

**H A R D W A R E**

**by**

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**Missing pg. 80**

DARKNESS. WIND.  
Dry.  
Relentless.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE WASTELAND - DAWN

The Darkness becomes a shifting veil of sand and we are inside the funnel of a dust storm. The veil parts, momentarily revealing a vista of dunes, a thin poisonous wind shipping across them in a crimson spray. Then the veil closes again, shifting to reveal a new tableau.

Abstract shapes silhouetted against a red sky.  
A steel fence post.  
A coil of barbed wire.  
A body, its outline softened by the dust, broken and half-buried, its ragged uniform fluttering in a mockery of life.  
A glint of dusty metal.  
A minefield laid bare by the restless wind.  
Another shape gains resolution in the dust.  
A steel hand appears, jointed fingers pointed skyward, veins an intricate web of cables and hydraulic tubing, born of fire.

A seething dust cloud appears low on the horizon, a dark shape emerging from its swirling grain, fluttering for a moment like a grounded bat, drawing closer, becoming the figure of a NOMAD swathed in a flapping scarf and a ragged duster, face shadowed by a wide-brimmed hat, shoulders hunched beneath the weight of a bulging military backpack. He holds a long stick like a spear in one hand and as he approaches we see the sunlight glistening on his tinted blast goggles and on the transparent respirator that protects his face.

The nomad is moving hurriedly, trying to keep ahead of the storm, his eyes nervously scanning the horizon.  
There is a sharp crack and two flares drift down behind him like will-o'-the-wisps falling from the red sky.  
He glances around and his eyes catch a glint of metal through the gloom.

Slowing, he weaves his way across the minefield, feeling out a path with the tip of his stick, his eyes focused on a shape buried beneath a low ridge of sand.  
He sees the reaching synthetic hand and hunches beside it, sweeping away the dust, the wind helping him, and slowly a face emerges from the earth.

A steel face with eyes like red jewels, features scorched and marked by shrapnel wounds. The nomad begins to dig more swiftly now.

He glances furtively around and then looks down, smiling at his discovery.

The steel skull could be smiling back at him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - DAWN

A landscape of metal sculpture. Crash helmets and motorcycle fenders blend into the screaming faces of grotesquely customized domestic androids, reaching waldo arms and webs of barbed wire and rubber tubing filling every square inch of the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and connecting hallway.

A digital clock radio on the stereo system flicks to "6:00 A.M" and HEAVY METAL comes crashing forth from the radio.

INT. KITCHEN

An automatic coffee maker simultaneously begins to BURBLE and spills a spattering stream of soy-cafe into a glass tureen.

INT. APARTMENT

The sole occupant of the apartment is already awake. A figure is crouched in the midst of the tangle of sculptures, surrounded by numerous pencil sketches of insects, face hidden by a battered welding mask, body swathed in paint-spattered overalls, the nozzle of an oxy-acetylene torch held in gloved hands, sparks showering everywhere.

The door buzzer rings: a long held BUZZZZZZZZZ. The metal worker curses, turns off the gas and crosses to a computer control console in the lounge, On the way, she turns down the music to a dull throb.

She props up her welding mask and types a series of digits into the computer. Her face is prematurely careworn but attractive. She's in her late twenties, her hair hanging in strands, her face slick with sweat. Her name is JILL.

A screen blinks into life on the console, patching into a security camera that is trained outside the apartment door. There's no one there.

She bites her lower lip and taps a few more keys and gets a view down the hall and then a view from the other direction. No one there. She exhales in frustration and types.

After a few seconds of electronic snow the face of a blonde kid appears in a haze. He's got a bandanna wrapped around his forehead and a wad of gum in his teeth. This is VERNON.

VERNON

Yo.

JILL

Vernon, is the Chief there?

VERNON

Hi, Miss Monroe. No, he's out on his rounds right now. I can have him call ya.

JILL

Those kids from two were at my door again.

VERNON

When was this?

JILL

Just now.

VERNON

We didn't see anybody.

JILL

That's what worries me.

VERNON

Huh?

JILL

Listen, Vernon, I've got a delivery coming from Foodstuffs today. Be sure to let 'em up.

VERNON

Will do, Miss Monroe.

The screen blinks off. Jill mutters.

JILL

Probably the only one who won't make it through his "net".

She walks to the kitchen, pours a cup of coffee, comes back out, turns the MUSIC BACK UP, flips down her visor and goes back to work.

CAMERA MOVES PAST HER TO the window, looking out on the city -- a large urban metropolis somewhere in the future. Mile high chimneys rise against the smog-filled morning sky.

EXT. SCRAPYARD - DAY

MUSIC OVER. A scrapyard on the outskirts of the city. The remains of cars and mangled ward machines lie in corroding mounds and oily clouds streaked with sparks billow from the mouths of forges and furnace stacks.

Shadowy FIGURES move through the smoke, welding irons glowing in their hands, unloading untidy barrows of scrap onto clattering conveyor belts.

The air is thick with the THUNDER of heavy machinery, the distorted CRIES of men and the CRACKLE of radio static.

The VOICE of a DEEJAY comes over the airwaves.

ANGRY BOB

This is Angry Bob coming at you on W.A.R. Radio with the good news and the bad news. Bad news is the heatwave's not going to let up. It's expected to hit ninety downtown before nightfall, although weather control keeps promising that rain is on the way. The foul up on the launch pad at terminal eight doesn't look like it's gonna clear for another half hour and holiday air traffic is still stacking up over the CBD and all outlying districts. But traffic control promises that if you all keep cool they'll get you home in time for Christmas. As for the good news -- I forget what the good news was, so let's just play some music!

The deejay LAUGHS, his voice echoing maniacally as METAL crashes across the wavelengths, spilling out into the scrapyard from an old transistor radio that's been left standing on the hood of a wrecked car.

MO BAXTER and his friend SHADES are traversing the yard. MO is still young, his muscular build betraying long hours of obsessive bench pressing. His blond hair is close-cropped and he wears patched and faded military uniform, his shirt unbuttoned to reveal a vest that is hand-painted with a blazing skull. A jagged scar zig-zags across his left cheek and his left hand is missing altogether, replaced by a robot prosthesis. A large grey duffle is thrown over his shoulder. Shades is a scrawny individual wearing a leather flying jacket and a three-day growth of beard.

He squints through the dark lenses of his trademark glasses. Shades is talking his usual blue streak, Mo has on a tolerant half-smile.

SHADES

New York, Max. That's the place' to make it now. Just think of it. Over nine thousand tons of steel.

(more)

SHADES (Cont'd)

Five thousand tons of aluminum. Four million miles of copper wire. Twelve thousand windows. Tons of audio gear. Auto parts. Typewriters. Kitchen appliances. Works of art still in the galleries. Just hanging there. Clothing. Toupees. Bridgework. False teeth. Prosthetic limbs. You name it. There's a killing to be made. New York has it all. Nobody's gonna repopulate the Big Apple, now. It's too ripe with radiation. The count's way up. All that stuff's just going begging. It's salvage city, Max. You'd love it.

MO

Stop calling me Max.

SHADES

Why not? It's a good name. Anyway, give New York some thought. It's a lot safer than the zone and the move would do you good.

MO

I can't afford the outlay. You'd need rad suits, jeeps, drilling gear... I'm saving up to retire in peace.

SHADES

Retire to what?

Mo gives a nod to the overalled workers as he and Shades head up to the dilapidated warehouse at the center of the yard.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

Mo and Shades step through the sliding doors into a large hall. It's wide as an aircraft hanger, lit by hanging fluorescent tube and dusty skylights.

The remains of gutted electronic equipment and dismembered androids are stacked everywhere, mechanical limbs and hydraulic tubing dangling from the rafters, giving the place the appearance of a cannibal's den. ALVY, a dwarf clad in threadbare, grease-covered overalls and holding a spanner in one hand, is hunched over the shivering, partly-animated torso of a malfunctioning domestic bot. He looks up from his work at the approaching pair and grins.

ALVY.

Well, well, well. Taking a little vacation, huh? Is this authorized?

Mo slips the bag off his shoulder. It hits the floor with a shifting CLANK.

MO

What do you care? Nothing that comes in here is authorized.

ALVY

That's not true, I'm primarily legitimate, now, I'll have you know.

MO

Oh...?

Mo lifts the bag off the floor with one hand.

MO

Perhaps I should go elsewhere, then.

ALVY

I said primarily legitimate.

He shoves the quivering android off the table into a rolling tamper. He brushes wood and metal filings from the table-top with his sleeve.

ALVY

Put it right here and let's see what you've got. Let me get my glass.

Alvy hops down from the bench and scurries into the nether reaches of the warehouse. Mo hefts the bag onto the bench. Unzips it.

Behind them the warehouse doors open with a tremulant RUMBLE. Mo and Shades turn around. A figure is silhouetted against the blazing daylight. It's the nomad. Coming toward them. He tips his hat up to look at them. Speaks in a low voice.

NOMAD

Where's the little man?

Mo steps forward, just a trifle hesitantly. Taking charge.

MO

He's indisposed. You got something to sell?

The nomad tips his head forward. Eyes Mo awhile. Then... what the hell. He nods. Unloads his sack on the table. Steel skull, dismembered metal arms, a limbless torso - tubing spilling from the guts -- and several spidery subsidiary arms terminating in pincers and drill bits.

SHADES

What the fuck?

Shades picks up the skull, awestruck. The nomad delicately takes it from him and replaces it.

MO

What is it?

The nomad slowly shakes his head.

MO

Where'd you find it?

The nomad moves his head slightly to indicate a distant world.

NOMAD

Nowheresville.

Mo and Shades nod. They know what he means.

NOMAD

Looks like it stepped on a frag mine. No legs at all and the torso is... all fucked up.

MO

(quickly)

What do you want for it?

Shades looks at him, shocked.

NOMAD

Fifty.

Now Shades looks at him!

MO  
Too much. Thirty.

NOMAD  
(no nonsense)  
Fifty.

MO  
Forty?

The nomad nods.

NOMAD  
Done.

MO  
(to Shades)  
Pay the man.

A stunned Shades peels off bills as Mo stuffs the robot parts into his own bag of the floor. The nomad turns and heads out.

MO  
That was easy.

Mo hefts the bag onto the table. Alvy returns just as the figure of the departing nomad is eaten up by the blazing sunlight. Alvy squints after him.

ALVY  
Who was that?

MO  
Somebody looking for a bathroom. I sent him on his way.

ALVY  
Why doesn't he piss in the street like everybody else?

Alvy clambers up onto the bench, rubbing his hands together. He plucks a large magnifying glass from his back pocket.

ALVY  
Now what have you got for me?

Mo unzips the bag and turns it over. Metal THUNDERS out. Alvy leans over the pile of parts. His eyes widen almost imperceptibly at the sight of the skull. A pulse of

excitement. He glances at the others to make sure they didn't notice. Then he shrugs indifferently.

Shades picks up the skull again. Now he can peruse it in earnest. Alvy's eyes can't help but to follow it. He tries to keep his voice casual.

ALVY

Where'd you get that?

Mo glances at Shades.

MO

I found it out in the zone. What do you think it is?

ALVY

(shrugging)

Maintenance drone, probably.

Mo furrows his brow doubtfully.

MO

You think so?

SHADES

Kinda scary-looking for a maintenance drone.

ALVY

That's the idea. Keeps the scavengers away, Y'see, you got a downed vehicle somewhere in the middle of nowhere, no survivors, you can drop a couple of these and have it put back together in no time.

Shades looks the skull in the eye.

SHADES

Nobody around to put him back together, though, huh?

MO

It doesn't have any legs at all that I could find and the torso's all fucked up. Stepped on a frag mine, I guess. Musta got lost.

Shades grins slyly at him.

SHADES

You figure?

Mo narrows his eyes briefly at him. Alvy plucks the skull from his hands. Shades frowns. Alvy shines a light in the android's eyes.

ALVY

Not much I can do with this. I can use the infra-reds. Breadboard up a couple of new circuits.

(shrugging)

How about thirty C's to take it off your hands?

MO

Thirty?!

(shaking his head)

No thanks, Alvy. Maybe I'll just hold onto it...

Mo takes the skull and sticks it back into the bag. An alarm off behind Alvy's eyes.

ALVY

Hold onto it?! What--- ? Forty C's...

Mo eyes him. Half-smiling.

MO

I thought it was worthless.

ALVY

It is! It is worthless! But it's even more worthless to you!

MO

Jeez, you weren't trying to low-ball me, were you, Alvy? You wouldn't cheat me...

Alvy shakes his head, watching the pieces disappear into the sack.

ALVY

No I wouldn't cheat you, but... but... It is junk, but...what are you gonna do with it?

MO

It's Christmas Eve. You should know that. You used to be an elf, didn't you? I can't exactly come back to my girl empty-handed, can I?

ALVY

Wouldn't she rather have a nice ...bouquet of flowers, maybe? They've got some beautiful stuff at the Mart. Just like in the pictures.

Smell real good, too. Even die on you after a couple of days. Very convincing. She'd love 'em.

MO

You don't know my girl.

SHADES

Jill doesn't have any use for fake flowers. Not when she can have real metal.

Mo nods at the pile of remaining parts.

MO

How much for the other stuff?

Alvy shakes his head, lips twisted in a tight, bitter frown. He desultorily lifts a couple pieces. Then he notices a severed steel hand on the bottom of the pile. One Mo missed. Alvy quickly drops the other pieces over it. Opens his hands to Mo.

ALVY

Ten C's. That's as high as I go.

Mo holds out his hand for it. Alvy quickly counts out several bills from a greasy roll.

MO

Yep, Alvy. You're as high as you're ever going to go.

Mo hands the bills to Shades and they head for the door. Alvy sneers after them.

