An Amtrak train snakes through the countryside. The January morning is so cold, it's clean. Welcome to Kansas.

The wheels of the train chug along. We watch this image long enough to wonder why we're watching it for so long.

The intercom announces, “Next Stop, Topeka!” as we move down the aisle, past businessmen and tourists, reading their papers. Each paper has a different photo and a differently worded headline. But all of them tell us one thing... The President’s State of the Union Address is tonight.

We move past two little girls pointing out the window, “Dad, lookit!” and finally land on... JAKE GREEN, 27, the charming prodigal son. Jake is old movie handsome. A rogue. Troubled. As he sips his whiskey, he looks sad and deep in thought. Jake stares through the window as billboards advertising the Golden Eagle Casino and Trading Post roll by.

JOVIAL MAN (O.S.)
Tough day?

Jake turns to find a chubby JOVIAL MAN, 47, smiling.

JOVIAL MAN (CONT’D)
Just curious why you're drinking so early in the morning? Break-up? Lay off? Titans fan?

JAKE
(finds himself smiling)
No. I’m going back home for the day. Going to visit my grandfather.

JOVIAL MAN
Is that bad?

JAKE
No. The bad part is seeing my father and brother.
(gestures like a boxer)
Dad will hit me with the 'you're a disappointment' right, and Peter will come in with the 'family values' left. Good times.
JOVIAL MAN
(smiles)
Let me guess. You’re grandpa’s
color?

JAKE
I don’t know. But he was my
favorite.

They smile. Jake points to the man’s empty beers...

JAKE (CONT’D)
What about you? Why are you
drinking so early in the morning?

JOVIAL MAN
Because I’m a drunk.

INT. AMTRAK STATION - TOPEKA, KANSAS - MORNING
Jake’s laughter becomes the squeal of the train’s brakes. Jake exits the train and passes baggage handlers, pushing luggage carts. If we look closely, we see one of them load a silver suitcase on the train.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - TOPEKA, KANSAS - MORNING
Jake’s taxi moves through the city streets, then enters a 12 story parking garage with a sign... Monthly Rates Available.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - 8TH FLOOR - MORNING
The taxi moves around a cement pillar to reveal... a vintage Ford Mustang Convertible. Jake turns to the taxi driver.

JAKE
You got jumper cables?

INT. PARKING GARAGE - GROUND FLOOR - MORNING
Jake, now sitting in the Mustang, hands his ticket to the TICKET TAKER, an African American woman, about 31. She looks at the ticket. All yellow and faded. She’s confused.

INT. PARKING GARAGE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER
The ticket taker enters the messy office and approaches her BOSS, a gruff man. She holds up Jake’s ticket.

TICKET TAKER
I don’t know what to do with this.
BOSS
What do you mean? Take his money.

TICKET TAKER
You don’t understand. This man’s had his car here for... 5 years.

EXT. KANSAS INTERSTATE HIGHWAY 77 - LATE MORNING
We see a MOTORCYCLE GANG making life hell for a student driver, then move over to Jake's Mustang as it pulls off the crowded highway. A sign reads... Jericho 87 miles.

INT. JAKE'S MUSTANG - LATE MORNING
Jake flips through the radio dial. Bill O'Reilly blurts, "Larry. Pensicola, Florida. Go." Larry, "Hey, Bill. So, the State of the Union tonight..." Jake changes the channel. Rush Limbaugh groans, "It makes me ill that the President’s speech is going to acknowledge this liberal--" Click. Al Franken says, "The arrogance of this administration--" Click. "...it'll be cold tonight. Low in the mid 20's."


EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - LATE MORNING
The image goes high as the Mustang cuts through the countryside. Jake passes rivers, streams, bridges, farms. Jericho may be isolated, but nobody can say that the ride to it isn’t gorgeous. No traffic. Blues skies. Peace.

EXT. POTAWATOMI NATION INDIAN CAVES - LATER
As Jake pulls up to a stop sign, he looks to his right to see... a JERICHO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUS. The CHUBBY BUS DRIVER stands in front of the bus’s smoking engine. He shakes his head in frustration and pulls out his cell phone. Jake shifts his glance to the PRETTY TEACHER as she guides a group of excited 2ND GRADE KIDS into the visitor’s center.

PRETTY TEACHER
Come on, kids. Single file now.
(a fat girl trips)
Oh, dear. Are you okay, Hilda?

EXT. PETERSON FAMILY FARM - ROADSIDE STAND - AFTERNOON
As customers browse the farm’s roadside stand, BONNIE PETERSON, 17 and cheer-leader juicy, sits behind the cash register. She text messages her boyfriend. “I miss you so much. Can you come back this weekend?”
Startled, Bonnie turns to her big brother, STANLEY PETERSON, 27, an avid car lover who has no luck with women.

STANLEY PETERSON (CONT’D)
Mom and dad didn’t keep you out of school today so you could text message your boyfriend.
(off Bonnie’s groan)
I know. “He moved away. My life is over. Blah blah.” Put down the phone, Bonnie!

Bonnie grumbles. Stanley turns and sees Jake climb out of his Mustang. At first, Stanley can’t believe his eyes. Then, a smile creeps over his face. Jake approaches. The two old friends smile. And then, Stanley starts hugging him.

STANLEY PETERSON (CONT’D)
I can’t believe it. Jake Green! My God. When you get back to town?

JAKE
Just now.

STANLEY PETERSON
You seen Emily yet? The family?

JAKE
I just got back now, Stanley.

STANLEY PETERSON
Oh, right. Right. Sorry. Wait. Where the hell have you been?

JAKE
Around.

STANLEY PETERSON
No one is “around” for 5 years.

JAKE
Believe it or not... the Army.

Just then, a woman emerges from the farm house. MIMI CLARK is 30, sexy, stylish, Jewish, urbanite, and couldn’t look more out of place. Stanley’s good humor instantly vanishes.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Who’s that?
STANLEY PETERSON
That? That’s the government.

JAKE
Sexy government.

Mimi Clark runs frightened from a chicken. “Ewww!”

STANLEY PETERSON
Don’t let the style fool you, Jake. Miss “shiver me timbers” is from the I.R.S.

JAKE
IRS? Audit?... Not going well?

STANLEY PETERSON
Forget it. How about you and me get together tonight? Catch up?

JAKE
I’d love to, but I’m only in to see my grandpa, then I gotta get back. So, if I can get my mother’s favorite Peterson Apple Pie...

Stanley nods, slaps Jake’s shoulder, and turns to find...

STANLEY PETERSON
BONNIE!

Bonnie drops the phone and scrambles to get Jake’s order.

STANLEY PETERSON (CONT’D)
Welcome back to Jericho, Jake.

EXT. JERICHO - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - AFTERNOON
We see it all through Jake’s eyes. Unlike most of flat, dusty Kansas, Jericho is nestled in the foothills. It’s a town that embraces its Old West roots and Frontier Spirit. A statue reads... Welcome to Jericho: We Stand Strong. ELECTION POSTERS hang on every storefront and telephone pole. ELECT GRAY ANDERSON. RE-ELECT MAYOR GREEN. All to the lovely sounds of Sean Hannity raving on the radio...

SEAN HANNITY (V.O.)
... we got an advanced copy, and let me tell you, friends, this speech is going down in history. Bold agenda. Bold. Okay, who do we have? Tiffany in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Hi, Tiffany.
As Tiffany tells Sean he’s a great American, Jake turns off the radio and keeps driving. To his right, Jake sees a moving truck. ROD HAWKINS, 39, serious, African American tips the movers as his wife and kids play in the yard. Suddenly, POLICE LIGHTS FLASH behind Jake. Jake pulls over. He looks in the side view mirror as two ominous pairs of policeman’s legs approach. Jake sighs until...

JIMMY
I thought I recognized this car.

Jake looks at JIMMY, 42, and BILL, 42, two best friends and the laughing stock of the police force. They smile at Jake.

JAKE
Hey Jimmy, Bill. Still buying those lottery tickets?

JIMMY
Man, if we ever win the lottery, our wives are going to become world travelers.

