

THE POSTMAN

screenplay by
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based on the novel by
David Brin

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Early Production Draft

FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

FADE IN:

1 EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE (UTAH) - DAY

1

Jagged mountains defy a dark, foreboding sky. We hear PLODDING HOOVES, CREAKING LEATHER. A lone wanderer appears. Wearing a long coat and a battered hat, he carries a bolt-action carbine. His name forgotten, history remembers him simply as THE POSTMAN.

His laden pack mule, BILL, BRAYS, as they pass a battered sign: "The Great Salt Lake Marina." They start down a slope and begin to cross a...

DRY LAKE BED

A bizarre, wind-swept sight. Dozens of boats resting lee-to on the dry, cracked earth. It's like God pulled the plug. Rusty mooring chains snake their way around house boats, ski boats and a cabin cruiser or two.

WOMAN (V.O.)

The last of the great cities died
when my father was a child.
Another victim of yet another war.
The plagues followed. And the
terrors. The living hid
themselves away in tiny hamlets in
hopes of surviving whatever new
madness conspired to rob them of
the little that remained. The
Earth itself had fallen prey to
chaos. For three years a dirty
snow fell that even summer could
not erase. The ocean was barren.
Poisoned. Near death.

As The Postman continues to cross, the CAMERA PULLS BACK. He's soon lost in the massive vista.

WOMAN (V.O.)

Sixteen long years passed before
the great lungs started working
again. My father said it was as
if the ocean breathed a great sigh
of relief...

A RUMBLE of THUNDER. RAIN begins to fall. The earth just sucks it up at first, but it's coming hard. Rivulets run. Puddles form. We begin to get the feeling that soon these boats will be tugging at the mooring chains once again.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

TRACK a rivulet as it runs, filling up a depression in the sand. And then, running to fill another in a series of depressions. They make a pattern we recognize as□--

MAN'S FOOTPRINTS

These tracks may already be days old as they fill with rain water. Then, the sound of light, padded FOOTFALLS. A LION ENTERS FRAME. Lean, hungry and dangerous, the big cat has been tracking this man. He lets out a low, disappointed GROWL. The rain has foiled his dinner plans□-- for now.

2 EXT. HIGHWAY ON-RAMP (UTAH) - DAY

2

A bullet-ridden sign reads: "U.S. 84 North." The Postman leads Bill down a barren 4-lane. Weeds poke up through the asphalt. The rusting hulk of a car rests in the median, covered in a tangle of purple wisteria. The Postman plucks a flower. He sticks it into a buttonhole and continues.

BILL BRAYS woefully. In answer:

THE POSTMAN

I don't know. And if you ask me again, I'm going to slug you.

They near a sign: "Thank You For Visiting Utah." The Postman waves, shouts to the sign as he passes it.

THE POSTMAN

It's been fun, hasn't it, kids?
(to the sign)
You're welcome!

3 EXT. 4-LANE (IDAHO) - BILLBOARD - DAY

3

Bill tugs up weeds as The Postman is climbing up a ladder on a highway that razor cuts the plains to the horizon.

Above, The Postman sands atop a billboard catwalk. He references a tattered road atlas, scans the horizon through binoculars with one broken lens. He pauses at a Union 76 ball just visible above the tree line.

4 EXT. HIGHWAY TRAVEL STOP (IDAHO) - DAY

4

A 76 Station and the remains of a Howard Johnson's. Alert, carbine in hand, The Postman leads in the mule. Rusting cars sag on flattened tires. There's a stripped fire engine, its cracked hoses leading to the HoJo foundation which bristles with burned timbers.

Bill stops to drink out of a stream. The Postman swats at him with his hat.

THE POSTMAN

Damnit, Bill, you know I need to check it first!

Bill hangs his head. The Postman digs through his pack. He removes an old Tupperware container and replaces its contents -- a tiny sheaf of litmus papers and several small bottles -- with stream water. He adds a few drops from each bottle. Swirls it around. Then dips a tiny strip of paper into the water. The paper turns a vivid purple. The Postman is dubious.

THE POSTMAN

Better than turpentine.
(touches some
to his lips)
Tastes about the same. Your call,
Bill.

Bill drinks.

THE POSTMAN

You ain't picky, Bill. I like that about you.

The Postman takes his carbine and a burlap sack and crosses to the 76 Station. An old extension ladder on the ground. The pole holding up the 76 ball has a 30-degree bend in it, like someone once tried to pull it over. Beyond the 76 ball, the sun sets -- but we here in the 20th Century have never seen such a wild riot of color before.

The Postman tries the station door. Locked. Smiling ironically, he steps in through the blown-out window.

5 INT. 76 STATION - OFFICE - DAY

5

A shambles. The Postman kicks around the table. He finds a few beat-up CDs, flips through them. Reads the label.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

'Running on Empty'? Tell me about it.

Tossing it, he turns, stops. There, resting on a pile of trash is a bashed-in portable TV. The Postman smiles.

THE POSTMAN

Hey, Bill! We got TV! 147 channels. Everything from Jesus to 'Jeopardy'.

He steps over, switches on the set. Nothing happens, but The Postman pretends just the same. He mimics static, then:

THE POSTMAN

'Like sands through the hour-glass, so are the days of our lives...'

(switching channels)

'Michael Shields, come on down, you're the next contestant on...'The Price is Right'.'

(switching again)

I'll take Domestic Nuclear Disasters for two hundred thousand, Alex...

The Postman stops suddenly. Click.

THE POSTMAN

We interrupt our regularly scheduled program to bring you the Second Civil War... Well, shit.

The Postman stares at the blank screen a moment. There's a sudden, panicked RUSTLING from behind the service manager's desk. The Postman wheels around, raises the carbine.

THE POSTMAN

I don't want any trouble... I bet you don't either... Let's just call it a draw, okay?

Sudden MOVEMENT. The Postman shouts in surprise as a Doe dashes out from behind the desk. Scared, it bounds back and forth between the walls. Then freezes in the corner. The Postman sighs in relief, lowers the carbine.

THE POSTMAN

Look out, Bill!

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

The doe bolts for the window and runs right into Bill. Bill has a conniption fit.

Investigating further, The Postman spots a cigarette machine. The front glass is smashed and all the slots are empty. But he looks down to the lock at the bottom. It's intact. He pulls a crowbar from the sack, crouches by the machine and digs the pry into a seam and pulls.

The panel bursts open to reveal four half-open cartons of cigarettes. He doesn't believe it for a second. Then:

THE POSTMAN

I'm rich.

6 EXT. 76 STATION - NIGHT

6

Embers of a campfire glow. The Postman is asleep, the carbine in reach.

BILL BRAYS and nervously stamps his hooves. The Postman reaches for the carbine only to find the barrel of a shotgun pointed in his face.

Three BANDITS! Hard-eyed and ugly. One, barely 20, is mostly just ugly. The Postman looks down the barrels of a shotgun, a rifle and a revolver. The LEAD BANDIT kicks the carbine out of reach.

THE POSTMAN

I'm just passing through. I don't mean anyone any harm.

(re: stream)

Water's good.

The Lead Bandit pokes at The Postman's shoulder with the muzzle of his rifle. The Postman knows why.

THE POSTMAN

I'm not a Holnist.

The Lead Bandit pokes again. Harder. The Postman opens his shirt, reveals his bare left shoulder.

THE POSTMAN

Okay?

They just stare at him, none saying a word. Creepy.

THE POSTMAN

I'm headed for a town called St. Rose. Somewhere west of Portland.

(CONTINUED)

LEAD BANDIT

Portland's under twenty feet of water.

THE POSTMAN

Well, I heard different.

LEAD BANDIT

You mouthin' me?

THE POSTMAN

No, it's just that it's hard to get good information.

The third BANDIT, a HULKING brute, has been quiet.

HULKING BANDIT

He is mouthin' you; I say we kill him.

LEAD BANDIT

Don't be in such a rush, Martin.

(back to

The Postman)

Now I see a pack mule over there, but I don't see no packs.

THE POSTMAN

This is all I got.

LEAD BANDIT

Oh... Kill him, Martin.

The Hulking Bandit, raises his shotgun. The butt end. He's going to bludgeon The Postman to death.

THE POSTMAN

(pointing)

Okay! My stuff's up there!

The 76 ball is twenty feet above the ground. In the gloom you can just see a hole has been punched through the side.

BANDIT #20

What do you got in there?

The Lead Bandit swats Bandit #20 upside the head.

LEAD BANDIT

Shut up.

(to Postman)

What do you got in there?

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

THE POSTMAN

Dried peas. Beef jerky.
Cigarettes.

ALL THREE BANDITS

Cigarettes!

THE POSTMAN

Sure. There's the ladder.

BANDIT #20

Maybe he's got it booby-trapped.

The Lead Bandit is about to smack Bandit #20 again -- then he sees the logic out of it. The Postman shakes his head, but isn't that convincing.

LEAD BANDIT

You go up and get it.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. 76 BALL - DAWN

7

The ladder set against the bent pole. Prodded by a shotgun, The Postman climbs, disappears through the hole and into the tilting 76 ball.

8 INT. 76 BALL - DAWN

8

Full of The Postman's earthly possessions. Trick is, how to save them and his life at the same time. He spies an old wrench: remnant of an attempt to remove the rusty bolts holding the ball in place. An idea begins to take shape.

LEAD BANDIT (O.S.)

Just you start tossing those
cigarettes down!

BANDITS

There's no answer. The Bandits eye each other nervously.

BANDIT #20

Maybe he fell asleep.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

76 BALL

The Postman grabs the wrench, starts working one of the last two rusted bolts. As it starts to give...

THE POSTMAN

It's going to take a second. I got my stuff bolted in.

BANDITS

The Lead Bandit takes a cautious step back.

LEAD BANDIT

Put some buckshot through it, Martin. Just to hurry him up.

HULKING BANDIT

I only got three shells left.

LEAD BANDIT

So use his gun.

The Hulking Bandit picks up the carbine and aims. CLICK. It isn't loaded. The Hulking Bandit tosses the gun aside, pulls a knife from his boot. Grimly, he begins to climb.

76 BALL

Cramped, The Postman's busy at the base of the ball, trying to unscrew the last remaining bolt. It won't budge.

LADDER

The Hulking Bandit has only a few more rungs to go.

76 BALL

No good. Time's up. The Postman starts rocking the pole.

LADDER

The Hulking Bandit has reached the opening -- feels the rocking motion. Hangs on.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (2)

8

76 BALL

Knife in hand, the Hulking Bandit looks inside. At that instant, The Postman rocks the pole one more time. The rusty bolt is not enough to keep the ball's full weight in place. It pops. The ball is frozen for an instant before going with the pole's tilt.

LADDER

The 76 ball drops off the pole, rolling over the Hulking Bandit's back and down the ladder's incline. The other Bandits dive clear as the 76 ball hurtles past.

THE POSTMAN

whips head over heels as the ball speeds away.

FIELD

The 76 ball launches off a dirt berm, but soon comes to a stop as it slams into an old utility pole and bursts apart. Fighting the vertigo, The Postman staggers to his feet.

THE POSTMAN

Bill!

Bill bolts from the station as the Lead Bandit raises the RIFLE and FIRES at The Postman.

Losing balance, The Postman lands on his butt just before a bullet splinters the utility pole above his head. Wobbly, he tries to gather his packs. The Bandits charge, quickly closing the ground, but Bill is there first.

Holding as much as he can, The Postman heaves himself over Bill's back. As the mule gallops away, the Lead Bandit aims the rifle. He's got The Postman in his sights.

He's about to fire when -- Bandit #20 stands up INTO the SHOT. He's got a fistful of cigarettes in each hand and he's laughing like a hyena!

BANDIT #20

We're rich!

9 EXT. OVERLOOK HILL (IDAHO) - DAY

9

The Postman sits on a rock, holding Bill's halter so the mule must face him. They are in the midst of an argument.

THE POSTMAN

It's true, we haven't done this in a while, but it's like riding a bicycle. Now, open your mouth.

The Postman pries his mouth open. Taking a toothbrush, he tends to Bill's teeth, then gives him an appraising look.
BILL BRAYS.

THE POSTMAN

I know the rule. It's my rule!
Avoid civilization at all costs.
But we gotta eat, don't we?
(as BILL BRAYS again)
What are you so worried about,
Bill? All you gotta do is stand
there. I'm the one with all the
lines.

The Postman leads the mule down the hill toward the town far below. Making his case all the while -- even as BILL BRAYS in protest.

10 EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE (IDAHO) - DAY

10

A patch of mud. In the center of the square fifty townspeople stand before a plank stage where The Postman wraps up a performance of MacBeth. He plays it with a mis-remembered gusto the people enjoy. Children especially are enamored. A heavily-muscled man, WOODY, lingers on the fringe of the crowd -- watching The Postman with inscrutable intensity.

THE POSTMAN

They said, 'Fear not, MacBeth,
'til Birnam Wood comes to
Dunsinane'!

He looks off stage for someone, but no one appears.

THE POSTMAN

I said, Birnam Wood comes to
Dunsinane!

Bill trots on-stage. Covered with twigs, BILL is Birnam Wood. He BRAYS lustily. The audience laughs in delight. The children clap. Only Woody seems unaffected.

(CONTINUED)

The Postman grabs two wooden swords -- he knows it's going well.

THE POSTMAN

Arm, arm yourselves! If the witch's words are true, there'll be no running or hiding here!

Shaking off the twigs, Bill takes one of the swords in his mouth. The two of them dash back and forth pretending to fight off an imaginary attack. Finally, The Postman looks out at the audience, remembers the words the best he can.

THE POSTMAN

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and the day after that. Out brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts his hour upon the stage and is heard no more. It's a tale told by a moron. Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

(waves sword)

But blow, wind! Come wrack! At least we'll die with the harness off our back!

The audience erupts in applause. But Woody stands still as stone. The Postman takes a bow. Even Bill does a cross-legged dip. Knowing when to quit, he steps off the stage to many hearty handshakes.

Woody watches his every move. MRS. THOMPSON, one of the town's leaders, steps up. She's accompanied by crotchety old CURMUDGEON LARRY.

MRS. THOMPSON

The children have never heard Shakespeare before.

THE POSTMAN

(grinning)

They still haven't.

The Curmudgeon is still clapping.

THE POSTMAN

Thanks. You're very nice.

CURMUDGEON LARRY

I'm clapping because you stink.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

THE POSTMAN

I don't think you understand how it works.

CURMUDGEON LARRY

When I was young, I tried to be an actor. I was awful. But now I won't die thinking I was the worst one.

THE POSTMAN

I'm glad I could help.

MRS. THOMPSON

Larry, stop it.
(to The Postman)
You were very good.

THE POSTMAN

Good enough to get something to eat?

Before she can answer, a SENTRY cries...

SENTRY

Holnists! Holnists are coming!

All eyes look down the road leading into town. A raiding party of Holnist Cavalry are on their way in. Mrs. Thompson sees The Postman's concern.

MRS. THOMPSON

It's okay. We give them food and supplies. All the towns do.

MAN #1

They hardly kill anyone lately. Just take a woman sometimes.

THE POSTMAN

Well, I'd just as soon not give them anything of mine. Let's find the back door, Bill.

The Postman gathers his stuff, slings packs onto Bill.

The forty Holnists in orange and black uniforms ride in. They're armed with mostly pistols and rifles. Some carry bows, knives, spear guns and swords. On their bare shoulders, branded into the flesh-- the number "8."

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (3)

10

Out front, always leading by example is, GENERAL BETHLEHEM. Tough, smart, merciless with style. Commander of the United Clans of Holn. Nothing escapes his eye.

A little behind him is the mysteriously silent Colonel Getty, second in command.

The Postman, finished packing, begins to move from building to building-- careful not to attract any attention.

BETHLEHEM (O.S.)

What are you doing there?

The Postman freezes, turns, is relieved to find Bethlehem's not talking to him at all. The General looks down from his horse at children playing an impromptu game of "Birnam Wood."

The children stop, stare at their feet. Bethlehem affects a "kindly" smile to accompany his gentler tone.

BETHLEHEM

I said, what are you doing?

Meantime, The Postman continues his surreptitious escape. The MAYOR hurries forward to greet Bethlehem.

MAYOR

It's just a game, General Bethlehem. Something they saw in a play. No harm in it.

BETHLEHEM

A play?

(to kids)

Show me. It's all right, children, show me.

One BRAVE BOY finds his voice, barely.

BRAVE BOY

Arm, arm yourselves! No running from the witches!

BETHLEHEM

(surprised)

Shakespeare, is it? Well, I'm sorry I missed it.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (4)

10

MAYOR

You should know, sir, we haven't nearly stocked the game we thought we would.

BETHLEHEM

Really? But you had time for a play?

Head down, The Postman makes for "the back way." But it's guarded by three daunting Holnist soldiers. No getting by them. The Postman does a quick 180, goes back the way he came.

Bethlehem looks at the frightened townsfolk.

BETHLEHEM

I'm taking three conscripts from each town. They will have the honor of serving in the Holnist Army until such time as I see fit.

(to Mayor)

Three men. You suppose you could do that?

The Mayor nods in acquiescence. Bethlehem looks to a Holnist officer. The officer, IDAHO, steps up and addresses the town.

IDAHO

All men between 15 and 50 and of suitable ethnic foundation are required to show themselves now.

The Holnist soldiers fan out, prodding any likely or unwilling candidates forward.

The Postman is now walking behind Bethlehem. Some of the Townspeople cast him a furtive glance as he makes his way toward the open courtyard and, ultimately, the gate out of town.

Three conscripts are hustled before Bethlehem. He looks over the first -- Woody. Smells him. Not much of a decision here.

BETHLEHEM

Acceptable.

IDAHO

Sir?

BETHLEHEM

Acceptable, Captain!

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (5)

10

The second -- a thin teenager. Bethlehem feels his arm, turns his head from side to side.

BETHLEHEM

You'll need to put some meat on,
but I like an impressionable mind.
Acceptable.

The third -- an innocuous man. Or so we think. Bethlehem stares hard at his olive skin, traces a finger over the bump on the man's nose.

BETHLEHEM

Mongoloid. Unacceptable.

Soldiers shove the man back into the crowd. The Brave Boy that was playing Birnam Wood allows himself a tiny smile when he sees that The Postman might make it.

BETHLEHEM

I want pure blood. Someone
like...

Bethlehem notes the Boy, turns to see the object of his attention, and spots The Postman leaving out the front gate.

BETHLEHEM

That man.

Idaho and another soldier are on it. The Postman tries to back away as the two dismount and come toward him.

THE POSTMAN

You don't understand...

But Idaho and the soldier aren't programmed for explanations -- they grab him.

IDAHO

You were required to show
yourself.

THE POSTMAN

But, I'm not with these people.
I'm just passing through. I --

Idaho silences him with a rifle butt to the head.
Everything falls OUT OF FOCUS

IDAHO (O.S.)

Take the mule.

DISSOLVE TO:

11 EXT. HOLNIST TRAINING CAMP (WESTERN IDAHO) - DAY

11

Spread out in the valley is General Bethlehem's Holnist Expeditionary Force. A five hundred-man army enjoying all the comforts a bivouac can offer.

19 head-shaved CONSCRIPTS, including Woody and The Postman, are held in a cramped, barbed wired pen. They watch as three more are shoved inside. One of them is Bandit #20. He and The Postman come face to face, recognize each other.

BANDIT #20

Hi.

THE POSTMAN
(astonished)

Hi?

The Postman steps toward him, Bandit #20 backs off quickly.

BANDIT #20

Well... I mean, we know each other, kind of...

THE POSTMAN

Kind of.

BANDIT #20
(looking around)

Wow!

THE POSTMAN

So what did you guys do with my cigarettes?