ALVY

Very funny. Can i help it if my mother picked up a dose in the big one?

(calling after)

You just wait. All those years out in the zone? Your kids'll make me look like Narcissus!

EXT. STREET - DAY

The temperature is still rising and heat shimmers in the sealed tar and concrete valley of the street. Mo and Shades dismount from a pedi-cab and move through the CROWD, dodging the crawling, man-powered vehicles. Knots of figures sit clustered like barnacles in the shade of each supporting pillar of the elevated roadway, their legs almost under the wheels of the traffic. There is a low RUMBLE as a truck passes on an overhead expressway.

Mo and Shades pass a row of rusting, wheelless cars, smoke rising from the chimneys in their roofs. Several TEENAGERS are busy beating up a WINO they've got pinned against one of the hoods. The wino breaks free and comes stumbling across Mo's path. He falls to one knee, grasping at Mo's leg, begging inarticulately for help. The kids LAUGH.

Mo looks menacingly at them, his hand falling to the butt of his shotgun. The kids clam up. Mo holds their sullen gaze. He draws the gun from its holster. The kids finally retreat down an alley. The wino murmurs his garbled thanks, pawing at Mo's leg.

MO

Hey. You're creasing the pants.

Mo pushes him away with the gun-barrel. The wino tumbles hard. Mo walks on, deftly slipping the shotgun back into its harness. Shades hurries to keep with him.

SHADES

Tough guy.

MO

Shut up.

SHADES

That's why you're still in the corps, isn't it?

Mo gives him a look. Fed up.

MO

Why?

SHADES

You tell me.

Mo rolls his eyes.

SHADES

No, really. Tell me why.

MO

(mock breezily)

The money's good. I get around. I see what's left of the world.

SHADES

I get around, too, and at least I'm still in one piece.

MO

Yeah, until one of your boosters blows up under you or your heatshield rips off on the way home.

SHADES

Don't knock it. At least it's quick. One psst and you're gas spread out over a thousand miles of stratosphere. Think of the view. No coughing your lungs out in a bunker or sitting around waiting for the first cancer cells to show up or your kids to be born blind and blue because you've had one dose too many and come up snake eyes in the genetic crap game you play every time you go zone tripping. DO you think Jill wants you to go on strolling around out there up to your ass in radioactive iodine for the rest of your life?

MO

Think she'd like it better if I was on welfare? Wound up like these bums? Nothing else I can do. Not now. Anyway, I don't want kids. Can't stand the little motherfuckers.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK FOYER - DAY

Mo steps through the twisted remains of a security gate into the graffiti-scarred foyer.

MO

What the fuck happened here?

SHADES

Some hophead drove a land cruiser through it. Put Tommy in the hospital. Did you know him?

MO

When did this happen?

SHADES

Two, three months ago.  
(beat)  
Right after - you left.

Mo pauses at a batteted computer terminal and types in an access code before turning to face the steel doors of the lift. The doors are slightly buckled as if someone has tried to open them with a crowbar. A grating metallic WHINE comes inside the elevator shaft. Mo waits for a while, listening as the whine

drops to a lower pitch and then cuts out entirely. He rattles the door in frustration.

CHIEF

Another scorcher today. Nearly ninety, they said on the news.

MO

And they take the temperature on the roof. Down in the streets it's a damn sight hotter.

CHIEF

That it is. Hey, while you're here I want you to meet someone. Got a new kid on the job.

Vernon, say hello to Mister Baxter!

(to Mo)

You heard about Tommy...?

Shades nods. Up above, Vernon sticks his head through the railings and grins down at them. He's working on a wad of gum.

VERNON

Yo!

Mo raises his hand to say hello, but Vernon has ducked back out of sight.

CHIEF

Kid's got shit for brains, but he'll work out once he knows the ropes. It ain't brain surgery!

Mo nods down to the lower floors.

MO

Looks like this is the last line of defense.

CHIEF

Damn right. This is as far as they get. We've got new surveillance gear all over the block. If you want to maybe pop down later for a game I'll show you 'how it works.

MO

Maybe I'll do that.

CHIEF

I'd appreciate it. Haven't had a good game in weeks. Vernon's got no head for chess. You can imagine.

Mo and Shades press on up the staircase. Shades wants to put a question to Mo. Finally gets up the nerve:

SHADES

She know you're back?

MO

(shaking his head)

I didn't want to wake her.

SHADES

You didn't mind waking me!

MO

You I don't care about.

Shades shakes his head.

SHADES

You shoulda called. Think she'll let you stay?

MO

(blustery)

Course she will. She sleeps better when I'm around. Makes her feel more secure.

SHADES

Ha! That's a laugh! She couldn't be more secure than she is now. She's sealed in tight. She doesn't need you or me.

MO

Is that right?

SHADES

She doesn't stick her little toe out of there if she doesn't have to.

MO

How do you know?

Shades shrugs uneasily.

SHADES

I keep an eye on her.

Mo stops, turns back. Eyes him narrowly. Shades shrugs again, a little embarrassed. Mo finally smiles.

MO

Good. Keep it up.

(nodding)

When I'm not around. See nothing happens to her, okay? Promise me that?



Mo exhales impatiently.

MO  
Jill. Let me in.

SHADES  
(whispering)  
I'll make up the couch.

INT. APARTMENT

Jill stands there, eyes downcast. Torn. Finally shaking her head in self-reproach and tapping a key. She heads toward the hall.

There is a HISS as the apartment's hydraulics go into action and the front door slides open on steel runners to reveal Mo and Shades standing on the threshold. Jill takes a geiger counter hanging from its peg in the hall and runs it over them.

JILL  
Hmm. Cesium level's low today.

MO  
I've had warmer hello's.

JILL  
Hello, Mo.

He gives her a smile.

MO  
Hey there, Jill.

They're a bit awkward. Nobody makes the first move. Jill nods at Shades.

JILL  
Hi.

SHADES  
How's it going?

JILL  
Not bad. I--

Mo takes the opportunity to move past her down the hall. Jill hesitates for a second. Then:

JILL

-- I got a commission customizing consoles for some uptowners. Welfare checks are coming in regular, I can't complain.

Mo stands on the edge of the living room. He smiles lightly at the chaos and puts down his gear. Jill and Shades come in behind him.

JILL

See my new pet? I've been using it as a model. This morning I woke up and -- look -- it made a web.

Mo bends beside a glass tank. His eyes focus on the spider and he nods his head.

SHADES

What do you feed it?

JILL

I've been giving it little bits of soy mince, but sometimes I catch a bug. It sucks 'em dry.

Mo frowns a little, then reaches down into his gunny sack.

MO

I've got something else you'll like.

He starts to open the sack but then he sees that Jill isn't watching him.

JILL

(to Shades)

I've been basing my work more on organic forms... translating them into the synthetic...focusing more on the synthesis...

Shades nods. Mo stands up suddenly.

MO

(to Shades)

Listen, you wanna stay for a beer, or something?

SHADES

No, that's okay, thanks. I want to talk to the super about the air conditioning before we all fry.

JILL

They say there's a cold front on the way. It might cool things down in time for Christmas.

SHADES

Yeah. There's hope yet.

MO

Can you guys hold off on the weather report for a minute?

They look at him, slightly surprised. He opens his bag, emptying it onto the floor with a CLATTER. The steel skull grins up at them, upside down amidst a tangle of components.

MO

See anything you like?

Jill kneels amidst the scrap, her face lighting up.

JILL

Oh! Jesus God! He's beautiful!  
(lifting the skull)  
I love it! What a monster.

She plants a kiss on its forehead.

MO

(shrugging)  
Maintenance drone, if you can believe Alvy.

He glances at Shades, who shrugs back. Jill sets down the skull and lifts a severed mechanical arm, running her fingers over the metalwork. Then she looks up at Mo and her face lights up with a smile. Mo gives it back.

MO

Merry Christmas, baby.

She stands and hugs him, still holding the android's arm in one hand.

Shades gives a little wave and backs toward the door.

SHADES

I'm gonna head out. You guys...

They're still locked in embrace.

JILL

Bye.

MO

Later, Shades.

Shades gives a little ironic salute, taps a number on the keypad next to the door. The door SHUNTS open. He ducks out. The door HISSES shut.

Jill and Mo kiss. Deeply. Holding each other tight.

The steel skull lies where Jill left it, still smiling, the embracing lovers inverted, reflected in the depth of its glass eyes.

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

Hot water HISSES from the overhead faucet and Mo stands in the frosted glass cubicle, eyes closed, steam rising around him as he lets the shower wash away three months of sweat and engine oil. He reaches out, pulling Jill closer. Her hands reach around him, gently massaging her back, feeling a web of waxy scar tissue beneath her fingertips.

A living mosaic of tattoos writhes beneath her touch, a jungle tangle of howling wolves, wilting roses, phallic warheads and naked bodies. Their lips meet and he caresses her and even though he cannot feel the caress through his synthetic hand he feels her shiver anyway. She clasps his wrist, raising the prosthetic limb to her lips, kissing the steep fingertips.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Later they lie in the circular bed in the room that serves as both bedroom and lounge, facing out towards the Venetian blinds whose open slats reveal a panoramic vista of rooftops and glowing windows. The television set is on, tuned to some program about the famine, the volume turned down, the news camera tracking silently across rows of emaciated bodies stacked like firewood, the images spilling their cold blue light across the naked lovers. The only sound in the apartment now is the rasping of their breath, the low hum of the air conditioning and the distant throb of the city, pulsing like blood rushing in their ears, muted by the soundproof walls.

Jill cries out, voice shrill as a bird call, head thrown back, Mo's hands clutching at her shoulders, his eyes closed, straining toward transcendence. Her cries become thicker, distorted, becoming an electronic synthesis of sound as a red glow grows around them and their image loses resolution, their bodies becoming solarized, becoming a grainy pornographic photograph taken on heat sensitive film stock.

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INT. APARTMENT IN ADJACENT TOWER BLOCK - NIGHT

LINCOLN WEINBERG, JR., a short, stocky man with close-cropped hair wearing a gaudy Hawaiian shirt, presses the remote lead-on his camera, keeping one eye pressed to the viewfinder. The shutter opens with a CLICK, exposing another frame, and then the auto-wind mechanism WHIRS into action.

A trickle of sweat runs down his forehead.

LINCOLN

Yeah, take it! Take that big dick! Take it all, bitch!

He re-adjusts the infrared lens of his camera to maximum telephoto, panning slightly to keep Jill in the center of the frame, peering through the parallel bars of the blinds, studying the cascade of her hair, the curve of her breasts...

His hand eases itself into his lap, his finger jerking on the remote trigger, almost a reflex action now. He sees Mo's hands claw at her back, hard enough to bruise, and he groans. Jill shudders, her spine arching, and Lincoln shudders with her. He blinks, trying to keep her moonlit image in focus.

LINCOLN

God... I love you...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill lies on her back amidst the stained sheets, smoking a joint, letting Mo trace the outline of her body with his good hand. She smiles dreamily, her eyes half-closed.

JILL

It's good to have you here, Moses.

MO

It's good to be here.

Then he sighs quietly, drawing his hand away, lying back. He stares at the ceiling.

JILL

What is it?

MO

What are we gonna do?

JILL

About what?

She's a bit wary, now. Cool.

MO

About us.

(pause)

Do you ever think about that?

JILL

(deadpan)

I like it when we're together. I haven't thought much beyond that. You're not somebody I can rely on.

(suddenly)

How long are you going to stay this time?

He's silent for a long while. She waits. Finally, with difficulty:

MO

I'm AWOL. I have to be back by next Thursday or I'll be counted out.

She sits up. Angry.

JILL

Let them count you out! You don't owe them anything!

She glances at his robot hand. He curls it up, moves it away.

MO

No. They owe me six months of back pay. I won't get it unless I stick it out until my contract is up.

Jill is frustrated. Draws up her knees. Rests her temple against them, turned away from him. Quietly:

JILL

Which is when?

He's evasive. Shrugs.

MO

Few months.

She slowly stretches out again. Lying with her back to him. Is trying to say something.

MO  
(softly)  
The thing is I...Jill?  
(pause)  
I really love you.

Long pause. Her expression doesn't change.

JILL  
So?  
He closes his eyes. Sleepy. Dreamy. He shrugs languidly.

MO  
Maybe...we...

He trails off. She lies there, watching the neon flicker of light play in the Venetian blinds and listening to the throb and whir of the city. Then she hears distant music come drifting up from the depth of the glass canyon outside the window pane, faint, almost lost beneath the roar of the traffic. A choir singing. A Christmas carol.  
Silent Night. Holy Night.

Jill turns to Mo and touches his arm.

JILL  
Mo.

But it is already too late. He is fast asleep. She sighs, curling up beside him, listening to the distant carol as she too drifts slowly into sleep.  
All is calm.  
All is bright.

DISSOLVE THROUGH:

NOWHERE

A shifting veil of fire.  
Wind borne sparks.  
A great wind blowing.  
Sand lifting from the dunes in crimson sheets, twisting in the air, taking on the semblance of life.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill moans softly in her sleep, face damp with sweat. Moonlight filters through the blinds and it is as if the lovers sleep in the midst of a forest of metal trees, the glistening branches and reaching arms of Jill's scrap sculptures silhouetted against the silver glow.

Glass eyes glint in the night and grotesque, tortured faces peer from the gloom. Ventilation tubing coils through the trees like snakes and a steel owl perches above the doorway its wingspan lined with metallic feathers.

Moonlight silvers the spider web and for a moment its strands seem to fill the room. Somewhere, far back in the shadows, something moves. Static flickers with a sputter across the television screen. A spark flies between synapses deep inside a damaged silicon brain and a crimson gleam flickers momentarily through the eyes of the steel skull.

