

SCARCITY

by

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21-45 year old armed forces, police, and intelligence agents (our intended protectors of the world) are going missing, seemingly 'taken' by strange agrarian communes popping up all over the planet, and Agent Bart, fresh out of retirement, is determined to solve the mystery of these disappearances.

PROLOGUE.

EXT. CITY - DAY

From an aerial view, we swoop in on a nondescript urban center.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Several years back, this city here
faced a crisis... of sorts... A mild
crisis, but a crisis nonetheless.

We're now at street-level in what appears to be the
city's financial district.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

A problem common to cities like
these. |BEAT| Rats.

REVEAL: despite the wealth and prosperity evident, a
concerning number of rats move about the street and
sidewalks. Pedestrians dodge and weave - and stumble on
designer heels and slip on designer soles - in an effort
to avoid contact.

The rats are not afraid.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Lots and lots of rats.

CUT TO:

INT. BUREAUCRATIC BUILDING OF SOME SORT - DAY

A bored-looking office **DRONE** sits at her reception desk;
one of many of the bureaucracy. We're pushing in on a
sign behind Drone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In an effort to solve the problem,
the city put out bounties on the
rodents.

Push to CU on the sign. It reads:

*1 Rat = .0001% tax rebate
(compounded)*

A man, grinning in anticipated satisfaction, holding a milk crate in front of a shirt with some conspicuous red splotches on it, approaches Drone's desk. Soon as he gets there he turns the milk crate upside down sending several dozen bloodied rat corpses tumbling out and rolling across the desk's surface.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This failed.

Drone recoils instantly. She flops her hands up and down and hops in disgust as we pull out to reveal men and women, all with milk crates in hands, lined up and out the office door.

FADE OUT TO BLACK:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In response, the city kept the bounty program, but amended the conditions for collecting.

CUT TO:

INT. BUREAUCRATIC BUILDING OF SOME SORT - DAY

Same bored-looking Drone sits at her reception station. The altered sign on the wall now reads:

*1 Rat TAIL = .0001% tax rebate
(compounded). Tails only!*

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

A different man, also grinning in anticipated satisfaction, tends to a huge number of cages. The cages contain rats. The **RAT TENDER** is feeding the large quantity of rats a larger quantity of food pellets.

He finishes dispensing the feed and picks up a pair of garden sheers. With his free - work-gloved - hand, he lifts one of the rats out of its cage.

Grinning wider, Rat Tender inches the sheers towards the rat's tail.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This failed too.

Sheer blades are about to snip the rat's tail when...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BUREAUCRATIC BUILDING OF SOME SORT - DAY

Rat Tender drops a few dozen tails onto Drone's desk. He grins, she frowns (she's not as disgusted, but she sure isn't happy).

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - DAY

We're in the financial district again, watching hundreds of rats, sans tails, scurrying in waves up the sidewalk.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Thanks to the city's efforts, there were more rats than ever. No matter what they did, they couldn't lick the problem. Every measure seemed to only worsen things. The problem looked like it was never going to go away, until, one day...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - DAY

The streets of the financial district are free of pests (well, there's yuppies... but no rats).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It did.

Pristine sidewalks and streets; uncanny.

NARRATOR

How? Well, it certainly wasn't the city's doing (although they, without any hesitation, took sole credit for the outcome...

CUT TO:

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

[NO AUDIO TO DIALOGUE] The mayor - a nondescript all-purpose suit - is speaking animatedly and imploringly to the press.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...kind of like a man shouting
'rise' at the dawn horizon taking
credit for the sun coming up).

There's a hint of growing agitation apparent in the mayor. He becomes more animated. He doesn't appear to be winning anyone over.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

We're front-on a small 2 bedroom bungalow as a small coupe is parking in the driveway.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

No, it was a local inventor and
experimenter with nothing but
ingenuity, a knack for scavenging,
and a hypothesis on his hands.

The **INVENTOR** exits the coupe, picks up a cloth covered square object from across the driver's seat, and carries it toward his front door.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

What was the hypothesis? Simple:
*given a large enough number of
discrete populations...*

CUT TO:

INT. INVENTOR'S BASEMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

CU: Inventor's hand flips on a light switch.

REVEAL: a bare floor with row upon row of rectangular boxes featuring glass tops and wooden sides. The boxes have two opposing chambers separated by a crosswise chunk at the center. The chunk has three plastic intake tubes protruding out the top (for filling something).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...of any particular sentient being...

CUT TO:

INT. INVENTOR'S BASEMENT (FLASHBACK)

The inventor whips the cloth cover off the box he's carrying... Even. More. Rats.

He takes out two of them and drops one each into the opposing chambers of the rectangular box.

Inside each chamber we see a single paddle and three dispensers of some sort. Both rats sniff at their respective paddles.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

*...evolving over a long enough
period of time...*

We very quickly cross-dissolve over the following shots:

1. We see many rats in many chambers just sniffing at their paddles.
2. A few rats are now curled up, looking around but ignoring the paddles, while a few others depress the paddles according to no particular pattern.
7. The inventor removes a pair of lethargic rats and replaces them with new recruits.
3. Most rats are now sleeping in their pens. Curiously, however, one pair is tapping away at their respective paddles in a semi-deliberate manner.
9. Inventor swaps out more rats.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...a functional society will emerge...

4. On the pair tapping away again. They've figured it out. The first-chamber rat (**FAT**) taps her paddle. A sip of water is dispensed on the second-chamber rat's (**SAT**) side. Sat drinks-up, then immediately depresses her own paddle sending a similar sized sip, in reciprocity, to Fat.

5. Bird's eye angle on the top of Fat and Sat's chamber now.

We see the rats engaged in the *you give/I give* relationship of *tap tap tapping* as we crane in on Fat's chamber and linger a second, creating the impression that the causality of these interactions is so much simpler: *hit the paddle, the machine rewards you.*

No sense of cooperation anymore.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...hierarchies and all...

7. Fat receives a ball of yarn from her material dispenser. She attempts to pull the yarn from the dispenser but a strand is hung up inside the mechanism. Fat pulls and pulls, finally breaking it free. She runs the yarn to her nest then turns back for the paddle. She looks like she's desperately trying to *not* break with routine.

Fat's about to press the paddle, then stops... something's off. A sound can be heard. It's a tapping sound on the other side of the chamber. Sat must have gotten impatient not receiving her materials (she's making a second attempt).

A bonus food pellet shoots out.

You'd almost swear Fat's just experienced an epiphany. She waits some more and the tapping begins anew...

8. Fat and Sat are working like a well-oiled machine, tapping away. Only, Fat is just tapping every three dispenses, racking up three times the amount of resources as Sat.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

*...driven by nothing but the
instinct to satisfy ones
appetites.*

FINAL DISSOLVE. The pair is just going *tap tap tap; eat eat eat; drink drink drink; nest nest nest; tap tap tap...* non-stop, at maximal efficiency.

FADE OUT TO BLACK.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I think it's safe to say the inventor acquired the evidence he was looking for.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - DAY

We're in the financial district, again, sans rats.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But, how did this solve the
problem of the rat infestation?

CUT TO:

INT. INVENTOR'S BASEMENT (FLASHBACK)

We're looking at an exceptionally large pen, separate from the rectangular boxes of the paddle-pushers. We can only see the outer walls, not what's inside.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

How? By accident of compassion.

Turns out the pen is reserved for the rats that never learned the pattern.

Inventor picks up an under-fed and under-watered rat from one of the rectangular boxes and moves him to the big pen.

The pen is open concept, no inner walls, just paddle pedestals lining the perimeter wall. We also see that there are rats already in the pen, fully rejuvenated, flipping paddles, eating, drinking, maintaining nests. Lastly, we see that there are way more paddles than there are rats.

He places the exhausted rat at a paddle and hangs a food pellet over it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The inventor could have just let
the unlucky rats starve to death.

The exhausted creature lifts itself up to reach the food, using the paddle to get leverage. This releases an alternative food pellet. He tries reaching again, releasing some water... then reaches again, releasing housing... then again and again... more food... more water... more housing... then... he forgets about the dangling food pellet altogether (he's stuffed).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He could have saved a lot of
effort and resources feeding the
dead rats to the live ones.

|BEAT| Yes, disgusting, I know,
but don't worry...

Inventor pours 'Ol Roy dog food into the hopper from which the food pellets (dog food apparently) are dispensed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He had planned for the contingency that most would not figure out the pattern. He made sure they were well-accommodated.

The rats are just *tap tap tapping* away at their pedestals, non-stop. Their nests are massive, full of excess housing and food hoarded on instinct.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Then, something curious happened.

The Inventor lays yet another spent rat in front of a paddle and begins tying the food pellet in place. Before he can finish, another rat approaches.

The visiting rat gets up on his hind legs. He squeaks in the other rat's direction, then turns, squeaking towards the pedestal. He gets on all fours again and walks over to the pedestal.

Tap tap tap.

The visitor dispenses a unit of food, water, and housing for the exhausted rat. He then turns, and just walks away.

The Inventor looks intrigued.

The spent rat lumbers and reaches for what looks like the food at first, but then lumbers right past and hits the paddle. He's learned.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The rats were learning. Their first lesson: *Hoarding is futile when resources are easily accessible and inexhaustible.*

The paddles are deserted. Completely inactive. The rats are happy with what they currently have.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Lesson 2: *There's such a thing as leisure.*

A rat rolls a food pellet around, seemingly disinterested. She walks away from it and curls up in her nest, motionless; looks bored.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Lesson 3: Leisure isn't worth a damn if you don't maximize the quality of it.

CROSS DISSOLVE over the following scenes:

1. Some rats play fighting.
2. Some rats sleeping.
3. Some rats having intercourse.
4. Some rats sleeping.
5. Some rats having intercourse.
6. Some rats sleeping.
7. Other rats sleeping.
8. Other other rats sleeping.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Lesson 4: If everything you know bores you, know more.

A more ingenious rat has managed to break out of the pen. She scurries, without hesitation, up the wall and into an open piece of duct-work (open, save for some fiberglass insulation keeping the air in; the rat pulls it out easily).

CONTINUOUS:

INT. INVENTOR'S KITCHEN (FLASHBACK)

EXPLORER RAT pries open, and emerges from, a vent cover.

The Inventor's house **CLEANER** is in the kitchen dining area, standing on a step stool cleaning the fan over the dinner table. She's mechanical about it; swooshing one of those 360 degree dusters across a fan blade.

She swooshes then rotates to the next blade. She's swooshing and rotating, swooshing and rotating, when... She stops abruptly. Her eyes widen. She's temporarily frozen.

REVEAL (Cleaner's POV): Explorer Rat is clinging to the top of the fan blade. She's looking at the cleaner with curiosity. She gets up on her hind legs and sniffs in Cleaner's direction.

EXPLORER RAT

**Squeak.*

Cleaner breaks from her trance, erupting in screams. She starts swinging the duster at the rat, back and forth, back and forth. She connects on the third pass and sends Explorer flying into a laundry basket full of dish towels, dish rags, and pot holders. At the moment Cleaner connects, she loses her balance and starts windmilling her arms (only delaying the inevitable). She tumbles backwards, then downwards, then out of frame.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. INVENTOR'S FRONT PORCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

[NO AUDIO TO THE DIALOGUE] The inventor is trying to console an irate cleaning lady. She's shaking her left fist and holding her aching head in her right hand. Her lips are moving rapidly (and angrily too).

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. INVENTOR'S BASEMENT (FLASHBACK)

The inventor finishes reinforcing the rat pen. Upon completion, he frustratedly throws his needle-nosed pliers into the corner, and storms off.

The Explorer Rat and others observe this with what almost looks like concern.

**FADE OUT TO BLACK
(OVER NARRATION).**

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Final Lesson: If you're attempting to brave the unknown, don't hassle the locals.

CUT TO:

INT. INVENTOR'S KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The Cleaner is back, doing what she does (must have gotten a raise...).

She's in the kitchen again, moving various appliances and wiping under, behind, and around them. It seems mundane at first.

We push in on an oven mitt that she's just set to one side. As she moves away from it, Explorer Rat's head pokes out from the opening. The rat looks in Cleaner's direction while Cleaner looks away, but as soon as Cleaner begins looking back, Explorer recedes into the mitt, out of sight. The Cleaner doesn't have a clue...

...But the Inventor does. We pull out to reveal the Inventor spying on the scene from the kitchen doorway. Again, he's intrigued.

FADE OUT.

INTERCUT. EXT. CITY/INT. BUILDING - DAY

A rat scurries into a gutter, in a calculated manner, invisible to the people occupying the heavily populated street.

BRIEFEST OF MONTAGES of many many rats, out and about in the city streets, but only where they are free from the eyes of the people.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So that was the solution. Not getting rid of the rats but harnessing an instinct they always had in them.

The rat bolts out of the gutter, unseen, and scurries up the downspout of an eavestrough.

The rat peeks out of a tear two-thirds up the side of the spout. Coast is clear. It leaps from the tear and disappears into a hole in the connecting wall where a brick is missing.

We push in on the wall of this building. We continue until we're looking at a bisection of it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

An instinct for unobtrusive coexistence, only expressible on a single condition.

REVEAL: The small space between the floorboards (of the floor we're on) and the ceiling of the floor below is full of rats and an abundance of dispenser pedestals. Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap...

We start to move up the bisection of the brick building. We see that in each space between floors, there is the same setup: rat homes and resource dispensers. We're picking up speed as we climb.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Well, that took care of the rats.
|BEAT| Now, what about the rest of
us?

We continue to swoosh upward along the bisection. Faster and faster. The building seems impossibly tall. Faster and faster. Then...

SWOOSH!

TITLE CARD

Scarcity

1.

INTERCUT. EXT. FOREST/EXT. LARGE COMPOUND/INT. LARGE COMPOUND - NIGHT

It's a standard northwestern forest (oaks, maples, poplars). It's dark, but we can make out much of the setting by moonlight.