BANDIT #20

We traded them for a woman.

THE POSTMAN

Wonderful. What happened to your partners?

BANDIT #20

They traded me to the Holnists.

GUARD (O.S.)

Ten hut!

General Bethlehem approaches on horseback. Colonel Getty follows behind. Bethlehem looks his new recruits over. Dismounting, he enters the pen and walks among them.

(CONTINUED)

BETHLEHEM

Welcome, gentlemen, to your new life. You have been born again as soldiers in the army of the United Clans of Holn. The strong have been sapped by the whimpering propaganda of the weak. Men, strong men, have been denied their destiny. You men have been saved from that fate. Redemption is within your grasp.

He starts down the line, looking the men over. He stops in front of a GANGLY RECRUIT. The Postman is alongside.

BETHLEHEM

You. What did you do before you were given this opportunity?

GANGLY RECRUIT

I had a shovel. I dugged holes.

Bethlehem regards him benevolently.

BETHLEHEM

You digged holes... Well, now you're going to fill them.
(turns to Postman)
And you?

THE POSTMAN

Me?

BETHLEHEM

Is there any question in anyone's mind that I was talking to you? Yes, you. You look like a dangerous man. Are you?

THE POSTMAN

I'm just a performer. Shakespeare. Stuff like that.

BETHLEHEM

Shakespeare?

THE POSTMAN

He was a writer. He --

BETHLEHEM

I know who Shakespeare was... 'Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war.'

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

Bethlehem says the lines boldly, encourages his men to clap for him. He looks at The Postman expectantly. Finally...

THE POSTMAN

I, um, you want a line?

Bethlehem nods. The Postman thinks a moment...

THE POSTMAN

'To be or not to be: That is the question.'

Bethlehem looks at his men as if to say, "Is this all this guy's got?" Bethlehem eyes The Postman; he wants a contest.

BETHLEHEM

'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.'

The Holnists clap, they know their General can best this guy.

THE POSTMAN

(gaining confidence)

'Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of York.'

Bethlehem claps The Postman on the back.

BETHLEHEM

You're pretty good. You're also a fighter. I see it in your eyes.

The Postman doesn't answer. Hesitant, he doesn't want to get into any more trouble than he's already in.

BETHLEHEM

Don't you agree? Come on, a man's got to speak his mind.

Bethlehem sounds sincere. He seems like a good guy.

THE POSTMAN

I don't mean any disrespect, sir, but you'd be better off just letting me go. A fighter is about the last thing I am.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (3)

11

The Postman doubles over as Bethlehem hooks a fist into his gut. Bethlehem clubs him in the head, dropping him to his knees, then digs a boot into his side. The Postman goes down.

BETHLEHEM

Don't you think I should be the judge of that, soldier?

The Postman gasps to catch his breath.

BETHLEHEM

Get up. I said, get up.

The Postman staggers to his feet. Blood trickles from his nose as he stares across at Bethlehem.

BETHLEHEM

Put up your fists.

THE POSTMAN

You'd win.

Bethlehem looks to Getty. CLICK. Getty shoves a PISTOL is into The Postman's ear. The Postman reluctantly raises his fists. Bethlehem gives him a satisfied nod.

BETHLEHEM

Now fight.

The Postman takes a tentative step forward. Bethlehem drives him back with a flurry of blows. The Postman is dazed, nearly out on his feet. Bethlehem holds him up.

BETHLEHEM

You're right. You're not a fighter. But you will be. I'm giving you a chance at a life that means something. A life worth living.

That said, Bethlehem delivers one last blow to The Postman's face. Everything goes BLACK...

12 EXT. HOLNIST TRAINING CAMP (WESTERN IDAHO) - DAWN

12

A brutal REVEILLE BLASTS the sleeping conscripts awake.

IDAHO (O.S.)

Let's move it. Everybody up and at 'em.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

The Postman comes to. He licks his dry, blood-caked lips. A sudden movement startles him-- it's Woody, shoving him a battered cup of water. It's like he's been keeping watch. The Postman is surprised, a little suspicious, and very grateful as he gulps the water down.

THE POSTMAN

Thanks. Did I win?

Woody shakes his head "no."

THE POSTMAN

I tried to tell him...

WOODY

Say it again.

THE POSTMAN

Say what?

WOODY

The words you said in town. About the wind blowing. And the rest... Say it again.

THE POSTMAN

'Blow, wind. Come wrack. At least we'll die with the harness off our back.'

WOODY

What's it mean?

THE POSTMAN

Live free or die.

Woody and The Postman scramble to fall-to with the other conscripts. Idaho surveys the ranks.

IDAHO

All right, girls. We're gonna run. Twenty miles. With packs. You got three hours. Everybody makes it. Or nobody eats.

13 EXT. TRAINING CAMP - MESS LINE - CLOSE ON MEAT - DAY

13

A COOK dumps a scoop of gristly, gray meat into each mess pail as the conscripts wait in line. They fall to ravenously, too hungry to taste how bad it is. Idaho supervises.

(CONTINUED)

IDAHO

Eat up! You got meat tonight.

The line has almost passed. Just The Postman left and Bandit #20 bringing up the rear. Idaho looks at The Postman, addresses the COOK.

IDAHO

Why don't you tell Shakespeare what kind of meat that is.

COOK

Mule.

Probably Bill □-- and The Postman knows it. He stares in revulsion at the putrid meat ladled into his pail.

IDAHO

A godawful animal. The sterile offspring of a horse and a donkey. Can you imagine that?! There's no room in this new world for a bastard like that.

Bandit #20 holds out his pail. But the cook won't fill it.

IDAHO

Uh uh.

(loudly; for all)

Any man last in line ain't hungry enough. You show up last, you don't eat!

Bandit #20 steps away in disbelief. Not knowing what else to do, he sits down beside The Postman, the only man with food who isn't eating.

BANDIT #20

I'll die before I'm last in line again.

THE POSTMAN

That's what they're hoping for.

He holds his pail out to Bandit #20.

BANDIT #20

Serious? This isn't bad.

Lost in despair, The Postman stares out at the skewed palette.

THE POSTMAN

These were supposed to be the best years of my life.

The conscripts stand at attention under the guard of Idaho and two other soldiers. To their right is a dead oak tree. Behind them, three rows of folding chairs.

Two figures approach. Bethlehem and Getty. Getty carries a sheathed sword. Bethlehem surveys the troops-- taking no more notice of The Postman than anyone else.

BETHLEHEM

The laws of eight, gentlemen.
That is the legacy handed down to
us by Nathan Holn.

At the mention of this name, the RECRUITS shout as one.

RECRUITS

God rest his soul!

THE POSTMAN

(low)

May he burn in hell.

Getty looks over at him. He heard him. The Postman swallows hard. Getty stares hard. Then he turns away. He's not going to bust him on it.

BETHLEHEM

These are the laws that we live
by. The eight is our symbol.
Each man will bear it with pride.

Bethlehem nods at Idaho who pushes up his own sleeve to reveal the branded 8.

BETHLEHEM

Only then will you be part of the
clan. Sit down, gentlemen.

The men move to sit in one of the three rows. Only then does it become apparent that there are 18 men and only 17 chairs. One SLOW RECRUIT is left standing. It doesn't take him long to realize that he's in trouble.

BETHLEHEM

Law One. You will obey orders
without question.

(to Slow Recruit)

I told you to sit.

SLOW RECRUIT

(scared)

There weren't enough chairs.

(CONTINUED)

BETHLEHEM

I didn't specify chairs. You could've sat down on the ground.

The Slow Recruit moves to do so.

BETHLEHEM

You disobeyed a direct order. You broke Law One.

Idaho and another soldier step up beside the Slow Recruit.

BETHLEHEM

Law Two. Punishment shall be swift.

They hustle the Recruit to the tree. Idaho unslings a coil of rope, throws it over a tree limb. They quickly slip a loop over the Slow Recruit's ankles and haul him upside down into the air.

BETHLEHEM

Law Three: Mercy is for the weak.
Four: Terror will defeat reason.
Five: Your allegiance is to the clan. Six: Justice can be dictated. Law Seven. Any clansman may challenge for leadership of the clan. Does any man here wish to challenge me?

There are no takers.

BETHLEHEM

On your feet!

The conscripts stand like jackknives snapping open.

Without a word, without a look -- Bethlehem reaches out and draws a sword from a sheath that Getty holds. Bethlehem steps to the Slow Recruit -- who slowly twists around.

BETHLEHEM

Law Eight: There is only one penalty: Death.

Bethlehem raises the sword.

SLOW RECRUIT

Please, I'm begging you.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

THE POSTMAN

As the sword finds its mark. Bethlehem looks at him, but addresses all.

BETHLEHEM

You will get out of this army what you put into it. Work and you'll be fed. Fight and you'll be respected. Die and you'll be remembered. It's up to you.

Bethlehem turns and walks away. Getty following behind. The Postman watches as they go. Idaho steps up to him.

IDAHO

You thinking of challenging for leadership of the clan?

THE POSTMAN

No, sir. I'm a follower not a leader.

IDAHO

You see Colonel Getty? Always following the General? He's the only man who ever challenged. Fight lasted six seconds, but the General didn't kill him. He cut off his tongue and he cut off his balls and old Getty's been following him like a dog ever since.

The Postman looks back to see Bethlehem and Getty disappear into the gloom. Idaho grins, likes how this affects a new man.

The Postman moves on. Idaho stops Woody as he passes.

IDAHO

The General don't see it, but I say you got some nigger in you.

Woody clenches his jaw, but wisely doesn't answer.

15 EXT. PLAINS - DAY

15

Rain as the army moves. Boots suck at the mud. War wagons heave out of ruts. A monster gun is mounted on an old John Deere semi, pulled by a team of ten horses. The conscripts fill the middle ranks, each bearing a heavy pack.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

Marching beside Woody, The Postman stares blankly ahead. The cry to halt. The conscripts unsling their packs, catch their breath. Idaho pulls The Postman out of line.

IDAHO

The General would like a word with you, Shakespeare.

16 INT. GENERAL BETHLEHEM'S TENT - DAY

16

Bethlehem stands before a painter's easel, palette in hand. He's got a mirror set up so he can see his reflection. He's doing a self-portrait in the tradition of the great Dutch Masters -- but it's a dismal failure.

He continues painting even as Idaho leads The Postman in. Idaho salutes, steps back. For a moment, The Postman doesn't quite know what to do.

BETHLEHEM

(re: the book and binoculars on the table)

They're yours. A solitary man, aren't you? Binoculars. To watch life from a distance. And Shakespeare. To read about it instead of living it.

Bethlehem wants an answer. The Postman clears his throat.

THE POSTMAN

No offense, General, but you seem to have read some Shakespeare yourself.

BETHLEHEM

If he wishes to rise above mere thuggery, a military commandeer must be classically educated. Philosophy, history. Even a sense of the dramatic.

(a beat)

Do you know what I did before the war? Do you think I was in the army? I sold copying machines. I was a salesman. The talent to lead men and devise and execute a battle plan were locked away inside me.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

He picks up Finding A Way to Win by Nathan Holn. A 20-year-old self-help book.

BETHLEHEM

If Nathan Holn hadn't come along, I'd still be selling copying machines. Can you imagine the wasted life? Can you imagine the magnitude of it? But war... War gives men like me a chance.

He turns to a dog-eared page in the book.

BETHLEHEM

Here... 'The prize is often left unclaimed. Have the courage to grasp it. For fortune always favors the bold.'

(moved)

It always inspires me.

(beat)

I have a design for the future. A master plan. I'll need able officers to carry it out. You have the intelligence. If your heart matches, you'll go far.

(a beat)

We'll talk more in the weeks to come. Dismissed.

The Postman leaves. Idaho stands at the ready.

BETHLEHEM

Issue the binoculars to a scout.

IDAHO

And the book, sir?

BETHLEHEM

Burn it.

Idaho leaves. Bethlehem goes back to his painting. He considers himself in the mirror. After a long stare-down, he shouts:

BETHLEHEM

Quit moving.

17 EXT. CAMP - DAY

17

The Postman rejoins the conscripts. Bandit #20 slides over.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

BANDIT #20

What happened?

Troubled, The Postman doesn't answer. He heads for a corner where Woody stands alone. Relentless, Bandit #20 follows.

BANDIT #20

What did he say?

THE POSTMAN

Nothing.

BANDIT #20

Did he say anything about me?

THE POSTMAN

No.

They reach the quiet corner; it's just the three of them.

THE POSTMAN

We got to get out of here.

BANDIT #20

What are you talking about?

THE POSTMAN

Escaping.

(low)

You ever hear of St. Rose? It's on the coast. They say it's a paradise. They've even got electric lights.

Bandit #20 looks scared, Woody unreadable.

BANDIT #20

We can't.

THE POSTMAN

Between the three of us, we could --

BANDIT #20

No, no. I can't. I like it here. I like being a part of something.

The Postman can't believe what Bandit #20 just said. Bandit #20 turns, hurries away.

The Postman looks to Woody who doesn't tip his hand either way. He moves away as well.

18 EXT. CAMP - DAY

18

The conscripts break camp. Hot work. Glistening with sweat, The Postman stops to stretch. Across the way, he sees Bandit #20 talking to Getty. Getty glances at The Postman who returns to work, watches under his eyebrows as Idaho joins the group. There's trouble brewing here.

Worried, The Postman looks to Woody, who watches the exchange as well. He is, as usual, inscrutable.

19 EXT. CLEARING - RIVER - DAY

19

The river is swollen and swift from the spring thaw. Marching along the east ridge above it, the army is given the order to halt.

The Postman looks ahead to where Idaho confers with Bethlehem. Something's wrong. They look to where:

Two carbine-toting soldiers stand alertly at guard by a thicket across the river. A rotten wood and rope bridge spans the space between the ridges.

Idaho rides to the conscripts:

IDAHO

One of you dogs has earned himself
a treat. Over there.

Idaho points to the thicket as he proceeds down the line.

IDAHO

Those men hunted themselves a lion
this morning. Must've been a zoo
around here before the war.
Anyhow, they shot him and he
crawled into that thicket. A
third man went in after him. We
don't know if he's dead or alive.
I need a volunteer. Someone's
gotta go in and get our boy out.

No volunteers, except the zealot Bandit #20.

BANDIT #20

I'll go.

Idaho ignores him, stops in front of Woody.

IDAHO

I guess size ain't a measure of
courage, is it? Shakespeare!

The fix is in. The Postman steps out of line.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

Idaho's about to hand The Postman a carbine when --

BETHLEHEM (O.S.)

I don't think so, Captain.

Bethlehem nods to Getty. Getty takes a hunting knife from a belt-sheath and tosses it, blade first, into the ground between The Postman's feet.

BETHLEHEM

Come out alive and you got yourself a lion steak.

Hefting the knife, The Postman stares at the west ridge.

IDAHO

(winks)

Maybe you'll find your St. Rose up there.

The Postman looks to Bandit #20 who stares back defiantly.

IDAHO

What are you waiting for, Christmas?

Bandit #20 can't contain his giggling, so Idaho backhands the sound out of him -- then looks back to The Postman.

Grim The Postman starts forward, looks from the rotten bridge to the water and back again as he moves.

All eyes on him as he starts across...

20 EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

20

The Postman steps lightly. Far below, the river rages. A knotty plank starts to crack underfoot. Scooting off it, he takes a last look around. Continues across to...

21 EXT. WEST RIDGE - DAY

21

The soldiers greet him -- unholy smiles on their ugly mugs. They point him ahead, prod him forward toward a trail of wet blood which leads deeper into the thicket.

Stooping, The Postman enters. The soldiers split off and track along with him on either side of the thicket.

Thorns catch and tear at his clothes as The Postman pushes his way through. He freezes. Ahead, sprawled and twisted, the mauled, bloody corpse of a Holnist soldier.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

Why are you stopping?

THE POSTMAN

I found him.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

He alive?

Clearly he is not.

THE POSTMAN

Yeah.

SOLDIER (O.S.)

Bring him out.

The Postman heaves the corpse onto his back. Rising, steadying himself, he looks back over his shoulders at a GUTTURAL GROWL. He hurries forward.

ARMY

Everyone stares across the river, straining to see as The Postman emerges with the corpse on his back.

ON BRIDGE

The Postman starts across, hampered by his burden. He pauses, at his feet, the cracked, knotty plank.

IDAHO

(across river)

Hurry up! You still got a lion to bag!

The Postman decides, deliberately steps on the PLANK. CRACK. The Postman and the corpse drop thirty feet down, disappear in the river below.

The corpse surfaces first, floats in the water.

Then The Postman. Farther down the river. Swimming downstream with powerful strokes. Between his efforts and the current, he's being quickly swept away from the Holnists.

As Bethlehem's eyes narrow in fury.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

A RIFLE BARKS a SHELL BACK after The Postman, but he disappears around a bend in the river.

Bethlehem signals to two soldiers. They start running along the east ridge toward the riverbend.

Two more start across the bridge to the west -- moving with military precision.

Bethlehem wheels toward the conscripts, points out Woody.

BETHLEHEM

In the water. Come back without him and you and another man will die in his place.

Woody dives in the water. Bethlehem looks to Idaho who dives in as well. Conscripts buzz with nervous excitement.

CONSCRIPTS

Go! Go!

BANDIT #20

(caught up)
I'll get him, sir.

He takes off running across the bridge.

23 EXT. RIVER - DAY

23

A fallen tree spans the river. As The Postman is swept beneath, he reaches up and catches hold. Pulling himself out of the water, he scrambles for the west shore. He disappears into the woods as two soldiers appear.

They catch hold of the tree, look to the west banking, see footprints in the mud where The Postman pulled himself out. They start after him.

24 EXT. CLEARING - WOODS - DAY

24

Clothes in tatters, his lungs ready to burst, The Postman stops. He takes cover as the two soldiers run past.

Breathing hard, The Postman steps out, starts across the clearing. He's halfway when Bandit #20 steps out from the trees. They look at each other for a moment.

THE POSTMAN

Just let me go. I don't want to be part of your army.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

Bandit #20 hesitates for a moment, then breaks into a grin.

BANDIT #20
My army. I like the sound of
 that.

The Postman gestures with his knife.

THE POSTMAN
 Don't --

BANDIT #20
I got him! Over --

The Postman lunges, digs into Bandit #20's gut. He blinks in surprise, then sags to the ground.

The Postman takes a step back. A shadow falls over him. It's Woody. Staring down at The Postman. They can hear others approaching from the river.

WOODY
 They sent me to kill you.

THE POSTMAN
 Come with me.

At that moment, Idaho and the second soldier come into the clearing. Idaho grins, relaxes his grip on his gun when he sees the mismatch between Woody and The Postman.

IDAHO
 Good, boy. Get him.

WOODY
 It's you or me.

THE POSTMAN
 I know.

IDAHO
 Finish it.

Woody circles The Postman, until he's facing Idaho and the soldier. Woody takes a long look at The Postman, smiles.

WOODY
 No harness on my back.

As The Postman realizes what he's doing, Woody flips his knife through the air and into the soldier's throat.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

As Woody rushes him, Idaho raises his GUN.

Idaho pumps TWO ROUNDS into Woody, but the big man keeps coming. The THIRD ROUND finds his heart, puts Woody down. Dead. But not before he lands on top of Idaho.

As Idaho struggles to get out from under Woody's massive frame, The Postman heads for the trees.

Covered in Woody's blood, Idaho FIRES a ROUND as The Postman disappears into the woods. Idaho starts after him.

IDAHO

Tracking. He sees a dribble of fresh blood. He touches it with his fingers and smiles.

He cocks his head at MOVEMENT to his left. Smiling, hefting his pistol, Idaho moves in. More SHUFFLING. Just ahead. He's got him now.

