

# Fatal Error

A screenplay by  
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BLACKNESS, THEN WHITE SCREEN TYPE: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

ROBERT GOOD, 40, of average appearance in just about every way, sits at a table in a small kitchen in a small house in a North Bay suburb of San Francisco.

His wife, EMILY GOOD, same age but far more visually stimulating, is getting their young children, JOHN and SARAH, ready for school.

Robert is aloof, half-hidden behind a newspaper.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
My name is Robert Good. I'm 40  
years old. I'm married and have  
two kids.

Emily is packing lunches.

The children fight over a Game-Boy. Emily gets between them and restores the peace. She casts a sidelong glare at Robert, who does not stir.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)  
My wife's name is Emily. I can't  
believe she married me. John is  
six and Sarah is four... I think.

Emily gets the children's coats, books and gear together and herds them out of the room.

They wave and shout goodbye to Robert. He doesn't notice.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)  
I guess you'd say I'm a quiet guy.  
But, I mean, what is there to say,  
anyway?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Robert sits in a mostly bare office, typing at a computer.

Two giant LCD screens on a small desk display tiny numbers and letters, computer code.

A tiny framed photo of his family is propped against a dead cactus.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I'm a hacker... not a cracker. I design complex proprietary business software applications. I'm one of the good guys.

Robert looks at a clock on the wall. As the second hand moves to confirm the noon hour, he stoops to retrieve a black lunch-box from beneath the desk.

EXT. PLAZA - DAY

Robert sits alone on a low concrete wall in the courtyard of a large office building. A fountain gurgles nearby.

He carefully arrays the contents of the lunch box on a napkin beside him: sandwich, juice box, banana, cut carrots, bran muffin.

He checks the time on his watch and starts in on the sandwich.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I'm a small cog in the giant wheel of the General Consolidated Business Corporation, one of the largest and most profitable companies on the planet. General Consolidated is into everything: energy, manufacturing, defence, retail, transportation, insurance, media, law, finance, you name it.

A panhandler walks by with his cup outstretched. Robert somehow looks at him but ignores him at the same time.

He's chewing methodically now, almost mindless, like a cow chomping cud. He pulls out a copy of *Popular Mechanics*.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Robert returns from lunch exactly 30 minutes later. He checks the clock, checks his watch, then places the lunch box back under the desk.

He sits down and rubs his hands, flexes his fingers. Now his eyes dart back and forth from one screen to the other.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I got my degree in computer science at Stanford 15 years ago. Since then I've written over three million lines of code.

He starts typing in short bursts.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)

My applications utilize sophisticated data mining algorithms to feed profit modelling sequences used by General Consolidated to make decisions that affect millions of people.

He is tilting his head, concentrating, typing. The screen shows the code as he writes. It's all short lines of symbols and numbers, unintelligible.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)

My most complicated program integrates payroll information, spending patterns, financial and insurance data, credit ratings, the works. Then it computes the most cost-effective corporate reaction for every possible interaction between the company and its customers.

The screen eventually blurs out of focus. Robert stops typing and looks up at the clock. As the second hand passes it's now 4:30.

He gathers his lunch box, briefcase, wallet and keys and shuffles out of the office.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)

I guess you'd call me a nerd, or a geek, maybe. I was the kid with the chemistry set, not the baseball mitt. You know, the kid that got beat up a lot.

Robert fumbles with his briefcase as he lurches through a maze of hallways. At the elevator, he stands alone, while other people engage in animated Friday-afternoon banter.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)

High school was okay. Mostly I just learned how to be invisible.

(MORE)

ROBERT(cont'd)

I guess I made a few friends, but they've all disappeared, too. Geeks will do that on you. We're pretty predictable that way.

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE

The elevator doors open. Robert is the last to leave. As he walks to his car, a shoelace comes untied. Reaching for the lace, he fumbles with his keys and his glasses fall off.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Anyway, that's about it. That's my story so far.

(pause)

Oh yeah, there's one other thing... I've only got six months to live.

INT. CAR

Robert pulls out of the garage and is immediately encased in rush-hour gridlock.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I thought it was just bad heartburn. Too much coffee, maybe, or stress on the job. Just something you learn to live with. Turns out I've got stomach cancer. How predictable is that?

ROLL TITLE AND CREDITS

MUSIC UP: PINK FLOYD - WISH YOU WERE HERE

Robert looks up at a highway sign: left to the Golden Gate Bridge and the suburbs, right to Baker Beach park.

He is heading left but veers violently right to take the beach route.

A collage of sunset, trees, people, stores, ocean and beach passes behind Robert's face through the open car window.

He slows along the beach front and parks the car.

He sits motionless, the car idling, before he eventually turns off the motor. He reaches for the door handle but does not open the door.

He crumples back in the seat, his energy escaping like air from a valve.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EARLIER THAT DAY

Robert sits in DR. STEVEN MATHER'S office. Mather is young, handsome, serene.

Robert sits nervously opposite, across a desk. Bookshelves, diplomas and modern art surround them.

ROBERT

(distantly)

Six months. That's about 180 days.  
Maybe 4,000 hours... a little more.

DR. MATHER

Well, give or take. I mean, it's impossible to say exactly at this stage.

ROBERT

(shocked)

What do you mean? You just said six months.

DR. MATHER

Robert, I'm only giving you the most probable diagnosis based on the information we have available right now. You know, in many ways, cancer is a very personal struggle. What I mean is, your reaction to it can have a substantial impact on the disease's progress.

ROBERT

(still stunned)

I don't follow.

DR. MATHER

Well, it's about attitude, mostly. I'm not saying you should become a Buddhist or fly off to Switzerland for the mountain air.

(MORE)

DR. MATHER(cont'd)

I just want you to consider that your attitude and actions have a direct influence on how the disease will manifest itself.

ROBERT

What's wrong with my attitude?

DR. MATHER

Nothing. Don't worry about it. I'll see you back here on Monday and we'll get your treatment started. Meanwhile, just try to take it easy and think about how you want to take this on. I know that sounds like a cliché. I'm sorry, Robert.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Robert is out of the car, taking off his shoes and socks. Now he treads barefoot towards the beach. Graffiti on a public bathroom wall declares: "Life's a Beach."

ROBERT (V.O.)

Life's a beach.

(pause)

I suppose that's poetic, but I really wouldn't know. I've never read a poem in my life.

He stands, sand drifting through his toes, in a kind of stationary dance.

ROBERT (cont'd)

My world revolves around numbers, equations, statements and conditions. Cause and effect. Yes and no, on and off, ones or zeros.

A disheveled man, about 35, sporting a filthy straw hat, approaches Robert.

STRAW HAT

Can you help a friend out?

Robert awkwardly pulls a twenty dollar bill from his wallet, dropping one of his shoes.

ROBERT

(handing him the money)

That's the smallest I've got, sorry.

STRAW HAT

You want me to make change? I  
can't make change...

ROBERT

No, it's all right. Just keep it.  
Looks like you need it. Just don't  
spend it on--

STRAW HAT

On what? Booze? Crack? Is that  
it? We're all the same, right?  
Well, you're all the same, too.  
(wryly)  
Just don't think it couldn't happen  
to you, buddy.

ROBERT

I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

STRAW HAT

Do I look like a drug addict to  
you?

ROBERT

Well, I mean, no... I just--

STRAW HAT

(shuffles angrily)  
Yeah, you just figured anybody  
needing charity must be a drug  
addict. Well, I got news for you  
pal, all this--  
(motions to a nearby  
shopping cart)  
--could just as easily be yours.

ROBERT

Look--

STRAW HAT

Not that you would care, but I'm a  
college graduate, I've got an MBA.  
(sees Robert's ring)  
Yeah, I had a wife...  
(nods to Robert's BMW)  
... and a nice car.  
(beat)  
Just like you.

ROBERT

I'm sorry.

STRAW HAT

I lost everything in bogus stock options. I kept buying and buying. Then they fired me and sued me for negligence. The whole thing was a setup, a total crock. I lost our savings and our house trying to get the money back.

(more desperate)

And then my wife left me. She took my kids... I'm lost out here.

ROBERT

(stunned, silent, then)

I'm really sorry.

STRAW HAT

(recovering)

Don't be sorry. And don't be fooled. Life's just a lottery, man.

He examines the bill against the sunlight and walks away.

ROBERT

Hey, you said you lost all your money in stock options...

STRAW HAT

(turning)

Yeah...

ROBERT

What was the name of the company?

STRAW HAT

General Consolidated Energy. Those bastards ruined my life. Wait a second, you a lawyer or something?

ROBERT

(shocked by the news)

Look, I don't have any more money on me, but I think there's a cash machine over there--

STRAW HAT

You crazy or something? Yeah, you look a little crazy to me. You should get yourself back to the suburbs, man.

The man strides off towards a liquor store.

Robert stands motionless, dumbstruck. He just stands there, holding his socks and shoes.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Robert enters his house, still carrying his shoes.

He closes the door quietly and stands motionless in the hallway. He shuts his eyes.

EMILY (O.S.)

Is that you, honey? You're awfully late. I'm putting dinner on the table now. John! Sarah! Dinner!

Robert opens his eyes, which scan the scene around him: keys in a dish on the side table, coats aligned on their hooks in the wall, shoes in tidy pairs beneath them.

He stands motionless for a moment longer before dropping his keys, coat, briefcase, lunch box and shoes in a single heap on the hallway floor.

He turns and ambles into the dining room barefoot.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Robert sits down at the table. His children, JOHN and SARAH, enter the room frantically, the boy chasing his sister. They take their seats and fidget.

JOHN

Hi, Dad.

Emily enters from the kitchen with plates of food and returns for more.

SARAH

Hi, Dad. Hi, Dad. Hi, Dad.

ROBERT

Hi, already. So, how are you two?

SARAH

John says I'm stupid.

ROBERT

What?

SARAH

That's not true, is it Daddy?

ROBERT  
Of course not. John?

JOHN  
Not stupid. Just dumb.

ROBERT  
You should apologize to your  
sister, John.

Emily enters with more plates and bowls. She sets them down  
and takes her seat.

EMILY  
Apologize for what?

ROBERT  
John apparently believes his  
sister's intellectual capacities  
are somewhat lacking.

EMILY  
What are you talking about?

SARAH  
John called me a dumb-dumb, mama.

EMILY  
John, why would you say such a  
thing?

John offers no response. His sister waits anxiously for some  
intervention and verbal resolution. Emily looks at Robert.  
He says nothing.

SARAH  
Daddy?

EMILY  
Robert?

ROBERT  
(snaps)  
All right. John, if you're sister  
is stupid, then, unfortunately, you  
must be stupid, too. That's simple  
genetics. But if you want to know,  
I'll tell you what's really stupid,  
and that's spending your entire  
life working so some stupid people  
can get rich at some other stupid  
people's expense.

Emily stares at Robert. John is likewise perplexed. Sarah beams.

SARAH

Daddy, you're funny. Hey, why aren't you wearing any socks?

Emily peers under the table.

EMILY

What? Robert, where are your socks?

ROBERT

Out in the hallway, I think.

EMILY

In the *hallway*?

ROBERT

Yes. I went to the beach... I took my socks and shoes off... just to feel the sand. I guess I forgot to put them back on.

EMILY

You went to the beach to feel the sand? What's wrong with you?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robert is sitting on the bed, intently observing his reflection in a dresser mirror.

Emily enters and crosses the room to stand at the window, her back to Robert.

EMILY

You were acting kind of weird this evening.

ROBERT

(far off)

Honey, I have to tell you something. I think you'd better sit down.

EMILY

I'm okay here, Robert. What's the matter? You're doing it again.

ROBERT

(MORE)

(still into mirror)  
I know. It *is* weird. I got the  
results back from Dr. Mather today.

EMILY  
Okay...

ROBERT  
It's not good, Em. I've got...  
cancer.

EMILY  
(staggers)  
If that's your idea of some kind of  
joke... because--

ROBERT  
(turns to her)  
It's not a joke.

Emily sobs violently, almost falling over. She stumbles to  
the bed and clutches Robert. Through her embrace, Robert  
stares blankly at his reflection in the mirror.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Robert is seated in front of Dr. Mather's desk.

DR. MATHER  
The tumor is large enough to  
warrant immediate chemotherapy.  
It's likely with a tumor of this  
nature that it may have  
metastasized to other tissue,  
possibly invading other organs.  
We've scheduled some tests to see  
what we can find. What I'm saying  
is our prognosis could be worse.  
But we can cross any of those  
bridges when we get there.

ROBERT  
Worse? What could be worse than  
having terminal cancer? More of  
it? You're telling me there's no  
hope.

DR. MATHER  
There's always hope, Robert.  
Always.  
(reflects)  
(MORE)

DR. MATHER(cont'd)

You know, I've seen what you might call miracles, but it's impossible to say how. Right now, things are not looking good, and to be honest, the chemo isn't going to be enough. I'm recommending additional radiation treatment for you.

ROBERT

Oh, boy. Will I glow in the dark?

DR. MATHER

(pause)

I know this is a lot to process right now, and it may even seem surreal at times. But I really need your help here.

ROBERT

You mean my attitude?

DR. MATHER

I know you're not thrilled to hear it, Robert. I can appreciate that. Believe me, I was never the spiritual type either, but when you've seen as many inexplicable things like I have over the years... things they don't teach you at med school, stuff you just can't find in medical journals. You begin to open your mind to alternatives.

(sees a glimmer in  
Robert's eyes)

It would be unethical for me to give you false hope, Robert, but you need to believe in your own ability to heal yourself.

ROBERT

Okay, I'll do my best.

DR. MATHER

It may take more than that. Anyway, I want you to go to St. Vincent's right away.

Mather takes some pamphlets from his desk and rises. Robert stands up as well.

DR. MATHER (cont'd)

(hands over the pamphlets)

(MORE)

DR. MATHER(cont'd)

Here's some information for you about the drugs you'll be receiving, along with your radiotherapy order. Please try to follow all the instructions to the letter. If you have any questions, just ask.