There is a HUM of energy and its memory banks light up. The TV screen dims for a second and the android's infrared retinas widen as its disembodied head silently watches over the apartment, focusing on the two glowing heatforms that lie curled beside each other on the bed.

Jill moans again, turning in her sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE WASTELAND - DAY

In her dream she's running across the dunes, almost blind, buffeted by the stinging sand, her hair whipping around her. Something dark emerges from the dust up ahead and slowly she approaches it. The curtain of sand parts, revealing a steel hand reaching from the earth.

She falls to her knees and without understanding why begins desperately to dig, the wind helping her uncover something long buried within the dune.

A face appears, staring up at her.

Mo's face, terribly burned, screaming mouth and eyeless sockets filled with sand.

She SCREAMS, starting to her feet and when she tries to run Mo's metal hand grabs her by the ankle and holds her fast.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill wakes with a start, sitting up in the darkened room, Mo is still sleeping at her side and she lets out a little sigh of relief when she sees him, reaching out to touch him, letting his warmth reassure her. She sits for a while in silence and then, making a decision, she swings herself out of bed, slips on a crumpled silk kimono and heads for the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jill absent-mindedly types a command into a wall console and the automatic coffee maker percolator lights up, chugging and whirring contentedly to itself. She opens the freezer to remove a carton of synti-milk, catching a glimpse of her face floating in the dark glaze of the tiling, illuminated momentarily by the dim light of the refrigerator door. The face seems disembodied, almost unrecognizable.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jill picks her way through the debris, cradling a steaming mug of coffee. She sits down in the middle of the room and crosses her legs, still feeling strangely disoriented. She taps another joint from an already half-empty pack of 'Acapulco Gold' and reaches out to flick the television's remote control, turning up the volume on a late-night news bulletin. The NEWSCASTER smiles reassuringly at her, his voice silky and emotionless, his hair and complexion flawless, probably computer generated.

NEWSCASTER

The Department of Agriculture announced today that further rationing under the new austerity guidelines is likely in the wake of the soya crop blight and the resulting forty percent shortfall in the harvest. The government has announced plans to set up a special task force to deal specifically with this problem and the recent reports of widespread deficiency-related diseases in the inner city.

Jill takes another drag on the joint, turning her attention to an unfinished sculpture. A collage of mutilated dolls, welded by a blowtorch into a single circular unit, interlaced with barbed wire and rusty surgical implements.

NEWSCASTER

Meanwhile, public resistance to the emergency population control bill continues to grow. The bill would mandate --

Jill flips the remote button, channel and turning to a hardcore pornography then to some music station where a nameless heavy metal band is battling its way through its latest number, by an undulating sea of dancers, surrounded upwards, hands reaching desperately outlined by a blue neon grid of laser beams.

Jill smiles, more at home now. She scrambles over to the pile of scrap and begins to shift through the android's remains. The torso is still largely intact, almost humanoid above the waist but degenerating below the hips into a truncated tangle of melted cables and hydraulic tubing.

Jill's fingers lightly trace the course of a shrapnel wound and she leans forward to try to make out a battered serial number and what seems to be some kind of military insignia engraved on its breastplate. A stylized moon and a thunderbolt. She counts four arms, three of them ending in slender hands with long, delicately jointed fingers while a fourth terminates in a rugged stump. She paws through the scrap, frowning, but the missing hand is nowhere to be found.

Two crumpled subsidiary arms project like insulated caterpillar legs from the android's stomach, one tapering into a jagged drill bit and the other ending in a pair of rotating pincers.

Jill smiles to herself, glancing up at the unfinished doll sculpture. Then she hauls on a pair of paint-spattered electrician's gloves and begins to work.

Mo stris, gradually coming awake to the sound of heavy metal, the bass turned too high, and the WHINE of a power saw in-operation somewhere in the gloom behind him. He sits up, turning to see Jill crouched over the android's remains, still dressed in her kimono but wearing welding goggles now and wielding a circular saw.

He can't quite make out what she's doing but he can see sparks the darkness, the clenched line of her jaw and the hurting whites of her eyes behind the goggles. Rapt, almost mesmeric in their concentration.

He rubs his eyes and yawns, glancing at his watch. He pulls on his trousers and shambles over to the window, lighting a cigarette. Behind him the power saw cuts off for a moment as Jill changes to her airbrush, setting to work on the android's head.

He smiles, neon washing over his face. Jill stands, raising the android's severed head and placing it in the midst of the doll fresco so that it forms a new centerpiece and Mo sees that she has painted one side of the steel skull with light blue clouds and the other with a dark, star-studded sky. He laughs and Jill turns to him.

MO

I like it.

He takes a step toward her. Unsure of himself.

MO

The dolls are a nice touch. Make a nice wreath.

Her mouth tightens. He tries again, kiddingly.

MO

Where does this stuff come from? You seem so normal on the surface.

She decides to take him seriously.

JILL

You know that new emergency bill they're pushing through?

MO

The birth control thing?

Jill nods at the ring of dolls.

JILL

I started on this when I first heard about it.

Mo gazes at the sculpture for a long time. Then he starts to turn around.

MO

I don't get it.

He picks up his shotgun. Shoulders it. Aiming out the window. Jill is glaring at his back.

JILL

Why do I let you in? Every time? Why?

He turns suddenly to her.

MO

You wanna know why?

JILL

Yes, I do!

MO

I'll show you why.  
(pointing)  
Sit in that chair.

She rolls her eyes.

JILL

Mo, I'm trying to work.

MO

You wanted to know. Now go sit in the chair.

JILL  
No. It's stupid.

MO  
Just go sit in the fucking chair, okay?

JILL  
Okay, okay. Jesus. If it makes you happy.

She sits in the chair.

JILL  
Okay, now what?

MO  
Now tip yourself back...slowly... so the front  
legs lift off the floor. Like you're riding it.

JILL  
This is really stupid.

MO  
Go on. Do it for me.

JILL  
Yeah, yeah.

She tips the chair back keeping her balance with one foot.

JILL  
Okay. Now what.

MO  
Let it go all the way. Let yourself fall.  
You'll be all right.

She starts to tip the chair backwards. For a moment she teeters  
on the verge of overbalancing and then, laughing, she drops  
forward into an upright position. Shaking her head.

JILL  
No.

MO  
Trust me, Jill.

JILL  
No. I can't do it. No way.

Mo steps suddenly forward and pushes her hard in the chest. She  
topples backwards with a SHRIEK and hits the floor with a

resounding THUD.

She lies on her back for a moment, looking up at Mo standing over her, the shotgun still in his hands.

Then she begins to laugh.

MO

Fun, huh?

Mo kneels next to her, grinning.

MO

You can't hurt yourself. Not if you fall right.  
Didn't I tell you?

She puts one arm around him, drawing him to her and they kiss.

MO

They tell you not to look down when you climb a cliff, but why not? The view is beautiful.

JILL

(still smiling)

You're so full of it...

From the flat below comes the sound of muffled THUMPING as the downstairs neighbors bang on their ceiling with a broom handle.

JILL

Oh, God... the neighbors...

Mo BANGS on the floor with his steel hand.

MO

Fuck them!

He drops the shotgun and grabs Jill, dragging her across the floor towards the bed. He lifts her in his arms, dumping her on the mattress and scrambling on top of her, pinning her down with his knees. For a moment they are quiet, looking at each other. He reaches out, brushing a strand from her face with his prosthetic hand.

JILL

Moses...

The phone RINGS. A BURBLING electronic sound, tangling in Jill's hair. Mo's hand twitches spastically. She recoils with a yelp.

MO

Shit!

Jill starts to laugh, untangling her hair. The phone continues to RING. Mo stands.

MO

It's not funny. Damn thing keeps getting radio and TV signals confused with my nerve impulses.

He crosses toward the main computer console. Looking contemplatively at the metal hind.

MO

I'm going to have to get it changed. Circuits are messed up anyway. Sometimes I even feel pain in it, like my hand's still there...

The expression in Mo's face makes her stop laughing. He shrugs it off and reaches for the phone. She reaches out her hand --

JILL

Don't answer it.

Too late. He's picked up the vid-phone handset.

MO

(into the phone)

Yeah?

A familiar face flickers across the vid-screen, peering out through the rolling electronic bars.

MO

Alvy?

Alvy is furtive, nervous.

ALVY

I gotta see you. Sorry to call so late, but...it's important.

MO

Jesus, Alvy. Talk to me in the morning.

ALVY

No. It has to be now. I'm talking big bucks, savvy. Meet me at the yard in an hour. And bring the, uh... skull and bones.

MO

The what?  
(realizing)

No way. I'm not selling it. That's final.

ALVY

Just hear me out. I can't talk over the phone.  
Too many ears. See you in an hour.

MO

Forget it.

The dwarf's face disappears in a swirl of electronic snow. Mo hangs up. Stands there. Intrigued. He stares at the blank screen. Jill is watching him. Waiting for his next move. He finally looks at her. Gives her a big, warm smile. Crosses toward her, shaking his head in exasperation.

He climbs onto her. Tipping her onto her back. Giving her kiss.

He looks her in the eye and shakes his head again.

MO

Everything's a big emergency with Alvy.

They kiss again.

Across the room, red embers glow deep in the eyes of the painted metal skull.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Alvy sits crouched beside work bench, an island of fluorescent light adrift in the darkened warehouse. He is bent over the bench, raising a jeweler's lens to examine the severed mechanical hand that lies before him. He takes note of an engraved serial number, then pushes the hand to the side, rummaging through a sheath of blueprints printed on a dog-eared read-out paper until he finds one that clearly matches the hand's design.

He leans closer, examining an intricate schematic diagram charting the hand's wiring. Red lettering is stencilled across one corner of the blueprint: "MARK 13 PROTOTYPE -AUTHORIZED ACCESS ONLY."

Something in the schematic seems to excite him and he lifts a gold pocket watch by its chain to check the time.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The room is still and dark. Neon glow blinks in a slat-pattern on the ceiling. The mute TV flickers and flashes.

Jill is peacefully asleep.

Mo is moving stealthily about the apartment, dressing. He sits carefully on the edge of the bed to lace up his boots. Jill sighs in her sleep. Stirs.

Mo waits till she settles back and gives her a soft kiss on the cheek. A small contented smile rises out of her dreams and breaks on her lips.

MO

(whispering)

I'll be back.

He stands and heads for the door.

EXT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The apartment's door HISSES open and Mo stands alone on the threshold, wrapped in a shapeless military coat, his hands in his pockets, He hesitates uneasily for a moment before stepping into the waiting darkness and making for the elevator. He hears a stealthy sound behind him and pauses, nervously typing a command into the lift's control console, one hand touching the butt of his shotgun.

Several ragged shapes detach themselves from the night, drifting slowly toward him. CHILDREN, three of them not even in their teens, ringworm already in their hair, their grubby faces thin, and spotted with sores, their eyes glistening hungrily in the half-light.

For a moment he's not sure how to react, then he sets his jaw and waves at them in a threatening manner.

MO

How did you get up here? Go on! Get the fuck out of here!

The children stand their ground, not daring to come closer and at the same time unwilling to give up. The lift door swishes open and Mo steps quickly into the narrow, grafitti-scarred cubicle.

INT. LIFT

The lift door doses and the children are gone from sight and the car is dropping toward the street. Mo breathes a sigh of relief, drawing the coat more tightly around himself. He mutters.

MO

Goddamn Chief.

He looks at his face in the door's cracked and cloudy mirror. His eyes seem lost and worried, strangely disoriented. He shivers, trying to pull himself together.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The lift door swishes open and Mo walks hastily through the lobby, stepping over the sleeping DRIFTERS as he makes for the street. Outside the rush of traffic and the stench of the gutters enfold him, the feeling of anonymity affording him it lends him some little comfort.

He steps into the street, hailing a pedi-cab, not looking back. The cab stops. He trots after it.

HIGH ANGLE - LOOKING DOWN ON MO

A motorized shutter CLICKS three times, freezing his image on heat-sensitive 35mm, the auto-wind WHIRRING.

INT. APARTMENT IN ADJACENT TOWER BLOCK - NIGHT

Lincoln is crouched by the window, following Mo through the lens of his camera.

LINCOLN

That's it, loverboy. Just keep on walking.

He pans his camera up once more to focus on the window of Jill's apartment.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill rolls over, the sheets tangling around her. Muttering in her sleep.

Somewhere far back in the cluttered apartment something moves and comes to life.

The red light glimmers in the eyes of the android's severed head. With an almost imperceptible electronic whir, its microchip mind wakes up, watching over the apartment from its perch in the midst of a nest of barbed wire and burned dolls.

The android's irises widen, like black holes slowly expanding.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The android's severed hand shivers, fingers shifting minutely, delicately touching the table-top as if trying to orient itself. Alvy is oblivious to the hand movement, too busy studying the minutely detailed blueprints spread out before him to notice anything else.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A bank of LED's light up on the main computer console. A low whine of feedback crackles from the intercom and static hazes the television screen. Jill groans, turning irritably on the bed.

Down on the floor, the android's dismembered limbs shiver as life returns to them, jointed fingers tapping on the floor, artificial muscles flexing slowly, hydraulic tubing twisting, fluid flowing back into damaged veins.

A dark pool of grease spreads like blood across the carpet.  
INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Alvy detects a furtive movement out of the corner of his eye and looks up from his work.  
The severed hand has vanished.  
The dwarf starts to his feet, checking the floor, seeing nothing but bare concrete.

He lifts the blueprints, searching the tabletop, suddenly bewildered.  
Behind him the hand scuttles deftly along a rack of spare freezing for Alvy looks around a moment in the shadow of an oil can as then scampering up to perch like a spider on the head of a deactivated servo-robot.