IDAHO

You want your St. Rose?

There's a RUSTLE of BRUSH just before a ROAR splits the air. Idaho doesn't even have time to scream as the LION pounces down on top of him.

25 EXT. CLIFF - DAY

25

The Postman, lungs heaving, stops his climb long enough to take stock of the Army waiting on the distant river edge.

Strength ebbing, he heaves himself up and continues climbing.

DISSOLVE TO:

26 EXT. WOODS (EASTERN OREGON) - NIGHT

26

A chilling RAIN drills down, washing across an old forest road. Covered with undergrowth and dotted with saplings, nothing's been down here in years.

Blue-lipped and shivering, his clothes torn and soaked, The Postman trudges along. He tries to rub some warmth back into his numbed limbs, but a coughing spell wracks his body.

(CONTINUED)

He trudges forward, shoes heavy with freezing mud. He's made his escape, but he won't last the night if he doesn't find some shelter.

An unnatural shape ahead, just off the road. Square. He cautiously pulls back a few branches.

An old, rusted Jeep with faded U.S. government markings. Its hood buried under the dirt of an old mud slide. The Postman stoops to look through the passenger side window, comes face-to-face with death. A skeleton sits inside, the skull grinning against the glass facing The Postman.

But The Postman doesn't jump back. He just stares. The two heads meet halfway as The Postman's face is reflected on the glass, superimposed over the skull.

A hypothermic shiver wracks his body. The Postman tries the door, but it won't budge. The other side of the Jeep is buried. But seeing that the windshield is partly smashed, he clears away the debris, peels back the spider-webbed safety glass and climbs inside.

JEEP

Pulling the glass back down, he looks almost shyly at the skeleton, like two kids about to "park" for the first time.

THE POSTMAN

Hey. How ya doin'?

The back of the Jeep is filled with bags marked U.S. Mail. The Postman picks up a hat off the console. Oddly respectful, he runs a finger along the band over the "Horse & Rider" emblem.

The Postman reaches, touches the embroidered American flag patch on the skeleton's jacket shoulder. Another shiver. A moment later, The Postman is pulling the nice dry jacket off the skeleton and shoving his own arms inside.

A sloshing sound. He pats down the jacket. Finds a liquor. He gives the skeleton a "you shouldn't have" look. But the cap won't budge. He twists, pries, bangs the neck of the steering wheel. At last it gives. He takes a long, hard swallow. The warming fire streams down his throat.

The Postman grabs a random letter, reads it aloud.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: (2)

26

THE POSTMAN

'Jerry Ball, Pine View.'

He starts to open it, looks at the skeleton and shrugs.

THE POSTMAN

So, arrest me.

(reading)

Here's a piece of good news.

Jerry's decided to go to school to
get his contractor's license.

Tossing it aside, he takes a drink, opens another. The words are in crayon -- a child's scrawl.

THE POSTMAN

(smiles to skeleton)

Little Jimmy wants his grandpa to
know he lost a tooth.

The Postman turns the envelope over in his palm. A tiny tooth falls out. The Postman considers it. This suddenly isn't so amusing. He puts it back in the envelope.

Shoving mail sacks aside, he climbs in the back. Burrowing in, he pulls the sacks back, covering himself with a blanket of mail. Getting warmer already, he regards the skeleton a beat as the RAIN DRUMS ON the ROOF.

27 EXT. JEEP - DAY

27

Wearing the blue uniform, The Postman looks down at the fresh grave, realizes a eulogy is in order. He takes off the hat, holds it over his chest for a heartfelt moment of silence.

THE POSTMAN

Thanks for being there for me.

(raising the flask)

Here's to you. I consider my
taxes very well spent.

He swallows the last few drops, then sets the flask down as a headstone. What now?

THE POSTMAN

All dressed up. Nowhere to go.

28 EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY (SOMEWHERE IN OREGON) - DAY 28

His hair growing back nicely, The Postman has reached the proverbial fork in the road. He considers his two options: "Pine View -- 32 miles." Or "Ridgemont -- 220 miles." He looks the two roads over, thinks.

THE POSTMAN

Well, that's easy.

29 EXT. GATES (PINE VIEW, OREGON) - DUSK 29

The town is protected by a tall, long palisade. Like Ft. Apache. All is dark as The Postman approaches.

THE POSTMAN

Greetings, Pine View, Oregon!

TWO SENTRIES appears from the gate house. They aim arrows.

SENTRY #1

Just head back the way you came.
Pine View ain't buying, ain't
listening and don't give charity.

A moment of truth is here. Finally, with authority:

THE POSTMAN

Civilian, I'm on official
business. I demand entry into the
town of Pine View.

SENTRY #2

What the hell are you talking
about?

THE POSTMAN

I'm through talking to you, buddy
boy! Now get somebody with
authority to open this gate!

More silhouettes appear on the palisade. One is SHERIFF BRISCOE, a big, no-nonsense man.

BRISCOE

I'm Sheriff Briscoe. Who the hell
are you?

THE POSTMAN

I'm a representative of the United
States Government --

An uproar. He makes himself heard above it.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

Authorized by order 417 of the restored Congress to reestablish a communication route to Idaho and lower Oregon. Now open that damn gate!

BRISCOE

What does that mean in English?

THE POSTMAN

I'm your postman!

There's a silent hush.

BRISCOE

(to someone on wall)

Hand me your gun.

THE POSTMAN

Understand that tampering with or obstructing the mail is a federal offense. Furthermore, the Bolin Act requires you to provide all mail carriers with sanctuary and nourishment.

(starting forward)

Now open that damn gate!

BRISCOE

You got three seconds to get your ass outta here.

THE POSTMAN

Is Jerry the contractor here?

Briscoe pumps his shotgun, aims it at The Postman.

THE POSTMAN

Wait! I'm going to get something out of my bag.

The Postman dumps the pack over, frantically shuffles through the letters.

BRISCOE

One!

THE POSTMAN

Paul Davis! 124 Vernon Street!

BRISCOE

Never heard of him. Two!

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED: (2)

29

THE POSTMAN
Lois Kent! 14 Weymoth Lane!

BRISCOE
Three!

He fumbles for the last letter. Briscoe takes aim.

THE POSTMAN
Irene March! 478 River Road!

There's an absolute stunned silence. Like a switch was thrown.

30 EXT. INSIDE GATES - DAY

30

The crowd parts as everyone turns to look back at IRENE MARCH. Mrs. March, in her late 50s, is blind, her eyes clouded by cataracts. In disbelief...

MRS. MARCH
Did he say my name?

The sense of hope is palpable as the gates are swung back. Two TOWNIES hurry Mrs. March out to meet The Postman. They're followed by a throng. As he sees she's blind...

THE POSTMAN
Oh, no...

Too late now. They stop Mrs. March in front of him. She stares off just to his left, a little afraid.

MRS. MARCH
I'm Irene March.

THE POSTMAN
(uncomfortable)
I have a letter for you.

He presses it into her hands, but she won't take it.

MRS. MARCH
Would you read it?

THE POSTMAN
I'm sure it's personal.

MRS. MARCH
Please. Someone has to.

(CONTINUED)

The Postman has little choice. As he opens the envelope...

THE POSTMAN

We're delivering the old stock piles, but I'll accept all new correspondence as well.

TOWNIE

Just read it, will ya?

Excited, the people move closer. Someone holds up a torch and The Postman starts.

THE POSTMAN

'Dear Irene. Sorry I haven't written. Everything's so crazy. The strange weather. The food shortages. That farmer Nathan Holn causing all that trouble. It's hard to understand. David's home from the Army. The war was over before he even got there. Thank God for that. He's still my baby no matter how big he gets. We're going to miss you for Christmas, but maybe next year. All our love. Donna.'

Mrs. March reaches out a trembling hand to take the letter.

MRS. MARCH

My sister in Denver. Fifteen years ago. Thank you.

The populace erupts with excitement. Mrs. March takes The Postman's hand, clasps it tightly.

MRS. MARCH

You're a Godsend. A savior.

The Postman pulls his hand back, rejects the title.

THE POSTMAN

No. I'm just... a postman.

An almost awesome silence. Too much for The Postman.

THE POSTMAN

I've been on the road a while. I could use a little something to eat --

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: (2)

30

MRS. MARCH

Oh, yes, absolutely... Is there anything else?

The townspeople welcome him with cheers. The Postman raises a silencing hand. As they quiet...

THE POSTMAN

Yes, there is! If there are dogs in this town, you have to leash them while I'm here!

Only The Postman laughs. No one else reacts. Briscoe watches dubiously from the wall as the people surround The Postman and sweep him through the gates and into town.

One couple watches The Postman closely as he makes his way into town. She is ABBY -- a sweet-faced, pretty woman. Her husband, MICHAEL, is a decent-looking sort, tall and strong.

31 INT. ABANDONED HOTEL - ROOM 7 - NIGHT

31

A freestanding tub has been set up, water "bucketed" in. The Postman luxuriates in his first hot bath in years and sings a familiar tune to himself.

THE POSTMAN

'Stop. Oh, yes, wait a minute, Mr. Postman. Waaa-ait, Mr. Postman...'

32 EXT. PARKING LOT (PINE VIEW) - NIGHT

32

FORD crosses the parking lot of an abandoned motel. He's a black kid, maybe 16, too young to remember any other life but this. He carries The Postman's uniform on a hanger.

33 INT. ABANDONED HOTEL - ROOM 7 - NIGHT

33

The Postman looks up at a KNOCK. Ford steps in. Like most kids, he needs a hero. Holding up the uniform, he just found one.

FORD

(beaming)

Cleaned and pressed, sir.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

THE POSTMAN

Thanks. Didn't somebody say something about dinner?

FORD

Yeah, I'm supposed to take you to Foster's.

(extending a hand)

My name's Ford. Ford Lincoln Mercury.

The Postman just nods, hoisting himself out of the tub and hurriedly wrapping a towel around himself.

FORD

Used to be John Stevens, but I changed it on account of I want to drive cars.

Hoping to impress, Ford reaches into a pocket, pulls out a worn, creased flyer for a "Ford Lincoln Mercury" dealership. Ford finds The Postman just staring at him, waiting for the uniform he's still got in his hand. Embarrassed, Ford quickly hands it over.

34 EXT. STREET (PINE VIEW) - NIGHT

34

Ford leads the way as they leave the motel behind. The Postman looks good in his uniform. They cross a parking lot where five partly-stripped cars have been sitting for years. There's a potted plant outside the driver's door of one.

FORD

I live in that car. A 2003 Pontiac Sinatra. With a nine-banger and a Q-eight.

THE POSTMAN

V-eight. Eight cylinders. That means an eight-banger.

FORD

(in awe of him)

Were they fast?

FORD

A buck seventy-five on a strip.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

FORD

A buck seventy-five? I thought maybe I could fix some of them up. It's nothing compared to what you do.

This is the last thing he expected to hear out of this kid's mouth. A moment, then...

THE POSTMAN

The important thing to remember about cars is, you can't eat 'em.

Ahead, people are gathered inside an old Foster's Freeze.

35 INT. FOSTER'S FREEZE (PINE VIEW) - NIGHT

35

The townspeople fill the booths, line the walls. They talk excitedly amongst themselves, break into spontaneous applause as Ford and The Postman enter.

The Postman is surprised, uncomfortable at this display. But then he sees that a banquet has been laid out on the counter. The centerpiece is a huge vat of steaming stew.

The PEOPLE clear a path for him.

MAN #1

Tell us about the government!

WOMAN #1

Yes, tell us everything!

Startled, The Postman doesn't quite know what to say. They seat him at a table -- but the food looks miles away.

MAN #2

Is there a President?

THE POSTMAN

Yeah.

WOMAN #2

What's his name?

THE POSTMAN

You know, I'm pretty hungry.

But these people won't be denied. Finally...

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

His name is, uh... Richard Starkey. From Maine. He has a saying. 'Things are getting better, getting better all the time.'

There's warm applause at that. Several people try the expression out on each other.

MAN #3

He a Democrat or a Republican?

THE POSTMAN

Parties are over with. The individual is what counts. You vote for the best man.

Ellen sets a steaming bowl of stew in front of The Postman. Famished, he digs in.

MAN #4

What about Europe? Any word?

The Postman tries to speak through a mouthful of food.

THE POSTMAN

Lady Di's in charge. Sixty years old and she still kicks ass.

WOMAN #3

Is Nathan Holn still alive?

THE POSTMAN

(smiles at irony)
He died. Skin cancer.

That's sure good news to everyone. But...

WOMAN #4

And the Holnists? They're still out there. What's the government going to do about them?

The Postman looks at the desperate faces -- he'd rather get back to his meal -- but this may be the most important question of all. He doesn't want to lie.

THE POSTMAN

The government's just getting started. You're on your own for at least eighteen months.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (2)

35

MAN #5

What about the Marines Corp?

A clamor of Holnist questions.

ELLEN

Be quiet, everyone! Can't we just
let this man eat?

The people nod and The Postman finally gets to eat. He catches sight of Briscoe watching him from the door. After a moment, Briscoe leaves.

36 INT. FOSTER'S FREEZE - LATER

36

A band plays an odd array of instruments. There's dancing. The Postman sits behind four empty bowls. People watch him eat like it was a religious experience. He pushes back the fifth bowl.

THE POSTMAN

Never thought I'd hear myself say
this, but I can't eat anymore.

He's cut off by the sight of a silent, little boy. The kid's looking up, staring intently at something.

THE POSTMAN

What?

The boy just stares.

THE POSTMAN

(re: the cap)

This?

The boy nods. The Postman shakes his head and smiles to himself. He takes off the cap, sets it on the kid's head.

THE POSTMAN

Almost fits.

The boy's eyes go wide with wonder. His stock's gone up 1000%. Before he can rush off to impress his friends, ELLEN -- his mother -- steps over and gently chides him.

ELLEN

That's not a toy, honey. That's
very important. Give it back.

(CONTINUED)

The boy carefully removes the cap, hands it back to The Postman. Ellen smiles gratefully and gently guides her son away.

The Postman shrugs, turns to find Abby, the pretty woman we saw at the Pine View gates. She smiles at The Postman.

ABBY

Would you like to dance?

THE POSTMAN

I don't know if I can, I think I'm still on duty.

He laughs. Abby says nothing.

THE POSTMAN

It's been a long time.

Abby holds out her hand like a promise.

ABBY

All you got to do is hold on.

DANCE FLOOR

Abby and The Postman dance. She keeps looking him over.

THE POSTMAN

Is something wrong?

ABBY

How tall are you?

THE POSTMAN

About six feet.

ABBY

Are you smart?

THE POSTMAN

Smarter than some I guess. Why?

ABBY

Just wondering. Did you ever have the bad mumps?

The Postman smiles. She's odd, but beautiful.

THE POSTMAN

Never had the bad mumps.

(CONTINUED)

ABBY

Have you ever had herpes or syphilis or anything like that?

He shakes his head "no." They continue to dance.

ABBY

So as far as you know, you have good semen?

THE POSTMAN

Is that a trick question?

ABBY

I don't mean to be nosy. I'm only asking because I want you to make me pregnant.

Stunned, The Postman stops dancing. Abby takes this moment to grab Michael.

THE POSTMAN

(to himself)

It's got to be the uniform.

Abby takes Michael's arm, introduces him proudly.

ABBY

This is my husband. Michael.

Michael smiles, shakes hands with a grave-digger's grip. The Postman doesn't know what to think.

ABBY

We've been trying to have a baby for three years. We can't on account of Michael had the bad mumps when he was twelve. So we need a body father. We could ask a man here, but it could cause trouble. I've seen it happen. Things go okay until the woman starts to show. Then it can be bad. But you'll only be around once in awhile with the mail.

The Postman just stares at them. Abby looks to Michael.

ABBY

He hasn't said 'no'.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

(undaunted)

What do you say, mister? You'd be doing us a favor.

THE POSTMAN

I'll have to think about it.

The Postman excuses himself with a nod and turns away, shaking his head at the strangeness of this new world.

But no rest for the wicked, as soon as he's free from Abby and Michael, he's running smack into another group of well-wishing TOWNIES. Mrs. March is among them. She's holding an envelope.

TOWNIE #1

Mrs. March wants to give you something.

(to Mrs. March)

He's right here, Irene.

MRS. MARCH

(re: letter)

It's to my daughter Annie. She left five years ago. She was only fifteen. The last I heard, she was living up north...

The Postman swallows hard, looks from the envelope to the faces around him, to Mrs. March. She looks blindly back. How can he lie to her?

THE POSTMAN

Look, Mrs. March, you should know that...

MRS. MARCH

Know what?

THE POSTMAN

Know that...

But she stops him, grabs for his hand.

MRS. MARCH

I have a feeling about you. I know you'll do what's right.

Her hand leaves his and she disappears into the crowd. She's left him with her letter and no choice at all.

THE POSTMAN

I got to get out of here.

37 EXT. PINE VIEW - NIGHT

37

The Postman moves through town. The streets are deserted. He's got his pack on, his mailbag. He passes a 7-11 converted to a blacksmith shop. There's a horse tethered to the railing in front of it. He grins; maybe he's going to make it out of here after all. As he starts to move toward the horse...

OLD MAN (O.S.)
It's right around the corner.

An OLD MAN sits on his porch across the street.

THE POSTMAN
(freezes, startled)
What is?

OLD MAN
What you're looking for.

The Old Man winks knowingly, then heads inside. As The Postman turns the corner, he finds himself in front of the post office. An old brick building. Chiseled in the granite facing: "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE. EST. 1884."

38 INT. POST OFFICE (PINE VIEW) - NIGHT

38

Long ago stripped, it still has a proud, official, almost holy feel. The Postman wanders in, stops to read the credo calligraphied on the wall. "Neither snow, nor rain..." He turns at a SOUND. Ford is here, leaning against a wall.

FORD
I knew you'd come here.

THE POSTMAN
You did, huh?

Ford nods. A sage sixteen-year-old.

FORD
How do you get to be a postman,
anyhow?

THE POSTMAN
You have to be in the right place
at the right time.

FORD
How could I do it?

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

I thought you wanted to drive cars.

FORD

Not anymore. That was kid's stuff. This is real. So, where's the right place?

THE POSTMAN

Could be anywhere. Anytime. Only another postman can make you a postman.

FORD

Kinda like vampires, right?

THE POSTMAN

Something like that. You have to be sworn in.

Ford raises his right hand, palm out, ready to take the oath. It takes The Postman a moment to realize.

THE POSTMAN

The organization's kinda shaky. It might not last.

FORD

What does?

THE POSTMAN

You'd meet a lot of people who don't believe in you.

FORD

I'll set them straight.

THE POSTMAN

It's a lonely job.

FORD

I've been lonely all my life.

This response strikes a chord. The Postman sees how badly Ford wants something to hold onto. He sees himself.

THE POSTMAN

So have I, Ford. So have I.

The Postman looks up at the creed on the wall. Finally...

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

What the hell? Repeat after me.

POSTMAN/FORD

(repeating)

Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat
nor gloom of night stays these
couriers from the swift completion
of their appointed rounds.

THE POSTMAN

Okay then.

FORD

(repeating)

Okay, then.

THE POSTMAN

No, no, no, I'm saying that. You
just listen... By my authority you
are now empowered to carry the
mail.

(extends a hand)

Congratulations, you're a postman.

They shake hands. The Postman doesn't realize, but this
is the most important moment in Ford's life.

FORD

I want you to know I'd die to get
a letter through.

Ford's intensity takes The Postman back. But the moment
is broken when...

BRISCOE (O.S.)

Johnny, why don't you run along.
I need to speak to this man.

Ford bristles at "Johnny," looks to The Postman.

FORD

I'll see you around.

