

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT. MAIN SQUARE. ALMATY. THE CAPITAL OF KAZAHKISTAN. SOMEWHERE IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

Darkness.

A rumble of thunder and beyond the thunder, a musical babble of child-like voices.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Ashley?

There is a spark. An arc of lightning splits the gloom.

ARCHANGEL (V.O.)

Where am I?

A search light illuminates a cloud of tiny, gleaming particles, an army of raindrops spread like diamonds on the velvet viewing table of the night.

They look like motes of dust in the projector beam, like electron particles or protein molecules, like the basic building blocks of life itself.

Then with the light gone the drops that have waited to have their picture taken give themselves over to gravity's glamour, plunging earthward through the searchlights, pattering off the drab raincoats of the assembled cadets, beading like sweat on the cold steel of their automatic rifles, pooling like blood in the headlights of an approaching phalanx of motorcycles escorting an armor plated limousine into the crowded square.

The Training Division's political officer, a stocky man in his mid-forties stands on a rainswept podium facing the concrete facade of the Grand Hotel Krasnopolski, his so'wester clinging to him like a black rubber foreskin, a blandly grinning portrait of the Premier towering behind him. He has been barking slogans through a scratchy loud hailer all evening in an effort to keep up the cadet's spirits and now as he catches sight of the limousine he bursts into a cover of "My Way", sung at double speed in a thick Kazakh accent.

DRILL SERGEANT

Attention! Eyes right! Pre-sent arms!

Premier ERNESTO BOELGAKOF steps into the spotlight, one hand raised in salutation, a confident smile graven into his Jack o'Lantern face, a mask of patchwork scar tissue. ROLLO GOTZ, his minister of information, clambers out behind him, attache case under one arm as GENERAL MOROZ marches stiffly forward to greet them.

MOROZ

Comrade Premier, I present the
Division for review and
marchpast.

There is a low snarl as ROLLO steps a little too close to one of the genetically modified attack dogs, the WARHOUND straining at its leash, not liking what it smells.

The Premier casts one eye over the massed cadets. The oldest of them might be pushing thirteen but the average age is around seven or eight.

BOELGAKOF

Thank you, Comrade General.
You may stand at ease.

The Praetorian guard clear their way to the podium and a pregnant silence falls across the square, broken only by the squeal of feedback as the Premier adjusts the microphone before launching into his belated address.

BOELGAKOF (CONT'D)

Children of the Kampo XIII
Training Division you have made
me happy to be in charge. I came
to speak to you of Christmas but
what I have seen today inspires
me to speak of something more
important! As we drove back from
the elimination ground I looked
around me and saw I was
surrounded by good people...

At the Premier's right hand ROLLO nervously scans the crowd. Somewhere high in the facade of the Grand Hotel Krasnopolski a window opens.

BOELGAKOF (CONT'D)

These motherfuckers, these
western speculators are going to
be out! I'm not saying it's
wrong to have a country house and
a big car, nor is it wrong to
talk of social justice, only that
it is wrong to link these two
things together into one! Those
who talk of social justice and go
around in big cars, they are the
ones for the lamp posts and the
telegraph poles! They are the
cause of our country's
misfortunes. These fucking
Americans...

There is a dull smack like two planks coming together as the first in a volley of titanium tipped bullets rips through the Premier's body, spinning him around.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GRAND HOTEL KRASNOPOLSKI. NIGHT.

A gaunt individual in his mid-twenties instinctively works the bolt of a hunting rifle, hunched half in and half out of the bedroom window.

The man's codename is ARCHANGEL, his real identity a secret even to himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROSTRUM. NIGHT.

Premier BOELGAKOF is just going down on one knee when the second shot shears through his forearm, blowing his left hand off at the wrist.

The cadets moan, the Premier doubling up with a thick, syrupy grunt as his bodyguards dive to cover him, knocking ROLLO to one side. Adjusting his aim ARCHANGEL shoots ROLLO through the throat and the minister of information tumbles sideways, his legs folding from under him, the attache case still clutched defensively in his hands.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GRAND HOTEL KRASNOPOLSKI. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL lets go of the rifle, pulling himself back into the room and closing the window in one fluid motion. He starts towards the door only to turn at the last moment, snatching up a dog-eared picture from the bedside table. A grainy Polaroid of a woman's face.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROSTRUM. NIGHT.

Raising a whistle to his lips MOROZ sends the massed cadets surging towards the hotel lobby. Crouching down he gingerly retrieve the Premier's severed hand, holding it by one finger as the medics prepare a cryo-baggy.

AIDE

I want Theatre One cleared
immediately!

(MORE)

AIDE(cont'd)

The Premier has been shot! I
repeat. Presidenta ranily!

The Premier stirs, shaking his head as the medics try to stabilize him. Meeting MOROZ'S gaze he offers a bloody thumbs up.

BOELGAKOF

It's OK... Ya v poryadke... ne
volnuites...

INT. THE LOBBY OF THE GRAND HOTEL KRASNOPOLSKI. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL comes down the last flight of steps just as the cadets reach the revolving doors.

For a moment all seems lost.

Then the boy in front staggers, his raincape caught in the hinge. One of his fellows bends to unhook it only to get the butt of his Kalashnikov wedged against the frame, jamming the portal further as his rampaging comrades try to push their way in.

For a magic moment slapstick reigns and turning on his heels ARCHANGEL makes a break for the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL bursts into the room drawing the immediate attention of the short order cook and his crew.

ARCHANGEL

Presidenta ranily!

A moan of outrage and surprise rises from the staff as the assassin pushes through them heading for the service entrance.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PARKING LOT. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL strips off his hotel livery hearing the crackle of radio static up ahead. He stiffens as a MILITARY POLICEMAN steps from the shadows, his greatcoat outlined against the piss coloured street lamps.

M.P.

Hey! Hey, ti!

The assassin is so quick on the draw the cop's brain never has time to process the information.

Stepping over his quivering carcass ARCHANGEL jogs calmly away up the pavement, heading for the bright lights of the shopping district.

An instant later the first of the cadets burst from the service entrance closely followed by MOROZ and the dog handlers.

Someone holds up ARCHANGEL'S tunic, allowing the slathering WARHOUND to catch his smell, locking on to the signature of his pheromones. The handler hunkers down, priming the antennae that sprouts from the back of the creature's skull before letting it slip the leash, watching as it circles the rainswept lot, an organic homing missile alive to the shifting chemistry of the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOPPING PRECINCT. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL slows, glancing back as a diesel bus skids around the corner. He raises one hand to flag it down, its doors opening with a comforting pneumatic hiss. The DRIVER, a grotesquely over-large lady in a white coat and flat cap, gives his I.D. a cursory once over before grinding out a ticket.

ARCHANGEL
Airstrip C pozhaluista.

The WARHOUND comes pelting up the street, a snarl rising in its mind and bubbling in its throat as it weaves in and out of the terrified pedestrians.

The bus pulls away and the beast keeps pace, falling only slightly behind as the decrepit vehicle comes up to full speed.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUS. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL settles himself towards the back, eyes down. Fishing in his pocket to retrieve the crumpled polaroid he allows himself a moments reverie.

The picture shows a slightly horsey looking woman with long red hair, a small child seated on her lap.

EXT. SERVICE ENTRANCE. NIGHT.

GENERAL MOROZ follows the Warhound's progress on his mobile, finger hovering over a blinking button that matches the pulsing L.E.D. on the Warhound's collar. It is as if he is watching a video game.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREET. NIGHT.

A late night REVELER stumbles from the curb, raising one hand. The driver slams on the brakes.

The vehicle lurches uneasily to a halt and ARCHANGEL glances up as the door opens, registering the surprise on the drunk's face as the snarling creature pushes past him, claws scrabbling on the metal steps.

The Warhound fixes its mad, dilated eyes on the assassin, hackles rising, a thin trickle of saliva sliding from its fangs.

ARCHANGEL

C'mon then...

He raises his gun as the beast pounces, both of them screaming at once.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SERVICE ENTRANCE. NIGHT.

The light stops blinking and MOROZ hits the detonator.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. THE BUS. NIGHT.

An explosion fills the vehicle.

ARCHANGEL sees the dog come apart in a gout of flame and fur. Then his vision is wiped out and there is only whiteness.

For a while it is as if he is looking down on his own body, the rain falling in upturned eyes that no longer have the strength to blink, sirens swelling in the distance.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Ashley?

CUT TO:

INT. NOWHERE.

A beam of light splits the gloom.

ARCHANGEL
Where am I?

The beam flickers as someone steps in front of it.

RICHARD
You're going to wake up now.

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLE:

IN A SEASON OF SOFT RAINS

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST. DAY.

A mosquito larva trembles in the oily water, shucking off its skin and rising like a ghost towards the shining surface. Storm clouds swirl above the water, sheets of rain obscuring a steaming, half formed landscape.

A swarm of gnats rise from the damp treetops, their massed bodies resembling at one moment a reaching hand with long, smoky fingers and the next a steaming, writhing funnel.

LOTTE (V.O.)
Micheal...

The funnel closes around us.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH. DAY.

Dark beams curve above our heads, watery sunlight picking out the figure of a teenager in a tattered leather jacket kneeling before the altar, lighting the candles with a dripping taper as she recites a list of names under her breath.

LOTTE
Gabriel... Santa Suszanna...
Santa Theresa...

She raises her eyes in silent appeal, greasy ringlets framing a face that is a curious mixture of innocence and defiance.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OPERATING THEATRE. NIGHT.

The overhead light is a white hot supernova in the dark.

SURGEON

Let's get some suction in here...

The masked surgeon massaging ARCHANGEL'S heart leans closer, coming between him and the light.

RICHARD (V.O.)

When I clap my hands...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAY.

A bloated mosquito settles on ARCHANGEL'S forearm and he swats at it instinctively, coming awake to find full daylight pouring through the window at the foot of his bed. From where he lies he can see the tops of three palm trees silhouetted against the burnt out sky.

He sits up, still expecting to hear the sound of clapping hands but the dream is already retreating, its details hazy and nonsensical. Easing his feet to the floor he focuses on the oblong, leather carrying case, the only item of luggage in the room.

There is a numbness to his fingertips and glancing down he finds their whorls swollen with scar tissue, tell-tale signs of recent laser surgery.

Turning to the mirror he cautiously explores the surgical dressing that covers his face, feeling the bandages tug at tender, healing flesh.

Leaving the dressing in place he rummages through the suitcase in the hope of coming up with a firearm, discovering a cricket bat, pad and gloves instead.

A practice ball rolls beneath the bed and he bends to retrieve it, experiencing an odd sensation of deja-vu as if there should be something else hidden there, something he can't quite recall.

Thumbing the fallen remote he finds the television tuned to a 24 hours sports channel.

TV PRESENTER (O.S.)
 Despite continuing threats of
 violence from anti-tour
 campaigners the South African
 cricket board has given the green
 light to next week's one day
 tournament in Cardiff...

The on screen action is fast, colourful and all but
 incomprehensible to anyone save the hardened pundit.
 Bewildered by his circumstances ARCHANGEL reaches for the
 telephone, tossing the ball in his hand as he dials
 reception.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Front desk. May I help?

ARCHANGEL
 Where are my shoes?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
 I'm sorry. What name please?

The assassin casts about himself, wishing he had a
 cigarette.

ARCHANGEL
 Hold on. I... I must've...

OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Don't worry. I'll send someone
 up.

There is a vague mumble of background voices and the line
 goes dead. Realizing he's still naked ARCHANGEL gathers
 the sheet about himself, searching in vain for a fire
 escape or some other way out.

A moment later there is a light knock at the door.

ARCHANGEL
 Yeah...

The newcomer runs their thumb across the scanner and the
 lock disengages to admit a cadaverous looking individual in
 a double breasted suit. In one hand he holds a pair of
 soft suede shoes.

MÖCH
 Gucci. Size eleven...

ARCHANGEL
 Sorry?

MÖCH
 They're very 'you'.

He smiles sadly, placing the shoes on the bedside table.

MÖCH (CONT'D)

You know it's a beautiful day...

The sports coverage seems to make the tall man uneasy. Retrieving the remote MÖCH hurriedly switches off the set before turning to open one of the windows, rearranging the curtains accordingly.

ARCHANGEL

Does Kate know where I am?

MÖCH

Kate?

ARCHANGEL

My wife.

MÖCH

Do we have to go through this every time?

ARCHANGEL

What do you mean?

MÖCH turns his eyes towards the beach, staring out at the cool, blue ocean and the strip of shining sand.

MÖCH

You don't have a 'wife'.

ARCHANGEL

But we have a daughter. Janey. I...

ARCHANGEL tries to remember where he put the photograph, searching in vain for his clothes, finding an unfamiliar cream linen suit in the empty wardrobe.

MÖCH

Breast pocket.

The assassin retrieves a battered Zippo and half a packet of Kools from the jacket.

MÖCH (CONT'D)

You do realize this is a smoke free zone...

ARCHANGEL

But I don't understand. She...

The words 'BEIJING '66 - FREEDOM'S JUST ANOTHER WORD' are scratched into the side of the zippo in jagged capitals.

MÖCH
 Fire insurance. Health and
 safety. You know how it is these
 days...

ARCHANGEL
 She was only seven...

He lights the cigarette anyway, eyes returning to the
 mirror.

MÖCH
 There was a breach.

ARCHANGEL takes a deep drag. Then, steeling himself, he
 raises his hands and gently begins to unpick the bandages.

MÖCH (CONT'D)
 We had to really get in there.
 Get under the bonnet. Delete a
 couple of whole sequences...

ARCHANGEL
 Was the mission a success? Did I
 hit my mark?

MÖCH
 You'll find the offshore account
 has been duly credited.

Just then someone taps on the door and the assassin
 freezes.

MÖCH
 That'll be Dr.Jarl...

Archangel watches in the mirror as the door opens to admit
 a tall, blonde woman with chilly blue eyes and classical
 Arian cheekbones. A second woman in a matron's uniform
 follows her, pushing a serving trolley.

MÖCH (CONT'D)
 I had them send up a little
 brunch.

Dr. Jarl seats herself beside ARCHANGEL, wordlessly helping
 him remove the bandages.

ARCHANGEL
 Black. Two sugars, thanks.

Glancing disdainfully at his cigarette the uniformed
 attendant lays out a saucer and cup.

MÖCH
 There. You do remember
 something.

ARCHANGEL

You tell me. You're my auditor,
right?

Möch nods slowly.

MÖCH

Call me Tomas. It's my name.
Tomas Möch.

The dressing comes away to reveal ARCHANGEL's new face, a good looking bachelor in his mid-thirties. Other than those familiar, haunted eyes he bears no resemblance to the youth who shot the Kazakh Premier.

MÖCH (CONT'D)

Now if you don't mind...

He hand Archangel an affidavit, indicating a blank space requiring signature.

ARCHANGEL

What's it for?

MÖCH

Requisition order for the shoes.
New quartermaster's a stickler
for paperwork...

Möch has a precise, cultivated way of speaking. ARCHANGEL catches the trace of an eastern European accent. Czech maybe.

ARCHANGEL

Of course.

MÖCH

You may have lost a few personal
recollections but I'm here to
help put the timeline back
together. Until then if you have
any questions...

ARCHANGEL

Do you do Belgian waffles?

Möch lifts the lid of the serving tray.

MÖCH

With maple syrup. Thank you.

ARCHANGEL

That's my favorite food...