ROBERT

Thanks, Doc.

DR. MATHER

I'd advise you to stop working immediately. Try to get lots of rest and maintain a healthy diet. Some good physical activity might benefit you as well. Might make you feel better.

ROBERT

I'm going over to pick up my stuff now. They've already put me on medical leave.

DR. MATHER

You know, this may be somewhat out of my realm, but if your life insurance is carried through your employer, being on a medical leave at the time of death can impact your insurance settlement.

ROBERT

You mean, the company could save money this way if I die?

DR. MATHER

Well, yes. I'm afraid so. I've seen it happen before.

ROBERT

(to himself)

Well, what do you know? Profiled by my own program...

DR. MATHER

How's that?

ROBERT

Huh? Oh, nothing.

(beat, smiles)

I'll try to eat lots of spinach.

DR. MATHER  
All right, sure. Just remember,  
anything's possible.

ROBERT  
I'll keep that in mind.

DR. MATHER  
Better take it to heart as well.

Robert exits the room. A NURSE leans into the doorway.

NURSE  
There's a call for you on line  
four, doctor.

DR. MATHER  
Thank you.

He picks up the phone.

DR. MATHER (cont'd)  
Emily! What a surprise. Robert  
was just here. What can I do for  
you?

INT. KITCHEN

Emily stands on the back porch, a kerchief on her head, a mop  
in one hand, the phone in the other.

EMILY  
I want to help him, but he won't  
let me in. Or the kids. I don't  
know if he's angry or depressed or  
what. I'm afraid he'll give up.  
(props mop against wall)  
Uh-huh... yes, I totally agree with  
you.  
(pause)  
I realize it's got to be his own  
choice, but maybe I can give him a  
push in the right direction.  
(beat)  
Okay, I understand... No, don't  
worry, nothing too obvious.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Robert is packing his things at the office.

Robert's co-worker, MATT DAVIS, a scrawny mid-twenties nerd with frantic hair and a stringy beard, enters the room.

MATT

We're going to miss you around here, man.

ROBERT

It's okay, Matt. Everyone's got to go sometime.

MATT

I didn't mean it like that.

ROBERT

I know. It's all right. Thanks.

MATT

Is there anything--

ROBERT

You can do? No. It's a personal disease, or so I'm told.

MATT

I'm really sorry. Listen, Robert. I was wondering, and I know it's just work and all... I mean, what with all you're going through right now--

ROBERT

So, it's you?

MATT

What?

ROBERT

You're the one who's taking over my work, aren't you?

MATT

Well, sort of. At least, I'm supposed to see what I can do. They told me what you built and they seem to think I can keep the ball rolling somehow.

Matt watches as Robert carefully places the dead cactus into a cardboard box.

MATT (cont'd)  
I have no idea how you built the  
Guardian Shield, Robert, to be  
honest.

ROBERT  
Well, if you want to stay honest,  
you'd better keep away from it.  
Just some friendly advice from one  
dying man to another.

Robert brushes past Matt and disappears into the hallway.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Emily sits with John and Sarah at the kitchen table.

Sarah is crying. John appears to be in shock. Emily is  
wiping tears with a tissue.

Robert enters from the hallway, carrying his tattered  
cardboard box, the dead cactus tilting out.

ROBERT  
What's going on here?  
You look as if... I mean--

EMILY  
They know, sweetheart. I told  
them. It's all right.

ROBERT  
Johnny, Sarah-Bear, don't be  
afraid. Look, there's a good  
chance everything's going to be  
okay.

EMILY  
There is?

ROBERT  
Sure, Dr. Mather said so.

JOHN  
What did he say?

ROBERT  
Okay, both of you. I want you to  
listen to me. Can you listen?

They both nod.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
Good. Now, it's true, I'm pretty sick right now. It's like I've got a really bad cold.

SARAH  
But Mommy said you have--

JOHN  
Cancer.

ROBERT  
Yes, cancer. That's right. As I was saying, it's like having a really bad cold--

SARAH  
Do you need a Kleenex, Daddy?

ROBERT  
(shakily)  
No. that's all right, but thank you. That was very nice of you.

JOHN  
Mom says you're probably going to die.

EMILY  
(interjects, horrified)  
No! John, that's *not* what I said at *all*. Oh, God. I said your dad has a very bad tummy ache and the doctors... I said your father has got cancer... and that people with cancer sometimes don't survive...  
(begins to cry)  
I said that it depends on the type of cancer and how advanced it is... and that your father's is not good and--

SARAH  
(emphatic)  
The doctor said it was going to be okay.

JOHN  
He said it *might* be okay.

EMILY  
That's what I said. That's what I've been telling you.

JOHN  
No, it isn't.

EMILY  
John, what's the matter with you?  
(looks up)  
Robert?

Emily and the children suddenly realize Robert has left the room.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Robert is turning over a raised garden bed in the back yard. He strains with the sod, breaking the shovel handle.

Emily appears on the back porch steps.

EMILY  
It sure is getting warmer out.

She carries a glass of lemonade out to Robert.

EMILY (cont'd)  
(handing him the glass)  
I made some lemonade.

Robert drinks it all in one gulp.

EMILY (cont'd)  
It's great to see you out here,  
working in the garden. You never  
really took an interest in  
gardening before.

ROBERT  
It's funny... I didn't actually  
realize we had a garden back here.  
Anyway, the doctor said some  
exercise might do me some good.

EMILY  
Looks like you could use a new  
shovel.

ROBERT  
(smiles)  
Oh, yeah. Don't know my own  
strength these days.

EMILY

(beat)

Sorry about the kids.

ROBERT

It's not going to be easy, Em.

EMILY

How do you feel?

ROBERT

Same as before. Football in my gut, a little nauseous, heartburn. Like I've been feeling for years. But no real pain.

EMILY

How are you feeling emotionally?

ROBERT

(beat)

I don't know.

EMILY

You need to connect to your emotions, honey. I think it's important for the healing process. Plus, there's lots of other things you could do, like taking supplements, you know, vitamins and special herbs for--

Robert drops the two shovel halves to the ground.

EMILY (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.

ROBERT

No, it's not you, it's just... I don't get it.

EMILY

What do you mean?

ROBERT

How this could have happened, how I didn't even know. Dr. Mather said I should have been doubled over in pain months ago.

EMILY

I should have insisted you see somebody.

ROBERT

How could you have known, Emily? Funny thing is, it still doesn't hurt, you know? But I feel it. And whenever I think about it, I feel it a little more. It's like a ball in my gut that shoots little streaks of pain outwards. And now it's changing somehow, as if it realizes that I know it's there, and it's preparing to battle me for my body.

EMILY

You need to prepare for the battle, too, honey.

ROBERT

(looks at shovel pieces)  
Well, I guess I'd better get a new weapon then.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Robert stands in an aisle, staring blankly at a mammoth wall of shovels of every imaginable size, shape and color.

A SALES CLERK approaches.

SALES CLERK

Was there something in particular you were looking for?

Robert moves his head slowly left, then right. The entire aisle is nothing but shovels.

ROBERT

(sarcastic)  
Yes, I was looking for shampoo.

SALES CLERK

Shampoo?  
(confused)  
Oh. Shampoo is way over in, uh, Aisle 17, sir.

ROBERT

What are you a wise-guy? I need a shovel. What do you think I'm standing *here* for?

The clerk also looks left, then right.

SALES CLERK

Of course. Was there a particular use you had in mind for your shovel?

ROBERT

Yes, I wanted to dig a grave in my back yard.

SALES CLERK

Oh, okay.

The clerk moves along the shovel wall. Robert follows.

ROBERT

It's pretty tough soil, mostly clay, I think.

The clerk stops and pulls out a shovel from a rack.

SALES CLERK

I would recommend a long-handled fiberglass-composite round-head shovel with a stainless steel blade.

(hands Robert the shovel)

All our lawn and garden tools come with a with a lifetime guarantee.

ROBERT

Six months ought to do it.

SALES CLERK

Excuse me?

ROBERT

Thanks. Sold. One shovel, guaranteed to last for life. Now, about that shampoo you mentioned...

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Robert carries his shovel and a tray of seedlings to his car.

An aging man shuffles by, tall and thin, with glasses, his frail body swathed in tweed, his gray hair askew.

Robert turns abruptly and calls out to him.

ROBERT

Excuse me?

MAN

(turning)

Yes?

ROBERT

I'm sorry, but aren't you Mr. Martin? Didn't you used to teach English at Maple Grove High School?

MR. MARTIN

Yes... now wait. And you are... wait a minute now... Good. Richard, no Robert. Robert Good. Yes? Am I right?

ROBERT

I'm impressed. It's been more than 20 years ago now.

MR. MARTIN

As I recall, English wasn't particularly your favorite subject, Master Good.

ROBERT

No, it wasn't. Maybe that's why I ended up as a computer programmer.

MR. MARTIN

Computer programming... Well, that's still language, nonetheless.

ROBERT

Yes, I suppose you're right. So, how are you? Still teaching?

MR. MARTIN

Oh, no. I retired years ago and joined the ranks of the faltering old fogies. Indeed, I'm just on my way to the pharmacy... for my wife. She's got liver problems.

ROBERT

I'm sorry to hear that.

MR. MARTIN

Funny, you know, it would have started around the time you were in my class, about 20 years ago.

ROBERT

What started?

MR. MARTIN

Well, an auto repair superstore opened near our house back then. An effluent pipe polluted a stream, and the water seeped into our well, which has been oozing a nasty chemical called tetrachloroethylene ever since. All courtesy of General Consolidated Auto.

Robert is stunned, blinking and shaking his head, as if the information is causing a short circuit in his brain.

His hands clench into fists.

ROBERT

(whispers)

You mean she was poisoned?

MR. MARTIN

Yes, and myself as well, to be honest, but she's suffered more. We eventually got a lawyer, but it would have cost us everything to get them into court and it would have taken years. So we gave up. Justice isn't blind to the buck, Robert, if I might wax poetic momentarily upon a former student.

ROBERT

(distant)

Of course.

MR. MARTIN

Preparing for a banner crop, are we?

ROBERT

Hmm? Oh, yes. My wife, she keeps telling me I should be eating more fresh vegetables. I figured if I grew them, I'd probably have to eat them.

MR. MARTIN

(pats Robert's shoulder)

Now that's both a logical and imaginative assertion, befitting of what our society most requires in a computer programmer.

ROBERT

(unsteady)

You know, I just remembered I need to get something from the pharmacy myself.

Robert turns and they walk together toward the mall entrance.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robert is lining up pill bottles on the top of a dresser.

Emily is propped up on pillows on the bed, reading a book.

ROBERT

Did you ever have Mr. Martin for English in high school?

EMILY

Mr. Martin? Let me think. Was he sort of tall and thin with glasses? And he always wore tweed jackets?

ROBERT

That's right. He was British. Sort of a walking thesaurus.

EMILY

Yeah, I remember him. Why?

ROBERT

I bumped into him at the mall today.

EMILY

No kidding? How was he?

ROBERT

(turns to her)

Emily, did I ever really tell you what I did for GCBC?

EMILY

(putting book down)

What you did? Of course. You did computer stuff, programming.

(beat)

So, how was Mr. Martin?

ROBERT

He was fine. No, I mean, do you know what I actually programmed?

EMILY

Well, you didn't ever say much about it. I remember you were pretty excited one time... I think it was something to do with software for corporate lawyers.

ROBERT

Yes, that's right. That was one of the programs I wrote. It was to help lawyers determine the cost-risk of litigation, factoring criteria mined from data held by GCBC's sister companies. They could plug in basic information on the litigant and instantly know the probable outcome of any future legal proceedings.

EMILY

Sorry, hon, you kind of lost me with the *factoring criteria* stuff.

ROBERT

(frowning)

Well, I made it possible for them to predict the outcomes of legal claims. You see, GCBC lawyers hold a massive information advantage over their adversaries... thanks to me.

EMILY

That's very impressive, honey. But I really think you should try to focus on other things right now. You know what they say... you are what you think.

Robert sighs and turns back to the dresser. He organizes the pills into small plastic dispensers arranged by day of the week.

Emily gets off the bed and approaches Robert. She hugs him from behind, looking over his shoulder.

EMILY (cont'd)  
So what have you got there?

ROBERT  
Let's see. We've got echinacea,  
vitamin C, ellagic acid, ginseng,  
aniseed essential oil, dandelion--

EMILY  
Looks like I married an alchemist.  
(stroking his hair)  
Are you sure you know what you're  
doing?

ROBERT  
Well, it was Mr. Martin, actually.

EMILY  
Mr. Martin?

ROBERT  
Turns out he knows quite a bit  
about alternative medicine and  
herbal remedies.

EMILY  
But every time *I* tried to get you  
to take supplements, you scoffed it  
off as quackery and snake oil.

ROBERT  
Sorry. But he really seemed to  
know what he was talking about.

Robert spills some pills, some of which roll under the furniture.

EMILY  
Well, he was your *teacher* and  
everything... *20 years ago*. And  
I'm just your *wife*, so I can see  
why you'd listen to him and not me.  
Hey, did he mention yoga as well?  
Maybe you remember... that's  
something else I've been trying to  
convince you to do for years.

She pulls a large yoga book from a shelf above the dresser.

EMILY (cont'd)  
(MORE)

(leafs through book)  
 This is sort of advanced stuff, so  
 you should probably stick to the  
 first section for a while--

Robert grunts as he gets to his knees and crawls over the  
 floor searching for fallen pills.

EMILY (cont'd)  
 Anyway, on whosever advice... I  
 really think it's great that you're  
 exploring your recovery options,  
 Robert.

ROBERT  
 (locating a pill)  
 Ah-ha!

EMILY  
 But I also think it would be a good  
 idea to let Dr. Mather know before  
 you start gulping down all these  
 pills.

