

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

written by

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Based on the novel by

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OVER BLACK;

Sounds come to us. Softly at first...

We are in some quiet place near a very loud place and as a sliding glass window is thrown open the acoustics come starkly into focus.

The indecipherable final lines of a speech, the roar of a capacity crowd.

Then, a closer, more intimate sound; a bullet being loaded down the barrel of a long-range carbine.

There's heavy, nervous breathing. Followed by a deafening GUNSHOT.

Then all is mayhem.

CUT IN:

EXT. ASTRODOME -- NIGHT, 1976

On the pitcher's mound, slumped over onto his side, lies BILLY PILGRIM, age 54. He wears the beard of a prophet.

As people rush around frantically trying to find the gunman, Billy rests there peacefully with his head shot open, a half smile on his dying face.

BILLY (V.O.)

Listen. Pay attention. Because if I have learned anything it is that this story isn't about my death. It's about yours. All of yours...

(beat)

You see, I have become unstuck in time. Watching moments from all along the great span of my life; always in a constant state of stage fright, never knowing which moments I'll have to act in next.

By now, Security has reached him. They crouch all around to stop the follow up shot that won't be necessary.

BILLY (V.O.)

You should know that all of this happened more or less. That I'm not making it up. With the help of a friend, I wrote my story down.

(MORE)

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It truly seemed to help people,
some of which you can see screaming
right now...

All around the stadium, zealous fans weep and carry on and
cling to one another.

BILLY (V.O.)

So, while they scream, shall we go
where I always go after death?
(beat)
To my life...

EXT. TIMES SQUARE -- NIGHT, 1968

Just a few years younger than when he was murdered, Billy
emerges in a three piece suit to walk the seedy avenues of
Mayor Lindsay's New York.

It's Christmas time in the city. But the thin layer of snow
on the ground does nothing to mask the dirt and grime of
downtown.

Billy walks hunkered down against the chill until his
footsteps slow outside an ADULT BOOKSTORE. He's seen a
familiar poster in the storefront and heads inside.

INT. THE PLEASURE CHEST -- CONTINUOUS

Billy browses the shelves until he finds what he was looking
for: a copy of Kilgore Trout's "The Big Board." He smiles,
looking at the author's picture on the dust jacket and seeing
an old friend.

CASHIER (O.S.)

You gonna buy something already?!

An angry, overweight CASHIER wants to know. He chews on his
cigar as Billy walks the book up to the counter. The man
looks perturbed at not dealing with a pervert for once.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

That ain't what you want, for
Christ's sake. What you want's in
the back.

Billy gives him a big, warm smile.

BILLY

Just this, thank you.

The Cashier shrugs and starts to ring him up as Billy scans the magazine stand next to him. The National Enquirer has the headline "*Whatever happened to Montana Wildhack?!*" Billy can't help but smile again. He takes it off the rack and plops it down in front of the cashier.

BILLY (CONT'D)
I'm going to be on the radio
tonight.

He sounds just like he looks: a truly crazy person.

EXT. 42ND STREET -- MINUTES LATER

With his book and tabloid firmly in hand, Billy crosses 3rd Avenue towards the Daily News Building.

INT. DAILY NEWS, LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

As he enters, Billy slows down a touch waiting for *something* to happen. He checks his watch. Between him and the bank of elevators is a burly SECURITY GUARD.

BILLY (V.O.)
I've lived this day many times
before...

Behind Billy enters a rich OLD BAT decked out in evening wear. She's carrying far too many X-mas presents to notice the wet floor ahead of her.

BILLY (V.O.)
...and I know without fail that
this security guard will be
distracted just long enough...

As he speaks, the old bitty takes a grand tumble and all her presents and shopping bags go flying. Right on cue, the Guard leaves his post to help her. And Billy hurries past them to the elevators unseen.

BILLY (V.O.)
I tell ya, I've seen that woman
fall so very many times...

Just as the elevator doors close, he cracks an irrepressible grin.

BILLY (V.O.)
And still it makes me laugh.

INT. DAILY NEWS, PENTHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy gets off on the top floor. There's a negligent TEMP working the reception desk of WPIX-FM, the talk radio station, and Billy plows right past her.

INT. WPIX WAITING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Billy's seated with his book and magazine in his lap. Across the room sit a group of PUNDITS who seem to know one another from the circuit. They chat amiably as the STATION MANAGER comes out to greet them.

STATION MANAGER

We're all ready for you now.

She holds the studio door open for the panelists to enter and is about to close it when Billy suddenly joins the group.

STATION MANAGER (CONT'D)

Oh, didn't see you there!

The Manager takes one look at the reading materials in his hand and, thinking they're props for the discussion, steps to the side to welcome him. Billy smiles amiably and walks past her into the soundproof booth.

INT. WPIX ROOFTOP STATION -- CONTINUOUS

As the guests are fitted with their own headsets, the evening's MODERATOR intros the discussion--

MODERATOR

--Many have tried, most have failed at the seemingly gargantuan task. Their goal: the great American novel. Scores have come close - Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Hemingway come to mind - but few in recent history. Now we give voice to a growing segment of the population that believes that the novel is no longer dying -- it is dead already. From the PIX penthouse on the 28th floor of the Daily News Building, we are joined by several literary critics from the Times and the Village Voice. Gentlemen - and ladies, apologies - what are your thoughts?

FRED ROSS, of the N.Y. Times Sunday Magazine, aims to set the tone and comes out swinging--

FRED ROSS

It speaks volumes to not only the character of a nation, but also the taste of what's supposed to be a discerning public when a book like "Myra Breckinridge" can stand atop my own publications bestseller list for eight weeks straight. I mean, here's a book about a man who has a sex change operation, masquerades as his own wife, gets in a car accident, then because he can't take his hormone treatments anymore, reverts back to being a man. Along the way Myra, or Myron - whatever you wanna call her - treats men the way that men, ostensibly, treat women. And you can tell Vidal thinks he's being soooo clever here--

GWEN FORD, of the Saturday Evening Post, has sparred with Fred before and won't give him an inch--

GWEN FORD

I'd like to know what you'd classify as satire. I really would--

FRED ROSS

I just like my satire to have a bit more subtlety to it--

GWEN FORD

Oh, like your columns!

MODERATOR

(laughing)

People, people! Back to your corners!

Billy has been waiting patiently for his turn to speak. Fred Ross's affronted silence is as good as any.

BILLY

Actually, there's a long history of hermaphroditism on other planets.

Slowly, every head in the room swivels Billy's way. He finishes somewhat unconfidently:

BILLY (CONT'D)
 ...it's only on Earth that we seem
 to find such things strange.

Fred Ross smiles. He's forgotten all about his argument with
 Gwen.

FRED ROSS
 How interesting - I wasn't aware we
 had found life on other planets.

BILLY
 Oh, I'm not talking about our own
 solar system--

FRED ROSS
 Naturally...

GWEN FORD
 Come on, Fred - he's a nut. Can we
 get back to what we were talking
 about?

FRED ROSS
 No Gwen, I'd like to hear what our
 friend, Mr...?

BILLY
 Pilgrim. Billy Pilgrim.

FRED ROSS
 Mr. Pilgrim. How perfect - a
 "Stranger in a Strange Land." Yes,
 Gwen, I'd like to hear from our
 guest if that's okay with our
 moderator--

The Moderator throws up his hands.

MODERATOR
 Don't let me stop you!

FRED ROSS
 Now, Mr. Pilgrim how do we know
 what you say is true? Every good
 journalist needs a primary source,
 don't they?

Billy looks over their doubting faces and stares back, as if
 to say -- isn't it obvious?

BILLY

Well, I am the primary source...

(beat)

I've been there.

FRED ROSS

Been where, Mr. Pilgrim?

BILLY

The Dome... on Tralfamadore.

Fred Ross's smile cannot be contained.

FRED ROSS

Tral-fam-a-what?

BILLY

Tralfamadore. It was the Tralfamadorians, in fact, who were able to give me information on my condition.

FRED ROSS

Oh, so you're aware of it?

GWEN FORD

Leave him alone, Fred.

BILLY

No it's okay, miss. I am what you might call 'untethered from time.'

MODERATOR

...You are?

BILLY

I am. I've seen my life every which way but front to back.

MODERATOR

Well then, Mr. Pilgrim... I think I speak for everyone in this room when I say we would all really like to hear your story.

BILLY

It's why I'm here.

Fred Ross leans back in his chair, crossing his arms -- this oughta be good. Billy pauses to take a sip of water, then continues.

BILLY (CONT'D)

The first time I came unstuck in time was December of '44. I was a Chaplain's assistant during the war and had just returned from the stateside funeral of my father. He was shot dead by a friend when they were out hunting for deer. So it goes. By the time I made it back to the front lines, the German's had started their offensive in what would eventually be known as the Battle of the Bulge...

INT. ARDENNES FOREST -- DAY, 1944

The Germans have caught the Allied forces completely off guard. The regiment's in the process of being destroyed as a twenty-two-year-old Billy steps out of a jeep, still in his mourning clothes. He has pale blonde hair and grey eyes.

Even though everyone's moving around on high alert, he somehow manages to track down a FIRST LIEUTENANT--

BILLY

--Sir, I'm to report to Regiment HQ. There's a Father Francis there whose assistant passed and I'm supposed to take over for him.

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Father Francis is dead so it looks like you're shit out of a job, kid.

Billy struggles to keep up.

BILLY

Then what exactly am I supposed to do--

A mortar round decimates the tent they were just in as the Lieutenant tackles Billy to the ground, barely saving his life. Among the chaos, he SCREAMS into Billy's ear--

FIRST LIEUTENANT

Find cover, private!

Soldiers are running for their foxholes as artillery rips through the air inches above their heads.

Billy crawls into a smoking crater made by the latest mortar round and covers his ears tight with both hands to block out the horrible noise of death all around.

He's unarmed and powerless to harm the enemy or help his fellow man. So, he just watches. And we see what he sees -- which is *carnage*.

Shells burst in the treetops above, raining down wintergreen needles, ninety-millimeter rounds split dense trees and soft, fleshy limbs alike.

Bullets criss-cross the woods and hit home in the necks and stomachs of teenage soldiers leaving their blood to stain the snow.

As Billy watches this happen through wide open eyes, quite simply, something snaps...

And he will not be right for a *long, long time*.

EXT. ARDENNES FRONT LINES -- HOURS LATER

The guns and mortar fire have ceased. A gentle snow has begun to fall. Not a soul is moving.

Out of a nearby foxhole, Billy tentatively sticks his head above ground.

BILLY (V.O.)
Somehow I survived.

He looks this way and that for signs of life and seeing none, skitters out of his hole like a frightened rabbit.

Getting as far as he can from the battleground, he makes his way on foot, stumbling along. CLOSE on his feet, his formal leather shoes already showing wear...

BILLY (V.O.)
The Germans attacked before I got a chance to be issued a steel helmet or combat boots. I found myself walking through two feet of snow in the penny loafers I had worn to my father's funeral.

EXT. BEL-LUX BORDER -- SOME TIME LATER

Billy bobs up and down on his half-broken shoes, staring ahead, lost.

BILLY (V.O.)
I was a dazed wanderer far behind enemy lines.

(MORE)

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I could scarcely distinguish between sleep and awake. My only company was that of three survivors who allowed me to tag along; two silent rifle scouts and an anti-tank gunner named Roland Weary.

The SCOUTS lead the way, their shorthand simpatico. At the rate they're going, Billy would be lost if it wasn't for WEARY. Every time Billy stops and mumbles:

BILLY

Go on without me...

Weary is there to curse him, kick him, and push him forward. Without the prodding, Billy just drops to the ground and tries to go to sleep. But Weary won't allow it. He keeps pulling Billy to his feet--

WEARY

--Get up! I'm not tellin' you again! We'll leave you, goddamnit!

BILLY

Then leave me.

The Scouts see this is useless.

SCOUT #1

We'll rest here a while.

As they take their ruck sacks off, Weary finally lets Billy slip to the ground and watches as he curls up into a little ball.

BILLY (V.O.)

I wanted to quit. I was cold. I was hungry. I was embarrassed and incompetent. We were without food or aid and we were eating snow to survive.

As the Scouts stop to check their bearings on a bloodied map, someone begins to shoot at them from far away.

Weary and the Scouts dive for cover, but Billy just remains where he is, kneeling in the middle of the crossway, resigned to death. Weary roars from a nearby hedgerow--

WEARY

Get out of the road, you dumb motherfucker!

The words seem to bring Billy back to his senses and he clammers down into the ditch to join them. Weary shakes his head pathetically at him.

WEARY (CONT'D)

Saved your life again, you dumb
bastard.

He goes about fishing stray chewing tobacco out of his beard as Billy stares at him.

BILLY (V.O.)

Roland Weary was from Pittsburgh. He was at the tail end of an unhappy childhood, had no friends, and was constantly being ditched by people who didn't want him around. It made Weary sick to be ditched. Whenever it happened he would find someone even more unpopular than himself, befriend that person, and then find some reason to beat the shit out of them. These were crazy, sexy, murderous relationships he entered into with people and, frankly, he didn't know any better.

Weary catches Billy glaring at him and follows his gaze to a ten-inch TRENCH KNIFE he has holstered. He pulls it out to show Billy. It's got a brass knuckle grip, bristled in spikes.

WEARY

This here is a blood gutter. My father gave it to me. He collects shit like this. Guns, swords, torture instruments, leg irons, you name it. How'd you like to get hit with something like this?

He rubs the spikes along Billy's cheek as Billy mumbles.

BILLY

I wouldn't...

WEARY

Well, I might have to use it on you if you don't start pulling your own weight!

Weary laughs himself into a coughing fit. Billy turns from him, exhausted, and leans against a tree for support.

BILLY (V.O.)
I was beginning to feel as if I
would never leave the war...

That's when it happens. His becoming unstuck in time. He falls forward and puts a hand out to catch himself. Suddenly that hand is pulling the cord on a set of venetian blinds, sending sunlight flooding into a doctor's office.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE -- DAY, 1968

Billy puts a hand up to block out the sun. He's staring out the window onto some kind of strip mall and watches as a mother hurries her crying son across the parking lot.

It's summer - there are Fourth of July deals on storefronts. The noonday heat shimmers off the scalding blacktop. He's beyond confused. He takes a step backwards and trips.

INT. ILLIUM OPTICS -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy exits his office, trying to catch his bearings. He wanders down a narrow hallway into a well-lit waiting room. When they see him, all three of his SECRETARIES greet him in unison--

SECRETARIES
Good afternoon, Dr. Pilgrim!

Their dulcet tones are too much for Billy and he immediately takes off, running outside.

EXT. ILLIUM OPTICS -- CONTINUOUS

Billy pushes his way out the front door and stops in his tracks. In front of him pass a couple longhairs who flash him a quick peace sign.

He's barely finished taking in their clothes and grooming habits when a pregnant woman in a halter top follows them.

Billy retreats. Indoors was safer.

INT. ILLIUM OPTICS, WAITING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Back in his office, Billy sheepishly approaches his Secretaries and asks:

BILLY

Would any of you be willing to give
me a ride?

The closest one to him is a woman with the nameplate
'DOLORES.'

DOLORES

What's wrong with your car?

Billy searches his pockets quickly and comes out with a set
of car keys.

BILLY

And where might my car be?

DOLORES

In your spot...

Dolores looks him over, befuddled.

DOLORES (CONT'D)

Are you feeling alright, sir?

BILLY

Yes, I'm... fine.

He can't take all three of them staring at him anymore. He
runs back outside.

EXT. ILLIUM SQUARE, PARKING LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy finds his spot. In it is a shiny, new Cadillac El
Dorado Coupe de Ville.

He's about to get in when he catches his reflection in the
driver's side window. Grey hair. Going bald. What year is
this?! The windshield registration says he's good through
1969.