BILL
Yeah, they’re going to go everywhere looking for us.

Jimmy and Bill laugh. Jake smiles. Same old joke.

BILL (CONT’D)
So, where you been hiding, Jake?

JAKE
Believe it or not... the rodeo.

INT. GRACIE LEIGH’S SUPERMARKET – AFTERNOON

A poster endorsing Mayor Green hangs in the window of this medium-sized supermarket and trading post. STEPHANIE LANCASTER, 16, a teenage princess of the highest order, samples lipstick. She complains to the cute tech nerd, ALVIE CLEMONS, 15, who worships her like a beaten dog. They’ve been friends since they were 3 years old.

STEPHANIE
I’ll never forgive my parents for not taking me on their trip to New York. I could be shopping on 5th Avenue right now instead of...
(referring to lipsticks)
Look at this sad collection. This color was out of style before it was invented.
ALVIE
I think it looks nice on you.

STEPHANIE
That’s because you’re staring at my chest, Alvie.

ALVIE
Yes, I am. But, we really should get back to--

STEPHANIE
Would you forget about studying for the SAT’s and live a little?

ALVIE
You’re right, Stephanie. Forget M.I.T. and my dreams of a happy life. Let’s ponder your chest.

We move to the counter, where Jake indulges the never-ending gossip of good-natured GRACIE LEIGH, 45. Gracie almost scans his bouquet of flowers and **Swiss Army Knife**... several times.

GRACIE LEIGH
... his name is Rod Hawkins. That new man. I think his wife is lovely, but him... I don’t know. Mrs. Olson made me promise not to tell anyone, but she heard he bought that nice house in cash. Cash. Promise not to tell anyone.

JAKE
Scout’s honor, Mrs. Leigh.

GRACIE LEIGH
So, how about you, Jake? Where you been keeping yourself all this time?

JAKE
Promise not to tell Mrs. Olson. (off her crossed heart) Believe it or not... I’ve been playing minor league baseball.

GRACIE LEIGH
That a fact?

JAKE
Scout’s honor.
As Jake leaves the store, he sees a woman coming out of her car. EMILY SPENSER, 26, is young, pretty, and idealistic. Jake's heart skips a beat. She flirts into her cell phone.

   EMILY
   No, it's a surprise. No, Roger.
   You'll find out tonight. Now, when do you get in from Chicago?

Emily looks up to see Jake. Her heart skips a beat. Emily is immediately distracted as she talks into her cell phone.

   EMILY (CONT'D)
   11 o'clock. I'll see you tonight.
   (locking eyes with Jake)
   I love you, too.

She hangs up. Jake and Emily look at each other. It hangs in the air for a long, charged moment.

   JAKE
   Hi, Emily.

   EMILY
   Jake. My God. What--

A complete loss for words.

   JAKE
   Yeah. I just came in for the day.
   See my grandfather. The family.

   EMILY
   Sure. I just... I didn't hear.

   JAKE
   Well, I would have called, but... I have to get back to Santa Fe.
   (off her look)
   Long boring story. How have you been? Mom tells me you're teaching at the high school now.

   EMILY
   I know. Weird, huh? But it's good. Other than teaching the kids I used to baby-sit. But I love it. Just got a house in the Pines.

   JAKE
   East Side? On a teacher's salary?
EMILY
Well... my... fiancé is in banking.

Just the word. Fiancé. Jake does his best to keep it light.

JAKE
That helps. Do I know him?

EMILY
No, I was at a conference. We met in Chicago.
(off his look)
I know. A city boy, right? But Roger loves small town life.

Jake nods. He never did. Finally...

JAKE
Well, I’m happy for you, Emily. I mean, you know, other than...
(turns on charm)
... the part of me that’s dying.

Emily laughs. It breaks the ice. All kidding now.

EMILY
How about you? You have somebody?

JAKE
No.

EMILY
I’m sorry.

JAKE
No, you’re not. You love it.

Emily laughs. Jake keeps smiling and riffing.

JAKE (CONT’D)
You won the reunion. You know it.
Look at you.

EMILY
(huge smile)
Where have you been all these years?

JAKE
Believe it or not... the navy.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Right. You always know when I’m
lying. One of your less attractive
qualities.

EMILY
Seriously, Jake. Where you been?
The laughs are over. Jake looks at the ground. Decides.

JAKE
Can you keep a secret?

INT. GRACIE LEIGH’S SUPERMARKET – AFTERNOON

We see Jake and Emily through the large storefront window. The stock boy, DALE TURNER, 16, is the trailer park kid everybody picks on. Dale watches Jake lean in to whisper in Emily’s ear. Dale’s jealous. Stephanie Lancaster smirks.

STEPHANIE
Well, here’s to you, Mrs. Robinson. Dale, do you really think you have a chance with Miss Spenser or any girl in her right mind?

Dale looks away, embarrassed, and goes back to sweeping.

ALVIE
Leave him alone, Stephanie. He’s got enough problems.

Dale takes one more look as Emily and Jake hug and say good-bye. The door rings as Emily enters the store. She’s very sad. Whatever Jake told her, it’s not good.

EXT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE – FRONT PORCH – AFTERNOON

Ding dong. Jake waits at the door, nervously. We hear footsteps. Then, the door opens, revealing Jake’s mother. GAIL GREEN, 56, is a brilliant politician’s wife and a cooler lady. Strong. Savvy. Jake presents the apple pie. They both break out in smiles. Then, they both break out in hugs.

INT. MAYOR GREEN'S DEN – MOMENTS LATER

MAYOR JOHNSTON GREEN, 58, small town charming, and PETER GREEN, the 33 year old star of the family, hold an informal meeting with Jericho’s answer to a labor crisis. On the side of labor is union boss, SHEP CALE, 45, a blue collar Joe. The Mayor hangs back, waiting for his moment to intervene.
PETER
We’re all in agreement about that.

SHEP
No, we’re not in agreement, Peter. My men have been promised safety equipment, a cost of living increa--

On the side of management is NORMAN PERRY, 42, a high strung workaholic. He groans.

NORMAN
You were not promised, Mr. Cale.

SHEP
I’m not talking to you, Mr. Perry.

MAYOR GREEN
“Mr. Perry? Mr. Cale?” For God’s sake, you two used to get drunk in high school together. Remember? Look, that factory keeps this town alive. So, I don’t want to hear anything about strikes or lockouts. I want you two to sit down like gentlemen and talk this thing through. That’s what we do in Jericho. We don’t feud.

Shep and Norman look off screen. Then...

SHEP
We don’t feud, huh?

The Mayor looks confused until he turns to the doorway to find... Jake. The Mayor turns instantly chilly.

MAYOR GREEN
You’re early.

END OF TEASER
ACT ONE

INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - LATER

The door opens to reveal Peter's wife, ANN GREEN, 33, Jericho's answer to Hillary Clinton when she moved to Arkansas. Normally, the Green family would stop to say hello, but right now, they are too busy with...

MAYOR GREEN (O.S.)
... don’t you know I’m fighting for my political life?

JAKE (O.S.)
Dad, I am not here to interfere with your campaign. All I want is your signature, then I’ll visit grandpa, then--

PETER
After 5 years? That’s all you have to say to dad?

JAKE
Peter, it’s none of your business.

MAYOR GREEN
It is his business. It’s all our business. What you have put this family through--

GAIL
Johnston, please.

MAYOR GREEN
No, Gail. He could have been a--

JAKE
Dad, we could spend a week talking about what I could have been. I have apologized. I have made amends. This is me now. I have a plan. But I need my money to--

MAYOR GREEN
It isn’t your money. It’s your grandfather’s money.

JAKE
I know it’s his, dad. I didn’t ask for it. But he gave it to me for a reason.
MAYOR GREEN
And he gave me authority over it for a reason. So, when you convince me you’re leading a more productive life--

JAKE
That’s why he gave me the mone--

MAYOR GREEN
You start the new life. Then, you get the money. It doesn’t work the other way around.

PETER
That’s right, Jake.

JAKE
Peter, we were both born on 3rd base. Stop pretending you hit a triple.