We're moving through the bush and into a clearing; pushing in on a chain-link-surrounded compound (fence looks to only serve to keep non-human animals out). Ivy grows all across and two thirds up the fence; lush green by physics but grey to the eye under dark of night.

Pushing into and through the fence we see the ivy isn't as thick as it first appeared. It's just superimposed with what's inside the compound: a vast array of horticulture, stretching for miles in only an eighth-of-a-square-mile space (totally surreal).

High angle now on a lush potato patch, looking like a dragon's back. Back starts breaking out in boils...

REVEAL: 4 men - armed, goggled, and in camouflage - rising as they canter in lock-step toward an agrarian longhouse at centre of compound. They reach the end of the patch and halt, assuming a crouching formation. It's all rote so far, so, so far so good.

Leader, **NIKE 1**, commands with chopping, ostensive, gestures (*go! go!*); **NIKE 3** begins reconnoitering.

BEAT.

Nike 3 returns.

NIKE 1

[WHISPER]

Breach point, Nike 3?

NIKE 3

[WHISPER]

Negative. No entry.

NIKE 1

[WHISPER]

How?

NIKE 3

[WHISPER]

No doors.

NIKE 1

[WHISPER]

You're kidding... They weren't born in there.

NIKE 3

[WHISPER]

No *goddamn* doors.

NIKE 1

[WHISPER]

Contingencies? Nike 2?

NIKE 2 (MARTY) taps a finger to his right ear.

NIKE 2

[WHISPER]

Nike 2 to Kool-Aid. Intel's for crap. Repeat, intel's for crap. Need entry solution for wall-banger.

KOOL-AID (V.O.)

Negative. Door knocker's still a go.

NIKE 2

[WHISPER]

Get over yourself Kool-Aid. No door to knock on. Intel's no good.

KOOL-AID (V.O.)

I'm looking at 3 points of entry.

NIKE 2

Put down your farmer's almanac...

KOOL-AID (V.O.)

Drone has eyes on the structure.

CONTINUOUS:

INT. OPERATION'S COMMAND

The room's buzzing with tech and about a half dozen people operating it.

A large video monitor shows a thermal imaging of the compound. On monitor in mid-ground we see the ops team as a semi-amorphous, four-headed blob of heat (red at the center, fading outward to orange, further to yellow). In background, we see the longhouse. Blobs of heat are lining two-thirds of the left of the house (occupants appear to be in bunk beds, stacked 2x2).

KOOL-AID (SIM) stands, staring at the monitor screen, talking into a head-set.

KOOL-AID

You're wearing that non-regulation boonie you think makes you look like Billy from Predator...

On monitor, Nike 2's head twists backwards, near owl-like, trying to catch the distant drone.

KOOL-AID (CONT'D)

...Looking around now... Still looking...

Nike 2 catches sight of it.

KOOL-AID (CONT'D)

Now you got us, Nike 2.

We're on the monitor again, pushing in on a front view of the longhouse, doors clearly visible, thermal people still inside...

**CONTINUOUS
DISSOLVE:**

INT. LARGE COMPOUND

...Looking at a front view of longhouse (night vision POV of ops team). Doors are gone, maybe there are inhabitants behind those walls, maybe not. Then...

Doors start to materialize on the longhouse. BOOM! First door. BOOM! Second door. BOOM! Third door. BOOM! Fourth door. And, finally, BOOM! Fifth door.

All of ops team are reacting to this surreality, so it's no hallucination. Nike 2 takes off his goggles, still looks in disbelief.

NIKE 2

There's too many...

FINAL BOOM! A sourceless light engulfs the ops team. Team members bolt upright, silent, still, like they've been told to freeze (but nobody's told them to do anything).

They all stand, rigid, bathed in white light.

CONTINUOUS:

INT. OPERATION'S COMMAND

Monitor is solid red. Burning hot. Impossible. Kool-Aid stares at it silently. Then...

SWOOSH! Screen goes completely greyscale. Zero thermal energy. Impossible.

Everyone in the room is exercised by this, everyone but Kool-Aid. Some of the techs move about, going from terminal to terminal, some rapidly tap at keyboards, some flip switches.

Kool-Aid just peers at the screen, cooly, pensive. His eyes narrow a little.

FADE OUT.

INTERCUT. INT. BRIEFING ROOM/INT. CUBICLE SPACE (OUTSIDE BRIEFING ROOM) - DAY

A chyron reads:

CSIS Headquarters. Ottawa, Amerika
East

**'CSIS' is pronounced 'see-sis'.*

We're looking at your standard sterile boardroom.

There's a large elliptical table with agents of various investigative and intelligence organizations seated around it; about a couple dozen men and women of all shapes and sizes save for one anomalous similarity: they're all old.

SPECIAL AGENT DANA LORRE is the only person in the room standing. She's running the show. Show's almost over.

LORRE

Before we break, I'd like to reiterate, this interagency stuff is never easy at the best of times. Your cooperation on such short notice is greatly appreciated.

Some nodding, looks of facile approval, and that silent clapping of hands (that ends just before palms collide) are directed by various attendees at other attendees.

LORRE (CONT'D)

Alright, we reconvene this PM.

[POINTING AT AN ATF AGENT AND AN RCMP OFFICER]

ATF and RCMP will brief us on any new militia activity,

[POINTING AT TWO FBI AGENTS]

and FBI will give us what they got on the agrarians.

Lorre nods in conclusion as the seated slowly rise and begin dispersing. As they clear out we see **AGENT BART** sitting comfortably on a couch along the wall of the boardroom. Lorre catches sight of him and he rises to greet her.

BART

Surprise, surprise, they leave all
the bureaucrats...

LORRE

[SARCASTIC]

Horse's ass ya. Survivor bias.

BART

How so?

LORRE

21s to 45s are gone and if you're
older than that around here, all
you're good for is bureaucracy.

Bart nods, smirks.

|BEAT|

BART

Let's test that. I want on this.

Lorre looks a mix of heartened and desperate. She's
suppressing a sudden eagerness.

LORRE

A team? How? Just us fogeys left.

BART

Just me. Just gas money.

LORRE

Well hell, *just* getting you away
from corrupting our youth with
that 'virtues of shoe-leather'
bullshit of yours is reason
enough, but...

We scan around outside the briefing room. There's a large
number of assigned cubicles (they all contain personal
effects), but less than a third of the cubicles have
people in them (current occupants are all, again, old).

BART

[SYMPATHETIC]

Right.

|BEAT|

LORRE

Bring 'em back Bart.

FADE OUT:

3.

INT. KIM AND MARTY (NIKE 2) KOVAL'S HOUSE - DAY

We're in **KIM KOVAL**'s home office. We pan from the window featuring a nice sunny day, across to a desk and chair, chair ominously facing (faking?) away from us, past a wall with many certificates and diplomas.

KIM (O.S.)

You know, I wonder... I really do...

We keep panning, past a faux fireplace mantle holding all the photographic evidence necessary to prove Kim and Marty are in a loving marriage.

BART (O.S.)

What's that Kimmy?

We pan to a stop at Kim, lounging in an easy chair in full recline. She Looks blank.

KIM

Should I sit here, in this horrendous comfort with nothing to distract from the emotions I'm feeling... or, move my boney ass to that torture chamber of an office chair and let the pain in my coccyx offset the grief I feel for my husband?

Bart shifts in the arm chair he sits in, poised...

BART

Kim, statistically...

KIM

I know. Your guys made it more than clear: cults don't kill, they indoctrinate; terrorists advertise it; kidnappers ask for ransom... I also know that if he were still alive nothing on this earth would have kept him from coming home...

She chokes up a little. Bart moves to her.

KIM (CONT'D)

Real paradox isn't it?

He picks her up and hugs her, then pulls back, looks her in the eyes (his hands on her shoulders).

BART

He's just taking the long way home, Kimmy girl.

Kim snuffles, nods in a direction other than Bart's.

KIM

Well that makes that real consistent now...

She latches back on for a real hug. Bart consoles her.

KIM (CONT'D)

Bart, you need to do me a favor.

[HER TONE IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE PROFESSIONAL AS SHE GOES].

They said there were no traces of blood on the scene. Marty'd never go down without a fight. He's alive... H-he's alive, but there'd still be blood. They're using that substandard luminol... won't pick up a damn thing in the dirt.

She breaks away now. All business.

KIM (CONT'D)

Go to my lab, get the trisodium nitrophagic acid from my assistant. If there's really no struggle, then... then I don't know. And that's the point. We'll know we don't know what we're dealing with.

BART

Real good Kim. Count on me, huh.

Kim nods. Bart has a Columbo style *one-more-question* change of demeanor.

BART (CONT'D)

Kim, anything in the house to defend yourself with?

KIM

Yeah.

BART

Keep it that way.

KIM

What are you thinking?

BART

That's the problem, all paradox
like you said. 2 and 2 keep
summing to 5... or everything *but*
4. Can't be too careful in chaos.

KIM

I'll be careful. Now, if you
excuse me, I think I'm ready for
my office chair.

She hugs Bart a last time, and he heads for the door.

4.

INTERCUT. EXT. LARGE COMPOUND/INT. LARGE COMPOUND - DAY

Bart pulls a large tank out of his trunk. It turns out to be a pump and nozzle for applying various types of sprays. He pumps the plunger on the top of the tank as he approaches the compound.

Bart's POV: he sees the small agrarian operation through the gate of the chainlink fence as he approaches. It's as lush as ever despite no one tending to it.

His pumping is facing more and more resistance, when...

PSSST!

A bit of air and fluid start seeping out of the now pressurized applicator. Bart reflexively tightens the nozzle while not breaking any stride.

Still futzing, he crosses through the fence of the compound. The nozzle tightened to sufficiency, he looks up again.

Bart's POV: it's horticulture for miles. Lusher and lush.

He reacts to the surreality by shaking his head. He comes back to his senses, but it's those damn senses that are giving him the surreality to begin with... Maybe he'll just ignore it?

He trunches on, heading to the end of the potato patch nearest the longhouse.

He gets there, stops, then SPRITZ! SPRITZ! SPRITZ!, he applies the chemical Kim gave him. He gives the soil and nightshade leaves a good dousing.

TIME LAPSE:

INT. LARGE COMPOUND - DAY

The chemical has dried on the soil and nightshade. Nothing's illuminated. Bart takes out his phone.

He appears to be texting someone. [INSERT] CU on phone screen, reading:

Nothing.

BLIPPIDY BLIP! A response. [INSERT] CU on phone screen, reading:

Kimmy: Where'd you look?

CLICK CLICK CLICK... [INSERT] CU on phone screen, reading:

Last known location.

BLIPPIDY BLIP! [INSERT] CU on phone screen, reading:

Kimmy: Outta the field too long.
Check points of cover...

A look like, *Duh*, on Bart's face.

BART

Outta shape.

We dissolve over quick shots of Bart spraying a large tree stump, the longhouse perimeter, and some CUs of the nozzle spraying into camera (objects sprayed are not visible).

Bart observes the part of the longhouse perimeter nearest the op's team's last known location, chemical now dry.

He get's back on his phone (*CLICK CLICK CLICK...*)[INSERT]
CU on phone screen, reading:

Still nothing.

BLIPPIDY BLIP! [INSERT] CU on phone screen, reading:

Kimmy: so, what are we dealing with?

CLICK CLICK CLICK... [INSERT] CU on phone screen,
reading:

?

Then...

CRUNCH, CRACK!

Sounds like a twig under a heel. Somebody other than Bart is moving about; not alone.

His eye's go wide. His movement remains steady. He puts his phone away like he's just told his wife he'll pick up take-out on the way home. His left hand is inching closer towards the Glock holstered on his left side. Fingers get just close enough to feel the heat of the strap of the leather holster when... he changes tack. He starts moving his left hand towards his right side. Holstered on that side is a taser (you can tell by the yellow handle). He's drawing it out slowly, when...

VOICE (O.S.)

I'm not trying to sneak up on you
Bart. We just happen to be in the
same place at the same time facing
the same direction. By necessity,
at least one of us is out of the
other's direct line of sight...

Bart slips the taser back into the holster without any hesitation at all. He turns to face his interlocutor at a reasonable pace, at a reasonable face.

BART

Here to make up for getting your
team captured?

REVEAL: it's Sim (Kool-Aid), looking conservatively nondescript save for a half-pack pouch slung over his left shoulder and situated at his right breast.

Sim is *always* deadpan.

SIM

This is a test of yours. I read your file as soon as I heard you were investigating the disappearances. You're attempting to gauge both my level of competence and temper by insinuating that I've performed poorly. I pass the test if I say, calmly: *you saw the same data I did and would have shared the same intelligence if in my position.*

Sim's eyes narrow. Bart smirks.

BART

What else can you tell me? Based on your research, of course...

SIM

You work alone of late, but you're no misanthrope, so I'm uncertain as to what explains the change.

BART

I love people Sim... love 'em. But I call the shots. Alone's easiest when everyone's got to follow my orders.

SIM

Or, it's the fact you were taken off your last two field assignments for key lapses in judgment, likely caused by your tendency towards *obsessional neuroses*. Combine that with age related cognitive decline, highly common in sixty...

BART

[INTERRUPTING]

I thought you said you didn't know why I work alone.

SIM

I said I lacked *certainty* not that I lacked confidence in a hypothesis.

BART

[NO NONSENSE NOW]

You're in this, you have to do as I say.

SIM

No.

Taken aback (but in an indulgent mood again), Bart looks at Sim with an *is-that-so-?* expression.

BART

Is that so?

SIM

Indeed. I'm needed on this operation. To be less precise, someone who serves the function I do is needed and I'm the only one who serves that function at present. And, you won't refuse. Your psych files indicate that you're not confrontational. At worst, you may apply passive-aggressive tactics in the hope that I just... leave.

BART

Or maybe I apply *aggressive-aggressive* tactics for a change...

SIM

Yes, like that exactly. More insinuation. Your insinuating that you will cause harm is an attempt at making me feel threatened. You're *aggressing* my leaving through indirect, hence passive, language. *Passive-aggressive...* I'm going to collect some soil samples. These aren't tubers common to the region.

