebrate my birthday.

MALACHAI

We have a surprise for you, Amos.
Isaac is going to keep you company.

Amos, Malachai and the rest look towards the cross.

ANGLE

Isaac is on the cross, still kicking, struggling and
shouting.

ISAAC

Malachai! He will punish you! He will punish all of you! He will not forgive you. None of you will be forgiven.

INT. BOMB SHELTER

Burt is finishing bandaging his shoulder wound with the available medical supplies.

JOB

My dad built it. For when the Communists launch their first strike.

Burt laughs bitterly.

BURT

The Communists aren't going to get us, Job. We're going to get us.

JOB

Are you looking for the lady?

BURT

(sharply)
Yes! Have you seen her?

JOB

They took her to the clearing.

BURT

What clearing? Where?

JOB

In the cornfield. Where The Blue Man is.

BURT

How do you know?

JOB

I followed them. Just like I followed you.

BURT

Show me.

Sarah intercedes with surprising vehemence.

SARAH

No! You can't. It's almost night.

BURT

So?

SARAH

Night is His time.

BURT

(frustrated, confused)

Whose time? What are you talking about?

Sarah hands him a picture from her stack. Burt walks over to the table where she's sitting.

ANGLE - THE PICTURE - BURT'S POV

It is a picture he, and we, have seen. It shows the figure of He Who Walks Behind the Rows, with that caption underneath.

WIDE ANGLE

He hands her back the picture.

BURT

I've seen these. In the house. I don't believe there's a bogey-man out there.

JOB

Is too. He made them kill my mom and dad.

BURT

(sincere)

Tell me.

JOB

I don't remember everything that happened cuz I was only five then, now I'm eight...

As he continues, with Burt listening intently, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GATLIN - DUSK

Night is falling. There's a small glimmer of sun on the horizon, sinking fast. Malachai looks around. He calls out to his unseen foe.

MALACHAI
 Outlander! We have your woman. She
 still lives!

And indeed she does. CAMERA WIDENS TO INCLUDE VICKY, who is bound and in Malachai 's grasp. About TWENTY BOYS are milling about, waiting to do their part if Burt should come.

MALACHAI
 (to a group)
 Five of you, go through the town.
 Call to him. Tell him we wait.

CUT TO:

INT. BOMB SHELTER

Job is finishing telling Burt the story. His words should sound familiar.

BURT
 Then it was Malachai who killed the
 old man at the gas station.

JOB
 Uh huh. I think his name was Mr.
 Diehl, but once I heard Malachai
 say it was Judas.

BURT
 (pleading)
 Job, you've got to take me to that
 clearing. I think it was Malachai
 has taken Vicky, and if I don't get
 there soon, I'm afraid she's going
 to wind up like Mr. Diehl.

Job ponders very seriously for a moment.

JOB
 Alright.

CUT TO:

EXT. GATLIN - DUSK

Malachai is still calling to Burt, baiting him with Vicky.

MALACHAI
 Outlander! Maybe you don't hear
 well. How's this?

He pulls the knife across Vicky's face, cutting her cheek.
She screams.

VICKY
Burt! Don't....

Malachai clasps a hand over her mouth, muffling her warning.

MALACHAI
Her blood will spill, Outlander!
Unless you give yourself up unto
Him.

ANGLE - BURT, JOB & SARAH

The three emerge from the bomb shelter and begin running towards the corn. They cross the street and run to where the field is visible. Something jerks Burt to a sudden halt.

ANGLE - BURT'S POV - LONG LENS

In the distance, near the barn by the cornfield, Malachai is still holding Vicky.

MALACHAI
We won't wait much longer,
Outlander! It is coming Night, and
Night is His time!

ANGLE

Burt has to resist the temptation to run directly to Vicky's aid. Job and Sarah now see what he is looking at.

JOB
(hissing)
Malachai!
(then childlike)
He's in trouble now....

BURT
Job, you and Sarah find a place to
hide. If anything happens to me,
you head out of town as fast as you
can. Stay on the road, and don't
stop until you reach Hemingford.
Now go on.

Burt hasn't stopped looking at Vicky the whole time. He runs OFF SCREEN, leaving Job and Sarah watching him go.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CORNFIELD - NIGHTFALL

Night comes, and night is His time. The corn begins to rustle until it actually seems to tremble.