Fumbling with the lock, Billy climbs in and reverses out of
the lot.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- MINUTES LATER

In near hysterics, Billy pulls to a stop at a red light. He's
breathing heavily, thinking about what to do next when a
HOMELESS MAN bangs on his window, looking for directions or
change. Billy never gets to find out which because he
immediately takes off.

BILLY (V.O.)
 It was Ilium, alright. My
 hometown. But it seemed to be
 falling apart now...

EXT. GATELAND MEADOWS, TRACK HOMES -- SOON AFTER

Billy creeps to a stop in a once familiar, but now decaying, neighborhood. Slowly, he gets out of the Coupe and stares in horror at his childhood home. It's covered in graffiti and sits smack dab in the middle of a slum. He runs his hands through his hair, refusing to believe...

EXT. DOWNTOWN ILLIUM -- LATER

Billy drives the radically altered streets of his childhood, looking for something, anything, that makes sense...

BILLY (V.O.)
 I couldn't fathom it. Just a few
 days ago I had been here. Now
 everything was changed...

In the distance, he comes upon a familiar sight: a fraternal LODGE on the corner sandwiched between two fast-food huts.

BILLY (V.O.)
 The one thing that remained was the
 Lion's Club, my father's old
 watering hole. I can't tell you how
 many times he called from there
 stinking drunk asking me to pick
 him up. If anyone still knew me --
 they would.

He swings the Coupe into the parking lot.

INT. LION'S CLUB -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy enters noisily only to find a banquet in progress. Onstage stands a MAJOR from the Marine Core talking at length about the communist scourge in Vietnam--

MAJOR GRILLO
 --now I spent two tours there and I
 can promise you that with a few
 like-minded people we can bomb the
 North back into the Stone Age!

The audience claps enthusiastically as an elderly man in plaid polyester grabs Billy by the arm.

MR. MARTELL

There he is!

Billy turns and his eyes widen.

BILLY

Mr. Martell!

MARTELL laughs at being called 'Mister.' He slaps Billy on the back.

MR. MARTELL

Mr. Pilgrim!

BILLY

Dear God, you got old!

Martell laughs.

MR. MARTELL

You're no spring chicken yourself!

As the Major finishes his speech to healthy applause, Martell starts to lead Billy towards him.

MR. MARTELL (CONT'D)

Come on Bill, I want you to meet someone...

By now the Major has made his way down off the stage to mingle with the people. A crowd has formed around him, so Martell has to force his way through with Billy in tow. It takes a few moments and as they approach they hear the tail end of what he has to say.

MAJOR GRILLO

I'm serious! I heard this from the Better Business Bureau. They hire these retarded kids who can't get any other work and they send 'em up to your door looking to sign you up for magazine subscriptions. And it works too -- who can turn down a retard?!

The group erupts in laughter.

MAJOR GRILLO (CONT'D)

It's true! Call the police when it happens to you. There's always a guy waiting down the street ready to take the money they make.

Martell finally pushes through to the inner circle and pulls Billy in with him.

MR. MARTELL

Major Grillo, this here is Billy Pilgrim, our chapter President. His son's a Sergeant in the Green Berets over in Vietnam right now.

Billy frowns - is Martell talking about him?! The Major vigorously shakes his hand.

MAJOR GRILLO

Your son's doing God's work. Bless him and every other young man over there.

Billy pulls his hand out of the man's grasp, horrified. He runs from the room to the baffled stares of all attended.

INT. COUPE DE VILLE -- SECONDS LATER

Billy jumps into the car and slams the door behind him. He furiously starts digging through the Coupe's glove box and comes out with the car's REGISTRATION.

It has his home address on it...

EXT. ROBIN'S EGG LANE -- TEN MINUTES LATER

On the nice side of town, Billy arrives outside of an expensive-looking COLONIAL. Jogging up the path, he tentatively knocks on the front door. There's no answer.

Fishing in his pockets for his keys, he finds one that looks like it might work and lets himself in.

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The inside is clean and beautiful and richly appointed. More to the point, it looks like no one's home. Billy calls out--

BILLY

Hello?

No answer. So he heads up to the second floor. At the top of the stairs, he finds what must be the master bedroom, and more importantly -- a bed! He can finally sleep.

Billy stretches his arms out wide and dives towards it only to land on hard, frozen ground in...

EXT. LUXEMBOURG -- LATE AFTERNOON, 1944

Not a moment has passed since Billy slipped off the tree. Weary drags him to his feet.

WEARY
You dumbass!

As Weary slaps the snow off his companion, Billy nods to himself, reassuringly.

BILLY
I'm okay... I'm gonna be okay...

Weary scoffs--

WEARY
If you're okay, I'd hate to see somebody sick!

He laughs and turns to see if the Scouts heard his joke. They're talking quietly by themselves, in urgent, hushed tones. Weary throws his arms around their shoulders.

WEARY (CONT'D)
I said, I'd hate to see somebody sick!

He cackles in their faces as they shrink from his touch.

WEARY (CONT'D)
So what's next for the three musketeers?

He leans in, conspiratorially.

WEARY (CONT'D)
I say we ditch tweedle dum. We'd make much better time without him.

One of the scouts nods.

SCOUT #2
Our thoughts exactly.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING -- SOON AFTER

Weary is taking a leak when the Scouts make their move. They collect their belongings and sneak off, making sure to disguise their tracks.

Weary zips up and turns back to camp, immediately clocking something's off. He hurries up to Billy who's staring dazedly at the ground in front of him.

WEARY
Where'd they go?!

BILLY
They left. I watched 'em.

WEARY
You saw them go and you didn't say anything?!

Billy nods. Weary takes a step towards him, irate. He tries to say something, but he's too mad. Soon he's sputtering, spittin' curses to the wind.

As Weary's tantrum flares, Billy calmly removes his shoes. He's on the bank of a small lake that's frozen over for the winter and for no particular reason at all -- he starts ice skating in his socks.

BILLY (V.O.)
I wanted to feel for Weary. I knew he was mad about something. But I was distracted. I was having the most delightful hallucination...

INT. STATELY PALACE HALL -- SAME TIME

In Billy's mind the frozen lake is a ballroom and he is a champion roller skater. He pirouettes and sails across the floor on one leg. Women swoon and roses are thrown at his feet. He catches one in mid air and puts it in his mouth.

EXT. LUXEMBOURG -- BACK TO SCENE

Weary catches sight of Billy figure skating. In reality it isn't as impressive as Billy thinks.

WEARY
What in the hell are you doing?!

But Billy is deaf to the world and Weary's finally had it. He slides across the ice to throttle him, slamming Billy into the creek bed.

WEARY (CONT'D)
Do you know the sacrifices I have made for you?!
(MORE)

WEARY (CONT'D)

We were the Three Musketeers and
you had to go ruin it like you ruin
everything!

He drives his boot into Billy's rib cage, sprawling him out on all fours. Billy makes strangled, convulsive, involuntary noises that sound a lot like laughter.

WEARY (CONT'D)

Oh, you think this is funny?!

Weary reaches into his coat and pulls out his BLOOD GUTTER. Raising it high above his head, he's about to bring it down when he realizes they have an audience.

Five German officers and a police dog stand above them on the ditch wall, staring curiously. Billy takes them in. They are violent, wind-burned men with teeth like piano keys. There is a COLONEL among them who is dressed in golden boots, while the others wear the clothes of the volunteer service.

The youngest, a blonde boy of fifteen, has wooden clogs held on by canvas straps. THE BOY climbs down towards them, his rifle raised. He points at Weary's boots. Weary shakes his head, miserably, and the boy raises the gun to his head. Slowly, Weary takes the boots off.

The other soldiers relieve him of his blood gutter and forty-five, as well. When they get to Billy's PENNY LOAFERS though, no one seems to want them. They toss the shoes back to Billy as two GUNSHOTS sound in the distance. The Colonel smiles and says in broken English:

COLONEL

We haf' vound your friends.

EXT. LUXEMBOURG COUNTRYSIDE -- HOURS LATER

Billy and Weary are being marched somewhere. Billy's loafers seem to be holding up, but in front of him Weary isn't as lucky.

He finds himself walking through sharp, numbing ice in disintegrating socks. Already the soles of his feet are red with blood and each step sends another bitter tear down his face.

It's sundown by the time they reach the COTTAGE. There they are joined by other lost souls from nearby villages collected by the enemy.

INT. P.O.W. COTTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Inside, there's a fire going. Billy finds an open seat on a nearby couch where he quickly falls asleep on a wounded Rabbi.

His eyes are closed for several seconds when he opens them briefly only to discover he's traveled to a HOSPITAL BED in...

INT. LAKE PLACID VETERAN'S HOSPITAL -- MORNING, 1947

Billy pulls the covers up over his head. Wherever the hell he is he wants no part of it.

NANCY PILGRIM (O.S.)
Are you going to come out or what?

Billy peers out from his bedspread to see a surprising sight. A middle-aged woman is sitting on his neighbor's bed.

BILLY
Mom?! Is that you?

NANCY PILGRIM
No, it's Eleanor Roosevelt - yes, it's your mother! You gonna come out and talk to me? I drove a long time to be here, the least you could do is talk to me.

Billy shakes his head.

BILLY
No, it's not safe out there.

NANCY PILGRIM shrugs.

NANCY PILGRIM
Suit yourself. I'll just have to talk to your roommate.

She turns to ELIOT ROSEWATER, the alcoholic, former Army Captain on whose bed she's sitting.

NANCY PILGRIM (CONT'D)
How are you, Eliot?

He puts down his book and smiles warmly.

ELIOT ROSEWATER
Howdy, Mrs. Pilgrim.

NANCY PILGRIM
Whatcha reading?

He shows her. She sees the cover and frowns.

NANCY PILGRIM (CONT'D)
Kilgore Trout's 'The Gutless
Wonder?' What's it about?

ELIOT ROSEWATER
It's about a robot with bad breath
who becomes popular after his
halitosis is cured. He's part of a
race of robots that drops something
called jellied gasoline on people
from planes. The robots get picked
to do this cause they have no
conscience. Mind you, no one seems
to care that he does this, but for
some reason they find his bad
breath unforgiveable. So eventually
he gets it fixed and goes out on
plenty of dates with beautiful
women because he has skin like a
human being does.

NANCY PILGRIM
Any good?

ELIOT ROSEWATER
Well, the prose is dreadful, but
you don't read Kilgore Trout for
the prose. You read him for the
ideas. His ideas are sensational.
I got your son into him. All he
reads now.

NANCY PILGRIM
I'd rather he weren't in here just
reading science fiction books. You
know he was top of his class when
this little episode happened?

ELIOT ROSEWATER
No, I didn't know that.

NANCY PILGRIM
And he's engaged to a very rich
girl.

Billy peeks his head out from the sheets.

BILLY
I am?!

INT. DR. ROBERT'S OFFICE -- LATER THAT DAY

Billy finds himself on the reclining couch of his therapist at the facility, DR. MELVYN ROBERTS, 63. He's got a svengali-like goatee and a piercing stare.

DR. ROBERTS

Billy, do you know why you're here?

BILLY

Like karmically?

DR. ROBERTS

You committed yourself. You had a mild nervous collapse during your final semester at the Ilium School of Opthamology.

Billy nods, dumbly.

DR. ROBERTS (CONT'D)

How do you think you're responding to your meds and the shock therapy?

Confidently drugged out, Billy mumbles:

BILLY

If you're ever in Cody, Oklahoma, just ask for Wild Bob.

Dr. Roberts nods as if that made sense.

DR. ROBERTS

Yesterday in our meeting you were talking about the incident at the YMCA when you were six.

BILLY

I was?

DR. ROBERTS

Yes. My colleagues and I conferred and we really think we've made a breakthrough. Your father threw you into that pool before you were ready and you almost drowned. Can you remember what happened several days after?

Billy thinks hard.

BILLY

We went on vacation to the Grand Canyon?

DR. ROBERTS

Precisely! And you were afraid he would throw you in there, as well. Don't you see?! The war is not the source of your illness! Your father is!

BILLY

That's good to know...

INT. BILLY'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- HALF HOUR LATER

Billy is wheeled back to his room by Nurse Ethyl. When she notices there's someone waiting for him, she intones--

NURSE ETHYL

Looks like somebody has a visitor!

There's a rather large young woman in trifocal lenses laced with rhinestones sitting on a chair by Billy's bed eating a Three Musketeer's bar.

Billy gives her a passing glance as he buries himself in his bed sheets. After a moment though, he looks back out at her.

BILLY

Valencia?

VALENCIA gives him a chocolate-y smile.

VALENCIA

Billy.

BILLY

What are you doing here?

VALENCIA

A girl's not allowed to visit her fiancé?

Billy shoves his head under his pillow.

BILLY (V.O.)

Marrying Valencia Merble, the daughter of my dean at the Ilium School for Optometry, was a sign of my mental illness. If I was in my right mind there was no way in hell I'd do that. When I first came unstuck, shocks like this always took me by surprise.

(MORE)

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I would visit times I hadn't lived yet and try to do and say the right things, but the people always stared at me as if I'd lost my mind. Eventually though, I lived the same day enough times that I finally found the right words to say.

Between the sliver of pillow and mattress, Billy's eyes darken.

BILLY (V.O.)

But always I find myself returning to the war. No matter what I do it is there like a horrible drunken memory from the night before.

He closes his eyes and wakes up suddenly back in--

INT. P.O.W. COTTAGE -- DECEMBER MORNING, 1944

Billy stirs before the other soldiers and takes in his surroundings. Hearing humming, he looks down to see the seven-year-old COTTAGE OWNER'S DAUGHTER painting his fingernails. She laughs when she realizes she's been caught and Billy laughs too. She asks in French--

COTTAGE OWNER'S DAUGHTER

Americain?

Billy nods. She smiles and goes back to painting his nails. When Billy glances at his lap he's surprised to see that he's wearing a dress. Well, not exactly a dress. Rather the pink tablecloth from the little girl's tea party set.

COTTAGE OWNER'S DAUGHTER (CONT'D)

Princesse.

Billy's about to object when one of the German soldiers comes over and kicks his leg. Ordering him and the others to their feet, the POW's are led single file out of the cottage.

EXT. LUX-GERMAN BORDER -- SOON AFTER

As they march, Billy keeps bumping into Weary who's standing in front of him. Each time, Weary SCREAMS--

WEARY

Walk right! Walk right!

By this point he's openly weeping, his gangrenous feet now blue and ivory and speckled with frozen black blood.

Into a massive valley they walk joining up with a humiliated river of Allied POW's, each with their arms above their heads. A camera records the arrivals, focusing on the sorry state of the American's feet.

Over their heads, a sign welcomes them to Germany.

EXT. RAILYARD -- AFTERNOON

Hundreds of captured men wait in formation as the prisoners are sorted according to rank. Billy, still in his pink toga, is made to stand across from a squad full of colonels. One of them has double pneumonia and a raging fever. He zeroes in on Billy and calls out to him.

WILD BOB

You one of my boys?

Billy doesn't reply, so the Colonel rephrases.

WILD BOB (CONT'D)

You from the four fifty-first?

BILLY

The four-fifty-first what?

WILD BOB

Infantry Regiment.

Billy shakes his head and the Colonel cries out wetly to anyone who'll listen.

WILD BOB (CONT'D)

It's me, boys! It's Wild Bob!

Someone tries to get Weary's attention--

P.O.W # 1

Weary, weren't you in the four-fifty-first?

But all Weary does is stare at the ground, moaning--

WEARY

My fuckin' feet...

Another person behind Billy shares:

P.O.W # 2

Four-fifty-first got completely wiped out at Bastogne. Saw it happen. That poor bastard...

WILD BOB continues to call out to his men, but only looks at Billy.