Peter is silent. Jake turns back to his father.

MAYOR GREEN
You always look for the easy road, Jake. And I can’t let you this time. I can’t give you something and watch you squander it again. It’s like that time I gave you my swiss army knife from the war, and--

Jake produces the new swiss army knife he bought at Gracie’s store from his pocket and hands it to his father.

JAKE
I know the next 50 things you’re going to say, dad. I wish I could give you back the real one, but I can’t. I am not here to fight. I just want to make grandpa proud. So, just sign the papers, so we can all get on with our lives.

The Mayor looks at the knife, then hands it back to Jake.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Dad, when are you going to realize that I’m 27 years old?

MAYOR GREEN
When you do.
With that, the Mayor goes into his den and closes the door.

   **JAKE**  
   Peter, you know this is unfair.

Peter, the loyal daddy’s boy, says nothing. He leaves the house with Ann, who shrugs. “Sorry, Jake.” Gail approaches.

   **GAIL**  
   Let’s visit your grandfather.

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**EXT. BAPTIST CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON**

The tombstone reads... "Peter Jake Green: Beloved Father. Grandfather. Mayor." Jake takes the bouquet of flowers he bought at Gracie’s store, then kneels down. He places the flowers on his grandfather’s grave. It’s a painful moment for him. Gail is a rock for him.

   **JAKE**  
   Mom, I’m sorry I couldn’t come to the funeral.

   **GAIL**  
   It’s okay. I understand. And don’t worry about dad. I’ll work on him. In the meantime...

Gail holds out a handful of bills. Jake shakes his head, no.

   **JAKE**  
   Thanks, but I didn’t come here for charity.

   **GAIL**  
   Are you sure you can’t stay?

   **JAKE**  
   I have to get back by tomorrow. You know that.

They move to his Mustang. They hug for a long time. Gail quietly slips the wad of bills into Jake’s coat pocket.

   **GAIL**  
   When will I see you again?

   **JAKE**  
   Whenever you can visit Santa Fe.  
   (off her look)  
   Mom, I can’t start a new life in the old one. This is the last day I’ll ever spend in Jericho.
One kiss. Jake climbs into his car. Gail smiles, sadly.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Oh, mom. One more thing...

Gail walks up to the driver’s side window. Jake puts the bills back in her hand. And smiles.

JAKE (CONT’D)
You have clumsy hands.

She smiles. Jake pulls away. Gail watches her boy go down the foothills and to the horizon as the sun begins to set.

INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - DUSK

Gail walks into the house to find a very angry Mayor Green.

GAIL
Johnston, when you give birth, you can tell me about taking sides.

The law is laid down. The two sit down in front of the TV as the State of the Union Address begins. The page shouts, “Ladies and gentleman. The President of the United States!”

INT. PETER AND ANN GREEN’S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Applause. The President takes the podium as Peter puts his arm around his wife, Ann, holding their 6 MONTH OLD BABY.

PETER
(hurt)
Jake’s going to tell me about things being unfair.

INT. PETERSON FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The President drinks in the applause as Stanley Peterson approaches his parents in the living room. MR. and MRS. PETERSON, 54, both salt of the earth, shake their heads. They hand the final IRS bill to Stanley. $131,852.

Stanley looks over at Bonnie, who is text messaging her boyfriend. “We’re going to lose the farm.”

INT. JIMMY’S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The President holds up his hands and the applause slowly dies down. Jimmy, Bill, and their respective kids watch the TV. Jimmy’s son, WOODY, 9, looks up at Jimmy.
WOODY
Do we have to watch this?

Jimmy and Bill look into the kitchen at their two ball-breaking wives, both named MARGARET, giving them the eye.

JIMMY
Sorry, kid. Mom wants us to improve ourselves.

INT. GRACIE LEIGH'S STORE - MOMENTS LATER

The President begins, "Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, members of Congress, my fellow Americans..."

Dale Turner gets ready to leave for the night as Gracie Leigh gossips into the phone.

GRACIE LEIGH
... You heard me. Minor league baseball. He and Emily were talking right outside here.

(to Dale Turner)

Thanks, Dale. See you tomorrow.

Dale Turner waves, then leaves the store. Back to the phone.

GRACIE LEIGH (CONT'D)

Everyone thought they were going to get married back in the day...

INT. EMILY SPENGER'S NEW HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

"... by law and custom, we meet here once a year in this sacred chamber to discuss the state of our union..."

Emily looks at an old YEARBOOK picture of Jake. The inscription reads. "Emily, I'll love you until the day I die." She shakes herself out of her nostalgia, turns up her iPod, and goes back to the champagne, flowers, and candles to make her fiancé's arrival perfect. The post-it note reads... Roger's flight. Kansas City Airport. 11:00pm.

INT. JAKE'S MUSTANG - MOMENTS LATER

"Tonight, with a growing economy, with..."

Jake switches off the radio and continues to move down the rural road. He sighs.
INT. BAILEY'S TAVERN - MOMENTS LATER

We scan the old-fashioned saloon. Mimi Clark from the IRS looks sad as she drowns the unfortunate aspect of her job down with a little wine. The SEXY BARMAID turns up the volume on the TV. We move in on the TV as his voice booms.

PRESIDENT
... democracy in the Middle East, the former Soviet Satellite nations stabilized, and threats from Iran and North Korea contained... the state of our union is... strong.

Just then, the TV turns to snow. The patrons grumble.

PATRONS
(ad-lib)
Damn. The cable’s out!

INT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Woody and the kids cheer!

WOODY
Yay! The cable’s out!

INT. STEPHANIE LANCASTER'S MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Stephanie Lancaster turns off the snowy television and goes right back to fighting with her mother on the phone.

STEPHANIE
I didn’t do anything to the TV, mom. Well, if you had brought me to New York, then maybe-- What? Oh, I wish you’d just die.

Silence. Stephanie is furious.

STEPHANIE (CONT’D)
Mom. Did you hang up on me?!

INT. PETERSON FARM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

As Stanley shakes his head at the satellite TV, Bonnie looks at the cell phone on the table flash green. A picture message. Bonnie hits a button and the image begins to load.

INT. BAILEY'S TAVERN - EVENING

Mimi Clark, IRS employee, checks the ATM machine. The sign reads... “Technical difficulties. Please, try again later.”
INT. SCHOOL BUS - MOMENTS LATER

The pretty school teacher, HEATHER LISINSKI, 26, rides in the front seat of the school bus. She talks on her cell phone.

HEATHER
We finally found a garage that could fix it. Had to take a detour. We’re heading back now.

Heather strains to see the road signs through the windows.

HEATHER (CONT’D)
We’re on... Cedar Run Road. We’ll be back in an hour, Mr. Mcvey. Mr. Mcvey? Hello?

Heather shrugs, folds her phone, and turns to the chubby bus driver, who smiles.

BUS DRIVER
(thick Southern drawl)
You wanna use my Blackberry?

EXT. JIMMY’S HOUSE - LATER

Good old hide and seek outside of this isolated house on the west side of town. Woody, his hands over his eyes, counts it down. His breath is foggy from the cold.

WOODY
3-2-1... ready or not, here I come!

Woody looks around. No one under the porch. No one in the tool shed. He finally creeps around to the bushes on the West Side of the house. And...

WOODY (CONT’D)
Gotcha!

Woody grabs his little sister, SALLY, who giggles until she sees Woody has a horrified expression on his face. She turns around, and the image moves with her. It’s then that we see it. In the distance, what used to be Denver is now...

A mushroom cloud.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. JAKE’S MUSTANG - DUSK

The mushroom cloud bellows in the distance of this isolated highway. Jake holds his hands in front of his face to shield his eyes from the blinding light coming from the rear view mirror. We stay inside this white light for a beat.

The light subsides. Jake blinks to find his visual bearing. And once his eyes focus, he sees it. A station wagon going the other direction has just veered into his lane. Jake’s eyes go wide and just before the moment of impact...

INT. STEPHANIE LANCASTER’S MANSION - DUSK

CRASH! Stephanie Lancaster has just dropped a plate of food on the living room floor. She moves to the massive bay windows of her family’s mansion on the hill. The mushroom cloud bellows in the distance. Stephanie is speechless.