ROBERT  
 (sneezes)  
 Yeah, you're right. I will. I'll  
 mention my pill gulping program  
 next time I see him.

EMILY  
 I'm serious.

Robert kneels and looks up at her with a confirming smile, a  
 pill between his teeth.

EMILY (cont'd)  
 (relieved, then playful)  
 I think I saw a red one go under  
 the bed.

Robert slides under the bed until only his legs can be seen.

Emily drops to the floor and slides under to join Robert,  
 facing him sideways.

ROBERT  
 Well, hello there.

EMILY  
 Find it?

ROBERT  
 There it is.

Robert reaches over Emily to retrieve the pill. He pauses over her. They look into each other's eyes and smile.

EMILY

Did you ever hide under your bed  
when you were a kid?

ROBERT

Sometimes.

EMILY

It feels safe under here, don't you  
think?

ROBERT

Safe from what?

EMILY

Everything.

Robert kisses her softly.

Emily responds with a kiss in return.

Robert strokes her hair. She caresses his face. They kiss again.

EMILY (cont'd)

Let's just stay here for a while.

ROBERT

Okay.

INT. GCBC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

ALBERT HAGEN is the silver-haired CEO of General Consolidated Business Corp. Well into his sixties, Hagen has retained a solid frame. His face has weathered handsomely over time. He radiates a father-like authority.

Hagen sits at an enormous chrome desk, raised up like a dais from the floor. A bank of computer monitors flickers to his left.

The room is spacious, gleaming and bright. Photographs of industrial and retail operations adorn the walls.

WALTER SMALLWOOD, head of security, stands beneath Hagen's glare. Smallwood is in fact small, with thin red hair receding in odd directions.

HAGEN

I understand there has been a personnel change on the Guardian Project.

WALTER

Yes, I was aware of that, sir.

HAGEN

Well, why was I not informed? I overheard it in the main lobby this morning. A programmer was whining to a security guard. How is it that a minimum wage security guard knows more about this crucial development than I do?

WALTER

I'm sorry, sir. I'll look into the matter right away.

HAGEN

Let me save you some time. The lead programmer on the Guardian Project is on medical leave with terminal cancer. How did that happen?

WALTER

The cancer?

HAGEN

Not the cancer, Walter, the medical leave.

WALTER

I ran the program on him, and that was the recommendation.

HAGEN

But he wrote the program, Walter. Think for a minute. He could become erratic. Best to cut all ties, in case he causes trouble. Forget about defending our liability. It would cost us a lot more than an insurance claim if everything winds up before a judge, or worse, in the press.

WALTER

Yes, sir.

HAGEN

All right. Now listen, some blabbermouth from his compilation team named Matt Davis has taken over the main administration and development of the project. I want to know everything about him. In fact, why don't you bring him up here, let's see who we're dealing with.

WALTER

Yes, sir.

HAGEN

And, Walter.

WALTER

Sir?

HAGEN

Make sure Robert Good is no longer associated with this company. No need to notify him just yet, he'll find out when the money stops flowing into his bank account. That should give us time to find a way, perhaps with Davis' help, to fire him.

Walter turns to leave.

HAGEN (cont'd)

Oh, and Walter, it would be a good idea to keep him under surveillance for the time being.

WALTER

Yes, sir.

INT. - YARD - DAY

Robert sits in a shaded area near the garden, under a tree.

He reaches for Emily's yoga book and opens it.

He looks at a beginner's pose, then flips to the back of the book to study a more advanced position. He then tries to bend himself accordingly.

He winces and doubles over in pain as Emily races down from the house to his aid.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCREEN TYPE: "Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffective." - Friedrich Neitzsche

FADE IN:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Emily drives. Robert sits glumly, gazing out the window. Sarah and John are asleep in the back seats.

EMILY

That was hard on them, Robert. I don't know if they should go to the hospital any more.

ROBERT

I know.

EMILY

Is the pain better now?

ROBERT

Yeah, amazing what modern medicine can accomplish.

EMILY

Maybe you overdid things a little.

ROBERT

Yeah, probably. Can we argue about all this later... I'm dying here.

EMILY

I'm sorry.

Emily begins to cry.

EMILY (cont'd)

I know you're trying to get better, sweetheart. But I'm not sure if you want to get better.

ROBERT

This may be the painkillers talking, but that has to be the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

EMILY

No, what I mean is... it's like you think you can *outwit* this. I don't think your *heart's* really in it.

(beat)

I'm sorry, that's not fair. It's just I see you trying so hard and experimenting and everything, but it's like you're trying to *figure it out*.

ROBERT

Nope. It's not the painkillers.

EMILY

Please, honey. This is not easy for me.

(beat)

It's like you *think* what you're doing will work, that it's only *logical*... that everything will work out if you can just string it all together the right way like a computer program. But I don't think it *works* that way. I think you have to really *believe*.

ROBERT

You're writing me off already? You want me to give up? Just let the chips fall, curl up and die? Is that it?

Robert gazes out the window at rows of houses sailing past.

ROBERT (cont'd)

You'll get the insurance... maybe, and you'll remarry. And the kids will have a new, improved Daddy.

EMILY

Now *that's* ridiculous, and you know it. I didn't mean it that way at all. Please, let's forget about it, okay?

They sit in silence and tension.

EMILY (cont'd)  
I'm sorry, Robert. That really  
wasn't fair.

ROBERT  
It's okay.  
(pause)  
So, what do you believe in?

EMILY  
I believe we can do anything we  
truly set our minds to.

ROBERT  
That's it?

EMILY  
Well, yes... but you can't be in  
*control* of everything. You do what  
you have to do, and you trust that  
it's going to work out, that you'll  
find a way. You have to let go.

ROBERT  
Let go of what?

JOHN  
Mom?

EMILY  
Almost there, kiddo. We're almost  
there now.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robert and Emily are asleep.

The bedroom door opens. John peers into the semi-darkness,  
then crosses the room to his father's side of the bed.

JOHN  
Dad?

Robert stirs and opens his eyes. He squints at the alarm  
clock: 2:30 a.m.

ROBERT  
(whispering)  
John? What are you doing? Is  
something wrong?

JOHN  
I can't sleep. Can you read me a story?

ROBERT  
A story? Son, do you know what time it is? Come on, let me take you back to bed.

Robert gets out of bed. He takes John's hand and they leave the room.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - NIGHT

John is cradled in Robert's lap. A few books are scattered at the foot of the bed, others on the floor.

JOHN  
Just one more, Dad. Please.

ROBERT  
John, we must have read ten books already. Aren't you getting tired yet?

JOHN  
(pause, then sullen)  
I don't want a new and improved Dad.

ROBERT  
What? John, did you hear your mother and I talking in the car? That was just a silly joke I made, son.

JOHN  
You're not getting better.

ROBERT  
It was just a setback, John. I feel better. It's like that sometimes. You take a few steps forward, and then one back. It keeps things interesting, you know?

JOHN  
Yeah, I guess so.  
(pause, smiles)  
One more story?

ROBERT

All right, but just one. Let's see.

Robert rummages through a stack of books on John's bedside table. He pulls a book randomly from the middle of the pile and holds it up.

ROBERT (cont'd)

What have we got here? Ah. *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.

Robert reads aloud. John closes his eyes and drifts off.

ROBERT (cont'd)

Robin Hood he took up his noble  
bow,  
And his broad arrows all amain,  
And Robin Hood he laughed, and  
begun to smile,  
As he went over the plain.

Robert stops reading. He sits motionless. A smile grows across his face.

He puts the book down, tucks John into bed, and turns out the light. He walks past his bedroom, down the stairs and into to the study.

He turns on his computer and shuts the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Robert is cooking breakfast: pancakes, eggs, bacon, toast. The coffee maker sputters.

Sarah rubs her eyes as she enters the kitchen in her pajamas.

SARAH

Hi, Daddy.

ROBERT

Hey, how's my Sarah-Bear today?

SARAH

Okay.

ROBERT

Just okay? Look, it's a wonderful day! I'm making breakfast.

SARAH  
Does Mom know you're in here...  
cooking?

Robert puts his fingers to his lips and winks.

ROBERT  
(whispers)  
It's a surprise!

Sarah sits down at the table and pours herself a glass of orange juice. She yawns.

SARAH  
(offhand)  
The pancakes are burning, Daddy.

Robert leaps to the stove and flips the pancakes frantically.

Emily enters.

EMILY  
Well, this is a surprise. Is it  
Mother's Day?

ROBERT  
I've raised a family of mockers.

EMILY  
John's out cold. Looks like he was  
up reading half the night. I'm a  
little worried about him.  
(beat)  
Those pancakes are burned, dear.

ROBERT  
Mockers and critics, commentators  
and cynics. That's what I've  
raised.  
(to Sarah)  
You can scrape the charred bits  
off.

Robert hands a plate to Sarah. She lifts it to her nose and smells.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
Emily, my dear? Are you not going  
to sit down and have some  
breakfast?

EMILY

I thought I'd get some coffee first.

ROBERT

Then sit, sit. Allow me.

Robert pours a cup of coffee and prepares a plate of food. He hands them to her with a flourish, a dishcloth draped across his forearm.

ROBERT (cont'd)

*Voila, madame.* Coffeey, pancakz, eggz and baycone.

SARAH

(to Emily)

They're okay if you put lots of syrup on them.

Robert piles a stack of pancakes and forks out some scrambled eggs and bacon from the pan on a plate for himself. He sits down.

EMILY

You're not going to eat all that?

ROBERT

Well, I'm not gonna paint a still-life portrait of it.

He forces a massive, syrup-dripping slice of pancake into his mouth.

ROBERT (cont'd)

Hmmm... Oooh... Ahhh.

EMILY

Take it easy, babe.

Robert swallows with difficulty, then takes a breath.

ROBERT

Yep, gotta watch the old cholesterol... that'll getcha all right.

EMILY

You're awfully chipper this morning.

ROBERT

I think I'm just giddy from lack of sleep. I've been up all night.

EMILY

What? I watched you fall asleep.

ROBERT

I know, then I got up.

(beat)

Emily. I decided to finally finish my novel.

(proudly)

I've been writing all night.

EMILY

Your *novel*?

ROBERT

Oh, didn't I ever mention my novel? Yeah, I started it in high school.

EMILY

You started a novel in high school? No, you never mentioned that.

ROBERT

That's strange, I was sure I did. Anyway, remember Mr. Martin? He had us all write a novel synopsis as part of our final grade. He encouraged me at the time to actually write the book, can you believe it?

EMILY

Not really... Robert, are you sure you're all right? Do you want to get some sleep, maybe?

Robert is eating his food, savoring each bite and speaking in excited bursts.

ROBERT

No, I'm fine. I'd like to take the kids out this morning, if that's all right with you.

EMILY

Sure, if you really feel up to it. I'll get John up. Where are you going?

ROBERT  
I thought I'd take them down to the beach.

SARAH  
The beach? Yippee! Can we build a sand castle, Daddy?

ROBERT  
(with mouth full)  
Now that sounds like a *spectacular* idea.

SARAH  
(singing)  
Yay! Going to the beach... yay...  
going to the beach... yay!

Emily gets up.

EMILY  
I'll get John up, and pack some things for you.

Sarah jumps up to follow.

SARAH  
Can I take Dolly too? She can sit inside the castle and rule the land.

ROBERT  
Wait, wait... if she's the queen of the castle, that would make me a dirty rascal!

EMILY  
(smiles at Robert)  
Daddy's gone crazy!

Robert darts at Sarah and tickles her sides. She giggles and squirms.

SARAH  
Daddy! Daddy!

The kitchen erupts in laughter as a dazed John enters. He stops and watches in amazement before bounding into the room to join in the fun.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Robert sits in the sand, propped up against a log, writing in a notebook.

The children are nearer the water's edge, building a sand castle with plastic buckets and shovels.

Robert spies the straw hat bum making his way from garbage can to garbage can.

Robert puts his notebook down, then gets up and approaches him.

ROBERT

Hi, remember me?

STRAW HAT

No.

ROBERT

You couldn't make change for me last time, remember?

STRAW HAT

You want your change now, is that it? Well, look--

ROBERT

No, forget about the money. Listen, I did something for you. Your name is Marshall Startt, right?

STRAW HAT

Who are you?

ROBERT

It's Marshall Startt, right?

MARSHALL

Yes... I mean, maybe. Why? You some kind of lawyer or something?

ROBERT

No, I'm not a lawyer. I'm a computer programmer.

MARSHALL

Gee, that's great. Maybe you can fix the laptop I keep stored in my shopping cart back under the bridge over there.

ROBERT

Listen, this is going to sound crazy, Marshall, but I fixed it. The stock options. I got them back and cashed them in for you at \$3.00 a share. By the way, did you know you still had \$42 in the bank?

MARSHALL

(perplexed)

I knew you were crazy. A crazy God damn lawyer. Why are you messing with me? I got nothing left, man!

Marshall opens his coat with arms outward to emphasize his poverty.

ROBERT

You had 100,000 options before you got fired. Go ahead. Do the math.

MARSHALL

What are you talking about? How do you know all this stuff? Who are you?

ROBERT

I told you. I'm a programmer. I wrote a program to correct the injustice that was played out on you by General Consolidated Energy. They had no right to take that money from you. They just knew they could get away with it.

MARSHALL

I still don't get it.

ROBERT

Do you remember where your bank account was?

MARSHALL

I'm broke, not stupid. Yeah, there's a branch just a couple of blocks from here.

ROBERT  
Got any ID?

MARSHALL  
What for?

ROBERT  
Why don't you take a little walk to  
the bank? Check it out.

MARSHALL  
You said I still have forty bucks  
in there?

ROBERT  
\$42.40, I think it was, with  
interest.

MARSHALL  
I don't know you... do I?

ROBERT  
Nope. Just check it out. No  
offence, but... what have you got  
to lose?

MARSHALL  
Yeah, good point.  
(beat)  
Look, if this is some kind of  
setup, if you're working for my  
wife... she's already got  
everything. I mean, look at me.