Alvy is already beginning to suspect the truth when he hears the soft metallic tapping coming from the shelf behind him. Slowly he turns, half guessing what he is about to see, his heart beating faster anyway. Then he sees the hand, one finger tapping impatiently against the servo-robot's cranium.  
The hand seems to know he's watching and freezes once more.

ALVY  
(under his breath)  
I'll be goddamned...

He takes a step closer, pulling on a pair of heavy rubber gloves. The hand remains motionless.  
The dwarf reaches slowly out, biting his lower lip nervously. Then his fingers touch it and in an instant the hand is scuttling up his arm, faster than he can move, feeling its way toward his face. He recoils, trying to brush it off, but it is already at his throat and he can feel its steel fingers trying to get a grip on his windpipe.

He grabs at the stump of the wrist, frantically trying to tug the hand away. He stumbles back, catching a chair behind his knees and losing his balance. He cries out, as he goes down, scrabbling at the tabletop as he goes down, but succeeds only in pulling the

blueprints down on top of him. He hits the floor hard and the hand is already grasping at his face, feeling for his eyes.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The light blazes, bright as hot coals now in the android's eyes. A coat rack falls with a CLATTER to the floor and Jill stirs, hovering between sleep and waking. The floor of the room is alive, now, hands twitching and hopping, wiring sparking in the gloom.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The sliding doors RATTLE as Mo pushes them open on their runners and steps into the darkened warehouse. There is a fluorescent light burning at the far end of the room behind a rack of accessories and Mo can hear the sounds of a violent scuffle interspersed with YELPS of pain.

MO

Alvy?

ALVY (O.S.)

(thick and muffled)

AH, FUCK! HELP ME! MOSES!!

Mo runs down the main aisle of the warehouse to find Alvy thrashing on the floor amidst the crumpled blueprints, clutching at his throat, his legs kicking.

MO

What the fuck?

ALVY

GET IT OFF! AAAAGH! GET IT OFF ME YOU SHITHEAD!!

Mo crouches quickly, pinning the screaming dwarf to the floor with his knees and pulling at the hand. At first it resists, then, in a moment of confusion, it releases Alvy and tries to grab at Mo but he already has it by the wrist and its fingers are too short to reach him.

He stands slowly, staring at the hand in disbelief, its fingers clawing helplessly at the air.

Alvy sits up, rubbing his throat. Dark purple bruises mark his flesh, bloodstains dappling his shirt, dripping from a row of

almost surgical incisions in his face and neck. Alvy mops at the blood with his handkerchief, his hand trembling.

ALVY

Oh, God...I'm...bleeding...!

MO

You're all right. Where did you get this?

ALVY

It...it was in that pile of junk you sold me. I didn't...I didn't notice it till after you left. It's part of the...Mark 13.

MO

The what?

Alvy peers about Mo's body, frowning.

ALVY

Mark 13. You didn't bring the rest of it?!

MO

Wait a minute. The android? What do you know about it? What is it?

Alvy stands and points at him.

ALVY

It's a more sophisticated version of you.

MO

I thought it was a maintenance drone!

ALVY

Uh...well, no. So did I. But then I got my hands on these blueprints. See?

Alvy hops eagerly onto the bench seat, pawing through the blueprint pages. Mo steps close to the bench, peering over Alvy's shoulder. Alvy keeps one eye on the hand in Mo's grip.

ALVY

This is the guy who is gonna make you obsolete. You'll be the maintenance drone.

(pointing at the hand)

He's got three more of those where that came from, as well as four subsidiary arms. More legs than a fucking spider. It's designed to operate in the field, out of radio contact, working on its own initiative, even making its

own repairs. It's the closest thing to real artificial intelligence money can buy and it's got just one primary function.

INT JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill lies curled on the bed, her eyes twitching beneath their lids, deep in a dream. Behind her the movement has become more organized. Steel fingers tighten bolts and seal damaged tubing, rebuilding its body piece by piece, dismembered limbs acting under the silent command of the severed head.

Slowly, almost painfully, the creature swings its torso upright, using its lower arms like legs, stretching itself as if awakening from a deep sleep.

Slowly Mark 13 returns to life.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE: - NIGHT

Alvy turns proudly from the blueprints to Mo.

ALVY

It can lie dormant for decades and recharge itself anytime from any power grid even from the sun, if necessary. It can see in the dark and move faster and quieter than the most highly trained combat soldier. It's got mind-bending drugs inside it worse than cyanide. It can kill you in seconds and even make you enjoy it.

Mo is staring at a blinking LED on the back of the hand.

MO

What's with this light? Is it malfunctioning?

He sounds almost hopeful.

ALVY

Oh, no. It's functioning fine. That's a warning that it's electrified. You're lucky the storage battery is kept in the chest cavity. Otherwise -- ZZZZT! The little bastard would've put more current through you than an electric chair.

MO

Where's the phone?! I've gotta call Jill!

ALVY

(reproachfully)

I told you to bring it with you.

MO

Just point me to the phone, Alvy!

ALVY

Now, slow down! Can't we do some business first? That's what you came here for.

Mo steps menacingly toward him.

MO

The phone, goddamnit!!

ALVY

250 C's! Cash!

Mo thrusts the wriggling hand at him. Alvy recoils, the blood draining from his face, the hand straining to reach him.

MO

Here! I'll give you this one for free! Around the neck! Now where's the fucking phone?!!

ALVY

(pointing across room)

Over there! Over there! Jeesh. You'll need change.

Mo carefully holds the hand out to Alvy. Wrist first. Alvy shakes his head.

MO

Take it!

Alvy takes it, blanching. Mo heads for the phone, digging into his pockets. Alvy holds the flexing hand at arm's length. Has to marvel at it. Raises his voice for Mo.

ALVY

Apparently they were testing a bunch of them out on the dune sea, but there was a fuck up. Seems there was one structural defect. An Achilles heel in the insulation system...

Mo hurries up to the vid-phone console, pulling change from his pocket, coins bouncing off the concrete floor. He feeds change into the slot, frantically types a number.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT

The vid-phone lights up the screen, an incoming call signal flashing across but almost as soon as it begins to RING the

receiver is lifted from its hook. Mo's face flickers across the screen, his eyes wide and nervous.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE

Mo stands clutching the receiver, staring into the fuzzy video monitor. He bangs the side of the console, trying to get a picture.

MO  
Hello! Hello, Jill?!

A soft, electric whir comes over the receiver, almost like the purr of a cat.

The screen flickers and for an instant Mo glimpses something. A dark shape staring back at him, eyes like hot coals. Then the line goes dead and the image disintegrates in a HISS of WHITE NOISE.

The call charge flickers on screen.

A stream of coins cascades from the slot, rattling across his boots.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT

A wisp of blue smoke rises from the vid-phone receiver and the steel hand that holds it tightens its grasp. There is a sound like frying bacon and the receiver slowly begins to melt.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE

Mo leans on the console, groaning to himself, hands massaging his forehead.

MO  
Jesus... Oh, Jesus... Jill.

Then a thought occurs to him and he quickly types another number into the vid-phone, feeding it more change. The phone rings for a while and Mo shuffles his feet uneasily.

MO  
Come on...come on...!

The screen flickers and a familiar face appears, the sound of distant sitar music coming over the receiver.

SHADES  
Ayuh...

He grins at Mo, seemingly naked save for his dark glasses.

MO

Shades! I need your help!

SHADES

Hey, uh...wow, um...it's cool, but...right now it's, uh, kinda difficult... Do you know what time it is?

MO

Listen to me! This is serious! Jill's in danger and you've gotta help her!

SHADES

(looking around uneasily)

Oh, Jeez. Oh...Christ. It had to be tonight.

He laughs nervously.

MO

What's wrong?

SHADES

My heart feels like an alligator.

MO

What?! Shades. What's wrong with you?!

SHADES

You know that tab of acid I was saving...?

MO

Oh no...

SHADES

Yeah. I dropped it. Like...Christmas can get pretty crazy on your own, y'know? I've just been sitting here staring at the stars all night. The sky's so beautiful...

INT. SHADES' APARTMENT

Shades sits cross-legged in front of the console wearing only a pair of boxing shorts, the vid-phone receiver cradled in one hand, candles burning everywhere. Books on eastern philosophy and mysticism are spread on the floor around him, their pages open to intricate mazes and mandalas.

The lights in the room are turned down and outside the picture window the stars really are beautiful.

Shades hears a soft thud and looks up from the console, momentarily distracted.  
There is a moth outside, beating against the glass, its wings silver in the moonlight.  
Shades smiles and, getting to his feet, takes a step toward the window, entranced by the waiting stars.  
He reaches out to touch the glass, Mo's voice growing faint and far away but still insistent.

MO

Hey! Hey! Listen to me! Come back! You've got to do this for me! You've got to go down to the apartment and get Jill out of there right now...Shades?!

Shades turns back to the screen. Blinks. Finally nods,

SHADES

Yeah, yeah. Okay.

MO

(with steady force)

Go get Jill. Bring her to your place and lock the door. Got that?

SHADES

What's going on? You in trouble with the cops again or --

MO

I'll tell you later! Just do it! Now!

SHADES

Okay, okay. Just let me get my pants on.

Shades is trying to climb into his pants. He almost falls over.

MO

(softly)

Hurry, Shades. I'm counting on you.

SHADES

No sweat. I'll be seeing you later, huh?

MO

Yeah, just watch yourself, okay?

SHADES

Oh, yeah. Noooooo problem. See ya. Bye.

Shades smiles and hangs up the receiver, standing silent for a moment, listening to the dull flutter of the moth's wings beating against the glass.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE

The vid-screen goes dead and Mo turns toward the door, taking a deep breath. He draws the shotgun from holster and checks to make sure it's loaded.

MO

Alvy. Call the police and give them my address. Then take that thing... that hand... and melt it down. Turn up the heat until there's nothing left... and I don't want you to think once about what it might be worth. It's mine by rights, anyway.

ALVY

Mo --

MO

(cocking the shotgun)  
Don't argue. Don't say a thing.

ALVY

All right, I'll do it. Little bastard's no friend of mine.

MO

(heading for the door)  
Thanks, Alvy. Maybe you are human, after all.

ALVY

Nah. I've just got a soft spot for an endangered species.

Alvy points after him with the truncated hand. Mo reholsters the shotgun and steps out the warehouse doors. The night swallows him up.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mark 13 moves slowly through the lounge, infra-red eyes cutting through the gloom, purring contentedly to itself as it examines the main computer terminal and then lollops on toward the bed. It halts, looking down at Jill, registering her sleeping form as a glowing puddle of energy.

A printout rattles through its brain.

HEATFORM 35 DEGREES CELSIUS HUMAN

RANGE: 0.5 METERS

It reaches almost tenderly toward her and she turns, sighing in her sleep. Then suddenly it pauses, raising its head as if listening for something, its irises widening microscopically.

EXT. SCRAPYARD - NIGHT

Alvy walks slowly down an avenue of rusting cars, gingerly clutching the wriggling hand, steam drifting all around him. He stops in front of one of the scrapyard's low brick blast furnaces and stands silent as if in thought. Then with one deft movement he opens the furnace door and hurls the hand inside, immediately SLAMMING the door. He spins a metal wheel, sealing the furnace and turning up the heat. He leans forward, firelight shimmering on his face, peering through the reinforced glass of the narrow furnace window, watching the severed hand scamper frantically around its prison, fingers scratching at the brickwork. Tongues of fire flicker up through a grate in the floor and the hand goes crazy, flinging itself at the window.

Alvy steps back, wiping his forehead. The temperature rises and the hand glows red, its outline softening as it begins to melt. There's no way out, but still it refuses to give up, hurling itself again at the walls, still banging frantically at the door, now just a jittering ball of fire.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill comes suddenly awake sitting up in bed, knowing that something is wrong. She looks around to the other side of the bed for Mo. He's not there. Just flat, crumpled sheets. A sharp burst of STATIC comes from the television and she looks to it. Something's wrong with the set.

The sound is distorted, muted as if underwater, and the image has become vague and shadowy, abstract, tinged with green.

She stares at it, shaking her head in confusion. Behind her something glistens in the dark, pulling itself up to its full height, poising like a cobra about to strike.

JILL

...Mo ?

She sees the remote control lying at the foot of the bed and reaches forward to pick it up and that movement is the only thing that saves her. A steel claw whistles past her head, so close she can feel its wind. The mattress shivers beneath her, bulging down

under the weight of something only half-glimpsed that's climbing over the head of the bed impossibly quickly.

She YELLS, diving head first onto the floor, hitting the ground all wrong, a dreamy puff of feathers going up around her as the creature rips the mattress apart in a frenzy of tearing fabric and thrashing claws.

INT. APARTMENT IN ADJACENT TOWER BLOCK

Lincoln shivers, the remote lead jumping in his hand, not understanding what he sees. Everything across the way is a tangle of movement. Something big, the size of a large dog, has taken the girl's place on the bed and seems to be eating the mattress. He squints through the lens, trying to figure out what it is, but it refuses to conform with anything he's seen before. He thinks he glimpses a pair of glowing red eyes and a bobbing, almost human head and shoulders but the arms and legs are all wrong, a blur of motion, limbs twitching like a big, clockwork spider.

He sits back, shaking his head.

LINCOLN

I'm losing it. I'm fucking losing it.

Unable to resist, he bends to the camera again and recoils almost immediately, crying out, retaining only an image of eyes like windows into hell. He can't shake the conviction that whatever it is was watching him right through the lens, waiting for him to take a look, and now it's seen him. Now it knows his face.

He sits back, nervously picking at his acne, the beginnings of an idea taking form in his head.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT

Jill crouches against the wall, still clutching the remote in her hand, a blizzard of feathers falling all around her.