Sim walks away. Bart looks blank, then slightly epiphanic.

BART

Sim, you only said 'no' to *having* to do as I say, but not *having to* is different from not *willing to* isn't it?

SIM (O.S.)
[IN THE DISTANCE]

Precisely, Bart.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL AND DINER - NIGHT

WIDE ON MOTEL/DINER: in extreme background, Bart pulls up to his room and exits his car. He approaches the door to his motel room.

FADE OUT.

TIME CUT:

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL AND DINER - DAY

WIDE ON MOTEL/DINER: in extreme background, Bart's walking towards the diner door.

FADE OUT.

5.

INT. DINER - DAY

Bart sits at a booth looking over his notes and drinking a cup of coffee. *DING!* goes the bell over the diner door. He looks up just in time to see Sim entering.

We hang on Sim from Bart's POV:

Sim, holding what looks like a football under one arm, is talking to the cashier. He points at a cookie jar next to the till. Cashier responds from out of our earshot and Sim shakes his head 'no'. He puts a hand on the cookie jar and says something we as well can't hear in response to the cashier. Cashier looks confused. Sim continues talking. Cashier shrugs and nods as Sim hands over some cash. He puts the cookie jar, cookies and all, under his free arm and starts walking towards Bart.

He walks right past, slowing just enough to plop the football-looking object onto the table.

THUMP!

Bart narrows in on the object, his expression teetering on the edge of neutral. It's a potato. A really big potato.

Sim returns, cookie jar sans cookies and two thirds full of water. He sets it next to the potato, swipes a couple sets of silverware from the adjacent booth, and sits opposite Bart.

BART

Down on the farm again, Sim?
Anything new, besides the spud?

SIM

[UNRAVELLING THE NAPKIN FROM THE
SILVERWARE]

Soil composition is normal for the region, however inadequate to grow the types of horticulture we observed. Strain typings of flora came back inconclusive... are you going to use this?

Sim gestures to Bart's butter knife.

BART

Just the spoon. All typings?

Sim snags the knife.

SIM

All. Could be some new recombinant strains in development.

Sim tips the tater on its end and jams a knife into it at a 45 degree angle.

SIM (CONT'D)

This would explain both the robustness and why the typing was inconclusive.

Sim spins the tater 90 degrees and jams another knife in it.

BART

Something tells me our commune friends only eat organic.

Sim jams another in.

SIM

Have you ever observed any of these purported cultists directly?

BART

I've seen exactly what you've seen.

Jams a fourth.

SIM

Then nothing with your own eyes. Has anyone?

BART

Farm supply dealers say no one out of the ordinary making purchases.

Sim lowers the potato into the water of the cookie jar and props it up on its custom knife legs.

BART (CONT'D)

Grow operation that big requires a lot of supplies, and nobody saw anyone unusual?

SIM

Cultists near invariably send friendly, innocuous, representatives into nearby towns to ingratiate themselves to those communities. This absence is definitely an anomaly. |BEAT| There's also this.

Sim pulls a wad of fabric out of the front pouch of his sling pack and starts unfurling it.

BART

What's that?

SIM

That is a non-regulation 65% cotton, 35% polyester wide brim boonie hat in an 'operational camouflage' pattern. It was worn by Marty Koval the night of his team's disappearance.

BART

Where'd you find it?

SIM

Marty's last known location. The potatoes.

BART

I wouldn't have missed that.

SIM

Neither would I. Someone involved has been there in the interim.

|BEAT|

BART

We're not dealing with a bunch of eunuchs looking to hitch their wagons to a shooting comet now are we Sim?

SIM

Doubtful.

Bart shakes his head, looks a little mystified at present. He shakes his head again like he's changing his mind with his face. He's settled on something resolute.

BART

I've been meaning to check in on Kim. She should know about this.

He snags the boonie, slips out of the booth, grabs his raincoat and starts for the door.

Sim unzips the top of his sling pack. He pulls out a cookie previously from the cookie jar and starts eating it apathetically (he must really be enjoying it). Then...

BART (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well, come on if you're in this.

Sim is activated by this. He puts the half cookie on the table and grabs his potato as he slips out the booth.

CUT TO:

6.

INT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S HOUSE - DAY

WIDE on Bart and Sim sitting side by side on a small couch in Kim's living room.

The cookie-potted potato sits on the coffee table in mid-ground (curiously, some sprouting is already occurring). Sim is eating another cookie. They're both listening to Kim.

KIM (O.S.)

I'll probably pull nothing off
Marty's hat but pesticides and
potato bug feces, but I appreciate
you letting me work this up
myself.

Sim looks to Bart in realization, then back to Kim.

SIM

Eminence grise.

BART

What?

SIM

Grey eminence. An advisor who
works behind the scenes and
without formal recognition... But
I digress.

Kim and Bart look to each other then back to Sim.

(In perfect unison)

KIM

You don't digress.

BART

You don't digress.

SIM

Be that as it may, I'm going to
change the subject with my next
statement... This tea is very
pleasing to the palate.

KIM

[SLIGHTLY ANNOYED]

How's the cookie?

SIM

Dry.

KIM

I can tell by all the crumbs.

BART

Alright alright! Focus. Kimmy,
look, we don't want to be getting
our hopes too high but we know
damn well Marty's hat was no
accident.

We see that Kim has taken to absent-mindedly caressing
the hat, lovingly (it's her husband's after all). She
catches what she's doing and immediately stops (it's
evidence after all).

BART (CONT'D)

Suspects are trying to communicate
with us. To what end...

We're on Sim now (our transition to him, a little
jarring). His up to this point unfaltering attention
drifts away from the conversation. He's fixating on an
unseen object.

BART (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...I don't know.

REVEAL: a display pedestal for an outdoor weather station
is the object. It features indoor/outdoor temperature,
humidity, current wind speed, gusting, rain gauge, the
works. Sim is focused on the indoor temperature.

BART (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But they have no leverage if they
have no...

CU on the weather pedestal. Indoor temperature reading is
flashing off and on (a change is pending). It goes from:

23.1

To

23.5

BART (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...hostages.

Sim looks to the window. Window's closed and curtains are
motionless under a floor vent. He looks back to the
pedestal. It's flashing again.

KIM (O.S.)

Maybe we need to read between the
lines, so to speak...

Indoor temperature goes from:

23.5

To

23.8

KIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...Forensics on the hat could get us more of their '*message*'.

Sim focuses on Kim and Bart once more.

BART

We can only hope Kimmy. I'm optimistic if you are.

KIM

The only thing keeping me going...

BART

You can keep Liz and I going this Sunday with those culinary skills of yours.

KIM

You putting me to work?

BART

Just providing the artist a canvas.

KIM

For Liz, hungry man.

BART

Then it's a date.

KIM

[SLIGHTLY WISTFUL]

Thanks for this.

Bart rises abruptly. Sim emulates this.

BART

Well, gotta get back at it.

Kim rises in response.

KIM

Me too.

Sim nods at the two of them; slightly pleasant look of agreement on his face.

Bart reaches out and takes both of Kim's extending hands in his.

BART

Here's to hoping, Kimmy girl.

CUT TO:

EXT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S HOUSE - DAY

Sim and Bart are walking to the car. Sim is minding his tater-in-a-vat as he goes. He's also exercised by Kim and Bart's sociability.

SIM

You just demanded she cook for you.

BART

Hell Sim, she's a literal chef, degree and everything.

Bart wrenches on the car door.

SIM

Of which, you're taking advantage.

BART

If fishing would take her mind off things, I'd take her fishing.

Bart's paused entering the automobile. He's leaning on the side of it, elbows on the roof.

BART (CONT'D)

What do you do to take your mind off of all that's going on?

Without missing a beat...

SIM

Horticulture.

Bart looks down to the potato and scoffs; he enters the car. Spud's sprouts are even more numerous and elongated, by the way.

CONTINUOUS:

INT. BART'S CAR

Bart's sitting in the car, waiting for Sim to seat himself. Bart wants closure on the discussion though.

BART

No, Farmer Joe, I mean, what is your primary occupation outside of work?

Sim seats himself.

SIM

Horticulture.

BART

[SLIGHTLY FRUSTRATED]

For more than the last few hours...

SIM

Computational linguistics.

Sim finishes pulling the door shut.

BART

Well, color me surprise...

SLAM.

SIM

[INTERRUPTING]

Don't change your demeanor as I speak to you Bart. Understand?

He does.

BART

I do.

SIM

Does Kim have any pets?

BART

No.

SIM

There's somebody in the house with her.

BART

How do you know?

SIM

It's 20.4 degrees outside. It was 21.1 degrees inside Kim's when we arrived. No windows open. No climate control. Start driving and circle around the block.

Bart puts the car in drive and starts it moving.

SIM (CONT'D)

We came in, temperature increased to 23.1 degrees in the living room. No serious fluctuation for 9 minutes, then a gradual increase to 23.8 degrees. That puts either a smaller body in the living room or a body our size in an adjacent room. Stop here.

Car stops in front of a fenceless house.

BART

Sure? You're Sure?

SIM

This is something you should bet on.

CONTINUOUS:

EXT. KIM AND MARTY'S BLOCK

Bart and Sim burst out of the car and move swiftly through the front yard of the fenceless house, around the side, and through to the backyard.

Crossing the alley and into Kim's backyard, Bart pulls his taser.

BART

Minimal-lethal.

SIM

All I carry.

Bart breaks away from Sim and heads to the left side of the house.

BART

Wait for me to get around front and we go in together.

Sim nods. Bart disappears around the side. Sim pulls his taser, when...

KIM'S SCREAM! is heard from inside the house.

Sim can hear the front door smashed on, SMASH! He tries turning the backdoor knob. It's locked. There's another SMASH! followed by the THUMP of the swinging front door hitting the adjacent wall. Bart has breached. There's no time to coordinate. SMASH! Sim's through the backdoor the same way.

CONTINUOUS:

INT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S HOUSE

SIM'S POV: Kitchen to the left, dining room to the right, hallway in the center.

OVER SIM'S SHOULDER: Sim heads down the hallway. He's loping briskly. The hallway T's off straight into the living room and perpendicular towards the master bedroom and bath. Sim hangs a right just as a piercing white light explodes from around the bend.

SIM'S POV: it's Bart rushing into the bedroom, arm over his eyes to protect from the blinding light. He disappears into the bedroom.

BART (O.S.)

Kim!

SWOOSH!

Sim enters the bedroom so fast he has to push off the door frame opposite him just to avoid smashing through it.

SIM

Bart!

Bart's keeled over on the floor, rubbing his eyes. He slowly rises with the help of Sim. He blinks profusely until he can see his surroundings well enough.

BART

She was here. She's here!

Kim and Marty's gun lays on the bed of the otherwise empty room.

FADE OUT TO BLACK.

SMASH CUT TO:

8.

INT. LORRE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bart barges through the office door. Sim in tow.

BART

They're taking civilians now!

Lorre makes herself rigid in her chair, poised.

LORRE

We don't know that yet.

BART

They took Kim Koval.

LORRE

And Kim Koval's been doing everything but drawing a CSIS paycheck. This isn't outside their M.O.

BART

Like hell!

LORRE

[IN RECITATION]

*This isn't outside their M.O.
Bart.*

Lorre's up and moving to Sim. She pushes him out the office door and shuts it on him all in one fluid motion. She turn's back to Bart in reproach.

LORRE (CONT'D)

[SLIGHTLY HUSHED] I don't know if you noticed, but ever since the public caught wind we *couldn't stop a few moonie kidnappers*, the Prez and PM have been *just* itching to implement that *Emergencies Act* of theirs.

BART

I don't know if you noticed Dana, but this *is* an emergency.

LORRE

Listen to you!

BART

Maybe just a one-and-done with the EA? Send in the heavy artillery and get our people back. One-and-done.

LORRE

Except that's not what's going to happen and you know damn well that's not what's going to happen. It'll be soldiers in the streets and a spook at every dinner table and that's a solution to nothing and that's a solution to nothing in perpetuity.

BART

Dana...

LORRE

Nothing Bart.

BART

Goddamn it...

LORRE

Goddamn it what?

BART

Goddamn it you're right.

| BEAT |

LORRE

For your sake, I'm glad to hear it.

| BEAT |

BART

When do you meet with committee?

LORRE

Friday after next. | BEAT | I won't lie to them if our laws won't fix this.

BART

Sim and I have a few moves left.

LORRE

Won't lie.

Bart slouches into a guest chair and holds his tilting head up with the index and middle finger of his left hand.

FADE OUT.

8.

INT. HUNTING STAND - NIGHT

The hunting stand sits like a treehouse for do-it-yourself carnivores, only, Bart and Sim aren't hunting (at least not in the conventional way).

They sit facing the agrarian compound from about 300 yards out. Various types of binoculars and scopes are strewn about; some food wrappers; two thermoses; Sim's potato (hairier than ever).

Stakeout's been going on a while.

Sim finishes eating a cookie. He's looking pensive (even for him).

SIM

What do you do to distract yourself from all this?

BART

Fishing.

SIM

So, your example the other day was semi-autobiographical.

BART

Damn right. Wife and I have a cabin just across the border. She's there now and I'll be joining her when all of this is said and done and we have the receipts. Do you have any family in-country?

SIM

No. They're all elsewhere.

BART

Well, get *anyone* you care about
out of here until this *Act*
nonsense is off the table. Plenty
of room at the cabin.

You'd almost swear Sim looks a little charmed by the
casual swiftness with which Bart offered up his house and
home.

SIM

Thank you, Bart.

BART

Don't mention it. |BEAT| What are
we dealing with Sim? Ghosts?

SIM

If we keep ruling out the simpler
of consistent explanations, that
may very well be.

BART

Sim, I didn't take you for a
spiritualist.

SIM

The set of things I take to exist
grows with every phenomenon I
can't explain by appeal to the
things already in the set.

BART

[SMILING]

Huh?