ROBERT  
Just go to the bank. I'll be right  
here with my kids when you get  
back.  
(motions to the beach)  
That's them down there, building a  
sand castle.

Marshall glances towards the children then bolts in the  
direction of the bank.

INT. BANK - DAY

Marshall catches his reflection as he enters through the  
bank's glass doors.

He removes his hat, wets his fingers and pats down his filthy  
hair.

He approaches a teller. She looks him up and down, glancing towards the security guard.

TELLER  
May I help you?

MARSHALL  
I'd like to check the balance of my account. Uh... I seem to have misplaced my passbook.

TELLER  
I'll need to see some identification, please.

Marshall empties the contents of his pockets on the counter: string, cigarette ends, coins, a rock, buttons, lint... and finally some ID cards. He wipes each on his shirt before handing to the teller.

TELLER (cont'd)  
Just a moment, please.

The teller crosses the floor to talk with the BRANCH MANAGER. She gestures to Marshall at the counter. After a moment, she returns.

TELLER (cont'd)  
Thank you. Just let me look up your account here...

She types into a computer terminal and waits a moment.

Marshall notices the security guard's gaze is fixed on him.

TELLER (cont'd)  
Here we are, Mr. Startt.

She takes a scrap of paper and writes on it, then hands the paper to Marshall.

He looks at it, then calmly folds it in half and inserts it into his shirt pocket.

MARSHALL  
May I make a withdrawal?

TELLER  
Yes. How much would you like?

MARSHALL  
How much can I have?

TELLER  
How much would you like, sir?

MARSHALL  
Well, right, okay... I'd like--  
(under his breath)  
--first and last month's rent,  
groceries, maybe some clothes ...  
ah--  
(to Teller)  
--Three thousand should do the  
trick.

TELLER  
Three thousand dollars. Very well,  
sir.

The teller fills out a slip.

TELLER (cont'd)  
Please sign here, sir.

He signs, his hand unsteady.

TELLER (cont'd)  
Thank you. Just a moment, please.

The teller returns to the manager's desk with the slip and the ID cards. He nods.

She returns, takes the money from a drawer and starts counting it out.

TELLER (cont'd)  
Here you are... 100, 200, 300, 400,  
500, 600...

Marshall's jaw drops. The teller's voice fades.

Marshall eyes himself in a mirror on a nearby pillar. He appears under great strain, as though he may burst into tears or laughter at any moment.

TELLER (cont'd)  
...2,600, 2,700, 2,800, 2,900,  
3,000.  
(hands bills to Marshall)  
And your ID, sir. And thank you  
for choosing Pacific InterTrust  
Savings for your most recent  
deposit.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Robert, John and Sarah are at the water's edge, desperately and ineffectively attempting to save their sand castle from the incoming tide.

Marshall approaches and sits down in the sand a few feet away.

SARAH  
Daddy, there's a man sitting there.

ROBERT  
It's okay, sweetie. I know him.  
I'll be right back.

Robert moves towards Marshall and squats in front of him.

MARSHALL  
I still don't know who you are.

ROBERT  
Does it matter?

Marshall pulls a bill from his wallet.

MARSHALL  
That twenty you gave me... I can  
pay you back.

ROBERT  
No, that was a gift. Don't jinx  
it.

MARSHALL  
Okay.

Robert rises and turns to the children. He attempts an old English accent.

ROBERT  
Kids, I fear our meagre defenses  
cannot withstand this severe tidal  
onslaught. It is time to abandon  
our efforts and retreat to the  
nearest ice cream parlor.

SARAH  
Wee! Ice cream!

ROBERT

John, please help your sister pack up and get ready to go. I'll be right there.

John takes Sarah's hand and walks up the beach to where they have left their towels and shoes, etc. Sarah is singing an improvised refrain about ice cream.

Robert turns back to Marshall.

ROBERT (cont'd)

Listen. I know you're wondering what's going on here, but it's better to just accept it. I wouldn't make a lot of noise about it. When they find out, my guess is nothing will happen. I'm sure they'd rather avoid the publicity. They'll probably just let it go.

MARSHALL

You work for them.

ROBERT

Not any more.

MARSHALL

Just your everyday Robin Hood, huh?

Robert smiles. Marshall begins to laugh. Robert starts laughing as well.

DISSOLVE TO: INT. DEN - NIGHT

Robert is typing at his home office computer in the den.

ROBERT (V.O.)

The idea was simple, but the scale was absolutely enormous. To do what I did for Marshall Startt and have it apply to everyone that my program had affected could take months, if it could be done at all. And I was running out of time. So I decided to work my way from top to bottom, from the heights of wholesale fraud and bogus accounting to returning individual sums to individual investors, employees, relatives, anyone I could sequence.

He types: "// Armaments Materials Standards -> Veteran's Help Fund".

EXT. BAGDHAD STREET - DAY

Two US Marines are pinned under sniper fire along a building rampart. They open a new box of ammunition and feed it into a machine gun. When they fire, the gun jams, then shatters and explodes.

In the aftermath, among the wounded soldiers is the ammo box on its side, with the manufacturer's stamp of *General Consolidated Defence Corporation*.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Robert is typing.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I decided to go as far as I could and set it off on Oct. 31, which would be six month's since my initial diagnosis. I thought Hallowe'en would be poetic, sort of a trick, or a treat, depending on which end of the stick you were on. I wasn't feeling great. And I was worried GCBC would figure out what happened with Marshall. It had been pretty simple, really. All of GCBC's financial information is processed over computer networks. No signatures, no paper files, just numbers and letters changing on different computers in different locations. I even altered internal memoranda, e-mails and other related documentation to provide a seamless corporate information backup to the reversal. It was as if what I was changing had never happened.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Robert gets up and paces, wiping his eyes, cleaning his glasses.

He takes some pills and water from a side table and doses up on vitamins before returning to the computer.

ROBERT (V.O.)

My life had been a cancer on others  
and my software had helped GCBC  
make millions, billions maybe, on  
the backs of good and honest  
people. It made me sick that my  
code, my logic, my being, had  
wrought such despair, pain, and  
economic uncertainty to so many  
people. If I could somehow reverse  
the code, I felt my life might have  
been worth something. Worth  
living. Before I died.

Robert types: "// Falsified EPA Data -> Environmental Defence  
Fund".

POWER STATION BOARDROOM - DAY

A group of General Consolidated Energy Corporation executives  
are seated around a boardroom table. Through a glass wall,  
we can see the immense black generator turbines spinning in  
the background.

A JOWLY, tripled chinned executive pipes up.

JOWLS

So by double-stacking the auxiliary  
outflow pipes, our carbon emissions  
are cut in half?

A PENCIL-NECKED plant manager with a pen holder in his pocket  
responds.

PENCIL-NECK

Well, no, not exactly. I guess it  
depends on what you mean. The CO<sub>2</sub>  
is basically converted into carbon  
monoxide, CO. So your carbon  
emissions are still there, but the  
formulation of the gases has  
changed, and your CO<sub>2</sub> levels are  
cut in half.

JOWLS

It's clear. Legal's cleared it.  
We only need to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>, not CO.

PENCIL-NECK

It should be noted, however, that this conversion has an alternative impact on the environment. CO reduces the abundance of hydroxyl radicals in the upper atmosphere.

JOWLS

Sounds like a win-win. Well, let's pack this up and fly on back through all that greenhouse gas to Chicago.

He chuckles at his own joke. His jowls jiggle.

PENCIL-NECK

Just to be clear, hydroxyl radicals help eliminate greenhouse gases, so if our goal is reduction of greenhouse gas, then this will actually have a reverse effect.

JOWLS

Our goal is to keep the lights on, that's all.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Robert is typing.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Some days were better than others. But I was lucky. I had my family there to support me, even if I didn't realize it at the time.

Robert types: "// Fraudulent Investor Losses -> Batch Refunds".

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

An elderly couple sits in lawn chairs in front of a run-down mobile home.

OLD MAN

Have we got any more cookies?

OLD WOMAN

We're out. And there's no more money until the next social security check.

OLD MAN  
No cookies?

OLD WOMAN  
If you hadn't lost everything in  
the stock market we'd have some  
friggin' cookies, all right?

OLD MAN  
They cooked the books, I'm tellin'  
you. It wasn't my fault. How many  
times do I have to tell you?

OLD WOMAN  
Cookies. Cooked books. Whatever.  
It's all the same to me.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Robert gets up from the computer and stretches.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
I felt uneasy about being a  
criminal. Jail didn't scare me. I  
didn't think I was going to be  
around long enough to hear the door  
clang shut. I was certain a  
hospital bed, not a prison cot, was  
to be my next and final  
destination. But it bothered me  
that I had to break the law to  
salvage my soul. I wondered if  
that was frowned upon, you know, up  
there.

Robert turns out the light and exits the room.

INT. GCBC HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Walter enters Hagen's office. Hagen wields a putter over an  
artificial golf green. When he sinks a ball, a large screen  
on the wall shows a cheering gallery, and the words "Nice  
Putt" appear.

WALTER  
Nice putt, sir.

Hagen moves to his desk.

HAGEN  
Sit down, Walter. I got your memo.  
I have a few questions.

WALTER  
Yes, sir.

HAGEN  
You say Good has been out playing  
with his family during the day.  
What about at night?

WALTER  
Sir?

HAGEN  
Your memo doesn't specify an  
evening schedule. What's going on  
with this guy after dark, Walter?

WALTER  
Sorry, I thought I had mentioned,  
he's at home.

HAGEN  
(exasperated)  
You did mention that. But what's  
he doing there, Walter?

WALTER  
Well, sir, we don't know exactly.  
I mean, sleeping, eating, that sort  
of thing, presumably.

HAGEN  
I can't afford presumptions,  
Walter. I need to know if he poses  
a risk.

WALTER  
Yes, sir.

HAGEN  
So find out. By the way, have we  
fired him yet?

WALTER  
Effective today, sir. His medical  
benefits have been cut off, and his  
termination letter has been sent.

HAGEN  
(smiling)  
So, tell me, what did he do?

WALTER  
(proudly)  
Ah, yes... theft of sensitive  
internal documentation. Davis was  
able to generate a log of  
electronic events that we have  
built into a legal file.

HAGEN  
Good. Very good, Walter. We can  
always expand on that if the winds  
pick up. Good work.

WALTER  
(gushing)  
Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Emily enters the kitchen with groceries, a newspaper and the  
mail. She drops everything on the kitchen counter.

Robert is washing his hands in the sink.

EMILY  
There's a letter here from your  
office.

Emily passes the letter to Robert. He dries his hands and  
opens it. A smirk appears on his face.

ROBERT  
They've taken me off medical leave.

EMILY  
Why?

ROBERT  
Because they fired me.

EMILY  
*What?*

ROBERT  
Says here they have evidence that I  
took sensitive company information  
for my own benefit.

EMILY  
What information?

ROBERT  
I don't know.

EMILY  
I don't understand.

ROBERT  
I was trying to tell you the other night. Remember? About the work I did for them.

EMILY  
But all you did was write software.

ROBERT  
Exactly. Incriminating software. I don't think you realize what the stakes are here, Em.

EMILY  
(gathers herself)  
I know what the stakes are, honey.  
(hands on his shoulders)  
Listen to me, it's going to be all right, Robert. We're not going to start worrying about money now.

ROBERT  
We're not?

EMILY  
No, we're not. The sun is going to rise again tomorrow, I guarantee it. And we're going to be okay. Nobody is going to starve, we'll get through this.

ROBERT  
Just let go, huh?

EMILY  
Take action, first, then let go. Say, why don't you go see them, talk to them? Whatever it is you're so worried about, I'm sure you can work it out. Try to envision that, Robert. Go ahead, close your eyes and envision a positive outcome to this.

Robert closes his eyes, then clutches his stomach in pain.

ROBERT  
I think I need to lie down.

INT. GCBC HEADQUARTERS (FOYER) - DAY

Robert sits nervously in a waiting area: chairs, a coffee table, magazines. A secretary occupies a desk to his left.

To the right, a large chrome door opens, as if part of the wall had opened, and Albert Hagen appears.

HAGEN  
Hello, Robert. I'm Albert Hagen.  
Please come in.

Robert stumbles up and follows Hagen into his office.

INT. HAGEN'S OFFICE

Walter is seated on a couch near Hagen's desk. He rises. Hagen speaks as he and Robert enter.

HAGEN  
I'm glad you're here, Robert. I'm afraid you gave us quite a scare. But let's get everything out on the table now, shall we? I'm sure we'll all feel much more comfortable if we can solve our differences internally and not involve... the authorities.

Hagen takes a black jelly bean from a coffee table bowl and pops it into his mouth.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
Oh, yes. This is Walter Smallwood. You'll remember his name from the letter you received.

Hagen moves around to sit at his mammoth raised dais of a desk.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
Please, let's all sit down.

Robert sits next to Walter. It is obvious that Robert is the larger man on the couch.

HAGEN (cont'd)

Robert, we appreciate all that you've done for us over the years. So, when I heard about what happened I had to ask myself, what would cause such a model employee to steal from us? Then I heard about your...

ROBERT

Stomach cancer.

HAGEN

Yes... that.

The men writhe momentarily in awkward silence.

ROBERT

I'd like to know exactly why I was fired.

HAGEN

Walter...

Walter slides a file folder across the coffee table towards Robert.

Robert picks it up and glances over the contents, then tosses the file back towards Walter.

ROBERT

This is a pile of crap, and you know it. Nice try.

WALTER

Well, we'd be just as happy to release our evidence to the police and district attorney's office for their interpretation.

ROBERT

I still feel like I'm waiting for the punch line.

Another silence.

HAGEN

Well, as I was saying, I asked myself what would drive a man to do steal from his employer, and it eventually it became quite clear to me. What you did was a cry for help. And I want to help you.

ROBERT  
Okay... still waiting here.