MÖCH

The guild looks after its own,
Ashley. Now if you don't mind...

MÖCH follows DR. JARL into the hall, leaving the assassin to his hazy thoughts.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Ashley?

He warily quarters the waffle, muttering the name under his breath. Returning his gaze to the window he notices a figure standing on the distant tide line, a slim, raven haired girl in an orange bikini staring out to sea, still as a postcard.

It is as if the moment has been abstracted from time. The sea. The sky. The birds like heaven's children.

Then she glances towards him and he imagines she might be smiling, her eyes hidden by a pair of shining mirror shades, the world inverted in her reflective lenses.

CUT TO:

EXT. BIG HOUSE / VERANDAH. DAY.

DOCTOR EDWIN LÖHNBRIDGE sits with his back to the bougainvillea, watching the spin cricket tournament on the plasma screen above the bar.

LÖHNBRIDGE is old enough to be the father of the Special Ops man next to him but despite his thinning hair and drooping moustache there is an amused, animal cunning to his eyes undimmed by age or drink. Whoever he is the last thing he looks like is a doctor.

TV PRESENTER (O.S.)

South African skipper, 'Sandy' Singleton has chosen to press on in the face of adversity, seeing the tour as a valuable opportunity to strengthen ties between former Commonwealth nations...

LÖHNBRIDGE and his associates watch as Singleton fends off a near supersonic bouncer. The ball clips his glove, ricocheting off his helmet and deflecting in a lazy parabola to gully. Out for a duck he turns his back on the umpire, stalking dazedly away towards first leg as if in denial.

LÖHNBRIDGE stirs, raising one eyebrow as he hears the sputter of an approaching golfcart followed a moment later by the voices of MÖCH and ARCHANGEL.

ARCHANGEL

Fringe states, you say?

The assassin disembarks, following his auditor up the steps towards the gingerbread farmhouse. The colonial style building is hemmed in by more recent prefabricated units surrounded by clean white driveways and bordered in low hedges that fail to entirely conceal a network of tripwires and the rough, grey concrete of machine gun casements.

MÖCH

The remains of the old EEC for example. United States of Scandia in the north. Uzbekistan in the east. You know the sort of thing. Strictly third world...

A bored looking plainclothes man searches ARCHANGEL with a low-frequency scanner, the assassin's eyes wandering to the perimeter fence and the smoky wall of the rainforest beyond, deciding he must be on an island after all.

MÖCH (CONT'D)

Ashley, I'd like you to meet Mr. Faultz from Admin and General Hudson Mainwaring from the Pentagon...

ARCHANGEL

Sir.

GENERAL MAINWARING

I understand your performance on this last outing was quite outstanding...

ARCHANGEL

Thank you, sir. I only wish I could remember it, sir.

ARCHANGEL's gaze goes past him, focussing on the screen where play has halted over a disputed line call.

MÖCH

Doctor Edwin Lohnbridge is our Isles of Britain specialist while Mr. Sturgis, I believe, is from Special Ops...

STURGIS raises his sunglasses long enough for ARCHANGEL to see the whites of his eyes.

STURGIS

You're a Brit, ain't you? I mean you probably understand the rules of this crazy-ass game...

The assassin blinks, convinced he can see himself on the television, striding bat in hand towards the popping crease. He's looking at his exact double, the South African team's great white hope, batting legend RUSSELL DALY.

MÖCH

The doctor's going to give you
the chance to go home, Ashley.
To do a spot of housecleaning...

CUT TO:

INT. BIG HOUSE / STUDY. DAY.

The intermittent purr of an air conditioner ripples through the gloom. ARCHANGEL is focussed on another screen now and the succession of photographs flung across it.

LÖHNBRIDGE

There's an Air LUXOR flight
scheduled to touch down on Friday
at New Heathrow, 11:05pm,
Greenwich Mean Time. Amongst the
passengers will be the South
African spin cricket team en
route to their one day match
against Wales. You're to
intercept their star batsman and
take his place...

ARCHANGEL

You've got to be fucking kidding.
I'm not a doubler. Doublers
train for years to pull this
shit.

Images from DALY's life flash before his eyes, charting the South African's career from initial triumphs and public dope bust to the present day and rehabilitation as a batting icon.

LÖHNBRIDGE

I believe your auditor has some
kind of temporary personality
overlay in mind...

ARCHANGEL

You mean a psychoactive virus,
don't you? I hate those things.
And why does it have to be
cricket?

MÖCH

You'll never need to play a match. I promise. We'll pull you out if things get sticky...

FAULTZ

You'll be fully briefed of course. Your agent vetted the terms and the appropriate sum was placed in escrow this morning...

The Auditor proffers his mobile but ARCHANGEL shrugs him off, noticing the succession of beautiful women clinging to the cricketer's arm at various charity events. STURGIS smiles, sensing his interest.

STURGIS

Your shill's something of a glamour boy. A do-gooder with political ambitions in his home country. We believe he's planning to make a secret rendezvous with the prince...

ARCHANGEL

The prince?

MÖCH glances uneasily about himself, focussing on the malfunctioning air conditioner.

MÖCH

I take it this room is secure? I don't mean to sound paranoid but...

STURGIS

It's clean. Dusted down with ultrasound, infrasound, UV, the whole bit...

There is a pregnant silence as the operatives exchange glances, each hoping the other might go next.

ARCHANGEL

So?

FAULTZ

Tell him.

LÖHNBRIDGE

A routine DNA scan at a Jesuit orphanage in South London indicated that one of the boys in their charge was the last surviving descendent of the Royal House of Windsor...

The cricketing footage gives way to a series of baby photographs, all of them depicting the same blue eyed child.

STURGIS

Haven't you got anything more recent?

LÖHNBRIDGE

Short notice, I'm afraid. The prince should have been sequestered immediately but a security breach lead to him being spirited from his cell by neo-nationalists connected to a banned organization known as Free Albion or more commonly the Albion Liberation Front...

Telephoto stills of youths with unlikely clothes and hair bombard the screen, murky images of gatherings in half submerged backstreets, abandoned warehouses and later in a stone ring in the midst of a vast, darkening field.

STURGIS

Random intelligence suggests they've smuggled the kid into the Welsh Republic where the ALF have set up training camps in Pembrokeshire and Camarthen...

A grainy, satellite picture of the Brecon Beacons appears before them, a smudgy composite of undulating foliage and swirling cloud. ARCHANGEL narrows his eyes, squinting at a clearing in the trees.

ARCHANGEL

Is there some way of enhancing this?

CUT TO:

INT. BIG HOUSE / AIR CONDITIONING UNIT. DAY.

A cockroach peers out of a grill at the shadowy figures in the room beyond, feelers twitching as it tastes the air.

STURGIS (O.S.)

You're looking at 98 percent cloud cover 365 days a year. No Doppler system designed could see through that shit...

ARCHANGEL (O.S.)

Figures, otherwise you'd have sent in a drone already, right?

A carbon fibre antennae sprouting from the roach's biomechanically altered carapace picks up the assassin's words, relaying them to a clandestine uplink.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE EDGE OF SPACE. DAY.

An aging commercial satellite parked in a debris strewn geostationary orbit high above the Pacific rim recognizes and receives the signal.

GENERAL MAINWARING (O.S.)

Technically we can't touch him
and under the current treaty
neither can the Brits...

ARCHANGEL (O.S.)

So you need a man on the ground,
huh?

A back-door programme, unknown to the satellite's registered owners, scrambles the conversation and beams it on to the other side of the earth, into the cauldron of greenhouse cloud that smothers the northern hemisphere.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO SHACK. SOUTH WALES. DAY.

A sullen teenager, dark hair knotted in greasy Celtic braids adjusts her headset. Her name is YDRIS. She's just turned thirteen and hasn't seen a dry day in her life.

LÖHNBRIDGE (O.S.)

We suspect an ALF agent will try
to contact Daly once he's cleared
customs. With a bit of luck he
might take you directly to the
prince...

Although she has the head and torso of a normal adolescent YDRIS's limbs terminate in stubby flipper like appendages. Wheeling herself across to the cypher unit she enters her password into a customized keyboard, confirming the transmission.

STURGIS (O.S.)

Security's pretty tight around
the kid. Apparently they're
calling him the 'Rain King' now
or the 'Prince of Wales'...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALE OF NEATH. SOUTH WALES. DAY.

The radio shack has been camouflaged amidst a jumble of boulders overlooking the valley and a campfire smoulders under a sagging tarpaulin pitched nearby. A half naked youth with chalk white dreadlocks lies sprawled in a hammock beside the fire, trying to get his head around a battered copy of the life and works of Rupert Brooke.

CHAZ

Say do the elm clumps greatly
stand, still guardians of that
Holy land?

CHAZ's demelinated skin has the translucent quality of unglazed porcelain, tatoos standing out like veins across his hairless chest and prematurely careworn face.

He's succeeded in putting a spliff together, a real triumph of ingenuity over the elements, savouring it as he recites aloud to the pink eyed Kellas cat that shares his hammock, one of the feral hybrids increasingly common to the area.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

Is dawn a secret shy and cold,
anadyomeme silver gold...

The creature rests its head in his lap, the only dry place it can find, staring at him intently as he reads.

KELLAS CAT

Anadyomeme...

CHAZ

Shut up.

CHAZ cuffs the cat's ear, realizing the beast has only the faintest idea of what poetry is but persevering nonetheless.

CHAZ (CONT'D)

...and sunset still a golden sea
from Hazlingfield to Madingly?
And after ere the night is
born...

Out of the corner of his eye he sees YDRIS waving from the door of the shack, a printout clenched in her sorry excuse for fingers.

YDRIS

Oy!!! Chaz!!! Get yer arse in
gear!

CHAZ
 ...do hares come out about the
 corn?

YDRIS
 We got mail!!!

YDRIS closes the gap between them, torturously negotiating
 the downhill trail in her worn-out wheelchair.

CHAZ
 O yet stands the church clock at
 ten to three and is there honey
 still for tea?

YDRIS
 Someone's coming...

CHAZ
 Gimme that.

She waits, wheezing softly to herself as he reads the
 transmission.

YDRIS
 Somebody's really coming.
 A proper shooter this time...

CHAZ grunts, finishing his spliff. Then, gripping the
 Kellas cat by the scruff of its neck, he hurls the yowling
 animal aside and swings himself from the hammock.

There is an old fashioned kalashnikov bearing a Christian
 fish symbol on its stock resting next to the fire and
 retrieving the weapon CHAZ folds the printout into his
 bandolier before starting wordlessly down the path skipping
 at breakneck speed between the roots of the huge, cancerous
 looking mushrooms and pale, cheese coloured trees.

It has been raining all week and the trail has become a
 stream, forcing CHAZ to slide most of the way on his
 haunches, a swarm of fireflies effortlessly pacing him,
 weaving like curious, sentient sparks through branches
 festooned in soggy ribbons and faintly tinkling charms,
 feeding off the remains of those humans and animals that
 have been left to hang, either as totems or a warning to
 the unwary.

An anti-aircraft position has been dug into the crag above
 the river and abandoning the path CHAZ follows a wilting
 row of speaker poles towards the valley floor, a jerry-
 rigged early warning system intended as a last line of
 defence for the camouflaged nest below.

Beside the tents a cursing, one legged drill instructor is
 trying to get a group of girls to run up to a line, drop
 prone and fire.

Owing to the shortage of equipment the girls are forced to mime their rifles and keep giggling out of turn.

The surviving menfolk are already at work on the lower slopes, harvesting the yeasty bracket fungus required for the evenings ceremonies. The ceremonies are all equally important but CHAZ enjoys the Scarlet Ceremonies best.

A cauldron simmers in the stone ring beside the falls where the limestone gorge widens into a vast, natural amphitheatre, a stage set awaiting the arrival of its dramatis personae and CHAZ slows, the rain easing off as he catches sight of THE BOY standing on the far side of the circle, his back to the world.

There is something about the sheer stillness of THE BOY and the way the fireflies congregate about him that never fails to give CHAZ the jitters.

RICHARD

Don't be afraid. You may approach...

At first he thinks THE BOY has sensed him coming but then he realizes he's seen his reflection in one of the rockpools.

CHAZ

My Lord...

CHAZ advances a half step before prostrating himself, touching his forehead to the earth.

RICHARD

Come on. Spit it out.

CHAZ

They're sending another straight man. A real pro' this time...

CHAZ averts his eyes as he speaks, not out of formal protocol but because it hurts his brain to look at THE BOY directly.

RICHARD

Well he'd better hurry. What's his name?

CHAZ

Hasn't got a name. Just a codename. Archangel...

THE BOY makes no effort to turn and CHAZ looks past him, trying in vain to understand what holds his attention, seeing only bugs skimming across the surface of the pool and his own mirror image peering nervously from the dark waters.

RICHARD

A name's not much good. We need
more. Get a couple of lads
together and sniff him out...

CHAZ narrows his eyes, seeing something behind his reflection, a flash of light in the depths of the pool, a ragged gap in the clouds and beyond it, deeper still, the contrail of an aircraft moving across the edge of space.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Come back to me when you have a
face...

Then the light fades and the rain comes down again, the reflection breaking up into dancing, incoherent shards.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW HEATHROW. NIGHT.

There is a shriek of malfunctioning turbines as a battered 747 comes barreling out of the clouds, plunging earthward, the angle of descent too steep for comfort.

RUSSELL DALY peers from the cabin's laminated window into the roaring void outside. In his early thirties the South African cricketer is at the peak of his powers and a dead ringer for Archangel.

Mouthing a prayer DALY braces himself, closing his eyes as the airbus touches down, slaloming across the waterlogged tarmac in a cloud of spray.

Firelight flickers against perspex and when DALY looks again he sees two rows of blazing oil drums lining the strip, casting a meagre glow across the facade of a crumbling terminal and the burned out remains of a helicopter hastily bulldozed aside to make way for the incoming flight.

Several masked soldiers have taken up position at the end of the runway, their dripping armbands displaying the red cross of Saint George, automatic rifles cocked and ready.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW HEATHROW. INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS (TERMINAL 8).
NIGHT.

A staccato rattle from the malfunctioning notice board signals the arrival of Air Luxor's Kingston flight.

The militia men herd the bedraggled passengers in from the rain and one of RUSSELL DALY's teammates, world class spin-bowler and all-round chinless wonder, WAYNE SCHUSTER catches up with him, trying to make light of it all.

SCHUSTER

Man, that was the roughest landing since Lusaka...

DALY

Sorry ?

SCHUSTER

Lusaka '67. We landed in a thunderstorm...

There is a look of glazed incomprehension in DALY's eyes.

DALY

Ja, right... I... I gotta freshen up or something before we meet the press...

He casts about himself as a baggage trolley rattles by, bathing the immigration hall in a violent amber light.

SCHUSTER

They'll be waiting alright. Just try to keep 'em on our side this time...

CUT TO:

INT. REST ROOM. INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS. TERMINAL 8.

DALY bends to wash his face. Focussing on his reflection he notices the telltale signs of advancing age, the dark rings beneath his lids and the day's growth of greying stubble on his cheeks.

Retrieving a tiny device resembling an asthma pump from his jacket pocket he snaps the neck off an ampoule of pseudoendorphins, squirting the contents up his nose.

He closes his eyes, taking a deep breath, feeling better already. Then a wave of nausea overwhelms him and he dry heaves into the basin.