WILD BOB

There are dead Germans all over the battlefield who wish to God that they'd never heard of the four-fifty-first! When the war's over we're gonna have a regimental reunion in my hometown. I'mma barbecue ya' whole steers! God be with you, boys! If you're ever in Cody, Oklahoma, just ask for Wild Bob!

Billy forces himself to look away from the sorry sight.

EXT. BOARDING PLATFORM -- SOON AFTER

One-by-one, the squads are led to frozen piles of overcoats. To separate them, the guards take pitch forks and pry the dead animal furs apart.

When it's Billy's turn he receives a disgusting, matted pelt that separates into two pieces: a MUFF and a small fur-collared OVERCOAT meant for a woman.

When he tries the bullet-riddled coat on it rips at the shoulders and he's left with a fur-necklace of a vest that ends at his lower back.

To the Germans, Billy is the funniest thing they've ever seen and they laugh until their sides hurt.

INT. FREIGHT TRAIN -- MINUTES LATER

As the squads are loaded onto the trains to be sent to their camps, Billy is pushed into the very corner with an aged American HOBBO.

Billy's only view is that of the small slotted ventilation shaft by his head. One of the Nazis sees Billy looking out it and wags his finger at him, chiding him in German to--

GERMAN SOLDIER

Be a good boy, now.

Pulling his gaze from the viewfinder, Billy tries to get comfortable. But the realization soon hits: for the entire trip, he'll have to lean against this wall. His exhaustion is now complete. And as the train pulls out, the hobo next to him can't help but add--

HOBO

This ain't so bad. I been to much worse places than this.

MONTAGE

Time passes slowly in the boxcar. Day and Night look the same. And the men are packed in thickly, like bodies in a mass grave.

BILLY (V.O.)

Over the next ten days we made our way to Dresden. At every station house we left a train or two behind, never to see those people again. On the bright side though, I quickly found out what my slot was for...

Miserable and sickly men pass SHIT BUCKETS over to Billy and the Hobo to dump. Billy trips while pouring it out the viewfinder and a bit of human waste runs down his fur vest.

BILLY (V.O.)

Somewhere in there was Christmas.

When the soldiers finally lay down for the night to sleep, Billy tiptoes over them in the hopes of finding a place to nap. He slides in next to a half-asleep AUSTRALIAN.

AUSTRALIAN

Is that you, Pilgrim?

Billy doesn't answer.

AUSTRALIAN (CONT'D)

Dammit, it is you! You can't sleep here - you kick in your sleep!

Needing sleep more than he needs air, Billy cries out--

BILLY

Well, where am I supposed to sleep?!

AUSTRALIAN

I don't give a shit, but not here!

Humbled and hopeless, Billy heads back to his corner. The Hobo looks worse for the wear but repeats his mantra--

HOBO
This ain't so bad.

Billy eyes the old man up and down.

BILLY (V.O.)
On the eighth day the hobo died.
So it goes. I was forced to ride
next to him for the last two days
of our journey. He wasn't the only
one to die either...

In the NEXT CAR OVER;

Roland Weary is on his deathbed. His feet and ankles have blackened and now green, diseased rivulets run up his leg veins. He's being cradled by PAUL LAZZARRO, a worm of a man with scabbed over boils on his face.

LAZZARRO
You're gonna be okay.

Weary shakes his head horribly and spits his last words out:

WEARY
Who killed me???

LAZZARRO
I know who killed you.

WEARY
Tell me again!

LAZZARRO
Billy Pilgrim.

Weary yells so the whole boxcar can hear him--

WEARY
WHO KILLED ME?!

They've heard it before and respond immediately:

EVERYONE
BILLY PILGRIM!

END OF MONTAGE

INT. BILLY'S BOXCAR -- DAYS LATER

On the tenth day, Billy stares out the ventilator shaft trying to sleep as the dead hobo permanently rests his head on Pilgrim's shoulder.

When the train stops, the GUARDS unlock the massive train doors and slide them open. Slowly, the POW's ooze out of the train and regain their sea legs.

Billy's the last one, so weak the guards have to help him down. When they do they see the DEAD HOBO and start arguing over who has to remove him.

EXT. DRESDEN TRAIN DEPOT -- CONTINUOUS

It's cold out. Billy puts his hand in the muff he received and looks around. Dresden is beautiful.

Streetcars clang happily and steam radiators whistle cheerily. There are theatres and restaurants and even a zoo.

BILLY (V.O.)

Every other German city had been bombed and burned ferociously. But Dresden hadn't suffered so much as a cracked windowpane.

Someone behind Billy speaks for everyone else--

P.O.W # 3

It looks like "Oz."

Seeing an untarnished European city for the first time and finally able to stretch his legs, Billy is rejuvenated. He starts leading the POW's towards the camp.

He seems to forget what he's wearing, however. As the people of Dresden stare at the new arrivals, Billy struts around in his pink toga and fur vest, his hands in the muff.

On seeing their confused faces, he becomes self-conscious. There's an odd lump protruding from his furry hand warmer. He picks at it as a GERMAN DOCTOR steps forward from the crowd. He speaks English and sounds very angry--

GERMAN DOCTOR

You think war is funny, do you?

Billy frowns.

GERMAN DOCTOR (CONT'D)
*You think the death of millions is
 a joke?! All a big comedy?!*

Billy's confused. He's pulled out the object that was stuck in the muff. On his nail-painted hands he holds out what he found.

It's a DIAMOND. Clearly left by a dead person.

Billy smiles wide, his mind on vacation, and becomes unstuck in time, yet again...

INT. GRABLE HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- X-MAS EVE, 1948

At a Christmas Party somewhere in Illium, Valencia shows off her ENGAGEMENT RING.

VALENCIA
 Billy got it in the war.

Billy nods as everyone "ooh's and ah'h's." He's three sheets to the wind, clearly hating the company. One of Val's friends, CAROL, finishes her drink and announces--

CAROL
 I'm finished! Gonna get another --
 any takers?

VALENCIA
 None for me, thanks.

CAROL
 None for you? What are you sick or
 something, you always--

She immediately trails off. Val's smiling, which leads the entire table to guess exactly what she wanted them to guess. Congratulations sound from one end of the table to the other.

Unable to listen to any more talk of babies, Billy quickly downs his own drink and stands up, abruptly.

BILLY
 I'm gonna get another.

Everyone keeps ogling the ring and telling her how happy they are for her, but Val's attention is on Billy as he leaves the table.

EXT. GRABLE HOUSE, BAR -- SOON AFTER

By now Billy's quite drunk and flirting with a woman whose name he can't quite remember.

BILLY
I'm so goddamn bored!

WOMAN AT THE BAR
You shouldn't be, everybody here is
an optometrist.

BILLY
That's the problem!

They dissolve into laughter as Val approaches Billy from behind.

VALENCIA
Sweetie, I'm not feeling too well.
I think I'm gonna go home and lie
down for a bit.

Billy nods. The fun's over. He starts to gather his things, but Val waves him off.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
No, it's fine. You stay. I'll get
a ride home with Carol.

BILLY
You sure now?

Val looks over the Woman at the bar and swallows her pride.

VALENCIA
Yes, have a good time.

She gives him a quick kiss on the cheek and without missing a beat, Bill dives right back into his conversation with the girl. Now a third wheel, Val fades into the background.

INT. GRABLE LAUNDRY ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Billy's got the girl he was talking to at the bar on top of the dryer. They're drunkenly pawing at one another about to have sex.

He's in the middle of removing her girdle when the house's owner, MRS. GRABLE, enters. Instantly, she starts beating Billy about the head with her open palm, swatting him out into the hallway.

Billy stumbles through the party, struggling to pull his pants up.

INT. BILLY'S CAR -- MINUTES LATER

Fumbling with his keys, Billy's having a hell of a time starting the car. He can't quite find the keyhole...

He starts over by the window and runs his hand over what he thinks is the dashboard, but the key won't slide in. He repeats this motion until he's flush against the other side of the car.

It's only then that he notices that he's sitting in the back seat.

BILLY

Oh...

EXT. STREETS OF ILLIUM -- LATE NIGHT

It's well past midnight by the time he gets the car started. He's now flying down suburban roads, careening around corners and barely missing other drivers by inches. They honk and yell obscenities at him. He takes the time to scream back at them.

Up ahead there's a tight turn. And when he turns to face it, he realizes he's going too fast. But by then there's nothing he can do. His Lincoln is sent flying through a metal guardrail into a ditch where it settles upside down.

INT. ILLIUM POLICE STATION, BOOKING -- EARLY MORNING

Some time later, Billy's sitting in the lobby of the police station with an ice pack on his head. The door opens and the person he called to bail him out shows up. Valencia's father, LIONEL MERBLE, sits down next to him and sighs.

BILLY

Thank you, Lionel.

LIONEL MERBLE

Don't thank me, just pay me back.

BILLY

You didn't tell Val, did you?

LIONEL MERBLE

No. And I'm not gonna.

They sit in a heavy silence for a while.

LIONEL MERBLE (CONT'D)

You need to cut this shit out,
Billy. You got a kid on the way
and I'll be damned if I'm raising
it.

Billy nods.

BILLY

I know.

He struggles to his feet and suddenly finds himself walking
in...

EXT. DRESDEN LABOR CAMP -- MORNING, 1945

They approach the camp from afar. On both sides of the
compound's entrance there are sandbag bunkers. They're
connected by an arch that reads: DRESDEN STAMMLAGER.

As the POWs walk under the arch, Billy looks at the Guards
that are leading them. With all able-bodied men at the front
lines, the German soldiers here are composed of World War One
vets and younger soldiers not fit for service. They wear
dutch greatcoats and smoke endless amounts of cigarettes.

The American POWs are marched past a barbed wire fence that
cordons the Russians POWs off from them. The Russians are
emaciated, their black and white pajamas hanging limply off
their frames.

They watch as the Americans pass. One of them even waves
limply at Billy. Billy returns the favor but keeps his head
down. The intake group is led past a dozen BARRACK HUTS,
until they finally come to a halt at their own.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE -- CONTINUOUS

The Guards line the new arrivals up and make them stand at
attention. Once there's quiet, one of the older guards steps
forward to address them. This is COMMANDER GEMPHRIES. The
English he speaks is authoritative but broken.

COMMANDER GEMPHRIES

This is ver you will be living.
Vat vonce was a home for pigs ist
now your home. If you are lost, you
must look for Schlachthof-fünf.
Schlachthof is Slaughterhouse and
Fünf is five.

INT. STERILIZATION WARD -- MINUTES LATER

The POW's are led down a dark hallway.

P.O.W # 4

I just want to lie down - where are they taking us?

But no one answers him. The hallway snakes down a larger corridor that finally ends in a dimly-lit LOCKER ROOM.

GERMAN GUARD

Remove your clothes.

One of the older POW's asks--

EDGAR DERBY

Why?

His answer comes in the form of a rifle raised to his temple. EDGAR DERBY immediately obliges.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

Hey, you don't have to tell me twice.

As they're undressing, one of the Guards walks around collecting their clothing so it can be gassed and deloused. The mood is somber, but Derby takes one look at Billy's get-up and laughs--

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

Hell of a Halloween costume, kid!

Billy looks down at his outfit and finally seems to notice something's off about it.

BILLY (V.O.)

Edgar Derby was the oldest of us all. At forty-one, he had pulled political strings to enlist. He was a high school teacher back home who had a grown son; a marine fighting in the pacific theatre. When we asked why he had joined up, he replied simply--

Derby, who's been talking silently to the others this whole time, finishes Billy's thought out loud--

EDGAR DERBY

--I couldn't very well let my students go off and fight without me, now could I?

Derby holds out a hand to Billy.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
What's your name?

Billy looks at the hand as if it may up and bite him at any moment. But after a beat, he takes it, weakly.

BILLY
Billy. Billy Pilgrim.

Across the room, Paul Lazarro's listening. Hearing Billy's name, he spits on the ground and is about to make his way over when the Germans open the door to what appears to be a shower room.

Covering their privates, the Americans make their way inside. Once the last of them is in, the door is locked and a switch is thrown.

INT. SHOWERS -- CONTINUOUS

The prisoners watch as a racket in the pipes circles the room, racing towards the showerheads. Everyone stares at their own shower in trepidation; they've heard the stories.

Billy's standing directly under the spray when the water comes out and hits him in the face. He's sent rocketing forward in time to another shower...

INT. HONEYMOON SUITE, BATHROOM -- EVENING, 1949

Val and Billy have brought champagne into the shower to make a toast. They're already drunk and soaping each other up as Val raises her glass.

VALENCIA
To my new husband on graduating.

She downs hers in one. Billy watches as she drunkenly dances over to shampoo her hair. This is supposed to be seductive. He grimaces. She's a little bit too much woman for him.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
What are you looking at?

BILLY
Nothing...

VALENCIA
Oh yeah?

She raises an eyebrow, rinses off, and climbs atop him, trying to get something going. But coming straight from the POW showers, sex is the last thing on Billy's mind and he quickly loses his erection. Valencia sighs.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Is it me?

Billy shakes his head no and she's left to intuit what's wrong. She sits on his lap as he stares off.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Tell me about the war, Billy.

BILLY

What do you want to know?

VALENCIA

Whatever you want to tell me.

Billy shrugs.

BILLY

Maybe later, sweetheart...

VALENCIA

Come on, you talk to daddy about it all the time...

Val almost doesn't go there, but then she does.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

About some guy named Edgar...

Billy's face goes pale and begins to contort in pain as Val continues...

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Something about a shovel?

Billy pushes her off and runs from the shower, fleeing into the mist which disorients him and sends him stumbling back to...

INT. STERILIZATION WARD, SHOWERS -- BACK TO SCENE, 1944

Billy's been standing in the shower's spray for fifteen minutes. Everyone has showered but him. All he managed to do was get wet.

The Guards lead them back out to the locker rooms where the POWs watch as their clothes are removed from the fumigation chamber.

BILLY (V.O.)
 All the lice in our clothes had
 been killed. So it goes.

EXT. CAMP YARD -- SOON AFTER

With his sterilized clothes back on, Billy finds himself in line with the other POWs. At the head of it is a GERMAN CORPORAL with an eye patch and one arm taking down each prisoners name and jotting it into a notebook. Billy turns to Derby.

BILLY
 What's this for?

Derby seems surprised that Billy can form coherent sentences.

EDGAR DERBY
 The German's record our names and
 our families back home know we're
 prisoners of war and not M.I.A. or
 dead.

Billy nods. It's his turn to step up. The Corporal asks in a thick German accent--

GERMAN CORPORAL
 Name. Rank. Serial number.

BILLY
 Private Billy Pilgrim. H27-5124.

The Corporal nods--

GERMAN CORPORAL
 Next.

Billy steps to the side as Derby claps him on the back.

EDGAR DERBY
 Congratulations...
 (beat)
 You officially exist again.

EXT. CAMP YARD, HOUSING UNITS -- EARLY EVENING

By the time intake is done the sun has gone down. The men are led to a line of identical sheds in the middle of the camp. But one of these sheds seems lit up, as if there were a party going on inside...

As they near, the door is thrown open and fifty middle-aged ENGLISHMEN emerge singing "*Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here*" to welcome their new guests. The singers surround the bewildered Americans and ferry them inside.

INT. BRIT'S BARRACKS -- CONTINUOUS

Once in the light, the Brits get a look at their new companions and the singing immediately dies down. They look at the sorry sight that is the Americans, Billy especially.

One of the Englishmen, JACOB TAVENER, splits from the group and puts a gentle arm around his shoulder.

JACOB
Is that coat a joke?

Billy shrugs.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Where did you get such a thing?

BILLY
They gave it to me...

JACOB
Jerry gave it to you?! Ohhh - yank, yank, yank - the coat was an insult. You mustn't let Jerry do things like that!