HAGEN  
Robert, let's contain our hostility, shall we? I'm sure it's probably not good for a man in your condition to harbor such angry sentiments in any case.

Robert scowls. Walter smiles. Hagen is emotionless.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
Clearly, a man will do anything to ensure his family's future security in a time of crisis. And I'd like us both to be spared the trauma of a needless confrontation. Like I said, we appreciate all that your work has accomplished. We'd like to settle the score with you.

ROBERT  
Ah, right... this where I'm supposed to say "how much", is that it?

HAGEN  
Negotiations can be civil, Robert. We're prepared to offer you a very handsome severance, providing you agree to our terms.

ROBERT  
Okay, I'll bite. How much?

HAGEN  
I personally favor round numbers, large round numbers. The number I have in mind is one million dollars.

Robert is stunned for a moment.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
Are you all right? Walter, get Robert some water.

Walter pours a glass from a jug on the coffee table. He passes it to Robert.

Robert is about to take a sip, but thinks again and sets the glass down.

ROBERT

(unsteady)

And the terms? What's the catch?

HAGEN

Of course, if you accept our generous offer, we simply need to know that the matter ends here. No future claims, no insurance money, no more tinkering with company information systems, and your record is wiped clean. Today. Now.

Hagen nods to Walter, who pulls a contract from a briefcase and slides it over to Robert. Robert glances over the paper.

ROBERT

(as he reads)

You want me to admit to a crime.

HAGEN

Yes. Perhaps not the one you actually committed, but a similar crime nonetheless. And we take your admission and lock it up in a nice tight box and throw away the key. Your confession will never again see the light of day, unless of course you try to write another one of your disruptive personal debit programs.

ROBERT

(reading again)

I'll have to discuss this with my wife.

HAGEN

All right, Robert. I would have preferred we settle this as men, face to face, here and now. But, please, discuss it with your wife. I'm sure she'll be relieved to know you'll be spared the stress and shame of criminal prosecution. And that she and your children will be taken care of, no matter what happens. And you, Robert, can take it easy... maybe even finish that novel of yours.

ROBERT  
How the hell..?

HAGEN  
Thanks for coming in, Robert. Go  
talk to your wife.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Robert pulls his car into the driveway. As he gets out, his neighbor calls out from across the hedge.

SPENCER  
Hey, Robert. Did you hear?  
They're going to be making a movie  
on our street.

ROBERT  
(distracted)  
How's that?

SPENCER  
Some Hollywood guy was around  
scouting locations for an action  
movie. Didn't you meet him?

Robert stops walking.

ROBERT  
No. What did he look like?

SPENCER  
(describing Walter)  
Look like? Let's see... smallish  
guy, red hair. Had a sort of lisp.  
Funny he didn't come to your house.  
He talked to just about everyone on  
the street.

ROBERT  
No kidding.

Robert turns, walks up the porch steps and enters his house.

INT. KITCHEN

Robert is at the kitchen table. He pulls the termination contract out of his jacket pocket and looks at it.

FOCUS ON a headline in a newspaper on the table beneath his gaze: "Former street person sets up homeless charity."

Robert picks up the paper and starts reading the story aloud.

ROBERT

*Marshall Startt, a former street person, is the brainchild behind a proposed drop-in center for the homeless in the downtown core.*

*The center, which will be funded entirely by Startt, will offer resources to homeless people, including food, employment counselling and affordable housing assistance.*

Emily enters from the back porch.

EMILY

I thought I heard you talking in here. So, how did it go?

ROBERT

They wanted me to admit to a crime I didn't commit.

EMILY

You can't do that.

ROBERT

They wanted me to sign a confession.

EMILY

You mean they tried to blackmail you?

ROBERT

They offered me money.

EMILY

No. No... I don't care how much they offered. I don't want to know. You can't do that.

Emily sits and takes Robert's hands.

EMILY (cont'd)

Honey, listen to me. I talked to my old boss this morning, you remember, Mike Sloan? Anyway, there's a temporary opening for an agent up in Sonoma, which is like five miles from my parent's ranch.

(MORE)

EMILY(cont'd)

We could all go out there for a while, at least while school's out. The kids love it there. And Mike said I could probably close a few good listings just working part time over the summer.

ROBERT

You want to sell real estate again?

EMILY

Sure. Why not?

ROBERT

I can't believe you're actually my wife.

EMILY

(ruffles his hair)

Now where did that come from?

ROBERT

Our lives are falling apart.

EMILY

This isn't your fault, honey. Remember that, and try to stay positive. Worry is bad for you.

ROBERT

Do you really want to do this?

EMILY

Yes.

ROBERT

Okay, as long as your folks are all right with it.

EMILY

(smiles)

Already talked to them, too.

John and Sarah enter, flinging books and lunch boxes on the table.

EMILY (cont'd)

Hey guys, come sit down. Your father and I were just talking about going to visit with Oma and Opa for the summer. What do you think?

JOHN  
You mean to stay with them?

EMILY  
For the summer, yes.

SARAH  
Do I get to ride Blackjack?

ROBERT  
Of course.

SARAH  
Wee!

Sarah dances out of the room.

ROBERT  
Well, John?

JOHN  
But all my friends are going to be  
*here*.

EMILY  
Maybe you could invite someone to  
come visit?

JOHN  
Who wants to be around all those  
pigs and chickens? They stink,  
mom.

EMILY  
John, sometimes we have to do  
things we don't want to because  
it's good for the whole family. Do  
you know what I mean?

JOHN  
No.

EMILY  
Well, if everyone in the world just  
thought about themselves all the  
time, we'd have no hospitals, or  
charities, or police...

ROBERT  
We all have to make sacrifices  
sometimes, son... do things we  
don't always want to do.

(MORE)

ROBERT(cont'd)

(to Emily)

Or maybe don't even understand.

JOHN

All right. I guess so. I wouldn't want to be the one who gets blamed for not having hospitals or police and stuff.

EXT. FARM - DAY

Robert is showing John how to bait a fishing hook.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I spent the next two months going back and forth from the country to the city.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Robert sits in a chair with a plastic intravenous tube in his arm.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Emily went back to work and I kept up my cancer treatment and continued to work on my project.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - EVENING

Robert types at his computer in the den.

ROBERT

I hacked into GCBC's mainframe and global corporate computer networks and ran some tests. I was beginning to realize it might actually work.

EXT. FARM - DAY

Robert is working on a laptop outside. Sarah approaches with a frog.

Robert stops working and talks with Sarah about it, pointing to certain features on the frog.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I felt like a kid again. Fear of the future and regret over the past were slipping away. And in their place a calmness was growing, nurtured by a more complete understanding of mortality. I began to experience each day as if it could be my last.

DISSOLVE TO: INT. CAR - DAY

Emily is driving. Robert's head is bald now and he has lost more weight. John and Sarah are in the back seat.

ROBERT

Oh! I almost forgot the big news.  
(beat)  
I finished it.

EMILY

What? You mean your novel? Honey, that's fantastic. Can I read it now? You've been so secretive about it.

ROBERT

Sure. I've just got a few things to clean up tonight.

EMILY

I'm so proud of you. I can't wait to read it.

SARAH

Can I write a nawble too?

JOHN

That's "novel" dumb-dumb.

ROBERT

John, I wish you'd find a more imaginative nick-name for your sister. Of course you can write a novel, Sarah-Bear.

SARAH

It's going to be about a family that lives on a farm. There's going to be horses, and pigs, and chickens, and Blackjack can talk.

JOHN  
Horses can't talk.

SARAH  
Blackjack can.

JOHN  
Sure.

EMILY  
I think that's a great idea for a book.

SARAH  
It's not a book, it's a nawble.

ROBERT  
Sounds like a great nawble to me, too.

JOHN  
Oh, brother.

Sarah grabs John's Game-Boy.

JOHN (cont'd)  
Hey, give that back!

The children continue to battle playfully in the back seat.

EMILY  
You know, Robert, you really seem to have connected with the kids this summer.

ROBERT  
You think so?

EMILY  
Don't you?

ROBERT  
Yes, I guess so.

EMILY  
It's nice to see.  
(pause)  
I think we've gotten closer, too.

ROBERT  
(looks at her)  
I know I haven't been the most adoring husband, sweetheart.

EMILY  
Well, you're making some great  
progress.

ROBERT  
Thanks.

EMILY  
You know what would be really  
adorable?

ROBERT  
What's that?

EMILY  
(giddy)  
If we could maybe try that ballroom  
dancing class I mentioned.

ROBERT  
(grimaces)  
Yeah... sure. Maybe.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Robert looks gaunt, thin and pale. Dr. Mather is looking  
over his file.

DR. MATHER  
Well, Robert, we've made it this  
far. It's been six months, and  
you're still here.

ROBERT  
Am I?

He looks down at his waning torso and smiles weakly.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
Yeah, barely.

DR. MATHER  
The cancer has not advanced since  
our last full blood and tissue  
analysis. That's the good news.  
However, it has not receded,  
either. Which is not so good.

ROBERT  
Glad you gave me the good news  
first.

DR. MATHER

What this means, and I've seen this before, Robert, is that it could basically go either way from here. Your overall condition at this stage will pretty much determine which way that is in a matter of weeks.

ROBERT

I'm not quite following.

DR. MATHER

I guess I'm saying you've got a 50-50 shot, Robert.

ROBERT

Oh. Well... better odds than Vegas.

DR. MATHER

If you start to feel better, we can almost bank that the cancer is in remission. If things take a turn for the worse, if the pain increases, then odds are the cancer is still growing. Like I said, it appears to be at a stage where it could go either way.

ROBERT

I see. Anything I can do?

DR. MATHER

Keep doing what you're doing, that would be my advice.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Robert is pacing in his pajamas. His brow is sweaty, his movements jerky. The clock shows 11:55 p.m.

ROBERT (v.o.)

The moment of truth had arrived. But I wasn't sure what was true any more. The bomb was ready, armed and set. All I had to do was press the Enter key. Just one little stroke of the finger to release the code and irreversibly transfer a hundred million dollars from the rich to the poor, from the bullies to their victims.

He picks up a photo of his wife and children.

ROBERT (cont'd)

I also programmed a second bomb to pierce the original Guardian Shield with a million holes, to render it useless, so that no more people would ever suffer from my work.

He touches the figures in the picture individually, then sets the frame down.

ROBERT (cont'd)

Fifty-fifty odds weren't that bad, considering. So what was I doing? What about my family?

He moves to the computer, the clock reads 11:58 p.m.

ROBERT (cont'd)

If I died, it would all make sense. But if I lived... it would be forever with the knowledge that I could have done something but did nothing. I asked myself: is it enough to live, just to survive?

He sits down at the desk, it's 11:59 p.m.

ROBERT (cont'd)

What about the soldiers and their families? And the kids robbed of their college savings? And the seniors deprived of their economic security?

The clock turns to 12:00 a.m. His finger is now poised over the Enter key. It's shaking badly.

ROBERT (cont'd)

But there was something even bigger than all of them, or me. There would be another, more eternal cost for such a lost opportunity, such a wasted life. That was too big a risk to take.

He presses the key. Instantly the screen changes.

Robert watches as a status bar tracks down the damage, 1% complete, 2% complete...

A counter shows the total sum being transferred: \$44,000, \$106,000, \$368,000...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Emily stands in front of the mirror in a steamy bathroom. She plugs in a hair dryer and turns it on. For a moment, the lights flicker.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The lights flicker and the *screen jams*. Robert's jaw drops.

Suddenly the program resumes and finishes.

ROBERT (v.o.)  
Never before had I felt so alive.  
Just for that moment, I felt I was  
going to survive. The thought  
scared me to death.

Robert turns off the computer and walks out of the room, shutting off the light.

He looks in on the children, then heads to the bedroom and enters.

He looks down at Emily, sleeping. He lays down beside her and stokes her hair.

She stirs and caresses his face softly.

They kiss at first gently, then with increasing passion.

Robert reaches for a button on her pajama top.

EMILY  
Oh, Robert... take me... under the  
bed.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Robert is sitting up in bed scanning the news channels on TV, the volume muted. Emily stirs.

EMILY  
(smiling)  
Good morning, tiger.

Robert kisses her on the forehead. She sighs.

ROBERT

(beat)

Emily, there's something I need to  
tell you...

INT. HAGEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Hagen is on the phone while eating breakfast at a long table  
in an ornate dining room.

HAGEN

What do you mean? How much?

He gets up and starts to pace with the phone.

HAGEN (cont'd)

How?

He picks up a plate of pastries and throws it against the  
wall.

HAGEN (cont'd)

Damn it, Walter. I'm on my way in.  
Get some people over to his house  
now and bring him in.

He throws the phone against the wall.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Through the front door window, we see Emily getting the kids  
ready for school, handing rucksacks and coats to them.

As she walks them out the door, VALERY and PAVEL, two GCBC  
henchmen dressed in suits, approach the house.

Valery is huge man, with long blond hair and beard. Pavel is  
shorter, leaner, and meaner, with a buzz cut.

EMILY

(kissing the children)

Okay, guys, off you go. See you  
this afternoon.

The men climb the front porch stairs. Pavel winks at the  
children as they pass.

EMILY (cont'd)

Can I help you?

VALERY

(MORE)

(Russian accent)  
We're looking for Robert Good.

EMILY  
What for?

PAVEL  
(Russian accent)  
Is he here?

EMILY  
What do you want?

ROBERT (O.S.)  
Em, have you seen my glasses?

Robert finds Emily with the men on the porch. He seems at perfect peace.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
That was fast.

VALERY  
Hello, Robert. We're here to take you to see Mr. Hagen.

ROBERT  
And I thought you were collecting for the KGB. Well, just let me find my glasses.

PAVEL  
Mr. Hagen is waiting. Are *those* your glasses?

He points to Robert's shirt pocket. Robert takes the glasses out and puts them on. Pavel reaches for his arm.

EMILY  
What if he doesn't want to go?

