

# **THE SAD SWEET SLEEP OF THANATOPSIS JONES**

by

Raleigh Marcell

FADE IN

EXT. SPACE.

In the black silence of Space a Rock tumbles.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. NIGHT.

A suburban house. Snow covered yard. A Christmas wreath on the door.

EXT. SPACE.

The Rock tumbles towards a distant Earth. The silence is broken by two female voices arguing ad lib resolving into...

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

This means alot to me.

MARIA (V.O.)

Oh, Thanatopsis, don't be such a geek.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. BACKYARD. NIGHT.

Three people sitting around a fire-pit. THANATOPSIS, 16, pale and lovely, wearing a red elf's hat, stands apart. MARIA, dark-haired, fiery, and older, snuggles against her boyfriend, JEFFERY, who is trying to toast marshmallows on straightened coat hangars for all three.

THANATOPSIS

Geek? Me?

MARIA

Or whatever your kind is called these days.

THANATOPSIS

All I'm asking is that you tell me if I've got these last lines right.

MARIA

You're the biggest nuisance a sister has ever had to put up with! I wish you were dead!

JEFFERY

Maria!

MARIA

I won't lie. I would be very happy if she wasn't such a bother.

JEFFERY

See what you've made me do. I'll  
get some more marshmallows.

He gets up and heads toward the house.

MARIA

Let's go all the way! Bring out  
some grahams and Hershey bars.  
They're on top the fridge!

THANATOPSIS

Jeffery's quiet tonight.

MARIA

Well, he's just got his degree and  
a job at NASA so his mind's half  
way to Pluto Fa-la la-la-la la-la  
la-la.

Thanatopsis holds out a Big Book.

THANATOPSIS

Please----

Maria takes the Book but pulls Thanatopsis close.

MARIA

Okay. But then you get the hell  
outta here! And I mean outta here!

EXT. SPACE.

As the Rock approaches Earth it begins to heat.

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

Deal. I'll go inside and be all to  
myself.

MARIA (V.O.)

Alright. Go ahead.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. BACKYARD. NIGHT.

Thanatopsis stands ready to recite. She clears her throat.  
Opens her mouth---

MARIA

So why do you memorize so much  
stuff?

THANATOPSIS

Suppose I go blind. Or deaf. Or both. Or get imprisoned. And I'm all alone. So even if I'm alone I'm never alone.

MARIA

You think about these things?  
You're not a geek. You're insane.

THANATOPSIS

And you? If the TV broke you'd be brain-dead---!

MARIA

Okay. Shut up and recite.

THANATOPSIS

Page thirty-seven: "Go forth under the open sky and list/To nature's teachings, while from all around Earth and her waters..."

EXT. SPACE.

The Rock whistles white-hot through the atmosphere.

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

"...and the depths of air/comes a still voice...."

EXT. JONES HOUSE. BACKYARD. NIGHT.

Thanatopsis sits. Maria closes the Book.

MARIA

So how much of this stuff you got up there?

THANATOPSIS

231 poems, half the Books of the Bible, all of Aesop's Fables and...

Jeffery comes out of the house.

JEFFERY

Oh look--! A shooting star....

As they stand and look skyward: a whoosh, a blinding flash, and an explosion.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. BACKYARD. NIGHT. -- CONTINUOUS

Clouds of smoke and dust swirl in the aftermath of the impact.

Out of this massive confusion crawls a figure.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. BACKYARD. NIGHT. -- LATER

Jeffery consoles a crying Maria, her clothes smoldering. MARY JONES, her Mother, stands in disbelief alternately looking at the sky and the smoldering crater. FIREFIGHTERS in the last stage of their work. Maria bolts toward the crater.

JEFFERY

Maria! No--!

She goes into the impact area, digging through the rubble to get the Book, wiping it clean of ashes.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. DRIVEWAY. NIGHT.

An Ambulance pulls away and down the street. JOE JONES, the Father, Jeffery, and an INSURANCE AGENT examines smoldering Rock. We know the Agent from the reflective "State Farm" logo on the back of his coat.

JOE

Is this the meteor?

JEFFERY

Meteorite.

JOE

What?

JEFFERY

It's a meteor in space but a meteorite when it hits the earth.

INSURANCE AGENT

The boy's right---

JOE

"Hits the earth!"? This thing smashed into my daughter! Does my policy cover it?

INSURANCE AGENT

(flipping through papers)

Now let's see. What kind is it?

The Agent examines the Rock with a Big Magnifying Glass.

INSURANCE AGENT (CONT'D)  
 Stony? Iron? or Stony Iron?  
 Ah--iron.

Jeffery now examines the Rock

JEFFERY  
 I'll confirm that. I've just  
 received my Masters in Physics, Mr.  
 Jones.

INSURANCE AGENT  
 Well, if its an Iron meteorite then  
 I'm very sorry.

JOE  
 What?

Agent examines a page of the Policy with the Glass.

INSURANCE AGENT  
 See for yourself.

Joe peers through the Glass. Emits a low whistle.

EXT. CITY STREET. NIGHT.

The Ambulance speeds to its destination.

INT/EXT. CABIN. NIGHT.

A couple of aging hippies, hereafter known as HE & SHE,  
 living in a unabomber-style nest supported and surrounded by  
 every conceivable protest sign including a "Just Stop  
 Everything" sign made from a pilfered Stop Sign. They wear  
 "Save the Seals" and "Save the Whales" Tee's. He is blogging  
 and finishing some fine weed while She monitors a scanner  
 over a fresh cup of coffee.

VOICE ON SCANNER  
 "231 McGovern Circle...girl struck  
 on the head by an Identified  
 Falling Object...lapsing into  
 coma..."

SHE  
 A situation has suddenly arisen!

HE  
 Don't you mean "evolved"?

SHE  
Oh yes-yes! Sorry---

HE  
Quick! To the Goremobile!

They quickly exchange the semi-secret Secular Humanist Gesture and spring into action revealing "I Care" Tees. They burst outside. Toss a jumble of signs into their huge green SUV plastered with "Save the Planet, Inc." signs.

SHE  
How far is the hospital?

HE  
Ten miles.

Consulting her handy "Carbon Footprint Indulgences Calculator".

SHE  
We must plant 3 trees, recycle 4 dozen cans and write threatening e-mails to 6 Republicans.

HE  
Right! Make a note of it.

SHE  
Noted!

He guns the engine and they are OFF in a cloud of smoke.

EXT. HOSPITAL. NIGHT.

Glowing blue letters proclaim a grim institutional block of brick and glass to be the "Greater Duluth Memorial Hospital for the Incredibly Ill".

A gentle sprinkling of snow starts to fall.

INT. HOSPITAL. EMERGENCY ROOM. NIGHT.

A NURSE lazily arranges scalpels. An ORDERLY sanitizes. Some DOCTORS lallygag exchanging golf grips. A closed-circuit TV hangs in a corner. A regular TV, golf in progress, in another. ON THE CLOSED-CIRCUIT TV an Ambulance screeches to a stop. The crew falls out, opens the door and pulls out a gurney.

The Nurse springs into action, breaking up the golf lesson. ON THE CLOSED-CIRCUIT the gurney down, the crew rush towards

the doors. The gurney and crew crash the Emergency Room. Instant, chaotic, and precisely professional action.

EXT. SKY. NIGHT.

A shooting star streaks through the sky.

Advanced is a symphony of sounds: a heavy mechanical breathing overlaid with a myriad of electronic blips, whirrs, dings, and pings, with assorted gurglings and glugs and something that sounds like a Model T cranking up.

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. NIGHT.

The source of the sounds is a bewildering array of Life-Sustaining Apparatus connected to Thanatopsis. One thick electrical cord trails away terminating in a huge Plug on the wall decorated with tinsel and a candy cane. A sign above the Plug reads: "WARNING!!! PLUG. DO NOT UN".

A DOCTOR examines a chart. He shakes his head and exits.

INT. HOSPITAL. WAITING ROOM. NIGHT.

Joe gazes out of the window. Mary paces. Maria reads the Book. JOE JUNIOR sits in a corner. A gangly youth of 14 or so, he is almost always listening to something through earplugs. Whether his periodic tremors and spasms are music-induced or a serious medical problem is uncertain.

The Doctor enters, his note-taking clipboard ever-present, his note-taking is copious and almost continuous.

MARY

Is she...? Is she---

DOCTOR

What? Dead?

(shrugs his shoulders)

I've done everything I do. All I can suggest now is that you call in the services of a good chef.

Mary breaks down. Joe pivots from the window.

JOE

Is there nothing that can be done?

DOCTOR

Nothing. Except -- propitiate your deity.



Mary gathers herself, secures a bedpan from beneath one of the sofas, positions herself over it, and hikes up her skirt.

JOE

Mary! I think he means appease God.

MARY

But I have to go.

JOE

Doctor---? Comatose?

DOCTOR

A hefty dose.

MARY

This isn't good.

MARIA

(closing the Book)

It could be worse.

Mary goes to Junior in the corner. Nudges him.

MARY

Junior, your sister is...is---

JOE

Mary....

He hands her a Microphone (of the "Mister" variety).

MARY

I forgot.

She taps on the Microphone. Junior nearly hits the ceiling.

MARY (CONT'D)

Junior, your sister is comatose.

Recovered from the blast, Junior stands very still, quivers, and returns to the corner. Mary rushes at the Doctor.

MARY (CONT'D)

She's dead! She's dead, isn't she?

Joe pulls her away. The Doctor is unperturbed.

DOCTOR  
It is my studied and experienced  
opinion...why, yes, she's dead.

MARIA  
Oh, Thanatopsis! I didn't mean  
anything I said---!

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. NIGHT.

Maria enters, followed by the Doctor and the rest of the  
family, Junior quickly settling into a far corner.

MARY  
Listen! What's that? She...she's  
breathing!

DOCTOR  
Well, if you want to get technical  
about it. Come here.

The Family, excepting Junior, approach the bed.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
That is not your daughter.

MARIA  
What?

DOCTOR  
Or your sister.

MARY  
Then who is she?

DOCTOR  
You mean what is it? What was  
formerly...  
(consulting chart)  
...Thanatopsis Jones is now merely  
an extension of these tubes and  
wires pulsations, gurglings,  
bubblings...

One of the machines "Pings".

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
---and pings.

MARY  
Then if it weren't for the machines  
she'd be...she'd be...

DOCTOR  
---your daughter again. But dead.

MARIA  
But --- she could be...thinking.

DOCTOR  
Thinking?!

The machine Pings! again.

MARY  
Doctor, her brain could be alive!

The Doctor seems to contemplate this possibility, but...

DOCTOR  
Well no not really. LOOK! Look at this! He rips off a long strip of graph paper from one of the machines.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
You don't have to believe me. This is very expensively obtained BrainWave Data that tells me to tell you that this brain is a complete blank!

He hands the paper to Joe, who studies it.

MARIA  
But what about her mind?

MARY  
Ahhhh....

DOCTOR  
(snatching the paper from Joe)  
This indicates a total lack of brain activity! It's scientific! It can't be contradicted! It won't be contradicted.

MARY  
Doctor! Oh Doctor, please! Maybe she's...meditating.

JOE  
"Meditating?"!  
(MORE)

JOE (cont'd)  
 (shaking her)  
 Jimminy Cricket, Mary. We're not  
 Orientals. We're Occidentals.  
 Occidentals don't meditate. We  
 pray. We go to our knees in the  
 privacy of our church or bedroom,  
 press our hands together AND PRAY!

MARIA  
 I know what her mind's doing. She's  
 reciting. She's memorized hundreds  
 of poems for times like these.

DOCTOR  
 Does this look like poetry to you?  
 This costs five-hundred dollars a  
 linear inch. Poems are a nickel a  
 word. And they lie! This doesn't  
 lie! It can't lie! It won't lie! It  
 is Truth!

Having uttered the irrefutable, the Doctor subsides.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 Only the machines are keeping her  
 alive.

MARY  
 What are you saying?

DOCTOR  
 (exactly as before)  
 Only the machines are keeping her  
 alive.

MARIA  
 What are you implying?

INT. HOSPITAL. RECORDING STUDIO. NIGHT.

Earphoned, the Doctor reads from a page of yellow copy.

DOCTOR  
 "Only the machines are keeping her  
 alive."

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. NIGHT.

Joe gathers Mary and Maria. He uses the Microphone as an  
 Interviewer.

JOE

Doctor, are you suggesting that we should turn the machines off?

DOCTOR

I'm only telling you the truth.  
Now if you will excuse me, I have live patients to heal. I leave.

And so he does, a bit too heroically.

INT. HOSPITAL. RECORDING STUDIO. NIGHT.

The Doctor removes his earphones, setting down the script.

DOCTOR

Not too strong I hope.

VOICE (O.S.)

That was perfect.

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. NIGHT.

Joe, Mary, and Marie stare at Thanatopsis.

JOE

We must do something.

MARY

Or. We can do nothing.

JOE

Or something---

MARIA

You mean---?

Maria looks at The Plug. Mary looks at The Plug. Joe leaps at The Plug and grips it as though to Pull It.

MARY

No!

MARIA

She's too young! She might still come out of it in time to get a date for New Year's Eve.

MARY

Yes! And she could be...could be...  
(singing)  
"Somewhere over the Rainbow..."

JOE  
Mary! Get a hold of yourself! We're  
not in Kansas anymore.

MARY  
But we never were. This is  
Minnesota.

JOE  
Don't you think Thanatopsis would  
have wanted it this way? You heard  
what the Doctor said...

INT. HOSPITAL. RECORDING STUDIO. NIGHT.

A finger presses a "Play" button.

INT. HOSPITAL. BUSY HALL. NIGHT.