SIM

If we can't answer the question,
what's going on? by appeal to the
physical, we'll have no choice but
to appeal to the non-physical;
what is colloquially referred to
as *the spiritual*.

BART

But we're not there yet?

SIM

Not yet.

Bart nods, looks out into the distance.

BART

Rosabelle believe.

Sims eyes narrow.

SIM

I must admit Bart, I am at a loss as to what that expression means.

BART

Harry Houdini. Never believed in the spiritual. Neither did his wife, Bess. Nevertheless, they made a promise to each other: should there be an afterlife, then whoever died first would try their damndest to contact the other from beyond the grave. To ensure no trickery, and that the source of contact be no one other than Harry or Bess, they came up with a code phrase that only they knew, something only the pre-deceased could and would say to the survivor: *Rosabelle believe.*

SIM

I see...

A flicker of lights in the compound. Bart and Sim snap to it. Both on their scopes.

BART

Anything?

SIM

Nothing, just the... wait... a figure in the corn stalks.

SCOPE'S POV: we can just barely make out a head and shoulders above the field of corn. A light turns on and is swathing a blue beam back and forth at waste-level of the figure; light obstructed by the stalks.

BART

I got you now...

Sim looks to Bart with more concern than we've ever seen him possess to date.

Bart get's up.

SIM

Bart! You know it's almost
certainly a trap. The pattern's
identical.

Bart pauses his lowering of himself onto the ladder that
exits the stand.

BART

I'm counting on it.

Sim moves to follow Bart. He's stopped. His leg is cuffed
to the bolt-attached bench on which he's been sitting.
Bart see's Sim struggle.

BART (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Sim. You're needed here.

SIM

That is tactically an error. I'm
the only person capable...

BART

The last thing I want is one of
your rationales.

BART (CONT'D)

You are not capable...

BART (CONT'D)

[INTERRUPTING]

Sim!

SIM

Then just tell me why.

|BEAT|

BART

Rosabelle believe.

Bart's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARGE COMPOUND - NIGHT

We're over Bart's shoulder, following him. It's like a virtual redo of Marty's team cantering toward the longhouse, only we're following a single - very dogged, very obsessive - man.

CONTINUOUS:

INT. HUNTING STAND

Sim sits calmly.

He's surveying his surroundings.

Scanning. Scanning. Then...

He hops to action. He grabs the plastic garbage bag he and Bart were using and dumps out its contents. He smooths it, then folds it over and over again until he has a 1/3 x 2 x 18 inch strip. He wedges the plastic strip between his ankle and the metal shackle. So far so good. He then removes his taser, pulls the pincer/projectile chunk off the tip and starts submitting the chain of his cuffs to the taser's voltage.

CONTINUOUS:

INT. LARGE COMPOUND

Bart's through the gate. Even in his doggedness he has to adjust to the immensity of the *inside* of the compound compared to the *outside*.

He's back on the figure in the corn now. Bart's canter turns to a thumping jog.

The figure, dark and amorphous, appears to catch sight of Bart and, the second he does, becomes bathed in white light. The white of the light keeps the figure obscured but present the same way the dark of night did. The figure starts to dematerialize...

BART

That's right, you pretend to run away now...

He's now sprinting towards the cornfield when suddenly stopped.

A familiar white light bathes him. He welcomes it with his arms open.

BART (CONT'D)

Yes.

He starts to dematerialize, only slower. The dematerializing almost appears to be hesitating. Bart notices this hesitation, looking slightly dissuaded, when...

Sim pops up behind the dematerializing Bart and jams his taser into the space between Bart's neck and shoulder - BZZZT! Bart immediately crumbles and the dematerialization reverses.

White light is on Sim now. He looks down to a fully rematerialized Bart.

SIM

I'm sorry Bart.

Naturally, it's Sim who's now dematerializing.

Bart looks on, immobile.

BART

[LABORED]

No.

SWOOSH! Sim is gone.

BART (CONT'D)

No!

FADE OUT.

9.

INT. HEARING ROOM - DAY

Lorre sits at a panel of microphones in one of those impossibly wooden (in terms of both structure and humor) parliamentary hearing rooms. She's getting soft-boiled by a bunch of bureaucrats who think they're grilling her.

SENATOR

Do you *ultimately* accept
responsibility for the many
catastrophic errors committed by
operatives under your command?
Just a *yes* or *no* will suffice.

LORRE

No.

SENATOR

You don't accept responsibility?

LORRE

No. I don't accept that *just a yes or no will suffice*. Your loaded questions mean no real questions at all. There wasn't a single catastrophic error, let alone *many*.

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Ms. Lorre, this committee will be the judge of what is and isn't a *real question...*

LORRE

[SLIGHTLY HUSHED]

No it won't. People with good sense will.

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Excuse me?

LORRE

You know, convention dictates that when we come into these *lampoonings of the concept of formality* we extend to you our utmost respect. Yet, in so doing, we're only continuously and futilely extending that respect to a group of people so cosmically inept they couldn't muster the conversational decorum of an ass crack flappin' in a popcorn fart. I've given you, all told, one and a half hours worth of my respect. No more.

The limited audience to this hearing, themselves decorous, nevertheless emit a loud collective murmur. They can't help discussing what just occurred.

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Order! Order!

Things eventually get quiet enough.

COMMITTEE CHAIR (CONT'D)

Ms. Lorre, I have every mind to...

SENATOR

[FAUX INTERRUPTING]

Madam Chairperson... Madame Chair... I apologize for interrupting you, and I wholeheartedly condemn this blatant disregard for the sanctity of these proceedings - as I'm sure you do too - but, for the sake of not allowing any further attempts at derailing this hearing, and allowing the good people of this country the closure they so sorely deserve, I would love to be able to conclude my line of inquiry.

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Of course Senator.

SENATOR

Thank you Madam Chairperson.

[HE TURNS HIS ATTENTION BACK TO LORRE]

Ok Agent Lorre, brass tacks then... Is it not true that we are permitted, nay obligated, to declare a state of emergency and invoke the *Emergencies Act* if indeed *there is an emergency and there is no pre-existing legislation that allows for the ending of this emergency?*

LORRE

That is the exact wording of the legislation, yes.

SENATOR

Are we in an emergency?

LORRE

Yes.

SENATOR

And, is there any existing piece of legislation that will allow us to end this emergency?

A conspicuous hush now... Maybe it existed prior to this question, maybe not, but we're aware of it now.

Lorre hesitates. She glances over her shoulder.

REVEAL: Bart is in the audience. He's looking right into Lorre's eyes at present, imploringly. He ever so subtly shakes his head.

Lorre looks away. Still hesitant. She takes a deep breath and leans into the microphone.

|BEAT|

LORRE

No.

Dull murmur immediately swells again.

CHAIR

Order. Order!

FADE OUT.

10.

**The following scenes play out as a montage. The scenes feature no audible dialogue or sound effects.*

EXT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING - DAY

Middle-aged soldiers pour out of armored personnel trucks just in front of the parliament building (an additional several floors have been added to parliament; a perfect replica of the White House appears to sit atop it). The soldiers assume a formation and begin marching down Wellington Street.

INT. COMMUNE COMPOUND - DAY

A dozen or so commune residents (men and women, some in their teens) walk, hands up, towards several dozen soldiers. Soldiers are aiming their guns at them (fingers on triggers). We see that the many buildings of the compound, visible behind the surrendering people, are at various stages of burning down.

Then...

A lone resident bursts through the surrendering members of his cohort, running towards the soldiers.

He appears to be holding something partly constituted of an elongated black cylinder.

A soldier in command shouts something. All soldiers open fire on the people, cutting them to shreds.

CU ON WHAT RESIDENT WAS HOLDING: appears to be legal documents of some kind (doesn't matter anymore), bound in a black leather folder, now spattered in blood.

INT. KITCHEN

A mother holds her infant in her left arm, reading a document held in her right hand.

CU: Portion of the note that reads

We regret to inform you of a
freezing of funds per the
following account:

FAMILY SAVER SAVINGS ACCOUNT (ACCT
*****7491).

We deliberately pan across each word of: 'freezing of funds'.

CU: Portion of the note that reads:

Funds will be made available again
pending authorization from The
Financial Transactions and Reports
Analysis Center of Amerika East
(FINTRAA).

CU: Portion of the note that reads:

...cannot provide any further
details as to when...

The mother cries.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Soldiers in full tactical gear are handcuffing a pastor and several of his congregants. Worshipers are all lined up on the grass in front of the church; yet-to-be-cuffed hands on heads, cuffed hands behind backs.

EXT. LARGE COMPOUND - DAY

Soldiers line the outside of the compound. It's now demarcated by a five foot swath, dyed orange, cut out of the surrounding foliage. None are crossing the line. Then... a single soldier absent-mindedly backs up just a step onto the orange and is immediately and brutally reprimanded by a superior.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

We start on a 3/4 top-down perspective of a protest and push in. As the scene becomes clearer, we see that soldiers, in full tactical gear, have formed a human blockade and are pushing back the protestors.

The soldiers are using unfinished wooden batons to crack the skull of any protestor who get close enough. Periodically, plumes of vaporized eye irritant burst out at the protestors.

It's a sea of waving peace sign placards (and similar symbolism) colliding with violently swung batons. It's not subtle, but it is a documentary at this point.

INT. LORRE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bart stands in front of Lorre's desk, reaching around himself. He finds what he's looking for and tosses the material onto the desk. It's his company ID and holstered gun.

Lorre pushes them back towards him and pulls a bottle of Jameson from a desk drawer.

Bart collapses in the office chair closest him.

FADE OUT.

**End of montage.*

11.

INT. BART'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bart stumbles from his kitchen into his living room. He's holding a tall weeping glass of brown liquor in his hand. He's singing in a slurred, despondent, manner.

BART

*Show me zha way to go home...
home... home...*

He moves to an easy chair and plops down.

BART (CONT'D)

I'm tarred an' a wanna go to bed

[TAKES A SIP].

Our view of him is obscured by the back of the chair. However, we can make out his right arm holding the drink and the fact that it's going up and down up and down, slowly draining itself out.

BART (CONT'D)

*Hash a glass a beer about an hour
ago an' shish gone right to my
head*

[SIP]...

We're circling around the back of Bart's chair, clockwise, coming around to his left side.

We circle around to CU on Bart's expressionless, motionless, face, then...

BART (CONT'D)

[BURSTING INTO IT A LITTLE FASTER
THIS TIME]

*Soooooooo! Show me the way to go
home... home... home.*

We slowly pan down and along his left arm.

BART (CONT'D)

*I'm tarred an' a' wanna go ta
bed...*

REVEAL: couched in Bart's left hand is a digital thermometer, insulated from the heat of his palm by a torn piece of potholder. It reads:

22.3

Digital readout starts to flash.

BART (CONT'D)

*Had a glash a' beer 'bout an hour
ago an' shish gone ryessh to my
head...*

It now reads:

22.9

Bart quickly downs the remainder of his drink. BURP!.

He get's up again, wobbly, and goes back towards the kitchen.

**Quick cuts over the following shots:* Bart dumps a little crushed ice in his glass; pours some whiskey in the glass; takes a sip; starts walking back to his easy chair.

He's shuffling and minding his weepy glass at the same time; looks like a man concentrating real hard on drunk work that's a sober man's leisure.

He shuffles, shuffles, shuffles, then...

He spins, quick silver like; sober as anything. He's spinning and reaching out. He grabs his quarry.

We're over the shoulder of an apparent figure coming up behind Bart, Bart now holding him by the lapels. There's an immediate recognition in Bart's face.

REVEAL: it's Marty Koval.

Bart looks him up and down, disgust building as he goes. Marty's wearing an earthy mint-colored fabric. It's flowing, casual, looks really really comfortable, yet formal; pajamas you'd wear to the prom.

As unique as the fabric is, what jumps out at us most is the platinum insignia Marty wears around his collar, bowtie-like. The insignia consists of a triple infinity loop. Each of the three loops contain a unique shape; in the first, a stalk of wheat; in the second, a drop of water; in the third, a house.

BART (CONT'D)

What's this getup? |BEAT| It was a cult.

Marty smiles.

MARTY

[TRANQUIL]

No.

Bart eases his grip a little. He's even more suspicious, but easing into a sort of resignation.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Thanks for looking in on Kim.

Marty pushes three fingers into his insignia, depressing all three symbols of the infinity loops. A familiar white light emerges.

Marty nods goodbye to Bart and starts to dematerialize.

Bart's not ready to say goodbye. He's back in field agent mode. He sees that the white light is focused into the insignia. Good enough. He comprehends. He let's go of the lapels and snatches the insignia, breaking it free from Marty's collar.

He backs away, himself now dematerializing.

Marty reaches out for the insignia, but... SWOOSH! Bart's gone.

**CONTINUOUS SMASH
CUT TO:**

INT. LARGE COMPOUND - NIGHT

BART'S POV: he's in a white out for just a second then, SWOOSH! He's at the gate of the agrarian compound, lurching forward.

He has just a split second for these surroundings to become recognizable when, once again, SWOOSH!

**CONTINUOUS SMASH
CUT TO:**

12.

INT. THE INVENTOR'S OFFICE

Bart rematerializes for what seems like a more extended stay this time. He looks around, taking in as much information as he can before god-knows-what happens.

The environment he's in is ultramodern (to 21st century eyes, anyway). It's an office space that's neither sterile nor homey, just perfectly accommodating. The surfaces and fixtures are translucent; not necessarily steel, nor stone, nor glass, nor wood, but translucent; almost like they could be made of all of the aforementioned materials but with a coat of light amber just for surface's sake.

There's no information (or information movers) anywhere. No video monitors, speakers, computers, outlets... just objects that serve *immediate* functions, like tables and chairs.

THE INVENTOR (O.S.)

You figured it out.

Bart turns in time to see The Inventor (remember him?) walking through the frictionless sliding door of his office. He looks about 20 years older than when we last saw him. He's wearing the same style of earthy robes as Marty, insignia on his collar too.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

[SLIGHTLY WISTFUL]

You remind me of someone I used to know.