ROBERT  
It's all right.

PAVEL  
Let's go.

EMILY  
Robert!

ROBERT  
Don't worry... I'll be back.

The three men walk down the stairs and get into a car parked on the street. It pulls away.

INT. GCBC HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Robert is escorted into the building by Valery and Pavel, who hand him off to Walter.

WALTER

Thank you, gentlemen, for your prompt delivery.

VALERY

He's all yours.

Pavel smiles. The Russians exit as Walter studies Robert.

WALTER

You don't look too good.

ROBERT

Didn't get much sleep.

WALTER

Yes, I imagine you had a busy night. Mr. Hagen is eager to speak with you. You were foolish not to take his offer.

They get into an elevator.

ROBERT

You know, Walter, I believe in this life our actions form part of a big karmic wheel. And some day it's going to spin your way. If I had taken Hagen's money, how could I face myself in the mirror, or look into the eyes of my wife and children? At least, this way, I'll have no regrets.

WALTER

I think your cancer medication must have messed up your brain.

ROBERT

(hippie voice)

Just watch out for that wheel, man, 'cause she's gonna come a spinnin' your way soon.

They exit the elevator and proceed through large glass doors into the foyer and on into Hagen's office.

WALTER  
Here he is, Mr. Hagen.

ROBERT  
Good morning.

HAGEN  
Sit down.

ROBERT  
What, no coffee?

Robert sits. Walter stands uneasily near the door.

HAGEN  
Thank you, Walter. Please wait outside.

Walter exits.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
You little shit. Do you know what you have cost this company?

ROBERT  
Yes.

HAGEN  
I need to know two things.

Hagen stands up and approaches Robert. He stoops over him, hands on the arms of Robert's chair.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
First, can this be reversed? Can you undo the damage?

ROBERT  
Anything's possible.

HAGEN  
Can the Guardian be restored?

ROBERT  
Like I said--

HAGEN  
Damn you!

Hagen shakes the chair violently and retreats to his desk in an attempt to calm himself.

ROBERT

You look a little faint, Albert.  
Can I get you a glass of water or something?

HAGEN

(wipes brow)

Robert, do you know I also have a computer science degree from Stanford? Did you know the Guardian Project was originally my idea?

ROBERT

No.

HAGEN

Well, I haven't written any programs lately, but I'm writing something now. It's a little that will paint a very clear picture of you for the police.

ROBERT

What are you talking about?

HAGEN

Robert, I'm going to give you 24 hours. If by that time you have not undone what you've done, and restored the Guardian Shield across our corporate networks, I'm going to run my little program.

ROBERT

Is that a threat?

HAGEN

And some day soon you'll be dead, and the name Robert Good will always and only be remembered as belonging to a gutless, radical extremist traitor.

ROBERT

Wouldn't that be sort of a waste of time and money? I mean, murdering a dying man.

HAGEN

It's not just yourself you should be concerned about. You have selfishly involved your family as well.

Robert sets his jaw, his body tenses, as if ready to strike.

ROBERT

Why don't you just call the police now?

HAGEN

Why don't you?

The men eye each other for a moment.

HAGEN (cont'd)

You've got 24 hours. Get the hell out of here.

ROBERT

I need more time.

HAGEN

You haven't got any. If it takes longer than 24 hours this... wound you have inflicted will never heal. And neither will you. You have my word on that.

Hagen looks at his watch. Robert gets up and leaves. At the door he turns.

ROBERT

Does it ever bother you?

HAGEN

What?

ROBERT

You know, The Guardian Project. Do you ever think about the people it affects?

HAGEN

My father grew up in Dresden during World War II, Robert. Do you know what the American pilots used to say about dropping the firebombs that destroyed our city?

Robert does not speak.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
They said they never felt like they  
were dropping bombs on real people.

ROBERT  
I've seen the people your bombs  
have hit. They're real.

HAGEN  
Your time is running out. Find a  
way to clean up the mess you've  
made, Robert.

Robert opens the door and leaves, brushing past Walter on his way to the elevator. Walter enters the office.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
Walter, get Matt Davis up here.

WALTER  
Yes, Mr. Hagen. Right away.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Robert stands amidst the bustling morning business scene, silent and motionless, sweating, breathing heavily.

He is near collapse. He weakly raises a hand.

A cab pulls up and he stumbles in. The driver is wearing a clown costume.

INT. GCBC HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Matt Davis is sitting uncomfortably on a hard sofa in Hagen's office. Hagen is pacing before him.

MATT  
It could take years, Mr. Hagen. I mean, we're talking about millions of lines of code. He's basically transferred all that money as if it had been authorized. There's no more record of the original data. We'd don't have anywhere to start from.

HAGEN  
I want you to talk to him.

MATT

I'm not so sure he'd listen.

HAGEN

He'll listen. Here's what you're going to tell him...

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - MORNING

Valery and Pavel are parked in a late model sedan. They watch as a taxi pulls up.

Robert gets out and starts walking toward the house. He is carrying a garbage bag. What looks like orange hair is protruding from the bag.

The cab drives away. Robert stops as he sees the men in the car. They smile at him. He makes a move towards them, then stops and grits his teeth, turns around and walks back toward the house with the bag.

DISSOLVE TO: EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

A long line of cabs rolls down the street. They pull up at Robert's house, jamming the driveway, yard and curb.

From each cab emerge groups of people, all dressed in clown costumes.

They converge at Robert's front porch steps, obliterating any view of the front door. Moments later the mob surges back down the steps and into the yard to the taxis.

Valery gets out of the car, trying desperately to identify Robert as the clowns scurry past.

Soon all the cabs have pulled away with their clown passengers.

Valery throws his hands up. Pavel gets out of the car and spits in anger.

DISSOLVE TO: INT. JOE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Robert and JOE SECORA, one of the cab drivers, are drinking beer on Joe's back porch.

They wear clown costumes, minus the wigs and noses.

JOE  
Another beer?

ROBERT  
No, I shouldn't thanks.

Robert looks at his watch.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
Emily and the kids should be at the  
farm by now.  
(pause)  
I can't thank you enough for what  
you did for us.

JOE  
Ah... what are you talking about?  
Forget it already.

ROBERT  
(pulling at his shirt)  
This clown get-up was a stroke of  
genius.

The two men laugh.

JOE  
Yeah, when my father ran Happy  
Cabs, he made it a tradition that  
all the drivers dress up as clowns  
on Hallowe'en.  
(gulps some beer)  
After all, it's the Happy Cab  
Company, right?

ROBERT  
I'm lucky it was you who picked me  
up this morning downtown.

JOE  
Maybe it was more than just luck.  
After all, you saved our company  
pension plan from disaster.  
General Consolidated was going to  
wipe us out. They had us locked  
in.

ROBERT  
All in a day's work.

JOE  
Listen to this guy. Now that's a  
good one!

(MORE)

JOE(cont'd)

(swigs from the bottle)  
 Don't you realize, you saved a lot  
 of our guys from having to work  
 through retirement. And their kids  
 will be able to go to college now.  
 Thanks to you.

ROBERT

(pause)  
 I can't stay here, Joe. I'm  
 separated from my family for their  
 safety. I can't put your family in  
 the same danger.

JOE

Where will you go?

Robert stands up and wriggles out of the clown costume.

ROBERT

I don't know yet. I didn't really  
 count on being alive at this point.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Robert sits in the dark on a bed in a motel room. He reaches  
 for the phone on a bedside table, knocking a Bible to the  
 floor. He picks it up and opens it randomly.

He lays back on the bed and reads aloud.

ROBERT

*Look upon my suffering and deliver  
 me, for I have not forgotten your  
 law.*

*Defend my cause and redeem me;  
 preserve my life according to your  
 promise.*

*Salvation is far from the wicked,  
 for they do not seek out your  
 decrees.*

*Your compassion is great, O LORD;  
 preserve my life according to your  
 laws.*

Robert's speech slows, he's drifting off.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
*See how I love your precepts;  
 preserve my life, O LORD, according  
 to your love.*

*All your words are true;  
 all your righteous laws are  
 eternal.*

Robert's eyes close as he falls asleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCREEN TYPE: "First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do." - Epictetus

FADE IN:

INT. GCBC HEADQUARTERS BOARD ROOM - DAY

Hagen stands at the head of a large board room.

Surrounding him are seated the presidents of the various affiliated companies within the GCBC conglomerate.

A black binder is on the table in front of each of them.

The lights are dimmed.

HAGEN  
 As you are all aware, gentlemen,  
 our organization has been attacked.  
 Attacked by a single, malicious,  
 radical and dangerous former  
 employee.

A huge plasma screen at the head of the room displays a giant mug shot of Robert.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
 Gentlemen, meet Robert Good.

After a pause, he resumes.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
 I called you here to tell you that  
 this man may be the single best  
 thing that ever happened to GCBC.

The room stirs with mumbles and gasps.

HAGEN (cont'd)

That's right, you heard me. Now listen, to change this from disaster to windfall, we're all going to have to follow the same plan, a simple plan.

(motions to the binders)

That plan is in front of you.

One of the executives, dressed in PINSTRIPES, interrupts.

PINSTRIPES

Albert, I'm personally out five million dollars. The money just vanished, and our company records have all been altered. There's no way we can get that money back. It just doesn't exist.

HAGEN

Not yet.

Hagen presses a button on a remote control. A slide show plays on the plasma screen.

HAGEN (cont'd)

(narrating)

All right, so here's Robert again. He's a solid family man, and until recently, a diligent employee.

(click)

But what do we have here? Robert Good attending a radical Islamic extremist meeting.

(click)

And here he is standing next to a large cache of weapons.

(click)

And here he is again, shaking hands with a man in Arab headdress.

A second executive, sporting an ugly COMB-OVER, interjects.

COMB-OVER

I'm down five million, too. Can we get to the point?

HAGEN

(irritated)

Please, gentlemen. I realize that everyone at this table has lost a fortune. That's why we're here.

(regains control)

(MORE)

HAGEN(cont'd)

Now, if you would please open your binders, you'll see that loss reports have been prepared for every division.

The men shuffle through the binders.

PINSTRIPES

Albert... I'm certain that \$5 million was lifted from my off-shore accounts, not \$10 million as it says here for my division.

HAGEN

That's correct, Jim. You're absolutely right.

(beat)

But somebody has to pay for our suffering. And it's going to be the private policy holders of General Consolidated Insurance. Are you with me? After all, we are insured by our own company.

(smiling)

Now, for the rest of you, your losses have all been doubled as well.

Laughter erupts.

COMB-OVER

But what if he talks?

HAGEN

He's got terminal cancer, remember? Besides, even if he survives, it won't matter what he says. The public will have already made up their minds once the media plays our little slide show on TV. And patriotic citizens are generally not noted for their critical thinking.

More laughter.

HAGEN (cont'd)

Let's take a vote, then, shall we? Assuming there are no more questions. All for?

All arms go up.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
 Outstanding. Now, remember, this  
 must be portrayed as a terrorist  
 attack on one of America's most  
 prosperous and respected companies.  
 (proud pause)  
 All right, so here's how the  
 insurance claims will work...

INT. FARM HOUSE - EVENING

Emily, John, Sarah, and Emily's parents, TED and JOAN STRONG,  
 are seated at the Strong's kitchen table. Ted is dishing out  
 food from large earthenware bowls. The atmosphere is  
 austere, but welcoming.

John scoops gravy on his potatoes.

EMILY  
 Not too much there, John.

JOAN  
 Oh, let the boy have some gravy,  
 dear.  
 (to John)  
 Go ahead. Fill 'er up, Johnny.  
 It'll stick to your ribs.

SARAH  
 No gravy for me... I don't want  
 sticky ribs.  
 (whispers to Emily)  
 Mommy, what are ribs?

The phone rings on the wall. Ted rises and answers.

TED  
 Hello.  
 (beat)  
 Who?

Ted cups the phone and speaks to Joan.

TED (cont'd)  
 It's some salesman.

JOAN  
 What does he want?

TED  
 (into phone)  
 What do you want?  
 (MORE)

TED(cont'd)

(pause, then to Joan)  
Says his names's Robert.

EMILY

Dad! That's Robert!

Emily jumps up and dashes to her father.

EMILY (cont'd)

Here, let me handle this ...

(taking the phone)

Robert! Is that you?

(beat)

Robert, where are you? I've been  
so worried. Why didn't you call?  
Are you all right?

(pause)

Are you feeling all right?

(pause)

Thank goodness... Robert, have you  
seen the news?

Emily stretches the phone cord out into the hallway to stand  
behind a swinging door.

EMILY (cont'd)

You're all over the news, honey.  
They're calling you a terrorist.

INT. MOTEL

Robert is still in bed. He looks exhausted.

ROBERT

A terrorist?

EMILY (O.S.)

Robert, it's insane. They say  
you're a radical, and that you  
stole money to fund terrorists in  
Afghanistan. They showed pictures  
of you.

ROBERT

What pictures?

EMILY (O.S.)

Pictures on TV, showing you with  
these men... these terrorists.  
Robert, what's happening?

ROBERT

Hagen.

INT. FARM HOUSE

EMILY

What? Who's Hagen? What are you talking about? Are those pictures real?

ROBERT (O.S.)

Of course not! Don't you see, it's some kind of smear campaign.

EMILY

(working herself up)  
A smear campaign? What's happening? Robert, the police were here. And there are still TV cameras outside.

ROBERT (O.S.)

Honey, you have to stay calm. You're safe there. It's me they want.

EMILY

(regaining herself)  
Robert, I almost forgot, a friend of yours called here today. His name was Matt, Matt Davis. He told me he worked with you. He wants to talk to you. He said something about going to the police. He left a number.

(takes paper from pocket)  
Here, I wrote it down... 555-8777.

ROBERT (O.S.)

Okay, got it... Emily, how are the kids?

EMILY

They're okay. John set up a command post in the living room. He's got binoculars, and a flashlight, and a walkie-talkie. Sarah isn't saying much. She asked me what a terrorist does. I didn't know what to say.