SIKH (O.S.)

You alright, sir?

A turbanned attendant watches from the doorway.

DALY

Ja... I'm fine... flight got
delayed so they laid on the free
booze a bit thick...

He reaches for a towel, watching in the mirror as the attendant exits. There is a soft click as someone undoes the toilet door behind him and as if in a dream DALY sees his exact double stepping from the cubicle, a warmly smiling doppelganger wearing an identical suit somewhat more stylishly.

Then a shining, silver wire drops past the cricketer's widening eyes and he feels himself yanked violently backwards.

ARCHANGEL draws his prey's flailing body into the cubicle, bolting the door to ensure their privacy. Amazed and a little shocked at his own proficiency he slips a tiny surgical blade known as a 'harpy' from his sleeve.

Knowing it might take a week or more to identify the cricketer by DNA alone ARCHANGEL removes his face, teeth and fingers, humming a loose improvisation on that song from 'Casablanca' as he works, flushing DALY's identity away piece by piece.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL plucks an oblong leather case from the carousel before hurrying to catch up with the rest of the team.

An anti-corruption drive is in full swing and there are huge posters everywhere warning passengers of mandatory jail terms for fraudulent visa applications or attempted bribery. The assassin elbows his way past a winding queue of hopeful immigrants clutching their red cards, the booming, impersonal voice of a Tannoy coming from everywhere and nowhere all at once.

TANNOY

GE Nationals please join the blue
star channel. All other passport
holders follow the red line
through customs and
immigration...

A hand falls on ARCHANGEL's shoulder and he turns to find himself face to face with SCHUSTER.

SCHUSTER

Hey! Like the shoes! Gi' us a
decko!

The assassin tries to turn away, avoiding eye contact.

SCHUSTER (CONT'D)

Wow, Gucci! The man's a swinger!

ARCHANGEL

Who knew, huh?

SCHUSTER laughs, slapping ARCHANGEL on the back as the customs officer beckons him forward.

A poster on the far side of the sheet of bullet proof glass bears the confident, smiling face of the British President, Eli Ashmole.

ARCHANGEL hands over a dog eared South African passport and a sheath of visas bearing Russell Daly's over-stamped signature, waiting as the officer struggles with his malfunctioning documater, the whining gadget spewing a garbled printout onto the floor of the booth.

OFFICER

On the mark please..

ARCHANGEL glances down, seeing two dayglow footprints stencilled before him. A little surprised by this additional formality he shuffles into place, blinking as a laser plays across his face.

The officer narrows his eyes, a huge close up of ARCHANGEL's retina staring back at him from the monitor, a blinking red light signalling a mismatch with Russell Daly's isometrics.

It's a fair cop and the assassin knows it.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITING ROOM. GUILD H.Q. TWENTY FOUR HOURS EARLIER.
DAY.

Another light.

ARCHANGEL is seated at a metal table, a pair of cylindrical sensors clutched in the palms of his hands.

MÖCH

Tell me about your wife.

ARCHANGEL

I don't have a wife.

Möch is opposite him, one eye on the flickering e-meter as it measures the sweat secretion in the assassin's palms.

MÖCH

I mean Kate. Your ex... What comes into your mind when you think of her?

ARCHANGEL

I don't know. Eyes, I guess. Hair. The way she smelled. Not the perfume but the way she really smelled, underneath it all...

MÖCH

How did she smell?

The assassin smiles as if enjoying the memory.

ARCHANGEL

Like maple syrup...

CUT TO:

INT. NEW HEATHROW. INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS. NIGHT.

The customs officer checks the screen again. There is no mistaking it. Whoever this man is he can't be Russell Daly. Glancing down at the sheath of documents he finds a wad of currency clipped to the passports inside cover.

PASSPORT OFFICER

Enjoy your stay...

The Officer slips the notes into his pocket and as he returns the papers ARCHANGEL notices his hands are strangely webbed, the result of low level genetic mutation.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW HEATHROW. INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS (TERMINAL 8). NIGHT.

The cricketers emerge from the gate in twos and threes to find several paparazzi and a crew from a current affairs programme waiting for them.

PHOTOGRAPHERS (VARIOUSLY)

Russell, over here please.

Russell, man. Hi Russell.

ARCHANGEL, psycho-actively programmed, deals with this wholly in character, stopping and smiling graciously at the cameras.

A woman steps forward with a microphone in her hand. This is FENELLA FRANKLIN, the programme's presenter.

She is plastic, but not so plastic as to be able to conceal her excitement at coming face to face with the charismatic sportsman and international do-gooder, Russell Daly.

FENELLA

Hi, Fenella Franklin, England
Nationwide. Welcome to London.
Can I have a few words?

ARCHANGEL

Hi, Fenella. Russell.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. SOUTH LONDON. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL and FENELLA's voices echo through the rainswept dark, crackling over the speakers of a television propped on the dashboard of a wheelless SAAB. The wreck is fitted with an aerial and crude chimney, just one of many such vehicles parked up in rows and re-purposed as low-rent accommodation.

FENELLA (O.S.)

Russell, we've been reading a lot
in the news lately about you and
Patsy McLennan.

A diminutive figure in a ragged jacket pushes a quad-bike laden with scavenged oddments down the aisle between the cars, the hood of her tracksuit raised against the numbing drizzle. Pausing beside the SAAB she knocks on the window, waiting for her mother to wind it down.

ARCHANGEL (O.S.)

No comment on that one, Fenella.
But I do want to say hi to all
you spinrocket fans out there
and tell everyone how thrilled we
are to be playing in England, the
country that gave birth to our
wonderful game...

JOYCE opens the window just far enough to stop the cats getting out.

JOYCE

Get any milk?

LOTTE shakes her head, catching a partial view of the television. The tube is misfiring and Archangel's face is a curious shade of green.

ARCHANGEL (O.S.)

The boys and I are gonna whack
that ball in Cardiff! Taffy's
gonna wish he'd never been born!

LOTTE
 Got eggs. And half a tub of
 marge...

LOTTE hands over the meagre offerings, wrinkling her nose at the smell. Beneath the blanket her mother's body is swollen and discoloured but the cats look even worse, their skin disfigured by weeping sores and fungoid growths the same colour as the greying meat in their feeding trays.

LOTTE
 What are you watching?

JOYCE
 I dunno. Some cricket guy.
 Don't suppose you saw that soft
 gang did you?

LOTTE
 As it happens...

She produces a grubby disc from within her jacket and JOYCE lets out an excited yelp.

JOYCE
 I don't know how you do it, the
 way they keep jacking up the
 price...

LOTTE
 Well, our credit's good with 'em
 now.

LOTTE glances at the rear-view mirror, straitening her ringlets, as her mother slips the disk into a battered DVD unit before replacing the kettle on the ring burner.

LOTTE (CONT'D)
 Got another four coming. 2655-
 59. Kat has to go to prison to
 get Charlie to sign the papers
 and Paul confronts Natalie...

Cheery theme music fills the vehicle, another episode of 'Eastenders' displacing Archangel from the screen.

JOYCE
 Don't spoil it...

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW HEATHROW. TERMINAL 8. NIGHT.

A chanting mob of protesters surge forward as they catch sight of the team.

The militiamen try to hold them at bay with their cattleprods but some still manage to hurl fistfuls of rotting debris at the white garbed South Africans who walk with as much dignity as possible towards their tour bus.

CAPTAIN 'SANDY' SINGLETON stands post as the others board, seemingly oblivious to the flying garbage. Raising his eyes to the brightening heavens he finds a faint patch of incipient blue, enough to keep his spirits up.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TOUR BUS. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL settles into his seat as SINGLETON conducts a head count.

SCHUSTER

You think the weather'll come through for us boss?

SINGLETON

Of course it will! This is the season isn't it?

SCHUSTER

I'm sorry?

SINGLETON

The one we'll be remembered for. There's no other season.

A hard object, possibly a cricket ball, smacks into the window behind him, causing it to frost over in a blizzard of cracks.

SINGLETON (CONT'D)

Now we're not going to lose any sleep over that kind of thing, are we lads?

A murmur of nervous laughter rises from the team as the bus lurches forwards, heading for the feed ramp.

SINGLETON (CONT'D)

Daly?

ARCHANGEL

Sir?

SINGLETON

Try not to smoke until we reach the hotel. It'll only be a few minutes.

ARCHANGEL looks away, resisting the urge to break SINGLETON's nose and drive a splinter of bone into his brain.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE POSTHOUSE HILTON. NIGHT.

The assassin's head lolls and when he opens his eyes again the bus is already pulling into a flooded parking lot. Three tailcoated valets splash towards them, umbrellas waving enthusiastically, hunched gait and glittering eyes betraying the physical and mental stigmata of chromosomal degeneration.

CUT TO:

INT. POSTHOUSE HILTON / FOYER / RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

An elderly Jamaican man in a crumpled dog collar hovers in the shade of a sickly houseplant, a bouquet of flowers in one hand and a collection box in the other.

FATHER TOM

Please... accept this flower on
behalf of the North Peckham
mission...

ARCHANGEL sidesteps him, the team milling unhappily in the sandbagged atrium.

SINGLETON

Apparently the kitchen staff have
already been evacuated but
they're willing to lay on a cold
buffet...

There is a chorus of tired groans and rustling blazers as SCHUSTER and SINGLETON pass amongst them, handing out keycards.

SINGLETON

Daly. You're in room 306...

He shepherds them towards the lift.

SCHUSTER

Room for one more, Russ.

ARCHANGEL

I'll take the stairs.

SCHUSTER grunts disapprovingly as the doors close, putting his friend's zoned out behaviour down to drug action.

Tipping a valet to take his suitcase ARCHANGEL wanders aimlessly into the dining area.

The only staff still on duty are illegals in a state of advanced mutation, their beady eyes staring hungrily at him as he takes in the greying cheeses and listless cuts of meat. Reaching across the deserted bar counter he rescues a bottle of the famous grouse.

ARCHANGEL
Room 306...

Brandishing his key card at a steward he pushes through what he assumes to be the fire exit, finding himself in a dimly lit pool enclosure.

It is like being inside an aquarium, the city lights sparkling through the steamed up windows. He takes another swig from the bottle, listening to the incessant thrumming of the rain against the glass before stripping off and swallow diving into the deep end.

ARCHANGEL swims a length along the bottom and enjoying the silence swims another. Then as his fingers brush the tiles the lights go down in the enclosure, abruptly plunging the pool into blackness.

The assassin surfaces with a gasp, imagining he must have hit his head only to realize the power supply to the entire complex has been knocked out.

FATHER TOM
Black out...

He blinks, noticing the priest seated on a sunbed, all but invisible save for the whites of his eyes and crumpled dog collar.

ARCHANGEL
I think the whole city's gone off
the grid...

FATHER TOM
There's war in the land. Wars
and rumours of wars. The masses
go hungry. Their bellies bloat.
These are the birth pains...

He hears a clink of glass as FATHER TOM samples the grouse.

ARCHANGEL
No flesh shall be spared...

FATHER TOM

Save that of the elect for they shall see him coming, the son of Man and he shall send his angels on a mission to gather together his flock. It's all right there in the Book of Mark...

ARCHANGEL clambers from the pool, staring out of the darkened skyline as he tries to recall the rest of the verse.

ARCHANGEL

Chapter thirteen...

The priest nods, passing him a towel.

FATHER TOM

Verse twenty-seven.

ARCHANGEL

You're ALF, aren't you?

FATHER TOM

I'm Father Tom. Human rescue division. I have orders to take you into the North Peckham Estate...

The assassin starts towards the dining area, carrying his shoes under one arm, the priest following at a pace.

FATHER TOM (CONT'D)

The boy is anxious to meet you. He's hoping you'll take an interest in our work...

Candles gleam everywhere on counters and tabletops as if the stewards foresaw the outage and prepared accordingly. Pausing to fix a pastrami sandwich ARCHANGEL hears a muffled thumping coming from the lift shaft where the cricket team are still trapped between floors, pale hands reaching through the bars of the cage as they try in vain to signal the indifferent staff.

ARCHANGEL

What about them?

FATHER TOM

They won't miss you. Not 'til this afternoon. If you can be out front in, say, fifteen minutes?

The assassin takes the stairs, deciding to eat on the hoof.

ARCHANGEL

Gimme twenty. I gotta fix my hair.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM #306. JUST BEFORE DAWN.

ARCHANGEL switches on the television, seating himself on the end of the bed and finishing his sandwich. Running his fingertips beneath the mattress he finds the gun exactly where it should be, a lightweight Walther P-56, spare clip and silencer fastened to its stock by a length of insulation tape.

Then the telephone rings.

A little unnerved the assassin slips on his cream linen jacket, adjusting the holster accordingly, trying to ignore the incoming call. Finally curiosity gets the better of him and he picks up anyway.

ARCHANGEL

Hullo?

The voice is faint but unmistakably American.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Patsy! Hey, I was just thinking of you. No. No, of course it's me...

He catches his reflection in the mirror, straitening his hair.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

I just got a bit of a cold right now, that's all...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RIVER. DAWN.

The mist thins to reveal the spires of Westminster, their Gothic facade shored up by sagging scaffolding, arched windows blind and silent, the cabinet long since evacuated to the high ground of Milton Keynes.

ARCHANGEL

Not much use for postcards, is it?

ARCHANGEL stands in the bow of a river taxi, the damp seeping into his socks as they head downriver.

The priest joins him at the rail, kindling a huge reefer known locally as a Camberwell carrot.

FATHER TOM

Tourists only came for the sex trade, or to have mutant psycho-surgeons rummage through their guts. You could get kids any colour you liked on the south bank up until the first pandemic but after that things really went downhill...

The priest proffers the reefer but the assassin declines.

ARCHANGEL

The future's not what it used to be, father...

FATHER TOM

You should've been here during the purges. That was really out of order...

The taxi's siren rings out as a dinghy carrying a frantically waving figure drifts towards them. The bow wave almost swamps the craft but its emaciated occupant continues to paddle in their direction, webbed fingers imploring for help.

A local militia in hand-me-down uniforms struggle to maintain order on Stamford wharf as the taxi cuts its engines and a mob of refugees press forward waving forged ID cards and wads of valueless money.

FATHER TOM (CONT'D)

The way they show it on the news you folks from abroad probably think there's killings going on all the time but you know nowadays they do the killings only at night...

FATHER TOM ushers ARCHANGEL towards his vehicle, a battered hearse secured by hausers to the aft deck, its windows reinforced by chicken wire, white crosses painted on the roof and bonnet to ward off airstrikes rather than the evil eye. Reaching into the glove compartment he searches for an appropriate CD as the gates at the end of the jetty swing wide and the crowd bears down on them.

FATHER TOM (CONT'D)

I hope you like salsa...

Breezy Latin music swells from the speakers and FATHER TOM floors the accelerator, driving at the thick of the mob, cursing softly and without emotion as they scatter before him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE NORTH PECKHAM ESTATE. DAY.

Rain falls in a grey sheet across the crumbling terraces as the hearse corners, negotiating a shattered barricade.

ARCHANGEL

I dunno. I don't understand mutants. There's just something about them...

FATHER TOM

If you'd seen what I've seen you'd feel differently about mutation. Believe me, it can be a very spiritual process.

They pass through a pair of wrought iron gates into what used to be a burial ground, its tilting obelisks presiding over an encampment of crude shanties and squalid benders, the rusting hulks of re-purposed vehicles softened by a pall of smoke.

