

Blindness

By

Don McKellar

Based on the novel
by Jose Saramago

Rhombus Media Inc.
99 Spadina Avenue, Suite 600
Toronto, Ontario
Tel: (416) 971-7856
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INT. CARS - MID-AFTERNOON

A series of DRIVERS, idling in the cocoon of their idling cars:

A WOMAN (The DOCTOR'S WIFE), on her way to get her roots dyed.

A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT talking on her cell phone.

A CAB DRIVER scanning the road for his next fare...

EXT. CROSSWALK - DAY

RED.

Across the intersection, the CAR in the middle lane is waiting for the lights to turn...

GREEN.

But the CAR does not advance.

We move in to investigate --

DRIVERS behind the car in question honk in frustration, eventually pulling out to pass. PEDESTRIANS at the curb-side try to peer past the glare of the windshield: the troubled DRIVER is gesturing frantically.

Closer, we see he is screaming.

RED.

Inquisitive PEDESTRIANS stop in the crosswalk, gather about the idling car.

The DRIVER is repeating the same words over and over; but under the regular din of the city, behind the muffle of tempered glass, as close as we dare approach, those words can not be heard -- until someone opens the door.

FIRST BLIND MAN

....Blind. I'm...blind....

CLOSE ON: his eyes, which draw us in to his POV:

WHITE

WHITE

WHITE

TITLE: BLINDNESS

Gradually, sounds drift in -- the busy street.

Then out of the field of WHITE, images start to emerge, so faint at first that they seem like ghosts on the retina -- figures bustling about the car.

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN

Sir, stay calm! Stay where you are.
Tell us what happened?

Once again, the anguished face of the blind man -- hands desperately rubbing, the failing eyes, shiny with tears.

Voices echo around him:

FIRST BLIND MAN

I'm blind...I can't...see...

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN

DON'T MOVE SIR! RELAX!

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN#2

Why not? Why shouldn't he?

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN

Don't move sir! Would you let me
handle this?!...

Honking horns and the shouts of angry DRIVERS start to overwhelm the scene. The corner is chaos.

DRIVER#1

CALL THE COPS!

DRIVER#2
-- MOVE THE FUCKING CAR!

A curious man in his mid-thirties eases up to the growing crowd, honing in on the dialogue around him:

ONLOOKER#1
(confidentially)
He's blind.

ONLOOKER#2
What?

ONLOOKER#1
The guy says he's blind.

ONLOOKER#2
Who, the driver? A blind guy was driving?...

The curious man (a GOOD SAMARITAN?) moves in closer, till he can see the stricken driver.

FIRST BLIND MAN
It happened...sudden...Like something flooding my eyes...I didn't...do anything...

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
Right, it's probably nerves.

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN#3
Did someone call an ambulance?

FIRST BLIND MAN
Please no ambulance, no police... just someone please, just take me home. I live right here...three blocks.

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
I'm sorry sir, but we can't do that.

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN#2
Why? Why not?

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
(to pedestrian#2)
We can't move him till we hear from the police! If there's been an accident --

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN#2
What accident?! I don't see no
accident!

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
Well, you don't know WHAT happened,
do you?! And the man is hurt! You
don't move a man who has just gone
blind!

FIRST BLIND MAN
(standing)
If someone can please take me to my
apartment. My wife can help...

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
Alright sir! Relax! ...

He tries to ease the man back into his car.

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN (CONT'D)
(back to Pedestrian#2)
What do we do with the car? Just
leave it in the street?

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN#2
He's got keys. We move it.

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
Where?

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN#2
The side of the road!

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
And leave it there?!

GOOD SAMARITAN
I can take him...

The GOOD SAMARITAN steps out of the crowd.

GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)
I can drive him home. It's on my
way.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

The crowd helps the BLIND MAN into the passenger seat and
fumbles with his seat belt.

CONCERNED PEDESTRIAN
Everything alright?

GOOD SAMARITAN
We're fine. Thank-you.

The door is closed. The GOOD SAMARITAN is sitting in the driver's seat, hand on the wheel. He smiles nervously at the curious crowd peering in through the windows, then, with purpose, he turns to the blind man.

GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)
Ok. So, I'm gonna take y'home. Ok?
I'm a good driver and I know my way
around, so you don't have to worry
about that -- so, you just sit
there and you try to not worry and
if you have any problem or question
you can just wave your hand or --
you can hear me right?

The blind man nods.

GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)
Right, so you just talk to me, if
y'need to, and...we'll get ya home
in no time. Ok?...Any questions?

The blind man turns his head to face the driver.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Why...aren't we moving?

GOOD SAMARITAN
Oh. The light's red.

FIRST BLIND MAN
...oh.

They both face forward and wait.

FIRST BLIND MAN
So where are we going?

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

FIRST BLIND MAN
There's a movement to it...like
light particles...like light
shining through a sea of white.
(MORE)

FIRST BLIND MAN (cont'd)
It feels like...I'm drowning in
milk...

The car is on the move through the bustling, disorienting,
Modernist city.

GOOD SAMARITAN
Really? Milk? Well one good thing
is I never heard blindness
described as white. It's black,
right? The absence of light. And I
read a lot of health magazines and
watch TV and stuff, so...that's a
good thing.

FIRST BLIND MAN

I guess.

GOOD SAMARITAN
Sure it is. Means it's not real
blindness. It's too fast anyway.
Blindness is slow, right? What you
have is some kind of psychosomatic
or some kind of nerve thing...

As the GOOD SAMARITAN relaxes into his duty, enjoys the feel
of the smooth ride at his command, his loose monologue
becomes disconnected from the images of the CAR --

-- reaching, passing it's destination.

-- searching for a parking spot.

GOOD SAMARITAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In my experience, and I'm a bit of
a hypochondriac, when you got
something wrong with you like
headaches, or heart irregularities,
sore muscles, short of breath,
backaches, whatever -- pain!--
nine times out of ten it's stress.
And there's nothing they can do.
And they tell you -- go home. Go
home, it'll pass...

-- curbing near a tight spot.

The door opens. The Blind Man steps out and abruptly the
chatter stops.

The Blind Man is engulfed in silence. Abandoned?

The car has pulled away.

Panic swells inside the Blind Man. He reaches his hands out as if he were swimming, and is about to cry out when the Good Samaritan takes him by the arm.

GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)

I got you. Don't worry.

The car is parked mere metres away.

The Blind Man and his guide, slowly, cross the street. Several NEIGHBOURS look on, vaguely curious, as the pair enter the building...

CUT TO:

EXT. UP-SCALE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

...and pass through the marbled lobby.

GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)

And so you got to look to your life. And your habits. Cause in the end it's down to you. Nothing comes from nothing -- What floor?

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

FIRST BLIND MAN

Fourteen.

The GOOD SAMARITAN presses the button and slouches back against the rear wall. The BLIND MAN appears increasingly uncomfortable in the presence of this talkative stranger.

GOOD SAMARITAN

What are your problems? Whatta you worry about?

FIRST BLIND MAN

Nothing unusual.

GOOD SAMARITAN

Any other symptoms? Nervous symptoms?

FIRST BLIND MAN

My life is pretty...regular these days.

GOOD SAMARITAN
(skeptical, sarcastic)
Really? Not a care in the world.
Life of leisure.

FIRST BLIND MAN
(weakly)
Until now.

The Good Samaritan takes a good look at his companion, sizing him up.

GOOD SAMARITAN
Anyone gonna be at home? Or will
you be alone?

FIRST BLIND MAN
I dunno. My wife won't expect me. I
got off early. Lucky me.

GOOD SAMARITAN
No problem. I got you.

The statement hangs in the air. If it was intended to
comfort, it is having the opposite effect.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/APARTMENT - DAY

The FIRST BLIND MAN is struggling with his lock and keys.

GOOD SAMARITAN
(offering assistance)
Here.

Reluctantly, the blind man relinquishes the keys. The door
sweeps open -- an impeccable apartment.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Hello! Hello?

He steps inside. The GOOD SAMARITAN follows, navigating
around the man and over to the window, where he takes in the
view.

FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
Sweetheart?!

GOOD SAMARITAN
Nice place.

The words are startling. Suddenly, the unchecked liberty of this strange man, roaming the apartment unseen, fills the blind man with overwhelming suspicion.

GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)
Your wife... uh, design it?

FIRST BLIND MAN
Listen, thank you for all your help--

GOOD SAMARITAN
You want me to stay? Take care of you? Till your wife gets home?

FIRST BLIND MAN
No, no --

GOOD SAMARITAN
I'd feel better --

FIRST BLIND MAN
No, please! I'm fine thank you...

By now, the blind man has made his way over to the Good Samaritan and clutched him by the arm. Almost frantic, he hustles him to the door.

FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
I appreciate all you've done...

GOOD SAMARITAN
No problem. I mean, today it's you, right? Tomorrow it --

FIRST BLIND MAN
Thank you!

GOOD SAMARITAN
I can find the door!

He breaks free from the blind man and makes his own way to the entrance hall. The blind man, embarrassed by his display of unchecked panic, stands down.

At the door, the Good Samaritan looks back.

GOOD SAMARITAN (CONT'D)
Good luck.

He leaves.

Immediately, the blind man is on the door, fumbling with the multiple locks. Instinctively, he puts his blind eye to the peephole -- useless! He turns, his back to the door, his chest heaving.

A sound from the hallway calms him: the stranger has left in the rumble of the elevator.

CLOSE ON: the Blind Man's eyes.

The image goes WHITE.

It is a thick and liquid white. With time, the whiteness seems to have a life, enveloping and all-encompassing.

The sound: prodding and invasive. Glass shatters.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Well, isn't this wonderful...Look at this...

A puddle of water, a broken vase. An elegant woman dressed for the office, stops in the entrance hall, bends to examine the wreckage. The blind man's WIFE is home.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

Thank you so much...

She speaks loudly, to wake her husband, who sits on the couch, his eyes closed.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)

You don't think you could've cleaned it up before you...flopped down. Look at you --

A bouquet of wet flowers rests in his lap. His face is tear-stained.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)

You're...bleeding...

Her anger has disappeared. She crouches before her husband and opens his clenched hand. It is cut from the broken glass.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)

Sweetheart...?

He gathers the courage to open his eyes.

FIRST BLIND MAN
I'm blind.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

The WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN is desperately flipping through their personal phone directory.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Eye doctors? Do we have one?
Neither of us needs glasses.

She drops the directory and flings open a side cabinet in search of the Yellow Pages.

The FIRST BLIND MAN is propped against the wall. A wad of toilet paper is wrapped about his hand.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Take me to the hospital.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
(splaying open the phone book)
The last thing we need is ten hours in Emergency. We need a specialist, not some student intern. If I can find one open...

She chooses a number and dials.

FIRST BLIND MAN
I would rather be dead than stay like this.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Shut up -- please. Things are bad enough.

She listens for her call to be answered.

FIRST BLIND MAN
(bitterly)
I'm sorry to inconvenience you.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
(speaking on the phone)
Hello, is the doctor in?... Yes, could I speak... Yes, I understand but...

(MORE)

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN (cont'd)
 I understand but -- Please, my
 husband is blind. He's gone
 blind....I'll wait.
 (to her husband)
 Sweetie?

She switches off the lights in the kitchen.

FIRST BLIND MAN
 What?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
 Pay attention.

She switches them on again.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D).
 Anything?

FIRST BLIND MAN
 Anything what?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
 Did you see anything? Something?

FIRST BLIND MAN
 Nothing.

She switches them off again.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
 (back to the phone)
 No, he's not...not a regular
 patient... No... Never had a
 problem... Please please please!
 (Again, she switches them
 on.)
 Sweetie?

FIRST BLIND MAN
 Yes?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
 (and off.)
 Yes --
 (She's back on the phone.)
 We can be there in fifteen
 minutes...
 (her hand over the
 receiver)
 Where are the keys?

FIRST BLIND MAN
 What? Are you talking to--?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
The car keys? Where did you put
them? How did you get back here
anyway? Did you drive?

FIRST BLIND MAN
A man took me. I don't know where
he put them.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
(lights on)
A man --
(Back to the phone)
Yes, thank-you...We'll be there.
Fifteen minutes.

She hangs up and immediately, flustered, starts to look for
the keys.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
Oh great. Isn't this perfect. Just
stay where you are!

FIRST BLIND MAN
Use *your* keys. We'll find mine when
we get back.

The woman races about, searching. She growls in frustration.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Do you at least know where he
parked the car?

CUT TO:

EXT. UP-SCALE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN stands in the street,
flailing her arms.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Taxi!

CUT TO:

INT. UP-SCALE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The FIRST BLIND MAN waits in the glassed-off lobby,
mechanically flicking the light switch on and off.

His wife arrives to collect him.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
(taking his arm)
Come on. Let's go!

FIRST BLIND MAN
The first lane?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Yes.

FIRST BLIND MAN
To the north?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Yes.

FIRST BLIND MAN
You looked all the way --?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Yes, come on! There's nothing wrong
with my eyes!

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - DAY

In his rear-view mirror, the TAXI-DRIVER steals a glimpse at the miserable couple.

FIRST BLIND MAN
I knew it. Son of a bitch. I had
this feeling. Knew it as soon as he
came in, I could feel him eyeing
the place. "You want me to stay
here till your wife gets home?" No
fuckin' way! "Keep you company?"
Scum. Kicked him out. Thank God.
What kind of person...? What kind
of person...takes advantage...? If
I didn't kick him out, he would've
robbed us blind.

He shakes his head, ruefully, at his unfortunate choice of words.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
He would've been there when I got
home, if you didn't kick him out.
Couldn't have taken a thing.
Including the car.

They ride on in silence.

FIRST BLIND MAN
(softly)
He should go blind.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM, DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The couple waits, anxious.

Even at the end of the day, there are still other patients:

A shy SQUINTING BOY with his impatient mother, a young WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES, and an elderly MAN WITH A BLACK EYEPATCH, who watches the new arrivals with interest.

The receptionist approaches the blind man and speaks to him as if he were deaf.

RECEPTIONIST
You can come with me now. SIR?
(to the man's wife)
The doctor will see him now.

MOTHER OF THE BOY
Excuse me --

RECEPTIONIST
Doctor's orders.

She leads the couple out.

MOTHER OF THE BOY
Excuse me. I've been waiting here
for over an hour. With a child.

Several other patients grumble in consent, till the old man quells the revolt --

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
Let him go. He's worse off than we
are.

CUT TO:

INT. CONSULTING ROOM, DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

An open eye fills the screen.

DOCTOR

Nothing in the cornea. Nothing in the sclera. Nothing in the retina. Nothing in the lens. Somebody just turned out all the lights?...

FIRST BLIND MAN

More like they turned them all on.

DOCTOR

Well, I don't see any lesions. Your eyes are perfect.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

You see, I told you.

FIRST BLIND MAN

Except I can't see anything.

The FIRST BLIND MAN is being examined. His chin is held in place before an elaborate binocular apparatus.

DOCTOR

And if that's true, then we'll have to do some more tests. I'm afraid, there's nothing we can do today, but I'll talk to my colleague at the hospital -- he's a specialist and a friend -- and we'll make some appointments first thing in the morning.

He frees his patient from the testing equipment and helps him to his feet.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I wish I could do more but I think we'd better proceed with caution.

FIRST BLIND MAN

What do you mean "if it's true"? You think I'm lying?

DOCTOR

No, not at all. It's just I've never encountered anything like this. There's no reason, as far as I can tell, that you shouldn't be able to see. I think we should consider that a good thing.

The DOCTOR picks up a folder off his desk. The BLIND MAN listens to the scratch of pen on paper.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Is that a prescription?

DOCTOR
No, it's not. I'm sorry, but I
can't prescribe anything till I
find out more. It would be
prescribing in the dark.