The busy Hall comes to a stop at the recorded voice of the  
Doctor.

DOCTOR'S VOICE  
"Only the machines are keeping her  
alive."

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. NIGHT.

MARY  
(covering her ears)  
Oh no! NO!

A NURSE, of uncertain gender, between a Mime and a Geisha,  
enters rolling a machine which she attaches and activates.

It resembles an old-time gas pump register. As soon as it is  
activated it DINGS! and displays a dollar sum of \$10,000. It  
will continue to tally and goes where Thanatopsis goes.

A commotion in the Hall and as the Nurse exits, a gaggle and  
tangle of arms clutching microphones and cameras attempts to  
surge in but Joe manages to shut and lock the door.

JOE  
Who would have thought it?

MARIA  
Who are they?

JOE  
Three-fourths of the cable news  
networks.

Mary pulls back the curtain and looks out of the window:

INSERT:

The hospital lawn is covered with satellite trucks including that of ESPN. Cables, and interns everywhere. Klieg Lights illuminate ANCHORS earnestly anchoring.

MARY

Better make that all of them.

The new machine DINGS! \$12,000.

JOE

That caps it. We have a decision to make. And at the rate hospital costs are rising...

DING! \$13,500.

JOE (CONT'D)

...and the arrival of the news networks we must decide: does Thanatopsis remain on the machines or do we...

Joe grips The Plug. Mary looks at The Plug. Maria looks at The Plug. Junior scrolls through song titles.

JOE (CONT'D)

---Pull The Plug.

MARIA

Daddy wait! Last week in Philosophy class I was tested on a problem exactly like this.

JOE

How did you solve it?

MARIA

I---

JOE

Be honest, Maria. This is a hospital. Did you pass or fail? Did he live or die?

MARIA

I unplugged. He died. I passed. But daddy! This is my chance to  
(MORE)

MARIA (cont'd)  
take the test again! This time I  
want to fail! Don't Pull The  
Plug---!

DING! \$20,000.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
It was only a test. It all seems so  
"..far away..."

MARY  
(nearly singing)  
"---stood an old rugged cross..."

Banging on the Hall Door.

VOICE (O.S.)  
In the name of 24 hour a day 365  
day a year forever and ever  
Hallelujah cable network  
news...Open this Door!

DING! \$25,000.

MARY  
"...for the dear Lamb of God left  
this home far away...."

JOE  
For Christ sake will you be quiet!

MARY  
Alright. But only for He who is  
Him.

Banging at the Door.

JOE  
GO AWAY!

VOICE (O.S.)  
But we want to interview you. Each  
of you.

JOE  
We don't care!

VOICE (O.S.)  
What?



MARY  
We don't care!!

VOICE (O.S.)  
This could lead to appearances on  
Letterman and The View...

JOE  
Screw Letterman!

MARY  
Poop on The View!

Pause. Murmuring from outside the door.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Really?

JOE  
YES!

Another Pause.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Com'on --- Really?

JOE  
Yes --- Really.

VOICE (O.S.)  
....Okay....

After listening at the door for a moment, Joe opens it a crack and peeks out. Satisfied, he closes the door. Joe approaches The Plug.

MARY  
Joe. Darling. You can't be thinking  
seriously of...of doing --- It.

JOE  
(craftily)  
Listen, Mary, I could contemplate  
"it" all I want but...but to  
actually do The Deed, well, I'd  
need...need a Court Order. Yes, a  
Court Order! And where would I get  
a Court Order at this time of the  
night?

MARY  
Give me your handkerchief.

Mary uses his handkerchief to cover The Plug.

MARY (CONT'D)

There.

JOE

Look -- this has been hard on everyone. Why don't you get some coffee and a carbonated beverage.

MARIA

(using the microphone)

Junior, it was a question in philosophy class. It didn't have anything to do with Thanatopsis. She didn't ask to be hit on the head by a meteor. At least not that I'm aware of.

Mary uses the microphone.

MARY

Would you like something to drink?

Junior stands. Looks around.

JUNIOR

Yeeeeessssss---!

EXT. HOSPITAL. LAWN. NIGHT.

The kliegs go off one by one. Anchors in puzzlement. Satellite dishes fold up. Trucks depart. Night returns. Crickets. A grubby ORDERLY, with sack and nail-stick, cleans up the huge mess.

INT. HOSPITAL. VENDING HALL. NIGHT.

A Hall of vending machines. Trash cans and a naked light bulb give it the look and feel of an alley. A padlocked steel door at the end of the Hall is marked "NO EXIT". Below that "Happy Holidays" in strung-out cut-out letters.

Junior has already settled on his haunches sucking on a Mountain Dew between the machines.

Two Ominous Figures appear and block the Hall. Mary and Maria discover them and are taken aback.

MARY

Are you from one of the 24-hour cable news networks?

HE  
No.

SHE  
...we're not.

MARY  
Then who are you?

MARIA  
And what do you want?

The figures are revealed to be He and She.

HE  
Fear not. We're Secular Humanists.

SHE  
And we're here to help you.

BOTH  
Whether you want it or not!

He slaps the can out of Maria's hand.

HE  
That carbonated beverage will kill  
you.

MARIA  
What?

HE  
My great-grandfather drank  
carbonated beverages!

SHE  
He died.

HE  
My grandfather drank carbonated  
beverages!

SHE  
He died.

HE  
My father drank....

But He breaks down. She consoles. He bounces back.  
Pretending to be Black they begin a Caucasoid-rap beat--

HE (CONT'D)  
 Secular Humanist is what we are.

SHE  
 We're white

HE  
 And so bright

SHE  
 And tintinnabular.  
 (patronizing)  
 "Like the ringing of bells."

HE  
 We tend to be shrilly

SHE  
 But never are silly

HE  
 We're just Regular Secular  
 Hu-oo-manists.

A pause, as though for applause or otherwise approval.

MARY  
 Tell us, please, what should we do?

That's all they need. They launch.

HE  
 All life is sacred.

SHE  
 We cry for misfits who've carved up  
 their parents and chopped them to  
 bits. "Have mercy!"

HE  
 She quivers. "Don't kill him!"

SHE  
 He sniffs.

HE  
 We're just Regular Secular  
 Hu-oo-manists.

MARY  
 Oh thank you! I see it all now.  
 What it is we should do...

MARIA

You've given us direction. And hope. Thanatopsis will come out of it yet.

MARY

It's the right thing to do.

MARIA

Yes! Thanatopsis is like...like an unborn child awaiting her moment of awareness, of birth, of re-birth!

He and She recoil in horror.

HE

Don't talk to us of fetuses

SHE

We'd rather save the cetuses

HE

Or baby seals or minnows in a stream!

SHE

And if you bring up morals

HE

We'll be running out of portals

SHE

Because no one's fully human 'till they're six or seven-teen!

Attention shifts to Junior twitching and jerking on his haunches, Mountain Dew squirting out of his nose.

MARIA

If we can hold on till next week she'll be seventeen---!

MARY

Maria, hush! I feel they speak the truth.

MARIA

I don't understand...

MARY

It's not about understanding. It's about feeling, isn't it?

She and He pin black awareness ribbons on Mary and Maria.

HE

You may object to us or our message

SHE

But surely you can't object to a simple piece of ribbon, can you?

MARIA

Well---

SHE

We have never eaten food that's fried.

HE

Contrary thoughts we can't abide.

BOTH

We're completely L.L. Beanified!

HE

We're just Regular

SHE

Secular

BOTH

Hu-oo-man-issssssts. . . .

MARY

Yes-yes! I see it, I feel it all clearly now. I'm converted. I believe!

SHE

Sip our Holy Spring Water.

HE

Eat this no-fat, cholesterol-free soy wafer.

MARIA

Mother! No! Don't do it!

SHE

Too late. She's one of us now.

MARY

(stonily)

I hate George Bush.

He and She give the Secular Humanist Gesture to Mary.

HE  
You know what must be done.

MARY  
"I do".

SHE  
Then do it.

MARIA  
Noooooooo!!!

Maria rushes to her mother but is intercepted.

HE & SHE  
(a chant 60's style)  
Just Do it. Just Do it. Just Do it.  
Just do it.

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. NIGHT.

Joe rubs his hands together in anticipation.

JOE  
There now. It's time to take  
action. And I'm going to do this  
Democratically. Everyone who wants  
what used to be my daughter to  
remain on these machines raise your  
hand.

He surveys the room.

JOE (CONT'D)

Now. All those who want to turn the machines mercifully off,  
say "Aye".

He waits a moment.

JOE (CONT'D)  
"Aye!"

He whips the handkerchief off of The Plug and ceremoniously  
grips The Plug and with a mighty tug, pulls. But it doesn't  
budge. He tries again with the same result.

JOE (CONT'D)  
 How can this be? She was always so  
 docile. So willing to go along.  
 (at her face)  
 Thanatopsis! This is for our...  
 (looks heavenward)  
 This is for your own good.

A great tug but falls over on his back. Snaps his fingers.

JOE (CONT'D)  
 A Court Order! I was right! That's  
 what I need. A Court Order!

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU HALL. NIGHT.

The Hall is empty except for a well-dressed bearded MAN  
 typing on his laptop.

Joe bustles out of ICU. Surveys before running to the  
 Stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL. STAIRWAY. NIGHT.

Joe, on a mission now, descends several flights.

INT. HOSPITAL PARKING GARAGE. NIGHT.

As befits the middle of the night, there are but a few cars  
 as Joe makes a beeline for a Restroom.

INT. HOSPITAL. PARKING GARAGE. RESTROOM. NIGHT.

Joe bursts in. A WAITING ROOM CHAMELEON (cousin to the  
 Lounge Lizard) is the only other occupant. He is making  
 himself up.

JOE  
 Ah! There it is!

On the wall, between prophylactic vending machines, is a  
 similar machine, only it dispenses "Court Orders 5¢" Joe  
 digs through his pockets.

JOE (CONT'D)  
 Damn! Hey, buddy, you got change  
 fora quarter?

W.R. CHAMELEON  
 Yeah sure...Here you go.



Joe hurriedly deposits a nickel, turns the crank, and out drops a nifty rolled and black-ribboned Court Order.

But wait! If one's good, 2's better.

JOE

In case there's an appeal.

Joe nervously laughs as he leaves. The Chameleon finishes eye-lining then sprays his throat...

W.R. CHAMELEON

"Like a bridge over troubled...."

INT. HOSPITAL. PARKING GARAGE. NIGHT.

As Joe emerges triumphant, clutching Court Orders, Mary exits the Ladies Room determined and ready, bending a coat hanger. They stop. Stare at each other. Joint realization and unity.

MARY

She's really not viable.

JOE

It's best for her.

MARY

It's what she would have wanted.

JOE

We're doing this for her.

Their minds meet. Then their bodies.

EXT. HOSPITAL. ROOF. DAWN.

As Maria enjoys the dawn, Junior twitches on the parapet giving way to thrashings and yelps. His batteries are depleted. Maria has extras in her purse which are as water to a desert wanderer to Junior. He subsides into quivering.

INT. HOSPITAL. EMERGENCY ROOM. NIGHT.

Things have returned to boredom. One Doctor putting. One Doctor polishing his balls. He is distracted and then riveted by the regular TV and rushes to turn the volume up.

DOCTOR

Hey! This is it!

PLAYBACK --- HOSPITAL. ICU. NIGHT.

An Indian ACTOR DOCTOR adjusts a heart monitor on a comatose PATIENT as an American Indian ACTRESS NURSE adjusts the drip on feeding tubes.

ACTOR DOCTOR  
Ooo, this is not good. Not good at  
all. I despair having to tell the  
sad news. How will I do it?

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU HALL. DAWN.

Joe and Mary, Court Order and Coat Hanger poised for action, approach the door of the ICU.

From inside the room: DING! They grasp each other's hands.

EXT. HOSPITAL. ROOF. DAWN.

Maria runs her finger along the flatline of Thanatopsis' Brain-Wave Data.

MARIA (V.O.)  
Could this be a poem? Could dear  
sweet Thanatopsis be...  
(reading from the Book)  
"...wandering lonely as a cloud  
that floats on high over vales and  
hills..."?

She removes her black ribbon, throws it to the ground, and steps on it. She dials her cellphone.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Jeffery? I need your help.

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. DAWN.

Joe opens the curtains and raises the shade revealing the eastern sky in all its splendor. Just to be on the safe side he hands Mary one of the Court Orders, which they hold out toward Thanatopsis. DING! Together they Pull The Plug.

The Sounds begin to gradually drop off and choke, like a cartoon car konking out. The last is the heart monitor which bravely keeps on. It finally flatlines. But no! A blip. Two. Three. But alas -- the flatline prevails. Silence. DING! DONG....

They let The Plug fall to the floor.

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU HALL. DAY.

Joe and Mary exit the ICU. Pause. Then flee.

The Bearded Man looks up from his laptop. As Joe and Mary disappear around the corner, the Nurse appears and goes into the ICU.

INT. HOSPITAL. ICU. DAY.

Immediately upon entering, the Nurse senses trouble: The Plug! She rushes to it, trying to re-insert it but can't.

She spies the spent Court Orders on the floor. The Nurse checks the heart: nothing. Pulse: nothing. Finally, the Nurse lifts Thanatopsis' arm and releases it. It flops down. Again, with the same result. One last time, trying to stiffen the arm before letting it go. To no avail. The match is over.

She covers the body and leaves.

DONG!

INT. HOSPITAL. MORGUE. DAY.

Still, silent, cold, and nearly filled to capacity.