EXT. PETERSON FARM - DUSK

They are speechless. Stanley, Bonnie, and the rest of the Peterson family rush out of the house to get a better view of the horizon. Bonnie drops her open cell phone to the ground.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DUSK

CRASH! Jake holds his left arm up to brace his impact, but it’s too powerful. His head hits the steering wheel. The car buckles, then careens into a ditch. Jake passes out on the steering wheel. His head makes the horn Beeeeeeeeee.

We move away from him into the freezing night on this isolated road. His car looks small.

INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - BATHROOM - EARLY EVENING

The faucet runs. Unaware of events, Mayor Green opens up his bottle of prescription pills. He coughs twice, then downs the pills with a little water. He sighs. Thinking about Jake. When he turns off the faucet, he hears something... the sound of crying.

INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The Mayor walks down the stairs to find Gail kneeling with Jimmy and Bill standing in front of her. Both look sad. Gail rises to reveal Jimmy’s son WOODY, horrified.

MAYOR GREEN

Gail? What’s going on?

Gail turns around. Her own expression... horrified.
Peter parks his Oldsmobile with a skid. Doors open.

Peter and Ann, carrying their baby, rush into the house, now buzzing with activity. The Mayor holds up his hand for silence as he moves to the other side of the room.

PETER
Dad! Dad!

MAYOR GREEN
We heard, Peter. Everyone, please. The explosion came from the West. There are military bases in Colorado. It could have been a test. An accident. Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. I’ll call the governor. Find out. In the meantime, let’s not forget who we are.

The Mayor’s confidence settles the group down. They watch as he turns his back to them as he picks up the phone. We see the Mayor’s face. The line is dead. He is now spooked. But he can’t show it to the others. He takes a breath. Turns.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
Anyone’s cell phone working?

They all shakes their heads. No. Scared.

PETER
Are we under attack, dad?

Silence. The Mayor thinks. Looks at their frightened faces.

MAYOR GREEN
I don’t know. Jimmy, Bill? Get on the radio. I want everyone at the Sheriff’s office in 20 minutes. Tell them to assess any damage along the way. I need to know if our town is still standing. Peter, we need to get the city’s emergency plan. Let’s move.

They begin to scurry. Woody trails after Jimmy.

WOODY
Dad, don’t leave! Dad, I want to go with you!
Jimmy kneels. Wipes the tears out of his son’s eyes. They’ve said these words 1,000 times. No sentiment.

JIMMY
Who’s my hero?

WOODY
Me.

JIMMY
Who’s the best?

WOODY
Me.

JIMMY
Who’s going to take care of these nice ladies?

WOODY
Me.

Woody hugs his dad. Peter kisses Ann and the baby and leaves. Ann watches him go. Gail and the Mayor lock eyes with a look that only comes with 35 years of marriage.

GAIL
Jake.

MAYOR GREEN
We’ll find him.

EXT. JERICHO STREET - EVENING

A police car flies down the street, followed by a Fire Truck. But Stephanie Lancaster doesn’t notice them. Stephanie Lancaster is in another world.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DUSK

Dale Turner sees the police car racing down the street. He moves to his trailer past a few frightened and crying folks.

TRAILER PARK FOLKS
“Oh, my God” “Are we under attack?” “Oh, those poor people.”

INT. DALE’S TRAILER - DUSK

Dale opens the trailer door. He sees old beer cans, pizza boxes, and an answering machine flashing ONE MESSAGE.
INT. BAILEY'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The juke box blasts as the people in the tavern enjoy their last blissful moment of ignorance. Mimi Clark, IRS employee, leaves the ATM machine and approaches the SEXY BARMAID.

MIMI CLARK
Excuse me, miss. I'm going back to DC tomorrow, and I need money for the cab. Where can I find an ATM?

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Mayor Green and Peter burst through the door where the EMT, Fire, and Police Crews have gathered. The Mayor points to the flashing lights on the cars through the window.

MAYOR GREEN
Could we turn off the Christmas Tree out there before the whole world starts asking questions?

The SHERIFF, 57, all business, nods to one of his younger deputies. The deputy charges outside.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT'D)
Sheriff. Chief.

The FIRE CHIEF, 48, a real cowboy, nods to the Mayor. The Mayor lays his emergency plan on the sheriff's desk.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT'D)
Any damage? Fires? Buildings?

SHERIFF
Nothing, Mr. Mayor. Town's fine.

MAYOR GREEN
Let's hope you're right.

SHERIFF
What do you mean?

MAYOR GREEN
Do we have any Geiger counters?

EXT. BAILEY'S TAVERN - MOMENTS LATER

As Mimi Clark exits the tavern, she sees it. Something's strange. People are gathering outside. Some are crying.

MIMI CLARK
Excuse me, sir. What's going on?
FRIGHTENED PASSERBY

MIMI CLARK
But... what... did they get D.C.?

INT. ALVIE CLEMONS’ BEDROOM - EVENING

Alvie is too focused on his SAT book and blasting stereo to hear the knock. His mother, TERESA CLEMONS, 45, shouts up.

TERESA CLEMONS (O.S.)
Alvie, your friend Stephanie’s here!

Alvie bounds up, checks his hopeless hair, and leaves.

INT. ALVIE CLEMONS’ HOUSE - EVENING

Alvie walks down the stairs to find Stephanie Lancaster, who is in a complete daze.

STEPHANIE
I can’t get my mom on the phone.

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

We see a cell phone that reads... Call Was Lost. We move up to the shattered face of Mimi Clark.

MIMI CLARK
Mom, please pick up the phone.

She tries again. No service. Panicked, she begins to run, past a poster of the smiling face of GRAY ANDERSON.

EXT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - EVENING

GRAY ANDERSON, 44, is slick, savvy, and politically astute. He passes a lady cop, speaking into her radio.

LADY COP
Bill? What’s the ETA on those Geiger counters?

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - EVENING

Gray Anderson enters the room as the impact of the news spreads across the group’s faces. The leaders are holding their composure. The younger cops and firemen are shaky. Some cry. Most are silent. Men. Women. Black. White. It’s the one human moment before...
MAYOR GREEN
I know. We’re all scared. We’re all thinking of our families. But in about 2 minutes, people are going to pour through those doors, looking for answers. So, we better get some quick. If we’re calm, they’re calm. Understood?

They all nod. The sheriff gestures to the emergency plan.

SHERIFF
What does the emergency plan say?

PETER GREEN
Contact the governor. National Guard. State troopers.

They all look at the RADIO OPERATOR in the corner. Static. He turns to them. Shakes his head. Nothing.

SHERIFF
Anything else?

MAYOR GREEN
A whole lot about tornadoes.

The group sighs. One young cop panics.

PANICKED COP
Are we under attack? We’re under--

MAYOR GREEN
Son. Until we hear otherwise, I don’t want to hear that word again. One explosion is not an attack.

Gray Anderson makes his way into the center near the Mayor, Peter, the Sheriff, and Fire Chief. The Mayor and Peter politely nod to him although we can feel the chill.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT'D)
I’m glad you’re here, Gray. We could use the help.

GRAY ANDERSON
Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Peter. Anything I can do.

BILL
Mayor Green! Sheriff!

They turn to see Bill set down a box of Geiger counters.
The pick-up truck flies down the road. Bonnie is shell-shocked. Stanley puts a hand on her shoulder.

**STANLEY**

Hang in there, Bonnie. We need to make sure the Mayor knows.

**INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - EVENING**

The Mayor holds the Geiger counter. He looks at the assembled group. Silence. Prayers. The Mayor switches the power on. Pins and needles as they wait. Nothing. Until the Mayor lowers the Geiger counter and it starts CLIK-CLIK-CLIK‘ing. People gasp. Cry. Terrified until...

**MAYOR GREEN**

Wait a minute.

The Mayor lifts the Geiger counter up. The CLIK-CLIK goes away. Puts it back down. CLIK-CLIK. The Sheriff gives the Mayor a quizzical look until...

**MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)**

I didn’t turn off my cell phone.

The group sighs in relief. Almost laughing. A YOUNG COUPLE enters the Sheriff’s office. Shaken.

**YOUNG HUSBAND**

Mr. Mayor?

**MAYOR GREEN**

Folks, no need to panic. So far, it looks like there’s no radiation fallout. We’ll keep checking around town, but in the meantime--

**YOUNG WIFE**

Actually, sir. We... uh... we spoke to Principal McVey. The school bus isn’t back from the field trip... with our son.

**INT. ALVIE CLEMONS’ HOUSE - NIGHT**

Alvie is speechless. His mother now has tears running down her face. We might think she’s reacting to the news, but...

**TERESA CLEMONS**

Alvie, call Principal McVey to find out where your little sister is.
INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - EVENING

Gail is now surrounded by a group of concerned parents. Some are worried. Some are crying. Some are irate.

CONCERNED PARENTS
“It should have been back an hour ago.” “Where is your husband!?"

GAIL
Everyone, please calm down. I’m sure my husband and the sheriff are doing everything they can to find the school bus.

IRATE MOTHER
That’s easy for you to say. You don’t have a child out there!

This hits Gail. Ann puts her hand on Gail’s shoulder. Gail kills herself not to cry. One tough lady.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Beeeeee. In the freezing January night, we see Jake’s Mustang, crumpled in the ditch. After a beat, Jake opens his eyes. He blinks a couple of times and slowly moves his head off the steering wheel. The beeeeee is replaced by the sound of silence. He touches his forehead. Blood. He looks at his leg. More blood. He moves his pants back.

A surface cut runs down his leg.

Jake tries to start the car, but the engine block seems cracked. Vrrrr. Vrrr. Nothing. Jake reaches over with his left hand to open the car door. The second he pushes on the door, he screams out in pain. His left arm is severely sprained. Jake opens the door with his right arm. Then, he limps toward the station wagon he collided with.

He peers into the wagon and sees... AN OLD COUPLE. Not moving. Jake grimaces. He opens the door. Feels the lady’s pulse through her neck. Dead. He reaches over and feels the old man’s pulse through his wrist. Same. He stands, and in a reflex from childhood, he crosses himself. Then, the shivers take over his body. It’s freezing.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - SECONDS LATER

Jake opens the station wagon’s back. Looks for anything that can help him. Mixed in with all the junk, souvenirs, and luggage, he sees a golf bag, a belt, and an overcoat. He wraps the belt around his leg to try and stop the bleeding.
Then, he grabs a golf club. Finally, he grabs the overcoat. When he picks it up, something goes clunk on his hand. He reaches into the coat and pulls out... a flask.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - SECONDS LATER

Jake, using the 5 wood as a makeshift crutch, begins to walk down the road toward a hill. A small body in a massive sea of black. He’s in the middle of nowhere.

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - NIGHT

We see the Mayor in silence for a breath. His face registers a flash of resigned sadness and worry about Jake. He looks over at the crowded room. Townspeople asking questions, panicked, some just wanting to help. Then, the volume comes back up, and it’s right back to business. The Mayor points to the map of the surrounding counties.

MAYOR GREEN
Okay. The school bus was here at the caves. Who can tell me where they might have gone for repairs?

FIRE CHIEF
There’s Wilson’s garage off 183.

EMT CREW CHIEF
Or maybe Cedar Run Road. They said they took a detour before the phone cut off. What do you think, Sheriff?

The crowd is getting louder. “What about fallout?” “Are we under attack?” “Can we help?” Peter steps up and shouts.

PETER GREEN
FOLKS! WE CAN’T HEAR OURSELVES THINK OVER HERE!

MAYOR GREEN
Peter, enough.

SHERIFF
I figure two teams. There are only so many places it could be.

The Mayor nods. Good work, sheriff. And then, Gray Anderson throws in his two cents. Just loud enough for the crowd.

GRAY ANDERSON
What about the parents?

Parts of the crowd react. “Yeah.” “We want to help.” Mayor Green looks at the Sheriff. Sotto voice.
SHERIFF
It’s your call, but we don’t know what’s out there. Could be fallout. Could be the Chinese army for all we know.

The Mayor thinks. Makes the tough call.

MAYOR GREEN
Folks, I’m sorry, but I want the police out there finding your kids. Not you.
(off their outrage)
You’re safe here. And God forbid you go out there, get stranded, and your child comes back an orphan. We’ll get your kids. I promise.

The parents are furious. Peter stares daggers at Gray Anderson. The Mayor pulls the sheriff aside. Whispers.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
I know the school bus has to come first, but Jake...

SHERIFF
We’ll get your son, Mr. Mayor.

The sheriff pats his shoulder and moves. Gray approaches.

GRAY ANDERSON
What can I do, sir?

MAYOR GREEN
Peter and I will find a way to call the governor. I need you to coordinate with the fire department to make sure no citizens leave town. It could be a death trap out there. No one’s dying on my watch.

GRAY ANDERSON
Anything I can do, Mr. Mayor.

Gray leaves. The Mayor watches him. The look on his face gives new meaning to the word mistrust.

INT. EMILY SPENSER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In stark contrast to the chaos we’ve seen, Emily Spenser is still in her own world. Her iPod is still playing romantic music. She's still smiling at the champagne, the candles, the "Welcome Home, Roger" sign. And suddenly...
EMILY

Oh, God!

We might think she just reacted to the tragedy. But no. The clock on the wall reads: 9:30pm. She takes off her iPod, rushes over to the table, and grabs her keys, revealing...

The Post-It note. Roger’s flight. Kansas City Airport. 11:00pm. In a dash, Emily is out the door.

INT. EMILY’S VW JETTA – NIGHT

Emily turns the key. The radio plays static. But she has a CD in there before it even registers to her that something is wrong. The romantic music continues.

EXT. THE PINES – NIGHT


She turns right and takes the East Road out of town. Her Jetta gets smaller and smaller in the distance until it disappears. And then, finally, the Fire Truck arrives to block the East road out of town.

EXT. RURAL ROAD – NIGHT

Jake turns around. Did he hear something? He looks at the woods. The breeze rustles the leaves. He turns around and keeps walking. Three steps. He stops. He hears feet running at him. His imagination gets the better of him. The feet are getting closer. Jake holds up the 5 wood, ready to defend himself. And just when he – and we – were sure he was going to be attacked... two little kids run up to him. One boy. One girl. Terrified.

GIRL
Mister, please.

JAKE
What is it, kids? What’s wrong?

BOY
I think they’re dying.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

67  EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT
The kids drag a limping Jake onto an isolated rural road.

    GIRL
    Please, mister.  Hurry.

68  EXT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - PARKING LOT - NIGHT
The police gear up to go on the search and rescue mission.
Guns.  Ammunition.  Extra batteries.  The Sheriff looks at a
jittery YOUNG COP, who’s obviously terrified.

    SHERIFF
    Don’t worry, son.  There’s nothing
    out there we can’t handle.

ROD HAWKINS, the new man in town, passes some townspeople,
asking questions.  “Folks, it could have been an accident.  A
test.  Please.”  Rod approaches one of the younger cops, an
African American guy, about 25.

    ROD HAWKINS
    Excuse me, son?  Who’s in charge?

The cop points at the Sheriff, who is busy barking orders.

    SHERIFF
    ... Jimmy, get on the bullhorn and
    calm the folks down.

Jimmy clicks on the bullhorn.  As he tries to quiet the
crowd... Rod approaches the sheriff.

    ROD HAWKINS
    You the sheriff?  Rod Hawkins.

    SHERIFF
    Good to meet you, Mr. Hawkins, but
    I’m afraid we got our hands full
    right now... Damn fools!

Just then, the Sheriff sees 2 pick-up trucks enter the
parking lot.  Inside the trucks are the FATHERS of the
missing school kids with rifles.

    SHERIFF (CONT’D)
    Gray, will you tell the weekend
    warriors the drill, please?

Gray Anderson nods and approaches the trucks.
ROD HAWKINS
Could you use an extra man?