He offers the paper to the man's shell-shocked wife. She does
not accept it. She just stands there, stunned.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
It's directions for the hospital.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
I know how to get to the hospital.
I don't need directions.

DOCTOR
It's directions for the admissions
staff. It's a list of tests I want
your husband to take.

She takes the paper.

FIRST BLIND MAN
So that's it?

DOCTOR
It's all I can do for now. Try and
get some rest. Some sleep if you
can. If there's any change in the
night or any developments at all --
please, please call --

He leads the couple to the door.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Doctor, I don't think you
understand what this is like.
You've got to do something. I don't
think I can deal with this much
longer by myself --

DOCTOR
But you're not by yourself! You're
not alone here.

(He nods to the blind
man.)
Be strong. We'll work together and
we'll figure it out. I promise.

Without another word, the couple leaves.

Alone, the Doctor's concern is immediately apparent.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM, DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The BLIND MAN and his WIFE are stalled at the reception desk.

RECEPTIONIST

All right then, this is the form
for your insurance. This here is
your bill. And this is the
registration form we use for all
new patients. I'll need your
signature here, here and here.

The Blind Man's wife is barely paying attention. She picks up
the pen and starts to sign --

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Not you...

She nods to the Blind Man.

Reigning in her frustration, the Wife of the Blind Man calmly
takes her husband's hand and folds it around the pen, guides
it to the form on the top of the pile, and with two bold
strokes marks an "X" on the dotted line.

FIRST BLIND MAN

(to the receptionist)

Can you please call us a cab.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

The GOOD SAMARITAN (henceforth known as the THIEF) drives the
stolen car.

Anxious, scared and racked with guilt, he tries his best not
to draw attention to himself, driving carefully, obeying the
rules of the road to the letter.

But then, to his horror, a police car pulls into view. The
OFFICER behind the wheel scans the traffic with a cold eye.

Is he possibly looking for someone? In a panic, the Thief turns onto a side road.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Mid-block, he parks, abruptly, almost without looking. The air in the car is stifling. He rolls down the windows and tries to breath calmly.

But this is impossible. He gets out of the car, his nerves about to explode. Without even closing the door, he walks away. Quickly.

Just then, the OFFICER from the car, walking now, rounds the corner.

The THIEF walks/jogs in the opposite direction. Trying desperately to appear inconspicuous; failing badly.

The Police Officer can not help but notice the man. He follows, curious.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMERCIAL ROAD - DAY

The THIEF picks up his pace. He jags out into the street. Cars whizz by, narrowly missing him.

Then, abruptly, he stops, on the centre line.

He blinks as if there might be something in his eyes. He rubs them, frantically, praying to himself; then lowers his hands and looks around, hoping to see...anything at all.

POV, the THIEF: WHITENESS.

He is blind. He falls to his knees.

CUT TO:

INT. CONSULTING ROOM, DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON: an open eye.

DOCTOR
Follow the light. Good boy. Look
into the light...

The BOY WITH THE SQUINT, whose mother had been so impatient in the waiting room, is finally in the chair. His small frame seems especially vulnerable surrounded, as it is, by elaborate optometric apparatuses.

The DOCTOR examines him with a penlight.

CUT TO:

The DOCTOR writing a prescription. He has just concluded his check-up for the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES. (She took the glasses off for the test, but now that it's over, back on they go.)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Only a mild form of conjunctivitis.
Continue taking the drops...it'll
clear up in no time.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

And maybe, should I keep wearing
the glasses...?

The Doctor looks up at her, quizzically.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES (CONT'D)

My eyes are still a little
sensitive. It makes me feel more
comfortable to be wearing...
sunglasses.

The Doctor smiles.

DOCTOR

Would you like me to make that an
order?

The woman nods.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(Handing her the
prescription.)

Only take them off when you sleep.

The woman returns his smile.

CUT TO:

The DOCTOR examines the one good eye of the MAN WITH THE
BLACK EYEPATCH.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

It's the natural consequence of age
and I'm afraid it will only get
worse if you...

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

Continue to age.

DOCTOR

(laughing lightly)

That's right. We *could* do
something, but you *can* still see.
It's your choice.

The Man with the Black Eyepatch leans back in the chair and sighs.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

I'm an old man: I'm in no hurry.

(He rises.)

No point doing something, before
you absolutely have to.

CUT TO:

Later.

The DOCTOR is alone in his office: the work day is done. He sits on the edge of his desk, deep in thought. Finally he goes to the bookshelf and pulls out a large medical volume. He sits in his chair, flips open the book and dials the phone.

DOCTOR

(into the phone.)

I guess you've gone home. I'll call
you tomorrow. I just wanted to ask
your advice on a strange case I saw
today --

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S HOME - NIGHT

The DOCTOR and his wife (the woman we glimpsed at the opening of the film) are finishing their supper. She has made an effort to dress up for the occasion.

DOCTOR

-- It appeared to be a kind of,
what we call, amaurosis.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Except with amaurosis everything is dark, and with this patient everything is white. He saw a kind of white darkness.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

How do you know what he saw?

DOCTOR

Well, exactly. We have to take his word for it, but it could be neurological or a kind of "psychic" blindness. There's a condition we call agnosia, which is an inability to recognize familiar objects.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

"Agnosia".

DOCTOR

Right.

The Doctor's wife clears the dinner plates and returns with a particularly tempting chocolate pear torte, which she presents with some ceremony. The Doctor continues uninterrupted.

DOCTOR

For instance, I would see this fork and think, "what is this thing? I've never seen one of these before." In other words, I'm reacting correctly to the luminous stimuli leading to the optic nerve, but I've lost the capacity to know what I know.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Is that related to "agnostic"?

DOCTOR

Is what?

He is eating the torte now.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(sounding it out.)

"Agnosia" -- "Agnosticism"

DOCTOR

Etymologically?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I bet it is. Didn't you take Latin?

DOCTOR
No, actually.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I thought all doctors had to take Latin.

DOCTOR
They did. Fifty years ago. You think of me as some wise old scholar.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I don't know about wise.

DOCTOR
Anyway it sounds like Greek.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
"Agnosia" -- It must have something to do with ignorance or lack of belief. There's a lot of judgment in that word. You doctors have to be very careful when you choose these names. Names can be very restricting.

The Doctor continues eating. He's struggling to pay attention, his mind tied up in case of the White Blindness.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)
(breaking the tension)
Alright, I get it -- drop the subject. I was trying to distract you with fascinating conversation.

Resigned, she picks up her fork. The Doctor smiles apologetically. In silence they finish their dessert.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The TV: A talking head is perfunctorily reeling off the late news.

ANCHORMAN
....to end the second week of the campaign with a tour of the facility's new, up to date, day care centre...

Slowly the image starts to tilt. The modulated tone of the Anchorman's voice is beginning to sound slightly woozy.

ANCHORMAN (CONT'D)
...And other than that, there
doesn't seem to be a single thing
that happened today...

The television is now lying on it's side. The sound is distant and pinched.

ANCHORMAN (CONT'D)
Another day in the city of blah,
blah, blah, blah...

Reverse: We now realize that we have been watching the television from the POV of the DOCTOR'S WIFE as she drops off to sleep. She has collapsed onto the paperwork and bookkeeping records that are spread out around her on the bed.

For a moment, we watch her, on her side, on the edge of slumber. The TV drones on -- a swelling electronic snore.

And then her eyes flutter open.

CUT TO:

INT. HALL/STUDY - NIGHT

The DOCTOR'S WIFE shuffles down the hallway to the study door.

Inside, the DOCTOR is at his desk, reading off his computer, taking notes. On his desk sit various books, papers, medical journals.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I'm turning in.

DOCTOR
(looking up, interrupted.)
Oh, Honey, um...

Looking back, over his shoulder -- his mind is elsewhere.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I forgot what I was going to say...

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Something about dinner?

DOCTOR

No...

DOCTOR'S WIFE

The naming of diseases?

DOCTOR

No...

The doctor is trying to remember his point.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

My new hair?

DOCTOR

(remembering)

Oh, could you set the alarm back. I
have to make some phone calls
before work. Six-thirty.

He returns to the monitor. The Doctor's wife approaches him
from behind...

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Don't stay up too late.

...and gently kisses the top of his head...

DOCTOR

And I did notice the hair.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(unconvinced)

Of course you did.

Another kiss and she slips out the door. The Doctor calls
after her --

DOCTOR

You don't want me to notice every
time you dye it do you? Doesn't
that defeat the purpose?

No answer. But already he's back in his books.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT.

The digital clock on the bedside table. The DOCTOR'S WIFE is
setting the alarm.

In we move, till the numbers flashing by -- like time in fast motion -- fade, out of focus, into a flickering haze.

CUT TO:

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES is picking up her eye-drops. The young PHARMACIST, working the prescription counter, is obviously taken by her.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
What's the big secret?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Huh?

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
What are you hiding from?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Jerks like you.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
(stunned into submission.)
That'll be \$11.50.

Curtly, she pays and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

THE WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES strides purposefully down the sidewalk. She waves a cab over and hops in.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
The Continental.

The cab pulls away. She sits in the back, confident but inscrutable behind the dark shades.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
(to the bartender)
Do you have the time?

BARTENDER
You got twenty minutes.

She nods. There is a palpable, almost conspiratorial connection between the BARTENDER and the WOMAN, although they barely exchange glances.

BARTENDER
Soda water?

She nods again.

The BARTENDER gets her drink. The WOMAN sits at the bar, trying to look inconspicuous -- as inconspicuous as is possible for someone wearing sunglasses indoors.

No more words are spoken. She and the BARTENDER wait.

CUT TO:

INT. 18TH FLOOR HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

THE WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES walks down the long corridor, she looks in her appointment book to make sure she has the right room number.

Arriving at the door, she composes herself and knocks. After a short time the door opens, slightly: the chain is still on.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
I can't take my glasses off. Is
that a problem?

MAN BEHIND THE DOOR
Are you serious?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Doctor's orders.

The door is opened. She enters the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The woman is on the bed, straddling the JOHN who is only seen indistinctly. She is naked except for the dark sunglasses.

The man climaxes brutishly and the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES follows in kind with a heartfelt orgasm that almost seems to take her by surprise.

She breaths a deep sigh of release.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
That was wild...I mean it...really
fucking weird...

She leans over and strokes the man's cheek.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES (CONT'D)
I don't do this for the money, you
know.

She flops down beside the man, on her back.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES (CONT'D)
I loved that.
(Pause.)
I'm still seeing everything
white...

CUT TO:

INT. THIEF'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Shoeless and in her housecoat, the THIEF'S WIFE shuffles to the door, annoyed to be dragged from the TV. The door bell rings insistently.

THIEF'S WIFE
(grumbling to herself)
I'm coming...

She opens the door, leaving the chain secured, and is not entirely surprised to see a POLICEMAN standing there with her husband.

THIEF'S WIFE (CONT'D)
What d'you want?

POLICEMAN
Ma'am, this man says he's your
husband.

THIEF'S WIFE

I don't care what he's done. You're not coming in.

POLICEMAN

Ma'am, your husband has a serious problem. He says he can't see.

THIEF'S WIFE

I don't care what the fuck he's done. So you can turn around --

THIEF

Just open the fuckin' door!

THIEF'S WIFE

Officer, I do not know this man.

The THIEF screams in fury and bangs his fists against the closing door.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY -- NIGHT

The DOCTOR is at his bookshelves. He pulls down an old medical school text book and is overwhelmed by panic. He fears for a second that he has lost his sight.

He looks around the room and reassures himself that it's just his imagination acting up. With the book in his hand, he walks over to the chair and sits down in front of the computer monitor.

He reads for a time and then pauses. He looks up, staring off into space, in stillness, lit by the glow of the monitor.

He lifts his hands in front of his eyes and realizes that he has gone blind.

CUT TO:

INT. 18TH FLOOR HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The ASSISTANT MANAGER of the hotel and a SECURITY GUARD drag the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES down the corridor. She is indignant and barely dressed. They are accompanied by a traumatized MAID, the one who alerted security in the first place.

The JOHN uses this commotion as an opportunity to escape. He slips past the hotel staff with a coat obscuring his face.

The blind woman is dragged, kicking and screaming, into a waiting elevator --

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR/LOBBY

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
I have to call my parents...I need help...

ASSISTANT MANAGER
Can you afford cab fare miss or should I call the police? The hotel doesn't normally cover expenses in this kind of affair.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Fuck you. I need a phone.

ASSISTANT MANAGER
But what am I saying? Of course you have money. You always get that in advance, right?

A bell chimes as they reach the lobby. The ASSISTANT MANAGER tightens his grip on his captive's arm. The doors open and, almost immediately, the BARTENDER rushes over to intercept.

BARTENDER
Hey hey -- what's going on here?

Impulsively, he wrestles the WOMAN from the Assistant Manager and holds her protectively.

BARTENDER
(to the Assistant Manager)
I got this!
(to the Woman,
protectively)
What did they do to you?

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The DOCTOR'S WIFE wakes. Her husband is where he should be, beside her in the bed. She gives him a gentle kiss, rises and seeks out her dressing gown.

CLOSE ON: The DOCTOR. The measured breath and tensed facial muscles hint that he may be feigning sleep.

After a time, cautiously, the eyelids open, but the Doctor remains motionless while his wife leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Still barely awake, the DOCTOR'S WIFE struggles with the coffee machine.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM/BATHROOM - MORNING

The DOCTOR'S WIFE shuffles in with a cup of steaming coffee, only to find that her husband has left the bed.

She tries the bathroom...and there the DOCTOR stands, slumped, with a hand on the sink for support. He stares ahead, as if searching for a reflection in the mirror he can not see.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

You're up before the alarm.

The Doctor nods faintly, his mood is unreadable. Sensing that something is wrong, his wife sidles in closer and sets down the coffee with a smile.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

Good morning.

DOCTOR

I doubt it. I doubt it'll be all that good.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(with real concern)

What? What do you mean?

DOCTOR

I can't see. I must have been infected by that patient I saw yesterday.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

That's impossible. Let me look.

She turns him around and looks him in the eyes.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)
I don't see...anything. Nothing.
Nobody goes blind like that.

DOCTOR
There's at least two of us now.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
What do we do? Tell me what to--

Suddenly and almost violently, the Doctor pushes his wife away, and backs into the shower stall, bumping and flailing like a captured animal.

DOCTOR
Don't! What was I thinking? Keep
away from me. Get out of the room
and close the door.

She doesn't leave.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Honey...

DOCTOR
Get out! I could infect you.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
It's too late for that now...

DOCTOR
Get out. Please!

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Honey, I'm not going to leave you.
No matter what you say.

She climbs into the tub with her husband and holds the trembling man. He still struggles, weakly, to push her away.

DOCTOR WIFE
(suppressing her tears)
I can't leave you. Not when you
need me. And I won't get sick. I
promise. I won't go blind.

DOCTOR
We have to warn people. It could be
an epidemic.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
All right. We'll do it together.
I'll dial; you talk.

Finally the Doctor relents, and surrenders to his wife's embrace.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

I'm not leaving you, honey. Ever.
Now tell me who to call.

MONTAGE: The Doctor tries to warn a series of government and medical authorities:

-- INT. LABORATORY, MEDICAL CENTRE

A supercilious, white-coated INTERN.

INTERN

(into the phone)

Uh-huh...Well, it sounds like you should see a doctor...I see, and if you are a doctor...Then why are you calling me sir?

-- INT. OFFICES, MINISTRY OF HEALTH

A bored BUREAUCRAT in a smart little suit.

BUREAUCRAT

(into her headset)

I'm afraid you'll have to tell me...Well, it is confidential, sir... No, I'm not going to panic. I'm a trained professional... Well, fine, have it your way. It's a little early now. I suggest you call back after nine.

She hangs up. Just then a distinguished, blandly handsome gentleman walks past her cubical.