The thing seems to be building a nest in the bed, pulling the sheets tight around itself.

She starts to edge past it, crawling slowly backwards toward the door, trying not to look too steadily at it, the childish notion occurring to her that if she can't see it then maybe it can't see her. A sob starts to rise inside her and she bites her lip to stay quiet. When she opens her eyes again the creature is gone.

Only the gaping claw marks in the mattress and the twisted sheets remain to show that it even existed. She glances around herself, shivering, eyes straining into the shadows, seeing nothing but the feathers lazily drifting down past the blue strobe of the television screen.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Mo is running, breathing hard, his head thrown back, his coat fluttering around him. A pedi-cab cruises past and he chases after it, raising his hand.

MO

Hey! Taxi! TAXI! STOP!

The pedi-cab speeds up and off, Mo giving up, slowing to catch his breath. Then he forces himself on again, moaning softly to himself, his feet keeping time with the beat of the blood in his temples.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill gets slowly to her feet, every muscle in her body tensed, eyes darting from side to side as she backs toward the door. Her foot strikes something and she recoils. She looks down and breaths a sigh of relief, seeing her blow-torch lying on the floor where she left it.

She kneels and tentatively lifting it pulls on the trigger, igniting a thin blue tongue of gas.

She backs toward the doorway, holding the blow-torch at arm's length, feeling comforted by its glow. Then she looks up and something she sees takes her breath away. The android's head is missing from its place in the center of the scrap sculpture. Slowly the truth begins to dawn on her.

JILL

Oh my God...

She turns, stepping across the threshold into the darkened hallway crouching defensively, eyes searching the gloom, expecting the worst. She makes it as far as the door and nervously reaches out to type the exit code into the wall console. Her fingers brush the keyboard and in the same instant the doorbell BUZZES. She types in the four digit code and sighs with relief as the door HISSES open on its runners.

She starts forward.

JILL

Mo... thank God...

She freezes in her tracks. A shadowy figure is standing on the threshold. A gust of warm air through the doorway snuffs flame of her torch. Lincoln Weinberg, Jr., lifts a camera to his eye. FLASH!

Jill jerks back with a YELP. Lincoln lowers the camera, grinning.

LINCOLN

Hi.

JILL

Who -- who are you?!

LINCOLN

I'm a neighbor.

JILL

What do you want?!

LINCOLN

(holding out his hand)

Lincoln Weinberg, Jr.

Jill is torn. Immobilized. She doesn't want to let this creep in. Doesn't want to join him outside. Doesn't want to stay in here.

He's still holding out his hand. She glances back over her shoulder. Shakes his hand.

LINCOLN

I thought you might need some help.

JILL

Why?

LINCOLN

Well...

He suddenly raises the camera to his eye again. FLASH! She blinks, disoriented, irritated.

LINCOLN

Don't mind me. It's a pornographic --  
photographic study I'm...working on...sorry.

JILL

What can I do for you?

He looks past her.

LINCOLN

I wanted to make sure you were all right.

JILL

I'm fine.

(pause)

My boyfriend's asleep in the other room.

Lincoln smiles.

LINCOLN

Your boyfriend.

She nods, tight-lipped. His eyes dance up and down the length of her body. She suddenly realizes that she's wearing only the skimpy kimono --

LINCOLN

You must have pretty weird taste in men.

-- and that she has a blow-torch in her hand. She points it at him.

JILL

Get out.

He steps over the threshold. A weird look in his eyes. Intense. Fevered. He licks his lips.

LINCOLN

Listen. I have to talk to you. I know a lot about you. I know things about you that you probably don't even know about yourself...I bet.

JILL

(backing away)

Oh, Jesus...

The door HISSES shut behind him.

LINCOLN

Whoops.

JILL

Oh, God, no!!

LINCOLN

It's okay --

The sound of loud HEAVY METAL comes crashing from the lounge and the lights the hallway flicker. Lincoln looks bemusedly around.

LINCOLN

Whoa! What's going on around here?

JILL

There's an android running amok in my lounge!!

LINCOLN

What?!

JILL

My boyfriend brought it home with him from the zone. It must have reactivated itself, I don't know how. It was all in pieces! We've gotta get out of here!

LINCOLN

It's okay. Take it easy. We can go to my place.

Jill shoves him aside and types a series of digits into the wall console. Nothing happens.

JILL

Why doesn't it work?!

LINCOLN

Someone's activated the emergency override. You can only unlock it from the main terminal.

JILL

How do you know?

LINCOLN

I used to be with the security and surveillance company that installed all the remote cameras and safety locks in this block a few years ago. You made me coffee while I was here.

JILL

(shaking her head)

I don't remember.

LINCOLN

That's okay. I don't mind.

The light flickers again and the music cuts off.

JILL

Now what?

LINCOLN

It sounds like something's overloading the power grid.

There is another abrupt BURST of sound and then silence again.

JILL

Mr... Lincoln? I'm scared. Can you get us out of here?

LINCOLN

Where's the main terminal?

JILL

In the living room. But --

LINCOLN

Don't worry. I know what I'm doing. Here. Gimme that.

He's reaching for the blow-torch. She's reluctant to hand it over.

LINCOLN

Come on!

He peels it from her grip and heads down the hall.

JILL

All right. Keep talking so I know where you are.

LINCOLN

I'm right here.

JILL

Please?

LINCOLN

All right.

He turns toward the lounge, brandishing the blow torch, while Jill crouches beside the locked door, her back against the wall.

LINCOLN

Hello in there. Any androids in there? Come out, come out...

Lincoln vanishes into the gloom. For a moment there is silence. Then the HEAVY METAL MUSIC comes on again, louder than before.

:

JILL  
(shouting)  
Lincoln!  
(pause)  
Lincoln?!!

Lincoln's voice comes back to her, yelling from the lounge.

LINCOLN (O.S.)  
It's okay! I'm in here. I've found the terminal.  
There's nothing in here!

She furrows her brow doubtfully. After a moment, she tiptoes back into the lounge and sees Lincoln standing beside the bed, staring at the claw marks in the mattress. He looks at her with a bit of a leer.

LINCOLN  
Hot night, huh?

Jill isn't really listening. Her gaze is scanning the room.

LINCOLN  
You and the boyfriend really tore up the sheets.  
Heh.

She's still looking worriedly about. He follows her gaze. Shrugging.

LINCOLN  
I told you.  
(then)  
What's his name?

JILL  
Whose?

LINCOLN  
Your boyfriend's.

JILL  
...Moses.

LINCOLN  
Moses. Jeez. Some name. He's not around much, is he? You should get a guy who doesn't leave you alone so much.

JILL  
You can stop talking now.

His face goes blank for a second. Then he grins.

LINCOLN

What if i sing? You want me to sing?

JILL

I don't care. Just get us out of here.

LINCOLN

(crossing to the console)

Let's see... um ...how about this?

(snapping his fingers)

Dum. Dum. Dum.

(typing on the keyboard)

Oh we all walk the wibberlee wobberlee WALK.

Oh we all talk the wibberlee wobberlee TALK.

And we all wear wibberlee wobberlee TIES.

And we look at all the pretty girls with  
wibberlee wobberlee eyes. Oh - kay! That should  
do it.

He gives her an amiable smile. She gestures toward the door with  
her head.

JILL

Good. Let's go.

He frowns. Bites his lower lip.

LINCOLN

Wait. Why'd you...?

She just wants out.

JILL

Why'd I what?

LINCOLN

Nothing. I just wanna...

JILL

Wanna what?!

LINCOLN

Your blinds.

JILL

What about them?!

The window blinds are closed. The ones through which Lincoln was watching her. He starts off toward them, snapping his fingers again. Trying to act casual.

LINCOLN

Dum. Dum. Dum. Oh we all sing the the wibberlee  
wobberlee song. Until day is daw-ning...

He crosses the window, making a feeble attempt at dancing, looking quite absurd in his baseball cap and Hawaiian shirt, clutching the blow-torch in one hand.

LINCOLN

And we all have that wibberlee wobberlee feeling  
in the morning.

(smiling back at her)

You don't want to keep these closed. You won't  
see Santa Claus coming.

He pulls the sash, opening the blinds. A red light falls across him and his smile freezes. There is a face looking back at him from the other side of the blinds. A thin, malevolent face with eyes like fire, one side dark as night, ablaze with the stars, the other a misty blue blur of airbrushed clouds. It seems to smile at him and he notices that its teeth are hypodermic needles.

He realizes that he should try to get back but he can't seem to tear himself away from the creature's gaze. Slowly the angel reaches out for him, the slats of the blinds crumpling around it and as if from a great distance he hears Jill begin to scream. Steel hands enfold him and he feels himself lifted from the ground.

He gives himself over to the embrace, the blow-torch dropping from his numbed fingers. Perhaps this is what he came for. Perhaps this, at last, is love. This angel places a hand on his face as if in absolution. Sparks dance in his eyes and he begins to burn. His legs twitch, dancing in the air. There is a smell like burning rubber.

His axial vertebrae dislocates with a sharp CRACK and blue smoke rises in a plume from his hair. Then, in a final instant of white hot ecstasy, the angel slides a power drill into his groin and its electrified fingers punch through his eyes into his brain.

Everything lets go at once, blood and urine jetting across the Venetian blinds. To the the android's heat sensors the blood is a liquid, golden light. It opens up more holes with its drill, letting out the light, digging deep into the husk, looking for

the source. The light washes over its hands and then begins to fade. Mark 13 lets Lincoln crumple to the floor, still sitting astride him, riding out his final spasms, smoke rising all around it.

Slowly the light dies.

Jill SCREAMS and SCREAMS, trying to shut out the wet tearing sounds as the android disembowels him, the drill WHINING sharply as it grates against one of his ribs.

Mark 13 twitches ecstatically, banging Lincoln's head against the floor as it works its fingers ever deeper into his skull.

INT. APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS

One of the neighbors, a middle-aged Chinese WOMAN in a dowdy blue nightgown, climbs onto a table and begins to BANG on the ceiling with a broom handle.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT

Mark 13 drops the messy remains of Lincoln's head with a dull thump, its limbs suddenly still, listening to the banging on the floor, realizing somewhere deep inside it's damaged brain that it still has work to do.

It pivots around, infra-red eyes searching for the girl.

INT. HALLWAY

Jill is frantically stabbing the code into the wall console. She steps back, waiting for the door to open. It doesn't.

JILL

No!!

She swallows a scream. Trying the code. Trying to rein herself in. Carefully pressing each digit.

Nothing happens. She hits the keypad with her fist.

INT. GUARDROOM - NIGHT

Chief and Vernon sit hunched over a chess board, CHINESE ROCK N' ROLL turned up to full volume on Chief's transistor radio, echoing off bare concrete walls that are lined with video monitors and pages torn from pin-up magazines. Vernon takes one of Chief's pawns, grinning, the end of his tongue pinched between his front teeth.

VERNON

Pow! Pow! Pow! Boom!

Chief slides his bishop across the board.

CHIEF  
Check and mate.

Vernon slaps himself on the head.

VERNON  
Oh, wha! How'd you do that? I didn't see that coming.

Vernon bends over the board, peering myopically at the pieces, retracing the move.

CHIEF  
Sicilian manuever. That's how you beet computers when you play 'em. Machines don't understand sacrifice and neither do morons.

Chief cuffs Vernon hard across the ear, sending him tumbling from his stool.

CHIEF  
Read some chess books, you jerk!

VERNON  
(holding his head)  
Ow! Ow-wow-wow!

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill is leaning her forehead against the cool metal of the door. Stymied. Something CLATTERS loudly in the room behind her and she turns with a whimper.

INT. LOUNGE

Red light touches the spider web as Mark 13 peers into the tank. It sees movement in the web and detects life but there is no temperature reading. Mark 13 inclines its head as if in thought, then raises one hand, trying to attract the spider's attention. Its steel fingers scratch against the glass but the spider doesn't respond.

The android's retina's expand, watching but not understanding.

INT. HALLWAY

Jill hears the sound of breaking glass. She feels the urge to scream and raises her hand, biting it hard, almost drawing blood. She peers into the gloom. A soft mechanical whir comes from the

darknesss and she pulls back, flattening herself against the wall.

The whir grows louder and another sound grows with it. The throb of an engine turning over, slowly gaining power, gears whining impatiently. She closes her eyes and jams her hands over her ears.

Suddenly the lights come on in the hallway and music comes BLARING at full volume.

"Silent night, Holy night"

Jill shakes her head slowly back and forth.

JILL  
(quietly)  
Oh, God, help me...

The carol plays on...

"All is calm, All is bright..."

INT. LOUNGE

Mark 13's sitting at the central terminal now, riding the console, its nervous system plugged directly into the main frame, sparks flying all around it, fingers twitching wildly across the keyboard.

INT. HALLWAY

The lights blink off again and Jill begins to edge down the passage, keeping her back to the wall. The Christmas carol stops, then starts again, coming at her in disorienting spurts. She reaches the kitchen door and the lights go on again, then start to blink rapidly, reaching the hypnotic frequency of a strobe before sparking and shorting out entirely.

Jill backs into the darkened kitchen. The timer bell goes off in the microwave behind her and she spins fearfully around. She sees the LED's flashing chaotically on the wall console and her blender WHIRRING out of control, a thin blue ribbon of smoke pouring from its motor.

The coffee maker overboils with a splutter and she pulls back as scalding liquid sprays across the counter. She sees a red glow rising from the overheating toaster and an electric carving knife lies WHIRRING and twitching to itself on the sideboard.

Then suddenly everthing goes quiet. She looks up, knowing what's going to come next. A movement flickers in the hallway and she

sees the gleam of two red eyes cutting through the darkness their beams highlighted like lasers by the drifting smoke. She pulls back against the wall, whimpering, knowing she's come to a dead end.