FATHER TOM (CONT'D)

This is my parish. Saint Michael's of Peckham...

A gang of children run between the graves, miming handguns and laughing, circling the hearse as it skids to a halt outside a bomb scarred church.

ARCHANGEL

Jesus...

FATHER TOM

Jesus been a long time gone, Mr. Daly...

A raincaped figure sits beside a trough fed from the church's gutter, watching over a row of bony horses. LOTTE crouches next to him, placing one hand on his knee as he fidgets with a malfunctioning jam-box.

LOTTE

It's him! That geezer! He's the one, ain't he?

CHAZ

You stay out of this.

CHAZ passes the portable stereo to one of the urchins for safekeeping as the assassin steps from the hearse. Resignedly flinging back his raincape he levels his Kalashnikov.

FATHER TOM

It's alright. He's expected.

CHAZ

I don't care if he's expected or not. Who the fuck is he?

LOTTE

Don't be a pillock! It's that cricket guy! The one on the telly...

There is a stirring of interest amongst the ragged onlookers.

CHAZ

Who?

LOTTE

You're him, ain't you? You're the one...

LOTTE straightens her ringlets tucking her Saturday Night Special into the front of her jeans.

ARCHANGEL

If you say so.

FATHER TOM

Even here. Mr. Daly, you are famous.

LOTTE

You look different in real life.

ARCHANGEL

Good different or bad different?

A woman in a striped shift blinks at ARCHANGEL from the shadow of the steps, both straps of her dress down, a scrawny infant suckling at each of her three breasts.

LOTTE

I dunno. Thinner.

FATHER TOM

Mr. Daly has a charitable interest in our work...

A stray dog sniffs approvingly at ARCHANGEL's mud spattered Gucci's.

LOTTE
Do I look like I need help?

ARCHANGEL
Frankly your hair's a mess and
the jacket's pretty sad but
you've done alright with the
boots.

LOTTE
They're Czech military...

ARCHANGEL
They suit you.

LOTTE
I wanted Polish cavalry but...

ARCHANGEL
The thigh length ones?

LOTTE
Yeah, with that tight, curved
heel...

CHAZ
Pervy old bugger...

CHAZ turns away and she goes after him, one hand trailing
against the small of his back as he retrieves his jam-box.

LOTTE
Leave it out, Chaz. He's
alright...

He watches ARCHANGEL start up the stairs, running the tip
of his pale, partly-webbed forefinger over the jam box's
exposed chipboard.

CHAZ
S'pose you like that. The way he
looked at you...

LOTTE
It's just... I get feelings
sometimes...

CHAZ smiles as the jam box sputters back into life.

CHAZ
Yeah. Me too.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH. DAY.

Thin, watery light filters through the boarded up windows, dimly illuminating a plaster statue of the Archangel Michael pinning down a squirming dragon with his sword.

FATHER TOM

This is one of the many camps that sprang up overnight. During the last pandemic there were 30,000 people a day crowding into the city. Now they have nowhere to go. No money. No ID. No hope. Most of them will never leave South London.

ARCHANGEL

What will happen to them?

FATHER TOM

Most will die. I've heard rumours of a new form of TB spreading through the camps that turns your flesh to cheese. Imagine that, Mr. Daly. They come expecting miracles but he's only a boy, flesh and blood like any of us. It would take something more, an angel come to earth to save them now...

ARCHANGEL's eyes return to the winged statue.

ARCHANGEL

Do you believe in angels, father?

FATHER TOM

I have to. I'm a priest. Now if you'll be so kind...

FATHER TOM disappears into the vestry, the sunlight falling about the assassin like a damp halo as he listens to the wailing of an unseen baby.

He struggles to recall the last time he set foot in a church. Then to his dismay remembers...

CUT TO:

INT. NOWHERE.

A young woman's face, drained of colour.

She staggers, wiping the blood from her lip with the back of her hand, eyes wide with fear.

FATHER TOM (O.S.)
Mr. Daly?

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH. DAY.

The psycho-active programming is starting to wear off and it takes ARCHANGEL a beat to recognize his name. There have been so many.

FATHER TOM (CONT'D)
I believe we're ready now...

The PRIEST beckons him forward and as if in a dream he hears the sound of his own voice coming from the vestry.

RECORDING (O.S.)
The boys and I are gonna whack that ball in Cardiff. Taffy's gonna wish he'd never been born...

CUT TO:

INT. THE VESTRY. DAY.

The nine year old prince sprawls in front of the television, pale hands barely protruding from the sleeves of his elaborately embroidered gown as he turns the pages of a dog eared copy of 'The Beano.'

RICHARD
Mr. Daly! What remarkably good timing. You're on the telly!

An action replay of the team's arrival flickers across the grimy screen.

PRESENTER (O.S.)
It's been thirteen years since a South African team toured the Isles of Britain due to the Organization of African Unity's outspoken criticism of the I.O.B's civil rights record...

RICHARD
Please sit down. Pour yourself a cuppah.

ARCHANGEL
Thank you, your highness.

The assassin serves himself from an ancient ceramic teapot decorated in runic symbols, watching out of the corner of his eye as the team scamper towards the bus.

RICHARD

A rather inhospitable reception.
I hope it hasn't given you the
wrong impression of our
country...

ARCHANGEL

I think I have a more informed
view, your highness.

RICHARD

Of course. You were born here,
weren't you?

ARCHANGEL

Still have some family. But I
don't suppose I'll get a chance
to see them...

RICHARD

I'm sure your mother's proud of
you. Parents teach by their
example, Mr. Daly. The state
teaches by it's example.

THE BOY scarcely looks up as FATHER TOM takes his leave,
closing the door behind him.

ARCHANGEL

Then we're fuckin' doomed.

RICHARD

A sense of humour. How
refreshing.
Do you like children, Mr. Daly?

ARCHANGEL

I've never had any but I try to
like what's going around...

RICHARD

I'm not like other children,
see...

THE BOY loosens his gown, exposing a simple, elegant tattoo
above his heart. The sign of the eye in the pyramid.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Feel my heart beat...

The assassin reaches out, almost against his will.

CUT TO:

INT. NOWHERE.

An image out of the past.

A young woman crumpling as the breath leaves her, a party of bullets going on inside her chest, her murderer's face a blur of disintegrating pixels.

From somewhere not far off comes the sound of tinkling, childish laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SACRISTY. DAY.

ARCHANGEL shivers, feeling THE BOY'S erratic pulse beneath his fingertips.

RICHARD

Gun, please.

The assassin reaches into his jacket, sliding the Walther P-56 from its holster. With the briefest of hesitations he passes it to Richard.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

This is one of those new synthetics that don't show up on UV or ultrasound...

ARCHANGEL

You knew that before I got in the door...

RICHARD

I told you. I'm different. Besides the shoes are a bit of a give-away. Russell Daly would never wear Guccis.

The prince hands back the gun, returning his attention to the comic book.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

It's a shame. I'd like to have met Mr. Daly. I was hoping he'd give me a few pointers on my batting...

He continues to read, staying with Dennis the Menace as the assassin slips a silencer from his pocket.

ARCHANGEL

You're a real piece of work, Richard...

A muffled explosion comes from somewhere outside followed by the sound of automatic fire.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You'd better hurry. That'll be the secret police or homeland security or whatever they're calling themselves nowadays. They've been following you since the airport...

ARCHANGEL

This job's been out of order right from the top...

He circles THE BOY, hearing a second, closer explosion and the sound of running feet.

RICHARD

Come on. You've killed kids before...

ARCHANGEL

It's just sloppy. I hate this sort of thing...

RICHARD

You killed your own family, didn't you? Katie and... what's her name?

ARCHANGEL cocks the gun, levelling it at THE BOY's head.

ARCHANGEL

Janey. She was only seven...

The door bursts inwards. Glancing over his shoulder ARCHANGEL finds himself looking down the barrel of CHAZ's AK-47.

CHAZ

I fuckin' knew it! You're the one alright! You're Archangel...

RICHARD

That auditor of yours is quite the card, isn't he? That Mr. Möch. Likes a good laugh...

ARCHANGEL

I didn't kill them. If that's what you mean.

CHAZ's finger trembles on the trigger as a concussion grenade explodes in front of the altar, a plume of smoke curling lazily into the room.

RICHARD
I can help you...

The assassin offers CHAZ a sideways smile, noticing two armed policemen starting down the aisle towards them.

ARCHANGEL
Behind you.

CHAZ turns, breaking concentration.

The Walther jumps in ARCHANGEL's hand, notching up two kills with as many rounds.

RICHARD
We can use a man like you. With your training...

ARCHANGEL shakes his head, watching the policemen go down, pinwheeling like broken bats through the watery half light.

ARCHANGEL
I don't think so. I'm sick of being used...

POLICE P.A: (O.S.)
PUT DOWN YOUR FIREARMS AND MOVE
AWAY FROM THE BUILDING! THIS IS
NOT AN ATTACK!

CHAZ rolls back the carpet, tugging at a hidden trapdoor.

RICHARD
There is one thing you could do...

ARCHANGEL
Why don't you just fuck off before I change my mind...

RICHARD
Call your mum if you get the chance. I'm sure she'd love to hear from you...

But the assassin has already disappeared into the drifting smoke, deciding to take his chances with the secret police instead.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. SOUTH LONDON. DAY.

ARCHANGEL bursts from the church, emptying his gun at the world, drawing down a blistering rain of incoming ordinance.

POLICE P.A:
THIS IS NOT AN ATTACK!! THIS IS
NOT AN ATTACK!!!

A diminutive figure hits him in a flying tackle, driving him into the shade of the horse trough, the two of them rolling together in the dirt for an instant before ARCHANGEL realizes his assailant is trying to rescue him.

LOTTE
Follow me...

Dusting herself off she crawls towards a row of wheelless vehicles using the trough for cover.

Behind them an unmarked para-van has touched down on the church's forecourt and is already disgorging a platoon of black garbed storm troopers in gas masks and kevlar exoskeletons.

Beckoning ARCHANGEL towards the SAAB LOTTE draws her Saturday Night Special, pushing him inside.

CUT TO:

INT. SAAB / NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. DAY.

JOYCE is propped in the driver's seat, going nowhere fast judging by her colour. She manages a smile, turning down the television as she catches sight of her daughter and the dashing, well-heeled stranger she's brought home.

LOTTE
It's that cricket guy, mum! The one on the telly! He says he's going to help us...

JOYCE
Nice of you to drop by, Russ. Care for some tea?

ARCHANGEL
No. Really. I can't stay...

There is a loud crack as an incoming round punches through the rear window, upsetting the kittens.

JOYCE
Excuse me, dear, but you were saying...

ARCHANGEL
It's just that I... I'm allergic to cats...

Stifling a sneeze he lunges for the far door, making a desperate bid for fresh air.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. SOUTH LONDON. DAY.

ARCHANGEL comes up behind the SAAB, gun in hand, determined to kill anyone who gets in his way.

The police are sealing off the area and conducting a head count, separating out the men and the younger, better looking women. FATHER TOM is trying to reason with one of the officers but as ARCHANGEL watches, a masked trooper steps forward, casually clubbing the priest to the ground and forcing him to his knees beside the others.

Then LOTTE emerges from the door of the SAAB, a battered, pink suitcase under one arm.

LOTTE

I can get us out of here...

ARCHANGEL

I'm not taking you with me.

At first he can't understand why the police haven't reached them yet. Then he realizes the platoon are keeping well back as an armoured sapper runs a whining scanner over Chaz's jam-box, checking it for booby-traps.

LOTTE

Have you got a map?

ARCHANGEL

No... I... what?

The sapper delicately inspects the hollowed out stereo to find it contains a fist sized wad of semtex connected to part of a re-purposed mobile handset.

LOTTE

Do you know where you're going?

Biting his lip the sapper raises his pliers.

ARCHANGEL

No...

An old man in a filthy raincoat scurries past in a crouch, making for the tethered horses. Behind them the sapper prepares to cut the red wire. Changing his mind he cuts the blue wire instead.

LOTTE

Then I'm your map.

The pliers close, severing the second wire. The white wire. LOTTE grabs at ARCHANGEL's sleeve but he pulls away so violently she skids in the mud, dropping her suitcase.

ARCHANGEL

Piss off.

LOTTE

I'll give you my boots...

The sapper winces, cutting the last wire. The red wire.

Reaching into his pocket ARCHANGEL tosses LOTTE a grubby roll of currency.

ARCHANGEL

It's all I have. Save yourself...

The sapper opens his eyes, relieved to find himself alive. Leaning closer he lifts the deactivated charge from the case.

The CS gas drifts towards them and ARCHANGEL turns away, starting towards the horses as his eyes redden, not wanting her to see his tears.

LOTTE

I don't want your bleedin' money!

Eyes watering, she bends to pick up the notes but then a hot wind fans them from her fingers as a massive explosion rocks the camp.

ARCHANGEL staggers, chunks of what looks like dog food raining around him. The bodies of the horses have protected him from the brunt of the blast but the policeman and the other refugees have not been so lucky. Black smoke is belching from the para-van and there are bits of bodies strewn across the steps.

ARCHANGEL

Lotte...

He starts towards her, seeing her lying face down amidst her scattered belongings. The old man who has been blown from his horse now sits propped against a wrecked car, staring at the stumps of his legs.

ARCHANGEL lifts LOTTE, cradling her in his arms, the rain washing the blood from her face.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Come on...

He presses his lips to hers, forcing air into her lungs. Her mouth tastes hot and salty. He doesn't know if it's blood or saliva but whatever it is turns him on.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Breathe...

A tremor runs through her body and he renews his efforts, LOTTE's chest heaving beneath his palms. Then she bites his lip and he recoils.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

I thought you were dead.

LOTTE

It's not my blood.

The assassin draws back, wiping his mouth with his sleeve.

LOTTE (CONT'D)

See. You really are an angel...

Retrieving her blood spattered teddy bear she clambers to her feet, hearing the rhythmic thud of approaching rotors.

LOTTE (CONT'D)

You brought me back to life, didn't you? Now you'll have to take me with you...

The assassin lifts her suitcase and she takes his hand, leading him between the graves.

LOTTE (CONT'D)

Either way we can't stay here.

CUT TO:

EXT. KENNINGTON PARK ROAD. DAY.

It is not even teatime but the sky is almost black.

ARCHANGEL and LOTTE pick their way around the remains of a barricade, hearing the sound of a television playing in one of the boarded up terrace houses.

NEWSCAST (O.S.)

Full curfew is currently in effect in zones SE3 to 15. Citizens are warned to keep off the streets and keep stay tuned to the emergency network until further notice...

LOTTE

They're looking for you...

ARCHANGEL

Nice to know they care.

Someone has set a car on fire on the corner of Camberwell New Road and LOTTE pauses, warming herself from the flames.

LOTTE

I don't suppose you feel like letting me in on this plan of yours? Like knowing where we're going might be a nice start.

ARCHANGEL

I'm meant to rendezvous with a man named 'Flag' at the Britannia Club in Bonnington Square. He'll be taking care of the travel arrangements.

LOTTE

What kind of name is that anyhow? 'Flag', I mean...

ARCHANGEL

It's a codename. Codenames never mean anything.

LOTTE

Since when do travel agents have codenames?

ARCHANGEL

He's better than a travel agent. He used to be a snakehead back in Beijing. They called him the 'wolf of Grozny' then. Still earns a kickback from practically every illegal to set foot in this town. He can get anyone in or out any time he wants...