BUREAUCRAT (CONT'D)

Good morning Minister.

-- INT. EMERGENCY, LARGE MEDICAL HOSPITAL

A senior, overly calm, Eye Specialist.

SILVER HAired DOCTOR

(into the phone)

Alright, I hear you. I got your message when I came in this morning.

(MORE)

SILVER HAired DOCTOR (cont'd)
 Now calm down, come in, and I'll
 examine you... Tell him to come in
 too... No, I'm not afraid. Two
 people does not an epidemic make...
 With no visible signs of trauma, no
 extenuating symptoms, I'm not about
 to barricade the streets... No
 problem. See you soon... That's a
 risk I can take.

He hangs up, then walks with purpose down the long corridor
 to the ER section where a harried NURSE is waiting.

SILVER HAired DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 (to the nurse)
 So, what seems to be the problem?

The nurse points to the BOY WITH THE SQUINT who sits in a
 chair next to his mother. The MOTHER is desperate, crying:
 her child has gone blind.

-- INT. WAITING ROOM, DOCTOR'S OFFICE

In the DOCTOR'S waiting room, his RECEPTIONIST goes through
 the appointment book, and talks on the phone.

RECEPTIONIST
 (panicky)
 Oh my god, he came at three I
 guess, quarter to three... The
 waiting room was full and his wife
 had to stand... Oh god, oh god... Who
 was here...?

COP #1
 Ma'am--

RECEPTIONIST
 (to the cop, without
 looking)
 Excuse me, I'm busy...

Still holding the phone, she goes to the file cabinets and
 starts grabbing various folders.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
 I have all the contact numbers. I
 could fax it to you now or could
 make those calls myself--

COP #1
 Ma'am!

The phone goes dead. Startled, the receptionist turns to see two -- armed -- POLICEMEN. One has just, with a finger on the cradle, hung up the phone. The second one scoops up the registry.

COP #1 (CONT'D)

I'm gonna have to ask you to close up shop and come with us, as quickly as possible.

The receptionist is frozen, with the phone to her ear. The insistent pulse of the dial tone fills the anxious silence.

COP #2

May I please have those files?

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM/LIVING ROOM - DAY

The DOCTOR sits on the bed. A large suitcase sits open on a chair. The DOCTOR'S WIFE is packing it with his clothes.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I'm putting some extra socks in with your toiletry bags. In the side pocket.

DOCTOR

Fine.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

The left side.

DOCTOR

Whatever you want. I don't care.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I want you to know where everything is.

DOCTOR

I'll find it. There's only one suitcase. This isn't some cruise in the South Pacific.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Honey, lie down and relax.

DOCTOR

They'll be here any minute.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

That's why you need to relax. I'll deal with them when they come.

The Doctor lies down, but is clearly incapable of relaxing. The Doctor's wife regards him with compassion. Then, in a spur of the moment decision, she throws some final items into the case -- female items, it appears -- and buckles it closed.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

I'm taking this out to the door.

DOCTOR

(sitting up)

I'll do it. I'm not an invalid.

The doorbell buzzes.

The sound of the bell is like a knife in the heart to the doctor and his wife. They both freeze.

The Doctor's wife finally pulls herself together and goes to open the door. From down the hallway, we can hear her address the commotion outside.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(off)

All right...We'll be right out...

The Doctor struggles to his feet. He reaches around for the suitcase.

The Doctor's wife returns to find her husband standing, bravely, unpersuasively stoic, like a soldier off to war. She is moved by his courage.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I'll be fine. If I need anything
I'll call you. Or get them to call.
They can't keep us apart for long,
can they?

The Doctor's wife shakes her head no, but doesn't speak -- afraid that the tone of her voice might betray her deep anxiety.

The doorbell sounds again.

EXT. DOCTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

POLICE CAPTAIN
STEP OUTSIDE PLEASE. TAKE YOUR
TIME.

The DOCTOR emerges from the front door with his suitcase in hand. His WIFE is at his arm. Before them, an intimidating sight (for those who can see):

A POLICE CAR and an AMBULANCE idle on the street. The ambulance is backed up with its rear doors open like a bear trap at the end of the front walk. EMERGENCY WORKERS, some in decontamination suits, flank the flagstone path like sentries. Some carry guns.

The officer in charge steps out of the ranks, but still keeps a good distance:

POLICE CAPTAIN
Please approach the vehicle.

The DOCTOR and his WIFE walk the gauntlet. As they near the sidewalk, two AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS step out to receive them.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT
You have a cell phone?

DOCTOR
(confused)
Yes.

The Doctor digs a phone from his inside pocket. The ATTENDANT promptly scoops it up, with his gloved hand, then brusquely helps the Doctor into the ambulance. The suitcase is dropped in the shuffle. The Doctor's wife picks it up and climbs in beside her husband.

The ATTENDANT grabs her by the arm:

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT
Step down, ma'am. I'm asking you to
step down. My orders are only to
take the man.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
No, no...

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT
(pulling her out)
This vehicle is for the infected.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(Pushing the man off.)

Then you'll have to take me too.
I've just gone blind. This very
minute.

The revelation stuns the Doctor; freezes the Attendant.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT

(shaking his head)

Have it your way.

He jumps back and slams the doors closed.

As the ambulance pulls away, we see the face of the DOCTOR'S WIFE peering back through the thick glass portholes on the rear of the vehicle. From her point of view, we watch as the police cars, the flashing lights and her house disappear in the distance.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: TV MONITOR

By all appearances, a cheap cable news show is playing. An ANNOUNCER reads from a paper on his nondescript desk. Inappropriately, the man seems to have been chosen for his pleasant voice and friendly demeanor.

ANNOUNCER

(reading)

Attention. Attention. Attention.
The government regrets having been
forced to exercise with all urgency
what it considers to be its
rightful duty to protect the
population by all possible means.
We are in a state of crisis. An
epidemic of blindness has broken
out provisionally known as the
"White Sickness" and we are relying
on the public spirit and
cooperation of all citizens to stem
any future contagion....

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

As the announcement continues we see the DOCTOR'S WIFE exploring her new surroundings. She wanders from room to room: the Dorms, the Washrooms, the Refectory, the Kitchen, the Entrance Foyer.

The building, an abandoned mental hospital, is not in the best repair. Dated, supposedly cheery super-graphics of flowers and rainbows do little to enliven the grim institutional halls.

Every room the DOCTOR'S WIFE enters has been fitted with a monitor to broadcast the droning message:

ANNOUNCER

....The decision to quarantine all those infected, and in adjacent but separate quarters all those who have come in contact with the infected, was not taken without careful consideration. Be assured that the isolation in which you now find yourselves represents, above any personal considerations, an act of solidarity with the rest of the nation...

INT. DORMITORY #1, MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE enters a vast, old-fashioned ward that has been set up with two symmetrical rows of ten beds each. She joins her husband who has been sitting, waiting, at the far end of one row.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

You'll never believe where they brought us.

DOCTOR

That guy's voice is already driving me crazy.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

You're lucky you can't see it.

DOCTOR

See it? It's a video? What kind of an idiot would play a video tape in a quarantine for the blind?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

There seem to be a lot of things they haven't thought about --

DOCTOR

You've got to get out of here. I'm going to tell them you can see.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
They'll never believe it. You'd
never get near enough to tell them.

She puts her arms around her husband and leans in close.

DOCTOR
(firmly)
I want you to go home.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
No you don't. I know you keep
saying that, but you don't.
You need me. Everyone in here's
gonna need me.

For a second, it occurs to her that maybe she's jumbled in
over her head.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Anyway, I'm here now...

The ANNOUNCEMENT is still playing on the monitor:

ANNOUNCER
....With that spirit of cooperation
in mind we ask that everyone pay
attention to the following simple
instructions. Number one: each
patient shall choose his own bed.
Number two: each ward shall elect a
captain or "dorm representative"
for communication with the outside
world...

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - EVENING

Later. Four more internees have arrived: The BOY WITH THE
SQUINT, the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES, the car THIEF and the
FIRST BLIND MAN. Each sits on their chosen bed and sounds
off:

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
Four.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Five.

THIEF
Eight, right.

FIRST BLIND MAN

Ten.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

On which side?

FIRST BLIND MAN

On the left. The left.

DOCTOR

Fine. Now if everyone can remember their beds, that's a good start. One thing we can be sure of is that we're on our own here and we need to get organized because it won't be long before this ward fills up with people. This and the others.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

The other what?

DOCTOR

The other wards. There're two other wards. Plus one on the other side for those who've made contact but still haven't gone blind.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

How do you know that?

The DOCTOR'S WIFE squeezes her husband's arm to keep him from speaking.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

We explored a bit before choosing this ward. It's closest to the entrance, where the food comes in.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

Doctor, if we're supposed to have a leader for each ward, I think it should be you. After all... you're... you're a doctor.

Ironical laughter from one of the far beds.

DOCTOR

What good is a doctor without eyes?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

But you still know stuff. You have an education...

DOCTOR

No, I don't think so...

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Honey, it's not such a bad idea.
Unless someone else wants to be the
rep --

DOCTOR

It's a little early to make that
decision, don't you think? There's
only six of us here. Six. Tomorrow
there'll be...god knows. The next
day more. You can't expect the new
arrivals to accept the authority of
someone they've never met, let
alone chosen, someone who can offer
them nothing but -- what? An
education? I suggest we wait for
more people and hold a proper
election.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Well, in the meantime it's going to
be very difficult--

FIRST BLIND MAN

It's going to be difficult no
matter what!

This debate has fueled the Thief's growing frustration.
Finally he stands, unable to contain himself, and points
accusingly in the general direction of the voice he just
heard.

THIEF

That asshole's to blame for this.
If I had my fucking eyes, I'd kill
'im!

DOCTOR

Please everyone, stop! Let's
remember that in an epidemic no
one's responsible--

FIRST BLIND MAN

He's responsible for stealing my
car.

THIEF

Are you fuckin' serious?. If I
hadn't been decent and helped--

The First Blind Man jumps to his feet.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Decent enough to steal my car?

THIEF
Are you accusing me? You got witnesses?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Please you two, the car's outside and you're in here. Make your peace. We have to live together.

FIRST BLIND MAN
No, I don't think so.

He gathers up his things and starts inching towards the door.

FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
I'm off to another ward. As far away as possible from this son-of-a-bitch who's capable of robbing a blind man.

He gropes his free hand along the aisle separating the two rows of beds.

FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
Where are the other wards?

There is no reply.

Suddenly, The First Blind Man finds himself beneath an onslaught of arms and legs. The Thief and the First Blind Man roll about on the floor colliding now and then with the legs of the beds, trying their best to pummel each other. The Boy with the Squint starts to cry.

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
Mom? Is my mom coming?

The Woman with Dark Glasses scoots over to the boy's bed to comfort him. The Doctor stands and shouts over the din of the two fighting men:

DOCTOR
Stop it! Enough of this. We're on our own here. If you want to turn this place into hell, you're doing an excellent job.

FIRST BLIND MAN
(pathetically)
He stole my car.

DOCTOR
Well, you're in no condition to drive.

THIEF
And he stole my sight.

DOCTOR
We're all blind here. No one's pointing any fingers. If you want to go to another ward, my wife will guide you. She knows the way better than me.

THIEF
(pulling himself together)
Listen doc, whoever you are, we're all equals here. There's been no election. So don't start ordering people with that tone of voice.

DOCTOR
I'm not *ordering* you, I'm *asking* you to leave him alone.

THIEF
Okay. Fine. Just be aware that I don't respond well to that voice. Of authority. What I *do* respond to is flattery and people sucking up to me, in case you were wondering.

He laughs at his little joke.

THIEF (CONT'D)
All right, now everyone, ladies please close your eyes, I'm gonna take off my clothes now and test run this here bed.

The Thief has made his way back to his cot, where he starts unbuttoning his shirt. The Woman with Dark Glasses lies down next to the Boy with the Squint.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
(whispering)
Are you okay? If you need anything in the night, don't be afraid to wake me up and ask.

Everyone in the room starts to prepare for the night. The room is momentarily silent. Then:

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
I have to pee.

The boy has spoken for everyone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

The DOCTOR'S WIFE leads everyone down the hallway to the washrooms. They advance slowly, single file, each with his hand on the shoulder of the person in front of him. The DOCTOR'S WIFE leads the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES, who holds the BOY by the hand. The THIEF in his underpants, seems to be enjoying his position close behind the woman. The DOCTOR is next, and taking up the rear, the FIRST BLIND MAN.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Everyone, try and remember the route. I don't want to have to guide you every time. Pay attention to how many--

Suddenly, The thief yelps in pain. The line breaks formation.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)
What happened?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
I seem to have injured the person behind me.

THIEF
Jesus, bitch, what are you wearing for shoes!?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
I'm sorry, I thought that I felt a hand on my breast.

The Doctor's wife smiles until she sees the damage, which is substantial. The Thief reaches down to feel his wound.

THIEF
Christ, I'm bleeding.

DOCTOR
Where's the wound?

THIEF

Crazy bitch, stuck her heel in my leg.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

I tripped. And watch your mouth.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

That wound should be washed and dressed.

DOCTOR

We need water.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Everyone stay here.

She takes her husband by the hand.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

Honey, let's take him to the kitchen.

BOY WITH THE SQUINT

I have to pee.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Hold it a bit longer, we'll be right back.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The DOCTOR washes the THIEF's wound with water and some paper towels while the DOCTOR'S WIFE looks around -- in the cupboards, under the sinks -- for something to bandage the wound with.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

All I could find are some dish towels. They're not very clean.

THIEF

It's really bleeding.

DOCTOR

What are you wearing? Take off your shirt.

The Thief removes his shirt and hands it to the doctor, who immediately begins to feel for the wound.

THIEF

Oww. Thank God we have a doctor.
Doc, I'm sorry if I was rude back
there. I didn't mean anything. I
was playing around...

He is rapidly reverting to a schoolboy before the principal.

DOCTOR

Relax. We're trying to help.

Fumbling, the Doctor tries to fashion a makeshift bandage;
his frustration mounting. The Doctor's wife takes his hands.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Here.

She takes the shirt from her husband and with astonishing
adroitness ties off the Thief's leg -- astonishing adroitness
in any case for a blind person, the Thief thinks. He is about
to say something, but holds his tongue.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE, the DOCTOR and the THIEF come staggering
back. The THIEF is limping. The DOCTOR'S WIFE sees the BOY
WITH THE SQUINT is upset, a puddle of urine at his feet.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

All right now, let's get to those
toilets.

They get back into their line, the Thief now at the back, and
resume their march.

DOCTOR

It smells like urine.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Right, that means we're almost
there. The toilet's just down the
hall. I don't know if it's the
men's or the women's, but we can
all use it, taking turns.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

The boy should go first.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Yes, the boy can go first.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - NIGHT

Everyone is getting ready for bed. The DOCTOR'S WIFE lies down next to her husband on their narrow bed.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(whispering)
I'm afraid it's going to be infected.

DOCTOR
I wouldn't be surprised; the heel of a shoe. What time is it?

She checks her watch.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
One-thirty.

DOCTOR
Honey, you're not responsible for everyone here. You've got to get some sleep.

Despite the good advice, she sits up and looks around the dorm. The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES is also awake (her glasses are tucked in safely under her pillow). Out of habit or naive hope she applies the eye-drops the doctor had prescribed for her. When done, she lies down beside the sleeping BOY WITH THE SQUINT.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Are you afraid to close your eyes?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
No. I'm afraid to open them. I'm afraid I'll lose my sight in my sleep. I'm going for a walk.

The Doctor's wife gets up and wanders through the beds like a nurse on duty. She stops when she hears a moan from the THIEF. The Thief's eyes are open.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
How are you feeling?

THIEF

Bad. My leg's killing me.