ANGLE

He Who Walks Behind the Rows is on the move, casting a black shadow against the blackening sky. The corn bends to His will, flattening on all sides as the God surges forward.

ANGLE - THE CLEARING - ISAAC

Isaac, from his high vantage point, sees what's happening to the corn. Terror fills his face.

ANGLE - AMOS

Amos has been sitting cross-legged in the clearing. Waiting. Staring off into a private place. He senses the approaching force and stands up. He is smiling.

AMOS

It's Him. He's come for me. He's
come to welcome me.

He looks into the sky, all about, but cannot see any-thing. Searching, he wanders out of the clearing and into the rows. His calling fades in the wind.

AMOS

I am here, Lord. I'm ready!

CAMERA ZOOMS IN TO ISAAC

Whimpering and cowering like the 14- year old boy that he is, Isaac watches as Amos disappears into the corn.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAR THE BARN - NIGHTFALL

An eerie wind is beginning to blow, somewhat like the wind on the outer edge of the eye of the storm, which signals the end of the calm and the beginning of the apocalypse. In the BACKGROUND, the corn is breezing wildly. Debris, tumbleweeds, parts of corn plants, etc, are blowing across Gatlin.

ANGLE - BURT

He is creeping up on Malachai with quick bursts of speed from cover to cover.

He runs from the back of A HOUSE to A FIXTURE OF PIPES AND TUBING that leads out into the cornfield.

ANGLE - THE FIXTURE - CLOSEUP

There's a CEMENT APRON around the fixture, and a removable COVER in the cement. Some WHITE LETTERING has been painted on the side of one of the pipes: SPRINKLER PUMPS #5 AND #6. Burt looks out to where the tubing leads and sees....

ANGLE - THE CORNFIELD

Even in the dark, he can make out the shape of TWO GIANT SPRINKLERS.

ANGLE

There is some HOSE and TUBING lying around the fixture. Burt picks up a length of the metal tubing and hefts it in his hand. He looks at Malachai differently now. Not more than 50 feet separates them.

ANGLE - BURT, INCLUDING MALACHAI & OTHERS

Before Burt can make his move, A NOISE from the corn-field distracts everybody. All heads turn towards it. They can see nothing, only hear A SCREAM.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CLEARING - SAME TIME

Isaac is ashen and sweating. His eyes are filled with unspeakable horror as he listens to the sound of Amos screaming just beyond him in the corn. That area of the corn is being torn up by something tremendous. There are terrible, beastly howls around Amos' feeble screams.

ANGLE

A SOUND OF TEARING AND BREAKING, followed by a GURGLING, quiets that area of the corn momentarily. Isaac waits and listens, straining to see. Suddenly, something is heaved into the clearing from the field. It looks like a sack, or what might once have been a body. It is wearing the remnants of Amos' clothes. As it lands in a heap, it splatters blood on Isaac.

ANGLE

A shadow, visible even in the dark because it is blacker than the night, falls over Isaac. He is looking straight up at something immense. He begs and pleads with it like a child.

ISAAC
 I...I did as you commanded...I was
 good...I swear it...

His eyes widen further, if that is possible, as the shadow descends upon him.

ISAAC
 NOOOOOooooo!

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAR THE BARN - SAME TIME

Even more wind now, almost a gale. There is a single, giant, death cloud over Gatlin. Burt uses the opportunity to attack. Malachai and the others are so preoccupied with what's going on out in the cornfield that they've allowed themselves to be caught off guard.

ANGLE

Vicky sees Burt charging. She jerks her body around so that Malachai's back is turned into Burt. Burt slugs him with the pipe and butts him with his good shoulder. Malachai sprawls to the ground.

BURT
 (to Vicky)
 Run!

ANGLE - THE FIFE FIXTURE

Job and Sarah have been trailing Burt. They run from the back of the same house he did to the same sprinkler fixture. They watch excitedly as he takes on Malachai.

ANGLE

Vicky has run to the barn. Burt is trying to catch up to her, but the circle of boys has closed around him. He lashes out with the pipe, scattering some of them in front, but suddenly his knees go out from under him as Malachai tackles him from behind. They roll in the dirt, Malachai pressing down with his knife while Burt tries to resist him with his left hand. The boys do not intercede, sensing this is Malachai's fight. They are also a bit intimidated by Burt. He's the first "man" many of them have had to deal with in some time.

ANGLE

Burt bucks Malachai with his leg, giving himself-;just enough time and room to swat him across the face with the pipe.