THE POSTMAN

Sure thing, Ford.

Ford exits.

BRISCOE

Johnny's real impressed with you.
Whole town's real impressed with
you.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (3)

38

THE POSTMAN

I take it you're not.

BRISCOE

Smarter than you look.

THE POSTMAN

What can I do for you, Sheriff?

BRISCOE

You can clear out. Or I can throw you out. Either way suits me fine.

THE POSTMAN

I'm afraid you don't understand, Sheriff. I'm a government employee. Authorized by --

BRISCOE

You're not authorized by shit. You're nothing but a drifter who found a bag of mail. And I want you out of my town.

THE POSTMAN

This is going in my report.

BRISCOE

These people don't need dreams, Mr. Postman. They need something real. They need help with the goddamn Holnists. Are you going to bring them that?

(as The Postman
doesn't answer)

Didn't think so. All you cost us so far is a few bowls of soup and maybe later a few broken hearts. I aim to keep it that way. You can stay till morning. Then I don't ever want to see you again.

Briscoe exits, leaves The Postman alone in the post office.

39 INT. ABANDONED HOTEL - ROOM 7 - NIGHT

39

The Postman arrives home. He pushes open the door, knocking over a stack of letters that have been shoved under the door. He gathers them up, flips through them. They're written on scraps, the backs of pictures, on handkerchiefs and homemade paper. They aren't old.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: 39

They're brand new. Shaking his head, he closes the door.

The Postman has no sooner done so when there's a KNOCK on the window. He looks over at a woman. She shrugs, smiles, holds up a letter. The Postman sighs; he's trapped in here.

40 EXT. FOSTER'S FREEZE - NIGHT 40

CAMERA STARTS ON a man with a string-tied package crossing the streets and DRIFTS TO the abandoned car where Ford lives. He's home.

ON FORD

Concentrating, Ford holds a needle and thread and a piece of cloth on which he's drawn an approximation of the post office shoulder patch. By moonlight he embroiders it in. Not exactly work you'd pay money for, but not bad either.

41 INT. ABANDONED HOTEL - ROOM 7 - CLOSE ON STRING-TIED PACKAGE - NIGHT 41

~from the previous scene. It's on the table with a growing stack of mail.

The Postman is in bed, trying to sleep. But it's hard-coming. He laces his fingers behind his head, stares up at the moon through a hole in the wall. A KNOCK at the door.

THE POSTMAN

Just leave it.

There's a pause. And then, ANOTHER KNOCK.

THE POSTMAN

I said leave it.

The door opens. Surprise. Abby stands in the doorway, her hair held up by an old red ribbon. He sits up.

THE POSTMAN

Hello, Abby.

ABBY

You'll be leaving tomorrow?

THE POSTMAN

I guess.

(CONTINUED)

ABBY

(enters; closes door)
Everybody's up late writing
letters for you to take. We're
not supposed to waste candles like
that, but they're so excited.

THE POSTMAN

How about you? Do you have a
letter?

ABBY

I don't have anybody to write to.

THE POSTMAN

I'll find you a pen pal. Someone
with interests similar to your
own. Dancing, checking for mumps.

Abby laughs. The Postman is charmed.

ABBY

You're funny. Hardly anyone's
funny around here.

THE POSTMAN

I guess no one feels much like
laughing.

The two of them just look at each other a moment. Abby
fingers the ribbon in her hair.

ABBY

Have you decided yet?

THE POSTMAN

Oh, well, I've been thinking about
it.

A beat. Abby lets her shift drop to the floor, then
slides under the sheets alongside him.

THE POSTMAN

Sure. Why not?

They lie there awkwardly for a moment. He looks at her.

THE POSTMAN

God, you're beautiful. Sorry, I
know you'd probably like to keep
things more clinical.

(beat)

You don't even know my name.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: (2)

41

She shushes him, covers his mouth with her hand.

ABBY

I don't want to.

He nods he understands. She stares into his eyes.

ABBY

It would be easier for me if you
closed your eyes.

The Postman closes his eyes. Abby slides her hand away
from his mouth. And as they start to make love...

DISSOLVE TO:

42 INT. ABANDONED HOTEL - ROOM 7 - DAY

42

The Postman wakes, reaches for the warm body that was
there last night. But Abby is gone. All that's left
behind is her red ribbon. Wistful, he picks it up.

43 EXT. ABANDONED HOTEL - DAY

43

The Postman exits. In uniform, his bag slung over his
shoulder. He starts then stops short. Only now do we see
most of the townspeople have silently assembled here.
They've been waiting for him, starving for him.

Ford steps up, hands him another fresh packet of letters.
The Postman sees that Ford hangs on to four or five.

THE POSTMAN

What about those?

FORD

These are going to Blue Jay.
About twenty miles east. I
thought I could take them.

The Postman scans the crowd. Looking for Abby maybe?

THE POSTMAN

(absently)

Okay. They're yours.

Briscoe rides up, regards The Postman sternly.

BRISCOE

I'm your escort out of town.

Some of the town's CITIZENS lead up a saddled mare.

(CONTINUED)

CITIZEN #1

We took a vote, Mr. Postman. We want you to have this horse.

CITIZEN #2

Now don't say no. A man on horseback can cover ten times the territory of a man on foot.

THE POSTMAN

(smiles at Briscoe)

I'll take it.

He ties his mailbag to the saddle, swings himself up.

CITIZEN #3

There's a bedroll, some oats and a week's rations.

THE POSTMAN

Thank you.

CITIZEN #1

Where do you figure you'll go from here?

THE POSTMAN

Go?... Oh yeah... I'll head west, then work my way back here in a sort of figure eight.

"8." Everyone's quiet a moment. They shift uncomfortably. The Postman looks out at the crowd. They crave hope. He should probably just keep his mouth shut.

THE POSTMAN

Times seem hard right now. But you have to believe it's getting better. Birds are migrating again. The rains are back.

The people consider him and then each other. By God, they do feel hopeful. Suddenly, Ellen, her little boy by her side, begins to sing. It's weak at first, but one-by-one the others join in. Soon the whole town is singing:

ELLEN & TOWN

'Oh beautiful for spacious skies,
for amber waves of grain. For
purple mountain's majesty, above
the fruited plain. America...'

The Postman looks around. They sing their hearts out. The guilt is overwhelming. He digs his heels into the horse's flanks and rides out of town.

44 EXT. PALISADE GATES (PINE VIEW) - DAY

44

People line the top as The Postman and Briscoe ride out. The strains of "AMERICA" still in the background.

BRISCOE

You got a helluva nerve, whoever you are.

The Postman doesn't rise to the bait.

THE POSTMAN

Is Abby around?

BRISCOE

She and Michael are working the north meadow this morning.

Briscoe reins up-- he's gone as far as his duty commands.

BRISCOE

Well, you're on your own.

The Postman tips his cap and continues riding by "Pine View-- Population 132." Briscoe watches a moment, then calls after him:

BRISCOE

Hey! Are you really who you say you are?

THE POSTMAN

If I come back with some mail, you'll know!

The Postman continues. Caught in an inner turmoil, Briscoe reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a letter. He turns it over in his hands, looks off at The Postman.

BRISCOE

God damn it!

Briscoe urges his horse forward, catches up. He hands The Postman the letter, then rides back for town. The Postman watches Briscoe. The people lining the wall. And he realizes just what effect he's had. There's nothing to do, but shrug his shoulders and ride. Strains of "AMERICA" still ECHO hauntingly OVER:

45 EXT. ON ROAD - SUN

45

A green and lavender sunset. In the middle of nowhere, The Postman rides, chewing a piece of jerked beef. He flips through some of the letters entrusted to him.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

THE POSTMAN

Eugene. Benning. Portland.
 (stops short)
 Boston!
 (resumes)
 Seattle. Boise... St. Rose,
 Paradise on the Pacific...

He considers the letter, looks around as if someone may be watching. He just begins to tear the corner, then stops.

THE POSTMAN

Maybe one thing can still be
 sacred.
 (to horse)
 All in all, not a bad gig, huh?

The HORSE SNORTS. Smiling, The Postman shoves the envelope into his bag. As he does, he finds something else. The red ribbon. He runs it through his fingers, thinks wistfully of Abby. Then, like a knight of old representing a lady's honor, he ties it to his mailbag and rides on.

46 EXT. WELL (PINE VIEW) - DAY

46

Abby's washing clothes with a tub and washboard. Waging war on dirt. Michael leans against a tree, watches Abby at work until she notices him. She wipes the sweat from her brow, tries not to smile.

ABBY

What are you looking at?

MICHAEL

Everything.

He steps over and they're in each other's arms. This is love. But as Michael kisses her, we hear a familiar alarm:

SENTRY

Holnists! Holnists are coming!

47 EXT. PALISADE GATES (PINE VIEW) - DAY

47

Led by Bethlehem and Getty, the soldiers ride in. Something about the citizens disturbs Bethlehem.

BETHLEHEM

They don't usually look at me.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

Bethlehem reins in across from the post office. Someone has hung a tattered old American flag.

BETHLEHEM

Who's responsible for that?!

No one answers. All heads are down now.

48 INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

48

Ford is sweeping up. The place looks almost presentable. He stops when he hears Bethlehem calling once more for the responsible party.

Ford starts forward. Suddenly Briscoe is blocking his way.

BRISCOE

Holnists, Johnny. You gotta stay out of sight.

FORD

I'm a postman. And I'm not hiding from anyone. I --

Briscoe grabs him by the shirt, hauls him out the back way.

BRISCOE

You stay out of this, or I'll lock you up myself damnit.

49 EXT. PINE VIEW - DAY

49

Bethlehem picks Michael out of the crowd.

BETHLEHEM

You. You'll be responsible.
(to soldiers)
Get him a torch.

Michael walks out into the square. One of the soldiers returns with a burning torch, gives it to Michael.

Bethlehem looks at the town, then at Michael.

BETHLEHEM

Set that flag on fire.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

ON MICHAEL

It's killing him, but Michael sets the torch to the flag.

BETHLEHEM

Now throw it through the window of
your 'post office.'

CRASH! The TORCH goes through the post office WINDOW.

ON FORD

Struggling to get out, but Briscoe blocks his way.

ON BETHLEHEM

As flames grow, he takes one last look around.

BETHLEHEM

The United States doesn't exist.
That flag is an abomination.

Briscoe steps forward, attempts to diffuse the situation.

BRISCOE

General Bethlehem.
(as Bethlehem turns)
We're gathering the tribute, sir.
Can I take your wagons?

Bethlehem decides not to kill anyone, looks to Getty.

BETHLEHEM

Make sure that fire doesn't go
out.

The General joins Briscoe.

Tears on his cheeks, Ford watches the post office burn.

50 EXT. PARKING LOT (PINE VIEW) - EARLY EVENING

50

Bethlehem relaxes with his officers as wagons are loaded. Michael is just passing with a sack of grain on his shoulder, when Bethlehem looks across the street -- spies Abby and some of the other women sewing grain sacks shut.

BETHLEHEM

Good Lord. That, gentlemen, is a
first-rate piece of ass.

(CONTINUED)

Michael overhears. He looks over as Bethlehem's men nod in agreement. Michael sees that they're talking about Abby.

BETHLEHEM

Tell the Sheriff I want to be introduced. She does not belong in a mudhole like this.

One of the men hurries off. It's concern for Abby, not for his manhood that makes him step forward.

MICHAEL

Excuse me.

BETHLEHEM

(looks over)

You again?

MICHAEL

That's my wife, General. She's a married woman.

BETHLEHEM

Do you know what system of government we have here, son?

(as Michael shrugs)

A feudal system. Like the Middle Ages. With lords and vassals. That's you and me. Those lords, they had some ideas. If a vassal got married, it was the lord's right, his right, to sleep with the bride on the wedding night.

MICHAEL

Me and Abby have been married for three years.

BETHLEHEM

Sorry, but I wasn't invited to the wedding. Now, you've already done me one favor, son. Don't let this be a black mark on an otherwise perfect record.

ABBY

Another woman has pointed out to her what's going on. She can't hear what's being said, but she watches, concerned.

(CONTINUED)

PARKING LOT

BETHLEHEM

We'll be civilized about this. I want you to give me your blessing.

MICHAEL

Sir, I can't. You can't.

BETHLEHEM

Can't? I'm tired of can't. We had a great nation once. Do you know what made it that way? I can! Till the weak came along. The 'I can'ts' destroyed us. But I'm going to make us strong again. I'm going to be the father of a new nation.

(draws his sword)

Do you know why it will be me?

Michael looks to Abby as she starts across the street.

BETHLEHEM

Because I can!

The SWORD WHISTLES down. Accompanied by an anguished cry:

ABBY

Michael!

Abby rushes forward, but she's blocked by Getty and another man. She cries out again and again.

Filled with impotent fury, Briscoe squeezes out the words.

BRISCOE

You didn't have to□--

BETHLEHEM

Didn't have to what, Sheriff?

Three Holnist soldiers draw down on Briscoe. Bethlehem circles, menacing on his horse.

BETHLEHEM

Your people seem seditious. You seem seditious.

Briscoe stares down at Michael's crumpled form. Abby wails.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (3)

50

BRISCOE

Aw, Michael...

Briscoe might go after Bethlehem despite the odds.

BETHLEHEM

What am I seeing here? I'm waiting.

BRISCOE

(burying his anger)

Man came through here. With mail. Said he was a postman. Said the government had been restored back east.

BETHLEHEM

What government?

From out of the crowd-- a voice. Ford.

FORD

The United States government.

Bethlehem whirls his horse at the noise.

BETHLEHEM

Who said that?

Not waiting for an answer, Getty charges the crowd, knocks one of the onlookers down. A dead silence.

Bethlehem frowns, thinks it over a minute.

BETHLEHEM

Which way did he go?

(a beat)

Do not make me ask again.

BRISCOE

(lies)

East.

BETHLEHEM

(to Getty)

Send a patrol east. Send three more south, north and west.

(to Briscoe)

They'd better find him east.

51 EXT. PALISADE GATES (PINE VIEW) - NIGHT

51

The Holnist army rides out. Overcome by grief, tied at the wrists, Abby stumbles behind one of the wagons.

52 EXT. BURNT-OUT POST OFFICE - NIGHT

52

Before the smoking ruins, Ford pulls on a blue shirt, his homemade postal flag on the shoulder. As Briscoe steps up, Ford shows him a bundle of singed, but intact letters.

FORD

I managed to save these.

BRISCOE

(re: shirt)

Take that thing off, Johnny. You want to die, too?

Ford shoves the letters in a makeshift bag, then climbs onto his waiting pony.

FORD

I'm headed south. With the mail.

BRISCOE

(grabs harness)

Don't be a damn fool.

FORD

What kind should I be?... Haw!

Ford digs his heels into the pony and is off in a flash doing damn near a buck seventy-five.

53 INT. MOVIE THEATER (BENNING, OREGON) - DAY

53

Mail call. The Postman stands in front of the torn screen. Hoping for glory by association, the smiling Mayor stands beside him. The ragged people of Benning clamor in front. Kids smile up at him as he calls out names:

THE POSTMAN

Rachel Clark!

(as she's there)

Charlie Sykes!

(as he's there)

Graham Druitt!

VOICE

G.D. died last winter of flu.

The Postman nods, sticks the letter back in his bag.

THE POSTMAN

That's it for now, folks.

There'll be more once a real system is in place.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

As usual, The Postman is assaulted with questions.

MAN

Tell us about President Starkey!

WOMAN

What about New York City? Did they survive the plague?

THE POSTMAN

Survive? They got Broadway up and running again. There's a kid doing Andrew Lloyd Webber like you wouldn't believe.

An older woman sheds a happy tear -- this is wonderful news.

MAN #3

How much is it to mail a letter?

THE POSTMAN

(smiles)

A buck seventy-five.

MAN #3

That sounds awful cheap.

THE POSTMAN

The catch is the only currency recognized are silver American coins minted before 1964 and two dollar bills. Look for Thomas Jefferson. Of course, food is always acceptable as barter.

The moment is split by a SIREN.

54 EXT. BENNING, OREGON - DAY

54

A long double-line of Holnist Cavalry stand in formation in front of the city walls made from stacks of crushed cars. On top, a SKINNY SENTRY CRANKS the SIREN while a CHUBBY SENTRY watches.

Bethlehem rides through them with Abby in tow -- her wrists tied by a rope which is looped around the pommel of Bethlehem's saddle. Her face is bruised, her bottom lip split. Bethlehem reins up, puzzled by the apparent stall.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

GIBBS

(rides up; salutes)

They won't open the gates, sir.

BETHLEHEM

What?

GIBBS

They say they got a representative
of the restored United States in
there. They say this army is
illegal. They say --

The Chubby Sentry answers from the top of the palisade.

CHUBBY SENTRY

Drop dead and go to hell!

The Chubby Sentry disappears back behind cover. Bethlehem
remains controlled, but his manner becomes deadly.

BETHLEHEM

The Romans had an expression they
used to scare their children.
'Hannibal ad portas!' -- Hannibal
is at the gates. Do you know who
Hannibal was?

(as she doesn't answer)

Of course not. A pretty girl like
you wouldn't know a thing.

(to Getty)

Colonel Getty, get some men up
there and open that gate.

55 EXT. INSIDE GATES - DAY

55

The Mayor hurries over, The Postman following reluctantly
behind. The Mayor spots the Sentries up on the parapet.

MAYOR

What the hell are you doing?!
Open the gates!

SKINNY SENTRY

Government's restored! We don't
have to take their crap anymore!

56 EXT. PALISADE GATES (BENNING) - DAY

56

Two Holnists scale the gates. They're near the top when
the Skinny Sentry appears. He FIRES an ARROW. Hit
through the shoulder, one Holnist falls. The other jumps.

57 EXT. PARAPET - INSIDE WALLS - DAY 57

Chubby and Skinny duck down behind the safety of the walls, trading high-fives.

58 EXT. PALISADE GATES (BENNING) - DAY 58

Bethlehem orders his men to pull back. He shakes his head, a quiet rage building. But he knows there's no military threat here. It's going to be a massacre.

59 EXT. PARAPET - INSIDE WALLS - DAY 59

Climbing an inside ladder, the Mayor slams the Chubby Sentry against the wall.

MAYOR

Idiots!

CITIZEN #1

(realizing; scared)

They're gonna kill us all.

The Mayor peers out through an observation hole. The Postman and several others join him.

CHUBBY SENTRY

No! Let's fight them!

MAYOR

With what? We got five guns maybe
20 rounds of ammo in the whole
town! How do we fight them with
that?!

The Postman watches the Holnists prepare for attack.

THE POSTMAN

You don't. Negotiate a
settlement. Give them extra
supplies.

The men look at each other. Sounds reasonable enough.

MAYOR

Okay. You're a government rep.
You go tell them.

The look on The Postman's face says it all.

They open enough to let the Postman ride out, then close behind him. He sits nervously on his horse waving a white flag. He's met, dismounts and is led to a command post where Bethlehem is studying a rough map of the town.

BETHLEHEM

Make it quick. I've got an attack to coordinate.

THE POSTMAN

General, um, they've asked me to negotiate a peace treaty.

The last time he and Bethlehem were face-to-face, the Postman had a shaved head, was dressed in rags, and was covered with cuts and bruises. Bethlehem can't place him, but there's something familiar all the same.

BETHLEHEM

Do I know you?

THE POSTMAN

I don't think so, sir. I --

BETHLEHEM

(scans uniform)

You're the Postman, aren't you?

ABBY

watches from the flap of Bethlehem's tent. The guard sees and shoves her back inside.

BETHLEHEM AND THE POSTMAN

Bethlehem flicks at the uniform flag shoulder patch.