The doors burst open, the slightly-tipsy ORDERLY pushes another Body on a gurney in. After some difficulty parallel-parking the gurney, he takes a drink from a hip flask. Unfortunately it is empty. He finds a bottle which he has hidden beneath the sheets of one of the other Bodies.

ORDERLY

Thanks for keeping it cold for me.

Each of the Bodies has its own DING! machine, only now it DONGS! and at longer intervals. Some of the tallies are astronomical, way into 7 figures. He makes himself room on Thanatopsis' gurney.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)

Well! I hear you nearly made it to your birthday. Too bad. Hey! You know what today is?

When there is no response, he exposes her face.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)

Today is almost my birthday. Who would have thought it? Me. Born. Well, that just goes to show ya.

Finishes the bottle. Retrieves another.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRAND CENTRAL HALL. NIGHT.

The Hall is empty until the Nurse comes through, stopping to watch the ubiquitous TV up on the wall.

PLAYBACK --- HOSPITAL. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

An anxious FAMILY is assembled around the Doctor's immense horseshoe-shaped desk. Huge portraits of Indira Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln on the wall behind the Doctor.

The Family - a Father, Mother, teen daughter, and a pair of identically dressed but completely dissimilar Boys.

ACTOR DOCTOR

Your daughter died at about 7:47  
this evening.

ACTRESS MARY

But she breathes!

ACTRESS MARIA

She blinks!

ACTOR DOCTOR

Simply assisted reactions methinks.

ACTOR JOE

What can we do?

The Doctor produces a larger-than-life electrically-correct model of A Receptacle into which a large Plug is inserted.

ACTOR DOCTOR

Let me demonstrate----

The demonstration produces multiple "ooooo's" and "ahhh's" at each extraction and insertion.

INT. HOSPITAL. MORGUE. NIGHT.

The Orderly is now expansive.

ORDERLY

Yeah, they pulled The Plug on me  
too once. But I showed 'em!

(laughs)

I went from comatose to  
unconscious. Then to impassive.

(MORE)

ORDERLY (cont'd)  
Then oblivious. At that point, I  
went back to work. Then from  
oblivious to ap-athetic. And now?  
Ha! I'm just pathetic.

He pulls a Paper Party Whistle out of his pocket, the kind  
that unrolls and squeaks. He blows it. It quickly rolls  
back. He tries again but can't sustain it.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)

"Happy Birthday to me..." I just can't seem to keep  
it...out.

(demonstrates)

Listen: can you keep a secret? It's the coffee. It's the  
damned coffee. They put somethin' in it -- ah! Enough of me.  
You look like you could use some cheerin' up.

He sticks the whistle in her mouth and covers her up.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)  
Yeah, it's the coffee....

He staggers out.

EXT. HOSPITAL. ROOF. DAY.

Junior crouches against an air-conditioner unit. He's either  
into some acid rock or having a gran mal.

INT. HOSPITAL. WAITING ROOM. DAY.

The Bearded Man sits at the opposite end of the room from  
Joe, Mary, and Maria.

MARIA  
You can't have done it!

JOE  
We did. We have. Its been done!

MARIA  
But why?

MARY  
Because it had to.

JOE  
It had to be done.

MARY  
And so it was.

JOE

Done. Well done.

Frustrated, Maria storms to a corner.

MARIA  
You sound like those Manhattan  
Lumberjacks!

JOE  
What?

Maria glances down at the Bearded Man's laptop and sees that he has typed her last utterance. She looks again but he is playing a violent video game.

MARY  
They were Secular Humanists. And  
good ones too.

JOE  
Maria, listen: Your sister's life  
just wasn't viable any longer.

MARIA  
Viable?!

Maria sticks her head out into the Hall. She disappears for a moment, returning with the Orderly in tow, with a mop.

ORDERLY  
Hay---!

MARIA  
"Viable"? How old is he? 53-37?  
Married?

ORDERLY  
No.

MARIA  
Pets?

ORDERLY  
Three gerbils.

MARIA  
Ambitions?

ORDERLY  
To move up to bedpans.

MARIA  
Is this a viable life? So we just  
ought to Pull The Plug on him too?

Orderly shakes himself away.

ORDERLY  
Don't think it hasn't been tried!  
But I'm alive!  
(laughs fiendishly)  
"I'm Alive!"

VOICE ON P.A.  
Clean-up in detox Cubicle 3-A.

ORDERLY  
(comically)  
Oy! If you call this living.  
(seriously, to Maria)  
Do you call this living?

Orderly drags himself out, mop in tow.

JOE  
Darling, don't you see that...

MARIA  
---where is she?!

MARY  
I suppose the place dead people go.

INT. HOSPITAL. MORGUE. DAY.

Junior sticks his head in. He sees his breath. The cold,  
the dark, the morbidity, appeal to him.

JUNIOR  
Kewl....

He makes a circuit, opens the door to leave. The whistle  
sounds, muffled. He stops, not certain if he heard  
anything, surveys the room. Nothing. The whistle sounds  
again. He lifts his earpiece. The whistle sounds and he  
notices a bulge under a sheet. He slowly approaches and  
lifts the sheet. It is Thanatopsis. The whistle is fully  
extended. Junior is drawn closer and closer to the  
phenomenon. The whistle snaps closed.

INT. HOSPITAL. ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

A gray, faceless ADMININISTRATOR collates pages from an immense stack as Joe and Mary sign them. Marie reads a Life Magazine.

A gaggle of people stand watching TV. The scene is of a Family standing around the patient on life-support.

ADMINISTRATOR

Sign here. And here. And here. And  
here. And here. And here. And here.  
NO! ...Here...and here. And here.

This continues as Junior rushes into the Office. He hurriedly whispers into Maria's ear. She stops him from going to the parents.

MARIA

(signaling to him)

No! Later. Come on.

And they quick-step out.

INT. HOSPITAL. COLORFUL HALL. DAY.

Maria leads the way with Junior, unsure where she is going. Before he can stop her, she throws open the double doors of a Children's Ward where a CLOWN, in frighteningly unfunny make-up, is doing pratfalls for an audience of impassive wheelchair-bound children.

INT. HOSPITAL. MORGUE. DAY.

Maria studies Thanatopsis' immobile face.

MARIA

Are you sure?

Junior nods "yes". Maria gently presses on Thanatopsis' chest and the whistle extends slowly in response.

MARIA (CONT'D)

But can she do it on her own?

Pause. They step back. Junior removes his earpiece. After another moment of waiting, the whistle sounds and unrolls. Maria springs into action.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Help me!



And they pivot Thanatopsis out of line and wheel her out.

INT. HOSPITAL. ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

The Administrator points out the options at the end of a long, long page.

ADMINISTRATOR  
Cremation or Interment?

Puzzled looks from Joe and Mary.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)  
We pride ourselves on being a  
full-service Hospital.

After a moment Joe and Mary respond together.

JOE  
Cremation...

MARY  
Interment.

They smile.

ADMINISTRATOR  
Cremation is cheaper. But then  
there's the Rapture.

Blank looks.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)  
Are you religious?

No reaction.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)  
Do you believe in anything?

MARY  
Recycling.

JOE  
Global Warming.

ADMINISTRATOR  
I recommend interment. It's  
organic.

MARY

But wouldn't it take up valuable space?

JOE

And coffins are made of wood. Wood that could be used to feed and clothe the poor.

MARY

---and promote world peace.

ADMINISTRATOR

That leaves cremation.

JOE & MARY

Okay. Do it.

ADMINISTRATOR

Sign here. And here. And here....

INT. HOSPITAL. REGULAR HALL. DAY.

Maria and Junior whizz past pushing the gurney with Thanatopsis.

INT. HOSPITAL. CAFETERIA. DAY.

The Doctor operates on a human-shaped glob of green jello, triumphantly extracting a Cherry, which he eats.

A Group eating off of trays stand watching TV as Thanatopsis' gurney bursts in.

MARIA

She's alive! She was dead. But now she's alive.

DOCTOR

No-no. That's not the way it works. First you're alive. Then you're dead.

A Server on the foodline bursts into laughter.

MARIA

Our parents pulled The Plug on her.

DOCTOR

Ooohh, well then...

MARIA  
---and she whistled.

DOCTOR  
Corpses don't whistle. They sit up.  
They gurgle sometimes. But they  
don't whistle...

Thanatopsis whistles giving it a full unroll and snap-back.

MARIA  
You see?!

The Doctor hastily scribbles notes.

DOCTOR  
It's unheard of.

MARIA  
Are you saying it's impossible?

DOCTOR  
I've never heard of it. And I don't  
intend hearing of it!

She whistles again.

MARIA  
There! You heard that?

Doctor examines Thanatopsis closely.

DOCTOR  
Hmmmmmm....

MARIA  
It's a miracle.

DOCTOR  
It seems to be Czech-o-slo-vak-ian.  
(pontificating)  
I don't know why. I don't know how.  
Yet she is. Alive. But. Still deep  
in a coma barely at the beginning  
of an extremely long sentence.

"Ding-Dong! "

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
(patting Maria on the  
head)

My dear girl. I am a Doctor of  
Medicine and yet the Nature of Life  
is more of a Mystery to me than  
ever it was. Sign here please.  
Maria signs.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
...and here...and here...and here.  
Oh! And --- there.

The Doctor parades out to applause.

INT. HOSPITAL. CAFETERIA HALL. DAY.

The Doctor walks down the Hall to the Elevators. Out of an  
Elevator walks the Bearded Man. The Doctor slips him papers  
before boarding the Elevator.

DOCTOR  
It's completely out of hand.

BEARDED MAN  
Good!

Thanatopsis is wheeled out of the Cafeteria and into the  
Hall by the Orderly, accompanied by the Nurse. Maria and  
Junior hard on their heels

MARIA  
Where are you taking her?

ORDERLY  
I may be barely viable...

MARIA  
---look, I'm sorry I...

ORDERLY  
(whispering to Maria)  
---but I understand.

The Nurse elbows Orderly in the ribs and he pushes the  
Gurney into another Elevator shutting out Maria and Junior.

INT. HOSPITAL. ELEVATOR. DAY.

The Orderly studies the Nurse taking Thanatopsis' pulse. He  
is disdainful of her pink awareness ribbon. She becomes  
aware of this. He has an idea. He pricks his finger,

squeezing droplets on a piece of white ribbon which he proudly pins to his shirt.

ORDERLY  
Measels-rights activist.

The Elevator stops and dings...as does Thanatopsis.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Thanatopsis lies motionless, the whistle still in her mouth.

The curtains are open showing a star-studded sky. "Ding!"

EXT. HOSPITAL. PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

Maria and Junior walk under the night sky.

A pick-up truck drives by. Stops. Backs up. It is Jeffery.

JEFFERY  
Maria! What is it?

MARIA  
Jeffery! It's Thanatopsis. She's been unplugged.

JEFFERY  
Oh, I'm so sorry.

MARIA  
But she lives! She's refused to die. And now I'm afraid.

JEFFERY  
Afraid of what?

MARIA  
That they're going to try to kill her again.

JEFFERY  
Who?

MARIA  
Everybody. Except us.

EXT. HOSPITAL. PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

Maria, Junior, and Jeffery walk toward the Hospital. A Van is rocking.

MARIA  
That's our van!

They carefully approach. Jeffery throws open the door. Mary and Joe are going at it. Junior turns aside and vomits.

JOE  
Maria--!

MARY  
Oh, darling, we're just...just---

JOE  
---making a replacement for your sister.

MARIA  
But she's still alive!

JOE  
Alive? Alive! We'll see about that! In just a minute---

Joe pulls the door shut and the Van resumes its rocking.

MARIA  
They're lying.

JEFFERY  
Maria!

MARIA  
He was wearing a condom.

Junior vomits again.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Maria, Jeffery, and Junior stand around the bed.

JEFFERY  
There must be a way to communicate with her.

Junior puts his earpiece on Thanatopsis. Maria speaks into the microphone.

MARIA  
Hello? Thanatopsis? Can. You. Hear.  
Me? This is your sister. Maria....

But nothing. Junior retrieves his equipment and retires to a corner. Thanatopsis whistles.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Thanatopsis! Yes? What is it?

A single blow.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Can...you...hear...me?

Nothing.

JEFFERY  
Once for "yes". Twice for "no".

She whistles twice.

MARIA  
"No"!

JEFFERY  
What can she mean?

MARIA  
It's madding!

In bursts the Clown, pushing aside Jeffery and Maria.

CLOWN  
Don't crowd her!

MARIA  
Who are you?

JEFFERY  
And what do you want?

MARIA  
And who are you?

The Clown opens the front of his clown costume revealing a black shirt and white collar and an immense Clown Crucifix around his neck.

CLOWN  
The hospital Chaplain. To help you.  
And current President of the local  
chapter of the SS.S. Sillies in  
Service. To the Savior.

MARIA  
How can you help?

JEFFERY  
And how did you know help was  
needed?

The Clown clicks on the TV.

CLOWN

It's already a Movie of the Day.

PLAYBACK -- EXT. DARK ALLEY. NIGHT.

Actor Joe meets surreptitiously with a Gang of Robed SUPREME  
COURT JUSTICES. The CHIEF wearing a huge Headdress.

ACTOR JOE  
Which one of you is the Chief  
Justice? Ah --- Here's a large  
amount of cash.

CHIEF JUSTICE  
Here Court Order.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Maria transfixed at the TV until Clown clicks it off.

MARIA  
So that's how he did it. But...but  
how has it gotten on TV?

CLOWN  
Some doctor, I believe.

MARIA  
Ah-ha! He was making all those  
notes but he was really writing a  
screenplay.

CLOWN  
It was probably just a treatment.

He punches this up with a squeeze horn blast.

MARIA  
What difference does it make? Can  
you do anything?