Then in a flash of inspiration she realizes something.

JILL  
(under her breath)  
Infra-red! The bastard's working on infra-red!

She crouches, pulling open the freezer and frantically ripping out its shelves, sending the contents clattering to the floor. She hears the whir of servo-motors as the android approaches and without another thought she climbs into the freezer, curling herself up to make herself as small as possible. She shivers, her bare skin brushing against frosted metal. She rams her hand into her mouth, trying to remain absolutely still, trying not to even breathe.

Infra-red eyes pierce the darkness of the kitchen and the android appears silhouetted in the doorway, its steel claws SCRATCHING on the linoleum. Its head revolves with a WHIR and for a moment its looking right at her, then it looks past her and away, WHIRRING angrily to itself. Suddenly it swings itself across floor so quickly that Jill almost loses sight of it. It reaches out and wrenches the cupboard door off its hinges. There is an explosion of SHATTERING crockery. Jill stifles a yell as shards of broken porcelain rattle to the floor around her.

The wreckage subsides and the android freezes, standing inhumanly still, head cocked to one side as if listening. Jill holds her breath, her eyes wandering across the Formica countertop, lighting at last on the thing she's been looking for.

The circular power saw she was using earlier that evening, lying now on a shelf opposite the freezer beside her airbrush and two cans of polyurethane spray paint. Then her eyes fall to the space below the shelf and she sees the two cylinders of oxy-acetylene gas and a plan of action begins to take form in her head.

She breaths out slowly, watching fearfully as her breath steams in the light of the open freezer.

Now the android sees the plume of steam.

Now it turns.

Now it's looking right at her and she returns its stare without flinching.

It hops toward her, head still cocked to one side, heat sensors confused by the cold air streaming from the freezer. It stops only an arm's length away from her and, reaching out blindly, begins to feel its way around the cold spot.

Jill cowers back as far as she can, numbed by the cold gradually creeping into her, trying to will herself not to shiver. The android's hand narrowly misses her foot, closing on a jar of mayonnaise. It withdraws the jar, holding it up for closer inspection. Its fingers tighten and the jar shatters, mayonnaise spattering to the floor in big round globules.

Jill gasps involuntarily. The android drops the remains of the jar and reaches back into the freezer, its hand feeling its way toward her trembling face. Then from far off in the apartment comes the sound of the doorbell ringing.

The android freezes again, deadly still, its fingertips barely an inch from Jill's terrified eyes.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Shades stands outside the locked door, shifting uneasily from foot to foot, chewing a piece of bubble gum. He presses the doorbell again, frowning. Then he BANGS on it with his fist.

SHADES

JILL! HEY, JILL! YOU IN THERE?

INT. KITCHEN

Jill hears the muffled knocking but doesn't dare move a muscle. She holds her breath, trying not to let her heart beat too fast. The steel hand wavers before her eyes.

INT. STAIRWAY

Shades shakes his head, dumbfounded.

SHADES

Jeez.

He leans back against the railing, crossing his arms and blowing a big, sticky bubble.

INT. KITCHEN

The steel hand wavers and falls, withdrawing from the freezer. Jill breathes out softly. The android takes a step backwards, its head pivoting toward the door.

Jill inches forward, her eyes on the power saw. It's lying just in front of her, its handle sticking out over the edge of the shelf.

The android takes another step toward the doorway and Jill slowly reaches out, holding her breath again. The android pauses. Listening. She leans further forward and her hand fastens on the power saw's hilt, her fingers so numb with cold she can barely feel it.

After that everything happens really fast. The android turns in one fluid movement, its eyes finding her. And Jill is already on her feet, brandishing the power saw with both hands. And the android is coming across the kitchen at her in a horrid blur of motion. And she could swear it's grinning at her. And then the power saw BUZZES into life and she's screaming at the top of her lungs.

JILL  
EAT THIS! MOTHERFUCKER!!!

The saw descends in a furious arc and the android flings up one hand to shield its face, suddenly realizing its peril. There is a flash of sparks and three of the android's fingers go clattering to the floor where they lie twitching like inch-worms. The saw blade catches the creature in the chest and Jill SCREAMS as a streak of sparks and metal splinters fountain into the air. The android screams, too, and for the first time Jill hears Mark 13's voice: a terrible mechanical MEWLING, so low it's more felt than heard, like a bass note from a synthesizer.

The creature shakes itself, arms flailing wildly, and Jill feels her own arm laid open from the elbow down, almost to the bone, by one of the thrashing talons. There is a sharp metallic CLANG as a claw strikes one of the oxy-acetylene cylinders and a jet of compressed gas begins to SCREAM from a ruined valve. The android lunges backwards, jerking the power saw out of her hands.

It collides with the remains of the cupboard and loses its balance, writhing amidst the broken crockery, trying to dislodge the blade from its chest, sparks leaping from its joints.

It flings the spinning blade away and the saw sails across the room into the lounge.

Jill can't stop screaming but her scream is a cry of rage. She grabs one of the spray cans and then begins to fumble desperately with the valve of the second oxy-acetylene cylinder, blood running in rivulets down her arm. There is a high-pitched WHISTLE and she staggers back as the valve opens, venting the tank's contents in a thin, vaporous stream.

Laughing and crying at the same time, Jill tumbles toward the door, coughing as the room fills with gas. The android lunges forward, hydraulic fluid dripping thickly from its chest, and its steel fingers encircle her ankle. She falls with a SHRIEK, clawing at the hall carpet with blood-slick hands, remorselessly pulled back, inch by inch, into the gas-filled kitchen. There is a loud WHINE and she sees the android's drill arm spin into life, reaching slowly up between her bare legs. She brandishes the spray can in one hand and then, reaching in her pocket, she triumphantly withdraws her cigarette lighter.

EXT. STAIRWAY

Mo comes pounding up the last flight of steps, his face livid with exertion.

MO

JILL!

He sees Shades standing near the apartment door and grabs him, shaking him so violently that his dark glasses almost fly off.

MO

Where is she?!

SHADES

Hey, I don't know, man! She wouldn't answer the door!

Mo practically hurls him down the steps.

MO

THEN GET HELP!!

Mo flings himself against the door, POUNDING his fists on the steel plating.

MO

JILL! JILL! I'M COMING!!

He WAILS in frustration, tears welling in his eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The SHRIEK of escaping gas fills the room, almost drowning out the sound of Jill's cries.

The spinning drill arm hangs over her, poisoning itself with surgical precision.

She lashes out at the android's face with her free foot as the creature hunkers closer to her, its retinas widening in anticipation. She snarls at it, her face twisted in rage and reaching suddenly out with the spray can she draws a line of black polyurethane paint across its eyes. The android WHINES, clutching at its face, and Jill kicks free from its grip, plunging backwards down the corridor.

She loses her footing and goes down on one knee as she pulls the pack of Acapulco Gold from her pocket.

Already the android is looking for her again, crouching in the kitchen doorway, gathering its energy for another attack. She spins the lighter, kindling the whole packet, waiting impatiently for the flames to take hold. She looks up, right into the android's eyes, a thin smile touching her lips. Then she staggers to her feet, hurling the blazing cigarette pack and diving for cover. The android reaches out and effortlessly snatches the blazing pack from the air like a star outfielder.

Then everything EXPLODES.

EXT. STAIRWAY

The locked door shudders and Mo SCREAMS, flinging himself against the steel plating.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT

Jill covers her head with her hands as shards of hot metal rain around her. Her sleeve catches fire and she rolls on the ground to smother it, crawling across the blackened carpet toward the lounge.

Somewhere a fire alarm has begun to RING.

The air seems filled with oily wisps like seeds from a black dandelion and, looking up, she sees that the kitchen simply isn't there anymore. The doorway at the end of the hallway is acting like a chimney, the air shimmering with heat.

She catches the flames for a while, half expecting something to move within the inferno and then something does but it is only a blazing wall-fitting subsiding in a cloud of sparks. She stares into the flames until the sweat evaporates and she feels her eyebrows shrivel. Then, satisfied at last, she gets to her feet and limps back into the lounge, cradling her wounded arm against her chest.

She stands on the threshold, surveying her apartment. The tangled scrap sculpture. The twisted Venetian blinds and blood-stained walls. The torn sheets and gutted mattress. The melted telephone receiver dangling slackly on its cord. Lincoln's body sprawled beside the window, his Hawaiian shirt dark with drying blood, a white drift of feathers strewn all around him.

She shakes her head.

JILL

God, What a fucking mess.

The steel door HISSES open at the end of the hall and she feels the cool night wind on her body and she turns to see Mo silhouetted in the doorway, Chief and Vernon on either side of him, craning their necks to see inside.

Mo seems frightened.

She starts forward, shrugging to show it's all right and then, as if in a dream, she sees him draw his shotgun and level it at her head.

MO

GET DOWN!

She SCREAMS and dives headlong to the floor, feeling something hot whistle past the back of her neck. She rolls, hugging the carpet, catching a brief glimpse of an inhuman figure standing over her.

A writhing, jittering column of living fire.

Then the shotgun jumps in Mo's hands and the burning android is blown backwards through the doorway into the lounge. Mo dashes past her followed by the Chief and Vernon and she hears him reload the shotgun.

Then someone's standing beside her, lifting her in his arms. She buries her face in Shades' flight jacket and begins to cry.

INT. LOUNGE

Mo stands in the doorway, the shotgun cradled in his arms, Chief and Vernon flanking him, clutching their automatics.

CHIEF

(looking at the devastation)

Jesus Christ!

The android stands beside the console, wisps of flame rising from it like tongues of fire in a religious fresco. As one they level their firearms and the creature lunges toward them, tracking flame across the carpet, emitting a DEEP BASS TONE as it comes.

Mo's shotgun leaps in his arms and the creature whirls frenziedly across the room, taking the full force of the blast. Chief and Vernon OPEN FIRE with their automatics, their bullets RICOCHETING off the android's titanium shell. It lunges backwards against the window and the glass in one of the panes CRACKS behind it.

It tries to come at them again, its arms tangling in the remains of the Venetian blinds. Mo slips another shell into his shotgun and steps forward, SHOOTING it in the chest. Part of the android's breastplate disintegrates in a mass of sparks and then the window finally gives way.

For a moment it teeters on the edge, surrounded by a blizzard of glass, then it is gone, plunging backwards into the night, and all that is left is the ROAR of the city coming through the broken window and the sound of glass and debris cascading to the street thirty floors below.

Mo relaxes slowly, coming down.

He lowers his shotgun as Chief and Vernon go running past him, looking for a fire extinguisher.

He hears something move behind him and turns to see Jill standing in the doorway, staring at the window, her face streaked with tears. He steps toward her, reaching out to take her in his arms, but she pulls away.

JILL

Where were you?!

She sits down on the end of the bed and begins to tear one of the sheets into strips, bandaging her arm.

MO

Let me look at that.

JILL

I can take care of it.

Mo decides to remain quiet. He leans back against the wall by the door. He hears the HISSSS of fire extinguishers coming from the hall. Shades wanders past, whistling through his teeth.

SHADES

Mama-mia.

He kneels next to Lincoln's corpse, shaking his head. Then he looks up at the broken window and the sky beyond. He seems mesmerized by the view. He rises to a standing position. Gazing out.

Chief turns off the fire alarm and ducks back into the room.

CHIEF

Fire's out. I'm going to call the cops and get an ambulance.

MO

I already had somebody call. They should have been here by now.

CHIEF

There was a big riot downtown. Probably have their hands full. Something about that new bill.

Chief ducks back out.

JILL

Figures.

She stands, broodingly.

JILL

Why waste their time forcing birth control on us? Why not just send a few of those metal fuckers into the streets?

She looks at Mo. He doesn't have an answer. She joins Shades at the window, looking out.

The smog has cleared and the stars are still bright over rooftops, the the sky a deep, rich blue, and on the far horizon is the first glow of dawn. Jill watches the sky slowly change hue. It is criss-crossed with vapor trails.

High up a supersonic jet is barrelling along on the edge of the stratosphere, heading someplace else.

JILL

(softly)

I want out from here. I want to get away.

Shades looks at her. Mo has crossed the room and is standing behind her. Shades looks at the floor, steps away from them.

MO

It's gonna be all right. Things are gonna change.

She squeezes her eyes shut. Dully:

JILL  
How much worse can they get?

MO  
I mean for the better.

He puts a hand on her shoulder.

MO  
...I'll be here.

She sighs raggedly. She almost smiles. Her voice is a hoarse whisper.

JILL  
For how long?

He looks out the window at the changing sky. Then at the back of her head.

MO  
From now on. I'm gonna stay here with you.  
(beat)  
If you'll let me.

Several seconds pass. Then she turns to him, a smile flickering on her lips. He gives her a cheeky smile in return. He lets his hand fall to his side.

MO  
You'll be safe with me. I'll look after ya.

She leans her head against his chest and they wrap their arms tightly around each other.

Shades walks out of the apartment, muttering something inaudible, staring at the floor all the way.

Suddenly Jill tightens up. She slides her palms up to Mo's chest and draws back. Looking him square in the eye. Realizing something...

JILL  
You never had to go back, did you? That was a lie, wasn't it? Your contract is up.

He doesn't answer. His face is blank. Then finally he starts to shake his head and --

-- a blackened steel hand reaches up through the window --

and grabs her by the hair!

Spinning her around to face the night.  
Mo starts forward with a CRY but he is only human and thus far too slow.

MO

NO!!!!

He catches a fleeting glimpse of a glistening metallic shape clinging like a spider to the outside of the apartment block and he raises his shotgun, trying to take aim, but Jill's body is in the way. Then the android hauls her from his view, pulling her head-first through the broken window, blood spattering around her.