LOTTE

Great. Another bloody war criminal...

ARCHANGEL

You make it sound like I am.

LOTTE

Aren't you?

CUT TO:

INT. BRITANIA CLUB. BONNINGTON SQUARE. NIGHT.

The baroque Moorish interior has seen better days. Shrapnel scars mark the oyster coloured walls and broken glass glistens on the dance floor, crunching under the feet of the listless punters.

A tall, vaguely Slavic gentleman in patent leather Durangos and grubby army issue vest reclines at the blackened bar counter, unshaven face a maze of ancient wounds.

FLAG

Peculiar posture this woman is in, look here...

A thin, one eyed girl wearing a sweat soaked g-string and a little too much mascara sits beside him, running her fingernails across FLAG's thigh as he previews a sequence of digital images on his cell.

ZMEI

Our only hope lies with the A.L.F. The party leaders have united themselves with...

FLAG scrolls from one image to the next.

FLAG

.... with a seeing eye dog, it's an extraordinary pose!

ZMEI

.... with the principles of constitutional democracy.

ZMEI sighs, realizing there's no point trying to explain. Looking up she sees ARCHANGEL and LOTTE elbowing their way towards them.

FLAG smiles, recognizing his old partner despite the absurd cover identity and careful plastic surgery.

FLAG

You're just in time.

ARCHANGEL

For what?

FLAG

Happy hour.

BARMAN

I'll need picture ID for that one.

FLAG

She's family, Henryk. Can't you see?

FLAG reaches out, gently twisting one of LOTTE's ringlets between his thumb and forefinger as the troll-like barman pours her a shot. Stepping closer LOTTE notices a pair of human molars dangling like trophies from the copper rings in his earlobes.

FLAG (CONT'D)

My little mushka...

ARCHANGEL

Her name's Lotte.

FLAG passes her the handset, an amused look in his bloodshot eyes.

FLAG

Here. When you press the button the little dog sits up and begs.

LOTTE takes one look and recoils. Then, giggling, she looks again.

ARCHANGEL

She's my map.

FLAG

She's terrific. How much do you want for her?

ZMEI fingers the hem of LOTTE's jacket, sampling the fabric.

ARCHANGEL

I want you to get her out.

FLAG

What's life without a dream, tovarich?

Downing his drink he turns to face the smoky dancefloor.

FLAG (CONT'D)

Look at 'em. The public. It boils my brain. All I want is to paint 'em across the walls like fuckin' lead but I gotta sit still nowadays for every spook in town. Even you, tovarich...

ARCHANGEL

'Beijing '66'... You gave me this.

ARCHANGEL props a soggy KOOL between his lips, focussing on the jagged words cut into his lighter.

FLAG

A keepsake. A reminder of our friendship and what it was we're fighting for...

ARCHANGEL

'Freedom's just another word'...

ZMEI picks up on the tune, humming the rest of the verse.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

She played that song on her guitar. It was one of the first things Katie learned...

FLAG

Of course. She was quite the lady then.

ARCHANGEL

And you know what happened to her, don't you? You know what went down in that deleted sequence?

FLAG

Maybe you should tell me what happened this afternoon first.

ARCHANGEL

They were onto me before I walked in the door.

The mobile starts to vibrate and LOTTE passes it to ZMEI.

ZMEI

Da?

The assassin leans closer, voice falling to a whisper.

ARCHANGEL

It was a set-up. The kid knew the drill right from the top...

FLAG

That doesn't reflect particularly well on either of us, tovarich. You know we could end up hanging from a hook for this. By the neck and by the ribs and upside down.

ZMEI murmurs something in Russian, relinquishing the cell.

FLAG (CONT'D)

A moment. Da. No. He's here alright. What was that? Sorry, you're breaking up...

ZMEI

We're too far underground.

ARCHANGEL

Like all this happened before...

FLAG curses, hitting redial.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Was someone else sent on this mission before me?

FLAG

I never said this but there was another guy about a month ago, sat right where you're sitting, another straight man with an identical brief and one of those weird-ass biblical codenames...

ARCHANGEL

What happened to him?

FLAG

I heard he drowned. Out in the forest somewhere. Spores finally got to his brain and he put his head up and let the rain come in his mouth and nose until his lungs were full of water. They found him propped against a log, still looking at the sky. This rain, a few days in it and you don't have a face anymore. It washes everything away.

A mosquito settles on ARCHANGEL's wrist and he swats at it nervously.

ARCHANGEL

He's just a kid...

FLAG

So were we all.

ARCHANGEL's eyes go to the empty shotglass.

FLAG (CONT'D)

Go on. Throw your mind away. We may both have our throats cut tomorrow but tonight enjoy. Enjoy what life has to offer you.

(MORE)

FLAG(cont'd)

Henryk's got all sorts back there. Had a babushka last night with three breasts. A third moon on her neck...

ARCHANGEL

It was probably a goitre. There's so much iodine in the water these days.

FLAG

A man in my excremental profession does not mistake such a detail, tovarich.

ZMEI disentangles herself, unclipping a pager from her g-string.

ZMEI

That's my cue.

Two of ZMEI's topless compatriots have set up a drum kit and mike stand on the narrow stage and she pushes her way towards them, using her elbows like sharp little wings.

FLAG (CONT'D)

You stay put. I gotta make a couple of calls...

LOTTE

Who's Katie?

ARCHANGEL

My wife.

LOTTE

Right.

She glances about the room as if looking for someone else to attach herself to.

ARCHANGEL

You want another shot?

LOTTE

You know I really appreciate this...

ARCHANGEL

Don't mention it.

LOTTE

Thanks anyway, shoe man. It's...

ARCHANGEL

I know.

LOTTE
You don't know shit but thanks
anyway. Now it's your turn.

ARCHANGEL
For what?

LOTTE
Hey, if you don't know...

ARCHANGEL
Thank you.

LOTTE
At least you've given me a chance
of seeing the sun before I die.

ARCHANGEL
You'll die if you come with me.

LOTTE
I'm not asking permission.

ARCHANGEL
You wouldn't last ten seconds.

LOTTE
Enough time for a dance then.
Just a quickie...

She takes him by the wrist, hauling him reluctantly onto the floor as the girls launch into their set.

ARCHANGEL's moves are a little stiff but he gets away without losing his cool. LOTTE is all over the place, posing and jumping, completely uninhibited. She draws him closer, her arms snaking about his neck, throwing him out of rhythm.

ARCHANGEL
I'm married, remember?

LOTTE
Show me the ring.

He catches the glint of strobe lights on body armour as uniformed policemen appear in the doorway, trying to force their way past the bouncers. Tightening his grip on LOTTE's hand the assassin propels her gently but firmly towards the fire exit.

ARCHANGEL
Your ten seconds are up...

CUT TO:

INT. THE BRITANNIA CLUB / BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

LOTTE follows ARCHANGEL down the gloomy corridor, looking for a way out.

LOTTE
Are there still lions in Africa?

He pushes open another door, interrupting a gang bang in one of the hospitality suites. Whatever they're doing involves a live goat but in the dingy halflight none of the participants intertwining on the floor seem particularly human.

ARCHANGEL
I keep telling you. I'm married.

LOTTE
So? What do you want?
A bleeding medal?

There is a sharp change in pressure as the door leading to the stage area is blown off its hinges and a masked policeman appears on the threshold. Acting on auto-pilot ARCHANGEL shoots him in the throat, blood and compressed air geysering across the cheesy wallpaper.

LOTTE
You're not a batsman, are you?

ARCHANGEL
Oh, for Christ's sake.
I hate this job...

LOTTE
I knew it...

A glowing red dot appears on her chest, hovering above her heart.

LOTTE (CONT'D)
You really are a fucking angel...

She topples into his arms without a cry, a second tranquilizer dart embedding itself in ARCHANGEL's left bicep.

Spinning, he empties his gun in the direction of the doorway and a black garbed sniper falls heavily against the shattered frame, a smoking rifle in his blood flecked hands.

A CS cannister rattles at ARCHANGEL's feet, a hissing, toxic spume filling the narrow corridor and unpicking LOTTE's fingers from his cream linen jacket he makes a dive for the hospitality suite. Hitting the carpet in a roll the assassin comes up face to face with the startled goat.

ARCHANGEL
Get to fuck!!!

The masked revellers cower submissively, jewelled piercings glinting in the murk.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)
All of you...

Shielding his eyes with his gunhand ARCHANGEL launches himself through the nearest window, a spray of broken glass embracing him as he plunges headlong into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY. NIGHT.

The concrete curb that breaks his fall is all too real.

Somehow the assassin forces himself upright, blood running like streamers through his hair. Then a concussion grenade starbursts behind him, knocking him flat once more.

Blinded by the magnesium glare he crawls inch by inch towards his gun.

ARCHANGEL
I...

Another dart strikes him in the shoulder as he brings up his automatic, firing reflexively.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)
Hate...

He pisses the clip into the dark, seeing an army of raindrops suspended in the muzzleflash. A vast, motionless sea of tears. Then, his last round spent, the soft rain falls on him in an insect cloud of coldness and pain.

There is a flash of wet kevlar as his assailants break cover. Then a final needle catches him in the neck and his legs fold from under him.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY - VAUXHALL. NIGHT.

White light flickers through his wavering lashes.

RICHARD (O.S.)
Ashley?

ARCHANGEL
Where am I?

RICHARD (O.S.)
Open your eyes and see.

ARCHANGEL glimpses his bare feet sliding limply across the polished floor. Looking up he sees the inverted shadow of a man holding a clipboard and beyond him a row of imploring hands reaching through reinforced bars.

ARCHANGEL
Richard?

He blinks, realizing his blood streaked body is being dragged backwards down a tiled corridor, two men in rubber aprons holding him firmly beneath the arms.

A line of naked figures shuffle past, sacks tied about their heads to hide their faces. Then the mouth of one of those sacks comes up to swallow his world and ARCHANGEL catches the faint tinkle of child-like laughter.

RICHARD (O.S.)
In your current state what do you
most desire?

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION CELL - VAUXHALL. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL feels rough burlap scrape against his face.

ARCHANGEL
Light...

The sack is removed and he finds himself squinting into the beam of a spotlight, stark naked and seated in a high backed wooden chair. Raising one hand to shield his eyes he glimpses a tiled floor laid out in the manner of a chess board.

Someone takes his hand and there is an acrid smell of disinfectant as an unseen attendant swabs his wrist before sliding a needle into his skin.

ARCHANGEL
Hey...

The needle is withdrawn.

INTERROGATOR
Who are you?

The light flickers as a shadowy figure passes in front of it.

ARCHANGEL

You're in a lot of trouble, pal!
I hope you realize that...

ARCHANGEL tries to stand but a steel tipped boot kicks his leg from under him. He loses balance, feeling pain.

INTERROGATOR

Come on. This is meant to be the
easy part.

ARCHANGEL

You guys are making a big mistake
here...

A gloved hand grasps the assassin by the shoulder, forcing him back into the chair.

INTERROGATOR

Who are you?

ARCHANGEL

I'm a South African citizen.
Call my consul.

He stands, determined not to give in.

INTERROGATOR

Do you know who you are?

Again he is kicked, this time on the bone above the back of his heel. He loses balance, falling to the chessboard floor, tears starting in his eyes.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

You'll be hearing from my
lawyer...

ARCHANGEL tries to rise imagining for a moment he is clinging to a vertical surface rather than lying against a horizontal one. Then his grip gives way and he slides into blackness.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BAG. NIGHT.

The assassin stretches out his limbs to find himself enclosed in a lightless cocoon.

ARCHANGEL

Where am I?

Thinking he might still be in the womb he flexes his muscles to find himself fully formed.

RICHARD (O.S.)
You'll see a crack...

Reaching out he discovers the cocoon is made of yielding synthetic fabric. His fingers brush a zip fastener and he realizes where he is. The zip comes undone and he smells burning flesh. A line of cadavers hangs above him, hooks lodged in their bony torsos, outlines blurred by the greasy smoke.

RICHARD (O.S. / CONT'D)
Out of the crack will come a
spark.

Then a face hidden by a respirator and mirrored goggles peers in through the crack and he starts to scream.

CUT TO:

INT. CREMATORIUM. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL struggles to extricate himself from a body-bag lying on a stalled conveyor belt at the maw of an oven, a mound of corpses tangled about him like firewood.

A masked labourer wearing heavy chainmail gloves gently restrains him, forcing him back into his bag while a second individual moves from one body to another, removing their fillings with a pair of pliers. Brandishing a clipboard the labourer checks an entry against the dayglow tag stapled around the assassin's wrist.

LABOURER
He's still alive. Get that geezer from the embassy in here.

ARCHANGEL
No. I'm dead. It's okay...

A heavy, sliding door rumbles open, a glowing rectangle widening in the fetid darkness to admit the silhouettes of two newcomers.

VICE CONSUL HAILLE BOAZ, an ebullient Zulu in his mid-forties, approaches the conveyor belt, a scented handkerchief pressed to his mouth. An apologetic secret policeman, LIEUTENANT PART, follows in his wake.

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
This is an outrage, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT PART
A simple case of mistaken
identity...

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
I don't care. If he's not at the
Pavilion by eleven o'clock I'll
have to make a statement.

ARCHANGEL's head lolls and the VICE CONSUL slaps him hard
through the face, focussing his attention.

ARCHANGEL
Who the fuck are you?

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
Good morning, Mr. Daly. I'm Vice
Consul Haille Boaz from the South
African embassy. I'm here to
help you.

ARCHANGEL
Where's the girl?

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
Who?

ARCHANGEL
Lotte...

He glances about himself at the anonymous faces of the
dead. Stripped of clothes they have been stripped of
identity as well.

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
Night time activities are for
night time, Mr. Daly. Day time
activities are for cricket. Now
we have barely six hours to get
you to Cardiff for the first
test...

LIEUTENANT PART
On bank holiday Monday? I wish
you luck.

The assassin moans, spitting blood as they pull him from
the bag.

ARCHANGEL
I thought I was dead...

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
I'm afraid you're still very much
alive, old boy Now if you don't
mind...

He hands ARCHANGEL a pen.

LIEUTENANT PART
The usual disclaimer. It's
standard procedure.

ARCHANGEL
Of course...

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. THE WELSH BORDER. DAY.

A light drizzle is falling over the remains of the Severn Bridge, missing sections spanned by pontoons and corroded hawsers.

A flag depicting a red dragon flaps listlessly from a pole on the Welsh side of the river. Beside it is a billboard bearing the symbol of a rat and a warning to be vigilant for new plagues. Someone has sprayed a spiral tag across the sagging poster and the words: 'WATCH FOR THE MUTANT!'

CAR RADIO (V.O.)
In London today President Ashmole
made an appeal for calm over the
emergency network. He said he
could offer no explanation for
the growing unrest...

VICE CONSUL BOAZ's limousine waits, engine idling, at a nearby checkpoint, radio tuned to a local station. SOLDIERS move methodically from car to car. They haul a struggling MAN from one of the vehicles, forcing him to join a rough line at the side of the road while his boot is cursorily searched, the contents flung onto the wet tarmac.

CAR RADIO (V.O./CONT.)
The World Service has been off
the air since midnight when tanks
took up position outside the
studios in White City. With all
other channels silent Virgin
Radio is describing itself as the
last free station south of
Watford...