Bart looks The Inventor up and down.

BART

Why-my getting the impression you brought me here to audition for *Manson Family: The New Batch*?

THE INVENTOR

Brought? You walked right through our door... for what? The third time now?

BART

Door? You're squatting on crown land.

THE INVENTOR

Crown land... What a dandy vestige. Your *PM*, he may be a fop but he's no royalty. And your *Prez*... He's a different entity altogether.

Bart looks discerningly at The Inventor. Whoever this guy is, he knows Amerika East politics.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

Let's pretend there's legitimacy in people not living on or working the land - nor maintaining it so that other's might some day - nevertheless staking a claim to it... We weren't on any land, crown or otherwise.

BART

Nonsense! I got the goddamn potato to prove it.

THE INVENTOR

And you can keep it. We've got plenty here.

BART

Here?

The Inventor waves his hand in front of some amber panels along the office walls. The opacity of the panels dissolves into transparency, allowing a view of the inventor's home.

THE INVENTOR

My home. Everyone's home.

Through the windows we see many tall buildings made out of the same translucent amber as the office fixtures. There's also a tremendous amount of *bucolia* all around this cityscape; trees, shrubs, grass... all flowery or fruity or both. What we're looking at, if it's no illusion, is no present-day Earth either. There aren't flying cars or holographic images or any such things, but there is an awful lot of teleporting. People are beaming in and out of existence, but curiously too, many are moving about on old-fashioned automobiles; electric scooters, bicycles, the odd sedan, and a complex monorail system. However, it's like they're using these devices for recreation, less to get from A to B. One citizen hops off a bicycle and teleports away as the bicycle dematerializes, disappearing too.

Bart walks up to the window and gives it a bap. The Inventor chuckles.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

It's not a video monitor Mr. Bart.
As your saying goes, *what you see is what you get*.

The Inventor looks to Bart's hand that did the bapping. He's still holding onto Marty's insignia.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

But... you've been *getting* a lot more than you've been *seeing* haven't you? |BEAT| If you have a minute, I can make things a lot clearer for you.

Bart swooshes a finger along the window. He rubs this finger to his thumb.

BART

As many as it takes. Answers and my people, by hook or by crook.

THE INVENTOR

We should start out then...

CUT TO:

14.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Bart follows The Inventor through the train station. It's a similar setting as the office, only with amenities necessary for travel by rail.

Many people are milling about. The odd person teleports in, the odd person teleports out (some, seemingly just to board a train and travel off somewhere else). The Inventor notices Bart staring confusedly at this behavior.

THE INVENTOR

We still like to take the scenic route from time to time... for nostalgia's sake.

A woman recognizes The Inventor and approaches him. She's all smiles and her hands are extended. The Inventor reciprocates. He extends his hands to hers and they shake in salutation. Curiously, it's the same greeting that Bart uses with Kim (of which, Bart doesn't fail to notice).

BART

Your *good old days* aren't even our *next century*.

THE INVENTOR

Our nostalgia is essential for you to understand. |SHORT BEAT|. This is no illusion.

The Inventor smiles. He points at a doorway that's periodically alternating from the default amber translucence to a shimmering aqua blue.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

This one's ours.

CUT TO:

INT. MONORAIL CAR - DAY

Bart looks out the window of his car in curiosity. He's gathering as much data as he can, so to speak. The train blasts out of the city limits and into the country; instant lushness again. The Inventor notices Bart's pensiveness.

THE INVENTOR

I admire that of your people.

BART

What's that?

THE INVENTOR

Your incredulity. Your tendency to demand proof... What I don't admire is your equal tendency to not know a proof when you see it, or worse, know it, but not alter your thoughts in the face of it... I'll never understand this.

Bart chuckles. He's a little more relaxed looking at the endless bucolia (a *little* more relaxed).

BART

Most of the time we're not asking for proof. We're just delaying being taken down a path of understanding we don't wish to tread.

[A LITTLE MELANCHOLY]

Give us the gift of fire and the first thing we'll do is burn our clothes to stay cold a little longer...

THE INVENTOR

We used to have that problem.

BART

And I thought you said you couldn't understand...

THE INVENTOR

I couldn't. I never understood it then, and I don't understand it now. Lucky for us, one day, this tendency just disappeared. We got to a point where the only thing we didn't have in abundance was *knowledge*. It quickly became our only novelty. The only thing that could be of any value, therefore. Lucky, again, the only thing that *could* be of value happened to be the thing of greatest value... and we'd just been taking it for granted all this time.

Bart nods. They both turn to the window now.

|BEAT|

Then...

A metal hand grabs Bart by the shoulder! He lurches back in defense.

METAL MAN (O.S.)

Can. I. Offer. You. A. Beverage?

REVEAL: a 'classic' automaton intended to serve customers like it's *the old days*. It has The Inventor's people's equivalent of a *Coca-Cola* logo on its chest.

BART

Jeez. *Klaatu Barada Nikto* metal man!

He waves the automaton away (*no thanks!*) then notices The Inventor looking intrigued by this altercation.

BART (CONT'D)

It's from a movie... a film... motion picture... *The Day the Earth Stood Still*...

THE INVENTOR

Oh I know. According to your people, it's required viewing for someone in my position.

BART

Well, that's slightly reassuring... you reminding them of *Klaatu*...

THE INVENTOR

Is it? The extraterrestrials in that movie were total *thugs*... your word I believe...

BART

[TAKEN ABACK]

What?

THE INVENTOR

This is our stop.

CUT TO:

INTERCUT. EXT. BUCOLIC SETTING/INT. LARGE COMPOUND - DAY

Bart and The Inventor trudge through what appears to be some grassland. The foliage is waste high, a little encumbering but Bart doesn't seem to notice since he's still hung up on what The Inventor said earlier.

BART

What do you mean *thugs*?

THE INVENTOR

Mr. Bart, those extraterrestrials were totalitarians and little else. Spying on earthlings, turning the Earth into a compliant police state, fearful of what no earthling had even done yet... and for no good reason.

BART

No good! They were developing nuclear bombs to use outside Earth's atmosphere.

They tromp out of the waste-high grass and into some willow bluffs. The bluffs are about twelve feet high and ten diameters across. It looks like they're navigating their way through cotton candy bales the size of the Statue of Liberty's head.

THE INVENTOR

They had small nuclear arms. That's nothing at a galactic scale. The span of time it would take earthlings to figure out how to maneuver a nuclear weapon outside of the solar system would be inordinately large...

can you even do this now?

BART

If we hadn't de-proliferated...

THE INVENTOR

You sound almost disappointed...
The chances that advanced beings
like Klaatu's couldn't easily
intercept such weapons is
virtually none. |BEAT| They
conquered a child's treehouse for
fear of BB guns and tricycles.

They tromp out of the bluffs and into something equally
as high as the grass they previously walked through (but
greener and with broader leaves). Bart has become too
rapt to notice.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

The more principled response would
be, *one*: understand the minimal
threat the earthlings posed and,
two: leave the Earthlings to their
own devices while easily
insulating '*we of the other*
planets' from any threat
Earthlings may ever, but likely
will never, pose.

Good natured and jovial up to this point, The Inventor
stops the walk again and gets a little more *matter of*
fact with Bart.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

Rule number one: *unless all you're*
offering are options they can take
or leave, leave them alone. |BEAT|
We're here. Look familiar?

REVEAL: The potato patch of the agrarian compound.

BART

What the f...

THE INVENTOR

[INTERRUPTING]

Just in time!

Marty comes bursting through what appears to be a portal
of some sort just before the fence on the other side of
the compound. He materializes out of nowhere.

BART

[NOTICING MARTY]

What the f...

FADE OUT

15.

INT. LARGE COMPOUND

Bart stares at Marty. Just stares. Not up and down. He's done with that. He's looking Marty in the eyes; has been for a while.

|BEAT|

BART

How they been treating you Marty?

Marty looks a little disappointed.

MARTY

Bart, you talk to me like I'm a hostage.

BART

By the looks of things, a hostage of your own mind.

MARTY

[CHUCKLES]

Again with this cult stuff. There's. No. Indoctrination.

THE INVENTOR

Not quite true, Marty. You've believed everything we told you without question. You should be more critical...

MARTY

[CHUCKLES AGAIN]

And I told you, I went with my gut on this one. Never steered me wrong yet.

BART

[DISRUPTIVE]

Aren't the two of you cute.

THE INVENTOR

Mr. Bart,

[POINTING AT THE GATE IN THE
CHAINLINK FENCE]

you can walk through that pathway,
back into your world any time you
want. You can take a step
backwards and be here in our world
any time too. That's why the
pathway is here. That's why we
took the scenic route. No smoke.
No mirrors. This is what I wanted
to show you.

BART

And this is where I try to leave
and you offer me something I can't
live without, only I gotta move in
with *all a' ya* if I wanna live
with *what I can't live without?*

MARTY

You already have *it*, Bart.

Bart looks at Marty quizzically. Marty jangles the
insignia half-hanging from Bart's grip. Bart
instinctively tosses it back to Marty.

Marty shakes his head with a little more disappointment.
He looks at Bart and, in a significant gesture, he opens
his empty hand and presses a single button on the
insignia with his other. A new insignia materializes out
of thin air into the open, empty, hand. Marty puts his
own insignia back onto his collar and hands the new one
to Bart.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Go ahead, try it. Just think of
whatever your heart desires most
in this world and press the
button.

Bart smirks, seriously thinks about it for a second...
then... stone faced. He opens his palm and drops the
insignia into the dirt.

BART

I work for a living.

MARTY

Then work for a *life* Bart, not tokens.

BART

I will when this caper's blown open.

THE INVENTOR

[PATIENT] What more can we help you with Mr. Bart?

BART

You've been rounding up our best. Intelligence... special ops...

THE INVENTOR

They came to us.

BART

Why only the young?

THE INVENTOR

That's who you sent. And you're here aren't you?

MARTY

Gotcha there Bart. What are ya now, sixty f...

BART

[INTERRUPTING]

You're squatting.

THE INVENTOR

We certainly are not. You're a guest of ours right where you stand. That pathway is immaterial, a substanceless portal between your world and ours. Only a fool would call that trespassing.

MARTY

Oh, believe me, there are people fool enough...

BART

[INTERRUPTING]

Still functions on Amerikan
soil...

THE INVENTOR

So you're telling me, we select the least obtrusive scenario in the least productive region of your *massive* country taking up literally no space whatever giving any earthling who wishes their heart's greatest desires and you attack us guns a blazing where in return we give the attackers *their* heart's greatest desires and you, in response, deem us an existential threat? ... Worst case scenario of leaving us alone was free produce for everyone... *Enjoy! But no!* You declare a national emergency. |BEAT| And I thought our old-world leaders were bad...

MARTY

Well, in fairness, our governments never did take kindly to self-sufficient types just minding their own business between bouts of excessive charity...

Bart looks a little sullen, a little embarrassed in light of the facts.

BART

I guess when you stack the facts up like that...

MARTY

According to how the world is?

THE INVENTOR

You're being given *the gift of fire* here Mr. Bart...

BART

Not so fast... Part two of the mission remains incomplete. I came here for my people. I've found one. Where's everybody else?

THE INVENTOR

Where they've always been, at home.

BART

Come on...

THE INVENTOR

You think because you can't see them, they're not there? Where's Marty?

Bart looks quizzical for about the hundredth time for about a hundredth of a second, then resolve. He spins around to where Marty was standing.

Marty's gone.

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

Where *am* I?

Bart turns back towards The Inventor. Inventor's gone too.

MARTY (O.S.)

Boo.

Bart turns again. Marty's back, big as life.

THE INVENTOR (O.S.)

We can show you how. It's second nature.

One last spin; The Inventor's back too. Bart's kinda getting it (but just how honest are the people giving it?).

MARTY

You gotta admit Bart, it would be pretty hard for the feds to swallow their best agents going missing then showing up days later having solved world hunger and flight delays...

BART

You gotta admit, *an inter-dimensional farmer's market that turns federal agents into ninja hippies* isn't exactly the pulp detective novel twist I was expecting.

MARTY

Well believe it. |BEAT| You want a clincher, come by Kim's and my place this Sunday for dinner. She'll cook, I'll eat. Bring Liz if you're even dreaming of getting through the front door.

Bart bends down and picks up his new insignia. He flops it in his hand like he's organizing change.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Is that a yes?

THE INVENTOR

Let's hold off on any deathbed conversions just yet Mr. Bart. Your incredulity is still your friend. But, it's a pretty consistent picture...

SIM (O.S.)

[SLIGHTLY OBTRUSIVE]

You might even say, it's an absolutely true picture. But there's still one detail missing; something you've been deliberately keeping from us professor...

REVEAL: Sim and Kim have appeared in the grow op. They're both wearing the standard earthy-mint pajamas, insignias too (Sim *is* wearing his ever present half-pack, though).

SIM (CONT'D)

...Your intentions.

FADE OUT.

INT. LARGE COMPOUND

Bart looks to Sim without emotion, but beams at Kim. Kim moves to Bart, she holds out her hands and greets him.

KIM

[IN ALMOST A WHISPER]

He was taking the long way home.

Whatever Bart's feeling at present, this fact pleases him.

Marty frowns at Sim.

MARTY

Speaking of incredulity, the ever skeptical Sim. [MARTY OPENS HIS ARMS] *Baybeee!*

He moves to Kim and latches unto her, snuggling her. She reciprocates warmly. Sim's eyes narrow at this. Marty looks back to Sim, slightly reproachful again.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Can't you see that my wife and I have been here for weeks and have only ever been accommodated? We come and go as we please.

SIM

And from that I may infer, with equal logical validity, that two hypotheses imply the professor's intentions. One: he's building our trust, over the long term, in order to indoctrinate us for use in carrying out his bidding... his bidding towards, say, pillaging the earth of its natural resources. Or, two: he's here to slowly but surely ease us into the waters of limitless abundance, security, but also that often incompatible counterpart to *security: liberty...* then ultimately, peace and prosperity. Either of those mutually contradictory, but theoretically consistent, hypotheses imply his intentions. We can't rule out the former hypothesis, and that is a source of concern.