He leads Billy to the nearest seat as RICHARD, the highest-ranking Englishman, motions for the rest of them to sit, as well.

RICHARD
Please, have something to eat, all of you.

A banquet created out of Red Cross rations has been set up and the Americans, having not properly eaten in weeks, throw manners to the wind and dig in. Billy, however, doesn't have the stomach for it and eats only bread.

As the Americans gorge themselves, Richard steps up onto the makeshift stage they've created.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
And what is dinner without an evening of festivities? I hope you'll bear with us, gents, as we haven't had an audience in quite some time.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Now without further ado, let me introduce the "Labor Camp Players" and their all-male revue... selections from "*Cinder-fella!*"

There's scattered applause as most are too busy eating. CINDERELLA and the PRINCE appear, stage left.

CINDERELLA

Oh I've just had the most wonderful night!

The Prince lewdly steps towards her.

THE PRINCE

It doesn't have to be over...

Americans with mouths full of soup laugh heartily. On stage, a reluctant actor steps forward, the hands of a CLOCK pinned to his shirt.

THE CLOCK

Hello, I'm a clock. It's midnight. You're in trouble.

A confused Cinderella holds the horny Prince at bay.

CINDERELLA

There was something I was supposed to do by midnight...

Billy laughs when he sees the man who helped him playing the FAIRY GODMOTHER. Jacob wears a mop in place of a wig as he calls from the wings:

JACOB

Remember goddaughter, if you're not home by midnight your carriage will turn into a pumpkin--

CINDERELLA

Ah, shit!

Billy finds this hysterical. He laughs louder and longer than anyone. And soon he's the only one still going. Very quickly, the laughter gives way to shrieking.

Everyone stares at him. He's unable to stop, screaming and braying, his mouth full of bread. He cackles madly until finally, several of the Englishmen are forced to band together to drag him from the room.

EXT. BRIT'S BARRACKS -- CONTINUOUS

The Brits carry Billy across the yard. It's silent out, save for Billy whose screaming can't be stifled...

INT. HOSPITAL BARRACKS -- MOMENTS LATER

The Brits succeed in wrestling Billy down onto a gurney. He fights them every step of the way until the Fairy Godmother shoves a morphine-filled SYRINGE into his arm. The drugs quickly work their magic and Billy is sent blissfully to sleep...

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM -- LATE NIGHT, 1968

In what is perhaps a dream, perhaps not, Billy wakes up in his bed back home. He's by himself and puts a lonely hand where his wife normally lies. After a moment, he gets up.

INT. BARBARA'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy makes his way down the hall to his daughter's bedroom. The place has been cleaned out, the remaining clothes and trinkets not worthy of being taken, dumped onto the bed.

Billy sits sadly at the foot of her bed just as Barbara's pink rotary phone RINGS. Picking it up, Billy hears the drunken, heavy breathing of an older man.

DRUNK (O.S.)
Hey man, is Barbie there?

Billy sighs.

BILLY
Not anymore...

DRUNK (O.S.)
But it says, 'for a good time,
call!' This ain't no good time!

The man hangs up and Billy returns the receiver to its cradle. He heads downstairs.

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE, KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

There are remnants from his daughter's wedding everywhere: a half-eaten cake, unwrapped presents, even a striped tent in the backyard where the function was held.

Billy grabs a half bottle of champagne off the kitchen counter, drinks some, then heads for the living room, swinging the bottle like a dinner bell as he goes.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Billy turns on the television. There's a crappy sci-fi/ soft core hybrid on; one of the dozens put into production after "Barbarella" was a hit.

This one stars MONTANA WILDHACK. She's a chesty blonde with minimal acting talent, but a great set of pipes.

ON SCREEN

Montana is tied to an EXAMINATION TABLE with an ominous 16-inch needle glacially approaching her.

While struggling against her bonds, she comes face-to-face with the CREATURE administering the syringe. It's an octopus-like, dollar store alien with whipping arms that have done a hell of a job ripping her space blouse to pieces.

MONTANA

I don't care if you keep me on
Delgar-7 for the rest of my life.
There's no way in hell I'm
betraying the man that I love!

The many-tentacled Beast manages to talk out of one of its oozing orifices--

OCTO-LUST

Well then, Lt. Spacecraft - you
will die!

And as OCTO-LUST moves on her she lets loose a terrific SCREAM that would put most horror ingenues to shame.

LIVING ROOM

Billy smiles at her, leering, until a noise distracts him. It's coming from the backyard. He stands and shuts the set off, then hearing it again, goes outside to investigate.

EXT. PILGRIM HOUSE, BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Billy's on the back patio when a blinding WHITE LIGHT covers him. Blocking out the glare, he barely makes out the contours of a FLYING SAUCER as it approaches. It looks strikingly similar to what people in the 1950's thought UFO's might look like...

Down snakes a ladder out of the airlock. It's outlined in lights like those on a Ferris wheel. Billy reaches a hand out to touch it and a strike of electricity bonds him to the ladder, pulling him up and into the saucer.

INT. FLYING SAUCER -- CONTINUOUS

The ship takes off and Billy finds himself flattened against a yellow barca-lounger as the UFO screams out of Earth's atmosphere...

INT. THE DOME ON TRALFAMADORE -- SOME TIME LATER

Billy wakes up naked in an opaque dome. His surroundings are like that of a swinging sixties bachelor pad. Getting up, he tries to escape through a side door when A VOICE comes on over an INTERCOM near his head--

THE VOICE (O.S.)

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

The Voice sounds as if someone had sat unexpectedly upon the keys of a church organ.

THE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The atmosphere outside your dome is currently 97.3% cyanide.

Billy feels slightly stupid talking to a speaker in the wall, but responds nonetheless.

BILLY

Where am I?

THE VOICE (O.S.)

659 billion light years from Earth. However, we tried to make up your room so that you would have little, if any, homesickness. Most of the design features you see were stolen from a Sears-Roebuck in Iowa City, Iowa.

BILLY

What?! Why me?

THE VOICE (O.S.)

'Why me?' That is a very Earthling question to ask, Mr. Pilgrim. Why you? Why us for that matter? Why anything? Because this moment simply is.

(MORE)

THE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You will find soon enough that we are all bugs in amber. No more, no less.

BILLY

I have to get home. There are people who'll be looking for me.

THE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, I wouldn't be worried about that, Mr. Pilgrim. We have taken you through what you might call a time warp, so that you could spend several years on Tralfamadore, if you wanted, and only be missing from Earth for a microsecond.

Billy appears faint; he starts to sway on the spot.

BILLY

I said, 'I want to leave.'

THE VOICE (O.S.)

And where would you like to go, Mr. Pilgrim?

Billy makes the mistake of screaming--

BILLY

Anywhere!

--and the next thing he knows, he wakes up back in New England at the...

INT. HONEYMOON SUITE, BEDROOM -- LATE NIGHT, 1948

Billy scurries back into bed and hugs his wife hard from behind, waking her up.

BILLY

I missed you.

He cries between her shoulder blades until she turns to face him.

VALENCIA

I'm sorry we fought.

He kisses her and she starts to well up. Billy wipes her face.

BILLY

What's the matter?

VALENCIA

I'm just so happy! I never thought anyone would marry me...

BILLY

Oh...

VALENCIA

I'm going to lose weight for you, Billy. I'm going to go on a diet and become beautiful for you!

BILLY

I like you just the way you are.

VALENCIA

Do you really?!

Billy nods and Val squeals joyfully--

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Oh, Billy!

Kissing him hard on the mouth, she pulls back smiling. She props herself up on her elbow to fully take in her new husband.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

You know, I look at you sometimes and I get funniest feeling that you're just full of *secrets*...

INT. HOSPITAL BARRACKS -- JANUARY MORNING, 1945

Billy wakes up back in the hospital bed. Sitting next to him in a chair is Edgar Derby. He's writing a letter home and looks up when he notices that Billy is awake.

EDGAR DERBY

I offered to keep an eye on you.
You feelin' better?

There's a paternal warmth to his question. Billy looks down and notices he's tied to the bed.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

You were kicking something awful in your sleep. Talkin' too. Who's Montana, by the way?

Billy's eyes go wide.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
 Don't feel like sharing? Fine,
 then. Now, if you can promise me
 you're done with the kicking, I
 think I can let you loose.

Derby undoes the restraints and Billy sits up in bed.

BILLY
 What are you writing?

EDGAR DERBY
 Letter home. My wife and I are
 having our twentieth when I get
 back. The Woman's got more ideas
 for china patterns than when we
 first got hitched--

Derby's cut off as behind them, a couple of new arrivals
 enter. Jacob's in the process of carrying an unconscious
 Paul Lazarro to one of the hospital beds.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
 What happened to him?

JACOB
 Sad story really -- caught him
 stealing cigarettes from under my
 pillow, so I had to break the poor
 boy's arm.

Derby LAUGHS and goes back to his letter. As Jacob and the
 Doctor mix plaster for the cast, Lazarro comes to and starts
 to bitch--

LAZARRO
 Oh you made a *biiig* mistake, friend
 - anybody touches me better kill
 me, or I'm gonna go outta my way to
 have *him* killed!

Jacob scoffs.

JACOB
 You know there is still time for me
 to kill *you*, if you persuade me
 that that's the sensible thing to
 do.

LAZARRO
 Why don't you go fuck yourself?!

JACOB
 Don't think I haven't tried.

He winks at Billy and walks out of the hospital, smiling.
Lazarro watches him go, spitting mad.

LAZARRO

He thinks I'm joking. I tell ya,
even if the President of the United
States fucked with me, I'd fix him
good. You should have seen what I
did to a dog one time...

Derby looks up from his letter.

EDGAR DERBY

A dog?

LAZARRO

Son of a bitch bit me. So I got
some steak and I got me the spring
out of a clock. I cut that spring
up into little pieces. They were
sharp as razor blades. I shoved
them into the steak and went past
where the dog was tied up and said,
'come on doggie, let's not fight
anymore, let's be friends.' He
believed me. He swallowed that
steak in one big gulp and I waited
around for ten minutes. Soon blood
started coming out of his mouth.
He began crying and rolling around
on the ground like knives were
inside of him. Then he tried to
bite out those insides. I laughed
and said, 'that's right boy, that's
me in there with those knives.'

He smiles off of Edgar and Billy's horrified looks.

LAZARRO (CONT'D)

Anybody asks you what the sweetest
thing in life is -- it's revenge.

EDGAR DERBY

You plan to feed the Fairy
Godmother clock springs?

LAZARRO

Bullet's cheaper than a clock.

EDGAR DERBY

You're gonna shoot him?!

LAZARRO

No, I'm going to have him shot. I can have anyone in the world killed for a thousand dollars plus traveling expenses. Think about it - he'll get home after the war. He'll be a big hero. The dames'll be crawlin' all over him. Then he'll settle down. Maybe get married. A few years'll go by. And then one day there'll be a knock at the door. When he opens it a stranger will ask his name and shoot him in the face. It happens to anyone on my list...

Derby laughs.

EDGAR DERBY

Oh yeah, and who's "on your list?"

LAZARRO

That Fairy God faggot and of course, your friend over there--

Lazarro points to Billy.

LAZARRO (CONT'D)

My best friend died on account of this cocksucker here and I promised to have him shot after the war.

Billy blanches.

BILLY

You can't be serious...

LAZARRO

Forget about it, kid. Enjoy life while you can. Nothing's gonna happen for fifteen, twenty years. But lemme give you a piece of advice: whenever the doorbell rings...

(beat)

Have someone else answer it.

Lazarro starts to LAUGH. It's high-pitched, sick and humorless, and sounds a lot like *screaming*...

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- DAY, 1951

Billy's alone watching the kids. His three-year-old is playing with blocks on the floor.

The *screaming* is coming from Billy's newborn baby daughter, Barbara. Billy's got her balanced on his knee, but he's paying no heed to her cries. He's in the middle of a full-blown PTSD episode, staring blankly at the wall.

The only thing that brings him out of it is the SOUND of the DOORBELL. It pulls everything else into focus. Even the baby stops crying.

Getting to his feet, Billy places Barbara in her playpen and walks to the foyer. He eyes the front door as if unwilling to approach it. But he does. Slowly and surely, he walks up to it, turns the knob, and opens it wide--

EXT. PILGRIM HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Standing there on his front stoop is a mentally handicapped young man selling subscriptions to "Life" magazine. As he goes into his spiel, Billy looks up and down the block for the man behind the scenes, the one pulling the strings.

There's a dirt-brown Lincoln Continental idling a few houses down, the driver smoking an endless string of Parliaments and leaving the butts to burn out below the driver side window.

Billy exits his house, leaving the front door wide open. He charges across the street towards the Continental.

When he gets close, he sees that the man has a broken smile, teeth like fallen gravestones. The SMOKER asks--

THE SMOKER

Something I can help you with,
friend?

Billy rips the door open and grabs the driver by his lapels, dumping him out onto the asphalt. Billy opens up on the guy, punching him in the face without mercy. He doesn't stop. Not even when his hands are bruised and covered in the man's blood.

Behind him, Billy's son has come to the front door to see what all the commotion's about. The handicapped solicitor takes his hand to stop him from running off and the two of them stand there watching as Billy's demons rage...

INT. HOSPITAL BARRACKS -- BACK TO SCENE, 1945

Billy's fight with the shyster has morphed seamlessly with him beating Lazarro. Somehow, Billy's gotten out of his hospital bed and torn Lazarro and his half-finished cast to the floor.

Unable to defend himself properly, Lazarro is taking terrible blows to the face and body. The beating only stops when Derby and the British Doctor pull them apart. Lazarro spits at him, foaming at the mouth--

LAZARRO

You're dead!

Not done by a long shot, Billy dives out of Derby's grasp and makes for Lazarro again, but Edgar pulls him back at the last moment and drags him out of the hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL BARRACKS -- CONTINUOUS

Derby puts him down when they're out of Lazarro's sight.

EDGAR DERBY

That wasn't very smart.

Billy doubles over, catching his breath.

BILLY

How so?

EDGAR DERBY

How so?! You're gonna have to check every meal you eat from here on out for clock springs!

Billy shrugs. They find themselves walking towards Slaughterhouse Five in relative silence.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

Look, are you okay?

BILLY

Yeah, I just...

Billy looks around, seemingly lost.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Is there a telephone? I'd like to call my mother and tell her I'm alright.

Derby looks him over, curiously.

EDGAR DERBY

Just where do you think you are,
kid?

Billy doesn't answer, just stares off past the barbed wire fence into the distance.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

I need you to listen to me Billy.
You need to start taking care of
yourself. If you let it the war's
gonna eat you alive. You have to
put on a brave face. Even if it's
a mask, even if it's a lie. You
can become anyone you want to after
this place. You just have to
survive it.

After a while, Billy finally nods and together they enter...

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE -- CONTINUOUS

They take a seat in front of Richard who is busy addressing the American POWs.

In front of each of the newcomers is a RED CROSS KIT containing a bar of soap, a safety razor, a washcloth, a chocolate bar, two cigars, and a book of matches.

The Brit's speech is akin to that of an INDUSTRIAL FILM--

RICHARD

If you stop taking pride in your appearance, you will die much sooner than expected. I have seen it happen. Men stop standing up straight. They cease to wash and shave. Then they refuse to get out of bed altogether. And soon enough, they die. It is evidently a very easy and painless way to go, if you so choose it. If you don't, I'd like you to join me in making the following pledge to yourself: to shave every day, to brush your teeth *twice* a day, to wash your face and hands before every meal, to exercise for at least one half hour every morning...

His words transcend space and time and carry over into Billy's life in...

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE -- VARIOUS, 1951 AND BEYOND

As Billy Pilgrim tries to put his life together, Richard intones from the past--

RICHARD (V.O.)
Make your bed with military
corners...