BETHLEHEM

The restored United States. Do these people really believe that shit? Who are you really?

Although he wants to confess everything, something tells The Postman he has to try to brass it out.

THE POSTMAN

I am a United States Postman. Authorized by order 417 of the restored Congress to --

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

BETHLEHEM

I was at the Battle of Georgetown.
I watched the White House burn to
the ground. Don't try to sell me
on any restored U.S...

THE POSTMAN

The new capital is based in
Minneapolis. Inside the Hubert
Humphrey Metrodome. You know,
where the Vikings used to play?

BETHLEHEM

You're funny. Now, what are the
terms?

THE POSTMAN

They'll open the gate and give you
double what they usually give.
Just don't hurt anybody. This was
all a misunderstanding.

Bethlehem thinks this over.

61 INT. ABBY'S TENT - DAY

61

Abby tracks the guard's silhouette through the canvas.
Her eyes search the tent -- land on the cot in the corner
and focus on its heavy, wooden legs.

62 EXT. GATES - DAY

62

Bethlehem has decided.

BETHLEHEM

Appreciate your offer, Postman.
Problem is, you're in no position
to negotiate. These people made
it through the bugs and the riots
and the three year winter. But
they're not going to survive you.

Bethlehem looks to Getty and nods. Getty motions to a
gunner. The MONSTER GUN is FIRED. Just as a SHELL
EXPLODES against the gates --

63 INT. ABBY'S TENT - DAY

63

Abby brings the heavy wooden cot leg down on the
unsuspecting guard's head.

The cavalry ride through roiling smoke into the open town.

Horrified, The Postman steps forward, but rifles are on him. All he can do is watch. The Mayor is the first to go down.

BETHLEHEM

Law six, justice can be dictated.
(to soldiers)
Kill him. And kill the restored
United States with him.

Bethlehem turns his attention to the battle. A CAPTAIN steps forward with gun raised.

CAPTAIN

(by rote)
In accordance with law eight and
by the authority of Emergency
Order 46, you are hereby --

A CRACK of RIFLE FIRE. The Captain's forehead explodes and he falls to the ground.

Shocked, Bethlehem whirls for the source of the GUNFIRE.

Abby! FIRING from a position behind a supply wagon.

But even as Bethlehem turns, an ARROW SINGS in and lodges in his arm. Fired from a pocket of sentries up on the palisade. Bethlehem bellows in outrage and pain.

The Postman takes advantage of the moment of chaos to grab the fallen Captain's gun.

He pulls a Holnist rider from his horse and swings into the saddle. The unhorsed rider goes for his gun. But once more SHOTS RING OUT and he goes down.

Bethlehem ducks as another BULLET ZINGS close. Too close.

BETHLEHEM

Get her.

Two soldiers move forward.

Suddenly The Postman's HORSE comes THUNDERING -- trampling the Holnist nearest him.

The other Holnist hears, looks back, sees The Postman coming and takes aim just as The Postman brings his gun to bear.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

The Holnist FIRES first. We don't see the hit. Just watch as The Postman FIRES an answering ROUND. The Holnist goes down.

The Postman reins up alongside the wagon. Grunting with pain, he reaches down, takes Abby's arm and swings her up behind him. Then digs his heels in for all he's worth.

More Holnists come on the run. They FIRE. The HORSE SNORTS in pain. He's hit. But The Postman urges him on, heading into the woods.

Bethlehem snaps off the arrow shaft and shouts:

BETHLEHEM

Colonel Getty!

65 EXT. WOODLAND ROAD - DAY

65

Abby is concerned as the horse slows to a trot.

ABBY

We can't stop now. They'll be coming after us.

The Postman's head lolls forward. She feels something on her hand, pulls it back smeared with blood. The Postman's shot in the belly.

The horse is failing. Near death.

We hear the sound of PURSUING CAVALRY. Abby urges the horse off the road. When the thicket grows too dense, Abby jumps down. She catches The Postman as he slides off, easing him to the ground.

THE POSTMAN

(disoriented)

Abby...

Abby shushes him. She pulls on the horse's bridle to force him farther along. But it's no good, the wounded horse goes down on its knees.

And five RIDERS THUNDER past. Fooled. All but the SIXTH, who pulls up to listen.

In the deep b.g., flames lick at the billowing black smoke. The town is burning.

The HORSE WHINNIES: in its death throes. Abby panics, tries to quiet the horse.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

The Sixth Soldier has heard the suffering horse. He draws his rifle from the saddle boot and starts into the thicket.

ON ABBY AND POSTMAN

The Postman lies unconscious on the ground. Abby sits beside him, rifle in hand. The Sixth Soldier appears.

ABBY

Don't move.

He hesitates at first. Then dismounts and moves toward her. Abby cocks the rifle.

SIXTH SOLDIER

If you'd had a bullet, you'd a used it by now.

Moving closer still, he doesn't see the BRANCH pulled back in The Postman's hand until it SNAPS hard into his face.

He stumbles back.

ABBY

You're right.

Abby dashes out, rifle in hand. She swings for the bleachers. The butt catches the side of the Sixth Soldier's head. He falls hard.

The Postman's eyes flutter. Dazed, he watches as Abby pilfers through the Soldier's gear. She takes everything of value: a knife, bullets, a canteen. His eyes flutter closed.

66 EXT. WOODS - DAY

66

Snowflakes swirl. Abby lays a sapling travois beside The Postman. He groans as she rolls him onto it, tucks a blanket around him. Using all the strength God gave her, Abby lifts one end, gets it high enough to hitch it to the Sixth Soldier's horse. As Abby leads the horse away...

67 EXT. WOOD ROAD - DAY

67

The snow has increased. A Holnist patrol moves down the road, disappears around a bend. A beat.

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED: 67

Abby appears, leading the horse and travois. She crosses the road and disappears into the woods.

A moment later, she reappears with a pine branch which she uses to brush at the snow, obscuring their tracks.

68 EXT. CASCADE MOUNTAINS (OREGON) - DAY 68

Riding into a blizzard, Abby leads the way up a zigzag path. A valley opens up below. The unconscious Postman lies bundled on the travois.

69 EXT. HUNTING SHACK - DUSK 69

A little square shape just visible beyond a creek. Abby leads the horse and travois-bound Postman to it.

70 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DUSK 70

One room. Dirt floor. The WINDOWS RATTLE in the WIND. Snow falls through a hole in the roof. The wooden DOOR BURSTS back and Abby enters. Half-frozen, she leads the horse and the travois right inside.

71 INT. HUNTING SHACK - NIGHT 71

A fire has been lit.

The Postman lies unconscious, his shirt open as Abby washes around his wound. She pulls the shirt back to clean his chest. The material falls away and Abby stops short. There -- high on his biceps -- a branded "8." She stares in disbelief.

DISSOLVE TO:

72 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY 72

The Postman lies on a cot below the window. He's conscious, but pale as a ghost.

Abby brings him a bowl of soup. Very thin soup. Stirring it with a spoon, The Postman smiles at Abby.

THE POSTMAN

Thank you.

She turns her back on him without a word. The Postman tries an exchange just the same.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

I don't think I ever had water
soup before. Maybe next time we
could try it with a little sand?

(as she doesn't respond)

Dirt? Wood?

(as she doesn't smile)

A twig garnish?

She goes about her business in silence.

THE POSTMAN

You used to think I was funny.

ABBY

They killed Michael.

THE POSTMAN

I'm sorry.

He takes a spoonful of soup and she comes to him.

ABBY

How sorry are you?

THE POSTMAN

What's that supposed to mean?

Her right hand flashes out, holds a knife up under his
chin.

THE POSTMAN

What's with you?

ABBY

You got the mark of eight on you.

A long beat. Finally, he swallows the soup in his mouth.
The action presses his Adam's apple against the blade.

THE POSTMAN

A mark doesn't mean I'm a --

ABBY

You're a liar. I should've let
you die.

THE POSTMAN

Then, why didn't you?

If she knows, she's not ready to say yet.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: (2)

72

THE POSTMAN

You were with Bethlehem. Does
that make you one of them?

Abby considers this, The Postman's gaze flickers down to
the spoon he still holds in his hand. Taking one last
stab at a joke.

THE POSTMAN

(re: the spoon)

Don't make me use this.

Abby doesn't laugh. But she does relent. She steps away.

73 EXT. HUNTING SHACK/VALLEY PASS - SUNSET

73

The hunting shack huddled against the south side of a low
rise. Beyond the rise, a pass. But there's no
negotiating it now. It's completely snowed in. And
another storm is on the way.

74 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY

74

WIND HOWLING in the b.g. The Postman lies back on his
cot. The little shack has been scoured clean. Abby
stares listlessly at the fire. The silence is torture.
The Postman tries to strike up a conversation.

THE POSTMAN

Wind's come up.

(no response from
Abby)

Getting colder too. Must be
another storm --

Abby gets up and throws a log on the fire.

ABBY

Anything else?

THE POSTMAN

I didn't mean for you to --

ABBY

Your legs are going to rot off if
you don't try to walk.

THE POSTMAN

I'm hurt.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

ABBY

You're lazy.

THE POSTMAN

Lazy?! I got a hole in my stomach. I'm weak. The two big meals around here are grass and snow. And we're running out of grass.

As the two of them glare at each other for a moment. Abby starts to put on her coat.

THE POSTMAN

Where are you going?

Abby doesn't answer. She picks up the rifle and starts to lead the horse outside.

THE POSTMAN

You're not leaving me here, are you?

Abby is out the door without a word.

75 EXT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY

75

HOLD ON The Postman in the window as she continues past. He watches a moment, suddenly grimaces. A GUNSHOT. The THUD of a BODY SLAMMING to the GROUND. Abby has shot the horse.

CUT TO:

76 EXT. HUNTING SHACK/PASS - SUNRISE

76

Tiny tracks in the snow, leading away from the shack. Abby struggles to make the monumental climb from the shack to the top of the rise where she can get a clear view of the pass.

PAN PAST her UP TO the top of the rise. It's a clear day -- but the pass is still snowed-in. No sign of winter receding.

DISSOLVE TO:

77 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY

77

Abby ladles a meager portion of horse meat stew into a bowl.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

ABBY

This is the last of it.

She walks with the bowl past The Postman -- who sits on his cot with arms outstretched -- and pointedly sets the bowl on the table.

THE POSTMAN

(mumbled)

Give me a break...

Abby starts putting on layer after layer of clothing.

ABBY

I'm going to check the pass.

THE POSTMAN

Why are you in such a hurry to get out of here? I can think of worse places. And worse company to --

And with the SLAM of the DOOR she is gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

78 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY

78

A few flakes of snow have begun to drift down. The Postman sits at the window -- starts to play tic-tac-toe in the frost. But then it dawns on him:

THE POSTMAN

You can't play tic-tac-toe with yourself.

79 EXT. WOODS - DAY

79

Disoriented, Abby stops to take stock of her surroundings. But she can't make anything out -- the snowfall is too thick.

80 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY

80

The fire is dying. The food untouched. The Postman sits in bed staring anxiously out the window. The snow has turned into a blizzard. He runs Abby's red ribbon through his hands.

81 EXT. WOODS - DAY 81

Abby trudges along heavily. She stumbles as the ice covering the stream breaks beneath her feet.

ABBY

Help!

82 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY 82

The Postman hears her call.

83 EXT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY 83

The door opens and out steps The Postman. In pain, he staggers around the back of the cabin -- in search of her.

84 EXT. STREAM - DAY 84

Abby looks up, sees him coming. The Postman collapses across from her. Both prone, they're also nearly nose-to-nose.

THE POSTMAN

I can't help you.

Finally, he pulls himself to his knees. She does the same. They climb each other to a standing position. Arm-in-arm, they start for the cabin.

85 INT. HUNTING SHACK - DUSK 85

Abby sits huddled in blankets. The fire is blazing. The Postman steps over, sets the once-again-hot bowl of stew before her.

She considers the food a moment.

ABBY

I told you that's all there was.

THE POSTMAN

That's why you should have it.

ABBY

I knew you could walk.

THE POSTMAN

You're weird, you know that?

86 INT. HUNTING SHACK - NIGHT

86

The Postman lies in bed, stares through the hole in the roof. A full moon is on the rise. Abby lies in her own makeshift bed, also awake. After a long silence:

THE POSTMAN

We walked on the moon once, Abby.

ABBY

So? What good is that now?

THE POSTMAN

Obviously you've forgotten Tang and microwave ovens.

(a beat)

Your face looks pretty.

Abby looks up.

THE POSTMAN

Not so bruised.

ABBY

Look, there's something you'd better know. You're going to find out soon enough. I'm pregnant.

(a long beat)

It's Michael's baby. You're just the body father.

THE POSTMAN

How do you know it's mine and not Bethlehem's?

ABBY

He tried with me almost every night. He couldn't do it. So he beat me. Said it was my fault.

DISSOLVE TO:

87 EXT. HUNTING SHACK/PASS - DAY

87

Abby stands atop the low rise -- looking out to the pass. Spring has come to the mountains. At long last the snow is starting to recede.

DISSOLVE TO:

88 EXT. FISHING POOL - DAY

88

The Postman kneels by the bank, sharpening a knife to clean the fish he's caught.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

88

Then, he catches his reflection in the water. Tangled beard. Matted hair. Is that him?

He suddenly starts sharpening the knife with renewed vigor. We get a sense he's not going to use it on the fish.

HANDS

plunge into the water, pull splashfuls up. We START ON The Postman's back, then ARC AROUND as he washes his face. He's just finished shaving off his beard with the hunting knife. He's nicked-up, but it's a definite improvement and he smiles in satisfaction -- until he sees --

Abby, reflected in the water.

THE POSTMAN

Abby.

The Postman whips around to see her standing there.

THE POSTMAN

What is it? What's wrong? Is it the baby?

ABBY

The pass is clear. It's time to go.

Behind her, he sees the cabin is on fire. Takes off running.

89 EXT. HUNTING SHACK - DAY

89

The fire is blazing. The hunting shack is too far gone to save. The Postman turns around.

THE POSTMAN

What happened?

He's nonplused to find Abby standing beside a pile of their neatly-packed gear.

THE POSTMAN

You got our stuff out.

ABBY

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

Of course? I don't understand.

ABBY

I set the fire.

THE POSTMAN

Am I missing the point here?

ABBY

You didn't think we'd stay here forever, did you?

(The Postman has
no response)

I'd appreciate if you'd walk with me long enough to find someplace safe for the baby. Then we can split up.

(a beat)

You shaved.

The Postman has all but forgotten.

THE POSTMAN

Yeah...

ABBY

It looks nice.

Before he can respond, she's heading off toward the pass, leaving The Postman to shake his head at the absurdity of it all. He shouts after her.

THE POSTMAN

You're really weird, you know that?

DISSOLVE TO:

Carrying their gear, Abby and The Postman walk across a meadow of wild flowers, headed for an old road.

THE POSTMAN

Have you ever heard of St. Rose, Abby?

ABBY

I've heard people talk. I've heard lots of names. Bliss. Hesperia. New Eden. Sheriff Briscoe says it's a fantasy.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

He's wrong. St. Rose is out there. And I'm going to find it.

ABBY

But you're The Postman.

THE POSTMAN

Look, I'm nobody, Abby. I'm just...

Before he can come clean -- they see a distant RIDER coming hard. The Postman unslings the rifle, slides a round into the chamber.

THE POSTMAN

This is what I hate. Strangers. Do you say 'hi' or do you blow their head off? Do they want to share what they got or take what you have? And if they want to take, how far are you willing to go to stop them? Damn it.

(to the Rider)

All right. That's far enough.

The Rider pulls up short, wearing a blue home-made uniform.

THE POSTMAN

We don't want any trouble.

RIDER

Me neither, mister.

The Postman is taken aback. The Rider, a girl, pulls off her cap, mops it across her brow. Maybe 14, we'll always know her by her Ponytail. Abby registers the uniform first.

ABBY

What are you?

PONYTAIL (RIDER)

Carrier 18. U.S. Postal Service. Got any mail?

Lowering the rifle, The Postman looks over at Abby, back to Ponytail.

THE POSTMAN

That's impossible.

(CONTINUED)

PONYTAIL

Ain't you heard of The Postman?

ABBY

No, tell us.

PONYTAIL

He's only the greatest man who ever lived. He crossed the wasteland, shook his fist at the enemy and spit in the eye of General Bethlehem himself. He's back east with President Starkey right now.

THE POSTMAN

Who told you all this?

PONYTAIL

Postmaster Ford Lincoln Mercury. He's in direct contact with the restored congress.

THE POSTMAN

Direct contact... I don't believe this.

PONYTAIL

(growing irritated)

Do you have mail, or don't you?

THE POSTMAN

You said Carrier Eighteen. That mean there's eighteen of you?

PONYTAIL

Thirty-two. As of midnight.

Oregon's main post office. A silver Airstream, fifty mobile homes and rusty Winnebagos resting on flat tires. Flying from a pole: the flag of the restored United States. A young recruit is ringing a bell on the top of a Winnebago.

Ford walks along an RV boulevard. He's joined by two young carriers, RED and Chubby (the sentry from Benning). All wear hip, personalized variations of the official uniform.

CHUBBY

You got another letter?

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

They come around the corner to where seven young recruits wait. They're joined by another twenty carriers.

FORD

More recruits?

RED

Seven of them. They're coming from everywhere.

Ford looks them over in satisfaction.

CHUBBY

Did you get a letter or didn't you?

Ford smiles, reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a creased sheet of paper. Chubby grins.

FORD

Gather 'round, everybody. Got another letter here. Came in last night.

Buzzing with excitement, the carriers gather around Ford.

SOUTH END OF BOULEVARD

Ponytail leads Abby and The Postman. They come up in the back of the crowd. Flanked by Red and Chubby, Ford stands on the hood of a car, letter in hand. The Postman taps a clueless YOUNG CARRIER on the back.

THE POSTMAN

What's all this?

YOUNG CARRIER

Postman sent Ford another letter. He's gonna read it.

FORD

(reading)

'Hello, all postal carriers.'

CARRIERS

(a ritual)

Hello!

(CONTINUED)

FORD

I'm here in Minneapolis with President Starkey, but my thoughts are with you. Remember, nothing worth doing can be done overnight. Keep your chins up and do your best not to get shot. Signed, The Postman.

A buzz goes through the crowd. Ponytail looks over.

PONYTAIL

His letters are always kind of short.

Abby and The Postman exchange a look.

FORD

(looks up)

Hold on now. There's a P.S... Anybody know what P.S. stands for?

The Postman raises his hand. Ford looks his way. His mouth drops as he realizes. In silence, he walks over to The Postman. They embrace and all the weight Ford's been carrying on his young shoulders suddenly falls to The Postman. The kid nearly collapses.

CHUBBY

Holy shit...

RED

That would be H.S., Chubby.

CHUBBY

I seen him once when I lived in Benning. It's The Postman!

Word goes through the crowd like a wave.

The Postman takes the letter, reads.

THE POSTMAN

P.S. Ford knows what to do.

Ford shrugs sheepishly.

FORD

Guess you want to talk about this?

The Postman takes Ford by the elbow. They disappear into the tent. The carriers just staring after them, awestruck.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED: (3) 91

PONYTAIL

I found him! I found him!

They clamor around her.

92 INT. TENT - DAY 92

The Postman and Ford.

THE POSTMAN

President Starkey? Minneapolis?
Ford knows what to do?

FORD

I thought you were dead.

THE POSTMAN

So? I'm not making the
connection. What's all this then?

FORD

I lied. I told people you were in
contact with me.

THE POSTMAN

Why?

FORD

Because I didn't want it to end.