THE INVENTOR

You're testing *us* Mr. Sim. You're running a secondary experiment: *hide some of the inferences you've inevitably drawn and see if I'll fill in the gaps.* Well, why not... You know its highly improbable that the former hypothesis be true. You know nothing close to our technologies exist on Earth. We're not from Earth, therefore. It's near impossible we're even from this solar system.

Since that's the case, you know very well that the energy it would take to travel here from another galaxy implies we already have enough resources to run our technologies an arbitrarily large number of iterations. It would cost us more of our resources to pillage yours... human resources included. This leaves your hypothesis of concern highly highly improbable.

SIM

Improbable, not impossible. All of those outcomes would need happen in conjunction where it's far less likely they *would* happen in conjunction. Therefore, your help in proving the correct hypothesis, one way or the other, would be greatly appreciated.

THE INVENTOR

How can I be of service?

BART

You can start by *telling* us your intentions.

The inventor smiles, like he's indulging himself in his true intentions just by setting out to prove them.

THE INVENTOR

We're not here to pillage. We're also not here to grant abundance, but it's ours to give and yours if you want it. We're here just to get a look at you. Food for thought.

BART

Food for thought?

The Inventor absentmindedly runs his finger along the insignia.

THE INVENTOR

As I said earlier Mr. Bart, knowledge is the only thing we can't pull out of thin air. Truth and beauty are the only scarce resources of our world.

You can never deplete them, but
there's never enough to go around.
Knowing truth and beauty, sharing
truth and beauty, that's why we're
here.

Bart remains silent; reverent but pensive. Sim, not so
much...

SIM

A very poignant explanation
professor. Now I'm going to prove
it.

Sim beams away.

FADE OUT.

15.

EXT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Kim opens the door, looks disappointed.

KIM

Where's Liz?

Bart's in the doorway, *sans* his wife, holding something
in a white box. He shakes his head, then tilts it towards
an armed middle-aged soldier standing standard on the
street corner like the fixture that he is. Bart looks
disappointed too.

They both look disappointed together. Then, Bart raises
his hands.

BART

She made dessert.

Kim brightens a little.

KIM

Come in you're out!

CONTINUOUS:

**INTERCUT. INT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S ENTRANCE/INT. KIM
AND MARTY KOVAL'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Bart and Kim talk as they walk from the entrance to the dining room. Kim's earthy-mint pajama's are flowing, Bart's in non-descript *sears-catalog-casual* clothes (so nothing about him is flowing).

KIM

I was talking to a guy from the lake the other day... bragging... said he pulled a pike out of there the size of my leg. He was real cheeky about it too. Looking at my legs saying it. Lucky Marty wasn't there... I said, how do you even serve a fish like that? He said hell if I know... You sports fisherman, all the same. Give me a fifth the weight of one of your freshwater barracudas in walleye and I'll make you a *pickerel cheek bisque* that'll turn your taxidermists to doll-makers...

[MOCKING]

I believe you know Mr. Personality here...

REVEAL: Sim is sitting at the dinner table. He's wearing his pajamas too (and half-pack).

KIM (CONT'D)

He's been here a while. You can tell by all the crumbs.

REVEAL: cookie crumbs.

Bart looks to Sim, apathetic. Sim's eyes narrow at Bart.

Kim notices the tension. She pulls out a chair for Bart and he sinks into it. He's facing Sim.

KIM (CONT'D)

Well, there now... I'm going to go in the kitchen and get Marty to start drinking beer with you fellas out here, so he'll stop ruining my *pedaheh*.

Kim moves towards the kitchen and disappears through the doorway.

Bart's been looking Sim up and down from the moment they were reintroduced. Scanning. Scanning... He reaches into his pocket.

|BEAT|

He's holding something in his hand. His face contorts into a wry smile.

BART

Down on the farm again, Sim?

We see that Bart is holding his little thermometer. He tosses it across the table to Sim.

REVEAL: an inscription on the back of the thermometer - engraved in a pure platinum placard - that reads:

Rosabelle Believe

BART (CONT'D)

Find anything new?

Without missing a beat...

SIM

It is really quite incredible Bart. When they say they materialize objects out of thin air, they're not lying. That is literally what they are doing. They convert matter to energy, energy to matter. They repurpose ambient atoms, down to their subatomic elements, and recompose them to form anything they please. It's how they teleport. It's how they reproduce amenities. Everything.

BART

And you believe their mission statement?

SIM

Technically, the story's yet to be proven, but we'd be fools not...

MARTY

[INTERRUPTING]

No shop talk tonight boys.

Marty's carrying three Kokanees into the dining room.

MARTY (CONT'D)

This is a *gangs almost all here* affair.

He distributes the bottles to each place setting.

Bart looks to his beer.

BART

[SARCASTIC]

I see you've broken out the good stuff.

He takes a swig.

MARTY

Hey! Let it breathe.

TIME CUT:

INT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

There's a few more beer bottles a piece at each place setting. The men are sitting around the table, doing what men do sitting around a table.

MARTY

Yeah? Well don't make me take it out and prove it to ya. Calluses are healed and everything...

BART

[LAUGHING]

You could have Chet Akins' fingers transplanted onto your hands and you'd still play that thing like a tree falling on a ukulele!

MARTY

You know what? I'm glad you said that, because now I have every excuse in the world to prove you wrong.

Marty reaches down, under the table. Sim looks intrigued. Bart prepares for impending doom.

Marty yanks an acoustic guitar out from under there (like he was waiting for this moment all evening).

MARTY (CONT'D)

Ta da!

BART

[LAUGHING STILL]

Oh no!

Marty stands up and props his left leg up on the seat of his chair. He puts the guitar on his knee and starts strumming. The chord progression goes A A A A D D D D A A A A D D D D ... (Marty's a lot more adept than you'd think).

MARTY

[AFFECTING HIS BEST WAYLON JENNINGS]

*Lord it's the same old tune,
fiddle and guitars. Where do we
take it from here? Rhinestone
suits and new shiny cars, it's
been the same way for years... we
need a change...*

Bart looks to Sim.

BART

[NEAR MOUTHING THE WORDS]

We need a change alright...

Then, out of nowhere...

BART (CONT'D)

*Somebody told me, when I
came to Nashville, son ya
finally got it made. Ol'
Hank made it here, we're
all sure that you will, but
I don't think Hank done it
this way... Naw, I don't
think Hank done it this
way...*

MARTY

*Somebody told me, when I
came to Nashville, son ya
finally got it made. Ol'
Hank made it here, we're
all sure that you will, but
I don't think Hank done it
this way... Naw, I don't
think Hank done it this
way...*

Marty starts soloing, kinda badly, but effectively.

Sim cracks the slightest of grins at the two caterwaulers.

BART (CONT'D)

*Lord I've seen the world
with a five piece band,
lookin at the back side of
me... singin' my songs, one
of his now and then, but I
don't think Hank done 'em
this way.... Naw, I don't
think Hank done 'em this
way...*

MARTY (CONT'D)

*Lord I've seen the world
with a five piece band,
lookin at the back side of
me... singin' my songs, one
of his now and then, but I
don't think Hank done 'em
this way.... Naw, I don't
think Hank done 'em this
way...*

BART (CONT'D)

Take it home...

More of Marty's soloing.

Then...

Kim's hands caress Marty by the shoulders. Marty looks over to her like a lovey-dovey buffoon. Kim looks affectionate but imploring but with a hint of an *I'm-sorry-to-do-this-to-ya-Waylon* expression. He gradually stops playing.

KIM

I've got something to show you
guys in the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kim's waving her hands over a finely made serving of pork tenderloin medallions with pedaheh. She's presenting it as though a TV chef is about to come over and give it a taste-test. Looks delicious.

KIM

We're going to play a game tonight
gentlemen...

[PLAYFUL]

No, not doing our best impressions
of people pretending to enjoy Bart
and Marty's duets... We're going
to play, *Guess the Real Meal with
Bill McNeal*.

She grabs a device to the right of her on the kitchen island.

KIM (CONT'D)

Now, I really really hate to admit this, but we are not dealing with a *you can't beat the real thing* situation here... Their technology doesn't just replicate food in form, but down to its every last function... taste included.

She turns on the device and a blue light emits. She begins waving it over the meals.

KIM (CONT'D)

Capture the *blue* print...

She finishes scanning the plate and sets the device down. No nonsense-like, she looks at the men, her fingers caressing her insignia.

KIM (CONT'D)

...And everyone in the network can have *tenderloin medallions ala pedaheh* anytime they want...

Marty looks a little jealous. Kim depresses the *wheat stalk* button on her insignia. Three identical plates materialize around the original.

Kim ushers the men up against the cabinets, their backs to her.

KIM (CONT'D)

Now close your eyes.

They oblige.

She starts shuffling the plates around on the counter, mixing them up.

KIM (CONT'D)

No peaking Marty!

She finishes the mixing.

KIM (CONT'D)

Alright, let's eat!

CUT TO:

INT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

**No sound effects or audio to dialogue here. Jessi Colter and Waylon Jennings' 'Storms Never Last' starts playing over the scene from an extended instrumental intro to, "oh I followed you down so many roads baby..."*

We pan around the table as the group eats, drinks, talks, and laughs, all in keeping with the tune (Sim, himself, is even chatty and jubilant in his own unique way). Although we've never seen this before, the naturalness with which the crew enjoys each others' company gives off the impression: this *is* just like old times.

Storms never last, do they baby...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KIM AND MARTY KOVAL'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

They sit, all, in quiet contentment. Plates are empty or near empty with napkins furled atop them.

Bart is the first to boost himself up from a food-induced slouch.

BART

Alright Kimmy, who ate the prize portions and who ate the television static?

KIM

Gentlemen?

SIM

There was absolutely nothing synthetic-tasting about mine.

MARTY

Nah Sim, it's mine. I've had Kim's cooking thousands a' times...

Kim pokes her finger into Marty's belly.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Mine's the real one.

They all look to Bart.

BART

Now, you all know a man with a palate as refined as mine couldn't possibly be mistaken when he says, mine was the *real meal*.

MARTY

Nice try *Jack in the Box*, I can see the mac and cheese powder on your finger tips from here.

BART

[TWINKLING HIS FINGERS]

Read 'em and weep Marty.

They all look to Kim.

KIM

Oh, you guys are gonna hate me for this, but...

BART

[PLAYFULLY INTERRUPTING]

KIM (CONT'D)

They're *all* fakes!

They're *all* fakes!

Bart bursts out laughing. Kim follows.

Then, suddenly...

A BANG! CRASH! A clamor is heard coming in through the open dining room window. Everyone at the dinner table is on instant high alert.

We briskly push into CU on the window.

A SCREAM! Silhouettes are chaotic through the neighbors' curtain-covered living-room window.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

[FAINT]

We told you, we weren't even there! Please!

REVEAL: Kim and Marty's dining room is empty. All diners have vanished seemingly into thin air... as they've been taught.

CONTINUOUS:

INT. KIM AND MARTY'S NEIGHBOR'S LIVING-ROOM

Two soldiers (**SOLDIER 1** and **SOLDIER 2**) hold a standing **ELDERLY MAN** in detention as a third soldier shoves the man's pleading wife into an arm chair. The Elderly Man wasn't resisting until the second they laid hands on his wife, but he sure is now.

SOLDIER 3 spins around towards the now struggling Elderly Man. He points his carbine right into his face. **ELDERLY WOMAN** screams once more. Elderly Man observes his wife's trauma and relents, goes still.

An **ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT** oozes onto the scene like he was hiding until the soldiers could detain the scary scary elderly couple...

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

[SPEAKING AT A RAPID PACE]

Understand that what I do now I do as an act of grace. I am under no obligation, as per *The Act*, to explain in any detail why you are being detained but I nevertheless will at present. Listen closely as I am not about to repeat myself. You are hereby under arrest on charges of *conspiracy to counsel the commission of mischief* and are to be remanded to the nearest detention facility forthwith.

ELDERLY MAN

No. I... I've been a lawyer for too many years. I know of no such law.

Bureaucrat smirks.

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

As per section 4.83, subsection 5 of *The Act*, the administer of *The Act*, the Justice Minister, reserves special authority to suspend the administering of due process in the prosequent administering of any pre-existing legislation, or any discretionary legislation *which* the administer be permitted to enact and enforce in the interim in which *The Act* is invocatory.

[IN A STARTLING SHOUT]

ARE WE PAYING ATTENTION?

[BACK TO A QUIETER TONE]

Did you catch it?

ELDERLY MAN

Catch what?

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

The error. It was not meant to be 'which the administer be permitted' but 'should the administer be permitted'. Instead of the conditional, we have the absolute. This phrasing may be in error, but it nevertheless makes explicitly clear that the minister may invent any illegality he wishes. Hence, *conspiracy to commit the counseling of mischief.*

ELDERLY WOMAN

I thought it was *conspiracy to counsel the commission of mischief.*

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

[POMPOUSLY]

Well, it's one of the two now isn't it?

ELDERLY MAN

You're putting us out on ice flows because of a typo?

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

No. Not at all... there's a typo because we're putting you out on ice flows. |BEAT| Alright, even my graciousness has it's limits. Let's get on with this.

ELDERLY MAN

This is tyranny!

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

Oh come now, you live in a democracy... It says so right in *The Act.*

Bureaucrat waves his hands and the soldiers start dragging the elderly couple out of their own living-room. The wife sobs and the husband once again struggles to get to her.

The Bureaucrat notices their trauma.

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT (CONT'D)

Separate vehicles officers.

Then...

Kim emerges out of nowhere and drives Bart's taser into the chest of Soldier 3 (who's dragging the Elderly Woman).

Bureaucrat spins to see the soldier fall. Bureaucrat is slack-jawed, scared.

Then...