Malachai goes over on his back and Burt is instantly on top of him. He whacks the knife out of the boy's hand, then grabs him by the throat with his right hand (the bad shoulder side) and raises the pipe over his head. He is completely in control of his dazed adversary. Malachai's life is in his hands.

ANGLE

Burt hesitates. He looks around at the circle of boys. They don't know what to do. Burt's eyes are white hot with accusation.

BURT

Is this what you want? Another killing? Is this what your Isaac preaches?

And almost as if in response, they hear Isaac's scream. It is so inhuman that it distracts everyone, including Burt. The scream is followed by ANOTHER NOISE, perhaps even more frightening and certainly less human. It's like the growl of a lion, only much deeper and more potent, like water draining into a thousand foot well. It is a sound that is at once recognizable and yet unlike any we have ever heard. It should chill us to the bone.

ANGLE

SEVERAL OF THE BOYS runs away, so frightened are they by this "declaration" from the cornfield. Burt rises to his feet, staring out at the darkness in awe and wonder. He forgets about Malachai, which is a mistake, and begins instinctively to move towards the barn for Vicky.

ANGLE

Malachai scrambles to his knees. He looks at the remaining boys.

MALACHAI

Get him! Kill him!

Nobody makes a move. Malachai is stunned that they would disobey him, but he is too filled with hate to worry about that now. He sees his knife on the ground and picks it up. Rising, he prepares to throw it into Burt's back. But just as he does...

ANGLE

A VOICE calls out to him. It does not sound human.

ISAAC
Malachai!

Burt hears it too, and turns around to see Malachai, the remaining Children, and the figure who has stepped out of the corn and is walking towards them.

ANGLE - ISAAC

It is not Isaac, but once it was. This is a demon Isaac, a hideous perversion of what used to be a little boy who was possessed by a fanatical religion. Much of his skin has been eaten away - gnawed to the bone by some beast of nightmares. His eyes are huge globes staring at something not of this world, as he is not any longer. His hair, the wisps of it that are left, seem more like corn leaves and corn silk, and indeed there is a greenish tinge to what little skin he has left. His clothes are plastered with corn plants and smeared with kernels. His hands, reaching outstretched for Malachai, are bone.

ISAAC
He wants you too, Malachai! He
wants you too!

ANGLE

The half dozen Children left run past Burt into the barn. A couple remain behind him and watch from the safety of his presence.

ANGLE - MALACHAI

He starts backing up. Alone. The look on his face is not demonstrable terror, or horror, or fright. It is way beyond that, so far that there is little emotion left with which to express what it is. He's trembling and sweating profusely. His hands and feet are like lead. He tries to flee from the oncoming demon but he can't seem to move.

ANGLE

Isaac catches up to Malachai, hissing and growling like an animal as he leaps upon him. Malachai buries his knife up to the hilt in Isaac's chest, but it doesn't even faze the smaller "boy." Isaac is already long since dead. He drags Malachai back into the corn with irresistible strength. Malachai's screams echo through the town.

ANGLE

Burt turns to the barn and sees that Vicky has witnessed this spectacle.

The Children who ran into the barn are huddled around her. She meets Burt halfway to the barn and they embrace passionately.

BURT
Thank God you're alright.

Job and Sarah come running over to them. They're terribly upset by what they've just seen and they cling to Burt and Vicky. But just when you thought it was safe to go back in the corn...

THE HOWL OF THE BEAST RISES OUT OF THE FIELD!

ANGLE

Burt, Vicky and the children are physically jarred by the power of the roar. The monstrous sounds continue as lights and lightning shatter the darkness, accompanied by a raging wind that tosses debris in every direction. It's as if the monster is going to destroy the entire town.

ANGLE

Our "family" hurries to the relative safety of the barn.

INT. BARN

Burt, Vicky, Job and Sarah join the other six Children who are huddled in here, frightened out of their wits.

VICKY
What do we do?

BURT
I don't know. If I knew what it was out there maybe I could tell you.

JOB
It's He Who Walks Behind the Rows.

VICKY
What if we run for it. Try to make it to the road.

Burt looks at the children, and Vicky's wounds.

BURT
I think we're safer here, at least for the time being.

They listen as the horrendous noises continue outside. Things are slamming up against the barn walls.

Without warning, one of the planks explodes. The wind howls in, muffling their screams of terror.