The Clown makes himself at home. Digging through his big orange bag, he gives Maria and Jeffery funny party hats. He studies the whistle.

CLOWN  
Where did this come from?

MARIA  
I don't know.

CLOWN  
It's professional grade. Vintage  
Czechoslovakian.

He produces a Big Bible which is hollowed out and from which he removes paper whistles which he distributes sacramentally into their opened mouths.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
Here. Take. Use.

Jeffery, Maria, and even Junior crowd the bed blowing furiously but expressively.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
Please! Please! Step back. If you  
will allow me....

He makes a series of seemingly fluent blows. All await an answer.

MARIA  
What did you say?

CLOWN  
I asked her name. Wait--! She's  
answering.

A weak but noticeable response from Thanatopsis.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
She says her name is  
Cran-is-to-peze?

MARIA  
It's Thanatopsis.

CLOWN  
It must be her accent.

MARIA  
She has a slight lisp.

CLOWN  
That's it.

MARIA  
It's a miracle!

CLOWN  
Quiet!

He blows a rather complicated question.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
I asked her if she was now or has  
she ever been, in fact -- dead.

JEFFERY  
Wow....

Thanatopsis answers simply.

MARIA  
Well? Her answer?

CLOWN  
"Yes".

The Clown, until now merely eccentric, helpful, and  
enthusiastic, turns driven, possessive, and evil. He blows a  
question. Thanatopsis answers.

JEFFERY  
What did you ask her?

CLOWN  
I asked if she is dead now.

JEFFERY  
And....?

CLOWN  
"Yes".

MARIA  
Ask her what it's like.

Clown asks. Thanatopsis answers. We suspect that the Clown  
is not entirely forthcoming.

CLOWN  
White --- and boring. Look, I...

MARIA  
I want to talk to her!

Maria blows a flurry. Waits in breathless anticipation. The Clown bursts out laughing.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
What's so funny?

CLOWN  
(taking Maria's whistle)  
You asked her if she would mind if  
you wore our shoes on your head.

MARIA  
Oh....

CLOWN  
Why don't you let me handle this.

JEFFERY  
Maybe its best---

CLOWN  
Yes! Best. For all of us. If you  
could just...just give me some time  
with her.

MARIA  
Why?

CLOWN  
"WHY?!" HOW DARE YOU--? It...its a  
delicate language. I need to be  
alone with her.

Thanatopsis whistles.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
Ah, you see. She would like  
some...some ice cream. Get her  
some. FOR GOD'S SAKE GET HER SOME  
ICE CREAM!

MARIA  
(grudgingly)  
Okay. But only for Him. And we'll  
take these with us.

Meaning their whistles.

CLOWN  
Since she is both alive and dead  
she has information. Knowledge. The  
world needs. To know.

Reluctantly they leave.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM HALL. NIGHT.

Just outside the Sick Room Junior squats, blowing the  
whistle.

JEFFERY  
This could be cosmically  
significant.

Maria slumps against the wall next to Junior.

JEFFERY (CONT'D)  
Maria---?

MARIA  
Give me a second. There. Help me  
up. For a moment everything drained  
out of me.

JEFFERY  
You've been through a lot.

MARIA  
Me!? What about Thanatopsis?

JEFFERY  
She's alive. Well, sort of.

JUNIOR  
ICE CREAM! ICE CREAM!

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Back against the door, the Clown drops all pretense.

CLOWN  
What puny minds! Here lies before  
me an opening into the world on the  
other side of death... what a  
title! "The Other Side of Death"!  
There's so much to ask. Purgatory  
and heaven and hell and Who sits at  
the left hand and is He going to  
come again? And if so -- WHEN?

He gets a grip on himself. Wipes away any drool. Pulls a chair to the bed, digs a notebook from his bag and blows a serious question. Thanatopsis answers at length as he scribbles notes.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
Really? I wouldn't have guessed it  
in a thousand years.

He blows a quick question and she answers.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
You're kidding!

He is now in mode: asking, scribbling, asking.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
Okay. Jesus on the right hand. St.  
Paul on the left. What? On his  
lap?!

INT. HOSPITAL. SNACK BAR. NIGHT.

Maria, Jeffery, and Junior, with ice cream, are drawn to a group watching TV.

PLAYBACK -- INT. HOSPITAL. ICU.

The Supreme Court, with the Chief in headdress, are on hand as Actor Joe is set to Pull The Plug. Actress Maria bursts in.

ACTRESS MARIA  
Stop, daddy, STOP!

ACTOR JOE  
I...I can't---! My hand's already  
moving---

INT. HOSPITAL. SNACK BAR. NIGHT.

A crush at the TV.

TV WATCHER #1  
The bastard.

TV WATCHER #2  
It's merciful.

TV WATCHER #1  
It's murder!

MARIA  
Look! I'm Brittany Spears!

PLAYBACK -- INT. HOSPITAL. ICU.

Actor Joe's hand has grasped the Plug as a UNION BOSS  
crashes in.

UNION BOSS  
STOP!

ACTOR JUNIOR  
Look! He's stopped!

ACTRESS MARIA  
Saved!

ACTRESS MARY  
Thanks be to the Deity and/or  
Deities!

The Boss hands Joe his card.

UNION BOSS  
John Hornbeck, President of the  
Plug Pullers Union Local #1159. You  
a member?

ACTOR JOE  
As a matter of fact---Joe hands him  
a card.

UNION BOSS  
Hmmm, joined yesterday, eh? Have at  
it.

INT. HOSPITAL. SNACK BAR. NIGHT.

The crowd has grown rowdy and divided.

GROUP A  
Pull it!

GROUP 1  
Don't!

GROUP A  
Pull it!

GROUP 1  
Don't!

GROUP A

Pull it!

GROUP 1

Don't---!

PLAYBACK -- IN. HOSPITAL. ICU.

Actor Joe grasps The Plug for a mighty tug---

UNION BOSS

WAIT! 5 o'clock.

He pulls Joe away.

INT. HOSPITAL. SNACK BAR. NIGHT.

Cheers from Group 1 and jeers from Group A.

PLAYBACK -- INT. HOSPITAL. ICU.

Actor Joe wrests loose from the Boss's grip and rips The Plug from the wall. The Boss rips up Joe's card.

UNION BOSS

We know where you live. You'll  
never Pull another Plug again.

EXT. HOSPITAL. PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

Joe and Mary exit the Van. A DOG runs by and is struck by a passing car. The joy and peace and satisfaction in Mary's face instantly become uncontrollable sobbing.

MARY

That. Poor. Dog---!

JOE

But Thanatopsis is alive.

MARY

How can that be? Maria's just  
hallucinating from grief.

JOE

We'd better look into this.

They spot He & She exiting the building.

MARY

Let's ask them about it.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Thanatopsis whistles up a storm. The Clown paces, leaps in the joy of discovery, all the time documenting it. He stops suddenly.

CLOWN

What? Are you sure of that?

He whistles his question and she answers. He pauses and stands quietly at the import of her answer.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

There aren't 10 Commandments? Only four?

(a low whistle)

Wow... Okay then, which four--?

He asks. No answer.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

Let me rephrase it....

There is still no response. He asks again. Nothing. The whistle drops from her mouth.

EXT. HOSPITAL. SIDE DOOR. NIGHT.

He & She are enjoying the night air until He is distracted. He sniffs at the air. Sniffs deeper.

HE

You smell that?

SHE

(sniffing)

Smoke?

HE

Cigarette smoke.

This galvanizes them. But there is no one in sight.

SHE

Over there!

They rush around the corner - but no one.

HE

Someone... somewhere... is smoking.



SHE  
Let's find 'em!

They speed away toward the next corner.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

The Clown tries to re-insert the whistle into Thanatopsis' mouth with increasing frustration. He tries to hold it in while whistling a question. Her whistle pops out. She moans.

CLOWN  
Oh no! NOOOOOO--!

She puts her hand to her face. She is coming OUT OF IT.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
This can't be happening! There's  
so much more to know! Was Jesus  
really an only begotten son?

The more she comes out of it, the more frenzied he becomes.

THANATOPSIS  
What---? What's happening? Where?  
Where am I? And who are---?

CLOWN  
---was there really a BIG BANG?

THANATOPSIS

What? How should I---?

In a frenzy, the Clown takes off his Big Shoe and hits Thanatopsis. He hits her again. And again. And again.

EXT. HOSPITAL. DUMPSTER PAD. NIGHT.

He & She round another corner out of breath but are rewarded: there is an ELDERLY MAN enjoying a cigarette. He & She, girded, approach. She slaps the cigarette out of his mouth.

HE  
You idiot!

SHE  
These will kill you!

HE  
And everyone around you!

He jerks the Elderly Man out of his chair and punches him in the stomach. As he doubles over a pack of cigarettes falls from his jacket. She deftly kicks them away and grinds them into the ground. They stand over the Elderly Man. He writhes in pain.

SHE

You'll thank us for this one day.

He flips a business card on the Elderly Man.

HE

We can always be reached through our website.

INT. HOSPITAL. GIFT SHOP. NIGHT.

The Patrons and Cashier are focused on the TV.

PLAYBACK --- INT. HOSPITAL. ICU.

An ELECTRICIAN examines The Plug.

ACTOR ELECTRICIAN

She's unplugged alright.

The heart monitor sounds flat-line then there is a blip.

ACTRESS MARY

Wait! Listen!

The blip becomes regular.

ACTRESS MARY (CONT'D)

She lives! She doesn't need the machines!

INT. HOSPITAL. GIFT SHOP. NIGHT.

The Patrons and Cashier break into cheers.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

The Clown stands at the bedside still holding the Big Shoe. He is spent after the Deed. He tries to put the whistle into her mouth but it does not stay.

CLOWN

This time, dead for good, I fear.

Just before exiting, he stops. He must try one more time. Close to her face he puckers up and "whistles a happy tune".

Nothing.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM HALL. NIGHT.

The Clown, frizzy hair hanging at his side, thumping on his one Big Shoe, exits the Sick Room and around the corner just as two MEN IN WHITE SUITS screech into the Hall.

WHITE SUIT #1  
Sometimes he pretends he's a priest  
and sometimes a clown.

WHITE SUIT #2  
How did he get away?

WHITE SUIT #1  
He escaped while watching TV.

EXT.HOSPITAL. DUMPSTER PAD. NIGHT.

Joe and Mary approach He & She, standing over the Elderly Man.

JOE  
What happened to him?

SHE  
Smoking can be hazardous to your  
health.

MARY  
She's alive. Thanatopsis is alive!

HE  
What do you mean by "alive"?

JOE  
We're not sure.

HE  
You pulled it all the way out, I  
hope?

Joe is puzzled by the intimacy of the question.

SHE  
The plug.

JOE  
Oh yes.

MARY

All the way.

SHE

Sometimes this happens.

HE

Just make sure nobody feeds her.

SHE

Let Mother Nature take her course.

MARY

So its natural?

SHE

The most natural thing in the world.

HE

She won't feel any pain.

SHE

If it's good enough for millions in the Third World it's good enough for your daughter.

JOE

Oh thank you, thank you.

As She escorts Joe and Mary to the door, He notices the Elderly Man's hand has reached the lit cigarette. He grinds the cigarette and the Man's hand into the ground.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Joe and Mary enter carefully as the Doctor concludes his examination. A surly MAN in a RED jumpsuit waits in a corner.

MARY

Is she--? Is she---

DOCTOR

Yes she is. And there's no two ways about it this time. Or three. Or four.

MARY

We were told she was..er is...alive.

DOCTOR  
Well she's dead now. I stake my  
reputation upon it.

JOE  
What's this whistle?

DOCTOR  
Undoubtedly a sick joke by one of  
the minimum-wage staff.

The Doctor tries to pull it out but it is firm. Rather than  
make a scene he shrugs it off.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
Rigor mortis.

He pulls the sheet over the Body as Maria, Jeffery, and  
Junior burst in, Junior with the ice cream.

MARIA  
Ah-ha! Oh-no! What have you done?  
Where's the Clown?

JOE  
Clown? This is how we found her.

MARY  
You're delusional.

DOCTOR  
Here's the trouble right here.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
(picking up the Big Shoe)  
Big Foot.  
(he's the only one  
amused. To Joe:)  
Initial this please.

MARIA  
You see, there was a Clown.

The Doctor tags out with a Judge, in robes and holding a Big  
Book, who enters.

JUDGE  
Is all the family here? Then  
please gather 'round and join  
hands.

(MORE)

JUDGE (cont'd)  
 (opens Book)  
 Dearly beloved. We are gathered  
 here for The Pronunciation. I now  
 pronounce you D E A D.  
 (closes Book, attaches  
 tag to toe)  
 You may now cremate the corpse.  
 (produces a document)  
 Sign here. And here. Initial there.  
 And there. And there.

The Judge notarizes the Document and presents it to Joe,  
 shakes his hand, and starts out. The REDMAN comes to life  
 and starts to unlock the wheels and push the bed out.

MARIA  
 Wait! NO!

JUDGE  
 It's over.

JOE  
 All over?

JUDGE  
 All. Over.

As he leaves, the Judge looks down as though he's stepped on  
 something.

MARIA  
 I don't believe it! I don't believe  
 any of it! Jeffery do something!

The Redman calmly removes a pencil from his pocket.

REDMAN  
 I've seen this before. I'm going to  
 poke her eyes out with this pencil.  
 I've always found this to be---

Jeffery wields the Big Shoe against the Redman's pencil.

JEFFERY  
 Oh no you don't!

The Redman deftly pokes Jeffery in the eye.

JEFFERY (CONT'D)  
 Owwww!

The Redman goes about his business, pushing the bed out of the room.

MARIA  
Are you okay?