Marty and Sim emerge out of nowhere to put Soldier 1 in a sleeper hold and drive a taser into Soldier 2's neck, respectively.

Bureaucrat spins just in time to see these soldiers fall too. He's white as a sheet now and literally vibrating.

Then...

BART (O.S.)

What do you think you're doing?

Bart, out of nowhere, grabs Bureaucrat by the throat and drives him onto the nearby couch.

Bureaucrat sits breathing heavy, eye's darting around, looking at the scene in disbelief.

Kim leads the elderly couple out of the room and around the corner.

BART (CONT'D)

[SHOUTING]

Well!

Bureaucrat's head turns lightning quick back to Bart.

A burst of white light erupts from where Kim has taken the couple.

Bureaucrat's head turns to the light with the same quickness.

SWOOSH!

Bureaucrat jumps at the swoosh. Bart grabs him by the face and focuses his attention back onto him.

BART (CONT'D)

Justify yourself you little weasel.

The bureaucrat attempts a response. He's still shaking.

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

Th-th-this is c-c-clear treason! I-insurrection. Terrorists! F-f-f-f-fascists...

BART

You were about to throw a grandma and grandpa into an internment camp and you're calling us fascists?

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

T-they broke the l-l-law! A-a-actions have consequences.

BART

What actions?

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

Actions have consequences. Actions have consequences. Actions have consequences...

BART

Well now your consequences have consequences...

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

Actions have consequences.

MARTY

My god Bart, it's like he has no mind at all. No free will.

SIM

You're quite nearly correct Marty.

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

Actions have consequences.

SIM

He was selected for his officiousness, but he is only human. The pain he feels perpetuating these horrors is too great a strain.

ALL-PURPOSE BUREAUCRAT

Actions have consequences.

SIM

His rote slogans aren't meant for us in any way. They're meant for him and him alone. He's saying them to quell his dissonance.

BART

We won't get anything out of him. Who needs it anyway? |BEAT| We thought we could just slip back into normal so easily didn't we? |BEAT|

[AT SIM]

I think I've figured out a way for you to prove your hypothesis.

Sim's eyes narrow.

FADE OUT.

16.

INT. THE INVENTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Inventor sits at his desk, listening to a proposal from Bart and Sim.

[NO AUDIO TO DIALOGUE]

We're watching as Bart speaks animatedly and Sim doesn't (he's speaking, just not animatedly). They're culminating to something...

BART

Well?

The Inventor mulls everything over (very briefly), then... resolve.

THE INVENTOR

We are willing to help you in any way you need save for one: *we will not intervene in your world.* It's yours, so it's yours alone to maintain.

SIM

You realize, if our plan comes to fruition, this will mean the immediate depletion, possible exhaustion, of Earth's resources?

THE INVENTOR

It's also a pretty good refutation, if I'm not mistaken...

SIM

Precisely.

The inventor smiles, then rises.

THE INVENTOR

Follow me.

CUT TO:

INT. THE INVENTOR'S LABORATORY - DAY

In structure, the lab is the same environment as The Inventor's basement laboratory, ie: a room with many many socialized rats. In terms of the particulars, the key differences are the updated technologies.

Bart and Sim look to each other like they understand this is a lab running experiments of some sort but, short of this, understand very little else.

The inventor approaches a pair of rats tapping away in their opposing chambers.

THE INVENTOR

You'll have your work cut out for you.

He gestures for Bart and Sim to pay attention as he takes a **SPIRITUAL PROGENY OF FAT** out of his rat chamber and away from his 3 for 1 acquisition of resources.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

There are a few... products of
some arcane recipe of instinct and
environment... who will never
accept what is on offer...

He brings Fat to the open-concept pen with the recovered rats and puts him in. Fat immediately runs to an unoccupied pedestal and taps it. A single food pellet shoots out. Fat looks disappointed.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

...by accident of a *give and take*
relationship where they were the
first to *take*.

Fat begins darting from unoccupied pedestal to unoccupied pedestal, looking for that magical 3 for 1 jackpot of a dispenser. No luck. He's becoming more and more agitated. He looks to the other rats *tap tap tapping* for resources but not sending any of them his way.

Fat goes raving.

At first he hisses at the other rats. They just ignore him. They're too busy tapping and living (more living than tapping). Fat tries violence now. He charges at **THE NEAREST RAT (NAT)** and grabs him by his throat, wringing on it.

Nat manages to break free of Fat's grip and gets some distance between himself and his attacker. He backs up... he stops... then he rears... he charges at Fat.

Just as Nat gets within a whisker's distance, he leaps. He flies right over Fat and keeps on running.

We're on CU of Fat now, turning to chase after Nat, but...

REVEAL: (Fat's POV) Nat's vanished.

Fat turns back to the other rats...

REVEAL: (Fat's POV) The rest of the rats have vanished too.

Fat's all alone, as agitated as ever.

Like it's the only *last* desperate move he can make, he starts hoarding the materials abandoned by the other rats. He piles them into a corner of the pen and starts guarding them, hissing in all directions; hissing at nothing.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

They're dogs in the manger now.
 They'll destroy everything and
 everyone before they'll live in a
 world of infinite resources; if
 only because destruction means
 deprivation for those who dare to
 no longer function beneath them.

Fat's still hissing; panting, raving, running in circles.
 He starts using his hind legs to fling valuable food and
 building materials up and out of the pen.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

You must insulate yourselves from
 those among you you know to
 possess such tendencies.

Fat carries on hissing. He's huffing and puffing at
 greater frequency. He's spent. He needs food and water
 but he's too bull-headed to consume any. He lays down,
 exhausted, gasping for air like even *that* he wishes he
 could deprive the whole world of.

The Inventor gives a look to Bart and Sim like he's
 thinking *well, you've both seen enough*. He reaches into
 the pen to remove Fat, when...

Bart grabs The Inventor's hand, gesturing a *don't*.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

Bart, he's dying.

Bart shakes his head at The Inventor, looks
 uncharacteristically imposing... *real damn* imposing.

The Inventor relents.

Sim's eyes narrow.

Bart stands, arms crossed, looking coolly into the pen at
 the dying rodent.

BART

This is how we get *normal*. |BEAT|
 Let's get to it.

FADE OUT:

17.

**The following scenes play out as a montage (as before).
 The scenes feature no audible dialogue or sound effects.*

INT. KITCHEN

Mother (the mother who's account was frozen) holds her infant in her arms. She's entering her kitchen from the dining room.

Her countertops are conspicuously bare save for a single item. We push in on it to reveal it's an insignia with a note attached. The note reads:

Try Me.

The mother picks up the taped-on note (we see, on the reverse of the note, additional print too small to read). She flips the note, reads it fast and curiously.

She picks up the insignia now, closes her eyes, and presses the button... A bottle of baby formula materializes on the countertop.

The mother cries.

INT. COMMUNE COMPOUND #2 - DAY

Middle-aged soldiers march in formation, heavily armed and approaching the main building of the compound. **SOLDIER AT POINT** approaches the door. Door has a note attached.

We push in to CU on door as Point's hand flips the taped-on note that must have been twisted in the wind. Note reads:

Back in Five.

Point turns back to command. Shrugs.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A large black shuttle van screeches to a halt in front of the church, 'Department of Parole' written on its side. A half dozen soldiers in full tactical gear pour out of it (where do these guys keep coming from?).

CONTINUOUS:

INT. CHURCH

Our recently paroled (escaped?) Pastor is preaching to his congregation. He's looking down to his bible when he's suddenly alerted to the presence outside. His head bolts upright.

He goes silent, looking toward the door of the church. The congregants' heads spin backwards towards the door too.

CONTINUOUS:

EXT. CHURCH

Soldiers are preparing to breach the church doors. Command nods. On 3, 2, 1... BOOM!

CONTINUOUS:

INT. CHURCH

Soldiers pour in, guns at the ready. They halt, look shocked.

REVEAL: Church is empty. Quiet... As.. A... Church.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

City Hall grounds look completely deserted, the streets too, not even vehicles. Protest signs and unfinished batons are strewn about, but that's about it.

EXT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING - EVENING (TWILIGHT)

Same situation on parliament hill; no people in sight.

Nothing.

We pull back from the Centennial Flame, on up past the Peace Tower, and into...

CONTINUOUS:

INT. OVAL OFFICE 2

...The Oval Office. We're looking over the shoulder of a husky man in silhouette, peering out at the lack of proceedings. A slender wisp of a man (also in silhouette) hesitantly sidles up beside husky man, joining him in his observation.

EXT. SUBURB - NIGHT

A suburb burns to the ground.

EXT. FARMER'S FIELD - NIGHT

A farmer's field burns to the ground.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

A supermarket burns to the ground.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURB - DAY

The suburb is back, none the worse for wear.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FARMER'S FIELD - DAY

The field is back, none the worse for wear.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

The supermarket is back, none the worse for wear.

**End of Montage.*

18.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE 2 - NIGHT

BOOM! **THE PREZ** barges into his office, **THE PM** in tow.

THE PREZ

They think they can jush live
without us huh?

He perches himself back at his window. As stated, the Prez is a real husky guy, 70s. He's got a white wispy comb-over that fools people everywhere but in the light. His voice alters from a badly acted folksy drawl to a raspy marble-mouthed bellow when he talks.

PM's over The Prez' shoulder at present. He's smarmy, preppy, and frail; about 50.

He speaks with a weak voice, like he's Mr. Haney shouting through a mile of weeping tile.

THE PM

What about *uh* our stuff?

THE PREZ

We have a saying down south...

THE PM

[INTERRUPTING]

Aren't you from *uh'um*
Pennsylvania?

THE PREZ

Don't interrupt me!

[A LITTLE CALMER]

They have a *shaying* down south...

Prez dumps himself into his desk chair, spins it back towards the window. PM rests his hand on the headrest of the chair, looking out the window as well.

THE PREZ (CONT'D)

*A single ant can live a lifetime
off the nectar of the last raisin
of the last grape of the last vine
of his once great society.*

|BEAT|

BART (O.S.)

And you're just the bug to do it
eh?

Chair spins. Prez is looking right at Bart. Bart is looking right back.

|BEAT|

Prez flips open the face of his watch and starts pushing a little button underneath, repeatedly.

BART (CONT'D)

No one's coming.

Kim, Marty, and Sim come out from behind various objects in the office.

BART (CONT'D)

To save you, anyway.

The PM grabs onto the Prez' wrist and starts pushing the little button repeatedly. The Prez shakes him off and grumbles something inaudible at him in reproach.

THE PREZ

[LOOKING BACK TO BART]

What? Here to petilshun your government?

A look of recognition comes across Prez' face.

THE PREZ (CONT'D)

Yeah... I know you. Lorre's lapdog.

[POINTS TO PM]

You two're why junior didn't get his *Urmgencies* Act when he wanted. You're finished. So help me...

[FLUSTERED]

you know... So help me... *gawd...*
I'll have you and Lorre for treashun! Yer doooo-o-ooo-oone!

[INSERT] quick cut of Fat hissing.

THE PREZ (CONT'D)

What the hell do you want?

BART

Just to finish what you started...
*A single ant can live a lifetime
off the nectar of the last raisin
of the last grape of the last vine
of his once great society... He
need only stand on the corpses of
his brethren to reach it.*

KIM

*But, does he destroy his brethren
to hasten the end of this process,
or its beginning?*

BART

And *that* is the question, Kim...
But not for men like these. These
men are going to save the world...

MARTY

The whole world?

BART

The whole... And for that, they
deserve only our pity, never fear.

Bart gets up, start's walking away.

THE PREZ

You're finished! You're under
arrest!

BART

Pity.

Bart keeps walking. His team follows.

THE PREZ

You stop you bastards!

They keep on.

Prez bolts upright, starts stomping after Bart... starts
running after Bart.

Bart turns, holds up his hand to The Prez (*stop, you
maniac*). This doesn't deter Prez in the least. He charges
right into Bart...

[INSERT] Quick cut of Fat wrangling Nat's neck.

...and through Bart.

Through? Then...

The PM, thoughtlessly chasing a more powerful politician
in the room, charges right into and through Bart too.

CUT TO:

**INT. THE INVENTOR'S OFFICE - JUST SECONDS BEFORE PREZ AND
PM BURST THROUGH BART (FLASHBACK)**

The Prez bursts through what turns out to be a
dimensional pathway that started at Bart and ended in The
Inventor's office.

|BEAT|

Now the PM emerges.

THE INVENTOR

[SMILING]

You came.

FADE OUT.

19.

INT. THE INVENTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Inventor gestures for his two guests to sit.

The Prez immediately moves for The Inventor's desk chair. He plops himself down, looks to Inventor with a *your move* expression that immediately falters. Prez notices that PM is just standing in place, clueless.

THE PREZ

AHEM!

Prez pounds the shoulder of the desk chair he's usurped. PM notices and bolts toward it.

THE PM

Uhh...

He stands by his boss' side and puts his hand on the corner of the chair. Prez resumes his *your move* demeanor.

Inventor waves his hands. The desk area of the office simultaneously spins (like on a lazy Susan) and The Prez' chair morphs into two uncomfortable looking translucent stools (knocking the PM off balance and onto his own stool in the process). They both sit facing The Inventor's newly materialized office chair. Prez and PM look uncomfortable by design.

THE INVENTOR

We may be accommodating, but we're not pushovers.

Prez looks as agitated as ever.

THE PREZ

That's why you've been taking pieces off the chess board.

THE INVENTOR

Absolutely, starting with our own.

THE PREZ

And, we're next.

THE INVENTOR

That's up to neither you nor me.

THE PREZ

Everything is up to me!

THE INVENTOR

Collect a tax dollar.

Prez says nothing; does nothing but start vibrating more aggressively.

THE PM

Uh...

THE PREZ

[INTERRUPTING]

This is treashun!

THE INVENTOR

The people of a republic have turned their backs to you. Your not leaving them be is what's treasonous.

THE PREZ

I didn't get as far as I did by being a political philosopher. The concept of a *republic* means nothing to me. I'm a pragmatist.