The Doctor's wife has to stop herself from saying 'Let's have a look' but, almost as if she had, the Thief lifts the blanket. The black hole of the wound with it's swollen edges is visible, the bandage has come loose. The mattress is soaked in blood.

The Doctor's wife puts a gentle hand on the Thief's forehead.

THIEF (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I won't tell.

He nods to the Doctor's wife as if they are sharing a secret.

She leaves the man and continues to the far end of the room. With no further to go, she leans back against the wall beside the door. She raises her head to face the thin strip of windows on the outside wall. They are too high to provide a view, but somehow the soft glow of the moonlight is a balm for her troubled eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL YARD -- EARLY MORNING

A busload of still-sighted but presumed to be infected NEW INMATES are being funneled into the Contaminated Ward at the far end of the building. They protest vigorously, pushing at the guards and shouting: I can see! I can still see!

"Not for long", replies a guard.

The last inmate to step off the bus is the hotel BARTENDER, barely contained terror in his still-seeing eyes.

INT. DORMITORY #1 - EARLY MORNING

The cries from the yard echo in the distance.

TIGHT ON: the closed eyes of the DOCTOR'S WIFE.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(to herself)

Five, four, three, two, one...

Nothing happens. She is lying in bed beside her husband. Afraid to open her eyes. She tries again.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

Five, four, three, two, one...

Nothing. Her eyes remain locked.

Suddenly the quiet of the sleeping room is interrupted by a clamour in the hall. Voices from the foyer shout:

VOICES (O.S.)

OUT! Get OUT! You can't stay here!!

The eyes of the Doctor's wife finally spring open: she can still see. With the confidence of the sighted, she readies herself to face the commotion. She is the first in the room on her feet.

DOCTOR

Help me with my pants.

One by one, a panicky group of NEW ARRIVALS appear at the door. The DOCTOR calls out, trying to take charge.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Keep calm! Everyone! There's no need to panic. Everyone's welcome. New people, there's six of us here already, how many are you?

Confusion. Finally somebody speaks.

NEW ARRIVAL

We don't know.

There are five of them, three men and two women. They are carrying no luggage, no personal affects.

DOCTOR

I'm sure there's room.

The group remains motionless at the door.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Maybe it would be best if everyone counted off and introduced themselves, one by one.

Two men speak at once and then immediately stop. The third man begins.

THIRD MAN

I'm...I'm number one...a Policeman.

(The one who apprehended the Thief.)

SECOND MAN

Number two...I'm a taxi-driver. Is
that what you want?

(The one who drove the First Blind Man and his Wife.)

FIRST MAN

Number Three. I'm a pharmacist.
Assistant.

(The one who filled the prescription for the eye drops.)

FIRST WOMAN

Number Four. I'm a hotel maid.

(The one who discovered the blind woman and called security.)

SECOND WOMAN

Number Five...a financial advisor--

FIRST BLIND MAN

That's my wife!! My wife!! Where
are you?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

(bursting into tears)
I'm here!

FIRST BLIND MAN

Keep talking...

Unsteadily, the woman steps forward into the aisle between the beds. Her eyes wide open; her hands struggling against the milky sea flooding into them. More confident, her husband approaches her from the other side.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

I'm here...I'm here...

One hand finds another and in a moment they are embracing, kisses in search of kisses.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE clings to her husband, sobbing as if she too has just been reunited.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

...oh god, this is terrible...

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
(quietly)
Is my mom here?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
She'll be here. Don't worry.

A loud buzzer stops everyone dead.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
That's the food drop off.

DOCTOR
(to his wife)
Let's go. I want to talk to them. I
want to catch them before they
leave.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Give me your hand.

She helps her husband out the door, as quickly as they can
go.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
And who was that guy talking?

FIRST BLIND MAN
He's a doctor. He's our...ward
representative.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - DAY

A large box filled with individual food containers has been
left in the centre of the entrance hall. The DOCTOR and his
WIFE arrive in time to see two SOLDIERS outside, retreating
down the front path to the entrance gates.

The couple rushes out to stop them.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE -- DAY

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Stop! Wait!

The SOLDIERS turn, alarmed, and immediately raise their guns.
They are carrying automatic machine guns.

DOCTOR

We have a man inside with an injured leg. He urgently needs treatment. I'm a Doctor. He needs antibiotics.

The SOLDIERS keep their distance, backing away as the DOCTOR advances.

SOLDIER #1

Turn back! Do not step forward! I can't let you leave.

The other soldier gestures to his comrades behind the gate. We can now see that the front courtyard of the hospital is walled off like a prison yard and the only exit, the gate, is heavily fortified.

DOCTOR

I'm not trying to leave. I'm asking for your help.

SOLDIER #1

(a little scared)

Another step forward and I will shoot.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Honey, stop. This isn't going to work.

Slowly, the Doctor continues to inch forward.

DOCTOR

This is ridiculous. A man is sick.

SOLDIER #1

I'm gonna count to three. If you do not turn back I'm gonna shoot. I have my orders. ONE.

DOCTOR WIFE

Honey, PLEASE.

DOCTOR

Just talk to your superiors!

SOLDIER #1

TWO!

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Let's go! They're terrified.

SOLDIER #1

THREE!

He aims the gun; ready to shoot--

DOCTOR

I can't believe this is happening.

Disgusted and angry, he turns around and, with his wife's assistance, retreats inside.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(to her husband)

We're on our own now. It's up to us to make this work...

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

CLOSE ON: TV MONITOR.

ANNOUNCER

...Number three: Each ward is equipped with a phone for connection with the outside. This phone is for emergency purposes only. All requests for the requisition of fresh supplies are to be made with the phone...

The recorded message is playing while the GROUP scavenges through the food parcel. They have found small individually packaged meals, milk, and desserts (although, neglectfully, no cutlery or glasses).

The DOCTOR'S WIFE is using the emergency phone. After a pause she begins:

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Yes I'll leave a message. My message is, why am I leaving a message? What good is an emergency phone if there is no one there to answer it? We have a situation here in the blind ward -- a number of people were kicked out of the contaminated ward and have joined us here, apparently you missed that, and we don't have enough food in our rations.

(MORE)

DOCTOR'S WIFE (cont'd)
Also, there's still my request, I
called yesterday, for a medical
supply kit...

Meanwhile, all the food has been discovered, identified, and,
by now, practically consumed. The THIEF calls from his sick
bed:

THIEF
(weakly, through nausea)
Hey, somebody! Drink please.

The CAB DRIVER finds an extra milk and leaves his comrades
mid-conversation.

HOTEL MAID
...and that was the last sight I
ever saw. I'll never forget it: a
plateful of nachos.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Is there coffee?

He is eating beside his wife who has already, it seems,
fallen into a deep, impenetrable, depression.

HOTEL MAID
I'd still like to know what
happened to that girl.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
What girl?

HOTEL MAID
That girl from room 1806.
Screaming. Naked except for her
sunglasses. Thrashing about on the
floor. I can still see her. She's
the one that infected me.

The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES is nearby, helping the BOY.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
(quietly, to the Boy)
Are you ready for dessert?

She takes off her glasses and tucks them, discreetly, into
her pocket. She will never wear them again.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(still on the phone)
I hope you get this message by
dinner.

Frustrated and angry, she bangs down the receiver.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: TV MONITOR

ANNOUNCER

Number four: Hygiene is everyone's concern. Patients are required to wash their own clothes by hand...

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

More blind people have arrived. The greeting ceremony is repeated.

SECURITY GUARD

Number eight: security guard at a hotel.

ENGINEER

Number nine: engineer.

This is the JOHN from the hotel, rm. 1806.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm a receptionist for an opthomologist.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE, who of course recognized the woman right away, has been bursting to speak.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Oh my god, welcome! I knew I recognized that voice.

RECEPTIONIST

(laughing, pleased to hear a friendly voice)

Number ten. I forgot to say "number ten".

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - TWILIGHT

CLOSE ON: TV MONITOR

ANNOUNCER

....a buzzer will sound a second time to indicate that the drop-off has been made. The blind wards may then collect their food. A third buzzer will sound for the contaminated ward...

The omnipresent announcement turns into a voice-over accompanying the TAXI-DRIVER and the ASSISTANT PHARMACIST as they grope, on hands and knees, for the latest food delivery.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - TWILIGHT

The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES stands by the THIEF's bed, comforting him.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

The food's coming. You just need to eat.

If she could see, she would know that the Thief is far too weak to welcome dinner. The woman caresses him.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean for this to happen. It was instinct.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE has been nearby the whole time, watching. She turns away and leaves, ashamed at herself for eavesdropping on this intimate moment.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Number six: All waste material, including leftover food containers, is to be burned...

EXT. COURTYARD - TWILIGHT

The DOCTOR'S WIFE helps several of the new INMATES stoke the fire bins with trash. The high flames and the smoke make this hard work for the blind.

Across the yard, The FIRST BLIND MAN and his WIFE sit on a bench, facing the blaze.

FIRST BLIND MAN

I like the feel on my face. The smell. You used to like it too.

(MORE)

FIRST BLIND MAN (cont'd)
Candles. The fire. We could be
anywhere...

He is trying to break through his wife's depression, but she won't have it. She's barely paying attention, looking the other way.

FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
(casting a spell)
Imagine. Imagine we're somewhere.
Alone. It's beautiful...

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Stop.

The fire crackling, is the only sound.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Why don't you talk to me?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
I can't. I can't pretend.

The conversation is over.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. FOYER - EVENING

The FIRST BLIND MAN and the TAXI-DRIVER have found the food parcel and have finished counting the portions. The TAXI-DRIVER opens the doors and yells outside.

TAXI-DRIVER
There's eighteen of us! Not eleven!

An unseen SOLDIER answers back through his bullhorn:

SERGEANT
HOLD YOUR BREATH. THERE'S MORE
COMING.

TAXI-DRIVER
More what? Food?

SERGEANT
DINNER GUESTS.

EXT. HOSPITAL YARD -- EVENING

Three busloads of new INMATES are being corralled through the open gates. SOLDIERS in protective gear direct them verbally.

SOLDIERS
MOVE IT. FORWARD MARCH. LET'S GO.
BACK IN LINE. WALK MUCH? GET UP.
MOVE IT. FASTER.

One BLOOD-THIRSTY SOLDIER tracks a BLIND MAN as he strays farther and farther from the group.

BLOOD-THIRSTY SOLDIER
(to himself, as if urging
a fish to take the bait)
Come on, keep going... Keep going
and I'll blow your head off.

With a timely command, the SERGEANT stops the man from pulling the trigger.

SERGEANT
That's enough soldier! Get him back
in line.

Unfortunate INMATES scramble and fall, shouting and crying as they are hounded forward.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
There's way too many. Where they
all gonna stay?

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - EVENING

The terrifying sounds of the new arrivals has sent everyone scurrying back to the safety of their own beds. The DOCTOR and his WIFE huddle together.

DOCTOR
Hold on. Here they come.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
It's impossible. We already have
too many...

The Doctor takes her hand.

INT. FOYER - EVENING

An ELDERLY BLIND MAN falls inside the doors. The panicked MOB stumbles in over him. Another MAN falls.

The announcement is still playing:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...Number twelve: Anyone attempting to leave the premises will be forcibly corrected. Thank you for your attention. Thank you for doing your duty for the good of the nation...

INT. CONTAMINATED WARD - EVENING

New ARRIVALS claw at the glass windows and the doors. The still sighted residents of the ward -- the BARTENDER amongst them -- are beside themselves with fear.

CONTAMINATED PATIENTS

GOD, STOP THEM! BARRICADE THE DOORS!

GUN SHOTS are heard from the yard.

INT. FOYER - EVENING

The LAST BLIND ARRIVAL enters, maintaining his distance from the MOB. He is an older man and it takes some effort for him to step his way past his fallen peers.

Another SHOT sounds: the man turns -- we recognize him as the MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH.

INT. CONTAMINATED WARD - EVENING

Hardy INMATES try and hold the doors closed, but the BLIND press in like rabid horde. A FIST breaks through a window in the door. The barricade falls. There is screaming.

CLOSE ON: TV MONITOR

ANNOUNCER

This message will be repeated three times a day. Good night.

The TV snaps off.

More GUN SHOTS.

BLACK.

Over the black a voice is heard:

SERGEANT
(through his bullhorn)
*Attention. The shovel you requested
is waiting in the yard. One person
should be chosen to collect it. One
person.*

FADE UP ON:

INT. FOYER - DAY

Three bodies lie contorted on the blood stained floor.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

The ward is now full to overflowing. Every bed is occupied: many more have staked out a corner of the floor, or a spot against the wall. Right now, the entire group is huddled at one end, around the DOCTOR who is leading a kind of ward meeting. The NEW ARRIVALS have just introduced themselves.

DOCTOR
All right, so, welcome newcomers to
Ward One! Make yourselves at home!

Everyone applauds.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
There are a number of things I'd
like to talk about today. First of
all there are now guide ropes
attached to the door handles of
each ward to help people find the
food and get back without incident.

Scattered applause and cheering.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
That's right, another brilliant
innovation for which we can thank
my good wife.

Another good natured ovation.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Please be careful out there. As we
know the guards are getting more
and more trigger-happy.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE appears at the entrance to the building, at the top of the stairs that lead down to the yard where a shovel has been left. She weaves about some, pretending to be blind.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(yelling, to the guards)
Where is it?

SERGEANT
(O.S., through his
bullhorn)
*This way. You're doing fine.
Colder. Colder. This way, to the
right...*

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

DOCTOR
My next point -- the toilets.

Groans all around.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
They are disgusting and backed-up
and they smell like hell. We're
seriously going to have to send a
team to find out what's going on in
there. I don't suppose there are
any volunteers?

Naturally, no one answers.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Well, in the meantime, I know the
men are using the sinks. If you
must, go outside. But do not, do
not, for God's sake use the halls
or anywhere else within these
walls. Is that clear?

Nods and general voiced assent.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Which brings me to my main point --
for sanitary reasons and reasons of
human decency, we must bury the
bodies in the hall. As soon as
possible.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

The SERGEANT continues to direct the DOCTOR'S WIFE to the shovel. For her part, she's getting a little tired of the blind charade, tired of parading for these brutish guards.

SERGEANT
(O.S., through his
bullhorn)
*Warmer. Warmer. Now reach down;
it's right in front of you.*

The Doctor's wife picks up the spade, then looking directly into the Sergeant's eyes she waves, turns around, and heads directly back to the door.

EXT. GUARD TOWER - DAY

A GUARD, with his gun still trained on the yard, turns to the SERGEANT.

GUARD
Did you see that?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE leads the DOCTOR, ambassador from Ward One, down the hall to Ward Three.

INT. DORMITORY #3 - DAY

The DOCTOR addresses the strange, suspicious population. The BARTENDER -- who seems different now, hardened by experience -- is the only recognizable face.

DOCTOR

The best solution is that each ward takes shifts with the shovel and buries their own share of the dead.

BARTENDER

What do you mean our share? They're not ours.

Some titters from the crowd.

DOCTOR

No, but some would probably have come to this ward --

BARTENDER

(grumbling)

After they were turned away from yours, like most of us were...

DOCTOR

Our Ward is completely full.

BARTENDER

Same here.

DOCTOR

So we're both in the same position. Right? Let's not argue. Each ward buries one body -- the job is done.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE looks around the silent room. The faces project a mixed feeling of fear and raw hostility. In the back of the room the BARTENDER is slouched against the wall, like a bad student facing off with a substitute teacher.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

All right, there's also the matter of food rationing. One of the wards is taking more than its share. I propose a committee of three people, one from each dorm, who will independently count the portions--

BARTENDER

Who the fuck are you?

DOCTOR

Pardon me?

BARTENDER

Who do you think you are, giving
all these orders?

DOCTOR

My ward has chosen me to be their
spokesman. I suggest your ward does
the same, otherwise we'll
constantly be at each other's
throats.