VICE CONSUL BOAZ winds down his window as a young MILITIA MAN comes jogging through the rain carrying two green passports and a soggy sheaf of transit papers.

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
What's the delay? Bank holiday
traffic?

MILITIA MAN
 Another plague, sir. They're
 burning Caerphilly...

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
 I'm sorry to hear that, sergeant.

The VICE CONSUL settles back into the leopard print upholstery, a glass of port in one hand, his eyes on the sulphurous storm clouds.

MILITIA MAN
 Mind you keep your windows rolled
 up until you reach Cardiff now.

The freeway is lined with corpses, the bodies of looters hanging from lamp posts on either side of the M4, victims of kangaroo court justice meted out by the Welsh Militias.

VICE CONSUL BOAZ
 It is looking a little grey...

The driver puts on a tape and sunny South African reggae bubbles from the speakers.

VICE CONSUL BOAZ (CONT'D)
 Still, it's nice to get out to
 the country once in a while,
 isn't it?

The car swerves to avoid an old lady lying face down on the road, a flock of crows scattering before its wheels.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARDIFF OVAL. DAY.

A sizeable crowd is gathering in the stand.

CAPTAIN 'SANDY' SINGLETON waits at one end of the pitch, his Herculean frame accentuated by his cricket pads, WAYNE SHUSTER hovering nervously behind him. A watery beam of sunlight finds its way through the stadium's perspex roof, falling across the popping crease and SINGLETON smiles as if he has been granted a sign.

SINGLETON
 The sun is on the field, Mr.
 Schuster. Go tell the lads...

CUT TO:

INT. BUCK HOUSE. MASTER BEDROOM. DAY.

PRESIDENT ASHMOLE turns his wheelchair, raising a remote control. A panel in the dressing slides open to reveal a flickering plasma screen.

NEWSREADER (O.S.)

We go over to Cardiff now for live coverage of the opening tournament in our season of first class cricket...

The FIRST LADY stifles a yawn. She lounges on the bed smoking a cigarette through an elaborate filter wired to her index finger.

FIRST LADY

Always the television! You never talk to me anymore, Eli.

There is a knock at the door.

PRESIDENT ASHMOLE

Yes?

PATRICK

It's Patrick, sir.

PRESIDENT ASHMOLE

Well open the door, man.

The door opens a crack to reveal the disgraced former member of parliament for Portishead, PATRICK MANDELBROT.

PRESIDENT ASHMOLE (CONT'D)

What is it?

PATRICK

It's the joint chiefs of staff, Mr. President. They're waiting for your orders.

PRESIDENT ASHMOLE

Well, tell them to sod off! Don't they know the cricket's starting?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARDIFF OVAL. DAY.

SINGLETON strides out to confront the captain of the Welsh team, the two UMPIRES looking on, white coats fluttering in the breeze.

SINGLETON meets his counterpart's eyes as he flips the coin.

The old English penny spins through the failing light, tumbling to the crease between them.

SINGLETON

Heads.

WELSH CAPTAIN

Heads it is.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PAVILION. DAY.

SCHUSTER appears in the door of the locker room, motioning to those inside to follow him.

SCHUSTER

Time to get this show on the road. Van, you're fielding at deep fine leg today.

VAN

Why do I have to be deep fine leg? I'm always deep fine leg.

The players press towards the door, pushing past ARCHANGEL who, fully kitted-out for the game of cricket, is busy feeding coins into a decrepid pay phone.

ARCHANGEL

Hello, operator... do you have a listing for a Mrs. Maureen McHallam in Maida Vale?

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Ringin' for you.

SCHUSTER

Shake a leg, Daly!

ARCHANGEL

Yeah. Hold on.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Hello?

ARCHANGEL

Mum...

He glances up as the line goes dead, finding SCHUSTER has deliberately cut him off.

SCHUSTER
 With due respect, Russ, your
 private life will have to wait.

SCHUSTER shoves a cricket bat into ARCHANGEL's hands.

SCHUSTER (CONT'D)
 Don't forget what the captain
 said. These Welsh bastards can
 make the ball move a mile off the
 seam by the time they've finished
 tampering with it.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARDIFF OVAL. DAY.

ARCHANGEL marches to the crease, SCHUSTER following.

A thin wind rises, keening across the pitch carrying the
 distant sound of applause.

SINGLETON
 Make it good, Daly.

The length of the wicket looms before him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALE OF NEATH. DAY.

RICHARD BATTENBERG sits cross legged under a dripping
 awning, following the action on a portable television.

A GUERILLA clad in ragged poncho is crouched at his
 shoulder, gesturing to CHAZ who stands at the very edge of
 the waterfall, the antennae clutched in his outstretched
 hand, shifting from one foot to another as he adjusts the
 reception. Behind him the cataract plunges into a roaring
 abyss, vanishing into a cauldron of treetops and rising
 spray.

COMMENTATOR
 Daly has taken up position at the
 clock tower end, ready to receive
 the first ball from Morfyd...

ARCHANGEL's face flickers across the screen, distorted by
 waves of magnetic interference.

COMMENTATOR (V.O./CONT'D.)
 Ivor Morfyd will be familiar to
 all our viewers but Daly wasn't
 around the last time the South
 Africans toured the I.O.B.
 (MORE)

COMMENTATOR(cont'd)

What can you tell us about his
game, Archie?

YDRIS wheels herself closer, trying to find a dry space
beneath the canopy.

YDRIS

Cup of tea, sir?

RICHARD

Why, yes. Thank you, Ydris.
Won't you join me? The game's
just starting...

CUT TO:

INT. BUCK HOUSE. MASTER BEDROOM. DAY.

The air-conditioning is on the fritz and ASHMOLE reaches
for his handkerchief, dabbing nervously at his forehead.

ASHMOLE

Frankly, I can't see how your
man's going to play this. I mean
a South African accent is one
thing but isn't this taking it a
bit far?

MÖCH

Oh, don't worry. I've got a
plan.

ASHMOLE glances uneasily at MÖCH.

ASHMOLE

What plan?

MÖCH sits in an easy chair at the foot of the bed, nibbling
on a chocolate biscuit as he watches ARCHANGEL prepare to
receive the first ball of the match.

ARCHIE (V.O.)

Well Karl, Daly lacks finesse and
technique but he's such a big
hitter he usually manages to rack
up the big scores anyway. This
is his first time out after a
shoulder injury and the South
Africans don't like the wet so
what he'll do out there today is
anyone's guess...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARDIFF OVAL. DAY.

FLAG strolls beneath the stand wearing the white hat and coat of a groundsman, shards of sunlight crisscrossing his face as he glances up at the happy crowd seated above him.

Fastening a wad of semtex to the underside of the stand he primes it with a detonator resembling a ballpoint pen. This done he covers the bomb with his hat and walks away, twirling the pointed stick like a cane.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARDIFF OVAL / POPPING CREASE. DAY.

ARCHANGEL narrows his eyes, tightening his grip on the hilt of his bat as IVOR MORFYD takes his place at the far end of the wicket. The man is built like a mountain.

MORFYD straightens his hair, wiping a greasy lock from his forehead as he meets ARCHANGEL's gaze. He grins, his gold teeth glistening in the damp sunshine, polishing the ball all the while against his thigh, furtively smearing it with Brylcream residue.

A cloud crosses the sun and MORFYD backs away, preparing for his run up. ARCHANGEL shivers.

It is all over in a split second.

MORFYD charges, bearing down like an angry waterbuffallo, bowling ARCHANGEL a vicious bouncer with a greasy spin.

The assassin snarls, bringing up the bat in one fluid, zen motion, connecting with the ball in a resounding crack and deflecting it from his face, sending it soaring away into the stands.

There is a moment of hushed disbelief. Then the crowd breaks into a spontaneous roar.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY. DAY.

A uniformed OFFICER watches disinterestedly as ARCHANGEL's face appears on the grubby monitor propped on his desk, waiting while his masked assistant fishes with a pair of tweezers in a perspex tray of wriggling, mutant crabspiders, selecting a particularly juicy specimen. LOTTE, stripped and tied to the chair in front of them, cranes her neck to get a better view.

COMMENTATOR

Daly's hit the ball full pitch over the boundary and into the stands.. And it's official! The umpire is signalling that Daly has hit a six!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARDIFF OVAL. DAY.

Glancing towards the pavilion ARCHANGEL sees CAPTAIN SINGLETON give him the thumbs up.

CAPTAIN SINGLETON

Good shot, old boy!

He turns, a hero at last, raising his bat to salute the crowd as it rises to its feet, his cricket whites shining in the fading sunlight.

Then the stands disintegrate in a ball of flame.

A warm breeze caresses the ARCHANGEL's face and he sits down as the shock wave ripples over him, smouldering debris raining across the pitch, the screams of the dying and the mutilated taking the place of the applause he was drinking in a moment before.

A pall of smoke fills the enclosed stadium, blotting out the sun.

CUT TO:

INT. BUCK HOUSE. MASTER BEDROOM. DAY.

The cricket match goes off the air and PRESIDENT ASHMOLE curses, thumping the monitor with his fist.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALE OF NEATH. SOUTH WALES. DAY.

RICHARD frowns as white noise is replaced by the legend: 'Normal service will be resumed shortly'. Then the pattern flickers, giving way to a 'Felix the Cat' cartoon and a merry piano rag.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARDIFF OVAL. DAY.

ARCHANGEL stumbles across the crease, trying to shield his eyes from the acrid fumes belching from the blazing stand, almost walking into a gas masked figure striding the other way, a ragged coat about his shoulders and a Heckler and Koch strapped to one arm.

FLAG

Here, catch! I've blown your cover...

He tosses ARCHANGEL a 9mm Berretta and, almost as an afterthought, a second gasmask.

ARCHANGEL

Flag...

FLAG

The Guild have given you a second chance. Don't piss it away this time.

Pulling the pin from a grenade FLAG bowls it full length down the pitch, buying them a little time from whoever's chasing them.

They start towards the rear of the stands, the ghostly outlines of the walking wounded drifting past them in the haze.

ARCHANGEL

Where are we going?

FLAG pulls a cowering man from the door of a Walls Ice Cream hut, shooting him in the chest and flinging him aside.

FLAG

Into the shadows, tovarich...

He bends, lifting a board from the floor of the hut to reveal a manhole leading into darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. STORMDRAIN. DAY.

ARCHANGEL descends a seemingly interminable ladder before dropping into the main drain.

ARCHANGEL

I can't believe I hit a six. If Morfyd hadn't bounced the ball off the seam...

FLAG casts about himself with his flashlight, the beam lancing through the swirling methane, a tide of grey rats wriggling about his ankles.

FLAG

Six? Seam? What is that?

ARCHANGEL

It doesn't matter...

The two assassins walk in silence for a while, respirators hissing as they make their way along the ribbed, oddly vaginal tunnel.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Flag?

FLAG

Da?

ARCHANGEL

Don't you ever miss the real world?

He hears a complicated rushing sound and glancing back catches a fleeting glimpse of a crabspider the size of a volkswagen, pale legs jerking in the muzzle flash as FLAG empties his Heckler and Koch.

FLAG

This is the real world. Climb aboard!

Grasping him by his sleeve FLAG propels him down a flight of steps to where an inflatable dinghy rides at its moorings on a subterranean watercourse.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNRIVER. DAY.

FLAG tosses ARCHANGEL a tiny, waterproof canister, battling to maintain control of the craft as it whirls through an open lock into daylight, one watercourse feeding into another.

FLAG

Your 'Rain King's gone to earth somewhere in the vale of Neath...

Inside the canister is a Geiger counter and a neatly folded printout of the satellite photograph ARCHANGEL saw in the briefing appended by a staple to a complicated aerial navigation chart.

ARCHANGEL

I think there used to be some kind of reprocessing plant here in the old days which means we should be heading north...

FLAG

We've got to go east to get north.

The channel widens until they can no longer see the banks. Raising his watch ARCHANGEL tries to calculate their bearing but the clouds are too thick to find the sun.

A thin, oily rain starts to fall and ARCHANGEL attempts to refold the map only to find it's been packed too carefully to fit back in the canister. The papers grow soggy, tearing in his hands and in the end he throws the tangled mess overboard, pulling at his mask.

ARCHANGEL

Jesus! I can't bloody well breathe in this thing...

FLAG

Keep it on or the spores'll be the death of you. That's what got to the last man who tried to do your job.

ARCHANGEL

The spores can wait.

FLAG

(shrugging)
Well, I'm wearing mine.

The Geiger counter chatters excitedly as ARCHANGEL searches for a dry cigarette. An instant later the craft lurches violently to one side, scales rasping against rubber as a huge, predatory shadow brushes the underside of their dinghy. Cursing incoherently FLAG tries to fend the creature off with his oar, a glistening black hump cutting the oily surface off the port bow.

FLAG

Nou mandavoshka!

ARCHANGEL lies back, staring at the sky, refusing to engage.

ARCHANGEL

I hate this fuckin' movie...

FLAG

Take a couple of these and you'll feel better.

FLAG passes him a baggy filled with little red ampoules of pseudoendorphins and designer RNA. Snapping the neck off one of the ampoules ARCHANGEL squirts it up his nose.

FLAG (CONT'D)
Only immortals have time to
complain...

CUT TO:

EXT. FURTHER DOWNRIVER. DAY.

ARCHANGEL opens his eyes to find the green wall of the rainforest rising from the shoreline. FLAG steers towards the trees, looking for the closest thing to dry land.

FLAG
This is as far as I go. Head due
north and you'll hit your mark.
Just be sure to make it good this
time...

The dinghy nudges against a sandbar and ARCHANGEL swings himself into the shallows, reaching for his gasmask.

ARCHANGEL
Will I see you again?

FLAG
I'll see you on the other side,
tovarich.

FLAG pushes off, offering a laconic salute as the current takes him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALE OF NEATH. SOUTH WALES. DAY.

The woods are a dripping lightless maze.

Spiders cling like black grapes to the branches and the soil beneath the assassin's shoes seethes with pale yellow slugs, each as long and thick as a severed thumb.

He slows, catching sight of a rusting speaker pole, bones and what look like pieces of broken mirrors dangling from the trees on either side of the path, the Geiger counter's clicking becoming an insistent low pitched scream as he notices the first corpse. The inverted remains of a trespasser, carnivorous fireflies eddying about the sockets of its eyes.

There are more bodies up ahead, human and animal, bodies and bits of bodies but ARCHANGEL tries not to look.

Switching off the Geiger counter he makes his way towards the tremor of the falls and the sound of faint child-like voices.

Shaking his head he brushes through a curtain of wet leaves to find himself on a rock overlooking the camp.

There is a peal of laughter like distant bells and ARCHANGEL sees the prince sitting cross legged in the stone circle below, his skin painted in coiling Celtic patterns.

A cauldron simmers on the smoky campfire beside him, the guerillas assembled wordlessly around it as if they are waiting for something, their scarlet bandannas the only flashes of colour amidst the mossy boulders.

ARCHANGEL

Can you feel me, Richard?

It's hot under the mask and sweat runs in the assassin's eyes. His hand trembles as he raises the gun.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Can you feel this?

The fireflies catch up him, swarming excitedly as his finger tightens on the trigger, putting off his aim. He tries to wave them away but before he can steady his hand CHAZ and two of his cronies appear silently from the undergrowth, levelling their kalashnikovs at the back of his head.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Ah, for Christ's sake...