He hears her SHRIEK and sees her legs kick for a moment before the creature releases her and she falls away into the night.

Mo raises the gun, FIRING into the darkness, glass tinkling all around him, his mouth stretched wide LAUGHING, CRYING, SCREAMING, FIRING again and again...

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

The power line breaks Jill's fall.  
She lashes out with one hand, grabbing onto the cable, crying out in pain, her feet swinging in space. She reaches up with her other hand to grip the cable more firmly and then just hangs there for awhile, her head drooping.

She feels blood running down her body and there is a dull pain in her forehead.

She realizes that she's been badly hurt, but she can't get her thoughts together much beyond that.

She hears someone shouting in the distance and a sound like thunder.

Mo's voice drifts back to her from earlier that evening, trying to explain something to her in his typical half-joking, half-serious manner, his voice small and faint, coming from a long way off.

MO

They tell you not to look down when you climb a cliff, but why not? The view is beautiful.

She smiles at his reassurance.

She opens her eyes and looking down sees her bare feet dangling below her, streaked with blood, crimson droplets falling away to the street thirty floors below.

She closes her eyes and SCREAMS.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT

Mo's head is bowed, hands clenched on the shotgun, eyes tightly shut, when he hears her scream. He lifts his head. Can't believe what he's hearing. Leaps forward and leans out the broken window, his steel hand clutching the buckled frame.

Jill is swinging from the power line only a few feet below him, her knuckles white.

He starts to clamber through the broken glass stepping out onto a narrow, brick parapet, the night wind murmuring about him. He calls her name and her eyelids flicker.

MO

JILL!

JILL

MO! HELP ME! I'M SLIPPING!

MO

I CAN'T! YOU'RE HANGING ON A POWER LINE! IF I TOUCH YOU WE'LL BOTH FRY!

JILL

HELP ME! GOD!

MO

YOU'VE GOT TO TRY AND JUMP! THERE'S NO OTHER WAY!

JILL

I CAN'T DO IT!

Mo looks down and sees the startled faces of the downstairs NEIGHBORS peering through the curtains of their living room window, immobile as waxworks.

MO

THERE'S A WINDOW JUST IN FRONT OF YOU! YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT!

JILL

I CAN'T DO IT!

MO

YOU CAN!

Then something moves just below the ledge and Mo goes pale. There is a SPUTTER of shorting wiring and Jill SCREAMS as she hears the electric WHIR of the android's servo-motors. The creature is

clinging to a fusebox just below the parapet, drawing in energy, sparks seething like fireflies all around it.

Mo levels the shotgun as the creature reaches out toward Jill's dangling body.

MO

JILL! SWING! IT'S COMING!! SWING FOR THE LOVE OF  
CHRIST! SWING AND JUMP!!

Jill starts trying to swing herself toward the window. The android's claw arcs through the air. She gathers momentum, her kimono flapping around her in crimson tatters. The metal claw is inches away and with an EXPLOSION of sparks the power line snaps under the strain and Jill lets go in mid-swing, launching herself with a SCREAM toward the lighted window, the street yawning beneath her.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Earlier that evening. Jill falling backwards in the chair, laughing, Mo standing over her.

INT. APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

The living room window BURSTS in a shower of glass and SCREAMING Chinese people dive for cover as Jill comes crashing feet first into their lives, landing awkwardly on the coffee table, upending a bowl of stale cocktail snacks and coming to rest in a heap on the floor, one leg twisted under her, blood trickling in a thin stream from her nose and pooling on the carpet. It's very red against her pale skin. The severed power cable HISSES and SPARKS, twisting beside her as if alive.

EXT. LEDGE

Mo creeps along the parapet, still holding onto the window frame with one hand. He sees the android scrambling to pull itself back into the apartment and he snarls at it, striking it in the face with the butt of his shotgun, trying to break its grip on the ledge.

MO

GO TO HELL, YOU BASTARD!

The creature looks up at him, freezing him with its gaze. Red light glints in Mo's eyes, sweat beading on his forehead. He shivers, trying to look away.

The creature seems to be smiling at him, now, a great, groovy death's head grin.

Then it simply lets go of the parapet, snaking one hand around Mo's ankle as it falls. Mo YELLS, losing his balance, feeling the window frame give beneath his weight, the street lights spinning far below him.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Shades is already running on the stairs when he sees the door of the apartment downstairs burst open and a distraught Chinese couple come running out onto the landing, screaming for help. He dashes down the flight, pushing past them into the lighted doorway.

INT. APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS

The Chinese woman screams something inarticulate at Shades, grasping at his sleeve and trying to hold him back. He pushes her away and manages to keep at arm's length as he struggles down the corridor into the lounge. He shoves her away and crunches over broken glass as he approaches Jill's body.

SHADES

Oh no.

He bends and lifts her, her away from the holding her gently in his arms as he drags snaking power cable, chanting a mantra under his breath to try to make things all right.

EXT. LEDGE

Mo clenches his teeth, his eyes bulging as he tries to haul himself back into the apartment. The electric motor in his hand whines in protest, frame on the verge of giving out completely, the window slowly buckling beneath the combined weight of both him and the creature that dangles from his foot. He wants to grab the window frame with his other hand, but can't bring himself to let go of the shotgun.

His hand slips slowly downwards, about to give way. He closes his eyes.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Earlier that evening.

Mo kissing Jill lightly on the cheek as she sleeps.

MO

(whispering)

I'll be back.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

Mo's ankle dislocates with a sharp CRACK and he SCREAMS.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Earlier that day.  
Shades walking beside him, expounding.

SHADES

New York, Max. That's the place to make it, now.  
Think about it.

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

Mo's eyes tolled back, head tilted back, moaning through clenched teeth...

MO

Don't... call me... Max.

Mo laughs, the roar of the street rising all around him...

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jill lying beside him in the dark.  
His fingers caressing her.

JILL

It's good to have you here, Moses.

MO

It's good to be here.

DISSOLVE THROUGH:

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

Jill's body sailing through the picture window, streaked with blood, glass bursting in a spray around her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LEDGE - NIGHT

Mo SHOUTS, his cry of rage going out over the rooftops. He pulls himself upwards, muscles straining, veins standing like cords in his neck and arms.

He hauls himself over the windowsill like a man doing a berserk chin-up under an unfair burden, flinging himself to carpet, landing on his shoulder and rolling, the creature crawling fast up his legs, eyes blazing.

A steel claw flashes through the air, talons glinting in the half-light, and Mo reaches out to block the blow. He grasps the android by the wrist with his mechanical hand and squeezes, forcing the arm slowly back, one of its control cables snapping with a loud TWANG like a breaking guitar string.

He brings up the shotgun with his other hand, trying to level it at the creature's head, but it is still too fast for him. It lunges forward and he feels a sharp, stinging pain as it bites into his forearm.

He releases his grip on the creature's hand, slamming his knee into its damaged chest, driving it backwards. The creature regains its balance. Mo rams the shotgun against its head, pulling the trigger on both barrels.

There is a flash of light and a deafening CONCUSSION and half the creature's head disintegrates in a whirl of sparks, one of the lamp-like eyes snuffing out forever.

It rolls SCREECHING and writhing across the floor, clutching at the remains of its head, sparks rising from its exposed brain pan, its face a mess of exposed circuitry and trailing wires. Mo WHOOPS with delight, reloading the shotgun. The creature crawls across the blackened carpet, trying to hide behind the computer terminal.

MO  
(chortling)  
You can run...

He stands to give chase, but his wounded foot gives way beneath him and he pitches to the floor. He sits up, feeling a dull pain throbbing in his good hand. He raises it and sees two small needle marks in his forearm. A drop of inky fluid oozes slowly from one of the punctures and the veins in his arm are gradually darkening, his skin rising in blisters around the wound.

MO  
Oh my God...

He looks up and it is as if the apartment is on fire again, psychedelic pinks and blues flickering across the walls. He thinks he sees the damaged android watching him, its steel fingers working on the wiring of the main computer terminal, plugging itself back into the main frame.

Everything in the apartment seems to be coming to life now, the scrap sculptures writhing and whispering on the walls, ventilation tubes coiling like snakes across the ceiling and

melted babies twisting their heads to watch him with their dead black eyes.

He shakes his head wildly from side to side, crying out, trying to hang on to his sanity.

INT. APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS - DAWN

Jill swims slowly back to consciousness, a ring of faces peering down at her. Several Chinese PEOPLE are watching over her, the Chinese woman who lives there trying to feed her a bowl of soup. Several VAGRANTS and SQUATTERS crowd into the room, lured by the commotion.

Chief comes pushing through them, clutching a baseball bat, and as if dreaming Jill sees his lips move, saying something, his voice impossibly slow.

CHIEF

Get back. The ambulance is here. We're gonna move her, now.

She feels something cool on her bending over her face and looking up she sees Shades splashing water on her forehead.

Then she tries to sit up, suddenly frightened.

JILL

MO!

Shades tries to hold her down.

SHADES

It's all right! Just stay quiet now.  
Everything's gonna be all right.

(beat)

There's nothing you can do.

She pushes him away, sitting up, realizing that she's been lying wrapped in a blanket on a couch in the downstairs neighbors' lounge.

Her eyes search the faces of the onlookers.

JILL

MO! WHERE ARE YOU?!

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE - DAWN

Mo stretches out his steel hand, drawing his boot knife. He clenches his teeth and plunges the knife into his forearm.

Blood and black ichor gush from the wound and he BELLOWS with pain.

He raises his arm, sucking desperately at it, spitting out a mouthful of warm, bitter fluid.

He feels his nervous system starting to shut down and he raises the knife again. He knows he has to cut deeper into the infected veins but he can't seem to get it together. He tries to call for help, but all he can emit is a thick, syrupy grunt that goes nowhere, dying in his throat.

The apartment is blazing, now, light streaming up from everywhere. He sees Jill's wrought iron owl trying to tear itself off the wall, its steel wings fluttering with impossible life.

He feels that he's drowning, sinking down into a floor that has suddenly taken on the consistency of warm mud.

Far back in his mind, someone's trying to tell him something. Something important that he's forgotten.

INT. ROBOT BREAKER'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Alvy hovering over the blueprints.

ALVY

...were testing a bunch of them out on the dune sea, but there was a fuck up. Seems there was one structural defect. An Achilles heel in the insulation system...

The dwarf points at one of the diagrams and Mo feels himself falling forward, lost in the spinning schematic that unfolds before him and turns into a glowing, computer-generated mandala. He realizes that he has lost consciousness and struggles to find his way out of the maze and back to sanity. Alvy's face swims before him, grotesquely distorted, emerging from a sea of circuitry. It points at him and grins.

ALVY

...in the insulation system!

INT. LOUNGE

Mo cries out, his eyes snapping open, the knife still clutched in his hand.

The android is sitting astride the main terminal, now, drawing power out of its matrix, slowly gaining strength once more.

It raises its arms like the branches of a metal tree and somehow it seems insanely beautiful.

Like the Rig Veda. Goddess Kali and the dance of death.

He begins to laugh.

Jill's voice comes to him again, whispering from another time stream.

JILL (V.O.)  
Ooh! Jesus God! He's beautiful...

ALVY (V.O.)  
It can kill you in seconds and even make you enjoy it.

JILL (V.O.)  
What a monster.

ALVY (V.O.)  
...enjoy it...

He looks into Mark 13's eyes and smiles, finding comfort in the red glow.

He no longer fears it.

In the end everything was perfect after all.

INT. APARTMENT DOWNSTAIRS - DAWN

Jill struggles to her feet, on the edge of panic, now, the onlookers crowding in around her.

JILL  
MOSES!

Chief steps forward putting a hand on her shoulder, trying to calm her.

CHIEF  
Please, Jill. Listen to me. You can't --

She shoves him hard in the chest and he staggers back. She snatches the baseball bat from his hands and begins to push through the crowd, feeling something grafting inside her leg.

JILL  
I'M COMING, MO! JUST HANG ON!

INT. LOUNGE

Mo no longer has the strength to laugh. The knife wavers and falls from his hand and he steps forward out of his body into Jill's waiting arms.

MO  
Fun, huh?

JILL  
(ruffling his hair)  
Don't go, Moses. Don't ever go away again.

MO  
I'm not going anywhere.

They kiss and the kiss goes on forever.  
Then he's back leaning against the wall on the floor, his eyes closed, his head dropping slowly forward, mouth slack, heart beat slowing...  
There is a sound: a growing high-pitched WHINE. It might be in his head.  
He whispers, but no one is there to hear him.

MO  
I'm sorry...Jill...

Then he is still. Lifeless. The only sound in the room is the approaching metallic WHINE.  
The android is holding aloft Jill's circular saw.  
It hunkers over Mo's crumpled form, the saw blade a whirling blur.

EXT. STAIRWELL - DAWN

Jill struggles painfully up the steps, clutching the baseball bat, the blanket tied around her like a cloak. She turns to glare down at the gathering mob, threatening them with the bat to keep them at bay as a red dawn breaks across the rooftops.  
Shades and the Chief stand at their forefront. Shades holds out his hands to her.

SHADES  
Okay, Jill, that's enough. What do you think you're going to do with that?

She swings the bat at him.

JILL  
GET AWAY FROM ME!

Shades leaps back with a YELP and Jill drags herself up onto the landing in front of her apartment, holding onto the railing for support. The door is open.

Vernon is peering warily into the apartment, squeezing his automatic tightly in a sweaty grip. He jumps, startled, as Jill nears him.

JILL

Get out of my way, Vernon!

VERNON

You don't want to go in there, Miss Monroe.

JILL

I SAID GET OUT OF MY WAY, GODDAMNIT!!

VERNON

It's still in there!!!