BARTENDER

(half joke, half threat)

Right, you wanna speak to our
leader? Negotiate, like a
diplomatic mission? I hereby
appoint myself King of Ward Three.
Any objections?

Everyone is too intimidated to speak except for a skinny,
snickering man in the corner (an ACCOUNTANT in the real
world):

ACCOUNTANT

Long live the king!

The BARTENDER is surprised and secretly delighted with the
ease of his uncontested coronation. He smiles in
satisfaction.

BARTENDER

And for my first pronouncement I
decree that Ward Three is going to
eat our dinner before we think
about burying any dead.

Hereafter this man shall be known the KING OF WARD THREE.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

The DOCTOR, the DOCTOR'S WIFE, and the WOMAN WITH DARK
GLASSES, in silence, bury the dead.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 -- NIGHT

Once again, the dorm prepares for bed. INMATES strip, fart,
bicker over their possessions.

The atmosphere is increasingly like a barnyard. The FIRST BLIND MAN and his WIFE lie down together, but as apart as possible on such a narrow bed. The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES once again applies her precious eye drops. The DOCTOR'S WIFE sees it all.

She stops at the thief's bed. The poor man is wan and sweaty. His infected leg is clearly visible, swollen to the hip and horribly discoloured.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

It's me. How're you feeling?

The THIEF replies with a wince. The Doctor's wife takes a closer look at the wound and recoils at the fetid stench.

THIEF

They don't know what it's like, these... Somebody has to show them. These fuckers, I know them... They have to see it to believe it...

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Who?

THIEF

Everyone. If you want something done...

DOCTOR'S WIFE

You're feverish. Try to get some sleep.

She reaches down to feel the man's forehead. With surprising speed, the Thief reaches up to grab her hand.

THIEF

(in a low voice)

I know you can see.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(trembling with surprise)

You're wrong. I don't know where you got that...

THIEF

Don't lie to me. You trust me?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Of course I do.

THIEF

Then why don't you tell me the
truth? I won't tell, I promise.
Can't trust a thief, is that it?

The Doctor's wife pulls her hand away and starts to leave.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

We'll talk tomorrow.

THIEF

I have a secret too -- I'm smart.
When I went blind it made me think
smarter. I have a lot to
contribute...

The Doctor's wife retreats to her bed, where the DOCTOR is
already lying. The Thief calls after her.

THIEF (CONT'D)

Sorry to be a downer. It's the
fever talking...

Sitting on the side of the bed, the Doctor's wife slips off
her shoes, readying herself for bed.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(sotto voce)

Oh god...I can't take this.

DOCTOR

Shhh. Lie down. You need your
strength. What time is it?

The Doctor's wife looks at her wristwatch and immediately
starts to cry. She collapses beside her husband.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Honey, what's the matter? Did you
lose your sight?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(still crying)

No. I forgot to wind my watch.

Somewhere on the far side of the dorm a couple is having sex.
Their grunts and moans start to build in volume and
frequency. Someone else objects:

FEMALE VOICE

Pigs! They're like pigs!

HOURS LATER:

The room is now still. Sighs and snores are the only sounds.

The THIEF pulls himself up into a sitting position and pivots his feet onto the floor.

With all his strength, he stands and starts to drag himself towards to the door, using the bed frames for support.

INT. CORRIDOR/FOYER - NIGHT

Down the corridor, flat against the wall, he lurches his way to the Foyer.

He finds a rope tied to the door handle at the end of the hall and, like a crippled rock climber, rappels backwards into the empty rotunda.

At the end of the rope, he falls.

For a moment, it seems that he can't go on.

But then he is up on his hands and knees pushing open the doors to the yard.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE/YARD - NIGHT

Still on his hands and knees, half crawling -- half writhing, he makes his tortuous way down the stairs and into the open yard.

Halfway to the gates, he collapses.

Then pulls himself up again on his elbows. His legs are now useless, but with his last strength, he inches forward.

The gates are not far.

THIEF
(struggling to speak)
Hey, you fuckers...look at
me...come'ere...look at this...

CUT TO:

EXT. GATE - NIGHT

A SENTRY at the gate hears something in the yard. He shakes himself awake and peers through the bars on the gate.

Nothing.

SENTRY
(calling to the tower)
Did you hear something?

EXT. GUARD TOWER - NIGHT

A GUARD throws his searchlight into the yard and looks around. He sees no one.

Below at the GATE, the SENTRY looks again.

SENTRY
I could've sworn...

Then to his horror the sentry finds himself almost face to face with the THIEF, who has pulled himself up to a standing position. His ghostly face framed between two bars.

Almost instinctively, he raises his gun and shoots the Thief in the face.

GUARD
(yelling down)
Did you get him?

Drawn by the gunshot, other SOLDIERS have rushed out to join the stunned GUARD. A thick black puddle of blood swells out below the gate.

SENTRY
The blood, the blood. Step back, it
could be infected!

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Illuminated by the spotlight, we can see a handful of INMATES have come to the top of the stairs to find out what's going on.

SERGEANT
(through the bullhorn)
FOUR OF YOU COME AND COLLECT THE
BODY. THE REST OF YOU GO BACK
INSIDE.

None of the blind people move.

BLACK

FADE UP ON:

INT. COURTYARD - MORNING

The FIRST BLIND MAN and the ASSISTANT PHARMACIST bury more bodies.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

A couple of BLIND MEN are fighting each other; the DOCTOR and his WIFE walk past, barely paying attention. She is carrying the thief's dirty sheets.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
He knew I could see--

DOCTOR
(quieting her)
Shhh.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
And I didn't do anything, when I
could've. He knew that.

DOCTOR
What are you talking about? You do
everything around here..

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I should be honest. Tell these
people. Maybe I can help.

DOCTOR
Sure and be their slave. Run
errands and fetch for them. I mean,
my God, it's bad enough as it is --

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I can handle it.

DOCTOR
I mean for us.

The Doctor's wife stops in her path.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Meaning what?

DOCTOR
You guiding me, cleaning me,
shaving me... It's hard enough to
think of you as...

His voice peters out.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
As what?

DOCTOR
As a wife. Instead of a nurse. Or a
mother.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(trying to hide her hurt)
Well, you'll have to get used to it
won't you? I don't have much
choice.

She starts to walk away

DOCTOR
Do not tell a soul.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE is scrubbing the sheets clean in one of the big, industrial double sinks, when she thinks she hears a sound. She turns off the taps.

Sure enough, improbable as it may seem, she can hear the faint sound of a radio dial shuffling station to station. It is coming from the pantry at the other side of the room.

Quietly she creeps across the floor and, mustering up her courage, flings open the pantry door.

Inside the cupboard, propped up against the wall, she finds the MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH. A transistor radio is glued to his ear.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
Would you happen to have an extra
bed in your dorm?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
We might have an opening.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
I have a radio.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

The residents of DORM #1 are all gathered around the MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH who stands holding the radio, like Moses delivering the commandments. A nostalgic Portuguese love song is playing and it seems like a miracle (*Madredeus*, perhaps). The INMATES are motionless, breathless. Some are moved to tears.

At the end of the song, the radio host says some indistinct words and plays a prerecorded intro to the news.

DOCTOR
What did he say?

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
He said it's a quarter to four.

HOTEL MAID
(joking)
Day or night?

The DOCTOR'S WIFE starts to wind her watch until she realizes that the sound of the winding has drawn the attention of the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES. She tries to laugh it off:

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Huh, instinctively I started
winding my watch...

DOCTOR
Quiet! We want to hear the news.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
Oh, you understand Portuguese?

Now that the tuning is a little better, we can hear that the radio host is indeed not speaking English. The DOCTOR is disappointed.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)

There's not as many stations as there used to be. But I guess, if you insist, I could give you an update. At least it would save on batteries.

DOCTOR

Please please.

He sits down on the late thief's bed and turns off the radio. The listeners form a tight circle around the man.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

In the first twenty-four hours there were hundreds of cases, or so the rumours said. All the same. No pain. A sea of white. But the government, in its wisdom, acted quickly...

FLASHBACK: INT. BOARDROOM, MINISTRY OF HEALTH. An emergency meeting.

MINISTER OF HEALTH

But we have nowhere to put them.

ADVISOR

(proud of himself)

There's the mental hospital. We closed it because of the cutbacks.

(NOTE: In the flashbacks that pepper this speech, all the characters will speak with the voice of the Man with the Black Eyepatch. It's as if he is acting out all the parts.)

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)

...and by the second day the numbers had dropped from hundreds to dozens. The government congratulated itself for nipping the problem in the bud. According to one expert...

FLASHBACK: TV. NEWS SPECIAL.

CELEBRATED SCIENTIST

Cases are not, as we originally thought, likely to swell and swell in quantities like a balloon. Science now likens the epidemic to an arrow shot in the air.

He holds up a graphic rendering of this hypothetical arrow.

CELEBRATED SCIENTIST (CONT'D)

The arrow reaches its highest point, pauses for a moment as if suspended and then drops precipitously, as gravity insists it must.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)

But, despite this excellent metaphor and the predictions of the scientific community, this didn't prove to be the case. Blindness spread, not like a tsunami, flooding everything, but like a thousand and one tiny streams which having drenched the earth, suddenly submerged it completely. By this point, the highest levels of government were involved -- the President himself -- and they of course responded by proposing a conference...

FLASHBACK: INT. BOARDROOM, MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

The MINISTER and his ADVISORS are now joined by the PRESIDENT and a GENERAL or two.

MINISTER

A massive international medical conference of opthomologists and neurologists.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

(over the boardroom flashback)

...But when it became clear that such a conference would take a while to organize they responded instead with...

FLASHBACK: MEETING ROOM, DOWNTOWN HOTEL. A boring looking seminar.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (V.O.)

seminars...

FLASHBACK: MEETING ROOM, A DIFFERENT HOTEL. A debate.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (V.O.)

debates...

FLASHBACK: CLASSROOM, UNIVERSITY. A round-table discussion.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (V.O.)
and round-table discussions. Some
open to the public, others behind
closed doors. The result of which
was to cause everyone, newspapers,
radio, and television, to rapidly
lose interest in such initiatives.

The image changes to the T.V. broadcast of the same round-table.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
Except in certain sensational
cases...

Suddenly a prominent ophthalmologist on the panel grabs his eyes and screams that he has just gone blind.

We return to DORM #1, in the present:

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
During this time, it should be
said, there were still several
charitable organizations offering
volunteers to assist the blind,
make their beds, prepare their
food. These people went blind
immediately, but at least their
gesture will go down in history.
Did any of them come here?

No one answers.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
Perhaps it was a rumor.

FIRST BLIND MAN
What about the roads and traffic?

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
Chaos, as usual. Then reports came
of a bus crash with twenty-three
casualties...

FLASHBACK: INT. BUS. The DRIVER grabs his eyes and screams.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
But that didn't stop anyone. Human
error, they said. It would've been
the same if the breaks had failed.
Then a second bus crashed...

FLASHBACK: INT. BUS. The vehicle goes careening out of control.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
And as it happens, in this case,
the breaks really had failed. But
rumour is more persuasive than
truth and the word went around that
the driver had gone blind. And
people were terrified. That same
day two planes collided...

FLASHBACK: TV. News broadcast showing charred remains and tangled wreckage.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
And the traffic problems were
solved...

FLASHBACK: STREETS, CITY. The once busy streets are now eerily efficient. What few pedestrians there are, scurry about, frantically avoiding each other.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)
After what they had seen and heard,
most people decided to stay home.

FLASHBACK: TV. EMERGENCY BROADCAST.

PRESIDENT
My fellow citizens, this is your
President speaking. Like so many of
you I have gone blind.

The INMATES listening to man with the black eyepatch are in a kind of catatonic reverie.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
Maybe we need some music after all.

He turns on the radio and starts searching again for a signal.

DOCTOR
You heard all that from reliable
sources?

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
It's a combination of what I heard
and what I saw with my own eyes...
eye, I should say. I only have one.
(MORE)

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (cont'd)
The good doctor here always wanted
to fit me with a glass one, but I
thought it was vanity.

DOCTOR
Guess you were right.

Some station is playing a familiar, popular love song.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Oh -- leave it there.

The melody plays and once again the entire room is affected.
The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES starts to weep. Some INMATES from
other wards appear at the door, drawn by the music. The MAN
WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH boosts the volume.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES (CONT'D)
(through her tears)
I never even liked this stupid
tune.

She puts her head on the DOCTOR'S shoulder and, for the
duration of the song, the two caress and comfort each other.
Nearby, the DOCTOR'S WIFE watches this intimate interchange,
and lets it be.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #3 - LATE AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON: TV MONITOR

The recorded announcement is playing for the umpteenth
time...

ANNOUNCER
Attention. Attention. Attention.
The government regrets having been
forced...

Until a chair goes flying into the TV and smashes the screen.

CUT TO:

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

The REBEL INMATES of Dorm #3 -- the self-appointed KING, the
ACCOUNTANT, and their thuggish COHORT -- have broken into the
office and commandeered the announcement system.

KING OF WARD THREE
(speaking into a
microphone)
Attention. Attention. Attention.
That's the last you're gonna hear
from that asshole.

His two henchmen cheer.

KING OF WARD THREE (CONT'D)
We've taken over this shithole. I'm
the King of Ward Three. And there's
gonna be some changes around here!

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - EARLY EVENING

Everyone has gathered, awaiting the delivery of dinner.
Instead, the ASSISTANT PHARMACIST and the HOTEL SECURITY
GUARD stumble into the room.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
They wouldn't let us have food!

FIRST BLIND MAN
Maybe they just "forgot" again like
yesterday's lunch.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
Not the soldiers, the blind.

POLICEMAN
We're all blind.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
From Ward Three.

HOTEL SECURITY GUARD
They say that from now on if we
want food we have to pay.

The ward erupts in protest -- What?! They can't do that! Who
are these people? Thieves! They're criminals!

TAXI-DRIVER
Fuck that! I say we just walk in
there and take what we deserve.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
Yeah, that won't be easy. There's
lots of them. And they're armed.

DOCTOR
What do you mean?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
We'll go in a group.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR/FOYER - DAY

A CIRCLE OF BLIND INMATES surround the food. Some carry bludgeons fashioned from bedsteads or broken furniture. Others carry long sticks -- curtain rods or broken base boards -- that they sweep before them in wide arcs.

Some INMATES from Ward #2 attempt to breach the circle, but are detected by the sweeping sticks and quickly beaten down.

They are soon joined by the emissaries from Ward #1, who try and break through, only to meet a similar defeat.

INMATES FROM #1 & #2
Give us our food! We have a right
to eat!

The KING OF WARD THREE stands in the middle of the circle. He climbs up on the food box, raises a handgun above his head and fires it. Plaster falls from the ceiling. Some INMATES scream in fear.

KING OF WARD THREE
Shut up! Shut your fuckin' mouths
or I will shoot straight ahead and
keep shooting till someone is hit.

This warning does the trick: the room is silent and still.

KING OF WARD THREE (CONT'D)
God you blind folks are stupid.
Screaming and crying like babies.
It makes me ashamed to be one of
you. Okay, it's like this. From now
on Ward Three is gonna take charge
of the food. And the rest of you --
if you wanna eat, you gotta pay for
it. Like in a store. Like in the
real world.

He pauses to let this sink in.

KING OF WARD THREE (CONT'D)

And like in the real world we're gonna guard our store, so don't even think of breaking in.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Pay with what?

KING OF WARD THREE

Excuse me, did I not say to shut up.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Explain your rules. Do we come one at a time or all together?

ACCOUNTANT FROM WARD THREE

(to his leader)

Please shoot her. One less mouth to feed.

KING OF WARD THREE

If I had eyes, she'd be dead already.

(to the rest of the inmates)

When we got the food locked up safe, we'll let you know the rules. In the meantime go back to your wards and get your money ready.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

You know we have no money.