THE POSTMAN

I don't know how long I can stay,
Ford. President Starkey will send
word one day and I'll have to move
on. Understand?

FORD

Sure. But you'll stay till he
sends word? Right?

The Postman can't answer, just turns and walks out of the
tent.

93 EXT. TENT - DAY 93

As The Postman exits, Chubby leads the carriers in a
salute. The Postman actually turns a moment to see if
someone else is standing behind him.

He looks back, sees the young, shining faces.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

Aw, don't do that. Hands down.

Their hands go down in one crisp military move. The Postman looks at Abby, to Ford as he exits the tent. The kid is craving reassurance.

FORD

You'll stay 'til President Starkey sends word, right? Right?

THE POSTMAN

Yeah, till he sends word, right.

Ford smiles, gestures to the carriers.

FORD

Could you say a few words?

The Postman looks over at the carriers. They quiet under his gaze, immediately respectful.

The problem is, he has no idea what to say. Finally:

THE POSTMAN

Two plus two equals four.

The cheering is tumultuous. The Postman picks Abby out of the cheering crowd -- the look on her face says it all.

The guts of the operation. Several carriers are busy sorting and bagging letters. It goes out pinned to a clothesline which crisscrosses back and forth. Everyone follows as Ford takes The Postman on a tour. There are hushed whispers among those who are seeing him for the first time.

FORD

We bring all the mail here first. We sort it, group it and then it goes out. So far we got thirty routes.

Ford leads The Postman and Abby into another Winnebago. Chubby and Red and Ponytail follow. Those that can't fit just peer in through the windows.

95 INT. WINNEBAGO - DAY

95

An old manual crank printing press is working away. Ford proudly removes a sheet, shows it to The Postman. A caricature of eight evil Holnists, forming a figure eight. Beneath: "Unite Against Holnist Tyranny!"

THE POSTMAN

You spelled tyranny wrong.

CHUBBY

(low, to Red)

Boy, he's smart.

96 EXT. RV CAMP - GREEN LAWN - DAY

96

The seven young Recruits seen earlier stand in a line. They're joined by OLD GEORGE, every day of 75 years old.

Ponytail holds up her hand, swears them in.

PONYTAIL/RECRUITS

Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat,
nor gloom of night...

As they finish, The Postman and Ford pass by. The Recruits salute. Shaking his head, The Postman's about to salute back when he spots Old George. George has a faded purple "AIRBORNE" tattoo on his arm and a twinkle in his eye. There's an old crow on his shoulder.

THE POSTMAN

How old are you?

OLD GEORGE

Seventy-five, sir.

The Postman looks over at Ford, who shrugs.

THE POSTMAN

Can you ride?

OLD GEORGE

Nope. Can't walk too good,
either.

THE POSTMAN

Why are you here?

OLD GEORGE

I know stuff.

The Postman looks at Ford again. Then:

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

THE POSTMAN
(re: tattoo)
When did you get that?

OLD GEORGE
1970. A girl with eyes as big as
saucers did me in a little town
called Saigon.

97 EXT. RV CAMP - AIRSTREAM - SUNSET

97

Carriers move items out of the trailer. The camp is
buzzing as usual. The Postman looks on -- sees Abby
passing by.

THE POSTMAN
Abby --

ABBY
Yes?

He's got her attention, just doesn't know what to do with
it.

THE POSTMAN
Ford wants me to have his trailer.
Said it's the best one.

ABBY
I'm on the other side of town.

THE POSTMAN
I got plenty of room here.

She shakes her head, and then walks away. The Postman
watches her disappear into the bustle of the camp.

THE POSTMAN
So much for the uniform theory.

98 EXT. HOLNIST WINTER CAMP (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA) - SUNSET

98

The same sun sets on the Holnist camp.

99 INT. BETHLEHEM'S TENT - SUNSET

99

Bethlehem once again at his easel with palette in hand.
He's trying another style -- Impressionism -- and it's
worse than the last. He looks over as Getty and Gibbs
approach with a PRISONER.

(CONTINUED)

BETHLEHEM

What do you think, Lieutenant?

GIBBS

Can't tell what it is if you stand too close. The colors all kinda run together, don't they?

BETHLEHEM

Yes...

Bethlehem looks away from his painting to see Gibbs and Getty flanking a scared, blue-clad mail carrier. For an instant, mistakes him for:

BETHLEHEM

Well, if it isn't our old friend the U.P.S. man.

GIBBS

We captured him on the Oregon border.

Realizing, Bethlehem turns the face from side-to-side.

BETHLEHEM

Who the hell are you?

CARRIER (PRISONER)

Carrier Twelve. United States, um, Postal Service.

Getty sets some of the Carrier's anti-Holnist propaganda onto Bethlehem's field table. Bethlehem picks it up.

It's hard to say what he's thinking. Finally:

BETHLEHEM

I want the camp struck at dawn. We're moving north.

GIBBS

Yes, sir.

Bethlehem looks back to Carrier Twelve.

BETHLEHEM

(chilling)
You spelled tyranny wrong.

100 EXT. RV CAMP - DAWN

100

Ten letter carriers are on horseback. Among them, Red and Ponytail. Ford and The Postman are also on horses. Each rider salutes The Postman, then gets a sheaf of anti-Holnist propaganda from Ford.

THE POSTMAN

I wish they'd stop saluting.

It's annoying him. As Chubby rides up. The Postman catches his right wrist as he attempts to salute. So Chubby salutes with the left hand instead. As they line up:

THE POSTMAN

Just stay safe and remember. The mailman's more important than the mail.

CHUBBY

Boy, he's smart.

The sun just peeks up over the horizon. At that signal, the carriers thunder off, the ground trembling under them. The look on their faces. The glory of it all. They're alive! The Postman hesitates, watches after them a moment.

THE POSTMAN

What the hell?

Urging his horse forward, he rides after them. With them. And then, like an exploding firework, each postman shoots off in a separate direction. Headed for all points of the compass and some in between.

101 EXT. OREGON HAMLET - DAY

101

The Postman looks down on the gathered crowd from his horse and smiles.

THE POSTMAN

For President Starkey and the First Congress of the Restored United States, I officially declare Postal Station 10... What's the name of this town?

YOUNG LEADER

We never named it.

THE POSTMAN

(thinks; smiles)

I officially declare Postal Station 10 in Elvis, Oregon, open for business!

102 EXT. TOWN (SOMEWHERE IN OREGON) - DAY 102

An eye-blink of a town. Ponytail stands on a crate reading names and handing letters to the grateful people massed around her.

103 EXT. TOWN (IDAHO BORDER) - DAY 103

Red and Chubby finish mail call, exchange an amazed look as they're offered a platter of food.

104 EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT 104

The moon hangs low over an interstate. A rider is silhouetted by the silvery orb, looking like some post-apocalyptic Don Quixote. It's The Postman.

105 EXT. FARMHOUSE/COUNTRY ROAD - DAY 105

Seen FROM the porch, a rider gallops hard on the road beyond.

A LITTLE BOY comes rushing out, letter in hand. The boy pulls up short; realizes the rider is already too far gone. The boy's shoulders sag; he's crushed.

LITTLE BOY

I missed him.

It's an almost psychic moment as the rider reins up in the distance and turns back around. A frozen beat and he starts galloping back down the road.

Fearless, the boy holds out the letter. The rider closes; it's The Postman. The boy stretches out as far as he can. Without breaking stride, The Postman leans out of the saddle, snatches the letter as he passes.

The boy watches after him -- knows what he's going to be when he grows up.

106 EXT. PINE VIEW GATES - DAY 106

Sheriff Briscoe huffs and puffs his big frame up the ladder and onto the top of the palisade.

BRISCOE

Phil, this better not be another
of your U.F.O.'s.

He looks where the sentry points. The Postman waits at the gate, behind him on horseback: Ford and Abby.

(CONTINUED)

106 CONTINUED:

106

THE POSTMAN
I'm back! And I got mail.

BRISCOE
(amazed)
I'll be damned.

107 EXT. PINE VIEW STREETS - DAY

107

The Postman rides with Briscoe, hurrying to stay alongside him. Half the town jogs along behind them.

FORD
Bethlehem is offering a 1000
pounds of gold to whoever brings
you in. Dead or alive.

THE POSTMAN
Thank God it wasn't a carton of
cigarettes.

BRISCOE
I'd have shot you myself.

108 EXT. PINE VIEW STREETS - NIGHT

108

Pine View is throwing a party. It's in full swing. A couple of guitars. A banjo and a trombone. Everyone dances.

The Postman walks with Briscoe, sees Mrs. March as her letter is read to her. Catches a glimpse of Abby dancing with Ford. He seems, for the first time, truly happy. For that matter, so does Briscoe.

BRISCOE
Things are getting better.
Getting better all the time.
(a beat)
I don't know who you are, but I do
know I was wrong about you.

The Postman smiles, reaches in his bag for an envelope.

THE POSTMAN
Got a letter for you, Sheriff.

Briscoe turns it over in his hands, looks up in wonder.

BRISCOE
It's from my sister. I thought
she was dead.

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

THE POSTMAN

You thought wrong.

Briscoe has tears in his eyes. The Postman continues on, embarrassed but affected.

DANCE

The Postman taps Ford's shoulder, wants to cut in on him and Abby. Ford steps aside. A beat before Abby decides it's okay. They begin. Her eyes are on her feet, careful that she doesn't take a misstep. But his eyes are on her. And over it all, BLEEDING IN, the sound of HOOF BEATS.

109 EXT. LONELY ROAD (SOUTHERN OREGON) - NIGHT

109

A mail carrier, Red, rides like the devil himself was in pursuit. Almost. It's Getty and three Holnists.

INTERCUT WITH:

DANCE

They whirl as the tempo picks up. The Postman pulls Abby in closer. Her eyes now move up to his.

ROAD

They're closing in on the terrified Red.

DANCE

Abby and The Postman. The chemistry is undeniable.

ROAD

RIFLES CRACK. SHOT in the back, Red throws back his arms. Letters flutter from the mail bag over his shoulder; he seems to glide along that way forever.

DANCE

The Postman looks at Abby; she's so beautiful. Like only a pregnant woman can be.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED: (2)

109

THE POSTMAN

Tell me about the baby, Abby. I
want to know.

Abby snaps out of the dream she's in. This isn't right.
Breaking away, she heads off. As he watches her go:

ROAD

Red falls from his horse. One of the soldiers scoops up
his mailbag.

CUT TO:

110 INT. COMMAND TENT (SOUTHERN OREGON) - NIGHT

110

By lantern, Bethlehem and Getty watch as Gibbs sorts
through the contents of the confiscated mailbag.

GIBBS

Births and deaths, the weather,
gossip. There's nothing here.

BETHLEHEM

Nothing? Everything is here. Am
I the only one who sees that?
(to Gibbs)
Get out!

Gibbs hurries away, leaving Bethlehem and Getty alone.

BETHLEHEM

Give the people back their hope
and their dreams won't be far
behind.

Bethlehem sees Getty waiting.

BETHLEHEM

What is it, Getty?

Getty hands Bethlehem a sheet of paper -- something Gibbs
missed. It's a propaganda sheet featuring a caricature of
The Postman leading a few carriers against Bethlehem and
his army -- represented as Hitler and the Nazis. The
caption underneath reads: "Ride Against the Holnist
Tide!"

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

BETHLEHEM

(crumpling the paper)

A military man, especially a commander, should keep a journal. After he's gone, it's the only real defense against the slander that arises.

111 INT. OLD GEORGE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

111

Old George sits hunched over a home-made shortwave radio with a joint in his mouth. The Postman sits beside him, listening as STATIC pours from an old car SPEAKER.

THE POSTMAN

Who do you talk to?

OLD GEORGE

Not a soul in seven years of trying. But I will.

The Postman steps to a telescope pointing up through a hole in the trailer ceiling.

OLD GEORGE

Go ahead. Take a look.
(offering joint)
Want some?

THE POSTMAN

No. No thanks. Hey, don't let the kids see that.

George nods and goes on playing with the dials -- searching for a voice in the void.

The Postman focuses on the moon.

OLD GEORGE

I was an aerospace engineer. I helped design the Galileo space station.

(scanning sky)

I dream it's orbiting Earth forever. With a dozen human skeletons all grinning at each other. Laughing at us down here.

There's an urgent KNOCKING on the trailer door. Ford appears.

THE POSTMAN

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: 111

FORD

It's Red. He's overdue.

THE POSTMAN

That makes five. All on Southern routes.

112 EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY 112

Five dead mail carriers have been laid out on the asphalt. Bethlehem walks the line, looking for his elusive arch-enemy.

BETHLEHEM

No. No. Not him. No.

(looks to soldiers)

Children. I want a man and you bring me children!

113 EXT. OREGON ROAD - DAY 113

A beautiful day. Ponytail rounds a bend at a lope -- and then -- her eyes widen in terror. She jerks the reins; the horse rears in protest.

Ahead: the truck stop. The five mail carriers hang upside down from the roof's overhang. A macabre sight.

POV THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE

SIGHTING ON Ponytail. A hand comes INTO FRAME and brings the rifle barrel down. It's --

GIBBS AND HOLNIST SHARPSHOOTER

GIBBS

Not yet. General wants the message to get back.

114 EXT. RV. CAMP - NIGHT 114

PAN UP FROM The Postman's dusty boots TO his grimly determined face as he strides through camp and stops at Old George's trailer.

He moves OUT OF FRAME, revealing -- Abby and Ponytail in the b.g.

115 INT. OLD GEORGE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

115

As usual, Old George is hunkered down before his short wave. He looks as the door opens and The Postman enters.

THE POSTMAN

Tell me about the other stuff you know...

George crosses the trailer, opens a cabinet. Inside: twenty odd guns plus the parts for several more. The CROW CAWS.

116 EXT. ELVIS, OREGON - DAY

116

Quiet. An old flag ruffles outside the post office -- the only new structure in town. Old George sweeps the porch as a patrol of ten Holnist soldiers ride into town. George makes no move to flee as they near. As they rein up across from him he just smiles and continues sweeping.

Sensing it, the Holnist officer looks up. There, on the roof, stands The Postman. Ford and Briscoe flank him -- along with twenty mailmen and locals, armed with guns, bows and rocks.

As the soldiers raise their rifles, the roofies OPEN FIRE. George whips up a sawed-off SHOTGUN. BOOM! Caught in the storm, the ten soldiers go down.

Grim, The Postman looks to Ford as the locals cheer. George resumes sweeping. The mailmen climb down to strip the weapons off the dead.

THE POSTMAN

Ford, I want you to get rid of the bodies. I don't want these people blamed for what we did.

Ford nods.

117 EXT. HOLNIST ARMY CAMP - NIGHT

117

Two sentries guard the east. They peer into the gloom at the sound of a WAGON APPROACHING. It sounds like it's coming fast.

SENTRY

Halt! Identify yourself!

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

WAGON

tearing along. Ford at the reins, urging the horses to all possible speed. Then he stands, leaps to the ground.

SENTRIES

They raise their rifles as the riderless wagon looms out of the night. They each get off a SHOT before being forced to dive out of the way. The wagon continues on, down to...

HOLNIST CAMP

A soldier finally grabs hold of one of the halters and brings the wagon to a stop. Half-dressed, Bethlehem steps up. A tarp covers the back upon which is written...

BETHLEHEM

(reading)

Postage due...

Bethlehem yanks away the tarp to reveal the 10 dead Holnist soldiers. The men around Bethlehem exchange looks, can't believe it. Bethlehem bellows in rage.

118 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

118

Ford, hidden in the woods, smiles at the sound.

119 EXT. HOLNIST CAMP - NIGHT

119

Bethlehem steps forward and shouts his challenge into the night.

BETHLEHEM

You want a war? I'll give you a war. I was born for it!

120 EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

120

Bethlehem's words reach Ford, his smile fades. He's just a scared boy. He kicks his horse into a gallop and rides away.

CUT TO:

121 EXT. SMALL AIRFIELD - DAY 121

In the fog, the sound of hollow HOOOF BEATS. The Postman rides past the shapes of airplanes. Standing silent. Forever grounded. The ghosts of the past.

122 EXT. RV CAMP - DAY 122

Ford is swearing in four new recruits.

ON FORD AND RECRUITS

As they repeat after him we realize they've changed the oath a bit.

FORD/RECRUITS

Neither snow, nor heat, nor gloom
of night. Through bandit's hell,
through fire fight. Through flood
and plague we cannot fail. No
Holnist trash will stop the mail.

THE POSTMAN

riding his weary mount into town, saddlebags bulging with mail. He pauses by the new recruits long enough to hear the words they're saying.

As he dismounts, a fresh-faced carrier takes the bridle. The Postman's well past the point of fatigue. He's living on pure adrenaline.

THE POSTMAN

Get this mail sorted. Bring me a
fresh horse. Something to eat.

As fresh-face starts away, The Postman calls after him.

THE POSTMAN

And all the mail going South!

The Postman watches as Ford shakes the hands of the new recruits.

The Postman reaches for his canteen. Empty. Damn. A tin cup filled with water appears from nowhere. Abby. The Postman takes it, too tired to acknowledge the gesture.

THE POSTMAN

They changed the oath.

(CONTINUED)

ABBY

Ford's idea.

THE POSTMAN

Figures.

(scoffs)

They don't think to ask who they're replacing. Or why.

He drains the cup and hands it back to her. Just then, one of the new recruits, LUKE, steps over.

LUKE

Sir? It'd be an honor if I could shake your hand.

A farmboy-type, Luke looks like a younger version of Woody. The Postman sees this, is lost in reverie. Luke still holds his hand out.

LUKE

Sir?

THE POSTMAN

You look like... Do I know you?

LUKE

No, sir.

THE POSTMAN

Well, good luck to you.

Nodding in awe, Luke heads off.

THE POSTMAN

Nice kid. Probably be dead in a week.

ABBY

(ignores it)

You're exhausted. You need rest. There's food in the trailer --

Ponytail rides by; two sacks of mail hang from her saddle pommel. The Postman grabs her horse's halter, stops her.

THE POSTMAN

Where are you going?

PONYTAIL

Route twenty-two. I'm already an hour late.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

You're grounded. Get off the horse. You know the rule.

PONYTAIL

What rule?

THE POSTMAN

Twenty-two's too far south.

PONYTAIL

But they're waiting on their mail down there.

THE POSTMAN

Get off the goddamn horse.

Shocked, she does. At the same time, fresh-face comes up leading a second horse laden with mail.

THE POSTMAN

(re: Ponytail's horse)

Tie him off to this one.

Fresh-face goes about tying the second horse to the first.

ABBY

You can't keep doing this.

THE POSTMAN

Doing what?

ABBY

Riding all the routes. You're not saving anyone.

The Postman climbs on Ponytail's horse, looks at Abby.

THE POSTMAN

Did I ever tell you how I got to be a postman, Abby?

(doesn't give her time to answer)

I don't know if you'd laugh or cry.

The Postman digs in his heels. The horse gallops away, the second one following behind.

123 EXT. ELVIS, OREGON - CLOSE ON BLOODIED POSTAL CARRIER - 123
NIGHT

A crowd of townsfolk are visible in deep b.g. Beyond them, the town of Elvis burns to the ground.

The CAMERA CIRCLES AROUND the BLOODIED CARRIER until we're looking OVER his shoulder at a firing squad led by Colonel Getty and Lieutenant Gibbs. Bethlehem watches.

GIBBS

Ready!

The only building not on fire is the post office. A SOLDIER rides up, carrying a torch, meaning to burn it.

SOLDIER

The post office, General?

BETHLEHEM

No. Let it stand. All by itself.
So it can remind them what it cost them.

GIBBS

Aim!

Rifles are aimed.

GIBBS

Fire!