JEFFERY  
That really hurt.

Maria ministers to Jeffery whose wound is superficial.

MARIA  
Well--! Isn't anyone...?

Junior turns on the TV.

MARY  
Junior!

JOE  
No. Wait ---

PLAYBACK ---A COMMERCIAL IS JUST ENDING.

PLAYBACK --- INT. HOSPITAL. CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
...and now back to your Movie of  
the Day, "Don't Die! Die!"

The Actor Doctor, detached and Godlike, addresses the Actor Parents.

ACTOR DOCTOR  
Your daughter's vital signs have  
ceased. She is in a "persistent  
vegetative state". There is  
nothing science, religion,  
morality, politics, or literature  
can do for her now except to put an  
end to it.

ACTOR JOE  
How?

ACTOR DOCTOR  
Withhold nourishment.

ACTRESS MARIA  
Starve her!?

ACTRESS MARY

How can we make a decision like that?

ACTOR DOCTOR

Fortunately, you are not alone. That's right. You out there can help out this family in need. Call one of the two numbers you see at the bottom of the screen: 1-800-SHE/EAT or 1-800-SHE/NO/EAT.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Maria grabs a water pitcher.

MARIA

NOOOOO!

She tosses the pitcher at the TV shattering it.

JOE

Maria!

MARIA

One of the last things Thanatopsis said to me was that I'd be brain-dead if the TV ever broke. Com'on Jeffery. You too Junior.

JOE

Where are you going?

MARIA

To see if she was right!

Maria, Jeffery, and Junior vacate the room. After a pause Mary picks up the phone.

MARY

What was that number?

INT. HOSPITAL. FORKED HALL. NIGHT.

The Redman lazily pushes Thanatopsis. He approaches a fork in the Hall with cheery signs indicating "Auditorium" to the right and "Crematorium" to the left. He veers left.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM HALL. NIGHT.

Jeffery waits for an anxiously pacing Maria. Junior is mesmerized by a sporadic fluorescent light above them.



JEFFERY

What are we going to do?

MARIA

I don't know.

JEFFERY

You were so positive in there.

MARIA

I know.

JEFFERY

You want some advice?

MARIA

I can't let her go. No way. Not now.

JEFFERY

Not ever?

MARIA

Let's save Thanatopsis and find that Clown!

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM HALL. NIGHT.

The Redman approaches the end of a long queue of covered bodies. Atop each is a numbered card. He secures a number for Thanatopsis: 37.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM HALL. NIGHT.

Maria takes her frustration out on Junior, shaking him from his fixation on the light. Now he stares, eyes crossed, attempting to catch the retinal eye pixils flying around him. He wanders off down the Hall, grasping at them.

MARIA

Junior---! I'm sorry.

JEFFERY

I'll get him.

MARIA

No! Maybe it's a sign. Let's follow.

INT. HOSPITAL. GIFT SHOP. NIGHT.

Joe and Mary are trying on various styles of Black Arm Bands.

She is distracted by a vocal crowd of shoppers at the TV.

PLAYBACK --- TELETHON SET

The Actor Doctor acts as MC for the event, a glitzy Telethon whose logo is a Big Thumb. The Actress Thanatopsis, in bed, is the centerpiece of the set, around which are arranged amphitheater-style the phone Answerers. A professional Announcer reads from copy:

ANNOUNCER

"In ancient Rome it was the difference between life and death. Today it could mean the difference between walking and riding. You couldn't light a lighter, surf, or snap your fingers without it. And if it wasn't opposable we'd still be primordial slime. Your THUMB. Think about it."

ACTOR DOCTOR

Thank you, Ed. Well, the way it looks now -- no dinner for the poor girl --- AND NOW, let's welcome the Broadway Cast of the new musical, "Lazarus!"

INT. HOSPITAL GIFT SHOP. NIGHT.

An oily and obsequious clip-boarded COUNSELOR taps Mary.

MARY

Who are you?

COUNSELOR

(consulting clipboard)

Are you Mary and Joseph Jones?

MARY

We are.

COUNSELOR

I am your Grief 'n Guilt Counselor.

JOE

We can't afford any more help.

COUNSELOR  
Oh, this one's on the house.

MARY  
Isn't that nice?

Counselor hands Joe and Mary black headbands.

MARY (CONT'D)  
But we're getting these.

COUNSELOR  
These are much more practical. Like  
the --- cremation you've chosen for  
your loved one.

Joe and Mary put on the headbands.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)  
Follow me please----

INT. HOSPITAL. FORKED HALL. NIGHT.

Junior, still chasing the retinal pixils, takes the  
"Crematorium" turn. An opened bag of some gloppy chocolate  
candy in his back pocket leaves a trail of droppings.

EXT. HOSPITAL. DUMPSTER PAD. NIGHT.

A pack of REDMEN smoke and play cards. Some stand warming  
themselves around a burning barrel. Several are ministering  
to the Elderly Man.

VOICE ON P.A.  
"---sixteen. Sixteen---"

One of the card-playing Redmen throws down his hand and  
exits into the Hospital.

He & She come round the corner ready for action but the  
sight of the congregation brings them to a stop.

ELDERLY MAN  
That's them!

The Redmen whip out their pencils. He & She slowly back the  
way they came.

HE  
Make a note for my Blog: "The  
pencil: how much longer can society  
(MORE)

HE (cont'd)  
afford unrestricted and  
indiscriminate ownership of this  
household implement of  
destruction?"

SHE  
Oh darling, you're so brave!

INT. HOSPITAL. LOBBY. PHONE BOOTH. NIGHT.

The Clown intently listening on the phone.

CLOWN  
...yes....YES! The only way back is  
to go all the way 'round.

He bolts out and away letting the receiver dangle.

VOICE ON PHONE  
"...lows expected tonight in the  
lower teens with scattered  
flurries..."

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM HALL. NIGHT.

Maria and Jeffery round into the Hall. Jeffery's eye now  
patched with an improvised black armband. He is more or  
less picking up and eating the spilled chocolate glops.

MARIA  
Junior---?

Jeffery grabs Maria by the arm.

JEFFERY  
Look.

MARIA  
Thanatopsis---?

He pulls back the sheet.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Oh yes, dear sweet Thanatopsis.

JEFFERY  
Owww!

He has been bitten by Junior who is under the bed.

MARIA

Com'on out of there and help us.

She pulls the bed out of line and snatches up the number.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Thirty-seven! It's her lucky number!

JEFFERY

Whose lucky number is thirty-seven?

MARIA

Don't you see? It's another sign. It must be. It has to be!

JEFFERY

Thirty-seven? Ah-- degrees. Celsius. Normal body temperature. But---

MARIA

--listen Jeffery. You saw what happened.

JEFFERY

Yes. And it was a wondrous thing but she's been pronounced dead.

MARIA

She's not dead! I won't allow it!

Maria pulls her Whistle out of her pocket and blows a furious question. After a moment, Jeffery pulls her away.

JEFFERY

(calmly)

Okay then, what do you propose we do? Wheel her home. Prop her up against the Christmas Tree with some milk and cookies and a note to Santa asking for --- what? She's had it all. Life and death. Beginning and end. Alpha and omega.

MARIA

Jeffery, when you went in for marshmallows I wished her dead!

JEFFERY

That's not true. I was still there.  
And that wasn't the first time you  
ever said that.

MARIA

But I can't let it be the last! I  
can't! I'm not going to give her  
up!

Maria puts her face close to Thanatopsis. Then places her  
hands on Thanatopsis' head.

MARIA (CONT'D)

You think there's really such a  
thing as a Vulcan Mind Meld?

Jeffery is almost embarrassed for her.

JEFFERY

Maria----

MARIA

Of course I know there isn't.  
Only---

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

(whispering)  
"...all that tread the globe..."

MARIA

Wait! It's her! Didja hear that!?

JEFFERY

Maria---

MARIA

Shhhh---! She's trying to tell me  
something.

Silence. Jeffery tries to urge Maria away from Thanatopsis.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Get off!  
(shutting her eyes  
tightly)  
Shhhh! Listen----

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

"...all that tread the globe are  
but a handful to the tribes that  
slumber in its bosom---"

Maria's expression is so convincing Jeffery steps back.

JEFFERY

What is she saying?

MARIA

Um -- "...all that tread something  
or other -- in the globe..." Oh  
Thanatopsis! You know I'm not good  
at this kind of thing! But she's  
alive, Jeffery. Alive!

JEFFERY

So what do we do? Where do we go?

Maria points to the "Crematorium" sign with arrow.

MARIA

Well we don't stay here a second  
longer! Junior, get below. Jeffery  
you push. I'll scout. Let's go!

INT. HOSPITAL. CHAPEL HALL. NIGHT.

Two Men in White Suits come to a screeching stop in front of  
the Chapel doors. They part them and peer in. #2 pulls back.

WHITE SUIT #2

I hate mimes.

#1 cracks the Doors for a longer look. The Clown, as a Mime,  
though still wearing one Big Shoe, performs for a  
congregation of 2: the Nurse, rapt in the front pew, and the  
Elderly Man, smoking in the back pew.

WHITE SUIT #1

He's not that crazy, is he?

#1 closes the Doors.

WHITE SUIT #1 (CONT'D)

Watch out.

#2 examines the bottom of his shoe.

WHITE SUIT #2

Ug! Mime droppings.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRIEF LOUNGE. NIGHT.

The Counselor escorts Joe and Mary into a small Lounge.  
Several grieving COUPLES occupy tables. The Waiting Room

Chameleon, accompanying himself on a chord organ, sings a medley of "Songs of Death 'n Dying".

An emaciated and pale GOTH WAITRESS serves drinks to Joe and Mary's table.

COUNSELOR

I know you feel as though you  
"don't need no Grief 'n Guilt  
Counseling". The fact that you feel  
this way is one of the symptoms of  
G 'n G Syndrome. The more you deny  
you have it, the worse you got it.

Counselor shakes their hands and slips out.

INT. HOSPITAL. BUSY HALL. NIGHT.

The Clown, still a Mime, clomps through traffic until he hits an invisible wall knocking him to the floor. He quickly recovers though the wall now encloses him. Acting quickly, he rubs his face clean, discards one glove, and tosses away his beret and Big Shoe. The way is now clear.

INT. HOSPITAL. LOCKER ROOM. NIGHT.

The gurney bursts into the empty room. Junior spills out from beneath. A wheelchair in the corner. Piles of multicolored scrubs.

MARIA

A disguise! We've got to disguise  
her.

JEFFERY

If she's alive don't you think your  
parents...?

MARIA

---They've already killed her once.  
I'm not giving them a second  
chance.

JEFFERY

What about the Clown...

MARIA

---right! He's the only one we can  
trust.

JEFFERY

Maria, look at this.



They examine Thanatopsis' forehead.

MARIA

Marks---?

JEFFERY

She's been struck on the head and  
it's left an impression. Look.

MARIA

"---ACME---"?

JEFFERY

His Big Shoe.

Maria ponders this for only a moment.

MARIA

Quick Junior! Grab those scrubs---

EXT. HOSPITAL. DUMPSTER PAD. NIGHT.

The Clown, now a Mullah, scimitar in gloved hand,  
head-toweled, stands atop the dumpster haranguing the  
semi-interested Redmen.

CLOWN

Thirty-seven Eunuchs were in a  
hole---

VOICE ON P.A.

"Twenty-five---

A Redman crushes out his cigarette and drags himself into  
the Hospital.

CLOWN

---twenty-five Eunuchs were in a  
hole. Their only contact with the  
world outside the hole was a daily  
visit from 6 Amazon women who  
danced around the opening of the  
hole and tossed 6 donuts to the  
trapped Eunuchs.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

Doctor sits behind a huge empty desk flanked by portraits of  
himself, deep in thought directed at a Party Whistle in the  
center of his desk. The Whistle is from a bag of them also  
on the desk. He picks up the Whistle. He puts it in his  
mouth. And blows. He rises to his feet. Tosses the Whistle

into the trash.

DOCTOR

This is an affront to all of  
medical science!

He pockets the Bag of Whistles, opens a cabinet of  
stethoscopes for a replacement, and strides out.

INT. HOSPITAL. LOCKER ROOM. NIGHT.

Maria puts the finishing touches of rouge to Thanatopsis'  
cheeks. She sits in the wheelchair, tied upright with bits  
of scrub sleeves, face made up as a clown's and dressed  
gaily with fragments of scrubs. The whistle in her mouth  
completes the disguise. Jeffery wears a white labcoat.

MARIA

There! Jeffery, you push.

EXT. HOSPITAL. DUMPSTER PAD. NIGHT.

Some of the Redmen are rapt and wearing towels on their  
heads.

CLOWN

Then one day a special envoy of  
augurs from the Wazir's court  
unrolled a rope ladder down the  
hole. Attached to the end of the  
ladder was a note from the Wazir  
which read: "Today was your last  
day for donuts. You have 2 choices:  
you can remain in the hole, or, you  
can climb out. But when you reach  
the top, my augurs have orders to  
immediately slit open your bellies  
and spread your entrails out over  
the ground."

The Men in White Suits sneak into the midst of the Redmen.

WHITE SUIT #2

Now!

WHITE SUIT #1

No! Shhh. Wait---

CLOWN

After a week, twelve and a half of  
the Eunuchs climbed out whereupon  
(MORE)

CLOWN (cont'd)  
they were immediately slit open and  
read by the augurs. The remaining  
twelve and a half drowned like rats  
two weeks later when a freak  
rainstorm flooded the hole.

WHITE SUIT #2  
Now----!

The Redmen erupt into violent in discussion and argument. By  
the time the White Suits have broken free, the Clown has  
gone.