KING OF WARD THREE

Then whatever you got, lady -- jewelry, watches, electronic shit. Whatever you think we might like.

A MEEK INMATE from Ward Two pipes in.

MEEK INMATE

Sir, excuse me, but how much is it for a meal?

KING OF WARD THREE

Well, gee I dunno. Why don't you just hand over everything you got and we'll see what you deserve. And by the way, I do not recommend that you cheat. Hide a single thing, and it will cost you dear.

(MORE)

KING OF WARD THREE (cont'd)
We're gonna do a little inspection
after just to make sure. Now go.

He fires another shot into the ceiling. The crowd starts to disperse.

HOODLUM
(to The Doctor's Wife)
Oh, and lady -- I won't forget your voice.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
And I won't forget your face.

The KING laughs at her absurd comment.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

Angry, frustrated and depressed the INMATES sit on their beds or slumped against the walls. Some -- like the wraithlike character in the corner, the WOMAN WITH INSOMNIA -- are already defeated, collecting their valuables and removing their jewelry. Others are stubbornly defiant. An announcement plays over the glum scene:

HOOLIGAN
(over the P.A. system)
Two people from each ward will be chosen to collect the valuables and bring them directly to Ward Three. If we like what we get, you'll receive food. Warning: do not cheat!

DOCTOR
We have no choice. They have weapons.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
Oh man, this is wrong. I say we stick together and all say no.

TAXI-DRIVER
He's right. I'm not gonna give up my stuff just cause some nigger says so--

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
We don't know what race he is--

TAXI-DRIVER

I can tell by his voice!

(NOTE: The Taxi-driver is wrong.)

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST

The point is they can't shoot us all.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Even some of us would be a problem. These people are criminals.

DOCTOR

She's right. It's not worth fighting. Not for a bunch of jewelry and watches we can't use anyway.

There is general groaning agreement from the room.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I'll collect.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I'll get a bag.

She searches for the plastic bag of odds and ends that she has been storing under the bed. She dumps it out on her mattress.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

No one has to pay, if they don't want to, but don't expect to be fed at the expense of the rest of us.

In the middle of her pile of things the DOCTOR'S WIFE finds a forgotten object -- a sharp pair of scissors.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

Some of us don't have much to give.

As he says this, the MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH tucks his radio deep under his mattress.

DOCTOR

Well, give what you have. "To each according to his abilities" and all that.

The Doctor's wife gives her husband the bag and helps him remove his watch and wedding ring. Behind her back, she holds on tight to the scissors.

The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES pulls out a great deal of jewelry, cosmetics, and assorted glitzy knickknacks.

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
I don't have anything.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Don't worry. I'll be like your mom -
- I'll pay for us both.

The DOCTOR arrives with the collection bag and the Woman tosses in the entire contents of her purse.

DOCTOR
Is that everything? I think we better.

FIRST BLIND MAN
I'll help collect.

The FIRST BLIND MAN starts by removing the rings from his wife's hand. His blindness saves him from her look of utter disgust and defeat.

Without saying a word, the Doctor's wife retreats to the far wall and surveys the room: the weeping HOTEL MAID unclasping a crucifix from around her neck. A DESPERATE WOMAN furtively stuffing a silver lighter into her shoe.

Above her on the wall, the Doctor's wife spots some nails that had been hammered in to support paintings long since removed. Reaching up, she hangs the scissors on the highest nail.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR/DORMATORY #3 - DAY

The INMATES of Ward Three may be violent thugs, but they are organized. A bed has been tipped over on its side and pushed against the door to form a kind of sales counter. Behind it, the ACCOUNTANT works, assessing and recording the value of the offerings from Ward Two.

ACCOUNTANT
(summarizing his findings)
Good enough.

The KING OF WARD THREE steps forward with three cartons of food for the EMISSARIES FROM WARD TWO, two cowering men who have been waiting on the corridor side of the counter.

EMISSARY FROM WARD TWO

(meekly)

But this is only three. We normally
get four cartons when we go by
ourselves--

KING OF WARD THREE

(cutting the man off)

But today you get three. And if you
keep whining you'll get two. Any
objections?

Resigned to their lot, the two men leave, grumbling to
themselves. Down the corridor, they pass the DOCTOR and the
FIRST BLIND MAN who have been waiting to deliver their loot
bags.

The Doctor feels his way to the door.

DOCTOR

We're from the first ward.

The Doctor goes to enter the room, but immediately runs into
the upturned bed.

KING OF WARD THREE

The first ward. Let's see what
riches the first ward has to offer.

(to the Accountant)

Check it out, my friend.

The Doctor is somewhat puzzled by this turn of phase. Who
among the blind is equipped to "check" anything out?

The Doctor hands over his bags and listens carefully as the
Accountant sorts through the merchandise and meticulously
takes inventory. The King leaves to get some food cartons.
When he is away, a curious sound catches the Doctor's ear --
chic chic chic. Metal perforating paper. Someone is using a
braille punch.

DOCTOR

You're blind.

ACCOUNTANT

No kidding.

DOCTOR

You're a normal blind person.

The Accountant is found out: he stops work.

KING OF WARD THREE

He was born blind. But that doesn't make him normal. That makes him supernormal. In the kingdom of the blind that makes him a superhero. So you best watch your ass--

DOCTOR

(appealing to the accountant)

You were born blind. You of all people should understand empathy and human compassion--

The King interrupts the Doctor by cocking his handgun and pressing it against the Doctor's neck.

KING OF WARD THREE

Shut the fuck up. He's blind. That doesn't make him good or bad. It just makes him blind. And now he's blind with a purpose, cause he's looking out for the sick and the hungry in his own ward. Charity starts at home. So fuck off with the sermon, take your food and get out. And say thank-you for what you got. Understand?

DOCTOR

I understand.

KING OF WARD THREE

Then say thank-you.

DOCTOR

(through clenched teeth)

Thank-you.

The gun goes down. The Doctor picks up the food and skulks off down the corridor, with the first blind man following.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

The Doctor sits at dinner, brooding. He listens to his wife open the packages, prepare the food, cut the servings into bite-sized pieces. The BOY sitting beside him seems to have acclimatized himself to his blindness better than he. The boy is more self-sufficient, more useful.

The Doctor feels his wife put a juice box in his hand, guide his other hand to the straw, lift the box. She wipes his mouth when he's had a sip: he slaps her hand away.

CUT TO:

INT. REFECTORY - EVENING

The DOCTOR is alone at a table, facing the windows that open onto the courtyard. The unappetizing room is otherwise empty, except for a handful of FILTHY INMATES who grub about under the tables.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

(entering)

Doctor? Are you here?

DOCTOR

I'm here. Over here. Here. Here...

He keeps talking until the woman, guided by his voice, is at his side.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

I brought you a little food. The boy couldn't finish. You need to eat.

DOCTOR

I can't. This place is like a toilet.

The woman sits down beside the Doctor.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

It's not your fault. You did everything you could.

DOCTOR

No, I didn't. I had a chance back there. That son of a bitch put his gun to my neck.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

Exactly--

DOCTOR

No. I could have grabbed it.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

No no, too risky.

DOCTOR

Not as much as it seems. I knew where the gun was, right? But he had no idea where my hands were.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

And then what?

DOCTOR

What?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

If you got the gun would you have shot him? You think you could've done that?

The Doctor seriously ponders the question.

DOCTOR

...I don't know.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

If you didn't kill him it would've been way worse. It would've started a war for sure. A real war.

DOCTOR

Right. I'll pretend I'd thought that through.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

And it's not easy. It's not easy knowing that you took a person's life. That you're responsible for that. Like I am.

The Doctor breaks down and puts his head in his hands. The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES sidles closer, seeking to comfort and find comfort.

DOCTOR

Oh god, what are we turning into?

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - NIGHT

The DOCTOR has joined the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES in her bed. Gently, almost mournfully, they kiss and make love.

Across the room, against the wall the DOCTOR'S WIFE is sitting, watching.

She tries to remain calm and put things in perspective, imagine the terror these two have endured, but nevertheless the sight is profoundly hurtful.

The SCISSORS hang on the nail above her head. No one else in the ward is awake, except for the WOMAN WITH INSOMNIA, who is sitting upright in bed with her eyes wide open.

Muffled cries of pleasure.

The Doctor's wife can bear it no longer. She reaches up for the scissors...and leaves the room.

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

She crosses the moonlit rotunda to the front doors and pauses to consider her course of action. Perhaps she will pay a midnight visit to the thugs in Ward Three. Instead, she steps outside.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

She sits on the front steps.

Across the yard on the tower, the lone guard spots her. He turns the searchlight in her direction.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE doesn't move. The bright white light burns in her eyes. It shimmers off the scissors in her hand.

IN THE TOWER: The GUARD watches, staring down this defiant internee. He reaches over to pick up his rifle, refocuses the light...but the woman is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMATORY #1 - NIGHT

Still in bed, the Doctor pulls away from the Woman with dark glasses, disentangling himself, suddenly ashamed.

DOCTOR
(hushed)
Forgive me...

He starts to get up, but a HAND touches his chest and rests there with the lightness of a bird.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Don't say anything. It'll be easier
for me to understand.

The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES starts to cry.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
(to the Doctor)
I wanted it too. I needed it. It's
not your fault...

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(gently)
Be quiet. Let's all be quiet.

She stretches her arm over the couple, as if gathering them
in the same embrace, and leans close to the girl's ear.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I...can...see...

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
I knew that. At least I think I
knew...

The DOCTOR'S WIFE lifts her legs onto the bed.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Shhh...it's our secret...

She closes her eyes and curls in beside her husband, her arm
still around the other woman. Her other hand gently slips the
scissors under the pillow.

For a brief suspended moment the entire dorm -- the entire
complex -- seems to be at peace.

Or at least, asleep.

BLACK

HOOLIGAN (V.O.)
It's been a week or something, and
you losers have nothing left to
offer, so we at Ward Three came up
with a new plan: Bring us your
women...

FADE UP ON:

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON: The HOOLIGAN'S mouth, speaking into the mike --

HOOLIGAN
Women for food.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - DAY

A full-scale shouting match. EVERYONE is on their feet, talking over everyone else, banging their beds, thumping their feet, gesticulating violently in random directions.

HOTEL MAID
I'm not going, but if I did go, it would be for myself and not for these men who have their own women. And not for the men who I have nothing to do with! If I wanted to I could go and just move in with those bastards -- get provided for, but I have some dignity thank you...!

TAXI-DRIVER
(simultaneously)
Nobody's asking you to go.
Certainly not the men from this ward, so don't blame us!

HOTEL MAID
I gave myself to you out of pity and now you think I'm a goddamn whore.

TAXI-DRIVER
What's that supposed to mean?
"Pity"?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
No one's calling anyone a whore.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST
Wait, wait -- she brings up a good point: We should ask, I think, if there're any volunteers. If there are any they should say so now.

This last suggestion effectively silences the room.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
"Volunteers"?

HOTEL MAID

"Volunteers"? What are you talking about?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

Haw many volunteers would we have if they'd said send us your men?

Again the room is silent.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST

It's not the same--

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

Oh really?

The ASSISTANT PHARMACIST can't seem to think of a good way to explain the distinction.

POLICEMAN

He was just asking for volunteers in the same way that they'd ask for volunteers if we were going off to war. This is war. If we don't eat, we're gonna die. Nobody wants to go to war -- but they do.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

The room explodes again in angry debate, only to be silenced by two quiet words from the WOMAN WITH INSOMNIA:

WOMAN WITH INSOMNIA

I'll go.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE looks over in surprise at the haggard, desperately frail, older woman who has just offered herself.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I'll go with her.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

Me too.

RECEPTIONIST

Me too.

Silence.

FIRST BLIND MAN

Well, you do what you like, but my wife is going nowhere. Dignity has no price. We'd rather starve.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST

Doctor?

DOCTOR

What? Are you asking me to give a deliberation here?

(He laughs to himself)

Obviously I'd also prefer for my wife not to go, but that's her decision. If she's prepared to do it, my pride, my "male pride" -- if such a thing still exists -- will suffer, but what choice do we have? Everyone should make their own decision based on whatever morals they have left.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(to the First Blind Man)

Nobody knows how many women there are here. You can keep yours for your exclusive use. We'll feed you both. I look forward to some lectures on dignity at that point.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

I wonder how it'll taste, the food we serve you.

FIRST BLIND MAN

That's not the point...

He is prepared to continue, but, for the first time in recent memory, his wife interrupts:

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

I'm no different than the rest.
I'll do what they do.

FIRST BLIND MAN

You'll do what I say.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

Don't order me.

FIRST BLIND MAN

It's disgusting.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
From now on you don't eat.

The room is shocked by the sudden brutality of the woman's declaration. The HOTEL MAID breaks into an inappropriate laugh...

HOTEL MAID
Poor guy...what's he supposed to do?

But the laughter quickly devolves into tears.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
How long do we wait before they come and get us?

CUT TO:

LATER.

Everyone sits on their beds or in their spot against the wall, waiting.

The MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH lies in bed with the radio to his ear, a pillow over the radio.

The ANNOUNCER'S voice is waning, the radio's batteries dying. In the middle of the broadcast there is a thud and a frantic commotion.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
...I'm Blind.

The radio goes dead. The Man with the Black Eyepatch waits a few moments, just in case, then drops the radio to the floor. He pulls the blanket over his head.

Finally, the ACCOUNTANT arrives at the door with two other THUGS FROM WARD THREE.

THUG #1
Good evening.

ACCOUNTANT
How many ladies?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Six.

HOTEL MAID
Seven.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE glances over at the terrified young woman.

THUG #1
Only seven?

ACCOUNTANT
Well, you seven will have to do
double duty tonight.

The THUGS laugh.

ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
If any of you are on the rag we
don't want you. We'll save it for
next time.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
No one's on the rag.

ACCOUNTANT
Well then, get yourselves all
gussied up and come over when
you're ready. We'll be waiting. The
food will follow, if we're happy.
Here's a bit of bread to tide you
over.

He tosses a bag of bread into the room and then exits with
his comrades.

No one moves to pick up the bag.

The Doctor's Wife looks over to see the scissors, once again
hanging from the nail.

She looks around at the other woman, shivering in their
private fear. This time she is one of them.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I'll lead the way.

The scissors will stay behind.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDORS/FOYER - NIGHT

The WOMEN walk single file down the corridor. They pass the
entrance hall that opens onto the yard. Just to get some
fresh air, the DOCTOR'S WIFE opens a door. The night is cold
and exceptionally black.

HOTEL MAID

There's no point trying to run. The guards are there.

WOMAN WITH INSOMNIA

At least it would be faster. We'd be dead before we knew it.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Come on...

She gives her arm to the exhausted woman, who looks like she might collapse any moment.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

No one's going to die...not by choice.

They turn down the dark hallway that leads to Dorm #3.

At the far end, a BLIND GUARD sits on a chair in the middle of the hall, sweeping the terrazzo floor with a long stick.

The mounting sounds of shuffling feet and suppressed tears, apprise him that the women are on their way.

BLIND GUARD

(to the men inside the ward)

They're coming! They're coming!

Cheers and laughter from within.

A couple of unseen BLIND MEN slide the toppled bed from in front of the entrance; it swings back like a prison gate.

The WOMEN have indeed arrived. The blind guard gropes and shoves them through the door, counting them as they pass. The KING steps forward out of the shadows to receive his prey.

KING OF WARD THREE

Ladies. Come in. Don't be afraid.
We're here to love you...not to hurt you...

INT. DORMITORY #3 - NIGHT

Huddled together in a clump the WOMEN advance forward. The room is almost completely without light, but at the far end the shadowy figures of BLIND MEN can be discerned, congregating around the beds.

One woman breaks down in a stuttering choke.

KING OF WARD THREE
Stop crying bitch.