ANGLE

Burt goes to Job. Something has to be done.

BURT
Job, has anybody ever tried to hurt
the monster? Any of the parents or
adults, before they were. . .

Job remembers what happened to them. To his parents.

JOB
(quietly)
The Blue Man.

BURT
Who's the Blue Man? What did he
do?

JOB
Officer Hotchkiss. The Chief of
Police. He came down here after he
talked to the minister. He was
reading a page torn out of the
bible. And then he was doing
something with the still.

BURT
What stopped him?

JOB
Malachai.

BURT
Why was he reading from the bible?
What was it?

Job reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a COMPASS, a PEN KNIFE, a RABBIT'S FOOT KEY CHAIN, TWO BASEBALL CARDS, and A WALLET. He pores through a number of PAPERS he has in the wallet. Outside, the sounds of Armageddon. The barn rocks and sways to the side.

BURT
Hurry up, Job!

Job finally finds what he's looking for. He hands Burt the page from three years ago.

ANGLE - THE PAGE - BURT'S POV

It's from REVELATIONS, CHAPTER 20. VERSE 10 is circled in RED.

20:10

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Burt remembers something.

QUICK FLASHBACK
TO:

INT. CHURCH

Just after the black-robed girl stabbed Burt and he fell into the pile of bibles, he noticed a page had been torn from each of them.

PRESENT TIME:

INT. BARN

ANGLE

Burt fights his frustration. He looks at Vicky, who has read the page over his shoulder.

BURT

I don't know what it means!

Another plank explodes. And another. They duck out of the way of the splintering boards.

BURT

(shouting, to Job)

What was the Blue Man doing at the still?

JOB

He hooked the hose up to it and was rolling it out.

Burt ponders.

BURT

Lake of fire...Fire! He must have been trying to burn the field.

VICKY

But how?

BURT

With the...Never mind.

Burt springs into action. He becomes the Field General of this motley fighting force.

BURT

You kids I Get me all the hoses you can find. Job, Sarah, find a glass bottle, a soda pop bottle if you can. Vicky, come here.

Burt leads Vicky over to the GASOHOL DRUMS. He takes the hose from one of the kids. It won't connect to the spigot.

BURT

(to kid)

Give me your knife.

The innocent looking boy hands Burt a mean looking knife. Burt hands it to Vicky and holds up the hose.

BURT

Cut it.

She does so. Burt jams the end onto the spigot.

BURT

(to Vicky)

You're going to have to hold this tight when I go out there.

VICKY

Where??? What??? Are you crazy???

Burt ignores her. He barks an order at the kids.

BURT

Connect those hoses. Hurry!

Job arrives with an empty, ancient bottle of PEPSI. Burt takes the hose off the spigot long enough to fill the bottle with gasohol. He rips part of Job's shirt and stuffs the rag into the bottle. Job protests.

JOB

Hey!

Burt smiles and touches the boy's cheek as he shakes the bottle thoroughly, wetting the rag with the gasohol. He turns to Vicky and gives her a hard, sudden kiss.

BURT

I love you. Remember to keep that hose on tight.

He jams it up against the spigot and opens the valve. Vicky doesn't know what to say, so she says nothing.

ANGLE

Burt lights the rag with his cigarette lighter, picks up the hose, from which gasohol is beginning to pour out, and exits the barn.

EXT. GATLIN - NIGHT

A scene worthy of the sounds we have just heard from inside the barn. There's a gale force wind blowing out of the cornfield. Wood, glass, corn - all kinds of debris - are being tossed about. The sky is dark but darker over the cornfield, except for the middle which is glowing and sparking. The houses and buildings of Gatlin are coming apart, both from the wind and the noise, that incredible and chilling roar, emanating from the cornfield.

ANGLE

Burt runs with the hose and the Molotov cocktail towards the sprinkler pump fixture. An even more savage roar goes up from the monster. Things begin to come out of the field, shot as if from cannons, right at Burt.

ANGLE

At first the corn plants seem like debris. They whip around Burt's legs, tripping him, and around his arms. While he's struggling, more are piling on top of him. He's becoming entangled in a net. Panic stricken, Burt struggles to free himself. He's tearing at the stalks when he sees...

ANGLE - THE BLUE MAN AND HIS CROSS

The crucifix and its dead occupant are about to smash Burt into the ground. He rolls out of the way just in time, barely avoiding the ten foot wooden icon.