And Billy obeys.

RICHARD (V.O.)
To look into a mirror frequently,
evaluating your appearance...

Billy stares at his gut. Lifts it and lets it drop. He rubs his knuckles tenderly where they're still bruised from fighting that stranger.

He gingerly rubs shaving cream on his brillo-pad of a face and begins to shave.

A MONTAGE begins, taking him through the many years that follow. The memories play like Super-8's, kodachrome-tinged.

Lionel Merble, Val's father, gifts Billy a new Buick Roadmaster with a big red bow. Billy hugs him.

They go into business at Lionel's most prosperous branch in Ilium where Billy is made manager. We see the ribbon cutting ceremony and everything.

With his new income, Billy buys Val and his burgeoning family an all-electric, Georgian home. She jumps around ecstatically when she sees it.

Billy hosts a Memorial Day backyard barbecue, shakes hands at the Lion's Club, and gets drunk with the guys down there.

Soon after, his wife has assembled the family for a cheap-o Wal-Mart family portrait. Billy smiles, ravidly. He is an imperfect man trying the best he can to make it through the day.

We watch as the kids grow up. The family gets a dog named Spot that Robert, Billy's oldest, seems particularly fond of. When it dies, they bury it in the backyard with the epitaph: "So it goes..."

The death rocks Robert hard and there's more than one instance where Billy has to pull his son off a neighborhood kid he's beating up.

In his teen years, Robert steals from his parent's liquor cabinet.

Upstairs, his younger sister, Barbara, climbs out of her bedroom window, shimmying down the gutters to meet up with College guys that have pulled up in their cars to take her out on the town.

And Billy misses it all, because his mind is somewhere else...

The MONTAGE ENDS as time slows in...

EXT. DOWNTOWN ILLIUM -- AFTERNOON, 1967

Billy's in the Coupe de Ville he gifted himself once the Buick Roadmaster crapped out. He's driving down the street when something down an alley catches his attention. A grown man is arguing with a group of pre-teens...

Billy slows the Coupe to a crawl and watches the altercation, his way blocked by dozens of adolescent's bicycles.

Getting out, he approaches the scrum of kids and listens as KILGORE TROUT - apparently a circulation man for the Illium Gazette in his spare time - manages his delivery boys and girls--

KILGORE TROUT

Get off your lazy asses and get the customers to subscribe to the fucking Sunday edition! Whoever sells the most subscriptions gets a free trip with their parents to Martha's Vineyard for a week - all expenses paid.

LYDIA, 12, one of the newspaper girls, is electrified. She raises her hand but doesn't wait to be called on.

LYDIA

Mr. Trout?! If I win can I bring my sister too?

KILGORE TROUT

You think money grows on trees, Lydia?!

She shakes her head no and lets her hands drop.

KILGORE TROUT (CONT'D)

Good. Now get out there and con-con-con!

Most of the kids depart, except for DAVEY, a ticked-off preteen who wants to quit. Billy watches their exchange, rapt.

DAVEY

My mom says I can't work for you anymore because the hours are too long and the pay is too shitty.

KILGORE TROUT

Oh, your Mom has a head full of beans! What are you - some kind of "Gutless Wonder?" You can't quit Davey, you're my best runner!

But the kid won't be swayed. He leaves his newspaper bag at Kilgore's feet. Trout is despondent until Billy recognizes him.

BILLY

Excuse me, are you Kilgore Trout?

KILGORE TROUT

Yeah.

BILLY

The writer?

KILGORE TROUT

Look you tell my ex if she wants to serve me papers she can damn well do it herself!

BILLY

I'm not a process server...

KILGORE TROUT

Well, whoever you are, I can't talk right now. My best guy just upped and quit and now I have to deliver these papers myself. So unless you have a car in working order, I'm afraid I'll have to say good day!

Kilgore digs a flask out of his pocket and turns his back on Billy, who can't believe his good fortune.

BILLY

I have a car.

Kilgore brightens considerably.

KILGORE TROUT

What did you say your name was?

INT. COUPE DE VILLE -- SOON AFTER

In Billy's car, Kilgore drinks like a fish, lazily pitching newspapers out the window every couple of minutes.

BILLY

Listen, I have a question. You're an expert on these things. Say, hypothetically I was, uh... writing a story about a protagonist who was... unstuck in time.

Kilgore looks at him skeptically and Billy sighs.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You think I'm crazy, don't you?

KILGORE TROUT

Not necessarily. I wrote a book once called 'Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension.' It was about people with mental illnesses who couldn't be treated because the causes of the diseases were all in the fourth dimension and the three-dimensional Earthling doctors couldn't see or imagine a solution.

BILLY

I don't think I read that one.

KILGORE TROUT

No, you wouldn't have - I burned every copy. Just like those sweet, religious folks from the Midwest do to my books at barbecues.

Billy smiles, this is all too good to be true.

BILLY

I can't believe the Kilgore Trout is sitting in my car. Look, I know this probably isn't your scene, but my wife is having a party for our 20th wedding anniversary next Friday and you've got to come!

KILGORE TROUT

Will there be alcohol?

Billy nods.

KILGORE TROUT (CONT'D)

Then I accept.

INT. ILLIUM OPTICS -- HALF HOUR LATER

BARBARA, now sixteen, waits for her father to arrive. She's sitting in the lobby reading Cosmo when one of the other doctors, a young man of twenty-five named BART BOUDREAUX, asks--

BART BOUDREAUX
Who are you here to see?

BARBARA
You must be new. My father owns
this place.

BART BOUDREAUX
You're Bill's kid? But you're
so...

He trails off, his mind in a terrible place.

BARBARA
I'm so... what?

She smiles at him and pops her bubblegum as her father returns from driving Kilgore Trout around. Bart tries to look busy.

BART BOUDREAUX
Bill! Good lunch break?

Billy gives him a curious eye.

BILLY
Was fine...

He spots his daughter and gives her a kiss on the forehead.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Hey sweetheart, what're you doing
here?

BARBARA
You're not serious, are you? I'm
supposed to drive over with you for
the thing.

Billy slaps his head.

BILLY
Of course! Where's your brother,
isn't he coming too?

BARBARA
Beats me...

INT. LION'S CLUB -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Billy's waiting in the wings off the dais with Val. He's pacing nervously and shaking his head.

BILLY

He's supposed to be here, Val. I'm tired of this crap.

VALENCIA

You and me both.

BILLY

He promised us.

VALENCIA

I know...

On stage someone finishes a speech with:

MR. MARTELL (O.S.)

...my friend and confidant... your new President, Billy Pilgrim!

There's hearty applause as Billy looks around one final time for his son. He curses to himself--

BILLY

Son of a bitch...

--and walks onto the stage, all smiles.

INT. COUPE DE VILLE -- HOURS LATER

Driving home, Billy is silently seething as Val tries to console him.

VALENCIA

I'm sure there's some explanation.

He begrudgingly nods and puts an arm around her chair. He's grown fond of her over the years...

She smiles back as POLICE LIGHTS shine on their faces.

EXT. PILGRIM HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Billy pulls into the driveway only to see a police cruiser waiting for them.

A SERGEANT stands there on the front stoop, his hand on the shoulder of an unrepentant ROBERT, age 18.

The family gets out of the car and makes their way to him.

BILLY
What'd he do, officer?

SERGEANT
It's bad this time, Billy.

BILLY
Out with it.

SERGEANT
He was drunk in the county
graveyard, tipping gravestones.

BILLY
Jesus, Robbie...

Billy runs an exhausted hand through his hair.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Is he being charged?

SERGEANT
They're tallying up a bill, waiting
for daytime to see the full extent
of the damage. I'd lawyer up, kid.

The Sergeant tips his hat to Val and Barbara.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
I'll see you around the lodge,
Billy. Night, all.

He drives off and the Pilgrims take the fight indoors.

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE, FOYER -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy can barely contain himself once the door's shut--

BILLY
I can't believe you!

ROBERT
Just stop, please. I have a
headache; we can talk about it
tomorrow.

Robert starts to walk upstairs, but Billy stops him.

BILLY
No, you'll talk to us now!

ROBERT

Are you speaking for the both of you?

VALENCIA

Listen to your father!

ROBERT

That's right, mom - just stand there and pretend he's not yelling.

BILLY

Don't talk to your mother that way! We work too damn hard for you to just flush your life away! You're gonna make some changes. You're gonna break up with those dropouts you call friends. You're gonna quit it with the drinking and the staying out 'til all hours. I'm not having you sleeping until three in the afternoon on Sundays, I don't care if it's the weekend! You're gonna get up, you're gonna make your bed; it's not your mother's responsibility. You will start acting like you are part of this family and not some lodger in a Holiday Inn!

ROBERT

And what if I don't?

BILLY

Well, you don't like it - you can get the hell out!

Robert's caught off guard. So are the others...

ROBERT

You actually mean that, don't you?

BILLY

You're damn right I do!

Robert nods, suddenly calm.

ROBERT

You know, I'm eighteen, dad?

He picks up the winter coat he just hung up.

BILLY

What's that supposed to mean?!

ROBERT

It means that maybe I should start
looking for a place of my own--

Val's been standing on the sidelines, afraid something like
this might happen.

VALENCIA

Billy, no--

But Robert is already out the door. Billy calls out after
him, incredulous--

BILLY

Just where do you think you're
going?!

EXT. PILGRIM HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Billy follows his son out onto the sidewalk.

ROBERT

I'll manage.

Robert mumbles, zipping up his coat. Billy stands there
watching him go, his arms crossed stubbornly.

BILLY

You'll be back. You got nowhere to
stay! You got no job, no high
school degree -- even McDonald's
won't have you!

By now, Billy is ranting and raving on the front lawn. At the
height of his anger, his son turns suddenly to stare right
back at him. He gives Billy the most pitying look you could
give another person.

ROBERT

You don't like your life very much,
do you dad?

The words are cutting and Billy is dumbstruck as his son
takes off down the road. He runs after the boy, hopelessly
calling his name, only to find himself back in...

EXT. DRESDEN TRAIN DEPOT -- LATE AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY, 1945

Billy slows from a run to a trot, composing himself. When he
realizes where he is, the look on his face says it all: what
comes next will be terrible.

The POWs have finished their work detail for the day and are on their way back to camp. They comes across the rail yard, a place they haven't been since they first arrived.

Billy spots him first; the DEAD HOBO he rode in with, frozen stiff in the weeds beside the tracks. The Guards just left him there in the fetal position, trying even in death to warm himself beside his fellow boxcar mates.

Someone had the foresight to take his shoes though -- his feet are blue and ivory now. Billy is busy staring at them when an outraged voice sounds from behind him in the crowd--

EDGAR DERBY (O.S.)

You bastards just left him there?!

Billy turns to see Edgar Derby pushing his way through the crowd.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?! Don't you have any dignity?!

The guards form a half circle around Derby, guns raised, as if he might be trouble. Derby doesn't even flinch.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

Bury him, damn you!

The guards don't make a move.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

Fine. You don't want to do it?!
Then I'll do it!

Derby marches over to the supply wheelbarrow, overflowing with picks and spades, and fishes out a shovel. He furiously starts digging a grave as the Germans watch him, wordlessly.

The ground is frozen solid and Derby is panting in exhaustion after only a couple moments. But he never lets up. There's something stubborn and wild in him and he locks eyes with the Guards whenever his will seems to be flagging. The Germans don't like this and take aim to shoot him.

This hits home with the other POWs and one-by-one, they grab their own shovels. They drop down beside Derby into the hole to help him dig. Even Billy joins in.

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE -- SPRING DAY, 1967

It's been almost two weeks since Robert left and the Pilgrims are preparing their home for Billy and Val's twentieth wedding anniversary. Caterers set up tables and chairs and lay out stacks of food platters. A couple of people are already there; close friends, milling around.

Billy finds himself on a couch, talking with one of the guests. He's in the middle of telling them all about his travels.

BILLY

I have to tell you, it weighs on a man, this not knowing where I'm going next. It's never inconsequential either. It's always a time I fucked up.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: he's talking to a baby. It nods. It doesn't know curses yet, doesn't know to be offended.

Billy catches sight of his wife across the room. She's busy fussing over every detail of the party, trying in her own way to make things perfect. Billy motions to her and leans in to confide to the baby.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You see that lady over there? That's my wife. Like so many Americans, she's trying to construct a life that makes sense out of things she finds in airport gift shops. I can't say I blame her. I might be doing the same if I were sticking around. Still, I've taken her for granted for so long. And I'm running out of time to tell her that.

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- SOON AFTER

It's toast time. All the guests are standing together in front of Billy and Val.

VALENCIA

Thank you all so much for coming. It means a lot to have you under one roof to celebrate with us. And I know Billy agrees. Bar's open so get yourself a--

BILLY

Actually, I'd like to say a few words.

Val's got a worried look on her face, but gives up the floor anyway. She has no idea what her husband might say...

BILLY (CONT'D)

All of this, everything you see, is made possible by this woman right here.

Val smiles, nervously, as Billy continues.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Now maybe I didn't value that in the first years of our marriage. Days when I couldn't get out of bed that she sat up with me. I took it for a given, that that's what a marriage was. But I'm here to tell you I damn well value it now. And I'll spend the rest of *my life* trying to make it up to you. To Val...

Billy raises his glass. There's cheers-ing and applause as Val leaves the room, excusing herself before she starts blubbering.

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE, FOYER -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

The party's back up and roaring by the time the doorbell rings. Billy goes to answer it. Standing there on the front stoop is Robert in an ARMY UNIFORM.

ROBERT

Hey, dad.

He smiles shyly. Billy just stares at him. He can't find the words.

BILLY

You idiot.

Robert laughs, surprised, but the smile slips from his face.

ROBERT

What?

BILLY

What have you done?! We could have worked it out! You don't want to do this.

ROBERT

Hey, it was good enough for you.

BILLY

No, it wasn't!

Val comes up from behind Billy.

VALENCIA

Who is it, honey--

But her words cut out when she sees her son. She shrieks and drops the plates she was carrying.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Robbie, no! Are you stupid?! They're gonna send you to Vietnam!

ROBERT

I asked to go, ma.

Billy's as close to tears as he's ever come.

BILLY

You're gonna die over there, son.

ROBERT

It's the right thing to do--

BILLY

I don't care if you think that! I've seen what happens to people who care!

ROBERT

It's going to be okay. Now, can I come in?

Billy stands there, frozen. After a moment, he walks from the door and his son enters. Robert tries to hug his mother, but Val flees back into the kitchen.

Billy drops down onto the couch he was on just a minute before. Time seems to go on around him. He watches as people file in and the party gets going.

On one side of the room, Kilgore Trout stands regaling a group of women with fictional stories of being a globe-trotting author.

On the other, the Febs (or Four-Eyed Bastards), an all-optometrist barbershop quartet, are warming up. Hearing them run through scales seems to agitate Billy. He starts to sweat and pull at his collar.

Because for the briefest of moments, they look just like his prison guards from the POW camp. He gets up to flee the room.

The only person who's seen what's happened is Trout. He cuts Billy off at the pass as he tries to escape upstairs.

KILGORE TROUT
What just happened?

BILLY
Nothing.

Billy wants nothing more than to get away.

KILGORE TROUT
You saw something.

BILLY
I don't know what you're talking about.

KILGORE TROUT
When the quartet was singing. It reminded you of something...

Billy shakes his head, vigorously.

BILLY
No.

KILGORE TROUT
It wasn't a story you were writing, was it? You were talking about yourself--

Kilgore lowers his voice to a confidential whisper.

KILGORE TROUT (CONT'D)
You saw through a time window!

Billy shakes his head again and turns to leave. But his way is blocked by his daughter, Barbara. She has Bart Boudreaux with her for some reason.

BARBARA
Daddy, I need to talk to you.