SHERIFF
No civilians. Mayor’s orders.

ROD HAWKINS
I used to be a cop. St. Louis.

SHERIFF
You know those roads out there?

ROD HAWKINS
No. Just moved to town.

SHERIFF
Then, I’m afraid you’d only slow us down. Sorry.

The Sheriff pats his shoulder, then turns. The only thing Rod hates more than machismo is a mistake.

ROD HAWKINS
Sheriff. You might want to get some black spray paint.

The Sheriff is confused. Rod points at the big Jericho emblem on the sides of the police car.

ROD HAWKINS (CONT’D)
To cover that. Look, I know you’re telling people it was an accident. And I hope it was. But if it was an attack, and there is chaos out there... you might not want the wrong people to know that Jericho is still here.

Rod starts to leave.

SHERIFF
Mr. Hawkins... The fire department could use an extra man. Next time, you’re with us.

Rod nods at the sheriff. Respect. As Rod leaves, Stephanie, Alvie, and his mother, Teresa Clemons, approach.

SHERIFF (CONT’D)
Mrs. Clemons. I already told you.

TERESA CLEMONS
But my daughter, Stacy--
SHERIFF
You want to help your daughter? Go rustle up some black spray paint.

She nods, eager to contribute in any way she can. They start running the other way, passing... Gray Anderson as he talks to the FATHERS in the pick-ups.

IRATE FATHER
But my son is out there!

GRAY ANDERSON
If it were up to me, I’d let you. But those are the Mayor’s orders.

INT. SHERIFF’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mayor Green and Peter sit with the radio operator, trying channel after channel. Static. Static.

RADIO OPERATOR
We have our frequencies, sir. But outside. It’s like no one’s there.

MAYOR GREEN
Is the problem digital?

RADIO OPERATOR
Maybe. We could switch to CB but it only has a radius of 15 miles. That doesn’t get us to the highway.

MAYOR GREEN
What about analog? A ham radio?

RADIO OPERATOR
That’s better, but we sold those off when we switched to digital.

MAYOR GREEN
I know where we can get one. Come on, Peter.

PETER
Dad, stay. We’ll send somebody.

MAYOR GREEN
No. He won’t talk to anybody else. (to radio operator) Try the CB. We’ll be back.
GRACIE LEIGH, her gossip long forgotten, throws black spray paint in a bag. Alvie’s mother digs in her purse for money.

GRACIE LEIGH
Mrs. Clemons, put your money away. We’re in this together, right?

She nods. Grateful. Gracie turns to Stephanie, staring absently at the cosmetics section. Thinking of her mother.

GRACIE LEIGH (CONT’D)
Stephanie, remember what the Mayor said. One explosion isn’t an attack. Right now, your mom could be calling you, worried.

Stephanie nods. Somewhat comforted.

The ramshackle trailer is cold and messy. One photograph of Dale Turner and his mother at a little league game. Even in the picture, his mother is holding a beer. Dale Turner sits motionless in front of the answering machine. We hear his mother’s voice on tape...

DALE’S MOTHER (V.O.)
(drunk)
... sorry I didn’t call sooner, Dale, but we decided to stay a couple extra days in Boulder.

BOYFRIEND (V.O.)
(drunker)
Put down the phone and come to bed.

DALE’S MOTHER (V.O.)
(laughs)
Stop that. It’s my kid. Honey? Honey, what are you starin’ at...

A low rumble. Glass shattering. And then... silence. Dale hits rewind. Then, he presses play. From the look on his face, we get the feeling he’s been doing this for an hour.

DALE’S MOTHER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
(drunk)
... sorry I didn’t call sooner, Dale, but we decided to stay--

Mercifully for Dale, the power blows.
We see the power grid begin to cut off across town from above, and then we move to specific locations...

Quick shots like a ricochet...

- The street lights turn off like a kick line.
- The radio operator’s static turns to... silence.
- The FIRE CHIEF shouting into a bullhorn “Folks, there is no fallout. We think it was an acci--” The streetlights turn dark. People scream. “We’re under attack.”
- The Shell gas station. Packed with cars. Some townspeople get what gas they can in the panic. The numbers click off. Gallons. Dollars. Cents. And then... complete darkness. The pumps stop. No more gas.
- Mimi Clark in her hotel room. Trying the landline phone for the 100th time. Losing it. Darkness.
- Road Out of Jericho. Jimmy and Bill spray paint the sides of the cars. Darkness. The EMT Crew Chief turns to the Sheriff. “Don’t worry. We’ll handle the town. Move.”
- The Mayor and Peter in the Oldsmobile as the traffic lights go black. “Hurry, Peter.”
- Stanley in his pick-up truck with Bonnie driving into the dark town. “I guess they already know.”
- Gracie Leigh alone in her store. Darkness. The broom in the corner now looks like an attacker. “Who is that?”

And then...

Jake’s eyes go wide. Near a cluster of trees, he sees... the Jericho elementary SCHOOL BUS. A flat tire on the rear axle. The hood smashed from the tree the bus hit.

Jake enters the bus and looks around. We don’t see it, but his face tells us the whole picture...

JAKE

Jesus.
EXT. ROAD OUT OF JERICHO - NIGHT

Two police cars head out into the night. Lights flashing. Passing the tall water tower that reads: Jericho. The police cars each split in a different direction.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

The image darts around with Jake as he takes in the sights of the bus. The BUS DRIVER is passed out on the driver’s seat with a severe concussion. Jake checks his pulse. Alive.

WOMAN’S VOICE (O.S.)

What’s happening?

Jake turns to his left. The pretty teacher, HEATHER LISINSKI, 26, slammed into the metal partition when the bus collided with the tree. She’s breathing shallow. Bleeding from the forehead. But still conscious. Frightened.

JAKE

I don’t know. Are you okay?

HEATHER

I can’t move.

JAKE

Can you feel your toes?

HEATHER

Yes. But I think... my insides. Are we under attack?

JAKE

It was one explosion. That’s not an attack yet.

Jake takes off his coat. Puts it on her to keep her warm.

HEATHER

Don’t worry about me. Worry about them.

Jake turns his attention to the school bus. The children are terrified. Some cry. With a never-ending chorus of...

DIFFERENT KIDS

“Mister, I want to go home.” “I want my mommy.” “I’m hungry.” “Please, Mister.” “I’m scared.” “They’re coming to kill us.”

And through the din, one little boy shouts at Jake.
LITTLE BOY
Mister, she’s sick. Mister, she can’t breathe.

Jake finally focuses on the little boy.

JAKE
What?

The little boy gestures to a little BLONDE GIRL, shaking with terror, her hands holding her neck. Jake rushes over.

JAKE (CONT’D)
What’s wrong? What’s wrong with her?

LITTLE BOY
When the bus stopped, Stacy was like this...

The little boy puts his chin on the seat in front of him. Jake moves his gaze to the frightened Blonde Girl. In a flash, Jake’s mind puts the pieces together. The little Blonde Girl took the whole impact on her throat.

JAKE
Are you okay? Let me see.

The little Blonde Girl removes her hands. Her throat is severely swollen. Jake does his best to stay calm.

JAKE (CONT’D)
(to Heather)
Do you have an ice pack? We have to stop the swelling now.

Heather weakly points to the first aid kit. The little Blonde Girl starts panting. Jake turns back to her.

JAKE (CONT’D)
It’s okay, Stacy. Calm down.

A little boy brings the first aid kit over. The little Blonde Girl looks at it. Panicked. Breathing faster.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Just breathe normally. You’re going to be okay.

The girl nods. Terrified. Her breathing faster.
JAKE (CONT'D)
Oh, God. Calm down. You’re making it worse.

Jake fumbles for the emergency ice pack. Punches it to break the seal. Shakes it up. The girl’s eyes start to flutter.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Stay with me. Come on.

The girl gives Jake a look of sheer horror, then she collapses in his arms. The children scream.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Wake up. Wake up.

He lays the girl on the floor and puts the ice pack on her throat. He frantically searches his pockets. He rushes over to the coat and pulls out the flask. He puts the metal of it near her nose. No breath.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Dammit!