WHITE SUIT #2 (CONT'D)  
Damn!

WHITE SUIT #1  
(grabbing #2)  
What else could they have done?

WHITE SUIT #2  
What?

WHITE SUIT #1  
The Eunuchs---

VOICE ON P.A.  
"Twenty-six through thirty-six!"

INT. HOSPITAL. GRIEF CHAMBER. NIGHT.

The Chameleon finishes the medley to lukewarm applause.

W.R. CHAMELEON  
Thank you---thank you.

He wheels out a TV on a cart and starts a video.

PLAYBACK --- AN INDUSTRIAL FILM

A succession of costumed actors in process shots.

SPACEMAN  
Death --- the final frontier.

ENGINEER  
Death --- the dark at the end of a  
well-lit but incomplete tunnel.

FOOTBALL PLAYER

Sudden Death -- more than just a way of breaking ties.

HANDSOME MAN

Remember me? I'm Duluth's own Rendell Evans and I played Timmy for three episodes of the NBC summer sitcom "6 Boys 4 Girls a Dog and a Green Parakeet". We at the Greater Duluth Memorial Hospital for the Incredibly Ill express our regrets at your loss.

EXT. HOSPITAL. DUMPSTER PAD. NIGHT.

A lone Redman, whom we know as our Redman warms himself at the barrel while White Suit #1 examines the towel the Clown was wearing. White Suit #2 cajoling him to continue the pursuit.

VOICE ON P.A.

"Thirty-seven----"

Redman leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL. AN EMPTY HALL. NIGHT.

The Trio (Maria, Jeffery, and Junior) with Thanatopsis in wheelchair and fully disguised, whiz down the Hall. Up ahead the Doctor strides toward them. The Trio slows to a walk, averting their gazes. It seems to work as the Doctor continues past. The Doctor mouthing words and gesturing grandly. But the Doctor stops.

DOCTOR

Wait a minute. That whistle. That girl!

A pause. The Trio break into a run. The Doctor gives chase.

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM HALL. NIGHT.

The Redman finds the Hall empty. At the far end of the Hall a door opens and the HEAD REDMAN, stoker in hand, steps out.

A pause. The Redman turns and runs away.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRIEF LOUNGE. NIGHT.

As the PLAYBACK ends, the Chameleon reprises some "Songs of Death 'n Dying" as the Waitress distributes CD's and Urns.

PLAYBACK --- INDUSTRIAL FILM

The Handsome Man holds up a CD case, simple black with white block lettering: "Songs of Death 'n Dying".

HANDSOME MAN  
 ---sung incomparably by our own  
 Kevin C. Lockwood. Death --- just  
 the beginning.

Behind the scenes in a laundry:

DRY CLEANER  
 Dying -- more than just changing  
 color.

A phone booth in the desert. ELVIS turns from his call.

ELVIS  
 Death --- it's not my thang but  
 it's plenty good enough for you.

He returns to his call. FADE TO BLACK

INT. HOSPITAL. GRIEF LOUNGE. NIGHT.

The Goth Waitress has only a CD for Joe and Mary.

JOE  
 Wait! Where's our Thanatopsis?

GOTH WAITRESS  
 Uhhh, only gotta George left.  
 Nobody's claimed him. You can have  
 him if you want. It's all just  
 ashes and dust anyways.

INT. HOSPITAL. FORKED HALL. NIGHT.

Joe and Mary stand at the fork.

The Men in White Suits whiz down the "Auditorium" Hall.

INT. HOSPITAL. ELEVATOR HALL. NIGHT.

The Trio, plus Thanatopsis speed down the Hall towards a bank of elevators. Jeffery pushes as many of the buttons as he can.

JEFFERY  
Com'on! Com'on! The elevators are  
slow but dinging. The Orderly  
appears.

ORDERLY  
Wait! Try this one----

He uses a key from his belt of keys to open a single  
elevator on the opposite wall.

JEFFERY  
Why?

ORDERLY  
Do you want explanations or escape?

JEFFERY  
(to Maria)  
What do we want?

MARIA  
There's liquor on your breath.

The single elevator door opens.

ORDERLY  
Okay so I just made communion. Are  
you going?

They pile into the tiny elevator. The door closes just as  
the Doctor comes screeching up as all the other elevator  
doors open with multiple dinging.

DOCTOR  
Which way did---?

ORDERLY  
Up-up-UP!

The Doctor dives into one of the elevators. The Orderly  
removes the key from the single elevator and ambles away.

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM HALL. NIGHT.

Joe and Mary approach the end of the Hall.

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM. NIGHT.

The Head Redman, in a red and gold jump suit, sits behind a  
tiny desk. On the wall behind him many metal doors with  
center portholes beyond which rages red-hotness. Shelves

display a multitude of Urn sizes and styles. Joe and Mary enter.

MARY  
Where's our daughter?

HEAD REDMAN  
Didn't you get one of these?

JOE  
No.

HEAD REDMAN  
Oh. Did you request the Family  
Pack?

He indicates a cute set of 4 Urns of diminishing size as the Redman bursts in.

REDMAN  
Number 37 --- Gone! I've looked  
almost but not quite everywhere---!

MARY  
Is that our---?

HEAD REDMAN  
Thirty-seven...thirty-seven---  
(consulting a manifest)  
Ah-- Than...Than a---

MARY  
That's her! Thanatopsis!

JOE  
Gone where?

REDMAN  
Just gone. Gurney and all.

INT. HOSPITAL. TINY ELEVATOR. NIGHT.

The Trio and Thanatopsis are crammed into the tiny elevator. Junior still semi-pixilated.

MARIA  
Which way?

JEFFERY  
Down! Down! Down!

There is only one button and it is labeled "Down-Down-Down!". Maria hits it. There's a jerk. The light dims.

JEFFERY (CONT'D)  
I don't feel anything.

MARIA  
Are we going up or down?

Jeffery tosses a coin into the air. Matrix-like, it hangs. Junior slowly envelops it in his hand with his pixils.

INT. HOSPITAL. X-RAY HALL. NIGHT.

The Clown/Mullah dashes into the X-Ray Room. The Two Men in White Suits screech up as the huge Iron Door slams shut.

WHITE SUIT #2  
Now we've got him.

WHITE SUIT #1  
Do we? Do we got him?

WHITE SUIT #2  
He's trapped like a Eunuch in a hole.

WHITE SUIT #1  
We've got him. But I get him.  
(bangs on door)  
RUN!

#1 wrestles #2 to the floor as the Clown exits the Room, hiding behind the towel.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRAND CENTRAL HALL. NIGHT.

A place where several Halls all feed into one Space, empty except for a TV on the wall and 2 chairs. The Redman skids into the Space. Which way to go? Joe and Mary bring up the rear.

MARY  
It has to be Maria and that boyfriend of hers.

REDMAN  
Where would they take her?

JOE  
What would they do?



REDMAN  
(offering)  
Redhots?

They refuse.

MARY  
So which way?

Each points down a different Hall.

EXT. HOSPITAL. GARDEN. NIGHT.

The Orderly sits on a bench sipping hot chocolate. Dawn threatens. He looks up. It starts to snow.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRAND CENTRAL HALL. NIGHT.

The Doctor stalks into and out of the Hall.

PLAYBACK --- TELETHON

Back at the Telethon ---

ACTOR DOCTOR  
...and our new totals are---

Decidedly pop Indian music heralds the new totals on the Big Tote Board.

ACTOR DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
---and it looks like it's still a  
virtual... dead heat!

INT. HOSPITAL. GRAND CENTRAL HALL. NIGHT.

The Doctor returns, distracted by the TV.

DOCTOR  
That's NOT how I wrote it! What are  
they going to do next? Make it a  
musical?

He rushes off. Almost immediately the Clown, now a perspiring Southern Baptist, towel over his shoulder, strides into the Space. He stops to limp up his already limp Bible. He atomizes more perspiration on his face and armpits then receives Inspiration!

CLOWN  
Yes-Yes-YES!

And dashes off as White Suit #1 enters in pursuit.

WHITE SUIT #1  
Wait! I'm not chasing you! I'm  
following you!

He dashes off as White Suit #2 enters nursing a bruised  
face.

WHITE SUIT #2  
---but I AM chasing both of you.  
Bastards!

INT. HOSPITAL. TINY ELEVATOR. NIGHT.

Jeffery explores the structure. Junior focuses on the  
throbbing light in the ceiling. Maria studies Thanatopsis.

JEFFERY  
This probably isn't the time -- but  
I've gotten my assignment from  
NASA. I'm going to be a payload  
specialist for the next planetary  
probe.

MARIA  
Jeffery! That's wonderful!

JEFFERY  
And where is she? Streaking past  
the Asteroid Belt?

MARIA  
No.  
(pats the Book)  
I think she's somewhere in here.  
(opens the Book and  
reads)  
"Two roads diverged in a  
yellowwood/and sorry I could not  
travel both---"

Pause.

JEFFERY  
Until today I thought death was  
binary.

MARIA  
Binary?

JEFFERY

Either-or.

MARIA

Like pregnant you mean?

JEFFERY

Yeah.

MARIA

But it's not?

JEFFERY

I'm not so sure now. Look, if death is like sleep---

MARIA

That's what everybody says.

JEFFERY

Right. And life is like being awake---

MARIA

That sounds right.

JEFFERY

What about the time in-between? I mean, you lay there awake and then at some point you're not. Awake. But there's something connecting them that isn't one or the other. Once I recorded myself going to sleep counting backwards: 100, 99, 98, 97, 96 ---95, 94, 93 that's waking, that's life, but then 92, 91, 90, 87, 13, 94 there it is! That's not waking but its not sleep. 82, 81, 35, 18 that's what's in-between. It doesn't have a name but it's 3 before 2, 18 followed by 67 preceded by 19! That's where I think she is!

The light goes off. Total Darkness. DING! The Door opens into a blinding whiteness.

EXT. HOSPITAL. GARDEN. DAWN.

The eastern sky glows rosy. The Orderly drains to the dregs his cup of hot chocolate. He sets the cup on the bench, gets up, stretching, and walks off.

The cup is full and steaming, including whipped cream.

INT. HOSPITAL. PARTS HALL. DAY.

Jeffery, Maria, and Thanatopsis are in a white Hall. The elevator has closed and disappeared, literally.

MARIA

Junior!

Jeffery feels the wall.

JEFFERY

It was just here!

Maria uses the Mr. Microphone---

MARIA

JUNIOR!

The Hall has only one way out: a Door over which a flashing sign proclaims: "PARTS".

JEFFERY

We've got to go this way.

MARIA

What about Junior?

JEFFERY

He probably doesn't know he's lost.

MARIA

Are we?

EXT. HOSPITAL. PARKING LOT. DAY.

He & She are poised to enter their Goremobile.

HE

My blog can wait There's so much  
more we can do here.

INT. HOSPITAL. TINY ELEVATOR. DAY.

Junior clings to the wall, still focused on the light when suddenly the door opens ejecting him into---

INT. HOSPITAL. TV STUDIO. DAY.

---the set of a Sick Room where a rehearsal is in progress with the Actor Family surrounding the bed of Actress

Thanatopsis, all blowing sports whistles.

The DIRECTOR jumps in.

DIRECTOR  
Stop-stop-stop! No-no-no!

He rips the Whistle out of the mouth of Actor Joe.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
Like this---

He blows and blows and blows furiously for each of the actors.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
This isn't first and ten from  
mid-field! My god! It's fourth and  
goal from the one with time running  
out!

He jams the Whistle back into Actor Joe's mouth.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
Now blow! Blow like you've never  
blown before!

They blow until stopped by a single gunshot.

The Director has fired a pistol into the air breaking one of the spots which flashes and crackles merrily. He throws his headset to the floor.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
This. Is. HOPELESS!

The Director storms out.

ACTOR JOE  
What are we to do?

ACTRESS MARY  
How are we to do it?

ACTRESS MARIA  
And who's going to tell us to do  
it?

All eyes gravitate to Junior, still spilled onto the floor, headset on, and grasping at the flickering of the shattered spotlight in a manner decidedly directorial.

MONTAGE --- INT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN HOSPITAL. DAY

In the Employee's Lounge, a blender furiously blending suddenly stops.

In the Laboratory, a pair of whirling test tubes stop whirling.

In a Dialysis Room, patient after patient's fluids slow to a stop.

He & She eagerly flip breaker switches "off".

INT. HOSPITAL. POOL. DAY.

The Pool Room is empty. The water still. A single light highlights the Clown, as Baptist Preacher, standing at the end of the high diving board. Perspiration runs off of him like a waterfall. White Suit #1 bursts in.

WHITE SUIT #1

DON'T---!

The Clown silences him with a grand gesture.

CLOWN

(in a Baptist accent)

TWO MEN --- were cast adrift on a sacred sea filled with fish of a holy order. Desperate, one of the men threw over his beliefs and drank some of the Holy Water and ate a Holy Mackerel. He died. The other man, dehydrated, starved and exposed, expired the next day.

The Clown tosses the towel away, presses his hands prayerfully together and dives perfectly into the water.

After the disturbance subsides with no sign of the Clown, White Suit #1 belly flops in. He too disappears.

As the water calms to glass White Suit #2 rushes in. The Bible and White Suit's shirt pop to the surface. A Hand grasps the Bible and pulls it back beneath the surface.

Silence and calm return.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRAND CENTRAL HALL. DAY.

Simultaneously Joe, Mary, and the Redman arrive from different directions, the Redman slips on a puddle of puke.

REDMAN  
No sign of #37 anywhere.

MARY  
You mean Thanatopsis---

JOE  
---our daughter.

REDMAN  
Look, this could cost me my job  
--and my back -- if we don't find  
'er. You're just in it for a jar of  
dust.