THE INVENTOR

Generate a useful outcome.

Crickets from the Prez again on this one. Just more agitation. Then...

THE PREZ

This is abduction!

THE INVENTOR

Leave.

THE PREZ

Nobody gives me an imperative.

The Inventor smiles a slightly wry smile.

THE INVENTOR

Well, since you're now a willing audience... let me tell you about our world...

**We dissolve over various shots of The Inventor talking inaudibly.*

FADE OUT.

INT. THE INVENTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Inventor leans back in his chair, hands folded and resting on his midsection.

THE INVENTOR

And that's it. That's the story.

|BEAT| ... |ANOTHER BEAT|

THE PREZ

Communist crap!

THE PM

Capitalist greed!

THE INVENTOR

Ha!

THE PREZ

What's so funny?

THE INVENTOR

We don't seek profits. And, we haven't any markets, let alone free markets.

Prez is actually enjoying himself for the first time this whole time...

THE PREZ

[TO PM]

Told ya junior! Commies!

THE PM

Umm, uh...

THE INVENTOR

We're no collective either, acting towards the end of any collective. We're individuals, with plenty of hierarchies, and we love our private property.

THE PREZ

Mixed economy namby-pamby-ness...
Knew it.

THE INVENTOR

No.

THE PREZ

Guess you're not even the
philosopher I thought you were.
There's no economies left genius.

THE INVENTOR

No economies. Right.

THE PREZ

What are you talking about?

THE INVENTOR

No economy. *A system in which
scarce resources are accumulated
and distributed according to more
or less efficient methods...* where
we have *no scarce resources...* can
be no such system. We enjoy
limitless material wealth and you
are welcome to enjoy it too.

| BEAT |

THE PREZ

Communist crap!

THE PM

Capitalist greed!

THE INVENTOR

Ha! Anyway, in the spirit of
diplomacy, I am providing you a
complete list of all of the
Earthly locations of our pathways.

THE PREZ

What's the game?

THE INVENTOR

Diplomacy.

THE PREZ

You think we're going to open up
negotiations with you?

THE INVENTOR

We're immaterial. This is our
first and last meeting. I'm merely
brokering the opening of said
diplomatic relations.

THE PREZ

You're a no good collaborator. Who you in bed with? ALQ? Charpentier? Romeyo? Who?

THE INVENTOR

Being a broker, you in equal proportion... But, this relationship is only as political as it needs to be to make it not political. The parties involved are you and the body of *people* who just want to be left alone.

THE PREZ

They'll get nothing from me.

THE INVENTOR

It's interesting that you think you have any leverage at this point... they're not here to ask you for anything, but to offer you comfort in your transition. This, as your bureaucrats have been taught to say, is an act of grace.

THE PREZ

How dare they!

THE INVENTOR

That's their offer: everything you could ever want *but* control, or nothing.

The Prez smiles a crooked smile.

THE PREZ

Everything eh?

THE INVENTOR

But control...

The Inventor leans in towards the Prez. He get's a closer look at the man; watching his wheels turning. Inventor's intrigued.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

What drives a man like you?

THE PREZ

Conceptual immortality.

THE INVENTOR

Then be the first politician on Earth to step aside and let life happen. You'll be in the history books forever.

THE PREZ

Everything...

THE INVENTOR

But control...

THE PM

Uh...

THE PREZ

[INTERRUPTING]

Well, naturally, we have to think this all over...

THE INVENTOR

Naturally.

The Prez bolts up off his stool, dragging PM up by the collar.

THE PREZ

We'll let ourselves out.

THE INVENTOR

Whatever you please.

Prez pushes PM towards the other side of the room from which they entered. PM moves at a pace that starts out brisk but becomes slower and slower the closer he gets to the would-be portal. He looks back to the Prez. Prez grimaces and gestures a *get in there* hand motion. PM inches into the portal.

SCHLOOP!

Prez follows. He approaches the portal posing like a hero despite his actions, just seconds ago.

SCHLOOP!

Then...

Bart is revealed, having emerged from behind (or under, or from on top of...) something.

THE INVENTOR (CONT'D)

So, what do you think he'll do.

BART

Think this all over...

SMASH CUT TO:

20.

EXT. LARGE COMPOUND - DAY

The last of the Prez' standing armies are lined up, chock-a-block, in formation, marching towards the compound-gate portal. They're the oldest and the youngest (17 to 21s and 55+) of the army; volunteer or otherwise.

They are following two bulldozers.

PLATOON LEADER

Halt! Hanson! Samuels! Tear down
that fence.

The two soldiers manning the bulldozers split off at the gate and begin tearing through the fence length-wise, like two mechanical stagehands opening curtains.

Once they're finished, the marching recommences.

PLATOON LEADER (CONT'D)

March!

The soldiers approach the orange boundary...

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE COMPOUND?

CU on the opposite side of the portal. |BEAT| The first of the soldiers burst through. TROMP TROMP TROMP TROMP.

REVEAL: it's not the agrarian compound. It's a vast sea of sod, like a par 185. There's an object near the beginning of the portal.

Soldiers march to the object. They get within 15 feet of it and...

PLATOON LEADER

Halt! Hanson, take point. What are
we looking at?

HANSON, looking to be about 20 (hence, young and naive enough to be perfect fodder) moves cautiously towards the object. From his POV it looks to be a small waist-high table. Something's on it... Hanson stops. We're on his POV for a second: he's looking at another insignia. This one has a note attached that reads:

Your heart's greatest desire.

Hanson puts a hand on the taped-on note and flips it over. The opposite side reads:

Press me.

There's a picture of the 'house' button of the insignia under the print.

PLATOON LEADER (CONT'D)

What is it soldier?

HANSON

It's a button.

PLATOON LEADER

What kind of button?

HANSON

A button that says I should press it... What do I do?

|BEAT|

PLATOON LEADER

Press it soldier.

HANSON

Hell no!

PLATOON LEADER

That's an order!

Hanson's hand drops to his side; a little shaky. We hold on Hanson's shaking hand as the loose mechanics within moving guns are heard offscreen (CLUCK-A-LUTCH!).

Whip-pull out over Hanson's shoulder to reveal all other soldiers behind him. They're holding their guns on him like a firing squad.

CU on Hanson's face steady as a rock.

CU on Hanson's hand, still shaking.

Back to CU on Hanson's face. He takes a deep breath.

He picks up the insignia, closes his eyes, and gives the home button a push. Lights start to emerge from the area just in front of the pedestal; brighter and brighter. All soldiers including **PLATOON LEADER** slowly recoil in protection. Hanson stands fast. Brighter, brighter... SWOOSH! Lights are gone.

CU on Hanson's face again; like stone. We pull back from CU and swing around to reveal what Hanson is looking at: A house with a 'sold' sign in the yard. It's a modest house, for a young family (you can tell because there are children's toys strewn about the lawn).

CU on Hanson's face again. Stone softens to a slight smile.

FADE OUT.

21.

EXT. STREETS IN FRONT OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS - DAY

Soldiers are gone. Spooks are gone. Government types are gone. People are back though, people of all shapes and sizes, living their lives. They're teleporting like crazy (like it's The Inventor's world), but otherwise, it's just Earthlings living as they would if there weren't countless hapless buffoons everywhere thinking they knew what was best for everyone and that they should be allowed to *thrust* this 'best' on everyone.

It's glorious.

CUT TO:

INT. A DARK OFFICE WITHIN PARLIAMENT - DAY

We hear what sounds like the Prez, his figure bathed in shadow, talking to three other figures, themselves just as shadowy.

THE PREZ

We panic 'em. We panic the extremists, they control the moderates.

SHADOWY FIGURE 1

What extremists? Extremists need leverage. You want witch hunts?

Guess what? Everyone's fine with witches now because, quite frankly, everyone's a witch. Try to burn 'em at the stake, they vanish and take the stake with 'em. |BEAT| You can't scare 'em this way. The prudes, the puritans, the bigots... they were the first everyone turned their backs on...

THE PREZ

Let's run the panic playbook... War.

SHADOWY FIGURE 2

Why would anyone in their position fight a war?

THE PREZ

Goddamnit! Famine?

SHADOWY FIGURE 3

Punitive taxes, land confiscation... you burned it all down and they want for nothing. You know this.

THE PREZ

[WEAKER]

Pestilence?

SHADOWY FIGURE 1

They don't get sick. They know they don't get sick. They know they won't get sick.

THE PREZ

Tell 'em the hospitals are overrun.

SHADOWY FIGURE 2

They've mastered the basic logic necessary to understand that if nobody's sick, then nobody's sick in a hospital...

THE PREZ

Death!

SHADOWY FIGURE 2

For crying out loud! They've never lived better.

THE PREZ

[OMINOUSLY]

Not what I meant.

SHADOWY FIGURE 3

You can't mean...

THE PREZ

Just a few to make an example of
'em...

**SHADOWY FIGURE 1, 2, AND 3
COLLECTIVELY**

Enough! |SHORT BEAT| You will die
before any of they do.

SMASH! The three figures break to pieces. The PM flips on the lights.

REVEAL: a broken mirror in triptych, the last few hanging shards reflecting The Prez.

THE PREZ

Who told you to do that!

The PM shuts off the lights just as something catches the three reflecting pairs of the Prez' eyes.

THE PREZ (CONT'D)

Back on!

PM flips the switch again; lights on.

We push in on an object sitting atop a table to the side of the office door. We hear the Prez' STOMP STOMP STOMPING off screen. We continue pushing to CU on object. It's another 'Try Me' insignia. The Prez' hand swipes it.

GRRRRR!

He throws it, angrily, smashing the remaining *hanging* shards.

SMASH!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS IN FRONT OF PARLIAMENT BUILDING - DAY

The Prez, with PM in tow, bursts out onto Wellington Street. People are teleporting in and out of existence;

walking, jogging, picnicking, living. All ignore the last two politicians in the world.

Prez doesn't like this.

THE PREZ

I'm your commander in chief! I'm
your commander in chief!

He continues to be ignored.

We push into CU on Prez' screaming (but inaudible) face, then whip-pull out to REVEAL: streets are empty. People are gone.

THE PREZ (CONT'D)

I'm your commander in chief...
I'm... chief...

Bart appears out of nowhere. He's still in his Sears casual clothes. He looks Prez in the eyes.

BART

You Don't know what to do, do you?
People like you never did.

Prez crumbles, gesturing at Bart with his hands (could be hostility could be contrition).

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE INVENTOR'S LABORATORY (FLASHBACK) - DAY

We're back on Fat, dying in the pen as Bart stands, arms crossed, looking coolly into the pen at the struggling rodent.

Bart continues to watch the rodent fade.

|BEAT|

Tap Tap Tapping is heard offscreen.

A rat has materialized at Fat's pedestal and is generating some resources from it. The rat brings her newly acquired food pellet to Fat.

Tap tap tap. Another rat does the same. Then...

Tap tap tap. Tap tap tap. Tap tap tap. Tap tap tap...

Finished, the rats go back to living their lives.

It's an embarrassment of riches for Fat. But, he still refuses to eat... He refuses to eat because he's dragging himself to the nearest pedestal. He arrives. He arrives, depresses the Paddle, and drinks the dispensed sip of water.

THE INVENTOR

I'll be damned.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS IN FRONT OF PARLIAMENT BUILDING - DAY

Bart drops an insignia into The Prez' outstretched hand.

BART

You better learn to live with
yourself if you ever want to live
with us. |BEAT|

[LOOKING AT THE PM]

And you?

PM

Uh...

Bart turns and walks away as everyone who had previously disappeared comes back out into the open. Bart snaps his insignia into his shirt collar for the first time. We can barely make out, over Bart's shoulder as he walks away, a non-descript woman hunkering down beside The Prez.

FADE OUT.

EPILOGUE.

INT. THE INVENTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Bart stands in The Inventor's office. He's still wearing his casual clothes, but he's still wearing his insignia too.

BART

So, what now for you?

SIM (O.S.)

I continue what the professor
started.

REVEAL: Sim sits at The Inventor's desk (potted potato plant at the corner of it and a few cookie crumbs everywhere else).

SIM (CONT'D)

Much orientation is still required.

BART

I'm sure you'll do fine Sim.

THE INVENTOR (O.S.)

And, what now for you Bart?

REVEAL: The Inventor has appeared.

SIM

Speak of the devil...

BART

[SMILING AT THE INVENTOR]

Who was it who said, *when everything you know bores you, know more?* There's a lot to explore, a lot to discover. Gotta keep things interesting.

THE INVENTOR

Not so interesting I hope.

BART

How do you mean?

THE INVENTOR

I think our meeting all those months back has provided a learning lesson: it's not enough to leave people to *find you*. Some are simply not ready. Unless crossing paths is inevitable, best to stay out of sight.

BART

I'll put that principle to the top of my list. |BEAT| Kim and Marty are making dinner tonight, the old fashioned way. Come on by.

THE INVENTOR

Breaking the rules already?

BART

On the contrary. You can't be a bother when you're our invited guest. Your absence would cause a greater negative effect.

| BEAT |

THE INVENTOR

I don't think I can argue with that...

BART

Sim?

SIM

Are you asking if I'm coming to dinner or if I can effectively argue against your rationale? The answer is *yes* to both.

BART

Now Sim, there's a difference between *being able to make the argument* and *desiring to make the argument* isn't there?

SIM

Precisely, Bart.

BART

Well then, I'll see you *both* tonight.

Bart waves to the two inventors and teleports away.
SWOOSH!

CONTINUOUS:

INT. FORMER CSIS HEADQUARTERS (NOW, INTERDIMENSIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL AFFAIRS, OR, IPA)

We pull out from an office door with a mechanical device in the process of stenciling the following onto the opaque window:

Director of Epistemics
Bart...

SWOOSH! We can see the bright light of a teleport through the opaque window.

We continue pulling out to reveal a second, adjacent, office door with the following stenciled onto its window:

Director of Aesthetics
Dana Lorre

We continue pulling out and on into a world without scarcity.

THE END.