Billy rubs his temples, the day already too much for him.

BILLY

Bart, what are you doing here?

BARBARA

I invited him. There's something we need to talk to you about.

BILLY

Yeah, and what's that?

Barbara holds up a diamond clad hand, beaming.

BARBARA

We're getting married!

ROBERT

Jesus Christ!

Robert can't help but interject. He's sidled up to the conversation. The overjoyed smile on Barbara's face begins to wilt.

BARBARA

What would you know about it, alchy?!

ROBERT

Hey, at least I'm not engaged to my father!

BARBARA

Oh, that's rich!

She laughs grimly, but runs crying from the room.

BART BOUDREAUX

Don't worry, Bill - I'll talk some sense into her.

He claps a hand onto Billy's shoulder. Billy stares at it, incredulously, wondering why this man is touching him.

Bart runs after his fiancée and Billy and his son are left alone for the first time since he arrived.

ROBERT

It's not that bad, pop. They're gonna pay for my college and I'm gonna take the Special Forces qualifier. I'm gonna be a Green Beret--

Billy turns his back on him, trying to appear busy. Robert sighs; the one person he thought would be proud of him is ignoring him.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You're still never gonna talk to me about it, are you dad? I thought if I went to war you could confide in me--

He tries to continue, but there's yelling coming from the other room...

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- SAME TIME

Val has raised her voice to a dull roar to accost Kilgore Trout.

VALENCIA

A what?!

Kilgore repeats himself.

KILGORE TROUT

A war book. I'm writing a war book next. I spent some time in the armed forces, and they say write what you know--

As Billy enters the room, Val continues raving--

VALENCIA

I know exactly the type of book you'll write! You'll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you'll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we'll have a lot more of them. And they'll be fought by babies like this one here!

She points to the child Billy was talking to on the couch.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

And this one--

Val points to her son, frantically. She's unaware, but she's been clutching her chest and now she's breathing heavily and her vision's become blurry.

Billy steps forward, knowing something's wrong. Losing her balance, Val makes a desperate grab for him. Billy tries to catch her but her legs give out. She lands hard on the floor as several party-goers cry out.

Billy immediately rolls her over onto her back and tries to press and breathe life back into her, but it's no use. She was dead before she hit the ground.

The party has stopped and everyone is staring at Billy. He looks up to see Barbara crying in Bart's arms and Robert blankly staring at his mother's body, in shock.

Kilgore attempts to help his friend to his feet, but Billy wrenches out of the man's grasp and runs from the room.

But he can't escape. He swings open the front door and bolts out of it only to find himself back at the graveside of the hobo...

EXT. DRESDEN TRAIN DEPOT -- BACK TO SCENE, 1945

With the other Americans joining Derby to dig the grave, the Germans appear to have a rebellion on their hands. They aim their guns at each new person who hops down into the hole and scream in their native language. Just as someone's about to be shot, an ALARM goes off.

Everyone looks up at a BULLHORN strapped to one of the barbed wire pillars. It's an *air raid siren* and different ones in other parts of the city start sounding, as well.

The Guards demand everyone get out of the hole. With the sirens going off it's an easy order to follow. They lead the group at a brisk pace back towards the camp.

Billy's one of the only ones still standing dumbly behind in the grave. It's like he can't move. Derby yells from above him--

EDGAR DERBY

What are you doing, kid?

Billy remains there, unsure of how to start moving. Derby crouches at the edge of the hole. He grabs Billy by the chin and prods him forward.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

It's just one foot after the other.

Billy finally nods and clammers out of the hole. Together, he and Derby run for camp as the first of the bombs make landfall.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE -- MINUTES LATER

It's early evening by the time the group makes it back. Most of them are already safe inside the barracks. There's only a single German left holding open the sliding metal front door for Derby and Billy. But when one of the bombs takes out a nearby guard tower, the Guard thinks better of it.

Derby yells for him to stop as he slides the door shut, but the man doesn't listen. Picking up his pace, Derby makes it there just in time to wedge his hand between the door and the wall. With Billy's help they're able to force their way inside.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE -- CONTINUOUS

Everyone has made for the Slaughterhouse's meat locker, down a steep staircase some fifty feet below the building.

Billy and Derby hurry towards the staircase door only to see out the window that the German anti-aircraft artillery guns have shot down a plane and it's falling right for the barracks.

Together they throw themselves down the stairs as the doorway is instantly sealed off with concrete and rubble, sending everything into darkness.

INT. THE DOME ON TRALFAMADORE -- ARTIFICIAL NIGHT

Billy opens his eyes.

BILLY

Am I dead?

There's no answer for a moment. Then the Voice speaks:

THE VOICE (O.S.)

We don't believe in death.

BILLY

You don't?

THE VOICE (O.S.)

I am a Tralfamadorian. We experience reality in four dimensions. We see past, present, and future all at once.

BILLY

I don't understand.

THE VOICE (O.S.)

You look at the universe and see points of light, whereas we look at the stars and see where they are going and where they have been, so that our Universe is filled with luminous strands of what you call spaghetti. It is just an illusion created on Earth that one moment follows another, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone, it is gone forever. Your journey is more like that of a Tralfamadorian book.

BILLY

You people have books?

THE VOICE (O.S.)

I'm afraid they would not interest you.

BILLY

Shouldn't I be the judge of that?

THE VOICE (O.S.)

Suit yourself.

A BOOK comes rattling through a PUSH SLOT. Billy looks at it; the pages are laid out with brief clumps of symbols separated by stars.

THE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They are a collection of urgent images, or telegrams, with little connection other than the fact that the author chose them carefully. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at once.

Billy tries to comprehend, but looks confused.

BILLY

I'm just trying to get my head around the idea of a disembodied voice reading...

THE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, we have bodies. I can assure you, Mr. Pilgrim.

BILLY

Can I... see one of you?

There's hesitation in the speaker's voice.

THE VOICE (O.S.)

We have been told by beings from other planets that we are somewhat... hard to look on.

BILLY

I'll take my chances.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

Very well. I'll show you the view from your dome into the Zoo itself. There is a very healthy crowd to see you today.

The opaque rim of the dome becomes translucent, and suddenly Billy can look out. We don't see the Tralfamadorians yet, only the vaguely repulsed face of Billy.

BILLY

Jesus Christ...

THE VOICE (O.S.)

You were warned. Perhaps, you would like to look upon something else? This is the Gulf of Tranquility right outside the Zoo.

The view changes to a glorious nighttime landscape of a Tralfmadorian dry ocean bed. Billy looks out. The planet bears a striking resemblance to Earth's moon.

BILLY

It's so peaceful here. My planet is nothing like this. What's your secret?

THE VOICE (O.S.)

Secret?

BILLY

To living peacefully, so I can take it back to Earth and save us all.

Billy hears laughing on the other end of the intercom.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Would you mind telling me what was so funny about that?

The laughing tapers off.

THE VOICE (O.S.)

Today we have a peaceful planet. On other days we have wars as horrible as anything on earth.

Billy's quiet for a moment.

BILLY

We're in the middle of one right now. Back on Earth, I mean. It's nothing new. We've always been the terrors of the universe. If we aren't a threat to other planets by now, it's only a matter of time...

THE VOICE (O.S.)

You can rest easy. We know how the Universe ends and Earth has nothing to do with it except that it too gets wiped out.

BILLY

You know how the universe ends? How?!

THE VOICE (O.S.)

We blow it up.

BILLY

You blow it up?!

THE VOICE (O.S.)

Yes. Experimenting with new fuels for our saucers. A test pilot presses a starter button and the Universe implodes. So it goes.

BILLY

If you know this, can't you keep the pilot from pressing the button?

THE VOICE (O.S.)

He has always pressed it and he always will.

BILLY

You sound to me as though you don't believe in free will.

THE VOICE (O.S.)

If I hadn't spent so much time studying Earthlings I would have no idea what you meant by the term 'free will.' I have visited thirty-one inhabitable planets in over a dozen universes and only on Earth is there talk of free will.

Billy drops his head into his hands.

THE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You seem distressed. Aren't you happy here?

Billy moans through his fingers.

BILLY

About as happy as I was on earth.

There is silence from the speaker for a moment or two.

THE VOICE (O.S.)

As your happiness is of our primary concern, we have taken the liberty of procuring you a mate. Perhaps this will lift your spirits...

The air lock slides open and three knee-high Tralfamadorians enter, carrying a naked Earthling woman. Billy steps back from them, eyeing the trio warily.

We only see obscured views of the aliens, but they seem to breathe like asthmatics and make a vague, slithering noise as they move. Billy's hand covers his mouth as if he might throw up at any moment.

The Tralfamadorians all have gas masks on, as does the woman. They place her down gently on the couch, remove her mask, and exit the way they came.

Once they're alone, Billy hurries to the woman's side only to realize that it's Montana Wildhack, of B-movie fame. Billy's got a look on his face like all his wildest dreams just came true. Slowly, Montana awakes from her sedation and her eyelids flutter open.

MONTANA

Where am I?

BILLY

Everything is alright. You're gonna be just fine.

As her vision corrects and comes into focus, she notices that she's naked. And that Billy's naked. The second she sees his penis, she screams her lungs out and desperately tries to cover her own body. She vaults off the couch, keeping a distance of ten feet between her and Billy at all times.

MONTANA

Where am I?!

BILLY

I can explain, if you'll just calm down--

MONTANA

Fuck calm! You tell me right now!

BILLY

Okay, fine. Now, this may sound a little crazy... but you're in an alien-run zoo on a planet called Tralfamadore. It's several billion miles from Earth.

Montana nods, slowly taking in what Billy's said.

MONTANA

Oh my god...

(beat)

You're a serial killer! What is this?! Some basement apartment in your mother's house?! How did you get me here?! I was just in Palm Springs drinking by the pool--

Her eyes cloud over.

MONTANA (CONT'D)

What, did you drug me?!

BILLY

No, of course not! I mean, somebody did, but--

She starts throwing things at Billy until he yells towards the intercom:

BILLY (CONT'D)

She doesn't believe me! Show her! Show her your people!

The dome goes translucent again and Montana pauses with a lamp raised high over her head about to throw it. She turns to see the crowd of Tralfamadoreans waving to her--

--and gives one of those 10,000 decibel SCREAMS she's known for.

After which, she immediately *faints*.

INT. PINE KNOLLS REST HOME -- DAY, 1969

Barbara pushes Billy around the geriatric facility in a wheelchair.

BILLY

I can walk, dammit.

BARBARA

Not my rules, dad. Besides you can hardly be trusted to behave on your own.

BILLY

I am a grown man!

BARBARA

Then why did you drive yourself to New York City to tell the whole goddamn tri-state area about aliens, huh?! You could have been killed!

BILLY

That's not how I die.

BARBARA

You didn't think any of this garbage before mom died.

BILLY

I did. I just didn't think the time was *ripe* to share it.

BARBARA

Well, you made your bed and now you're going to sleep in it.

BILLY

You were supposed to be the good kid--

BARBARA

Hey! I am not Mom. I cannot be the sole person in charge of making sure Billy Pilgrim doesn't go off the deep end!

Billy chokes back any response and sits there silently, missing her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Now, I've made arrangements for you to speak with a Dr. Conyers. He's the therapist here.

BILLY

If telling people about Tralfamadore is crazy, then you better just have me committed!

Barbara shakes her head, muttering:

BARBARA

I could kill that Kilgore Trout...

INT. CONYER'S OFFICE -- LATER THAT DAY

Billy frowns on a reclining couch across from the lab-coated DR. EVAN CONYERS, 43.

CONYERS

You want to tell me what brought you here?

Billy sits there stubbornly with his arms crossed, but reluctantly admits:

BILLY

I went into work and told a patient, a kid whose father died in Vietnam, that his father wasn't dead. That according to the Tralfamadorian concept of time, he's still alive somewhere and always would be.

CONYERS

And how did this young man react to that news?

BILLY

He told his mother. And she yelled at my staff until the partners decided it would be best if I took an indefinite leave of absence.

CONYERS

Tralfamadore, huh? So these... Tralfamadorians...

(MORE)

CONYERS (CONT'D)

gave you the ability to time-travel and then waited twenty-odd years to abduct you?

BILLY

No, the Tralfamodorians had nothing to do with me becoming unstuck in time, they were simply able to give me insights into my condition.

Conyers chuckles, good-naturedly.

CONYERS

Well, you may be delusional, but I'll give you this - you're very entertaining. And a lot more forthcoming than a lot of my other patients. Usually it takes a while to earn that kind of trust.

BILLY

You're forgetting we've spoken before. Many, many times.

CONYERS

You really believe that, don't you?

Billy nods.

CONYERS (CONT'D)

Your daughter tells me you survived the bombing of Dresden. You want to tell me about it?

BILLY

You're not ready for it.

CONYERS

Why don't you try me?

BILLY

I wasn't insulting you. No one was ready for that...

Billy sighs, collecting his thoughts, then continues.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Dresden wasn't a military target. It had no armories or supply depots. At the time we didn't know why they hit us.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

Turns out Churchill planned to bomb a bunch of eastern cities at the same time as the Soviets advanced on the Western front. They thought this would cause confusion among the German troops and stop them from sending reinforcements to face the Russians. In short...

(beat)

We were nothing more than a *distraction*.

EXT. DRESDEN CITY CENTER -- NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 13, 1945

The population of Dresden goes about their evening as if there wasn't even a war going on.

BILLY (V.O.)

By the time the first air raid sirens went off, the Germans had become immune to them. There had been over 150 since the war started and they had never been hit before so they had no reason to think that that day was going to be any different...

EXT. DRESDEN SKYLINE -- SAME TIME

R.A.F. PATHFINDER squadrons tear through the night air dropping red flares and dazzling white phosphorous to show the LANCASTERS that follow where to bomb...

EXT. AUGUSTUS BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

Down across the banks of the river Elbe we chase the bombing run. It heads out of NEUSTADT across the old sandstone bridge and into the historic district...

EXT. ALTSTADT, VARIOUS -- CONTINUOUS

The city's medieval area, congested with highly combustible timbered buildings, is set aflame...

BILLY (V.O.)

World renowned museums and art galleries disappeared from Dresden's skyline...

Flying over THEATRE SQUARE, payloads are dropped onto most of Dresden's attractions...

At the SEMPEROPER OPERA HOUSE, tuxedo'd opera-goers stubbornly continue to watch a Soprano sing above the air raid sirens until hellfire splits the stage in two...

The music they were listening to sets the tone for the rest of the fire bombing, as...

The TASCHENBERG PALAIS, the Grand Hotel's candle-lit BALLROOM, stands silently empty.

We watch as the CHANDELIER drops from the ceiling and crashes to the ground...

The planes, they spread out, seeking targets outside the fires breadth...

EXT. HAUPTBAHNHOF STATION -- CONTINUOUS

Four-ton blockbuster bombs fall from the bellies of these Allied planes down towards the Dresden train station below.

BILLY (V.O.)

At the rail yard, hundreds of people who refused to leave their seats were killed instantly...

EXT. DRESDEN ZOO -- CONTINUOUS

The roar of planes startles the ANIMALS and the GYPSY TROUPERS alike.

BILLY (V.O.)

For no reason at all, the Traveling circus and the Dresden Zoo were hit, the performers and animals all incinerated...

A lone giraffe runs through the streets ablaze trying desperately to put itself out.

EXT. INNERE NEUSTADT -- SAME TIME

Those stuck outdoors when the bombs hit trample the dead or dying in utter panic...

Burnt coaches filled with refugees scream by...

People run around in shock, unaware they're burning, all the while calling for their children and families...

They scream silently, gesticulating madly with their hands, reaching out for air that will never come.

And then, without warning, they simply fall to the ground, landing upon streets of melting asphalt on their hands and knees where they burn to cinder in moments...