MARY  
How dare you!

REDMAN  
(pulling himself up)  
It's true, isn't it?

Pause.

JOE  
How dare you characterize our  
situation!

MARY  
And how dare you judge us! And it's  
not a jar, it's an Urn.

JOE  
And it's not dust, it's ashes.

Redman wipes the puke off his backside.

REDMAN  
Yeah well suit yourselves.

He slips down once more and slides away. The Orderly arrives  
pushing a squeaky wringer bucket. He sizes up the puke and  
wringing out his mop.

MARY  
Can you imagine---?

JOE  
Referring to our daughter as a jar  
of dust.

Pause. Orderly sloshes the mop and wrings again.

MARY

But --- this is what she would have wanted. Right?

JOE

How can you doubt it? It's self-evident: life starts at birth and ends at death.

The Orderly wrings the mop one last time and snaps open a yellow safety cone: "BE VIGILANT" depicting a stick figure leaping over a puddle.

ORDERLY

No. Life begins at conception and is everlasting. Eternal.

He exits leaving Joe and Mary open-mouthed. But they recover. Mary snickers.

MARY

Bumper-sticker philosopher!

JOE

Racist!

MARY

Republican.

JOE

They're everywhere. Like roaches.

MARY

Shouldn't we be -- somewhere?

Joe plops himself down in one of the chairs.

JOE

We are.

INT. HOSPITAL. INCUBATION WARD. DAY.

The quiet is broken sequentially by babies crying as one after one the incubators shut down then reverses as each of the bodies goes silent.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRAND CENTRAL HALL. DAY.

Joe and Mary seated, the TV above them clicks on.



PLAYBACK --- TELETHON

The Actor Doctor finishing coffee and a donut. Points to a Big Clock which is straight up 12 o'clock.

ACTOR DOCTOR  
Time's up! Will it be NO-DINER? Or  
DINNER? Glucose? Or no-course?  
Feeding tube? or Being rude?  
Starvation? Or salvation?

A drum roll as the Tote Board cycles.

ACTOR DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
There it is! NO DINNER! The people  
have spoke!

And nurses and orderlies remove everything from the sickroom leaving a frail girl on a stripped bed.

INT. HOSPITAL. PARTS HALL. DAY.

Maria, Jeffery, and Thanatopsis have reached the end of the long Hall. A grocery-store-like sliding door opens upon their approach.

JEFFERY  
"Parts"? What kind of parts?

Jeffery steps in, followed by Maria pushing Thanatopsis. The Door closes. The "Parts" sign snaps off.

INT. HOSPITAL. PARTS PLACE. DAY.

A darkened museum-like Space. As Maria, Jeffery, and Thanatopsis proceed, signs and displays turn themselves on.

The first of these is the sign 'WELCOME TO PARTS PLACE' accompanied by royalty-free music.

The sign 'EXTERNAL' appears. Inside glass cases are tastefully displayed and labeled fingers, toes, ears, noses, arms, legs, and breasts.

MARIA  
It's weird.

JEFFERY  
Sure is.

MARIA  
I mean, I'm getting really hungry.

As they proceed past the "External" phases out and  
"INTERNAL" appears.

Arranged in an open refrigerated unit and displayed on  
individual styrofoam trays are teeth, livers, lungs, hearts,  
colons, spleens, kidneys, bladders, and stomachs. Behind the  
display, an animatronic surgeon/butcher busily working.

Maria stares at a liver lying on a bed of Romaine. She  
snatches it and rips out a bite.

JEFFERY

Maria---!

MARIA

I couldn't help it. I'm starving.

"Internal" fades as up ahead, high up on a wall appears the  
sign 'ETERNAL', chase lights flashing. The lighting of this  
sign is accompanied by a Live Orchestra of natural  
whistlers, penny whistlers, party whistlers, slide  
whistlers, and sports whistlers whistling a Fanfare. They  
fade.

About eight feet up in the wall below the sign is a small  
circular Opening.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Something tells me we've reached  
our destination.

JEFFERY

We have. But has Thanatopsis?

They look up at the Opening, blackness beyond.

INT. HOSPITAL SICK ROOM. DAY.

A COUPLE, each in an Iron Lung Machine modified so they can  
hold hands.

IRON LUNG MAN

My little pushkin, I believe---

IRON LUNG WOMAN

Believe what, my dear hornied  
toad---

IRON LUNG MAN

That no matter what, no matter  
who, no matter how---

Suddenly their machines shut down. Their joined hands part as their machines sigh their last sighs.

INT. HOSPITAL. ELECTRICAL ROOM. DAY.

He & She have reached the mother lode: a room filled with Breakers of all kinds, one of which She has just pulled.

SHE

If only life was this simple.

HE

One day it will be.

Together they grasp a Giant Switch and pull it. A section of wall slides away revealing a Passageway. They enter.

INT. HOSPITAL. PARTS PLACE. DAY.

Maria and Jeffery stand under the Eternal Opening, Jeffery trying to leap up to reach the Opening, which he finally does, pulling himself up into it.

JEFFERY

Can't see a thing. We'll never get Thanatopsis up. Oh my--! It's closing!

MARIA

Oh, Thanatopsis! I know you're alive. I know you can hear me.

JEFFERY

Hurry---!

MARIA

Remember when you said that even when you were alone you were never alone? I believe you now---

JEFFERY

Maria---!

She tosses the Big Book up to Jeffery.

MARIA

You don't need this. Your sweet mind wanders through meadows and---

She hugs Thanatopsis.

JEFFERY  
--it's now or never---!

He pulls her up and into the almost closed Opening.

MARIA  
Let's goooooooooooooo---!

JEFFERY  
---oooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

They disappear into the Blackness. The Opening shuts tight.

Lit only from the glow of the "Eternal" sign, Thanatopsis sits silent and still in the wheelchair.

After a moment voices and footsteps are heard in the distance. It is He & She.

SHE  
Well well well. What have we here?  
Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

HE  
There's no way she's going to make  
it on her own.

They examine the Whistle closely.

SHE  
This has got to go.

He pulls at it but it doesn't budge.

SHE (CONT'D)  
Harder---

No luck so both strive until it pops out.

HE  
There!

The Whistle is laid on her lap and they disappear pushing Thanatopsis into the Darkness.

INT. HOSPITAL. FORKED HALL. DAY.

He & She, with Thanatopsis, enter the Forked Hall.

SHE  
Wait a minute ---

She goes around the front of Thanatopsis and examines her face closely.

SHE (CONT'D)  
Take a look at this---

There are streaks in her make-up made by tears.

SHE (CONT'D)  
Quick! Give me your handkerchief.

She eagerly erases all of the streaks.

SHE (CONT'D)  
There! No one will ever know.

And they push her into the Crematorium Hall.

INT. HOSPITAL. BASEMENT. DAY.

The elevator dings to a stop. The Doctor emerges. In a far corner of the cavernous space the Bearded Man squats, the laptop on the floor beside him.

BEARDED MAN  
It's out of my hands.

DOCTOR  
But it's right there.

Bearded Man picks up the laptop which is clicking away.

BEARDED MAN  
It's achieved a life all its own.

DOCTOR  
UnPlug it!

BEARDED MAN  
I have!

The Doctor plunges the laptop into a barrel of water. It struggles and bubbles but finally stops.

DOCTOR  
There! That's how its done.

EXT. DRAINAGE DITCH. DAY.

White Suit #1 and Clown, dripping wet, crawl out of a discharge pipe like a couple of nearly drowned pups. Clown recovers first, pulling himself up.

CLOWN

Freedom!

And starts to climb out of the deep ditch. But White Suit has grabbed a hold to his leg.

WHITE SUIT #1

Tell me more! I want to hear more!

Clown angrily shakes him off.

CLOWN

Look! I---

(but changing tack)

Get on your knees. No-no. Stand up!  
Face away from me. Lift your left  
foot. Raise your hands. Repeat  
after me: I Believe In Olio.

WHITE SUIT #1

"I Believe In Olio---"

(turning around)

What?

CLOWN

It's not what you think.

WHITE SUIT #1

Oh. But---

CLOWN

ARE YOU QUESTIONING ME??!!

White Suit turns away.

WHITE SUIT #1

"I BELIEVE IN OLIO! I BELIEVE IN  
OLIO!"

CLOWN

"Oh so Holy Olio."

WHITE SUIT #1

"Oh so holy O---

The Clown whacks White Suit across the back of the head with a Big Stick, felling him like a sack of garlic. The Clown admires his feat, tosses the Big Stick to the ground.

CLOWN

I've always wanted to do something  
like that.

And clammers laughing up and out of the ditch.

INT. HOSPITAL. TUBE. DAY.

Marie, followed by Jeffery slide down a Tube.

MARIA

--OOooooooooo---!

JEFFERY

--OOOOooooooooo---!

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM HALL. DAY.

He and She push Thanatopsis down the Hall towards the Crematorium. The Redman rushes in behind them.

REDMAN

Hey! Where do you think you're going? Step aside. This is my job.

He and She step aside and the Redman continues towards the end of the Hall, He & She following. When nearly there, the Head Redman, manifest in hand, steps out of the Crematorium, the end of the Hall bathed in red.

HEAD REDMAN

Number thirty-seven I presume?

REDMAN

None other!

HEAD REDMAN

(ticking her off)

Excellent.

Head Redman makes way for the Redman to push Thanatopsis into the Crematorium.

HE

Looks like our work is done.

HEAD REDMAN

It must give you an immense feeling of --- triumph.

SHE

Yes it does. It does---

HE

In fact---

The Head Redman turns curtly into the Crematorium, slamming the door in He and She's faces.

He quickly recovers, sniffing the air.

HE (CONT'D)

Do you smell that?

SHE

Smoke---?

HE

No! Coffee.

SHE

Oh my---!

HE

Dispensed in massive quantities by every business in every office in this country! An incredible conspiracy. We have work to do!

EXT. DRAINAGE DITCH. DAY.

White Suit #2 tumbles out of the discharge pipe. He sees #1 lying in the ooze.

WHITE SUIT #2

Oh my God!

He turns #1 over, slapping him on the back until he comes to, spitting mud and slime.

WHITE SUIT #2 (CONT'D)

What happened? Did he get away?

#1 stares blankly into #2's face until he is seized by a Tremendous Certainty. #1 seizes #2 by the shoulders.

WHITE SUIT #1

OLIO!

WHITE SUIT #2

Oli-what?

WHITE SUIT #1

O! OLIO!

#1 rises to his feet, lifting his left leg and facing away from #2 raising his arms heavenward.



WHITE SUIT #1 (CONT'D)  
 I---! I BELIEVE--! I BELIEVE  
 IN---! I BELIEVE IN OLIO! OH SO HOLY  
 O---

#2 whacks #1 across the back of the head. He tumbles to the ground like a sack of grits.

WHITE SUIT #2  
 It happens to all of us sooner or  
 later: We are what we become.

#2 then drags #1 back into the discharge pipe and they both disappear.

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM. DAY.

The Head Redman moves Thanatopsis into position near one of the iron doors. The other ovens are ablaze giving the room a hellish glow. He removes her toe-tag, carefully cross-checks his paperwork. Satisfied, he opens the door and slides out the tray. He lifts Thanatopsis out of the wheelchair and plops her on the tray. He places the Whistle on her chest.

PLAYBACK --- FINALE

A bare room. Actress Thanatopsis in white lying atop the sheets. A drum beat. Empty Space surrounds the bed. On catwalks above are Doctors, Parents, Politicians, lawyers each able to manipulate some part of Actress Thanatopsis' body by means of strings.

In a full Bollywood Musical the manipulators "dance" Thanatopsis until the Hero arrives.

It is Junior, completely in his element: frenzied dancing, sparkling costumes, loud music in which Thanatopsis is ultimately freed of all ties and returns to her bed which ascends into Glory.

INT. HOSPITAL. FORKED HALL. DAY.

On the TV, endless credits roll over stills from previous scenes. He and She meet Joe and Mary.

HE  
 Well, it's done.

SHE  
 Well done by now I would say.

He and She try to suppress snickers.

MARY  
What do you mean?

HE  
You'll find out.

SHE  
Congratulations---

HE  
---and condolences.

He and She leave. Counselor arrives.

COUNSELOR  
Mr. and Mrs. Jones?

JOE  
Yes---?

COUNSELOR  
Come with me please.

INT. HOSPITAL. GRIEF LOUNGE. DAY.

As the Chameleon sings one of the "Songs of Death 'n Dying" the Waitress distributes Urns to new sets of Grieving People. Seeing the supply of Urns rapidly diminishing, Joe and Mary are anxious.

JOE  
Where's our daughter?

GOTH WAITRESS  
Have another drink.

MARY  
This is the worse service. We wish  
to speak to the manager.

At the song's high point, a chute opens and out slide Maria, then Jeffery, onto the stage floor.

JEFFERY  
Wow. So this is the Eternal? I  
think I've been here before.

MARIA  
Mom! Dad!

JOE

Maria! We apologize. We thought you had done a very naughty thing with your sister.

MARIA

What?

MARY

But we were wrong.

Maria sees the Grieving People with their Urns.

MARIA

(to Jeffery)

We never should have left her! Now we're too late!

JOE

But you're not. There seems to be some sort of hold-up. Waitress!

MARIA

Com'on! There might still be time!

Maria and Jeffery storm out of the Lounge. The Waitress distributes the last of the Urns to a Family, each member getting a suitably-sized Urn.

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM. DAY.

The Head Redman is ready to slide Thanatopsis into the Oven. A banging at the door.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Open up! Open up in the name of Medical Science! What---? ...and in the name of the Writer's Guild!