JILL

SO IS MO!!

Vernon glances over her shoulder. Jill spins around to find the Chief coming up to grab her. She swings the bat at his head YELLING at the top of her lungs. Chief takes a step back, startled more by her shriek than the bat.

Jill turns and makes a dash for the open door, wincing at the pain in her leg.

Vernon starts forward and she swings the bat at him, clipping him in the side of the head with a hollow THOK. He reels back, dazed.

She limps quickly across the threshold into the darkened apartment.

Behind her the Chief and Vernon are yelling at each other but she doesn't look back.

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT

Jill staggers across the burned-out hallway, heading for the lounge, her own head throbbing, filled with fire. She reels drunkenly, leaning on the bat for support.

She knows she's nearing the limit of her strength but there's something she has to do.

Behind her, Vernon starts across the threshold, Chief and Shades right behind him.

INT. LOUNGE

The android is still plugged into the main terminal. It senses the movement in the hall and reaches out, fingers darting across the keyboard, the exposed matrix of its brain glowing with light.

INT. HALLWAY

There is a HISS of hydraulics and the apartment door slides home on its runners, its control circuits sparking, close to overload. Chief sees the door closing and makes a dive for it.

He doesn't make it.

The door catches him just above the hips, squeezing him against the frame, driving the wind out of him, his body armor CRUMPLING. The hydraulics SQUEAL. The door automatically reopens.

Chief gasps, trying to get up, but there seems to be something wrong with his legs.

Shades grabs him by the feet, trying to pull him back across the threshold.

Vernon turns, too slow, his gaze meeting Chief's for a moment. Chief's eyes are wide with fear.

INT. LOUNGE

The android hits the keyboard again, overloading the system.

INT. HALLWAY

The door RAMS home on its pistons and the Chief's body unhinges at the waist.

His arms twitch, his mouth wide open, vomiting a dark jet of blood so thick it's almost solid.

Shades staggers back against the railing, still clutching Chief's legs.

Vernon falls to his knees and throws up on the carpet.

Jill looks away, sobbing, staggering into the lounge, the baseball bat raised in front of her.

Behind her, the door begins to slice open and closed, over and over, the runners greased with blood, sparks showering from the control console.

INT. LOUNGE - DAWN

Jill slowly crosses the room, glancing warily about. Then she sees Mo and starts forward with a gasp, kneeling beside him, momentarily forgetting her own peril. She touches him and his head tips slackly to one side. Behind the half-closed lids his eyes are dull as marbles. Jill shivers, a sob rising inside her,

JILL

Oh, Mo...Mo... Why couldn't you wait for me...?

She reaches out, softly touching his face, straightening his hair, leaning forward as if to kiss him...

JILL  
I love you...

She notices that she's kneeling in a pool of blood that has spread beneath him.  
His left arm is folded under his torso.  
She turns him over.  
His robot prosthetic hand is missing, severed from his wrist.  
Dark fluid drools from the stump.  
Jill recoils with a gasp, staggering to her feet.  
She turns, brandishing the baseball bat, screaming, mind  
tilting slowly into madness.

JILL  
GOD DAMN YOU!!!

But the android is already gone from behind the console. She can see no sign of it but knows it must be somewhere close.  
She hears a stealthy movement behind her and spins around in a black rage.  
Vernon is standing in the doorway, pale with shock, automatic clutched in his trembling hands.

VERNON  
What are we gonna do now?!! We can't get out!!  
WHAT ARE WE GONNA FUCKING DO?!!!

JILL  
(raising the bat)  
SHUT UP! You want me to hit you with this again?!!

Vernon vehemently shakes his head.

JILL  
Then just shut the fuck up!

VERNON  
(sobbing)  
But...but...it's gonna kill us. It got the Chief. You can't stop it. We're gonna die!

She turns slowly, scanning for the creature, nodding.

JILL  
Yeah, eventually. Not today.

VERNON  
You...promise?

JILL  
(nodding)

Cross my heart and... you know the rest.

She hobbles over to the computer terminal. Vernon steps warily into the room, his eyes searching the wreckage. He sees a dark stain on the floor and stares at it. A drop of hydraulic fluid hits him on the cheek and he glances up at the ceiling.

Mark 13 grins down at him, hanging from the light fixture, one hand plugged into the power socket.

Vernon has just enough time to let out a strangled yell before the creature grabs him by the face and lifts him off the floor.

His automatic falls to the carpet, discharging a single shot.

JILL  
NO! NO! NO!

Vernon's feet shudder in mid-air and then begin to smoke as current surges through him.

Jill covers her eyes as the creature flings the security guard against the wall like a big, broken doll, and jumps eagerly down after him.

Through her fingers she sees Mark 13 scuttle over to the wall console that used to control the lighting and stereo system and plug one hand into the power matrix.

It shudders orgasmically, drawing more energy into its storage battery and beginning to carve up Vernon's twitching body with its drill arm.

JILL  
WHY DON'T YOU COME AFTER ME, YOU LITTLE POWER  
JUNKIE?! YOU SCARED?!

The android glances back at her over its shoulder as if caught in the midst of a sexual act.

It shifts uneasily, dragging Vernon's body deeper into the shadows, as if embarrassed.

Then something occurs to Jill.

She bends over the computer terminal, frantically typing a series of digits into the keyboard.

A complex map of the apartment's power grid flashes across the terminal's visual display.

She grins, pinpointing the android and typing in another command.

The android's brain matrix appears on the screen and she looks up to see that the creature has turned once again and is watching her with its single, baleful eye.

(PAGE MISSING)

JILL

You have been programmed incorrectly! I am not the enemy and this is not the zone. I am an unemployed scrap sculptress and this is a residential building.

The android seems to be thinking. Then:

JILL

You need to be reprogrammed. What is your memory bank access code?

MARK 13

Access code classified.

JILL

How does your brain work. Tell me about your design.

MARK 13

Oh.

We all walk the wibberlee wobberlee WALK  
And we all talk the wibberlee wobberlee TALK  
And we all wear wibberlee wobberlee TIES  
And we look at all the pretty girls with  
wibberlee wobberlee EYES  
Oh!

In a blur the android disengages itself from the wall console and comes CLATTERING across the room at her. She swings the bat, STRIKING it hard in the head. Sparks shoot from its exposed brain and it stumbles back a step as Jill retreats toward the door.

It comes at her again and she swings the bat once more, YELLING as the impact shivers up her arm. She stumbles into the hallway, whirling the bat around her in an attempt to keep the android at bay. She turns, catching a glimpse of Shades watching helplessly from the other side of the malfunctioning door. Her guard falters for a second.

SHADES

JILL WATCH OUT!

She spins around and the android is almost upon her. She YELLS, an animal cry of rage, BATTERING crazily at the android's head and exposed brain, keeping it at bay as she backs down the hall.

:

She braces herself against the bathroom door, making a stand as the android comes at her again. She lashes out but the android deflects the blow and she loses her grip on the bat, sending it CRASHING through the glass shower partition.

One of Mark 13's claws catches her on the jaw and she reels backwards, landing awkwardly on the tile floor of the shower cubicle, the cut in her scalp reopening, blood trickling down her forehead into her eyes.

Her hand fumbles blindly across the broken glass, reaching for the handle of the baseball bat. Mark 13 comes at her fast, now, talons SCRATCHING across the wet tiling, pinning her down with its newly-acquired prosthetic hand. The red warning light on the back of the other hand blinks to life.

She SCREAMS.

A severed power cable SPUTTERS in the creature's damaged chest but nothing happens. Jill realizes why the android had to plug itself into the power socket before electrocuting Vernon.

Mark 13's drill arm WHIRS to life, telescoping out toward her, about to finish something it started once before. Jill SCREAMS, her head twisting from side to side, her legs thrashing, her hands clawing in vain at the android's armored breastplate.

EXT. STAIRWAY - DAWN

Shades watches miserably through the swiftly opening-and-closing door. Breathing in and out through his nose. Mouth shut tight. He closes his eyes at the sound of another SCREAM.

EXT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Earlier that day.

Mo turned to Shades on the stairs. Looking at him seriously.

MO

...When I'm not around. See nothing happens to her, okay? Promise me that?

EXT. STAIRWAY - DAWN

Shades opening his eyes and mouth. Drawing a long breath. Stepping back. Watching the door SLAM open and closed. Counting under his breath. Closing his eyes again. Humming softly to himself. Trying to match the tone of the electrical pulses that power the door.

He opens his eyes and jumps, sailing across the threshold with a tremendous leap that would have made a samurai warrior proud.

INT. HALLWAY

Shades stumbles over Chief's torso and sprawls on the charred floor as the door SLAMS shut behind him with lethal force. He sits up, staring at the door in disbelief.

Then he hears Jill SCREAM again and he starts to his feet, prising the automatic from Chief's grip and heading toward the bathroom.

INT. SHOWER - DAY

Jill's fingers fasten on the baseball bat. Grasping it with both hands she SLAMS it into the android's throat. It backs off an inch and she struggles violently to squirm out of its grasp. The drill spins only inches away from her flesh. Its mouth snaps at her, hypodermic teeth dripping venom. Its claws tangle in her blanket and the fabric TEARS loudly as she pulls away. She kicks the android in the chest, breaking one of her toes and hurtling backwards, pulling right out of the blanket.

The blanket is still warm and for a moment the android is plainly confused. The drill bites into empty cloth and Jill inches away. The android looks up, clutching the rags. Knows it's been tricked.

Then Shades is suddenly in the doorway, leveling the Chief's automatic at the android's head. The gun jumps in his hand and the bullet WHINES off the creature's armor plating, RICOCHETING around the cubicle in a spray of glass.

Jill SCREAMS and ducks and the android turns to Shades, looking at him as if he were no more a distraction than a fly. Shades stares back, red light glinting in his dark glasses. It is as if he hears a countdown for a lift-off echoing in his mind.

The android tenses, preparing to spring. Shades levels the gun again, finger tightening on the trigger.

Jill tries to regain her footing but her leg no longer seems to respond. She reaches for something to grab hold of. Her hand falls on the hot water tap. She tries to lift herself. The tap just spins under her weight and all she manages to do is turn on the shower.

Steaming water sprays from the shower head and the android's heat sensors go crazy.

Jill backs off, inching away as the creature runs amok, arms flailing in all directions, clawing at the falling water and trying to grab hold of the steam, the shower partition disintegrating around it in a cloud of pulverized glass.

To Mark 13 the water is a stream of golden light. There is light everywhere, now, even covering its chassis, and it reaches out toward the source of the light, a coruscating sun-like object on the cubicle wall. It reaches toward the shower head. It feels the light slowly seeping into its body. Seeping into its mind. Setting its mind on fire. It begins to understand.

Hot water sprays across its eyes, driven in rivulets across its metal chassis.

Jill sees a flurry of sparks begin to rise from its exposed brain.

The android emits a deafening, high-pitched mechanical SCREECH as it shorts out, its arms pinwheeling out of control.

The prosthetic hand is tearing at the android's own wiring.

Jill suddenly understands and turns both faucets on full.

The android writhes beneath the gently spray, a haze of smoke filling the air. It falls on its back, twitching spastically, arms a blur of motion, glass scattering all over.

Its brain matrix burns out in a burst of blue sparks and then at last it lies still.

The sharp, electric smell of burning insulation hangs heavily in the air.

Shades takes a step forward, lowering the gun, staring at the deactivated android in disbelief.

SHADES

Jesus...

The smoke thins, affording them a clear view of Mark 13's motionless carcass lying sprawled on its back in a shallow puddle. The spray rings lightly on its chassis, dripping across its mangled face, pooling in its one remaining eye socket, leaking deeply into its lifeless circuits.

With a CRY of rage Jill somehow gets to her feet and starts forward, dancing naked over its body, BEATING at its head with the baseball bat, SCREAMING and SCREAMING, the blood running off her in pink rivulets.

She beats at it until its head is nothing but a tangle of twisted microchips and the bat splinters in her blistered hands.

Shades puts a hand on her shoulder and she turns with a snarl, threatening him with the remains of the bat. He holds his hands up to her.

SHADES

Jill! Listen to me! Listen...! It's over! You killed it. It's dead. Look.

He kicks the android. It makes a hollow PLONK.

SHADES

(seriously)

It's not going to get up. It's finished. Okay?

Jill stands beneath the hot spray, rubbing her eyes and at last, unnoticed, she lets the tears come, joining the rivulets of warm water already running down her body.

Shades takes off his flight jacket and drapes it around her shoulders. Jill drops the remains of the bat and lets him lead her from the cubicle.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

The rising wail of police sirens.  
The clock radio flicks to "6:00 A.M."  
A cheesy electronic JINGLE heralds the new broadcast day. The deejay addresses the devastated lounge, a pulsebeat of heavy metal in the background.

ANGRY BOB

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! This is Angry Bob and you are listening to W.A.R. Radio, somewhere on your dial, and I am here to wake you up! We got some real good news from the Department of Defense today. They're finally moving forward with the long-delayed Mark 14 project -- I don't know what it is and I don't care, but if you've got any kind of security clearance at all, get your unemployed ass down to Central Robotics first thing Monday morning. Things are looking up. Just one more reason to celebrate on this great day, when we honor the birth of that very special man...and...yet he was not a man...

(beat)

This is Angry Bob wishing you and yours a very,  
merry Christmas!

A HEAVY METAL version of "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" comes up  
loud as another day begins outside the apartment.

The bodies of Mo, Vernon, Chief and Lincoln lie very still  
listening to the radio as it gradually gets light.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHOWER - DAY

Mark 13 lies motionless. Water falls all around it. The  
prosthetic hand is reaching skyward as if to touch the rain.

FADE TO BLACK.  
ROLL END TITLES.

THE END