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Alvie’s mother, Alvie, and Stephanie surround the Fire Chief along with a crowd, shouting questions. “Did they blow up the power station?” “We’re under attack!” And then... ROD HAWKINS approaches.

ROD HAWKINS
Folks, I doubt anyone blew up the power station. It was probably a drain on the system from Denver.

FIRE CHIEF
Are you the science teacher?

EXT. OLD SHACK HOUSE - NIGHT

Knock. Knock. Peter stands with Mayor Green, who coughs.

PETER
Dad, did you take your pills?

MAYOR GREEN
I’m fine. Don’t worry about me.

Suddenly, the door flies open and a shotgun is leveled at the Mayor’s chest. Chik-chik. After a beat, OLD MAN OLIVER, 68, a bonafide kook, puts down the gun.
OLD MAN OLIVER
Sorry, Mr. Mayor. Thought you were aliens. We’re under attack by aliens, don’t you know?

MAYOR GREEN
Oliver, do you have your ham radio?

OLD MAN OLIVER
Yeah, but I ain’t got power to run it.

PETER
I know someone with a generator.

OLD MAN OLIVER
Okay, then. 50 cents.

PETER
OLIVER!

OLD MAN OLIVER
I need my 50 cents.

The Mayor pulls out a dollar.

OLD MAN OLIVER (CONT’D)
Okay, let me get your change.

EXT. SHERIFF’S CAR – NIGHT
The Sheriff drives through the darkness.

SHERIFF
Jimmy, what’s your 20?

JIMMY (V.O.)
Willow Creek, Sheriff. Nothing.

SHERIFF
We’re almost to Cedar Run.

The nervous YOUNG COP stares at the Geiger counter, waiting for it to CLIK-CLIK. You can almost hear his heartbeat.

INT. SCHOOL BUS – NIGHT
JAKE
Kids, calm down. I need to focus.
Please. I need quiet-- DAMMIT!
WOULD YOU SHUT THE HELL UP!?

His shouting only made it worse. And then, out of nowhere...

HEATHER
THE FIRST PERSON WHO STOPS TALKING
DOESN'T HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL
TOMORROW!

Immediate silence. Jake looks at Heather, who nods at him.
"Go ahead." As he rummages through the bus driver’s pockets, Jake turns to the kids.

JAKE
Kids. I need everyone right now to help me. Who has a pen? Anyone have a pen?

LITTLE BOY
(hopeful)
We have pencils.

JAKE

GIRL (O.S.)
I have a straw.

JAKE
Who said that?

A girl raises her hand. Jake rushes over to her.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Let me see it. Let me see it.

She hands him her... juice box. Jake pulls out the straw.

JAKE (CONT’D)
It’s too thin. Does anyone else have a juice box?

30 hands go up.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Get them out. Now. What’s your name?

Jake points to the first little girl who raised her hand.
JULIE
Julie.

JAKE
Give your straws to Julie. Quick.

Jake moves back to the first aid kit. Grabs two band-aids. The kids all hand the straws to Julie.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Kids, put the straws in a circle.

The kids do it literally.

JAKE (CONT'D)
(barks)
No. No. No. Not a circle circle.

The kids don’t understand. Heather gestures with her hand...

HEATHER
Like your moms when they measure spaghetti. Or pick up sticks before you drop them.

The kids get it. They start putting the juice box straws in a tight bunch, making the equivalent of a wide straw. Jake hands 2 band aids to Julie.

JAKE
Make it tight.

Jake fumbles through his pockets as Heather guides the kids.

HEATHER
(calm)
Nice and tight on the bottom. Good Julie. Now, the top. Nice, Roy.

Jake pulls out his father’s... SWISS ARMY KNIFE. He opens the knife and flask. Then, he douses the blade with alcohol.

INT. SHERIFF’S CAR - NIGHT

The Young Cop keeps looking at the Geiger counter. Paranoid.

JIMMY (V.O.)

SHERIFF
No. We don’t-- wait. I see something. This could be it.
INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

Jake bends over the Blonde girl. The kids lean, staring.

HEATHER
Give him some room, kids.

The kids back away. Jake grips the knife in his right hand. He looks at the soft skin in the divit below her neck. He puts his sprained left arm on the girl’s chest. Wincing.

JAKE
Who’s the strongest kid?

17 hands go up. 8 boys. 7 girls. “Me.” “Me.” “Me.”

HEATHER
Danny. You.

Danny, wide-eyed, approaches.

JAKE
Danny. I hurt my left arm. I need you to hold down her shoulders in case she wakes up. And don’t look.

Danny is frightened, but does as he’s told. Jake bends over, his left arm now on her forehead. He brings the blade to her neck. Danny shuts his eyes. We don’t see it. But Jake starts making the incision. Danny slowly peaks open his left eye. Curiosity killed the cat. We see Danny’s reaction to the blood. And Jake’s focus.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Grab the gauze. Stay with me, son.

INT. JIMMY’S POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Jimmy drives. Bill’s in the passenger seat.

SHERIFF (V.O.)
Jimmy. We see the bus.

JIMMY
Thank God. What’s your 20?

SHERIFF (V.O.)
About 6 miles west of 183.

JIMMY
You want us?
SHERIFF (V.O.)
Keep looking for Jake.

JIMMY
10-4.

Jimmy holsters the radio. After all the intense focus of the last few hours, the relief breaks him. He starts crying.

BILL
Better not let the sheriff catch you do that.

Jimmy smiles. Bill pats his back.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

Jake finishes the incision and lifts up his arm. He wipes his forearm on his forehead. Blood. He nods to Danny, who gives him the gauze. Jake mops up the small pool of blood on the girl’s neck.

JAKE
Julie. Where are my straws?

Julie hands him the juice box straws all wrapped tight. He brings the contraption to the incision. Danny watches as Jake inserts the juice box straws into the incision. His mouth hangs open. “Wow.” Jake bends down, revealing the CPR sign behind him. He moves his mouth to the straws. He blows. The girl’s chest doesn’t move.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Come on, Stacy.

INT. SHERIFF’S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Through the windshield, we see a bus. The men in the sheriff’s car are ecstatic.

SHERIFF
Let’s not start cheering. Stay focused. They may need help.

The car stops. The Sheriff and his men move toward the bus.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Danny hands Jake 2 band-aids. Jake quickly tapes them around the juice box straws to make the seal around the air hole tighter. He moves to it again. Blows into the tube. The girl’s chest moves up and down. Jake blows again.
JAKE
Come on, kid.

He blows again. Again. Finally, the little girl takes a
breath on her own. The kids are awestruck. Jake exhales.
He looks at the blood on his shaking hands.

HEATHER
How did you know how to do that?

Jake turns to the pretty teacher.

JAKE
Military school. My father sent
me.

HEATHER
Were you a soldier?

JAKE
No. A screw up.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

The flashlight rises, lighting the Sheriff’s face. He looks
shocked. A reverse angle reveals that he’s not looking at
Jake, Heather, the kids, or the School Bus Driver, but a...

PRISON GUARD

Shot through the forehead. He moves the light to the bus. A
State Trooper is dead. The rest of the bus is empty.

The Sheriff’s men shine their flashlights on the outside of
the bus. We see the words...

KANSAS STATE MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

89 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Rod Hawkins climbs quickly up the telephone pole. He looks out over the town. People roam the streets. Frightened.

ROD HAWKINS
Chief! You need to get some lights on. Folks are starting to lose it.

90 EXT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Stanley Peterson’s pick-up truck comes to a skid. He opens the door and rushes to the house. Bonnie follows.

91 EXT. SHELL GAS STATION - NIGHT

The station is still crowded as the crowds of cars try to untangle themselves in the darkness. Cars honk.

92 INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Gail and Ann open the door to reveal... Stanley and Bonnie Peterson. Stanley is sad. Bonnie is shell-shocked.

STANLEY
Mrs. Green, we uh... we saw something. It’s horrible. You should get Jake and your husband.

93 EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Stephanie Lancaster starts crying. Alvie holds her.

STEPHANIE
I told my mom I wish she’d die.