HEAD REDMAN

It's open.

The Doctor and the Bearded Man enter as the Head Redman dogs the Oven Door. He twists the Big Knob from "OFF" through "SULTRY" to "4-ALARM" to "PYRE".

DOCTOR

Just in time. You getting all of this?

BEARDED MAN  
(taking shorthand)  
Gottit.

A whistling is heard coming from the Oven.

INT. HOSPITAL. CREMATORIUM HALL. DAY.

Maria and Jeffery nearly collapse outside the door to the Crematorium. There is whistling from within.

MARIA  
I hope we're --- do you hear that?!

JEFFERY  
Oh my God--YES!

They rush in.

INT. HOSPITAL CREMATORIUM. DAY.

Before Maria and Jeffery can get their bearings, the Doctor has pulled the bag of Party Whistles out of his pocket and he and the Bearded Man whistle to cover the now fading whistling from the Oven.

The Head Redman twists the Big Knob to "OH MOMMA!".

BEARDED MAN  
A fitting tribute to a fighting  
spirit.

DOCTOR  
Amen---!

They toss their Whistles into the trash as they leave. Maria stares into the Oven through the porthole.

MARIA  
Is she---? Is she---?

The timer goes off. Four beeps a la microwave oven.

HEAD REDMAN  
Now she is.

Jeffery consoles Maria.

INT/EXT. HOSPITAL. LOBBY. DAY.

The Jones' Van awaits as Joe signs papers at the Front Desk ("and here and here and here..."). Mary, Junior, and Maria

patiently wait.

The Urn sits in a plastic bedpan sitting on the seat of a wheelchair tended by the Orderly. Joe finishes and the Family pile into the Van. Maria pleading for the Urn and to remain. The Van drives away.

MARIA  
(to Orderly)  
I thought you understood.

ORDERLY  
I did. I do. I will.

Jeffery drives up in his truck. Maria gets in clutching the Urn.

MARIA  
She'll always be with me.

INT. GOREMOBILE. DAY.

He and She settle in, He lighting a pipe, She dipping a teabag.

SHE  
Are you feeling what I'm feeling?

HE  
Satisfaction---?

SHE  
A little lower.

HE  
Are you proposing that we create...

SHE  
---ah-ah!

HE  
I mean... Produce--? Erect---?

SHE  
Oh darling, you're such an activist.

HE  
Manufacture---?

SHE  
Too capitalistic.

HE  
Well then, shall we generate a  
little bundle of embryonic stem  
cells?

SHE  
I thought you'd never ask!

EXT. HOSPITAL. PARKING LOT. DAY.

The lone Goremobile sits in a far corner of the lot. A bird  
sings. It stops. Lightning strikes the car. It explodes.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAY.

The Clown, now a Man wearing a well-worn and slightly out of  
style but neat suit, ambles down a narrow 2-lane road. He  
whistles merrily.

He comes across a man, OLIVER, in his front yard hard at a  
futile effort to dig out a stump. The Clown stops to watch,  
hands atop the rail fence separating them. Oliver gives the  
stump a mighty tug but it is stubborn. He sits himself on  
the ground wiping his face.

OLIVER  
Ain't interested.

He rouses himself and attacks the stump again.

OLIVER (CONT'D)  
Go on with ya. I'm in no mood for  
preachin' today.

CLOWN  
What?

Oliver indicates the Bible sticking out of the Clown's  
pocket.

OLIVER  
Preachin'---

The Clown removes his coat, drapes it over the fence,  
loosens his tie, rolls up his sleeves and attacks the stump.

CLOWN  
Well, do'u want this stump out or  
dontcha? Com'on!

Oliver joins in and the stump gives way.

OLIVER  
Thanks mister.

The Clown rolls down his sleeves. Oliver is pleasantly satisfied and possibly willing to listen to a 'pitch' now.

OLIVER (CONT'D)  
Uh ---

The Clown approaches Oliver.

OLIVER (CONT'D)  
Water---?

The Clown accepts, drawing a long pull. He hands the bottle back to Oliver who sets it down and takes up his shovel.

The Clown wipes his mouth, staring at Oliver and approaches until face to face.

CLOWN  
I was once willing to KILL when the  
prospect of validating through  
reason what I had accepted on faith  
presented itself to me!

Oliver backs slowly away, gripping the shovel ready to wield it if needed.

OLIVER  
Uh --- yeah. Me too!

CLOWN  
But I'm much better now. Much  
better. Thanks, friend.

The Clown crosses the fence, taking up his coat and resumes his amble, whistling merrily.

INT. MARIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Maria on her bed, Big Book on her lap, turning the pages lovingly while eating from several bags of snacks. The Urn on her bedside table. She lifts the Urn.

MARIA  
You've lost weight.  
(smiles)  
Lucky girl.

She replaces the Urn. Closes and puts up The Book. She is impatient.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. BACKYARD. NIGHT.

Maria lights the fire-pit. It blazes quickly. The wood crackling. Maria settles down with a huge bag of marshmallows.

EXT. JONES HOUSE. BACKYARD. NIGHT -- LATER

The fire's burned down to coals, like stars in the sky. Maria gently swirls the stars with a stick. Her cellphone rings.

MARIA

Jeffery! God, I've missed  
you---What? Florida? You mean just  
drop everything and come to  
Florida? Junior too? --- Why not?  
WHY NOT!

She throws the stick into the pit making a shower of sparks and a flare-up of the fire.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL. NIGHT.

A floodlit Rocket sits poised for blast-off.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

Maria and Jeffery, close together, can see the Rocket in the distance. Junior squats, still listening but watching in anticipation through binoculars. Jeffery checks his watch and turns on a radio.

MARIA

Shouldn't you be there?

JEFFERY

This is where I want to be.

They kiss.

RADIO VOICE

"5-4-3-2-1 ---"

The Rocket rises majestically and fiery.

RADIO VOICE (CONT'D)

"...and we have lift-off of the  
first probe to Pluto. Pluto: once  
a planet, now demoted to renegade  
moon. Nevertheless the destination  
(MORE)



RADIO VOICE (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
for this ambitious journey to the  
outer reaches of our solar system  
-- and beyond."

The Rocket streaks upward lighting the entire sky and  
accelerates almost out of sight. Even Junior is impressed.  
He stands and removes his earphones.

MARIA  
Jeffery, I'm so proud that you're  
apart of that.

JEFFERY  
In a way you are too.

MARIA  
What do you mean?

JEFFERY  
There's a passenger on board.

Maria is puzzled. Jeffery proud. Maria glimmers.

MARIA  
You mean---?

Jeffery nods.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Thanatopsis---?! Oh Jeffery!

She embraces and kisses him.

JEFFERY  
I sneaked her ashes aboard.

MARIA  
And now she's ---- out there.

Maria watches the vapor trail dissipate and the small  
white-hot spot fade. Tears stream down her face.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT. -- LATER

Jeffery and Maria lie on their backs enjoying the starry  
night sky. Junior squats watching waves lap the shore.

MARIA  
I know somehow Thanatopsis has  
still got poems in her mind. In her  
soul.

EXT. SPACE.

The Pluto Probe silently tumbles through the blackness.

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

"When I look at thy heavens, the  
work of thy fingers, the moon and  
the stars which thou hast  
established---"

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

Maria and Jeffery embrace.

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

"---what is man that thou are  
mindful of him, and the son of man  
that thou dost care for him?"  
Maria. Maria!

Maria springs up.

MARIA

What?

JEFFERY

What is it?

MARIA

She called out my name.

JEFFERY

That's not possible.

MARIA

It was like she was standing here.

THANATOPSIS (V.O.)

Maria---?

(O.S.)

Maria? Jeffery, I saw her move!

MARIA

There! Again! Didn't you hear her?!

THANATOPSIS (O.S.)

Maria? Can you hear me? Can you  
hear me? Please---

MARIA

YES! I CAN HEAR YOU!

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. DAY.

Thanatopsis stands over Maria, who is immobile in bed.  
Jeffery gently urges Thanatopsis back into a chair.

THANATOPSIS

Jeffery, I am certain I saw her  
move.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

Maria stands knee-deep in the ocean.

MARIA

Wait---! What's happening? Where  
has everyone gone? Why am I so  
hungry?

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. DAY.

Thanatopsis sits sobbing in the chair. Mary enters softly.  
Jeffery is pretty much at a loss and quite resigned.

MARY

Thanatopsis, there's someone here  
to talk to you. To help you---

THANATOPSIS

I don't need help! It's Maria  
who...Oh don't you understand?  
Don't you care?

A MAN enters. He is the Doctor, only now goateed and in  
tweed.

DOCTOR

Of course we care. That's why we're  
here. Come with me, my dear.

THANATOPSIS

Why couldn't we have waited for  
Uncle Oliver?

MARY

Dear, you might have noticed that  
this hospital doesn't have a bar.

THANATOPSIS

But---

DOCTOR

Come along...

THANATOPSIS  
NO! She pulls away from the Doctor.

DOCTOR  
As you wish.

He leaves.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

Exhausted, Maria wades onto the shore and collapses.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. DAY.

Jeffery consoles Thanatopsis. Mary looks out of the window. Joe enters. He takes Mary's hand who takes Thanatopsis' who keeps Jeffery's.

JOE  
(softly)  
The doctors say it can't be much longer.

THANATOPSIS  
I can't believe that we're doing this.

JOE  
Two years. We've given her two years...

THANATOPSIS  
Stop whispering!

MARY  
Hush, dear---

THANATOPSIS  
Why? She can't hear anything, right? That's what everyone tells us, has told us, keeps telling us---!

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

The ocean is close to covering Maria. Her eyes close.

MARIA  
So hungry --- so tired.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Thanatopsis sleeps against Jeffery's shoulder. Joe and Mary stand over Maria's peaceful face.

JOE

Uncle Charley was always her favorite.

MARY

And he's hurt her the most. And not for the first time.

JOE

But she's never held it against him.

MARY

Brother of mine or not, he's had ample time to drag his sorry carcass here.

JOE

Where do you think he is?

MARY

(bitterly)

Still looking for himself. This year he's probably a guru in Tibet.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP. DAY.

A SUPPLICANT squats before a Guru. The back of the Suppliant's head blocks our view of the Guru's face.

SUPPLICANT

Keep me in suspense no longer,  
Great One! Utter to me the promised  
Truth of Truths!

The Suppliant prostrates himself revealing the Guru to be the Clown with a party Whistle in his mouth. He blows and it unrolls and squeaks. He is seized with Insight, blows the Whistle out of his mouth, jumps to his feet and using the Suppliant's back, springs out of the scene. The Suppliant reaches out for the Whistle.

SUPPLICANT (CONT'D)

Oh, thank you, Great One...

The Clown returns and grinds the Whistle into the ground.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Thanatopsis sleeps on a cot. Joe and Mary share the chair. A Nurse takes Maria's pulse, which is evidently very faint. Thanatopsis opens her eyes and sits up.

NURSE

I'd gather the family together.  
Thanatopsis rouses Joe and Mary.

THANATOPSIS

Get Jeffery.

Joe dashes out of the room.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT.

The ocean nearly engulfs Maria until she is pulled away from the foam. She opens her eyes to see the Clown, now completely Charley, bending over her.

MARIA

Uncle Charley---!

CHARLEY

Don't speak.

He puts his fingers to her lips.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

I'm here to take you home.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT. -- LATER

Charley and Maria warm themselves before a fire. She's wrapped in his guru robes.

MARIA

---so Thanatopsis is not on her way  
to Pluto?

CHARLEY

(smiling)

No.

MARIA

She's alive and well and---?

CHARLEY

---somewhere out there very close  
to you. Maybe as close as I am to  
you right now.

MARIA  
And mom and dad? And Jeffery?

CHARLEY  
The same.

MARIA  
And Junior?

CHARLEY  
Who?

MARIA  
My brother.

CHARLEY  
Maria, you know you don't have a  
brother.

MARIA  
Thank God....

Standing up, she drops the robes.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
So Thanatopsis is right here?

CHARLEY  
Or there. Or there.

MARIA  
(excitedly, close to  
Charley)  
I've heard her calling out to me!  
Reciting to me---!

CHARLEY  
That's a hopeful sign.

MARIA  
Of what?

CHARLEY  
That I won't...won't have to take  
you --- home.

MARIA  
So home isn't --- home?

CHARLEY  
No.

The full weight and import of her situation presses her down to the sand.

MARIA  
How much time?

CHARLEY  
Precious little.

MARIA  
Isn't it enough that I hear her?

CHARLEY  
It should be but it isn't.  
(pause)  
And I can't help you.

MARIA  
Because --- you're not here. Right?

He is gone. The robes are gone. The ocean is gone. The sand is gone.

INT. HOSPITAL. SICK ROOM. NIGHT.

Maria is peaceful. She is surrounded by Joe and Mary, Thanatopsis, and Jeffrey, who holds Maria's hand. We see them from Maria's POV with the door in the background.

After a long moment Charley enters, closes the door and leans back against it, arms crossed. Maria opens her eyes.

MARIA  
Are you here?

CHARLEY  
You bet.

MARIA  
Is it time?

CHARLEY  
Time? What is time? I'm here to  
take you home----

Maria's hand slips from Jeffery's.

INT/EXT. SOMEWHERE. DAY/NIGHT.

Maria and Charley stand shoulder-to-shoulder. Charley takes several steps away without Maria. His steps tap.



MARIA

What's that?

CHARLEY

What?

She points to his feet. He happily discovers the tapping.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Com'on!

She joins him. She taps too. They slowly discover a nice simple time-step which they execute in place as we pull slowly away AS CREDITS ROLL until they eventually disappear.

FADE OUT