But he is still entangled in the corn stalks. Job suddenly appears with a knife. He starts hacking away at the stalks. They bleed and the monster howls in protest.

ANGLE

Burt is free. He picks up the hose and cocktail.

BURT
Get back to the barn!

He runs forward. Job stays right where he is, not wanting to abandon Burt.

ANGLE

Burt is almost at the pump when THE BODIES OF ISAAC AND MALACHI - what's left of them - are now flung upon him. Half skeletons, half decaying flesh, they entangle him in a lifeless grappler hold. Burt struggles to rid himself of them and finds it isn't that easy.

ANGLE - JOB

He stands frozen, watching in horror.

ANGLE - THE CORNFIELD

And now the monster itself rears its head and bellows its intent. It is immense, formless, a vision of death.

ANGLE

Burt is working feverishly. He opens the metal cover on the pump and tries to unscrew its connecting valve. The thing won't budge. The hose is spilling gallons of gasohol by the second and is in danger of running out. He grabs another piece of loose tubing and uses it as a lever. The valve finally opens. Job arrives.

EXT. CORNFIELD - NIGHT

The monster moves slowly, steadily, inexorably towards Burt and Job.

ANGLE

Burt jams the hose into the valve. He throws the switch and...

ANGLE - CORNFIELD - NEAR THE SPRINKLERS

...Nothing happens. The monster approaches. Burt and Job will never make it back to the barn. The Beast is too close. But then, the sprinklers begin to move, kicked to life by the sudden increase in pressure. They begin to spew gasohol over the sacred corn.

ANGLE

The Beast is enraged. It looses a deafening roar of protest and pain. It lifts the giant sprinklers into the air like they were toys and thrashes them, but as it does so it only gets more of the fluid on the corn, and also on itself.

ANGLE - BURT & JOB

Burt picks up the Molotov cocktail and heaves it. Within the motion, though, he is jolted by the forgotten pain in his wounded shoulder.

ANGLE

The Molotov cocktail falls far short of its target. In fact, it doesn't even break.

ANGLE

Burt, clutching his wound, stares in shock.

BURT

Oh no....

Job, realizing what has happened, begins to run straight into the corn.

BURT

Job! NO! COME BACK!!!

ANGLE

Job is intent. His little body darts into the rows.

ANGLE

The monster starts towards the boy.

ANGLE

Burt starts towards the field, screaming to Job in vain.

BURT

JOB! RUN! IT'S COMING AFTER
YOU!!!

ANGLE - BETWEEN THE ROWS - JOB

Job flies past the stalks. He spots the still-burning cocktail.

ANGLE - BURT

He scours the field with his eyes. Despair racks his body. As the Beast comes within 50 yards, its immense shadow falls over him. Burt steps back, his eyes drawn upwards. He is about to die and he knows it.

ANGLE

Job emerges from the cornfield. He hands the flaming Molotov cocktail to Burt, who is so happy to see him that he forgets himself for a moment. He looks at the boy, and then incredulously at the bomb.

ANGLE - JOB

He waits expectantly for Burt to throw it again.

ANGLE

Burt heaves the cocktail as hard and as high as he can. It takes a second for it to land and then..

BAROOOM!

THE CORNFIELD EXPLODES IN FLAME

becoming a veritable LAKE OF FIRE. The sky turns a fiery orange-red. THE BEAST HOWLS EVEN LOUDER, registering its pain and rage.

ANGLE

Vicky and the rest of the children venture a look, so great is the noise and the heat.

VICKY
(seeing the flames)
Oh my God! Buuuurrrrrt!

She goes running to him, all of the Children following.

ANGLE

Burt and Job have been running towards the barn. They join the others and all continue their retreat to a safer place.

ANGLE

They stop near the edge of town and look back on the destruction.

THE CORNFIELD - THEIR POV

The Devil is in his Hell. As the flames consume the field, A MUCH BRIGHTER AND MORE INTENSE FIRE accompanied "by tortured screaming, breaks off from the general one. The Beast is outlined and defined by this fire within the fire. It burns brighter and brighter, brilliantly for a moment, and then IMPLODES IN ON ITSELF, turning into a vortex that disappears down into the earth.

ANGLE

Burt, Vicky, Job and Sarah, and all of the others, watch, the glow from the continuing flames casting a healing light on their faces. Vicky is leaning against Burt. In her hand, she is still clutching the page from Revelations.

-end-