Coaly darkness swallows the women.

KING OF WARD THREE (CONT'D)
Get over here, all of you... Now
strip down and get in a line. I
want you all in order from cold to
hot. Get the hottest, sexiest
bitches up front here where I can
feel them. Not you baby -- this
one's like a cold fish. See if
someone can wake her up.

Male laughter. A woman is pulled from the group. Clothes are
ripped. All we can see is the ghostly luminescence of exposed
flesh. The rest is only voices --

KING OF WARD THREE (CONT'D)
Alright, this is more like it. A
little on the mature side but...you
like that? That's right -- it's my
gun.

(He laughs.)
And what about you...stop
whimpering... you should be up at
the front. You're nice. Feels good.
You're gonna be my number one
tonight. Are you blonde? -- Don't
answer. Stop whimpering, I don't
wanna hear your voice. Tonight's
your lucky night. Tonight you're
gonna be blonde. And tanned. With a
perfect little fuckin' smile.
That's right, tonight you're a
movie star. Get down on your knees.

Sound of: Crying, grunting. A woman screams.

KING OF WARD THREE (CONT'D)
SHUT THAT BITCH UP! Get down on
your knees. You. You too. Down with
your friend. You feel that? That's
my hands on your throat. You feel
that?

Sound of: Choking. Tortured moaning. Another scream.

KING OF WARD THREE (CONT'D)
Get to work.

At some point maybe the image started fading, so gradually it was impossible to notice. In any case the image is now completely black. Nothing is visible.

Black.

But the sounds continue.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMATORY #1 - NIGHT

Motionless, helpless, the MEN wait at the door. All except the FIRST BLIND MAN who lies in his bed, with his blanket over his head.

LATER:

Down the hall, cries and moans can be heard of the women returning. The men hold their positions. The women enter carrying the limp form of the WOMAN WITH INSOMNIA.

LATER:

The WOMEN bruised and dishevelled, are bunched together in the corner. They clean themselves, as best they can, with water from a plastic bag. The MEN have still not moved.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(angry)

Someone go get the food.

After a moment, two men rise, the DOCTOR and the MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH. With bowed heads, they shuffle towards the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

The ACCOUNTANT walks the halls as if he owns them. Two THUGS clear the way for him in advance, yelling: MOVE, MOVE, OUT OF THE WAY, MOVE. They are heading to Ward Two.

Upon arrival, the ACCOUNTANT finds the door:

ACCOUNTANT

Women from Ward Two, tonight's the night. How many do we have?

CUT TO:

INT. DORMATORY #1 - DAY

The mood is, understandably, bleak. The BOY WITH THE SQUINT is slumped against the wall with his knees against his chest.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(to the boy)

Hi. Are you okay? Would you like another story?

The boy nods. The DOCTOR'S WIFE sits down beside him.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

How about the one about the boy and the magic beans? Do you like that one?

The boy nods again.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

All right. This is the story about a brave boy, just like you, who ended up killing a giant ten times his size...

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #2 - DAY

The WOMEN from the second ward have been lined up by the THUGS from Ward Three and tied together with torn bed sheets. The MEN OF WARD TWO try and keep out of trouble.

THUG #1

Is that it? We have everyone? Don't want some poor lady to miss out. Alright then, move it! Let's go!

The thugs, like cattle drivers, herd the coffle out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMATORY #1 - DAY

The women of Ward #2 can be heard down the corridor, wailing and crying on their way to Ward Three. The ACCOUNTANT decides to make a surprise visit before joining his mates at the orgy.

ACCOUNTANT

(strolling into the room)

Good afternoon ladies. Have you recovered from our fun the other night?

The DOCTOR'S WIFE has stopped telling her story; her hatred for this intruder is barely containable. She can hardly look at him.

ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

I just wanted to drop in, in case you're feeling jealous. I wanted you to know that even though it's not your day today, our hearts are still with you. You menfolk should be proud of your ladies. Well, one of them was kind of a dead fish, but the rest of them performed like pros.

The Doctor's Wife can't hold her silence:

DOCTOR'S WIFE

There's only six of us now.

ACCOUNTANT

What? One of you fucked off?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

No great loss. She was kind of a dead fish.

The ACCOUNTANT, and the entire room, is taken aback by the brutality and callousness of the comment.

ACCOUNTANT

(His bravado gone.)

See you next time.

He leaves. The dorm is bristling with rage and frustration.

BOY WITH THE SQUINT

(tentatively)

And then what happened?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

The rest of the story will have to wait.

She stands, walks directly across the room and plucks the SCISSORS from the nail.

She goes to her husband, leans down and kisses him on the top of his head.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I won't be long.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

She strides down the corridor, scissors in hand.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #3. - DAY

She arrives at the door and stares in at the obscene spectacle. She steels herself for action.

Quietly, but with determination, she enters and crosses the floor.

WOMEN are being raped on all sides -- the sounds alone are profoundly disturbing -- but the DOCTOR'S WIFE doesn't stop to look. She keeps her eye on her target -- the KING OF WARD THREE.

The ACCOUNTANT is pulling a woman down on his bed. As the DOCTOR'S WIFE passes, he pauses -- her footsteps are unusually confident and clear.

The King of Ward Three sits in a chair with a woman between his legs. He is moaning; his head thrown back.

The Doctor's wife goes up behind him and raises the scissors. Just as she's about to strike, the man's eyes open.

The Doctor's wife drives the scissors into his throat and pulls back, dragging the man and the chair ten feet across the floor.

The traumatized woman who had been servicing the man begins to scream, but is quickly silenced by a hand over her mouth.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(whispering into her ear)
Don't say a word.

The ACCOUNTANT, meanwhile, has found the body of the King.. He searches for the man's gun.

The Doctor's wife guides the traumatized woman to the door.

ACCOUNTANT

Stop! I know you're here.

The Doctor's wife turns. Now everyone in the room is aware that something is happening. WOMEN push the MEN off of them.

ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

You can't get away with this.

Some men cower, now scared themselves; others wrestle their women to the ground with new determination.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

You don't even know who I am.

ACCOUNTANT

I know your voice. Just try and say another word.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Your dead friend said the same thing--

The Accountant SHOOTs for the voice -- and misses.

Pandemonium. Everywhere, the WOMEN extricate themselves from their rapists and crawl, stumble towards the exit, or in some cases in the exact wrong direction. The Doctor's wife doubles back to help.

ACCOUNTANT

Don't let them get away!

Slashing with the scissors, the Doctor's Wife opens a path to the door, through the grasping men.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Lead by the DOCTOR'S WIFE the WOMEN escape down the hall. The ACCOUNTANT runs out after them.

ACCOUNTANT

That's it ladies -- NO MORE FOOD!

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(calling back)
Every day we go without food, one
of your men will die. We'll collect
from now on.

The Accountant fires again, down the hall. The women scurry
off, but the Doctor's wife holds her ground.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
You missed.

INT. HOSPITAL DORMITORY - EVENING

The news has already made it down to Ward #1. Everyone is on
their feet.

THE DOCTOR addresses his wife as she enters.

DOCTOR
They're saying a man was killed.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
There was. Yes. I killed him.

The INMATES take in this momentous news.

DOCTOR
Will you have to kill again?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
If I have to.

DOCTOR
There's going to be a battle, I
know it. A war. I think we should
barricade the door with the beds,
like they did. And post guards at
all times.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Whatever you say, but first we get
the food.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL FOYER - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE is waiting for the food delivery. She is joined by the TAXI DRIVER and the ASSISTANT PHARMACIST, who are acting like sentries, sweeping the floor with long sticks to detect enemies.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL YARD - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE has given up waiting. She is outside now, yelling to the GUARDS in the tower.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

What's going on? We haven't eaten in three days!

GUARD

If there's no food, that's because there's no food. Is that clear? So go back inside or I'll be forced to take measures.

The Doctor's wife stares back at the tower in disbelief.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - NIGHT

It's later: the WARD is exhausted, half-starved, huddled behind the barricaded doors. The MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH sits on his bed, tying a knot in a string.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

When they miss meals I'm lost.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

We all are. We'll figure it out somehow.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

What I mean is, it's the only way I keep track of the time and the days passing. I tie a knot for each day.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

You know how many days it's been?

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

That many.

He holds up the string: it is a jumble of knots upon knots.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH (CONT'D)

Four days without food.

Just then, all the power goes off.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

The lights are out.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYE PATCH

Now you're as blind as the rest of us. Just when we needed your eyes.

He nods to the DOCTOR'S WIFE; he knows her secret. Then he stands and addresses the room.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

Look, if the food won't come, I say we get it ourselves. I bet they still have some stored up in Ward Three.

RECEPTIONIST

They'll fight us. It's like a fortress. And they still have a gun.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH

It's either that or a slow death.

FIRST BLIND MAN

It'll be a faster death over there, if we try and attack them.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

Either we go now, or I'm going to lie down on my bed and let myself die.

DOCTOR

Everyone who wants to go, raise their hand.

A few people hesitantly put up their hands.

The DOCTOR starts to laugh at the absurdity of his voting system. The others join in.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

All right, how about this? If you don't want to go, just creep away. Anonymously. No one will even know you were here. The rest of you, please, stick around, let's make a plan.

Some people back away into the shadows. One of them is the DESPERATE WOMAN, who now has manic look in her eyes.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Is that it? How many of us are left?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Eleven. And don't ask me how I know. It's because I can see.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR TO DORMITORY #3. - NIGHT

The DESPERATE WOMAN who snuck away, weaves her way down the corridor. She is clutching something tightly with both hands.

Behind the barricaded door, the ACCOUNTANT is on sentry duty.

ACCOUNTANT

Is somebody there?

Without taking another step, the WOMAN crouches down to the floor. She continues to advance on hands and knees, careful not to drop her secret weapon -- a lighter.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL DORMITORY. - NIGHT

The STRIKE FORCE from Ward One strips metal support bars from the beds and builds an arsenal of weapons.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL DORMITORY #3. - NIGHT

The DESPERATE WOMAN has made it to the barricade that blocks the entrance to the ward. She feels around till she finds the corner of a mattress and flicks on her lighter.

ACCOUNTANT

I know you're fucking there.

The ACCOUNTANT looms out over the barricade with the gun in his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The DOCTOR'S WIFE leads the troops. Behind her the DOCTOR, the WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES, the MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH, the FIRST BLIND MAN and his WIFE form an advancing phalanx, marching shoulder to shoulder off to Ward Three. They are armed with makeshift weapons, steeled for battle.

The sound of a GUN SHOT stops them. Then there are shouts.

Then the smell...

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Smoke.

CUT TO:

INT. WARD THREE - NIGHT

The barricade is now a massive bonfire blocking the only exit. The ACCOUNTANT and his COHORTS are in a panic, shouting, climbing the walls. Someone tries to put the fire out with a sheet and succumbs to the flames himself. The sheet, in turn, draws back as if alive and billows the fire into the room.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR/FOYER - NIGHT

Panicky, disoriented INMATES flood the halls, rushing, stumbling in every direction. The DOCTOR'S WIFE leads her gang to the foyer. She points them to the door and runs back inside.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY #1 - NIGHT

The DOCTOR'S WIFE rushes in to find INMATES she can still assist. Passing the Dorm she sees the BOY WITH THE SQUINT.

Most others in the room are too weak or infirm to move. Smoke pours in from the hall.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL YARD - NIGHT

The whole building is glowing with fire. Flames lick through the dormitory windows as they shatter one by one.

The GANG, reunited with the BOY and the DOCTOR'S WIFE, make it out to the centre of the entrance walk, in clear view of the guard towers.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

They'll shoot us.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(calling up to the towers)

WHERE ARE YOU? GUARDS? DO YOU SEE
WHAT'S GOING ON?

There is no response. No sign of life in the towers, on the ramparts, behind the walls.

The Doctor's wife bravely walks right up to the gates.

Then she pushes them open. They are unlocked.

The Doctor's wife looks back at her friends, backlit by their burning prison.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

We're free. We're free.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GATES - DAY

Morning comes.

The GROUP is huddled together on the street. The DOCTOR'S WIFE is the first to stir. She looks around at her filthy, hungry, and nearly naked companions.

The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES wakes next. She reaches around, touching the warm sleeping bodies around her. She touches the Doctor's wife and smiles, remembering where she is.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(whispering)
We have to get some food. And
shelter.

The Woman with dark glasses nods in agreement and whispers
back:

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Somewhere far away from here.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Hand in hand, the GROUP wanders down the street, into this
strange, new world.

The streets are empty of cars and people -- except for the
occasional BLIND PEDESTRIAN, scuttling about like an undersea
creature. Litter is strewn everywhere. A HAGGARD WOMAN
crouches on the side walk to pee. Nearby a couple of ELDERLY
MEN sleep huddled together, unaware that the sun is up.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE is overwhelmed by the enormity of what she
sees: it seems that society has been erased and a new breed
of man is evolving before her eyes -- the Blind. She is a
relic of the past.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMERCIAL STRIP - DAY

The GROUP walks on through a shopping district that now
resembles a ghost town. On both sides of the street, shop
windows are broken, stores are emptied, scattered refuse is
abandoned in drifts on the sidewalk.

Nowhere does there seem to be any promise of food.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE gathers the group under the awning of an
abandoned cake shop.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Everyone, I'm going to go out and
look for food.

DOCTOR
I'll come with you.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(no nonsense)

It's something I can do better by myself. You stay here, take care of each other. That's something you can do better...

She looks at the group -- the Doctor and the Woman with Dark Glasses. She feels like an outsider.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

And listen, there're other groups out there. So if someone approaches you, you tell them this place is occupied, okay? Do not leave this spot.

She starts to go.

DOCTOR

(calling after her)

I'm sure you can find food better by yourself, there's no question -- But can you carry it back?

The Doctor's wife hesitates.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE ventures alone into the eerie, derelict showroom -- shelves are bare, displays toppled.

She moves on past the food section: anything edible has long since been pilfered. Scattered refuse, discarded packaging is all that remains.

Finally, she finds something useful: the clothing section. The selection is meagre, but still the discovery of clean, new clothes on hangers is a miracle. An echo of her former life. Carefully and with some care she starts collecting shirts and pants, for men and women. When she is startled by a voice:

MAN IN THE STORE

(aggressively)

Wadda you want?

The Doctor's wife turns to see a bedraggled, middle-aged man emerging from behind a heap of fallen mannequins. She approaches him cautiously, as one would a stray dog.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I'm looking for food. We haven't eaten in four days. Do you know where I can find some?

MAN IN THE STORE

(barking back)

If I knew, do you think I'd tell you? Get out! My group's here. I'm not alone. Get out!

The Doctor's wife leaves, with her arms full of clothes.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET/BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

It appears the DOCTOR came along after all. And a good thing too -- his arms are piled with clothes. He wanders along like a pack mule beside his WIFE who leads him by the hand. She peers into every store they pass, hoping to spot something edible.

DOCTOR

What about water? I don't imagine there's running water.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I'll look for bottles.

DOCTOR

Or electricity.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

No.

DOCTOR

There must be a government out there somewhere, trying to solve this mess...

As evidence, the state of the city doesn't support this supposition. The streets are busier in this neighbourhood. Groups of BLIND PEOPLE in mismatched clothes wander about in tight clumps.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

No remnants of human society?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

There's still society. Just no one with vision.

DOCTOR

Or if they can see, they're keeping
it to themselves.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Exactly.

Eventually, the pair come across an upscale butcher shop. The Doctor's wife looks in the window. The cases are empty, but there are still a number of SCAVENGERS scouring the shelves. Maybe there are still some remnants of packaged food.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

I'm going in.

DOCTOR

I'll wait here. I know my place.

As a parting gesture, the Doctor's wife caresses her husband's face.

She goes in.

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

The air is fetid; the DOCTOR'S WIFE puts her hand over her face.