BILLY (V.O.)

The temperatures on the ground reached a horrible 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit. Even oxygen couldn't survive there.

EXT. DRESDEN LABOR CAMP -- SAME TIME

At the POW camp, guard towers and barrack huts go up in flames, the fence lines torn from the earth. CLOSE on what's left of Slaughterhouse...

BILLY (V.O.)

And the Russian who waved to me burned. And the Germans who didn't laugh, they burned too. The one flame, it ate anything organic. And it was just waiting to come for us next.

(beat)

For three days we were in that meat locker...

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, BASEMENT -- SAME TIME

In the bunker, lights blink out, come back on, then fade altogether. After a moment of fumbling, a MATCH flares in the darkness. The English light candles and pass them around the room.

The POWs are huddled together. They keep stealing glances across the basement at the Guards. The Germans are spooked, their guns out in front of them, leaping at shadows.

LAZARRO

I say we jump them. They can't shoot but one of us. Plus, we got Doc here to bandage us up--

He claps the British SURGEON on the back, pulling him into the circle.

SURGEON

I must severely advise against taking such risks. I have no sterile place to operate, no material to stitch you back up, and without the proper equipment you'll bleed out down here.

RICHARD

Doc's right, we sit tight. At least until the shaft is cleared.

LAZARRO

We may not get another chance at this! You saw their faces when the bombs started to fall -- they're scared! We got 'em on the run!

When Derby sees that Lazarro's words are starting to land with the men he jumps in before it can go any further.

EDGAR DERBY

Do you wanna be the one to bleed out?! There's no telling how long we're gonna be down here for--

But Lazarro presses on, ignoring him--

LAZARRO

--Come on! I bet there aren't even bullets in those guns -- you read about the supply shortages! They're probably just for show.

EDGAR DERBY

You wanna take that chance?

LAZARRO

Someone should.

EDGAR DERBY

And just how do you expect we do it? We don't have any weapons!

LAZARRO

I say we kill the first with this...

Lazarro pulls a short-handled TROWEL from his jacket pocket.

LAZARRO (CONT'D)

...then take his gun.

The POWs close ranks around it, lowering their voices.

JACOB

Where the hell did you get that?!

LAZARRO

Swiped it from the supply wheelbarrow when the All-American Boy was making his stand.

EDGAR DERBY

You miserable little pissant. You're not deciding for yourself, you're deciding for everyone. Take a look around - there's not much room down here. They start firing, we all end up dead. But you didn't think about that, did you? Because you're a goddamn fucking moron--

Lazarro's eyes fill with fire. He takes a step towards Derby.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

What?! What are you gonna do, huh? Hire somebody to kill me?!

The POWs that can hear them LAUGH. It only makes Lazarro madder.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

Because the sad truth about you is you're too much of a coward to do it yourself. Gotta egg on a whole platoon to do your killing for you.

LAZARRO

It's up to them...

Lazarro motions to the Butcher racks that line the support beams of the basement.

LAZARRO (CONT'D)

Whattaya say, boys? Let's off them all and hang them from these hooks. What'll it be, kraut filet or kraut loin?

The other POWs look at him grimly as Lazarro turns his attention to Billy. He's seated among the bags of reserve foodstuffs.

LAZARRO (CONT'D)

Why not use Pilgrim here as our shield, he's worthless enough.

EDGAR DERBY
Leave him alone, Lazarro.

LAZARRO
I'm serious, the guy's lost his
mind. He ain't in there anymore!

Lazarro leans over to whisper just to Billy.

LAZARRO (CONT'D)
My arm's not broken this time.
Who's to say in all this darkness
and commotion that the Germans
didn't up and cut you to bits?

EDGAR DERBY
I said, leave him be!

Lazarro turns back to face Derby and the rest of the POWs.

LAZARRO
Fine. Do what you want. But the
second I see an opening, I'm going
for it. The rest of you can join
in if you want, but this here
gardenin' tool's gonna see some
kraut blood before the night's
through.

Derby watches Lazarro go, a haunted look carefully hidden on
his face. He clocks that Billy's staring at him and tries to
wave it off.

EDGAR DERBY
Just ignore him.

Derby takes a seat among the potato sacks on the floor next
to Billy. As he tries to get comfortable, Billy asks him
something that's been on his mind for a long time.

BILLY
Why do you help me?

Derby frowns at the somewhat odd question.

EDGAR DERBY
I don't know...

He thinks on it a moment.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
Maybe Albert, wherever he's
fighting... maybe he has someone
like me over there.
(MORE)

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
I would hope that whoever it is,
he's taking care of my boy.

Billy shakes his head.

BILLY
I can't return the favor.

EDGAR DERBY
Who asked you to?

Derby smiles, warmly, and Billy nods, burying his face in his hands before he loses it. After a quiet moment, Derby leans in.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
Hey kid, look around the room.

Billy lifts his face up, choking back emotion, but does as he's told. The POWs are spread out around the room, all in various states of desperation.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
You're not the only one in pain
down here. The war's written on all
their faces. It finds little ways
to fuck with all of us...

Derby manages a laugh.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
Hell, sometimes I think I can hear
the sound of tank tracks in my
sleep...

Derby's lost for a moment, but eventually shakes it off. What Billy's got can't be shaken off though. And Derby sees it all. He gently taps his own head.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
Look, wherever you go to up here,
wherever your mind wanders off
to... if you need to check out for
a while, I can keep watch.

BILLY
Really?

Derby nods as Billy finds a comfortable place to lean back. He didn't know he was this tired...

EDGAR DERBY
Just remember some place you were
happy.

But to Billy, his voice is already fading away...

INT. THE DOME ON TRALFAMADORE -- EVENING

Montana finishes fastening a blanket around herself. She sits down at one end of a lengthy banquet table the Tralfamadorians have set up.

Billy still has nothing to cover up his nakedness with, so when he moves to sit down Montana holds an arm up.

MONTANA

That's close enough.

BILLY

I told you, I'm not with them--

MONTANA

Well you could have warned me!

Billy lets go of the chair he was going to sit in and instead grabs a spot on the opposite end of the table.

BILLY

Far enough?

She nods. They sit there quietly as Montana, clearly starving, eyes the spread their hosts have laid out.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Please eat something. My wife had food issues. She made our daughter diet her entire life. Gave her terrible body dysmorphia. Affected her choice in men too.

MONTANA

What do you mean *had* food issues.

BILLY

She passed away last year.

Unsure of what to say, Montana takes a few grapes and pops them into her mouth. She waits a moment to seem ladylike, then goes back for the cheese.

MONTANA

You're not gonna eat?

BILLY

I haven't had much of an appetite lately.

MONTANA

Yeah well, I'm not one of these L.A. model types. I once had a producer who tried to put in my contract what kind of foods I could eat. He wanted to outlaw bread! Disgusting little man - always tried to sneak into my dressing room...

BILLY

I mean, can you blame the guy?

Montana pauses, a mouth full of food.

MONTANA

Oh, no...
(beat)
You're a fan.

Billy blushes a little and smiles.

BILLY

I may have seen... *a couple* of your movies.

MONTANA

Look pal, I don't know what you think's gonna happen, but I'm nothing like the girls in those movies. They're just cheap-o schlock we shot in the valley, so don't ask me about any of that sci-fi nonsense because I don't give a crap.

She stands up from the table taking her plate with her, but turns back at the last second--

MONTANA (CONT'D)

And I'm sorry that your wife died, I really am, but that does not give you permission to--

BILLY

--I didn't.

MONTANA

--to treat me any differently--

BILLY

--I haven't!

Montana has been through this speech too many times before, but she's sputtering out now because it's Billy.

MONTANA

Just -- stay on your side of the room and I'll stay on mine!

She storms off in a huff.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, BASEMENT -- FEBRUARY 14, 1945

As calcimine rains down from the ceiling, the room hums like aftershocks from a quake. For the most part, the Guards have calmed down. Save for one or two, the majority of them have their backs to the POWs.

Across the basement, Billy watches as Lazarro edges towards them, his hand buried deep in his jacket pocket, clutching the TROWEL.

He isn't the only person to notice. Derby sees the way Lazarro is acting and makes an inconspicuous beeline to cut him off.

By now the trowel is out in the open. Just as Lazarro moves to raise it overhead, Derby slams him into the wall.

LAZARRO

What the hell, Derby?! Whose side are you on?!

Derby grips the weapon, pushing it down out of sight of the Guards.

EDGAR DERBY

Let go of it.

LAZARRO

You're gonna lose that hand if you're not careful.

EDGAR DERBY

I swear to God, Lazarro - I will break your wrist.

The Guards have noticed the altercation. They turn to cheer it on, picking sides. Derby hisses at Lazarro--

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)

They're gonna see it!

LAZARRO

Better let go then...

EDGAR DERBY

You suicidal son of a bitch!

LAZARRO

Do you want to die instead of them,
Derby? Is that it?

EDGAR DERBY

Fuck you--

Lazarro violently pushes Derby off and goes to stab him with the trowel just as the ceiling *rips open*. A bomb has hit Slaughterhouse dead on.

Billy's on his feet instantly and watches in horror as part of the basement caves in, raining down hundred pound slabs of concrete atop Lazarro and Derby. Helpless to do anything to save his friend, Billy stands there, arms outstretched--

INT. THE DOME ON TRALFAMADORE -- EVENING

Billy finds himself standing in the middle of the dome, clutching a pillow over his naked body.

There's a violent STORM raging outside the Dome, a strange mixture of snow, sleet, and rain that batters the walls of their home.

Billy stares at Montana across the room, wanting to go to her. She's half asleep in bed under the covers. He climbs in next to her and tries to lay down quietly, but she quickly whirls around on him--

MONTANA

What are you doing?!

He could come up with a million excuses, but with his life in shambles, Billy goes for the truth. He holds nothing back--

BILLY

I'm afraid, okay?! I'm a billion miles from home and you're the only person here and I'm afraid! So I'm laying here. I'm sorry if that disturbs you.

She looks like she wants to say something, but shakes her head.

MONTANA

Fine.

He settles down next to her. She turns her back on him going onto her side once more.

Billy lays in silence until tears well up in his eyes. Suddenly, he turns and drapes an arm around Montana, pulling her close.

Montana's eyes open. She knows she should push him off, but he's like a scared, frightened child in that moment.

So she lays her arm on top of his and clasps his hand. As if she needs this too.

They slowly fall asleep as a voice from another time and place gently prods Billy awake...

EDGAR DERBY (O.S.)
Billy? You can get up now...

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, BASEMENT -- FEBRUARY 15, 1945

Billy opens his eyes. Montana is no longer lying next to him, just the bag of supplies he nestled up to the night before.

EDGAR DERBY (O.C.)
They've cleared a path for us.

Billy looks up. Derby's kneeling by his side, covered in dirt and a few non-serious wounds.

BILLY
You're alive!

Forgetting where they are for a moment, Billy throws caution to the wind and pulls Derby into a massive bear hug. Derby laughs after a startled moment, then claps him on the back.

EDGAR DERBY
I know. Unfortunately, so is Lazarro...

Standing up, he helps Billy to his feet. Over Derby's shoulder, Billy can see the English have indeed dug their way out. Together, they head for the crowd of POWs making their way towards the surface...

On the uneven climb up the half-cleared basement stairs, Billy finds himself walking just a few paces behind Lazarro.

But Lazarro doesn't notice him; his eyes are on the Guard in front of him, focused on how he can drive the recovered trowel into the man's temple.

Billy keeps climbing, unsure of whether to call out or not. Derby is too far away to notice...

The seconds tick by with everyone ascending. Billy watches, unable to speak, as Lazarro pulls the weapon from his pocket.

And just as he's about to strike, all goes blindingly white. The door at the top of the basement stairs has been thrown open--

EXT. CAMP RUINS -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy emerges into glaring sunlight. But it only lasts a moment. In its place appears a slice of hell on earth.

Looking around, even Lazarro forgets his plan of attacking the Guards. There's nothing but death. It hangs in the air.

The Soldiers cover their mouths and noses to block out the smell of sewage and cooked flesh.

All around them, animals come out to feast on the leftovers. Wild dogs and packs of rats fatten themselves on the dead.

EXT. INNERE NEUSTADT -- SOON AFTER

The Guards lead the surviving POWs through what remains of the city. The streets of Dresden are charred and covered in debris.

At the head of the group, Richard comes across an obstacle in the road; a BURNT LOG. He leans over to clear it out of the way only to pull back hands covered in blood. Jacobs steps forward.

JACOB

Jesus, is that what I think it is?

Richard stares dumbly at the mess covering his hands. Billy watches as he leans back down to lift the corpse off the road. Underneath is the almost perfectly preserved body of a YOUNG CHILD. Billy gapes at the image; a parent dying to protect it's offspring.

Unsure of what to do, they continue down the blackened strasse when a horrible groaning noise fills the air behind them.

Frauenkirke Dome, one of the largest in Europe, has somehow survived the bombing. But the sandstone pillars can take no more.

And as the outer walls shatter, the POWs turn to watch 6,000 tons of stone plunge to earth, penetrating the crypts below.

To the Guards, it's like a bad omen. They huddle together, worried, suspicious of the English and the Americans. To Billy, just for a second, they look like that BARBERSHOP QUARTET from his 20th Anniversary Party.

BILLY (V.O.)

The Guards had to know what this meant. If this is what their city looked like then how in the hell could their side be winning? Their solution was to put us on grave detail, digging for corpses...

EXT. INNERE ALTSTADT -- DAYS LATER

The POWs paw through the wreckage looking for bodies. Billy's busy pulling up sheet metal when a hole opens up in the ground in front of him.

BILLY (V.O.)

By Dresden city code, the cellar walls in Altstadt were made to be torn through in case of fire, so that if one house filled with smoke you could just push your way through to your neighbor's. But with the entire city burning, those fleeing from one basement simply ran to the next.

(beat)

And the next...

He peers down into the darkness in horror--

BILLY (V.O.)

The result being that I found hundreds of bodies at the end of that city block.

Billy staggers back several feet and vomits onto the cobble stones.

Hearing the commotion, the Guards look down into the cellar and see what Billy saw. They immediately cringe from the smell.

Billy watches as they wave over one of the POWs. He's wearing a FLAMETHROWER and sprays it wildly into the hole in the ground.

EXT. ALTMARKT SQUARE -- SOON AFTER

The POWs and Guards make their way to a massive central park.

BILLY (V.O.)

But worst of all was Altmarkt Square. Following the first bombing raid, survivors were told to go there to get away from any building worth destroying. When they were all out in the open, that's when we bombed the Square.

The survivors take in the devastation that surrounds them. They're all affected but none moreso than Billy.

BILLY (V.O.)

I saw decapitations and torn off limbs. I saw a pregnant woman with her belly burst, her child's arm hanging out. I couldn't believe our side had done this...

EXT. ALTMARKT SQUARE -- LATER THAT DAY

Together, they stack the corpses in the square and when the piles are large enough, they're forced to take the flame throwers to them too...

BILLY (V.O.)

Some 25,000 people died in Dresden. And we personally burned 7,000 in that square. So it goes...

INT. CONYER'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON, 1971

Back in the Old Folks Home, Conyers interrupts Billy's story--

CONYERS

You keep saying this, 'so it goes.' What does it mean?

BILLY

The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore is that when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly to cry at his funeral.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

The Tralfamadorians can look at all the different moments of a life just the way we look at, say, a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that that person is in a bad condition in that particular moment but that he's fine in plenty of other moments. So now when I hear that someone has died, I simply shrug my shoulders and say exactly what the Tralfamadorians always say about dead people: 'So it goes.'

Conyers leans forward, unconvinced.

CONYERS

You're using this philosophy to comfort yourself about death. Sure it makes you feel better but it also let's you off the hook. If you believe you can't change the world you stop trying. How can you tell what is possible or not without trying your damndest to change things?!