INT. MOTEL

ROBERT

(gaining strength)  
Listen to me, I'll talk to Matt. I think I can trust him. And don't believe any of this terrorist stuff, promise me that.

EMILY (O.S.)

(suddenly calm)  
Robert... why don't you just turn yourself in? You can't run like this.

ROBERT

I know, I know... Listen, I'll call you back after I talk to Matt.

EMILY (O.S.)

Take care of yourself.

ROBERT

Bye.

Robert hangs up the phone slowly, his hand resting on the receiver.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Joe's hand picks up a phone as we find him back on the porch again, drinking beer alone. The radio is playing "Shout It Out Loud" by KISS.

JOE

(into phone)  
Bobby, my man. It's Joe Secora.  
How you doing?

(pause)

I know, it's been a while. Listen, Bobby, I know this is out of the blue, but are you still doing that Web stuff, you know the blogs, or whatever.

(pause)

A million subscribers? No kidding!

(beat)

Hey, Bobby, I was wondering if you could help me with something. It's pretty important, sort of life and death stuff, you know...

EXT. PAY PHONE - EVENING

Robert is standing inside a phone booth in sight of his motel.

ROBERT

How do I know I can trust you,  
Matt?

(pause)

Yeah, good point.

(pause)

All right.

(pause)

Yeah, Weissman's. I know the  
place.

(beat)

I'll be there in an hour.

Robert exits the phone booth. He notices a police car parked at the motel. Robert ducks behind a hedge.

Robert watches the motel clerk and two officers walk to Robert's room door. The clerk opens it and they enter.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Robert stops at a convenience store. As he looks over a bottle of vitamin D, his eye is caught by a CD in a rack.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Something seemed to be moving me  
forward, deciding my next steps,  
guiding me towards a conclusion.

He moves towards the rack.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)

Funny thing was, I had no idea what  
I was doing, or what that  
conclusion might be.

He selects the CD, apparently home-made, entitled PSALMS.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)

Matt wanted a copy of the Guardian  
Shield, the software I had created  
that allowed the company to flip  
its finger at the law and people's  
rights, stealing their savings,  
investments and futures.

(MORE)

ROBERT(cont'd)

He said Hagen was planning to kill me, but I'd be spared if Matt could restore the Shield.

He pays for the CD and vitamins, exits, and is back walking the street.

INT. DELI - NIGHT

Robert sits down in a booth across from Matt. They eye one another.

ROBERT

Hello, Matt. How's the hacking?

MATT

Do you bring the backup?

ROBERT

Yes.

MATT

Where?

ROBERT

In my pocket.

A waitress approaches, KAREN GIVENS, young, attractive, with a couple of dreadlocks. She eyes Robert with curiosity.

KAREN

What'll it be, guys?

ROBERT

Coffee. And eggs. Scrambled, with bacon and toast. And a side of fries.

(looking up at her)

Please.

KAREN

What about you?

MATT

Just coffee.

Karen walks away, taking another hard look at Robert as she goes. Robert stands up.

ROBERT

Excuse me. I could use a little wash.

Robert gets up and walks around the counter to the men's room.

MATT  
(into his shirt)  
He's gone to the bathroom.

Karen is watching Matt as Hagen and Valery enter the deli and join him in the booth.

HAGEN  
Good work. You can go.

Matt gets up and leaves quickly. Karen keeps an eye on them.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
Go ahead.

Valery takes a vial out of his pocket and untwists the cap.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
Hurry up.

PAVEL  
Why do I have to do it?

HAGEN  
C'mon, he'll be back any minute.

PAVEL  
Why don't you do it?

HAGEN  
(snatches the vial)  
Give me that, you little chicken.

Hagen pours a clear liquid into Robert's coffee cup.

PAVEL  
Why chicken? In Russia we call  
sissy man a--

HAGEN  
Shut up.

Karen approaches the table.

KAREN  
Coffee, guys?

HAGEN  
Please.

PAVEL  
Tea for me.

Karen walks away.

HAGEN  
(to Valery)  
Go to the car and wait for me. I  
want this all for myself.

Pavel mumbles something in Russian, gets up and leaves.  
Robert returns from the men's room.

ROBERT  
Well, what a surprise.

HAGEN  
You're busted, Robert.

ROBERT  
Hello, Albert.

HAGEN  
Hand over the disk. Don't make me  
bring them into this.

Hagen gestures with his head out the window to Pavel and  
Valery.

ROBERT  
I guess Matt's going to collect a  
nice round sum, huh?

HAGEN  
He gets to keep his job. The disk,  
Robert.

Robert pulls out the CD he bought and hands it to Hagen.

HAGEN (cont'd)  
This says "Psalms."

ROBERT  
What should I have written on it,  
"Corporate Exploitation Software?"

HAGEN  
Your conscience is most admirable,  
my boy, as baffling as it may be to  
everyone else. Too bad it only  
gets you into trouble.

Karen returns with the coffee and tea.

KAREN  
Where's your friend?

HAGEN  
None of your business.

KAREN  
Well, at least you two aren't going to get away.

HAGEN  
Is there a problem, miss?

KAREN  
I called the cops.  
(motions out the window)  
Well, here they come now.

Hagen and Robert look out the window and see a police cruiser pulling into the parking lot.

HAGEN  
Well, thank you, miss. You saved me the trouble of calling them myself.

Robert drains his coffee in one gulp. Hagen watches intently.

Robert bolts upright and dashes out of the deli as Hagen sits back and smiles at Robert's empty cup.

KAREN  
You're still here.

HAGEN  
(to Karen)  
I told you, I've got nothing to hide.

Two police officers enter the deli, one old and rotund, the other young and slim. They look around the room, then take seats at the counter. Karen approaches them.

KAREN  
Same as usual, guys?

YOUNG COP  
You got it, sweetie.

OLD COP  
Any cherry pie, tonight?

KAREN

Fresh baked this morning.

OLD COP

Gimme two slices then, with ice cream. Make 'em big ones and I'll let you ride in my patrol car.

KAREN

Jack, your age is starting to show... luring young women into your police car.

Hagen watches as he sips his coffee.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

It's raining. Robert is gazing into an electronics store window. He shivers as he watches himself a TV newscast.

A finger taps him on the shoulder. Robert turns around. It's Karen, the waitress.

KAREN

I was hoping I might find you.

ROBERT

(wary)

Look, I'm not a terrorist.

KAREN

I know.

ROBERT

You do?

KAREN

Yes. It's all over the Internet. Looks like the TV news hasn't caught up to the real story yet.

ROBERT

What are you talking about? You called the police.

KAREN

No, those guys always come in at 8:15 for their break. I needed a diversion.

ROBERT

I don't understand.

KAREN  
I live just around the corner.  
Want to get out of the rain?

ROBERT  
I have terminal cancer. And I'm  
married, too.

KAREN  
(laughs)  
I know, I know. Come on.

INT. KAREN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Robert and Karen enter her apartment.

It's small and dark. Old stuffed furniture, potted plants,  
hanging beads and books fill the space.

ROBERT  
May I use your phone?

KAREN  
Of course. It's right over there.

Robert traces the cord to the handset, which lies under a  
magazine. He dials a number.

ROBERT  
(to Karen)  
Are you a writer?

KAREN  
Yes, a starving one. I write  
biographies mostly.

ROBERT  
(into phone)  
Honey, is that you?

Karen moves to the kitchen area.

Robert slowly slides his back down the wall to sit on the  
floor.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
Yes, yes, I'm fine, just tired.  
(coughs)  
Really. Emily, listen, you were  
right... I can't do this any more.  
I want to turn myself in.  
(MORE)

ROBERT(cont'd)

(pause)

Of course.

(pause)

Don't cry.

(pause)

Honey, I've got to go now. I'll call you from the police station.

(beat)

They still give you one call, right?

Karen enters with a tray.

ROBERT (cont'd)

I'll talk to you later.

(beat)

Okay, sweetheart... Love you too. Bye.

KAREN

(after a moment)

I made some tea.

ROBERT

Thanks, but I'm sort of full of coffee.

KAREN

Yeah, about that coffee. There's something I need to tell you.

ROBERT

I still want to know how you know so much about me.

KAREN

Well, that's all part of it. Why don't you sit down.

Karen clears debris of the sofa and they sit.

KAREN (cont'd)

That older guy you were with tried to slip something in your coffee. So I switched cups, yours for his.

ROBERT

How's that?

KAREN

That big foreign guy gave him a bottle, and he poured something in your coffee. Then I saw Jack and Roy driving up and, well...

(MORE)

KAREN(cont'd)

I don't know why exactly, but I made up that story about calling the police and switched the cups while you were both looking out the window.

ROBERT

It was probably just truth serum, or maybe some sort of sedative.

KAREN

Oh.

ROBERT

Did he drink it?

KAREN

I think so.

ROBERT

(touches her arm)

Thank you.

KAREN

I hope I didn't do anything wrong. I mean, like I said, I don't really know what got into me. It was like I knew then, but can't remember now. It just seemed like the right thing to do.

(beat)

Itt's all over the Internet. They're calling you the Robin Hood of the Information Age.

ROBERT

Nice.

KAREN

They say you have a family... and never did anything to hurt anyone. When I saw you, I knew it was true. I knew you couldn't be a terrorist.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Robert approaches a night clerk at a counter. He does not look good. He is tired and pale.

ROBERT  
My name is Robert Good. I hear  
you're looking for me.

NIGHT CLERK  
Just a minute, please.

Robert appears faint.

ROBERT  
Is there somewhere I can sit down?

NIGHT CLERK  
Sure, right over there.

ROBERT  
Thanks.

Robert sits down behind a half wall and closes his eyes.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Robert opens his eyes. A SWAT team is poised around him.

SWAT OFFICER 1  
(to Officer 2, softly)  
Hands up?

SWAT OFFICER 2  
(whispers)  
Maybe "Wake up" first?

SWAT OFFICER 1  
(whispers back)  
Yeah.  
(to Robert, loudly)  
WAKE UP!

Robert bolts upright. He looks around him and starts to  
laugh.

SWAT OFFICER 1 (cont'd)  
Put your hands above your head!

Robert puts his hands up.

SWAT OFFICER 2  
Okay! Move in!

A half-dozen officers surge forward and take Robert to the floor hard. Robert is handcuffed and dragged away.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCREEN TYPE: "Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." - John 16:24

FADE IN:

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Robert sits across from Emily at a long table among other patients at the hospital.

A sheriff's officer stands behind Robert, who holds Emily's hands across the table.

ROBERT  
I'm not afraid any more.

EMILY  
What do you mean?

ROBERT  
You know, of dying. I was before.  
But things have changed.  
(beat)  
I've changed.

EMILY  
You're not going to die.

ROBERT  
Emily, do you remember... when things were looking bad, when we ran out of money, when the doctors had nothing but bad news. Do you remember what you said..? You said: "The sun will rise again tomorrow." Do you remember?

Emily nods.

ROBERT (cont'd)  
Do you still feel that way?

EMILY  
(smiles)  
Of course.

ROBERT

Even if I didn't take all your advice or try all the things you suggested?

EMILY

You had to find your own path, honey. Besides, the meditation crystals and the incense... well, that's just not your style.

(takes his hands)

Honey, I've got to go, the kids are waiting downstairs. I'll see you tomorrow at the trial, okay?

ROBERT

Okay.

Emily reaches over and kisses Robert on the forehead.

The guard scowls and Robert smiles as Emily leaves.

A radio sounds on the guard's hip. He pulls it up and answers.

GUARD

Echo One.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

Prisoner has another visitor. He's on his way in.

GUARD

Roger. Echo One out.

The guard places the radio back in its holster as Robert gets up. The guard pushes him back into the chair.

GUARD (cont'd)

Hang on. You've got another visitor.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Hagen sees Emily as she is leaving the cafeteria. He looks into her eyes as they pass. She shudders.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Hagen enters, finds Robert and approaches him.

ROBERT  
(to Guard)  
Watch this man, he may try to kill  
me.

GUARD  
Sure, whatever.

Hagen sits down. The guard resumes his stance behind Robert.

HAGEN  
Well, Robert, I listened to the  
Psalms. Not as enlightening as I  
had hoped.

ROBERT  
Yeah, I'm really sorry about that.

HAGEN  
Never mind. Turns out good old  
Matt Davis has a real aptitude for  
deconstruction and re-engineering.  
It's just going to set us back a  
bit, that's all.

ROBERT  
Is that what you came here to tell  
me?

HAGEN  
Well, actually, I had a meeting  
with the District Attorney. But I  
couldn't resist seeing you again.  
I just wanted you to know that your  
little Robin Hood adventure won't  
make the history books. It's going  
to remain your personal fairy  
tale... and farewell.

ROBERT  
The beast speaks eloquently.

HAGEN  
Just a side effect of my  
satisfaction at seeing you here  
like this.

ROBERT  
Speaking of side effects, just what  
was that you put in my coffee?

HAGEN  
(startled)  
(MORE)

HAGEN(cont'd)

Well, I don't suppose it matters now. It would be the word of a terrorist against a the word of prominent business leader.

(beat)

It was Pavel's own special blend of Polonium 210.

ROBERT

Sorry, I must have skipped that class in chemistry.

HAGEN

It's an isotope of a radioactive metalloid, encased in an alkaline layer for slow release. But believe me, it will soon pack a powerful punch.

ROBERT

Gee, thanks. I guess you didn't know... these clowns in the white coats around here... they've already put me through the microwave.

HAGEN

Your bone marrow will go pretty quickly, and you'll suffer from internal bleeding, of course. Not to mention the effects on the nervous system.

ROBERT

I could have you charged with attempted murder.

HAGEN

I'm afraid there's no way to beat this one, Robert. You can upgrade your charge to just plain murder.

Hagen laughs, then clutches his stomach.

ROBERT

Ouch. You sure you didn't get any of that Pastranium in you?