THE BOY looks up at ARCHANGEL, nodding as if to wish him good day.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Here we go...

CHAZ takes his gun, his comrades prodding the assassin with his rifle as they start down the ridge towards the stone circle. Arms upraised in his mud spattered cricketing whites ARCHANGEL feels every bit the martyr.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNSTREAM. DAY.

FLAG eases himself into the topmost branches of an ancient conifer facing the falls. He's wearing spikes on his feet and a lineman's belt holds him fast as he reaches into his coat, retrieving the customized components of a marksman's rifle taped to its lining.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALE OF NEATH. SOUTH WALES. DAY.

One of the guards twists ARCHANGEL's arm behind his back, forcing him to his knees in the centre of the ring.

CHAZ passes RICHARD the Berretta, watching the assassin struggle ineffectually as they tug at his gas mask.

RICHARD
Don't be afraid.

The mask's valves come undone, compressed air jetting in a stream from the respirator.

ARCHANGEL
What about the spores?

RICHARD
Oh, they tell everyone that. A few spores won't hurt you. Besides, wouldn't you rather die with a good Welsh rain on your face?

ARCHANGEL pulls off the mask and takes a deep breath, filling his lungs with air that is surprisingly fresh.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
There. That's better, isn't it?

The boy king stands over him, the Berretta cradled in one hand.

ARCHANGEL
Nice seeing you again, Richard.

RICHARD
Elegant cover drive you played earlier. I was impressed.

ARCHANGEL
Rain stopped play.

RICHARD
Pity. Did you have time to call your mother?

ARCHANGEL shakes his head, trying to compose himself.

ARCHANGEL
Why? What's going to happen to me?

RICHARD
You'll be the first to sample our home brew.
(MORE)

RICHARD(cont'd)

It's distilled from local fungus,
highly psychoactive you'll find
and a powerful mutagen. Exactly
what this country needs...

CHAZ bends over the steaming cauldron, ladling a viscous
grey fluid into a wooden bowl.

ARCHANGEL

Will I change? Will I become
like you?

RICHARD

You'll wake up. That's what you
want, isn't it?

ARCHANGEL's eyes wander across the assembled guerillas.
Some, shuffle on pads or are propped in rickety wheelchairs
while those, like CHAZ, who have maintained full mobility
display the telltale signs of advanced mutation.

ARCHANGEL

Will it hurt?

RICHARD

Isn't change always painful? The
land changes and its creatures
also change. We are different
but we are many. Your world, the
old world and its ways are dying
but we are new...

ARCHANGEL gingerly takes the bowl from CHAZ, holding it
with both hands.

ARCHANGEL

And my wife and kid? What about
them?

RICHARD

Your friend, the wolf of Grozny
happened to them. It was the
Guild's way of tying up loose
ends. He killed them and then he
ate them, I recall.

ARCHANGEL

What do you mean?

The bowl trembles in ARCHANGEL's hands.

RICHARD

Have you ever heard of the Fisher
King tradition, Ashley?

ARCHANGEL

No.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNSTREAM. DAY.

FLAG brushes the leaves out of his way, the assassin's distraught face floating in his cross-hairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALE OF NEATH. SOUTH WALES. DAY.

THE BOY stares out over the rising mist, fingertips trailing against a standing stone, tracing the timeworn glyphs that mark its pitted surface.

RICHARD

In the old tradition the land is
the king and the king is the
land. The king dies to renew the
land and ensure the harvest...

ARCHANGEL

This country's not worth it. Not
anymore...

RICHARD

As flesh and blood I'm as
helpless as the monarchy of old
but as a symbol, as a sacrifice,
there is much to be achieved.

The rain eases off, a ragged streak appearing in the clouds. A streak as blue as THE BOY's eyes.

CHAZ

C'mon, drink up. It's getting
cold.

CHAZ shoulders his lucky kalashnikov, gesturing impatiently towards the bowl in ARCHANGEL's hands.

ARCHANGEL

You're crazy, Richard. You Brits
are born crazy! It's probably
something in the water...

RICHARD

Now that's a curious observation.
I prefer to think of our fate as
manifest destiny. Shame we don't
have time to discuss it...

ARCHANGEL

There's time.

RICHARD

They're waiting for me...

The short hairs rise on the back of ARCHANGEL's neck as he hears the tinkle of distant, child-like laughter.

THE BOY pauses on the edge of the gorge, looking up at the trees, at the sky, at everything. Taking a deep breath he reaches out to embrace his kingdom, the fireflies silently gathering about him.

ARCHANGEL

No!!!

The cross-hairs of FLAG's sights find the tattoo on RICHARD's chest and ARCHANGEL lunges forward with a cry, dashing the contents of the bowl into CHAZ's face, one hand out-stretched as if to pull THE BOY back from the brink or somehow shield him with his body.

There is a flash and the golden child pitches headlong into the void, his tiny figure vanishing into the foaming cataract, the sound of the gunshot arriving a split second later.

ARCHANGEL stumbles to a halt, staring numbly as if tempted to give chase, the assembled guerillas gazing at him in stunned silence.

Then YDRIS begins to whimper, dragging herself from her wheelchair as she goes to CHAZ's aid.

The young albino is flailing blindly in the dirt beside the cauldron, a welter of expanding fungus spores bursting from his splitting flesh and metastasing rapidly outwards. YDRIS turns him over and CHAZ opens his mouth as if to scream, a wriggling mess of fungoid tendrils erupting soundlessly from his lips.

FLAG squeezes off another shot, an incoming round whistling over ARCHANGEL's shoulder, breaking the spell.

As one the guerillas bring up their weapons and open fire, forcing the assassin to beat a hasty retreat towards the falls. There are people shooting at him from both sides now and he has nowhere to go but out, bullets flicking and whining about him as he jumps.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SPLASH POOL. DAY.

The current sucks ARCHANGEL down, a sound like bells pealing in his ears as he kicks against the tow.

Something brushes his ankle and he sees the boy king drifting through the murk, an enigmatic smile on his paling lips. Reaching out, he catches hold of THE BOY as a churning cloud of silt envelopes them, their bodies tumbling end over end through the dark.

For a crazy moment it is as if there is a coruscating, light coming from below, a radiance more terrifying than the dark. Then the silt clears and ARCHANGEL realizes his hands are clenched about the child's throat.

He recoils, losing his grip, as he kicks towards the surface.

At the very limits of his consciousness he glances back, imagining he sees other figures outlined against that sourceless glow as they gather in the fallen prince, pale hands agleam with ancient jewelry.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RIVERBANK. DAY.

ARCHANGEL breaks surface, coughing and shivering as he struggles ashore, hearing shouts and the sound of gunfire coming from upstream. He might even be crying but in the rain it's impossible to tell. Splashing knee deep through the shallows he works his way downriver. After a while he begins to run.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. NIGHT.

A burst of lightning etches the graveyard's railings into the night.

ARCHANGEL (V.O.)
Can you feel me, Richard?

A second flash reveals ARCHANGEL's figure silhouetted in the gateway. Gathering his sodden coat about himself he starts down the track towards the church.

ARCHANGEL (V.O./CONT.)
Are you still there?

INT. SAINT MICHAEL'S OF PECKHAM. NIGHT.

FLAG kneels at the altar, head bowed as if in prayer, shattered pews pushed aside and blood soaked tracts strewn about him as if some violent struggle has taken place.

A nail gun rests beside the overturned chalice and scattered host, FATHER TOM'S naked body barely visible in the halflight, appended by two rivets to the wooden cross.

FLAG

Man that is born of woman is of
few days and full of sorrow. He
cometh forth as a flower and is
cut down...

FLAG unwraps his cutlery, laying a gleaming array of knives, bowls and bonesaws before the altar.

FLAG (CONT'D)

He fleeth also as a shadow and
continueth not...

His voice tails off as he senses movement but before he can turn a shining wire drifts past his face and tightens about his throat.

ARCHANGEL

Don't fucking move. Don't even
breathe...

ARCHANGEL twists the wire around FLAG's neck, drawing him backwards.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Hand me the gun. Ultra-slow...

FLAG hisses, reaching unsteadily into the flap of his coat to produce a silenced automatic.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

And the 9mm Glock you got in your
pocket. Yeah. I saw you. Give
it up, you son of a bitch!

ARCHANGEL tightens the noose with his free hand as FLAG lets the Glock fall, face turning slowly blue.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Spread 'em! Hands on the altar!

ARCHANGEL drives him hard against the stone, pressing the automatic against the back of FLAG's skull.

FLAG
Some fucking angel you turned out
to be.

He coughs, spitting out a tooth.

ARCHANGEL
My name's Ashley.

FLAG
Atchlee?

ARCHANGEL
Keep your Hands on the altar, you
fuckin' psychopath! You think
this is a joke?

FLAG stretches out his arms in a mockery of Christ's
suffering, allowing ARCHANGEL to frisk him.

FLAG
You're humiliating me, Atchlee.
This is very foolish of you...

The pockets of FLAG's coat yield a switchblade, four hand
grenades, a string of detonators and something resembling a
marlin spike.

FLAG
After all you were the one who
wanted the divorce. I was only
following orders...

ARCHANGEL
You didn't have to fuckin' eat
her...

ARCHANGEL grabs him by the scruff of the neck, slamming his
head against the altar.

FLAG
Okay, maybe I exceeded the brief
but did you think the Guild would
let her walk? After everything
you told her?

ARCHANGEL
Look at me! Look at me so I can
shoot your fuckin' eyes out!

FLAG turns, his back to the altar, groggily meeting the
assassin's gaze.

FLAG
She always had a soft spot for
me. You know that, tovarich.

(MORE)

FLAG(cont'd)

Call it mission creep but at least this way some part of her lives on...

ARCHANGEL

Don't keep calling me that. I'm not your friend...

FLAG

So, you love the taste too. That sweet, gamey smell? We ate together for the first time in Cambodia...

ARCHANGEL

SHUT UP!!!

ARCHANGEL's finger tightens on the trigger but then, hearing a footfall behind him, he spins levelling the gun at the newcomer. LOTTE stands in the aisle, suitcase in hand, lower lip trembling as if not sure what to say.

LOTTE

I thought you were dead.

ARCHANGEL

I couldn't leave you here...

He takes her in his arms, breathing in the strange, intoxicating musk of her hair. For a moment she tries to resist but then the suitcase drops from her hand and she gives herself over to the embrace.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

In this fuckin' wasteland.

LOTTE

Where will we go? Somewhere sunny?

ARCHANGEL

Sunny and hot. Trust me.

FLAG watches, slipping the fallen marlin spike into his sleeve as he hears the rumble of approaching engines.

FLAG

Hotter than you think, tovarich...

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. SOUTH LONDON. NIGHT.

A convoy of riot control vans come bouncing down the dirt track, headlights blazing through the rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT MICHAEL'S OF PECKHAM. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL checks the clip on his automatic.

ARCHANGEL

Who the hell are they?

FLAG

You and your piece of tail have a lot to learn about staying alive. Why do you think Ashmole's secret police let her go in the first place? They knew you'd come looking for her.

LOTTE

If that's true, I didn't know... I promise!

FLAG

She is bait, my friend, and you took the juicy morsel, hook, line and sinker.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. NIGHT.

The convoy skids to a halt outside the church, forming a rough semi-circle, disgorging a team of armoured security police bearing M19's and RPG's.

CUT TO:

INT. SAINT MICHAEL'S OF PECKHAM. NIGHT.

ARCHANGEL presses Glock into LOTTE's hands.

ARCHANGEL

You know how to use this?

She nods fiercely, looking past him as FLAG draws himself upright, face a mess of blood and bruises.

FLAG
Come on, give me a gun! We'll
light a candle in hell
together...

ARCHANGEL
No way, you bastard!

He rounds on FLAG, determined to finish the job but as he
cocks the automatic a rocket propelled grenade reduces the
church doors to matchwood and he dives to cover LOTTE
instead, the two of them taking refuge behind an overturned
pew.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)
Stick close to me. You'll be
fine.

LOTTE
Yeah. Sure.

Keeping his head down FLAG disappears into the sacristy.

ARCHANGEL
If anything should happen make
for the Posthouse Hilton.
There's two grand US in the
suitcase at the end of the bed
and another couple in Euros...

She zips the key card into her breast pocket as a black
wave of security men enter the church, raincoats billowing,
guns flashing like phosphorescence in a heavy, rolling sea.
Then an orange glow fills the building.

Shielding LOTTE with his body ARCHANGEL looks back to see
FLAG silhouetted in the door of the sacristy, using an old
Soviet army issue flamethrower like a hose, his lips curled
in a lupine snarl.

The cries of the burning policemen are muffled by melting
respirators, exploding ammo belts ripping their bodies into
black shreds as they fall.

ARCHANGEL
We'll settle the score later.

FLAG
Now, my friend, they will find
out why I'm called the 'wolf of
Grozny'...

Behind them the fire is already climbing the walls and
licking hungrily at the cross, hymn sheets rising in wisps
of flame around FATHER TOM's sagging body.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH PECKHAM MISSION. NIGHT.

An incandescent plume of fire rises from the churchyard, momentarily visible from the edge of space itself.

LOTTE rolls, taking cover behind a marble gravestone, hearing the assassins yelling at once, their voices rising together like the cry of a single, mythic beast.

A gas tank explodes in one of the vehicles and she covers her ears, waiting for a lull in the shooting. When she looks again she sees ARCHANGEL working his way towards her from grave to grave while FLAG watches over him like a benign, maleficent demon, his coattails fluttering in the firewind as he holds the marksmen at bay.

LOTTE

C'mon! We haven't got all night!

FLAG slips to one knee at the base of the steps, blood glistening wetly in the firelight. LOTTE hears the throb of approaching rotors and ARCHANGEL pauses, glancing back as a searchlight rakes the graveyard.

ARCHANGEL

Cover me!

And she does, emptying her Glock at the armoured vehicles, drawing down a hard rain of return fire as ARCHANGEL doubles back, untangling FLAG from the straps of the flame thrower and dragging him into the shelter of a newly dug grave, a hail of lead scuffing the dirt in after them.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Oh man, we're fucked! We're never getting out of here...

FLAG

Accentuate the positive,
tovarich...

LOTTE cowers behind a headstone, a relentless volley of incoming ordinance chipping away the marble slab. FLAG coughs, tearing a strip from his coat to serve as a tourniquet.

FLAG

What better place for corpses
than a graveyard?

A grenade bursts on the lip of the grave and ARCHANGEL flings himself into the muck, shrapnel pattering against his shoulder blades.

LOTTE opens her eyes as the tone of the fire changes, realizing with growing surprise that some new adversary is drawing the marksmen's guns.

She breaks cover to see a line of horses emerge at a gallop from the darkness, the rain rising in a spray about their hooves as they bear down on the burning church, a posse of rifle wielding guerrillas clinging to their saddles.

ARCHANGEL

It's the fuckin' cavalry!

More of the freedom fighters emerge on foot from the trees, opening fire with handguns and Kalashnikovs.

The police, outflanked, run before them.

LOTTE

It's the A.L.F!

ARCHANGEL clambers from the grave, brandishing his assault rifle, returning the rider's crazed, clenched fist salute.

ARCHANGEL

God save Prince Richard, Saint Michael and Saint George!

A security man hurries past LOTTE in a crouch but then her mother opens the door of the SAAB, knocking him flat, the other refugees summon the courage to come from the shadows, knives, spades and improvised cudgels in their hands.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

God save the Fisher King!