Shock and dismay from the townsfolk as SHOTS RING OUT.

CLOSE ON BLOODY CARRIER'S FACE

as he realizes he's still standing.

PULL BACK to reveal nine bodies lying on the ground. Only the Bloodied Carrier is still standing.

Bethlehem points at the Bloodied Carrier, crooks a finger for him. He staggers up. Bethlehem smiles.

BETHLEHEM

You think you can ride?
(as the Carrier
nods)
Then today's your lucky day.

124 INT. RV PARK - AIRSTREAM - DAY 124

Abby tends to the Bloodied Carrier. He tries to salute as The Postman enters the trailer.

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED:

124

Ford and Chubby watch and wait as The Postman goes to the boy's side.

BLOODIED CARRIER

Bethlehem says...

The Postman motions it's okay as the Carrier struggles.

BLOODIED CARRIER

... he's... headed north. He's gonna kill ten people in every town. Then burn it to the ground. For what you did...

The Postman is puzzled. But Ford knows what and why.

BLOODIED CARRIER

He said to tell you Pine View's on his way. He said he'd wait there, but not for long.

(breaking down)

I was so scared, sir... I thought they were going to kill me, too... I wish they would have...

125 EXT. RISE ABOVE PINE VIEW - DAY

125

The Postman poised on a rise that affords a view of the gruesome spectacle below.

POSTMAN'S POV

Pine View in flames. The big John Deere gun has blown several gaps into the palisade. Bethlehem watches as his army sacks the town. The people have been rounded up. The selection of the ten has begun.

126 EXT. RISE ABOVE PINE VIEW - DAY

126

The Postman wheels his horse around. But Ford, Ponytail, Chubby and Luke are standing in his way.

FORD

What are you going to do?

THE POSTMAN

I'm going to stop this.

FORD

You can't.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

Get out of my way, Ford. All of you.

FORD

(shaking his head)

They'll kill you.

The Postman starts to ride through them. Luke, Chubby and Ponytail move their horses to block.

Ford maneuvers his horse in close and grabs The Postman's harness.

THE POSTMAN

Goddamnit --

The Postman jumps off his horse. Ford tackles him. The Postman shoves him away, continues on. Luke and Chubby pounce on him. With Ford's help, they hold him down.

FORD

You can't help them!

THE POSTMAN

There's still time, Ford!

The Postman struggles. They're genuinely having trouble holding him down.

PONYTAIL

(re: The Postman)

You're hurting him.

But there's no let-up.

FORD

No, this is all my doing. I went against your orders.

There's a moment of shocked surprise.

FORD

The Holnists we killed. You told me to bury them. But I didn't. I sent Bethlehem the bodies.

THE POSTMAN

Why?

FORD

Because Bethlehem has to know that we're not going to stop.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED: (2)

126

THE POSTMAN

God damn you, Ford. Those people down there are dying because of us. Because of what we did.

FORD

Bullshit. They're dying because of Bethlehem. They're dying because this is a shitty world. And if we're ever going to change it, then somebody might have to die. If I could make it be me down there I would. But I can't.

A terrible SCREAM gives them all pause.

127 EXT. PINE VIEW - DAY

127

Down below -- Holnist soldiers hold back a screaming mother as her 10-year-old boy is pulled into the line.

Sheriff Briscoe is among the ten, he puts his hand on the boy's shoulder -- the picture of grace under pressure.

128 EXT. RISE ABOVE PINE VIEW - ON POSTMAN AND CARRIERS

128

THE POSTMAN

My God, what have I done?
(beat)
We don't even know their names...

129 EXT. PINE VIEW - CLOSE ON LITTLE BOY - DAY

129

His eyes wide and fearful. Like a kitten's.

130 EXT. RISE ABOVE PINE VIEW - DAY

130

PONYTAIL

(holding back
the tears)

We know their names. The little one's my brother. His name is Billy.

A moment of stunned silence.

PONYTAIL

What Ford did was wrong. But it doesn't change anything for any of us. Does it?

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED: 130

She looks to the other carriers -- it's written all over their faces -- they stand with Ponytail and Ford.

131 EXT. PINE VIEW - DAY 131

Bethlehem looks the line-up over. The firing squad stands at the ready. Bethlehem looks to the trees -- feeling something.

BETHLEHEM

(to Getty)

He's out there somewhere.
Watching. I can feel it.

Briscoe follows his gaze. He doesn't see anything, but maybe gets the same feeling. Bethlehem looks to Briscoe.

BETHLEHEM

You feel it too, don't you?
Didn't have to end like this,
Sheriff. He knew where I'd be if
he wanted to face me like a man.
Instead, he's hiding like a
rabbit. So much for your Postman.

GIBBS

Ready! Aim!

Rifles are raised. Briscoe seems to grow as he throws his shoulders back and shouts...

BRISCOE

Ride, Postman! Ride! You hear
me? I said ride!

132 EXT. RISE ABOVE PINE VIEW - DAY 132

The WORDS ECHO. Nothing The Postman can do, but watch.

133 EXT. PINE VIEW - DAY 133

Bethlehem's eyes go wild --

BETHLEHEM

Fire!

The RIFLES BARK. Everyone falls dead.

134 EXT. RISE ABOVE PINE VIEW - DAY 134

Something in The Postman breaks. He just lies there. The witnesses move back, taking The Postman with them.

135 EXT. PINE VIEW - DAY 135

Sheriff Briscoe lies dead. The letter from his sister blows from his hand.

CUT TO:

136 INT. AIRSTREAM - NIGHT 136

The Postman folds a letter, shoves it into an envelope. He writes "Bethlehem" across the front, starts to write a second letter. The door opens and Abby enters.

ABBY

Ford thinks you're going to do something.

THE POSTMAN

I am.

The Postman watches as, outside, the mail carriers begin to assemble.

THE POSTMAN

If I don't, those kids are going to keep on getting themselves killed.

ABBY

Ford doesn't know what it means to be a kid. He doesn't have your memories. None of them do. All they've got is the lousy world we gave them. And this is the only decent thing in it.

THE POSTMAN

What? Being a postman? It's all bullshit, Abby. All of it.

(beat)

I took this uniform off a skeleton to stay warm. I made up the rest to stay fed. There is no restored United States.

ABBY

I knew it was something like that.

The Postman fingers the brim of the cap, softens.

(CONTINUED)

136 CONTINUED:

136

THE POSTMAN

Weird thing is, being a Postman
was almost the best thing that
ever happened to me...

(re: red ribbon)

Remember this? You left it behind
that night.

ABBY

I remember...

THE POSTMAN

I always liked to think you left
it on purpose. But maybe you just
forgot it.

Abby doesn't answer. She leaves instead.

137 EXT. R.V. CAMP - NIGHT

137

Twelve mail carriers, including Ford, Ponytail, Chubby,
Luke and Old George, wait as The Postman steps up before
them. Abby's off to the side.

THE POSTMAN

Is this everybody?

FORD

The rest are on the overdue list.

THE POSTMAN

This is everybody.

(for all)

Got a letter from President
Starkey.

An excited murmur among the carriers. Only Ford eyes The
Postman suspiciously. The Postman reads:

THE POSTMAN

'Greetings all carriers.'

CARRIERS

Greetings, President Starkey!

THE POSTMAN

(reading)

'I've been in contact with The
Postman. I've received all the
reports. I'm proud of you all.'

He looks at them, doesn't need to read what's in his
heart.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

In dark days, in a weary world,
 you gave everything and asked for
 nothing. You beat back despair
 and replaced it with hope and for
 that your country can never repay
 you. But the price is too high.
 I won't see anymore of my bravest
 die. It is my duty to hereby
 disband the Postal Service of the
 restored United States. You are
 to burn your uniforms and The
 Postman is to return to
 Minneapolis at once. Thank you
 and that is all.

A hushed silence. The Postman walks away. The carriers
 exchange tired, defeated looks. Abby just sighs, knows
 he's not necessarily wrong.

Ford catches up with The Postman. He stares at The
 Postman; The Postman stares back.

FORD

(low; fierce)

The President never wrote that
 letter.

THE POSTMAN

If he could've that's what he
 would have said.

Ford gestures to the second letter.

FORD

Who's the other letter to?

THE POSTMAN

Bethlehem. I'm taking it to him
 in the morning.

FORD

What does it say?

THE POSTMAN

Mail's private. You know that.

FORD

What does it say?

THE POSTMAN

(stops; turns)

It says it's over. It says we
 quit.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (2)

137

FORD

It says you quit. What about the oath?

THE POSTMAN

Tell me something, Ford. How much mail can a dead postman deliver?
It's over.

The Postman starts to walk away again.

FORD

Then I'll take it.

THE POSTMAN

I can't trust you.

Ford gathers courage and confronts The Postman.

FORD

If this is the end. If this is the last piece of mail that ever gets delivered. I'll take it.

THE POSTMAN

Whoever takes this letter probably dies for it.

Ford thrusts out his hand.

FORD

I'm still a postman. You owe it to me... I owe it to me.

The Postman hesitates, studies the intense young man. Gives him the letter.

138 EXT. R.V. CAMP - STABLE AREA - DAY

138

The Postman is packing bags onto a horse as Abby approaches.

THE POSTMAN

I'm going to St. Rose, Abby. And I'm taking you with me. I know you don't want to hear it, but that's my child inside you. I want to see it born somewhere safe. I have a right to that, Abby. Whether you like it or not.

Abby walks away. The Postman rests his head on his pack for a moment. Heavy.

(CONTINUED)

The CLICK of a GUN causes The Postman to lift his head and see Luke standing there.

THE POSTMAN

Thought I recognized you.

LUKE

General Bethlehem said...
 (raises the pistol)
 ... You should be on your knees
 when I do it.

THE POSTMAN

I don't give a damn what that
 asshole said.

LUKE

The general is a great man.

THE POSTMAN

The general is a fucking lunatic.

The Postman steps forward. Stops when the barrel of the pistol is right against his own chest.

THE POSTMAN

You don't own a thought in that
 goddamn head of yours, do you?
 (a beat)
 You want to see a man?

The Postman turns to watch as Ford starts out of camp.

THE POSTMAN

That's a man.

The Postman turns, sees Luke's face fraught with confusion and emotion.

THE POSTMAN

You don't understand, do you? You
 never will until you can think for
 yourself and be willing to pay the
 price for it.

Luke stares back into The Postman's eyes. A frozen beat.

THE POSTMAN

You ready?

ABBY (O.S.)

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED: (2)

138

Abby sits on her horse. She's witness to it all. Luke is confused and ashamed. The Postman mounts his horse and moves to Abby's side.

THE POSTMAN

You're a better man than
Bethlehem, Luke. I've seen it.

139 EXT. RIDGE - R.V. CAMP - DAY

139

Some carriers drop their uniforms into a bonfire.

The Postman and Abby ride up on the ridge above the RV camp. They pause to look back one last time. Across the way, on the other side, Ford is doing the same thing. As though he senses it, Ford stops and looks back.

Ford raises his hand, salutes. Slowly, The Postman brings up his own hand. But he doesn't salute. He waves. Good-bye. As Ford turns away, so does The Postman.

ON CHUBBY, PONYTAIL AND CARRIER NAMED DREW

watching as The Postman and Abby disappear from sight.

CHUBBY

Guess Minneapolis is that way.

140 EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

140

A sign prohibits pedestrians, horses and bicycles. The Postman and Abby ride by. The Postman no longer wears his uniform. Their gear is packed behind their saddles.

As a family of transients begin to rise from where they're camped in the breakdown lane:

THE POSTMAN

We can't help you. We're just as
lost as you are.

The Postman rides on. Abby watches over her shoulder as they slowly begin to sit back down.

141 EXT. HOLNIST CAMP - BETHLEHEM'S TENT - DAWN

141

Bethlehem sits waiting at his camp table. Behind him, a finished painting.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

This time he's painted himself in the grand Rococo-style -
- as part of the Holy Family with doves and flowers and
glowing rays from Heaven. It's awful.

Getty and Gibbs bring in a prisoner. It's Ford!

BETHLEHEM

Good lord, what do we have here?

FORD

I'm a representative of the
restored United States --

Bethlehem backhands Ford.

GIBBS

He's got a letter. Says The
Postman sent it.

BETHLEHEM

A letter?

Bethlehem tears open the letter and starts to read:

BETHLEHEM

'Bethlehem. This letter is my
testimony to the fact that there
is no restored United States and
there is no Postal Service.'

(laugh; grim)

Then who the hell have we been
fighting...?

(reads on)

'My carriers are returning home.
In exchange, I'm asking you to let
them be. The Postman.'

Bethlehem eyes Ford with undisguised contempt.

BETHLEHEM

He expects me to believe this?

LUKE (O.S.)

It's true, sir. I was there. He
disbanded the carriers and rode
west.

Ford turns blazing eyes to Luke -- he's been standing
there all along.

FORD

Traitor...

It takes a moment for the news to sink in. But it does.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: (2)

141

BETHLEHEM

Then I've won. I've won.

As the assembled Holnists congratulate each other, Bethlehem looks at Luke.

BETHLEHEM

You were supposed to kill him.

LUKE

I couldn't get close enough.

(re: Ford)

This one's his second in command.

Bethlehem looks Ford over.

BETHLEHEM

Why doesn't that surprise me?

Ford stares back. Proud. Bethlehem looks to Getty.

BETHLEHEM

Bring out the one we found yesterday. They can die together.

A frightened CARRIER is brought up. He wears a purple uniform with CALI sewn on the shoulder. Neither we nor Ford have seen him before. As a firing squad assembles, Ford is shoved over with him.

FORD

Who are you?

CAL CARRIER

Name's Clark. Postal Carrier of the restored Republic of California. Who are you?

Ford looks at him a second, can't help but laugh. From Gibbs; the shout of "ready!"

FORD

Postmaster Ford Lincoln Mercury.

CALI CARRIER

It's an honor.

Bethlehem watches as Clark holds out his hand. Ford shakes it. "Aim!"

BETHLEHEM

Wait a minute... wait a minute!

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: (3)

141

GIBBS

Sir?

BETHLEHEM

Hold your fire! You don't know
each other?

(to himself, quiet
anger building)

This will never be over. It'll go
on except I'll be fighting a
goddamn ghost.

GIBBS

Should we fire, sir?

BETHLEHEM

No goddamnit.

Bethlehem crumples the letter, tosses it.

BETHLEHEM

No, I won't fight a ghost. Tabula
rasa, gentlemen. A clean slate.
I want all mail carriers hunted
down. I want The Postman found.
I want him dealt with.

(to Getty)

Colonel, organize the scouts.

(to Luke)

He rode west?

142 EXT. RIVER - DAY

142

A pair of boots are walking through the water. It's The
Postman. He turns over a body in the water. It wears a
homemade postal uniform, a bag of mail twisted around his
arm. It's a young face, one we haven't seen before. He
looks up to Abby on a ridge.

THE POSTMAN

I don't know him. Do you?

ABBY

(shakes her head)

Where do you think he came from?

Puzzled, The Postman shakes his head. He gently releases
the body. The current takes it and they watch as it
continues on its way to Postal Valhalla.

143 EXT. INTERSTATE - DAY

143

The family of transients are grilled by three Holnist
scouts. One man points the way Abby and Bethlehem rode.

144 EXT. PLAIN - DAY

144

Littered with rubble. The wood, brick, steel and concrete of what was once a small town. Amazingly, one gray house still stands, miraculously untouched by whatever disaster visited this place.

A wild-haired SQUATTER steps out on the porch as Abby and The Postman ride by. He waves hello with a .45.

SQUATTER

Howdy. Welcome to sunny California.

THE POSTMAN

(re: the town)

What happened here?

SQUATTER

Little accident. The ground started to shake big time and the Hanford nuclear plant went...

(motions an explosion)

... 'Poof.' Destroyed everything for miles. But the sunsets are beautiful.

THE POSTMAN

You ever hear of a city called St. Rose?

SQUATTER

Friend, I've never heard of St. Shit.

The Squatter laughs and laughs -- like it was the funniest thing in the world. The Postman and Abby exchange a look, continue on their way.

SQUATTER

Hey, don't go! I got Monopoly in the house! Boardwalk, Park Place and the Reading Railroad!

CUT TO:

145 EXT. EDGE OF RUBBLE - DAY

145

Ponytail, Chubby, and Draw watching from afar. Chubby has the telescope.

CHUBBY

You think that's President Starkey?

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED:

145

Ponytail takes the telescope from Chubby for a look.

PONYTAIL

No.

CHUBBY

What makes you so sure?

PONYTAIL

President lives in a white house.
That guy's place is gray.

Drew and Chubby exchange a look. That makes sense.

146 EXT. SKY - DAY

146

A lightning bolt shreds the sky. It's day, but the sky is black with rain.

147 EXT. HIGH TENSION TOWERS - DAY

147

The useless towers cutting across a valley. Rain beats down, as The Postman and Abby trudge along.

Up ahead, a rail-road tunnel promises shelter from the storm.

THE POSTMAN

(re: the tunnel)

We can rest in there.

Abby is quick to agree.

Out of the corner of his eye, The Postman catches a blur of movement.

He turns his head quickly, but he's barely in time to see a wooden basket, attached to one of the high wires, swing from a distant tower. There's a sentry inside it.

The basketed sentry whistles away at 40 mph, heading straight for an adjacent tower. In a matter of seconds, he's lost from view.

The Postman looks back at Abby. She's shivering.

THE POSTMAN

Did you see that?

ABBY

(shaking her head)

I'm hungry, Postman.

The Postman guides her toward the train tunnel.

148 INT. TRAIN TUNNEL - DAY 148

Abby sleeps beside the fire. The Postman, silhouetted against the flames, heads toward the far tunnel exit.

149 EXT. FAR SIDE OF TUNNEL - DAY 149

The Postman peers into the rain, taking in the view of a distant bridge. Abby comes to stand at his side.

150 EXT. COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE (BRIDGE CITY) - DAY 150

A town settled between spans of a steel truss bridge. The Columbia River rushes far below. A sentry spots Abby and The Postman approaching, blows a whistle.

GUARD

Set the rifle on the ground.

THE POSTMAN

This old thing? It isn't even loaded. Where are we?

The BRIDGE CITY MAYOR, a middle-aged retro-hippie, steps up.

B.C. MAYOR

You're in Bridge City. Where we don't allow guns.

The Postman sets down the carbine. The Guard steps over to scoop it up.

B.C. MAYOR

Sentry said you were coming.

The Postman stares at the Mayor a beat.

THE POSTMAN

I know you. You're famous.

B.C. MAYOR

I was once. Not anymore.

(beat)

Are you looking to cross?

THE POSTMAN

We will be. Right now, we'd just appreciate some food.

(as the Mayor

nods his assent)

I got some kids behind me, too.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

B.C. MAYOR

How many?

THE POSTMAN

Three.

(as the Mayor
agrees once more)Hey, guys, come on in! I know
you're out there!

CHUBBY SENTRY

Boy, is he smart...

As they stand, show themselves.

151 EXT. NORTH BOUND LANE (BRIDGE CITY) - DUSK

151

Fog rolls in. Abby rests.

Ponytail, Chubby and Drew look up gratefully as one of the
citizens of Bridge City doles out bread.

The Mayor steps over, hands The Postman two loaves.

B.C. MAYOR

For you and your wife.

THE POSTMAN

Thanks. She's not my wife.

The exchange cuts Abby like a knife. She gets up and
leaves. The Mayor keeps his council -- not sure what to
make of this arrangement.

THE POSTMAN

Let me ask you something, have you
ever heard of a town with electric
lights?

B.C. MAYOR

St. Rose?

THE POSTMAN

Yeah!

B.C. MAYOR

Never been. But they say it's a
ways down on the coast.