Inside it's clear there are more people than it seemed. The BLIND are everywhere, crawling on all fours, sweeping the filth for something salvageable.

The Doctor's wife navigates her way through to the back. A narrow corridor behind the counter leads to a metal door. Behind the door, a staircase to the basement.

The Doctor's wife reaches for the light switch. It doesn't work, but she descends anyway, into the dark, dark cellar.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

Suddenly the DOCTOR'S WIFE is gripped with fear. Crouching low, she inches forward, feeling for something, anything. Seeing nothing. It is impenetrably dark. Black.

We hear her bang something metal, a shelving unit? Shuffle forward, hands along the metal, bottles clanging, boxes, tins. A rattle to the floor, and something is scattered.

Rustling. Scratch.

A match lights the cellar: the Doctor's wife is in a storeroom filled with treasures: preserves, sausages, canned goods. One particular little sausage looks so enticing, she has to break it open and eat some right there.

With renewed strength, she grabs some plastic bags from the floor and starts filling them with produce.

CUT TO:

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

The DOCTOR'S WIFE is now carrying several bags stuffed with supplies. Gently, she closes the door to the cellar.

Just then a figure enters the narrow corridor.

SCAVENGER

What do you have there? What are you eating? Smells like meat.

He grabs for the Doctor's wife. She pushes him away and slides by him into the store.

The ruckus has alerted everyone in the store to the fact that there is a stranger in their midst, bearing food. They lunge at her blindly.

The Doctor's wife is forced to fight her way through them to the door. She pushes many to the ground and pries their fingers loose as they clutch at her clothes, moaning in hunger, shrieking in desperation.

She is almost at the door when a HULKING SCAVENGER steps in her path: "Give it to me, give it to me." He grabs her wrist and twists her to the floor. The rest of the HORDE closes in, from all corners.

Suddenly, the DOCTOR enters and pushes the man aside.

DOCTOR

Leave her alone! Honey, give me your hand.

But the rest of the scavengers are still coming. A particularly aggressive one grabs at the food bags and rips one away from the Doctor's wife. It scatters on the floor and immediately the scavengers pounce on it like jackals. The contents are strewn about like entrails, rummaged through and clawed.

The distraction is enough to allow the Doctor to help his wife outside. She clutches the remaining bags to her chest.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUTCHER SHOP/STREET - DAY

For the first time since the White Plague struck, the DOCTOR is leading his wife. The episode in the store has left her severely shaken -- she is panting; her legs are trembling. But she trudges on, half running, eager to find a place of refuge. Without her husband's arm on her shoulder doubtless she would collapse.

Finally she does, on the curbside, with the food bags at her feet. The Doctor crouches down to comfort her.

DOCTOR

All right, you're all right. You're safe now. We both are. Now stay here, I'm just going to go back and get the clothes while I still remember where they are.

The Doctor's wife nods.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Ok. Go.

He goes. Alone now, the Doctor's wife looks around to get her bearings. The city is filthy and already it seems to be decaying. To the left, two mangy DOGS are fighting over a pile of garbage. Or is it a corpse.

The Doctor's wife starts to cry.

It starts to rain.

The raindrops mix with her tears.

One of the fighting DOGS spots the DOCTOR'S WIFE. Perhaps the sight of the upset woman rekindles some memory of domestic contentment in the animal, some sympathy for humankind. In any case, meekly, with his head lowered, the DOG sidles up to the woman and offers its head for a pat.

The Doctor's wife accepts the offer. She gives the dog a hug. The dog, in return, licks the tears from her face.

DOCTOR

Give me your hand. It's starting to rain.

The Doctor has returned with the clothes. His hand is offered to his wife.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAKE SHOP/STREET - DAY

The rain patters gently on the canvas shop awning. The BLIND TRAVELLERS are huddled underneath.

WOMAN WITH THE DARK GLASSES

I love the sound of rain.

She steps out onto the sidewalk and lifts her face to allow the rain to fall on her tired, dirty skin.

WOMAN WITH THE DARK GLASSES (CONT'D)

It's beautiful.

Soon the WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN joins her in the street.

The rain shower swells.

The Wife of the First Blind Man opens her tattered shirt to feel the cleansing rain. It is like a gift from heaven.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The DOCTOR is still supporting his WIFE as the two of them make their way back to the group. The DOG OF TEARS tags along behind them.

They pass an imposing old cathedral, a pack of SCAVENGERS huddle in the door, drawn out by the rain. A statue stands in the yard nearby. The Doctor's wife looks up -- someone, somehow has tied a white scarf around the Virgin Mary's eyes, a blindfold.

DOCTOR

Let's pick up the pace.

It's pouring.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAKE SHOP/STREET - DAY

The entire GANG is in the street now, with their arms open to the welcome rain. Clothes have been tossed aside. For the first time in a very long time, everyone seems happy. Spinning, laughing, rejoicing in the rain.

By the time the DOCTOR and his WIFE arrive (followed by the DOG OF TEARS), the GROUP has been joined by other BLIND PEOPLE, strangers. They are still coming, emerging from shop doorways and between buildings.

The Doctor's wife looks up to see others on the balconies and rooftops, many with pots and pails to catch the welcome rain. The sight is revivifying.

The WOMAN WITH THE DARK GLASSES is in the centre of the celebrations. The Doctor's wife runs up to her.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

It's me. I'm back.

They embrace.

CUT TO:

INT. CAKE SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON.

The GROUP sits together on the floor, chatting and sharing food. A number of them proudly sport new, noticeably clean, items of clothing.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

Who would do such a thing? It's appalling.

FIRST BLIND MAN

Someone who lost faith?

DOCTOR

Or the local priest.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

"If the people can't see, then why should the statue."

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYE PATCH

After what he's put us through, God doesn't deserve to see. I'm sure that was the idea.

This statement pretty much ends all discussion. They continue to eat in silence.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

And to think of all those people...
When you were away, we talked to a
man who was part of a group, he
said, that moved around together,
helping each other to find food and
shelter. Each night they slept in a
different place.

FIRST BLIND MAN

I asked him why he didn't sleep in
his own home -- he said he didn't
know where it was anymore.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

He lost it.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN

It makes me worry about our own
homes. Maybe people have broken
in...

FIRST BLIND MAN

Why are you worried about that?

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYE PATCH

They're welcome to it, if they find
their way to my little room.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

What I'm trying to say is, that he
made me think about how lucky we
are -- that we have a leader with
vision.

The group laughs at this unintentionally grandiose turn of
phrase.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Well, just because I can see, it
doesn't necessarily make me a
leader.

DOCTOR

I disagree. I think it does.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
So I think it's up to you to decide
what we do next.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - TWILIGHT

The dialogue continues over images of the group, wending their way through new neighborhoods -- a cavern of apartment towers, an affluent street with the lawns overgrown like meadows.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (V.O.)
Well...I guess, I think we should
stick together, for a while at
least. And go somewhere where we
can relax, together, spend the
night. Hopefully get some sleep.
I guess, I'd suggest our house.
It's not that far and it's quite
large. Of course, I don't have the
keys; I left them back in the
hospital, but I imagine...

DOCTOR (V.O.)
I took them out of your bag a while
ago. I had an idea they'd be safer
with me.

Laughter.

DOCTOR (V.O.)
I know you well, my dear.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (V.O.)
Some things never change.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT . DOCTOR'S HOUSE - DUSK

The DOCTOR'S WIFE guides the Doctor's hand as he slides his key into the lock. The GROUP (including the DOG OF TEARS) huddles around the DOCTOR as he swings open the door. The Doctor's wife prepares to enter.

DOCTOR

Careful. Just because we locked the door, doesn't mean we don't have guests.

The Doctor's wife understands: cautiously, she ventures inside.

Aside from a light layer of dust, the house is exactly as we saw it last.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(calling inside)

Hello.

Behind her, one at a time, the rest of the GROUP starts to come in. The last to enter is the dog, who bounds in and runs upstairs.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

Come in, come in.

But the group holds their position in the entrance hall.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

Maybe we should take off our shoes.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Yes, maybe. Just leave them at the door.

The shoes are removed.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES

We don't wanna mess the place up.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Oh don't worry, the dog's already taken care of that.

Slowly people step into the living room.

They are afraid to move too fast or to touch anything, lest they break it or stain it with their filth.

The Doctor finds his favorite chair and, almost affectionately, runs his hand down its dusty arm.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

If you'd like to take off your clothes, I'm sure I can find some fresh ones upstairs.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Are you talking to me?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
To everyone. Your clothes are
almost as dirty as your shoes.

FIRST BLIND MAN
Here? All together?

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
(starting to strip)
Oh come on, she's the only one who
can see.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
And if it makes you feel better
it's getting pretty dark.

She leaves for the kitchen.

With no eyes watching, everyone in the group starts to
undress.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
(to herself)
I'm pretty sure she's seen worse
sights than this old body.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

A collection of pots, basins and vases have been placed on
the back stoop to collect rain. The DOCTOR'S WIFE reaches
out, picks up a half-filled pot and puts it on the lit stove.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(to herself)
Thank god for gas.

Out of the corner of her eye, she notices that the BOY WITH
THE SQUINT has found his way to the kitchen.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)
Hi. Come on in. I'm just trying to
get some light.

She pulls an old gas lamp down from the top of the fridge.

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
Is electricity back on?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
No no, it's an oil lamp.

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
A what?

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(laughing)
I'll tell you about it later.

She finds a match and lights the lamp.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - DUSK

The MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH, naked, stands at the sink. He removes his eyepatch, then starts to rub shaving cream on his rough beard.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE enters and pours the pot of steaming water into the plugged sink.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
That should do the trick.

She guides the old man's hand to her husband's razor.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)
You sure you don't want help?

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYE PATCH
I prefer to do it myself.

He raises his shaky hand and draws the razor across his face. It's not easy. He tries again.

The hand of the Doctor's wife slides in and gently helps.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The DOCTOR'S WIFE is choosing clothes from her wardrobe for the WOMEN to try on. They are naked. The soft glow of an old oil lamp is the only light in the room.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
I haven't seen myself in so long. I
must look ridiculous.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
No you don't. Dirty and skinny...

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
But not ridiculous.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Not at all.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
And what about me?

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
You, you're beautiful.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
You've never seen me.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
In my dreams you're always
beautiful.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
Well, you see? That's why blindness
is a gift to the ugly.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
(firmly)
You're not ugly.

WIFE OF THE FIRST BLIND MAN
(seriously)
No. I'm not.

The Doctor's wife hands her a dress.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Doctor's Wife puts the finishing touches on dinner. She has heated some canned peas and carrots. Anchovies have been grilled. For dessert there is stewed fruit with chocolate chips.

Shaved, scrubbed clean, dressed in their finest, the entire GANG is seated around the table as the Doctor's wife arrives with the feast.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Now, I don't want to sound like a certain moron we heard from all too often...

Mock boos and laughs from around the table.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

but before we eat I do have a couple of brief announcements. First of all, there's room for everyone. There are two bedrooms for the couples. Everyone else can sleep on a couch, one for everyone. Um, I set a bucket outside the back door for people to do their business.

FIRST BLIND MAN

(joking)

In the rain.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I still think it's better than in the kitchen.

General agreement.

DOCTOR'S WIFE (CONT'D)

...Anyway the rain is stopping.

DOCTOR

Honey, I'm sorry to interrupt, but didn't we have a bottle of water under the sink?

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Uhm, I think we might. Why didn't I think of that?

She goes to get up, but the DOCTOR stops her.

DOCTOR

No, I'll get it.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE lets him go.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

The main thing is that I want everyone to feel at home. Because this is your home too.

(MORE)

DOCTOR'S WIFE (cont'd)
I think it would be crazy for us to
separate now, after we've been
through so much.

The room falls silent while everyone considers their new
arrangement.

DOCTOR
Ah-ha!

He has found the water.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I think you are going to enjoy this
people. A very fine bottle. French
as I recall. And sparkling?

He hands the bottle to his wife.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Sparkling.

DOCTOR
Fill the glasses. I want to propose
a toast.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
I'm very flattered that you're
offering us your home...

DOCTOR
Our pleasure.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYE PATCH
And I will accept on one condition.

DOCTOR
And what's that? Does everyone have
a glass.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
That when I become too much of a
burden, you tell me. And if that's
impossible, out of friendship or
pity, then at least you let me do
what I have to do.

FIRST BLIND MAN
And what's that?

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
Withdraw. Let me wander off, like
an elephant prepared to die.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
But you are not an elephant.

MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH
I'm not a man either.

WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES
Not if you keep making childish
comments like that.

The joke lightens the mood.

DOCTOR
Everyone, I'd like to propose a
toast. To us. To our family.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
To our human family.

BOY WITH THE SQUINT
And the dog.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
And the dog.

EVERYONE
Cheers.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Now let's eat!

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT.

The Doctor and his wife make love in their own bed. Their
passion is intimate and humane.

The Doctor rolls over, his face wet with sweat or tears. His
wife lets her hand linger over his chest and neck.

DOCTOR
Sometimes, when we made love, I
used to fantasize about other
women.

His wife stops her caress.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Oh.

DOCTOR

But now, when I fantasize, when I
think of a woman...I see your face.
Only your face.

The Doctor's Wife is touched. She pulls herself in to her husband.

DOCTOR

You're the only woman left.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

A new day. The WOMAN WITH DARK GLASSES stirs awake with the MAN WITH THE BLACK EYEPATCH still asleep in her lap. The DOG is asleep in another couch.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(off)

There's coffee, believe it or not.

The BOY WITH THE SQUINT walks in with a collection of mugs. He is moving with the amazing confidence, as if he had been born blind.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE follows. She is carrying a city map.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(to the boy)

That's it. Pass them out.

(calling off)

Honey, are you coming?

The DOCTOR is in the garden, through the French doors. He turns and waves.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I was thinking we should have a
group meeting. Plan out our day.
Our future, actually. We're already
low on supplies and I'm worried
about security here.

The Doctor enters.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

I'll get the others.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

The DOCTOR'S WIFE heads directly to the coffee pot on the stove, passing the FIRST BLIND MAN who is sitting at the table with a cup at the ready. His eyes are closed and he is shaking.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I'll pour you a cup and you can
take it in the living room.

She turns off the element.

FIRST BLIND MAN
I'm blind. I can't believe this.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE turns. There is a strange urgency in the man's voice.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
What do you mean?

FIRST BLIND MAN
I'm blind.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
I know...

FIRST BLIND MAN
You don't understand. I closed my
eyes and everything went dark. The
white was gone. It was like I was
asleep, but I wasn't. I was awake.

DOCTOR'S WIFE
Then open your eyes.

FIRST BLIND MAN
I'm afraid.

But then he does.

His eyes are open and active.

They are live with wonder.

FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)
I can see. I can see.

He stands and looks at the DOCTOR'S WIFE for the first time.

FIRST BLIND MAN (CONT'D)

It's you.

He is almost crying with quiet joy.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

Are you sure? And you were the first, that means that the others might soon...

FIRST BLIND MAN

I think I can see better than I ever did.

Suddenly overwhelmed, he runs from the room to find his wife.

FIRST BLIND MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I can see you! I can see!

Screams of delight and disbelief erupt from the other room.

In the middle of all the excitement the DOCTOR'S WIFE imagines she hears a voice from outside. She looks out the back window into the lane behind the house.

In the distance a man is jumping and cheering -- I CAN SEE! I CAN SEE! Others rush out to join him in his celebration.

The DOCTOR'S WIFE lifts her wet eyes to the sky.

The sky is clear and glowing white.

We see it from her point of view.

White.

White.

DOCTOR'S WIFE

(to herself)

Now, It's my turn.

Close on: her eyes.

She blinks and lowers her gaze.

The blindness was only passing.

From her POV: The blinding glare of the sun dissipates and the city comes into view -- still there -- struggling to life.