BILLY

There is no changing what comes next.

CONYERS

How do you know that?

BILLY

Because I've tried.

CONYERS

Then try again!

BILLY

It won't work--

CONYERS

And why not?!

BILLY

Because if I pushed any harder I'd be as dead as he is!

Billy goes quiet. He's said more than he meant to. Conyers didn't know that this was where they were headed. But he presses on, lightly.

CONYERS

Tell me about Edgar Derby, Billy.

Billy shakes his head.

BILLY

If I talk about it I always go there.

He looks Conyers in the eyes, horribly frightened...

BILLY (CONT'D)

And I really don't want to go there.

EXT. ALTMARKT SQUARE -- MARCH, 1945

The Americans are at work, processing the dead. In his section, Edgar Derby pauses briefly when he discovers something among the debris...

BILLY (V.O.)

We were stacking the bodies in Altmarkt Square when he found it. A somehow unbroken teapot. He must have thought how much his wife would love it...

Looking around, Derby picks the TEAPOT up and slides it quickly into his uniform.

Several yards away, Paul Lazarro sees this and looks like God just smiled upon him. He quickly gets a Guard's attention and wags a finger in Derby's direction.

When the Guard sees Derby buttoning his shirt back over the teapot, he begins to yell--

GUARD

Aufhalten!

Everyone stops what they're doing to see what all the commotions about. They watch as the Guard marches over to Derby and wrenches his uniform open. He pulls out the contraband hidden inside as Derby's face pales.

BILLY (V.O.)

He was charged with plundering, tried, and sentenced to death.

Billy watches as a scrum of Guards carries Derby away. He turns back to Lazarro who's got an exhilarated look on his face. He grins at Billy. All teeth.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE -- SOON AFTER

In front of the ruins of their former barracks, the Guard who caught Derby stealing ties him to a post.

BILLY (V.O.)

None of us could believe it. Here
the war was almost over and they
were still killing us off.

The POWs are made to watch as the FIRING SQUAD loads their rifles. Derby stands straight against the pole, refusing to give them anything. Behind the GUNMEN, Jacob stands next to Richard.

JACOB

We have to do something!

RICHARD

They'll just shoot us next.

JACOB

We can't let this happen!

RICHARD

We have no choice and you know it.

JACOB

This is bullshit, Captain!

Billy stands off to the side, refusing to look up. When he finally does, he finds Derby waiting to lock eyes with him as the squad cock their guns. Billy smiles sadly at his friend.

BILLY (V.O.)

I was one of the four chosen to
bury him. He was so brave all the
way 'til the end. But then he saw
us with those shovels...

Derby's sight travels to Billy's hand and the SHOVEL handle held limply there.

BILLY (V.O.)

...he just lost it.

Derby shakes his head, refusing to believe this is happening.

EDGAR DERBY

No... no... it's not fair. Not
right. We beat you. We were
beating you! Someone tell them to
stop this! Is this even legal?!

They raise their rifles as hot, bitter tears run down Derby's face.

EDGAR DERBY (CONT'D)
 For a fucking teapot?! You can
 have it! You can *fucking* have it!
 I don't want anything from you
 terrible people.

The Leader of the Guards, Commander Gemphries, begins to count down--

COMMANDER GEMPHRIES
 Eins.

EDGAR DERBY
 This can't be happening...

COMMANDER GEMPHRIES
 Zwei.

EDGAR DERBY
 Somebody get my dad--

COMMANDER GEMPHRIES
 Drei!

EDGAR DERBY
 Billy, do something!!!

The gunshots enter Derby from all angles. He's dead almost instantly, slumped, but still standing against the pole.

It's too much for Billy and he looks away. It's the saddest time he's ever said it...

BILLY (V.O.)
 So it goes.

INT. CONYER'S OFFICE -- DAY, 1972

Billy is twenty-seven years older than that terrible day, but it might as well have happened just a moment ago. He sits across from Conyers, saying nothing.

But for all the grief in his face there's not a tear to be seen. It isn't lost on Conyers.

CONYERS
 In the short time I've known you,
 you rarely, if ever, show emotion.
 Your friend died in the war.

BILLY

I only knew him a few days.

CONYERS

This 'So it goes' business isn't going to cut it here. You mean to tell me you had no reaction?

BILLY

People grieve in different ways.

CONYERS

And you? How do you grieve?

Billy looks at him and sighs.

EXT. DRESDEN LABOR CAMP -- MAY, 1945

Alone for the first time in months, Billy and several other POWs have gone riding in a green, coffin-shaped wagon pulled by two horses.

BILLY (V.O.)

It was a May afternoon, two days after the war in Europe had ended. Our captors had fled once they heard the Russians were coming, killing and robbing and raping and burning. With nothing but time on our hands, we returned to Slaughterhouse in search of war souvenirs...

As the others go pillage, Billy remains in the back atop the carriage, sunning himself. He stares into the sun until he hears German being spoken.

Opening his eyes, he sees a man and a woman speaking worriedly to one another. When they notice they're not alone, they chide him in German and drag him off the carriage to the front of the cart to see the horses.

The animal's mouths are bleeding, gashed by the bits. Their tongues loll out of their mouths, sick with thirst. They're malnourished and diseased and as Billy stares at them, something inside him breaks.

For the first time in this war, he begins to cry. It's shallow at first, then loud, as he collapses to the ground in front of the animals. He doesn't care who sees. The war is over and he's broken.

Somewhere in another place and time, Conyers speaks for him:

CONYERS (O.S.)

You wept for the horses because you
couldn't weep for the people...

Together with the couple, Billy unbridles the horses and sets them free. But they won't move, no matter how much they're prodded...

Billy beats at their flanks, pushing and shoving, but the stupid beasts won't budge. Seeing how fruitless this is, the couple try to pull Billy away but he just shakes them off.

He goes back and pushes the horses so hard he slips in the mud by their feet and lands on all fours covered in dirt.

It's a sorry sight and the German couple stare down at him with pitying looks. When they realize they can't do anything for him, the man sadly leads his wife away.

But Billy doesn't know how to stop. He's face-to-face with the horse's hooves which are split and broken, so that every step is pure agony. Billy climbs back to his feet.

BILLY

Does it hurt to walk?! Here -- you
can have my shoes!

He pulls his boots off and desperately tries to hand them over. As if the horses will just slide them on...

When his words reach his ears and he hears how crazy he sounds he weeps all over again.

He slowly walks over to the nearest horse, resigned, and hugs it around the mane. And there, looking into its eyes, he finally gives up.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I couldn't save them. And soon
after that the Russians showed
up...

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE RUINS -- MINUTES LATER

A Russian TANK UNIT rolls through the city. They take stock of Billy and the ruined horses. After some arguing amongst the soldiers, one of their superiors pulls rank. He steps up with his sidearm and puts each horse out of its misery.

BILLY (V.O.)

Shortly after that we learned we
were going home.

EXT. BEET FIELD, OUTSIDE OF HALLE -- SEVERAL WEEKS AFTER THE WAR

The Americans are lined up in a blood red field off the river Elbe. It's the prisoner exchange that brings them home. When it's his turn to be traded, Billy's eyes are wide and fearful as he crosses, hope in them for the first time in ages...

BILLY (V.O.)

We were flown to a rest camp in France, where we were fed chocolate malts and other rich foods until we were all covered with baby fat. Then we were sent home, and I married a sweet girl who was covered with baby fat too. And we had babies. And they're all grown up now.

INT. CONYER'S OFFICE -- DAY, 1973

It's been several years since Dr. Conyers started treating Billy. Still it's hard not to be affected by his story. Billy continues, his eyes on the ground.

BILLY

I don't know. Maybe there is nothing profound to say about war. I thank you for listening anyway. Still, I can't help but think that the wrong person died that day. Does someone like Edgar Derby have to die just so someone like me can live? I've seen my own death so many times that I just want it to be over. I keep hoping that the next time it happens, I won't come back. That instead of going directly to my birth as I always seem to do... that something will change. That I can get off this track I got on god knows how many years ago...

Conyers remembers something and looks down at a shopping bag he brought with him. Now doesn't seem like the right time. He tries to scoot it out of view, but Billy sees.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What's in there?

CONYERS

It's nothing. It hardly seems appropriate now.

BILLY

Conyers, it's fine. Go ahead.

CONYERS

It just seems cruel--

BILLY

I said, it's fine!

The doctor reaches into the bag and pulls out a copy of Kilgore Trout's "The Big Board." It's the same book Billy looked at in the adult bookstore in Times Square.

CONYERS

I picked up one of your favorite author's books. It's about a man and woman who are kidnapped by extra-terrestrials. They get put on display in a zoo on a planet called Zircon-212. Does any of this sound familiar?

BILLY

What are you saying?

CONYERS

You'd been reading about Tralfamadore long before you ever went there.

Billy just stares at him, shaking his head.

BILLY

You haven't listened to a single thing I've said, have you?

CONYERS

You make no connection between the zoo on Tralfamadore and the Slaughterhouse you resided in?

BILLY

Meaning?

CONYERS

You couldn't reconcile the past, so you built a future you could live with--

BILLY

Built? You think this is all in my head?

CONYERS

You must believe your world is within your control. You were raised on science fiction and b-movies and when you needed to hide you created this wild, wonderful world far from the Earth that held your worst memories. You gave yourself a beautiful new bride and found a home for the two of you; your very own snow globe where everything is safe, where all your needs are tended to. Where the only thing you have to do is *heal*.

Billy shakes his head again, but Conyers presses on.

CONYERS (CONT'D)

Whatever became of Montana?

BILLY

She's back on Tralfamadore taking care of the baby.

CONYERS

That's interesting.

BILLY

Why is it interesting?

CONYERS

Well, I don't mean to be insensitive or upset you, but...

He trails off.

BILLY

What?

CONYERS

If years can go by on Tralfamadore in one of Earth's milliseconds, doesn't that mean Montana and your child... have been dead for centuries?

Billy appears disturbed for the briefest of moments, then he remembers...

He remembers that they are most assuredly alive in another time.

And it calms him.

BILLY

Oh, I'm sure I'll see them sometime
or another...

The transition is amazing to behold and Conyers shakes his head, smiling.

CONYERS

It's funny. I know all of this is coming from a place of illness, but it truly seems to comfort you. I don't know, maybe it could help other people too... Not at face value, of course, but as a sort of parable. I know this is going to sound nuts, but would you...

(beat)

Would you mind if I wrote some of this down?

Billy grins. He's been waiting for this for a long, long time.

INT./EXT. VARIOUS -- 1974-1976

Over late nights of drinking and Chinese take-out, Billy and Conyers set his story to print. And as time passes, a strange thing starts to happen. Billy actually seems to be getting better.

Around the country over the next couple years, he and Conyers travel from bookstore to bookstore spreading the gospel that is "The Autobiography of Billy Pilgrim."

People want signatures and to hear Billy speak. He doesn't heal the sick or cure the blind, but he seems to be a different kind of prophet. One that makes people who are in pain from loss feel just a little bit better.

He hugs grandmothers and kisses babies. He is exactly what a self-help guru should be.

Soon enough, the venues change. They become bigger and bigger. With the increasing popularity of the book, the signings and speeches move to gymnasiums and small theatres, until finally Billy Pilgrim is playing stadiums.

And the last stop on the tour is one in Texas at the world famous...

EXT. ASTRODOME, DUGOUT -- EVENING, 1976

It's a beautiful night. Dr. Conyers and Billy are standing in the dugout, waiting for Billy to be introduced. It's just a quiet moment between the two of them. And Billy knows he only has a few left...

BILLY

I've been a bad father, haven't I?

CONYERS

That's not for me to say...

The announcer is wrapping things up. Billy starts to head for the stairs, when something makes him turn back to the Doctor.

BILLY

When it's all over I don't want you blaming yourself.

CONYERS

What?

Billy's name is called over the loudspeaker and he moves to leave again, when Conyers stops him.

CONYERS (CONT'D)

Billy, what's gonna happen?

BILLY

You'll have to wait and see.

Conyers shakes his head. The possibilities are endless.

CONYERS

You're crazy...

And Billy laughs for once; a rare sight.

BILLY

Billy Pilgrim lost his mind...

He shrugs.

BILLY (CONT'D)

So it goes.

Exiting, he hands a slip of paper to one of the police officers and heads out to meet his adoring public. Unfolding it, the officer reads the note and his eyes bulge.

BILLY (V.O.)

The note was a concession to Conyers. An experiment to see if it was actually possible to change things.

As Billy jogs across the field, thousands of Polaroid flashes fill the air. He waves to them all.

Taking the pulpit, he looks off towards the left field bleachers. It almost seems as if he's recognized someone. He holds a hand up to quiet the crowd.

BILLY

Many years ago, a man promised to have me killed. He is old now, living not far from here. He has read all the publicity associated with my appearance in your fair city. He is insane. And tonight he will keep his promise.

There are protests from the crowd, but again, Billy holds his hand up.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Now, if you think that death is a terrible thing, then you haven't understood a word I've said.

He looks to Conyers and smiles.

BILLY (CONT'D)

My co-writer called my story a parable. And if that's so, I'd like to share another. It's found on the last page of my autobiography: The Lord rained fire and brimstone down upon Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot's wife was told not to look back as they burned. But she did look back, and I love her for that, because it was so human. So she was turned into a pillar of salt. People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore. I've finished my war book now. This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt--

A GUNSHOT cracks from the rafters to the bullpen and Billy's head erupts.

INT. UTILITY CLOSET #3, 2ND TIER BALCONY -- SAME TIME

In his shooter's nest, Paul Lazarro leans back satisfied from peering down the rifle scope. He's hit his mark and it's time to move now.

INT. 2ND TIER BALCONY, GATE C -- MOMENTS LATER

Amid the chaos of the crowd of thousands reacting, Lazarro slips out of the JANITOR'S CLOSET unnoticed.

He's in his early sixties now and has a trim grey mustache. With the stolen custodian uniform he's wearing, he moves unnoticed in the rush of bodies.

Slung over his back, he carries a leather case that holds his dismantled rifle. He's cool and collected, but eager to be out of the stadium.

And with Security drawn towards the field, he's able to walk calmly towards the fire escape...

INT. ASTRODOME, FRONT GATE -- SECONDS LATER

At the base of the fire escape, Lazarro exits the stairwell and turns the corner at a fair clip.

He makes it as far as the entrance turnstiles only to find a brigade of POLICE waiting for him, guns drawn, led by the officer Billy gave the note to. The cop calls out--

OFFICER

You! Lemme see your hands!

Not about to go quietly, Lazarro turns to sprint away, desperately clawing for his rifle bag.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

We will fire on you!

But Lazarro keeps running. He only makes it a few feet when the Police light him up, riddling his back with dozens of rounds.

He falls forward and crumples to the ground in agony where he quickly breathes his last breath.

EXT. ASTRODOME, PITCHER'S MOUND -- SAME TIME

As emergency aid workers try fruitlessly to save his life, the light begins to leave Billy's eyes. But not before that gorgeous symphony of gunfire can be heard.

Billy travels once again. This time instead of going from his death to when he was born, he arrives at a time when he was reborn. He finds himself in...

INT. THE DOME ON TRALFAMADORE -- WHERE TIME IS IRRELEVANT

It's artificial evening there and Montana is lying in bed, cuddling their newborn child.

MONTANA
Time traveling again?

BILLY
How can you tell?

MONTANA
I can always tell. Where'd you go
this time?

BILLY
It doesn't matter.

He lies down next to them, smiling. So damn grateful.

BILLY (V.O.)
Because here my children aren't
grown. And my wife isn't dead.
Here I have a beautiful newborn
baby boy and a wife that loves me.
And I can try all over again to
live a better life tomorrow.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END