THE POSTMAN

How far?

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

B.C. MAYOR

Couple hundred miles at least. I
couldn't say for sure.

It's the discovery of a lifetime. The Postman looks to
the west end of the bridge, where Abby stands alone.

THE POSTMAN

You seem like a decent man. And
these seem like decent people.

B.C. MAYOR

We try to be.

THE POSTMAN

And this seems like a safe place.

B.C. MAYOR

(intuitive)

You want to leave her?

The Postman looks back to the Mayor, then slowly nods.

THE POSTMAN

All of them. I'll give you the
horses and my gear. Abby's
special. She's strong. Probably
end up running the place.

B.C. MAYOR

Why don't you take the night to
think. Decide if that's what you
really want.

152 EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

152

Fog obscures the east end. A sentry squints at the
MUFFLED CLOP of HOOVES. The mist parts to reveal, seventy
yards away: three Holnist scouts on horseback.
Emissaries from hell.

As the sentry blows a whistle...

BRIDGE

As word spreads, folks move down the bridge for a look.
Eating their bread, The Postman, Abby and the carriers
join them.

(CONTINUED)

EAST END

The Mayor stands across from the lead scout -- conferring. Finally, the Mayor points him back the way he came. The lead scout doesn't budge, spots The Postman in the crowd.

He and The Postman seem to stare at each other forever. Then, with a flick of the reins, he's gone. The other two follow. Swallowed up by the misty evening gloom. The Postman's head swims dizzily. It's not over.

The Mayor returns to dozens of nervous questions.

B.C. MAYOR

They're looking for The Postman.

B.C. MAN

No such thing anymore.

B.C. MAYOR

Man on the horse says there is. Says he thinks he's here. Says he's coming back with friends.

A little BOY steps forward, sings out.

B.C. BOY

What's a postman?

A silent moment. It's been so long, no one's sure how to answer. The Postman looks down at the ground. The carriers exchange deflated looks. Then...

ABBY

(stepping forward)

You never heard of a postman?

He shakes his head "no." Seems a shame. As The Postman looks over at Abby, she takes a page from his book.

ABBY

There used to be a postman for every street in America. They wore uniforms. And hats. Like this one...

She goes to The Postman's gear, returns with his postal cap. Sets it on the boy's head.

B.C. BOY

Wow...

(CONTINUED)

ABBY

My postman knew the name of every kid on my street. He knew our birthdays. He'd even find the baseballs you'd hit down the street. I can still see the smile on his face. The tip of his cap -- when he had a letter in his bag with my name on it. Mine always came just after school. You could set your watch by him. Unless you were waiting on something special -- like a present from somewhere far away or a letter from your sweetheart. Then it seemed like he'd never come. I used to think they could make time stand still.

Several other listeners nod -- they're completely with her.

ABBY

I don't think we ever really understood what they meant to us until they were gone. Getting a letter made you feel like you were part of something bigger than yourself. No place was ever too far away for the postman. So nobody ever had to be alone. The postman was someone you could count on. Things just made more sense when they were around.

(beat)

That's the kind of world we used to have. A world a lot of us took for granted. And now we've got this one. And it makes me wonder -- what kind of world do I want my child to live in? I want my child to live in a world where hopes and dreams aren't just lies you tell yourself to get through another day. I want my child, and I want my friends -- I want all of us to live in a world where you still get your mail.

It's a moment before anyone speaks.

B.C. MAYOR

(to The Postman)

Are you The Postman?

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED: (3)

152

The Postman takes the cap off the little boy's head, touches the emblem, and answers.

THE POSTMAN

Yes.

B.C. MAYOR

I've heard of you, man. You're famous.

THE POSTMAN

Yeah, I guess I am. And all of a sudden, I'm not wearing the right clothes.

And as he puts on his cap, he accepts the mantle as well.

153 EXT. BRIDGE - CLOSE ON PINE BOX - MORNING

153

lowered from the top of the bridge. Hands reach up to steady it and bring it gently to the ground. It's one of many.

The Postman and Abby gasp as the Mayor opens the lid to reveal: 20 well-oiled rifles and 15 pistols with ammo. The Postman blinks over at the Mayor.

B.C. MAYOR

Fact that we don't allow 'em doesn't mean we don't have 'em. We're not stupid, after all.

THE POSTMAN

I'm sorry I've brought this on you.

B.C. MAYOR

No need to be sorry. Long as we get our mail on time.

PONYTAIL (O.S.)

Ready for duty, sir.

The Postman looks over to see Ponytail, Drew and Chubby ride up. Like him, they are back in uniform.

THE POSTMAN

The order was to burn all uniforms.

The carriers look away -- sheepish.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

153

THE POSTMAN

You know what to do then?

PONYTAIL

Talk to the people. Gather who's willing. Tell them it's important. Tell them we can make a difference.

CHUBBY SENTRY

And tell 'em we're going to kick ass.

THE POSTMAN

Yeah, tell them that, too.

154 EXT. NEAR BRIDGE - DAY

154

At the edge of the Gorge. The three carriers, and the mounted locals thunder off the bridge and down the road. High above...

155 EXT. HIGH TENSION TOWER - POSTMAN AND ABBY

155

The Mayor is in the b.g. helping one of the sentries prepare the basket for travel.

ABBY

This is hard for me.

(beat)

Michael was the best man I ever knew. I never thought there'd be another man I could love the way I loved him.

(searching for
the words)

I don't know why I've been so blessed. And I've tried to find a way to be thankful, but I swear, if I lose you...

Her eyes start to tear and he takes her in his arms.

THE POSTMAN

Abby, do you think a lie can become the truth?

ABBY

I don't know, but I believe in you. You have a gift, Postman. I saw it back in Pine View.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ABBY (CONT'D)

You made Mrs. March feel like she could see again. You made Ford feel like he was part of the world. You give out hope like it was candy in your pocket.

He starts to speak. She stops him, taking his hand.

ABBY

When you come back, we'll be waiting here for you. So you can take us to St. Rose.

The Postman lets go of her hand and starts for the basket.

The Mayor gestures to the line of towers extending into the distance.

B.C. MAYOR

There's three good-sized towns up that way. Enough folks to be a big help to you. If you can convince them to come.

As The Postman steps into the basket, he makes the mistake of looking over the edge. It's a long, long way down.

B.C. MAYOR

A lot higher than it looks, huh?

The Postman looks at the contraption with more than a little trepidation. The Mayor grins.

B.C. MAYOR

Don't tell anybody, but I like to ride the damn thing just for the hell of it. Being a city official has its perks.

He winks and as he reaches for the release pin. The Postman's hand meets his there.

B.C. MAYOR

Trust me, man. This'll get you there a lot faster.

THE POSTMAN

How do I stop --

But it's too late. The Mayor releases the pin.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED: (2)

155

B.C. MAYOR

Don't worry about it. Good luck
and Godspeed.

COUNTERWEIGHT

Plummeting into the Columbia River Gorge. The Mayor lets
out a rebel yell.

BASKET

The Postman is whipped along, past the riders below. The
speed exhilarating.

156 EXT. PINE VIEW, OREGON - DAY

156

The town's gone, but the palisade remains. Chubby rides
along it, exhorting the people who watch from above. But
it's The Postman we hear, all the magic back in his voice.

THE POSTMAN (V.O.)

Once more into the breach, dear
friends, once more. Or close the
wall with our dead. In peace
nothing so becomes a man as
modesty and humility. But when
the blast of war blows in our
ears, then imitate the action of
the tiger.

157 EXT. ELVIS, OREGON - NIGHT

157

A few makeshift structures are back up. Carrying a torch,
Ponytail gallops hard into town. People wake, including
Mrs. March's daughter. As Ponytail speaks to them...

THE POSTMAN (V.O.)

Summon up the blood. Disguise
fair nature with rage and lend the
eye a terrible aspect.

158 EXT. FIELD - DAY

158

Captured by a Holnist cavalry patrol, Old George and four
other carriers are lined up, hands bound before them.
Holnist soldiers force them to their knees as Gibbs
organizes an impromptu firing squad.

(CONTINUED)

158 CONTINUED:

158

Old George looks down the line. The carriers are about to break down.

OLD GEORGE
Steady, boys, steady.

And as Gibbs steps up, all hope is gone.

GIBBS
In accordance with Law Eight...

OLD GEORGE
Get on with it, you floppy-eared sonuvabitch!

We see the faces of the young carriers. Defeated, bitter. But there's a sudden spark in Old George's eyes. He starts to rise.

The soldiers pick up their guns and that's when they see The Postman.

THE POSTMAN

Riding over the crest. Galloping toward them. Behind him, forty new mail carriers. All riding like mad. One of them carries the flag of the restored United States.

Gibbs and his men run for their horses. SHOTS are FIRED. Four Holnists go down. The rest gallop away.

The Postman and his carriers meet.

159 EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY

159

Converging. The Postman with his forty-five coming from the west. Drew, Chubby, and a ragtag thirty coming from the north. And from the south, Ponytail leading a contingent of fifty!

The forces converge and continue east.

160 EXT. HOLNIST CAMP - DAY

160

The army has gathered. Three hundred strong.

Bethlehem and Getty stand outside the command tent, listening to a winded, frightened Gibbs. We FOLLOW Bethlehem's eyes OVER Gibbs' SHOULDERS TO the horizon, where he sees: The Postman and his army of two hundred carriers cresting a distant rise.

(CONTINUED)

GIBBS (O.S.)

... We were outnumbered, sir.

BETHLEHEM

How many?

GIBBS

A least a hundred. With guns.

BETHLEHEM

(feigning shock)

With guns? Are you sure?

GIBBS

Yes, sir...

BETHLEHEM

Looks more like two hundred to me...

He steps away to get a better vantage point of the approaching army. He reaches out -- Getty hands him a pair of binoculars.

BETHLEHEM

(donning a pair of leather gloves)

Only thing worse than a coward is one who can't count. Lieutenant, do yourself a favor. Die well in this battle. In my army a deserter's life is a brief and unpleasant one.

Bethlehem watches The Postman through the binoculars -- a hint of a smile on his face.

BETHLEHEM

(to himself)

At last, someone with courage enough to bring the fight to me.

A Holnist soldier stands by with Bethlehem's horse. The General mounts -- the model of military calm and precision. Getty reins up beside him.

BETHLEHEM

Reckoning, gentlemen. This is the day I've dreamed of.

A sea of wildflowers separates the carriers from the Holnists. The monster John Deere gun is ready for battle.

162 EXT. HOLNIST LINE - DAY

162

Bethlehem stands with Getty, scanning the postal line with his binoculars. The carriers look, just spoiling for a fight. Bethlehem lowers his binoculars, smiles grimly.

BETHLEHEM

They're an eager-looking bunch.
Morale's a dangerous thing.

(to Getty)

Bring him up. I want this postman
to see how the game is played.

163 EXT. CARRIERS' LINE - DAY

163

The Postman, Chubby, Ponytail and Old George and all the carriers have taken positions.

The Postman sights through a telescope.

He scans further down the line -- then stops when he sees Ford. Bloody, beaten within inches of his life. He's shackled -- surrounded by Holnist guards.

The Postman's eyes turn to stone.

THE POSTMAN

(to carriers)

Stay here. No one moves until I
give the orders.

He clicks his horse forward, toward the Holnist line.

164 EXT. HOLNIST LINE - DAY

164

Bethlehem, flanked by Getty and the Holnist Sergeant, watches as The Postman makes his approach. He reaches into his pocket, withdraws a white kerchief and holds it in the air.

SERGEANT

Are they surrendering?

BETHLEHEM

God, I hope not.

He watches for a moment as The Postman crosses the field -
- moving well within range of Holnist fire. Then, he coaxes his horse forward.

165 EXT. MEADOW - DAY

165

Bethlehem and The Postman riding toward each other. They meet when The Postman is almost three-quarters of the way over to the Holnists' side.

BETHLEHEM AND POSTMAN

As they come face-to-face.

BETHLEHEM
My little shipping clerk.

THE POSTMAN
We're both a couple of frauds.
You know it; I know it.

Bethlehem sneers.

BETHLEHEM
Great men are made by other great men. Patton had Rommel. Grant had Lee. But I get you.

THE POSTMAN
You're no fucking general. You're a copying machine salesman. You're not even a good painter.

BETHLEHEM
Are you trying to goad me into a fight?

THE POSTMAN
Wouldn't it be great if wars could be fought just by the assholes who started them? We could settle this thing right here. You and me.

BETHLEHEM
Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way.

THE POSTMAN
It does in your army.

The Postman kicks his horse up into a gallop, and rides up the Holnist line. No one, least of all Bethlehem, is sure what's going on.

THE POSTMAN
I invoke law seven of the Laws of Eight! Any man may challenge for leadership of the clan!

(CONTINUED)

BETHLEHEM

What?

The Postman wheels his horse around.

THE POSTMAN

I challenge you.

Bethlehem is caught completely by surprise, but recovers.

BETHLEHEM

You're not a Holnist. You're not
a member of the clan. You don't
have the right.

The Postman rolls up his sleeve. He rides the Holnist
lines displaying his brand for all to see. The Holnists
murmur amongst themselves.

THE POSTMAN

I have every right. I invoke law
seven!

Bethlehem can't believe his eyes.

THE POSTMAN

I challenge for leadership of the
clan!

The seed of doubt is planted. Is Bethlehem violating one
of the Laws of Eight? The men look at one another. Gibbs
looks to Getty. Bethlehem looks from The Postman's tattoo
to his face.

BETHLEHEM

Where do I know you from?

THE POSTMAN

'Cry Havoc! And let slip the dogs
of war.' Remember that?

BETHLEHEM

Shakespeare. The one who didn't
want to fight.

THE POSTMAN

I should've found a way to kill
you then. But you seemed so
strong.

BETHLEHEM

Law seven it is.
(to all)
This war is settled here!

(CONTINUED)

As The Postman nods in agreement.

They take their positions -- and without a word -- they kick their horses into a charge. Coming straight for each other like medieval jousters.

Bethlehem reaches for his sword. But before it clears the scabbard, The Postman lunges.

The horses collide. Bethlehem and The Postman hit the ground hard.

Holnists and Carriers alike begin to move forward for a better look.

The fight is fierce. Bloody. The Postman and Bethlehem are at each other like coiled snakes.

It's more of a fight than any of the Holnists -- especially Getty -- expected. The spectators pull in tighter.

Both combatants have taken a beating -- and still, they fight on -- trading bloody, raw-knuckled punches.

One of Bethlehem's connects. The Postman loses his footing, hits the ground -- knocking his head on a rock with a resounding CRACK. Dazed, he's slow to rise.

It's just the moment Bethlehem needs, he straddles the fallen Postman, reaches for his knife with one hand -- grabs The Postman's throat with the other.

BETHLEHEM

I study people. I know your problem. Do you know why you can't fight?

The Postman can't answer.

BETHLEHEM

You have nothing to fight for. You don't care about anything. You don't value anything. You don't believe in anything. That's what makes me better.

The Postman grabs Bethlehem's knife-hand -- using all his remaining strength to keep him at bay.

THE POSTMAN

(barely audible)

I believe in the United States Postal Service.

(CONTINUED)

The Postman lets go of Bethlehem's hands, grabs his belt and pulls him over. As they roll to their feet, The Postman club-fists Bethlehem on the side of the head.

THE POSTMAN

Neither snow...
 (wham!)
 Nor rain...
 (wham!)
 Nor heat...
 (wham!)
 Nor gloom of night...
 (wham!)
 Will stay this courier from the
 swift completion of his appointed
 rounds...

Bethlehem reels, stumbling back. The Postman pounces on top of him, begins to strangle him. Bethlehem tries to pry the fingers from his throat, but can't. He's going to die.

The Postman is urged on. By both sides. Holnists. Carriers. Ford. Even Holnist Luke. He looks up at the faces -- and finally lets Bethlehem go. The General gasps for breath.

As Ponytail and Chubby move forward to untie Ford, The Postman looks to both sides.

THE POSTMAN

It doesn't have to be this way.
 We don't have to kill each other.
 We can live together. We can --

Ford takes Chubby's pistol, sets it against the side of Bethlehem's head.

FORD

Law three. Mercy is for the weak.

THE POSTMAN

Ford, don't...

Bethlehem shakes his head -- doesn't want him to, either.

FORD

Law eight. There is only one
 penalty and that penalty is death.

Ford's going to shoot.

(CONTINUED)

THE POSTMAN

He isn't worth it. I'm the head
of the clan now! There are going
to be new laws!

(to all)

Law one! No more killing!
There's going to be peace!

The Postman looks at carriers and Holnists alike.

THE POSTMAN

Who else? Who else has a law?

WOMAN

Everyone has to learn how to read.

THE POSTMAN

That's law two. Who else?!

CARRIER #1

Three. Liberty and justice for
all!

LUKE

Four. No more tattoos.

CARRIER #2

Law five. Give peace a chance!

HOLNIST SOLDIER #2

Law six. Mercy is, it's okay
sometimes!

CARRIER #3

Seven! Bring back vacations!

The Postman nods solemnly, looks to Ford.

THE POSTMAN

How about it, Ford Lincoln
Mercury? You give us law eight.

Ford grits his teeth.

THE POSTMAN

(close -- for Ford)

Be a leader, Ford.

FORD

Law eight...

Ford FIRES! Bethlehem flinches, then sags as he realizes
Ford has fired into the ground.

(CONTINUED)

FORD

... Live and let live.

The Postman smiles in relief as Ford lowers the revolver and starts to hand the weapon over.

Forgotten for an instant, Bethlehem makes a last, wild lunge, grabs Ford's gun.

As Bethlehem aims at The Postman, a SHOT rings out. Hit in the chest, Bethlehem blinks in amazement before he falls to the ground, dying. Getty has shot him.

BETHLEHEM

Would I had bestowed that time in
the tongues that I have in
fencing, dancing and bear-baiting.
Oh, had I but followed the arts...

He dies.

THE POSTMAN

Grow like savages -- as soldiers
will -- that nothing do but
mediate on blood.

Getty throws his rifle on the ground. Other weapons are laid down. The war, at long last, is over.

THE POSTMAN

Somebody take a letter.

CHUBBY

Huh?

THE POSTMAN

A letter...

DISSOLVE TO:

Abby, in bed, holding her new baby in her arms. She's reading a letter. What she reads makes her smile. She puts the letter down and cuddles her baby.

ABBY

Your daddy wrote to tell you that
he'll be here as soon as he can.
And that he loves you very much.

Abby looks up to see The Postman standing at her door. She looks at him, smiling with tears in her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

166 CONTINUED:

166

THE POSTMAN

Mail's slow. I'll have to see
about that.

Abby smiles down at the child in her arms.

ABBY

Your daughter. Her name is Hope.

The Postman takes the tiny child in his arms.

WOMAN (V.O.)

And so my father returned home
after the Holnists were
defeated...

167 EXT. ST. ROSE - DAY

167

A beach town. No wall, no sentries, just cottages lining
a dozen sand-swept streets. A crowd has gathered to hear
The Postman's daughter, HOPE, mid-thirties, speak. Beside
her, a bearded, 52-year-old Ford in his postmaster's
uniform. They stand before a large, tarp-draped statue.

HOPE

But he never did see St. Rose.
There was too much to be done.
He'd made a promise and in keeping
it -- he traded one dream for
another. With no regrets. And
so, in honor of my father...

She unveils the statue: we've seen this before. It's The
Postman on his horse, low-slung in the saddle, leaning
down to pluck the letter from the Little Boy's hand.

There's an OLDER MAN in the audience who seems especially
moved by the statue. There's a younger man beside him.

OLDER MAN

That was me.

As St. Rose applauds...

FADE OUT.

THE END