HAGEN

(in pain)

Polonium... I saw you... I watched you drink it.

ROBERT  
Funny how perceptions can be so  
misleading, don't you think,  
Albert?

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - EVENING

DOUG ADAMS, the assistant district attorney, is exhausted.  
He sits on the side of a desk, occupied by his secretary,  
LORNA.

ADAMS  
(sighs)  
Lorna, I was wondering if you could  
do me a little favor?

LORNA  
How little?

ADAMS  
Can you make copies of these for  
me?  
(handing over a bulging  
folder)  
I need 15 sets of these.

LORNA  
(feeling the weight)  
Whoa.

ADAMS  
If you don't mind. I've still got  
to prepare my notes for the trial.  
(points to the ceiling)  
Our esteemed District Attorney  
wants this one locked up tight.

LORNA  
Oh, all right, you've got enough on  
your plate. I'll leave the copies  
on your desk for you.

ADAMS  
Thanks. See you in the morning.

Adams leaves the room, glancing in a mirror on the way out.

Lorna leafs through the files and sighs. As she walks  
towards the copier room, her stomach growls. She hesitates  
for a moment, then turns back.

EXT. MALL - EVENING

Lorna is eating a cheese-dog in a food mall at a shopping center. In the background is a print and copy shop.

INT. PRINT SHOP - DAY

An employee at the print shop is handling Lorna's files. He begins to read them lazily.

After a moment he stops the copier machine and dials a number.

PRINT SHOP EMPLOYEE

Hey, uncle Joe. It's Will, I'm down at the print shop... No, everything's fine. Listen, remember that guy you were telling me about, you know that good samaritan hacker dude..? Yeah, that's right. What was his name again?

(beat)

Did you say Robert Good?

(beat)

Thanks, uncle Joe. Got to run. I'll fill you in later.

He tosses the copies he has just made into the trash, then pulls a folder off a shelf and removes some photographs. These he places into the copier and re-starts the machine.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - MORNING

A noisy crowd has gathered at the courthouse. Some carry placards: "Free Robert Good" or "Justice is not a Crime".

Robert is escorted by sheriffs up the courthouse steps.

INT. COURTHOUSE - MORNING

Prosecutor Adams is addressing the jury.

ADAMS

The defendant may look like someone who deserves a break.

(MORE)

ADAMS(cont'd)

But this man stole over \$200 million from a group of companies that supply essential goods and services, depriving stockholders of their returns and limiting these companies from thriving, creating jobs, feeding families--

JUDGE ANNIE ROTH interrupts Adams' speech.

JUDGE ROTH

All right, Mr. Adams. We get the picture. Let's invite some facts to join your sentiments, shall we?

ADAMS

(slightly flustered)

The fact is, the defendant not only stole money, a *fact* he has already admitted by his guilty plea to the charge of grand larceny... he took it and then he cooked the books and covered his deception with bogus records... once again as much admitted with his guilty plea to the charge of fraud.

Adams looks at Robert and shakes his head. He moves closer to the jury.

Now, some people might understand how a man in his condition might crack, might make a mistake and take something that doesn't belong to him. But what we the people cannot understand is how he could give the spoils of his crime, some \$200 million dollars, to a radical terrorist organization, whose main objective is to blow up as many Americans as they can.

JUDGE ROTH

Very colorful. I hope your evidence backs up your verbal aerobatics.

Adams returns to the prosecution table.

JUDGE ROTH (cont'd)

Since the defendant's counsel raised no objection to the mention of his client's earlier pleas on the lesser charges, I feel it is my duty to remind the jury that our only objective here is to decide whether or not the defendant conspired to kill. Please ignore any further references to the previously adjudicated matters of theft and fraud which, according to the prosecution, led to the defendant's alleged homicidal conspiracy. We're not concerned with that. The defendant is on trial here for only one charge. Now, Mr. Peqeno, I'm sure we're going to be captivated by your rendition of this story.

Public defender JUAN PEQUENO rises to address the jury.

He moves nervously and without direction about the courtroom during his recital, using seemingly inappropriate gestures to emphasize his words.

JUAN

Ladies and gentlemen, the prosecution has been led to believe that Robert Good is a terrorist who gave money to other terrorists so they could wage war on the United States.

(shrugs oddly)

Indeed, many of you have seen the news reports. It was in the papers and on TV, how Robert was linked to terrorists. The problem is, it's just not true.

(gives a thumbs up)

The media got it wrong. All of them. They all got it wrong. In a feeding frenzy worthy of Paris Hilton or a presidential election, they all ran with a lie. Now, the question is: Why did they do that?

(claps his hands)

(MORE)

JUAN(cont'd)

Because that fantastic lie was fabricated by the company Robert worked for in order to bilk as much as they could out of this trial of sedition, this stoning of another citizen for profit, this misrepresentation of the facts to facilitate further lining of the pockets of a few at the expense of many.

A MESSENGER enters and hands Adams a note, then leaves. Adams reads it and his shoulders sag.

JUAN (cont'd)

Did Robert take money? Yes, he took money that had been stolen by these self-same accusers. How much? It's impossible to know, but it was nowhere near the astronomical sums claimed by the prosecution, be sure of that.

(with a tsk-tsk)

He took this money, not from the company, but from sheltered off-shore executive accounts, money that had already been skimmed from investors, consumers and employees alike.

(snaps his fingers)

And Robert took it and he gave it back to the people it had been taken from. He did this without personal gain, purely out of a sense of altruism, born from the ugliness of having to assist his superiors attain wealth beyond measure by crooked means.

(arms extended outwards)

There was no conspiracy, there were no terrorists, nothing. Just a man with a conscience, doing a good deed, and paying the price.

JUDGE ROTH

Thank you, Mr. Peqeno. Gentlemen, I see we have a vast factual chasm to cross. Let's hope your mutual exhibits and witnesses will provide a bridge over which the jury may safely arrive at the truth. Mr. Adams, if you please.

Adams rises.

ADAMS

Your honor. The prosecution regrets to inform the court a number of key witnesses have apparently gone missing.

JUDGE ROTH

Well, that's not good.

ADAMS

If I may for the present, ah, present this documented evidence for the court's consideration, your honor.

(handing files to Bailiff)

The bailiff stands up and distributes the folders to the jurors, judge and defence.

ADAMS (cont'd)

May I ask the court to consider prosecution Exhibit A. Ladies and gentlemen, if I may ask you to carefully examine the photographs--

JUDGE ROTH

More for the gentlemen, I'd say. Mr. Adams, are you aware that distribution of pornography can be an indictable offence?

ADAMS

I beg your pardon?

JUDGE ROTH

Have you examined your own exhibit, counsellor?

Adams retreats to his table to open the folder there. It contains pictures of naked women, along with a discount coupon for print and copy services.

ADAMS

Your honor, I don't understand.

JUDGE ROTH

I stopped trying a while back. If you're quite finished, counsellor...

Adams looks around in disbelief.

ADAMS

The prosecution would like to move for a rescheduling of proceedings, a recess so that the people might--

JUDGE ROTH

Motion denied. Fzzzz. Hear that? That was the sound of my patience fizzling out.

The judge tosses the prosecution's exhibit aside.

JUDGE ROTH (cont'd)

Bailiff, please remove this offensive material from my courtroom.

(to Pequeno)

Now, Mr. Pequeno, you're ahead on points. Do you see any reason to continue with a defence?

Some members of the jury and gallery snicker.

As the bailiff retrieves the folders, one elderly male juror attempts to hide his copy of prosecution Exhibit A in his jacket.

JUAN

The defense rests, your honor.

JUDGE ROTH

Smart move. Well, first I would like to extend my apologies to the jury and gallery for being subjected to this display. I have had my finger poised over the mistrial button since we began. However, since that could leave a door open for a repeat performance of this comedy of justice, and since tossing the case out would leave yet another door open for constitutional debate over double jeopardy, I would like the jury to render a verdict and complete this matter. Let me simply say that without any evidence made by the prosecution, I can only imagine one possible outcome of your deliberations.

The jury is led out of the room.

Moments later the door opens again and they reappear.

JUDGE ROTH (cont'd)  
 We're setting all kinds of speed records today. Has the jury reached a verdict?

JURY FOREMAN  
 Yes, your honor. On the charge of conspiracy to commit murder, we find the defendant not guilty.

JUDGE ROTH  
 There. Well done, everyone. Now, on the matter of your guilty pleas to charges of grand theft and fraud, I have to say you might have held off on those, Mr. Good.  
 (to Pequeno)  
 I would advise the same to your counsel.

Pequeno squirms.

At any rate, even though the prosecution could not quantify the severity of these admitted crimes, I still think you did something wrong, and you know it.  
 (pause)  
 One hundred hours community service... that ought to suit a man like you, Mr. Good.  
 (beat)  
 Case closed. Court adjourned.  
 Adios.

Judge Roth slams down her gavel.

INT. SWISS CLINIC - DAY

Hagen lies unconscious in bed in a clinic overlooking the mountains.

A team of doctors mills about, looking over charts, reading output from various machines hooked into Hagen.

DOCTOR 1  
 (German accent)  
 It's not looking good.

DOCTOR 2  
His major organs are shutting down.

DOCTOR 1  
Nasty way to die. Poor bastard.

DOCTOR 2  
Not poor... he's one of the richest  
men in the world.

DOCTOR 1  
That's not going to help him now.

Hagen opens his eyes. He is barely alive and delirious.

HAGEN  
Is that you, Robert? Help me,  
Robert. Can't you help me?

DOCTOR 1  
We're doing all we can. Please  
rest now.

HAGEN  
Robert...

Hagen's eyes close and his head sinks back into the pillow.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Dr. Mather descends the stairs and enters the living room.

Emily is waiting for him on the sofa. She rises.

EMILY  
How is he?

DR. MATHER  
Emily, I've never seen anything  
quite like it. When I got the  
latest lab results, I wanted to  
come over and see him with my own  
eyes.

EMILY  
So, he's going to be okay?

DR. MATHER

Well, honestly, it's going to take some time, a few years, actually, to be sure. But it looks like the cancer has totally receded. It's just plain gone.

EMILY

Thank God. Thank you, Doctor.

DR. MATHER

I just followed procedure.

(leans toward her)

If you want my personal opinion, I believe Robert cured himself. I know that sounds ridiculous, and frankly I didn't think he had it in him, but here we are.

EMILY

He's been sleeping for two days straight.

DR. MATHER

Obviously, he needs it, after everything he's gone through. He's exhausted, dehydrated and has a touch of the flu. But no cancer.

(beat)

Well, I'd better be getting back.

EMILY

Thanks for everything.

DR. MATHER

I'll have Robert back in my office in a couple of weeks to follow up. Bye, Emily.

EMILY

Good-bye.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Emily enters the bedroom. Robert is sitting up, looking out the window.

EMILY

You're awake.

ROBERT

Have you ever noticed how the light filters through the cedar trees? It's really amazing, look at all the different shades of green.

EMILY

Can't say I've noticed that.

ROBERT

Look.

Emily sits down next to Robert and looks out the window.

EMILY

Oh, yeah. I see what you mean. That really is spectacular.

ROBERT

So are you. Did I ever tell you that?

EMILY

I'm think you might have.

ROBERT

Well, now you know I have.

EMILY

(beat)  
Dr. Mather was here.

ROBERT

Oh.

EMILY

Robert... he says the cancer is gone.

ROBERT

I know.

EMILY

You do?

ROBERT

Yes. I can feel it. I mean, I can't feel it any more.

(looks out window again)  
Do you remember when we were talking in the hospital? When I said it would be okay if I died?

EMILY

Yes, I remember.

ROBERT

I never told you why.

EMILY

You don't have to.

ROBERT

It was because I felt I had done the right thing, Emily. I had actually *lived* my life on its own terms.

(takes her hand)

You showed me how to let go, how to feel, and then things started to change. And I felt... I still feel... a trust in my own life. Does that make any sense?

EMILY

Yes. Yes, it does.

(pause)

You know, you could have told me. You *should* have told me... about your "novel". You didn't have to face that all alone.

She gives him a mock punch to the chin as he nods.

EMILY (cont'd)

Are you hungry?

ROBERT

Yes.

EMILY

Let me get you some lunch. What would you like?

ROBERT

A peanut butter sandwich.

EMILY

But you hate peanut butter, sweetheart.

ROBERT

There's a lot of things I hate, isn't there?

EMILY  
Well, I don't know about that.

ROBERT  
What else?

EMILY  
You mean food? Well, you don't like bananas, or raisins... let's see... cinnamon--

ROBERT  
Cinnamon! Hey, do we have raisin bread? What about a a peanut butter and banana sandwich on cinnamon raisin bread!

EMILY  
Well, this is certainly going to be interesting.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. YARD - DAY

Robert is pulling turnips from the garden. Emily comes down the back porch steps carrying a cordless phone.

EMILY  
Honey, telephone for you.

ROBERT  
Who is it?

EMILY  
I'm not sure, she says she's from a publishing company.

Robert puts the turnips down, wipes his hands on his pant legs and takes the phone from Emily.

ROBERT  
Hello... Yes, that's right... No, I haven't.  
(beat)  
Yes, I could meet with you... tomorrow? Okay. That's fine. See you then.

EMILY  
Got a date?

ROBERT

Em, they want me to write a book about, you know, my adventures.

EMILY

Do you want to?

ROBERT

You know what? I think I do want to write a book about my adventures.

EMILY

As long as you stick to writing this time.

ROBERT

(laughs)

Okay, agreed... but I think I may need some help.

EMILY

Sorry, I don't know any biographers off hand.

ROBERT

Well, just so happens I do. Say, have you ever been to Weissman's Deli?

EMILY

I don't think so.

ROBERT

Come on, I'll take you... I want you to meet someone there.

Robert takes Emily's hand.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCREEN TYPE: "Our truest life is when we are in our dreams awake." - Henry David Thoreau

ROLL END CREDITS