FLAG grits his teeth. Slipping behind the wheel of Father Tom's hearse he rams the marlin spike into the ignition, the lights and radio coming on at once.

RADIO (O.S.)

Police have been unable to enforce the curfew and reports are coming in of violence in all sectors following the death of Free Albion leader Richard Battenberg in what has been described as a 'targeted killing'...

A riderless white horse appears from the gloom and ARCHANGEL catches its reins. He offers the beast a reassuring smile, raising one hand so it can get his smell. Swinging himself into the saddle, he canters back to pick up LOTTE.

ARCHANGEL

We're out of here.

LOTTE blows her mum a kiss, gathering up her suitcase.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH LONDON. NIGHT.

The militias have abandoned any pretence at keeping order, helping the looters by smashing shop windows with their rifles and handing out television sets and consumer durables to the increasingly unruly crowd.

A sound system has been set up on the corner of Saint Agnes place and a flash party clogs Camberwell New Road, an insistent electronic beat underscoring the rotors and wailing sirens that rise from every quarter of the stricken city.

LOTTE

I prayed something like this
would happen. That you'd come
down for me...

ARCHANGEL stiffens, hearing the rumble of approaching tanks.

LOTTE (CONT'D)

In the dream you rode a pale
horse...

The first T-87 crawls into sight from behind the Victorian terrace houses, turret roving as its gyro-stabilizers lock on to a target. He tries to rein in the horse only to find the mob is too thick for them to turn.

LOTTE (CONT'D)

And the moon... the moon was...

The crowd pushes forward and raising his assault rifle ARCHANGEL fires a burst above their heads but the horse panics at the sound, bolting full tilt into the path of the tanks.

The mob takes this as the signal to charge, brandishing clubs and crowbars.

LOTTE (CONT'D)

The moon was the colour of blood
and the sky like sackcloth of
ashes...

She giggles, biting his ear, red dots weaving like sparks in her eyes as they race towards the guns.

The barrels rise and rise but do not open fire.

Instead the tanks train their weapons at the night sky in the internationally recognized symbol of surrender, the column's commander returning ARCHANGEL's cautious salute, the clenched fist of the Albion Liberation Front.

COMMANDER
God save Prince Richard!

ARCHANGEL
God save the king!

The mob take up the cry as he canters past the guns, LOTTE's arms all around him.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)
These are your people...

The jubilant crowd swarm about the armoured vehicles, clambering onto the hulls to embrace the cheering soldiers.

LOTTE
They're yours too now...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MALL. DAWN.

The citizens have assembled outside the gates of Buck House, arms upraised in an undulating sea of fists and banners. They speak as one, a single chant rising from their lips.

CHORUS
We are the old people! We are
the new people! We are the same
people, stronger than before!

ARCHANGEL stands on the turret of the lead tank while LOTTE sits astride its barrel, swinging her boots as the armoured column comes crawling up the mall, garlands of flowers draped about their guns.

A frightened posse of private security men wearing white armbands cower inside the palace gates, staring through the bars at the tanks.

The assassin smiles, catching their eye.

ARCHANGEL
Tell the boss I'd like a word
with the management...

CUT TO:

INT. BUCK HOUSE. DAWN.

A bank of monitors have been set up in one of the requisitioned ballrooms where PRESIDENT ASHMOLE is mid-way through an interrupted press conference.

The head of state is propped in his wheelchair, surrounded by his chiefs of staff while the disgraced former MP, PATRICK MANDELBROT paces nervously beside him.

ASHMOLE
What's he doing here?

ARCHANGEL's image drifts across one of the screens.

PATRICK
I don't know but I think you'd better let him in...

A knot of terrified journalists and confused technicians watch as ASHMOLE signals his consent. Amongst the reporters are FENELLA FRANKLIN, the anchor for 'England Nationwide' and the lugubrious American war correspondent MICHAEL HARE.

MICHAEL
It's outrageous, man. Out-fuckin'-rageous...

The monitors blink out one by one. A private security guard steps forward to fiddle with the knobs but the emergency network seems to have been knocked off the air.

FIELD MARSHAL HORN
We must call an air strike on the Ministry of Defense immediately, Mr. President. The F17's, are standing by for your orders...

ASHMOLE
Tell them not to attack! Tell them I say no!

PATRICK
Are we still on the air?

BRIGADIER GAWLER
But our negotiations have failed, Eli. Our attack forces will be paralysed...

FENELLA FRANKLIN steps forward as two armed FOOTMEN in velvet frockcoats open the oak panelled doors so that ARCHANGEL and LOTTE can come in from the rain.

FENELLA

Mr. President, I noticed the guards on the palace gate were wearing white armbands. Does this mean they plan to surrender to the A.L.F?

ASHMOLE blinks.

ASHMOLE

The armbands are a counter-sign.

PATRICK

(whispering)

The counter-sign is red, white and blue, Eli...

ASHMOLE

Whatever. The colours are changed every day. Any more questions? Mr. Hare?

MICHAEL

Not me, man.

ARCHANGEL narrows his eyes, wiping his feet on the red carpet.

ARCHANGEL

Just one.

ASHMOLE shifts uneasily in his wheelchair.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

You know who I am, don't you, Mr. President?

There is a sound of gunfire and breaking glass coming from elsewhere in the building. Realizing the jig is up PATRICK turns away, lighting an unfashionable cigarette, already mentally composing his memoirs.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)

Then tell the press, tell the world...

CUT TO:

INT. A TERRACE HOUSE IN MAIDA VALE. DAY.

MAUREEN MCHALLEM sits in her favourite armchair, watching her son on the television. The telephone on the sideboard rings but she makes no attempt to answer it.

ARCHANGEL (O.S.)

Who am I?

An instant later someone starts to bang on the kitchen door but her gaze remains fixed on the screen as the beleaguered president waits for the right answer to pop into his head. Then to his relief it does.

ASHMOLE (O.S.)

Why, you're the man who hit that tremendous six yesterday!

ARCHANGEL pushes open the front door, hearing the prerecorded television broadcast playing in the lounge as he starts down the dingy hallway, almost beaten back by the memories that ooze in waves from the faded wallpaper.

ARCHANGEL

Mum?

His voice is a whisper. MAUREEN makes no effort to turn and he steps closer to find she has been bound to the chair, lips sealed with duct tape.

ASHMOLE (O.S.)

That was one of the most amazing innings I've ever seen and believe me I've seen a few, my boy...

The assassin turns, slow as a planet, sensing movement.

MÖCH

Care for a cuppah, Ashley?

His auditor smiles, a saucer cradled in one hand. MR. STURGIS and another field operative flank him, their guns aimed at ARCHANGEL's head. Möch sips his tea, watching as Fenella Franklin wrests control of the microphone.

FENELLA (O.S.)

Do you have any comment on the allegations of torture made against your regime, Mr. President?

ASHMOLE tweaks his hearing-aid.

PRESIDENT ASHMOLE (O.S.)

Rapture? There has been no rapture here?

MÖCH

Oh, he's a clever lad, that Eli!

ARCHANGEL

You planned it this way, didn't you? Right from the beginning...

MÖCH

A bloodless revolution designed
and scripted by social scientists
to restore the status quo and
keep the masses in their place.
Barely a blip on the stock
exchange...

ARCHANGEL

And the kid? What about him?

MÖCH

We needed him to bring the people
to the street, to engineer a
confrontation between them and
the military and secure Ashmole's
legacy. Why do you think he
chose to give the order not to
open fire on public television?
Should go down great in the
history books...

The camera pans over the faces of the assembled journalists
and the assassin catches sight of Lotte in the crowd.

ARCHANGEL

Yeah. But who in heaven or earth
gets to write them?

The press conference goes off the air, replaced by a
recording of the national anthem and a colourful test
pattern.

MÖCH (CONT'D)

Want a biccy, Sturgis?

STURGIS

Don't mind if I do, sir...

STURGIS lowers his gun, helping himself to a chocolate
digestives and ARCHANGEL shoots him through the spleen.

MÖCH ducks, spilling his tea as the second operative tries
to take aim, squeezing off a single round before his head
disintegrates in a pink blur.

MÖCH

Oh, for God's sake! Now look
what you've done...

ARCHANGEL

I'm going to kill you, Möch.

MÖCH shakes his head, mopping at his suit with a
handkerchief.

MÖCH
 We've had this conversation
 enough times. Do you really
 think you're capable of free
 will?

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST LONDON. DAY.

Several plain clothes men take up position on the
 surrounding rooftops, drawing a bead on the terrace house's
 doorway.

CUT TO:

INT. TERRACE HOUSE. DAY.

ARCHANGEL lifts the net curtain keeping an eye on the
 activity outside.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)
 By the time you hear the national
 anthem it will all be over...

MÖCH
 Maybe I should have let you die
 with that dog back in Almaty...

ARCHANGEL
 It's a wonderful thing.
 Hindsight...

MÖCH
 So, kill me if it makes you feel
 any better. Kill yourself while
 you're at it. They'll only send
 someone else...

ARCHANGEL
 Maybe next time they won't eat
 people.

He empties his gun into MÖCH, watching his auditor's body
 tumble backwards into the hall. Then slipping the harpy
 from his sleeve he cuts his mother loose.

MAUREEN
 What do you want from me?

ARCHANGEL
 Nothin'...

He draws away, seeing the suspicion in her eyes and beneath
 the fear a vague glimmer of recognition.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)
 Nothin' at all...

He steps lightly across the corpses, cordite curling about him like a halo as he makes for the door.

For a moment there is silence.

After a beat the national anthem starts up again and the sound of gunfire comes from outside.

The barrage is continuous, one burst following another as the old woman sinks to her knees in front of the television, covering her ears.

CUT TO:

INT. THE POSTHOUSE HILTON - NEW HEATHROW. DAY.

The monitor at the foot of the bed is tuned to the rolling news, a soft rain falling outside the window, the prematurely fading sun casting its wet light across the crumpled sheets.

FENELLA (O.S.)
 President Ashmole and his family
 were airlifted out of the country
 in the early hours of this
 morning by the American airforce
 taking with them as much as
 twenty-five million IOB pounds
 along with some of the most
 valuable pieces from the Buck
 House art collection...

LOTTE winces, checking the bandages on ARCHANGEL's dressings, not liking his colour one bit.

LOTTE
 What happened? What did they do
 to you?

ARCHANGEL
 Don't talk...

He lies back, staring at the ceiling through glazed eyes, a bottle of champagne clenched in one hand.

ARCHANGEL (CONT'D)
 Just kiss me. Where it doesn't
 hurt...

She does as she's told.

LOTTE

I don't want the bleeding to
start again...

ARCHANGEL

Don't worry. You can always kiss
it better.

She climbs astride him and he helps her out of her shirt.

FENELLA (O.S.)

As from today the government is
in the hands of the A.L.F. Long
live the free Republic of Albion!

A new anthem comes over the air underscoring hand held
footage of marching protesters.

ARCHANGEL is silent, tears streaking his face as he move
further into the tiny flame that is the gateway to
infinity, to immortality, to blessed escape.

LOTTE's nails stab into his buttocks and he arches his
back, focusing on a calendar on the wall behind the bed.
At the moment of crisis he sees a photograph of a Florida
beach resort decorating the month of June. The scene is
almost identical to the view from his window.

He blinks trying to catch a glimpse of the girl in the
orange bikini but she is nowhere to be found.

There is a sound like waves breaking over sand. A distant
gull somewhere high up.

LOTTE

What's wrong?

ARCHANGEL

Nothin'...

He rolls over with a sigh.

LOTTE

What are you looking for?

ARCHANGEL

Cigarettes. Must've lost them
somewhere.

LOTTE

Try room service.

ARCHANGEL

They already evacuated the
staff...

LOTTE
 I'll check the bar. Maybe I can
 liberate another bottle of
 champers...

She starts to dress, searching for her discarded clothing.

ARCHANGEL
 You know you'd look great in a
 pair of those llama skin boots...

LOTTE
 Seen my knickers anywhere?

She glances about, finding no trace of them.

ARCHANGEL
 You know the ones I mean? They
 come all the way up to your
 calves but they're real soft...

LOTTE
 Don't bother. They'll turn up...

He watches her pull on her jeans. Then blowing him a kiss
 she vanishes into the hall.

The assassin lies on his back for a while, toying with his
 lighter, listening to the sound of the rain on the glass.
 When he looks again he notices FLAG standing silently in
 the doorway, one arm in a sling, the other cradling a fresh
 magnum of champagne.

FLAG
 Room service.

ARCHANGEL sits up a little too fast, grimacing as he tears
 a stitch.

FLAG (CONT'D)
 Congratulations. We just brought
 down the government...

He tosses ARCHANGEL the bottle.

ARCHANGEL
 Looks that way, I suppose.

FLAG
 Oh, don't be so glum. Russell
 Daly is a hero of the revolution.
 Your face is all over the news...

FLAG fetches two glasses from the mini-bar.

ARCHANGEL

And the real Russell Daly? What about him?

FLAG

He's probably still lying in the morgue at New Heathrow without his face, teeth or fingers. A small price to pay for a place in the history books...

ARCHANGEL pops the cork and champagne goes everywhere.

ARCHANGEL

What are we drinking to?

FLAG

To conspiracies, of course. Don't we butter our bread with them, breathe them in and out like air, lie down with them at night?

ARCHANGEL

It's a living...

He fills FLAG's glass before turning away to pick up his trousers.

FLAG

It's God's work. Bringing peace to the world...

ARCHANGEL

Have you got my ticket?

FLAG

Two singles to the Gold Coast. Stop-over in Sydney. Economy only but I don't think she'll complain...

FLAG retrieves Lotte's teddy bear from beside the pillowcase.

ARCHANGEL

I can't find my cigarettes...

ARCHANGEL's hand closes around the butt of the 9mm, still in his trouser pocket from the night before.

FLAG

Back pocket.

ARCHANGEL starts to turn, bringing up the gun and FLAG shoots him in the chest, claspings the teddy-bear to the barrel of his automatic as an improvised silencer.

ARCHANGEL grunts, a little surprised to find himself on the floor, staring with dimming eyes at the underside of the bed, seeing a pair of nylon underpants tangled in one of the springs.

FLAG (CONT'D)
Nothing personal, tovarich.

FLAG wipes the gun with the hem of his coat before letting it fall and ARCHANGEL shivers, vaguely aware of the tall man's insect bitten wrists and the smell of cordite on his breath as he bends over him.

Then FLAG whispers something in his ear and reaching around the assassin's face he carefully folds down his eyelids.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW HEATHROW. DAY.

FLAG carries LOTTE's little pink suitcase, her teddy-bear tucked under one arm as he escorts her towards the waiting airbus, its turbines droning like the mother of all mosquitos.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRBUS. DAY.

LOTTE's pale face stares from the laminated window, features oddly distorted by the rain streaked perspex. It looks as if she's crying but it's hard to be sure.

The sun's rays warm her as she rises above the rain clouds, the airbus levelling off at 45,000 feet, its silver fuselage floating in the naked light.

RICHARD (O.S.)
When I clap my hands.
Ready?

LOTTE smiles. There is no movement here. No sound. No memories. Only brightness and the promise of brightness. The heavens above and the earth below lost in cloud.

RICHARD (V.O./CONT.)
Wake up!

CUT TO:
END TITLES.