94 EXT. JERICHO STREET - NIGHT

People rush down the streets. In the middle of this storm of activity, we see a lone figure, walking. The trailer park kid, Dale Turner. With a blank expression on his face.

95 INT. GRACIE LEIGH’S SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Gracie walks through the darkness. Every corner has something that looks like an attacker. A broom. A globe. Finally, a KNOCK makes her scream. She shines the flashlight through the glass door. Standing there is Dale Turner.
INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT
The cell phone casts a glow on Stanley Peterson, Bonnie, Ann, and finally Gail, who holds the cell phone to her face and looks at the picture on it.

GAIL
Oh, dear God.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT
The freezing night. Quickly. We move from the jack, hoisting up the bus, to the rear of the bus where Jake grabs the spare tire. He throws the spare on the ground. Thud. He connects the lug wrench with the first lug nut on the flat tire. He kneels down, his leg throbbing. Grimaces. Fights through it. He leans in and pushes with all the strength in his right arm against the lug wrench. Nothing.

He tries again, GROANING this time. Nothing. He’s gotta use his legs. He stands, steadies the lug wrench, brings his bad leg up. And just as he brings it down as hard as he can...

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT
Heather and the children watch Jake as his foot slips off the tire iron and his bad leg buckles. Shrieking with pain.

JAKE (O.S.)
WHERE’S THE GOD DAMN RESCUE PARTY!?

INT. JIMMY’S POLICE CAR - NIGHT
Jimmy and Bill look at the highway.

BILL
It’s like a ghost town.

JIMMY
Bill, let’s face it. He didn’t come this way.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT
Jake rushes into the bus.

JAKE
Kids. I need you. Now, dammit.

JULIE
Mister, you swear a lot.
Jake and Heather exchange a brief smile and then... he looks her over. She is getting more and more pale.

JAKE
How you holding up?

HEATHER
(not fine)
Fine. How about your leg?

Jake’s eyes say it all. He’s losing blood fast.

HEATHER (CONT’D)
Hurry.

INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Silence like a heartbeat. Gail’s eyes scan Bonnie’s cell phone again. We see her boyfriend’s smiling face. Then, the image pans to reveal... the fire ball 5 miles behind him.

Gail turns to Stanley, sad, and Bonnie, who is on Mars with shock. Gail struggles to keep her own composure.

GAIL
Where was this?

STANLEY
Atlanta, Mrs. Green.

GAIL
We’ll notify the Mayor. Thank you, Stanley. Bonnie. God bless you.

STANLEY PETERSON
Ma’am... I’m sure Jake will be okay.

Gail nods. Thank you. Stanley nods back. Truth is, neither of them are sure. Especially when...

BONNIE PETERSON
No, he’s not. He’s not okay. Nobody is okay.

STANLEY PETERSON
Bonnie--

BONNIE PETERSON
Jake’s dead. Don’t you get that? Why don’t you get that? He’s dead.
The kids are in a line on the side of the bus. Jake bends down on his knee. Pain. He puts the lug wrench onto the flat tire’s lug nut. Holds it in place.

JAKE
Go.

The first kid in the line runs at the tire iron and jumps. He lands on it. Doesn’t budge.

JAKE (CONT’D)
Out of the way. Next!


JAKE (CONT’D)
Please, help us God.

Cars honk in the darkness. With no power, the pumps will not work. NORMAN PERRY, whose labor dispute with Shep Cale feels like an ancient memory, kneels by his SUV, screwing the cap on his extra 2 gallon gas can. A BURLY MAN approaches.

BURLY MAN
Hey. You get extra there?

NORMAN
Sorry.

BURLY MAN
What do you mean sorry?

NORMAN
First come. First serve.

BURLY MAN
You already filled your car. What? You gonna mow your lawn?

NORMAN
Sorry. My family--

BURLY MAN
We all have families. Come on.

The Burly Man reaches for the can. Tug of war.
INT. SHELL GAS STATION - CONVENIENCE MART - NIGHT

An ANGRY CROWD stares down the convenience store CLERK.

ANGRY MAN
But what if ours is contaminated?!

CLERK
Folks, I can’t let you have the water without paying for it.

ANGRY WOMAN
It’s not my fault your credit card machine’s down!

EXT. BAILEY’S TAVERN - NIGHT

Mayor Green helps Peter unload the ham radio from the trunk. The Mayor has to stop. He begins coughing. Pale and sick.

PETER
Dad, you don’t look well. Let me take you home.

MAYOR GREEN
I’m fine. Let’s get it inside.

INT. BAILEY’S TAVERN - NIGHT

The tavern is now half full. The people with no families to go home to are riding this out together. The doors burst open and the Mayor shouts at the SEXY BARMAID, known to her friends and neighbors as MARY BAILEY, 32.

MAYOR GREEN (O.S.)
Mary! We need your generator!

INT. GREEN FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Gail hands a sealed envelope to the EMT Crew Chief.

GAIL
Get this letter to my husband immediately.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

We see a pair of little feet run toward the lug wrench. The feet jump. The feet land. Click. The lug nut budges. The image tracks up to a little fat girl. Jake smiles.

JAKE
What’s your name?
HILDA
Hilda.

Jake smiles at her. Hilda smiles back. A long beat.

JAKE
(funny)
I Didn’t Tell You To Stop Jumping.
Come On!

Hilda goes back to starting position. Jake shakes his head.

JAKE (CONT’D)
God, is there anything worse than handling kids?

109  EXT. SHELL GAS STATION - NIGHT
The answer is yes. Handling adults. The gas can is dropped as the Burly Man throws the first punch.

110 INT. SHELL GAS STATION - CONVENIENCE MART - NIGHT
Over the shouting protests of the Clerk, the angry crowd begins taking the convenience store’s water supply.

CLERK
Where are you going!? You can’t just take it!

111 INT. GRACIE LEIGH’S SUPERMARKET - NIGHT
Dale Turner leaves the store through the back, his arms loaded with frozen foods. Gracie is confused and frightened.

GRACIE LEIGH
Dale, what are you doing, honey? Please, don’t steal from me!

112  EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT
The Fire Chief, Rod Hawkins, and the Firemen are surrounded on all sides. Gray Anderson watches them confer.

FIRE CHIEF
Lights. Lights. Well, we got a couple portable generators. And some flashlights. Not enough to cover the streets, though.

FIRE MAN (V.O.)
Chief, we got real problems down here at the Shell Station.
Gray Anderson hears the news about the Shell Station. He considers. Then, he leaves the scene.

EXT. BAILEY’S TAVERN – NIGHT

Peter stands with Mary Bailey, the sexy barmaid, out in the alley. He’s on his knee, trying to start the generator.

MARY BAILEY
Peter, what are we going to do?

PETER
I don’t know.

MARY BAILEY
I’m scared. Peter...

Peter turns around. She looks at him. One look and we suddenly realize... they are not talking about the bomb.

PETER
I can’t... we can’t... not anymore.

MARY BAILEY
But... Peter, I need you.

PETER
I’m sorry. I have to be there for my family.

INT. BAILEY’S TAVERN – NIGHT

The lights come on. The frightened crowd surrounds the Mayor as he turns on the ham radio.

MAYOR GREEN
This is Mayor Johnston Green of Jericho, Kansas... we are trying to contact the governor, the national guard, and the Crawford Power plant. Is anyone there?

EXT. SCHOOL BUS – NIGHT

The 4 lug nuts are on the ground. Jake slaps himself a couple of times to stay awake, but the blood loss is making it difficult. Hilda huffs and puffs.

HILDA
Are you okay, mister?
JAKE
Just don’t let me fall asleep,
Hilda. Come on, guys.

Jake directs two boys pull the flat tire off of the bus.
They pick up the spare tire. Jake helps them guide it into
the right spot. Click. Jake grabs the lug wrench, puts the
lug nut in place, and starts turning.

EXT. JERICHO STREET - NIGHT
Gray Anderson continues walking, past terrified townspeople.

INT. BAILEY’S TAVERN - NIGHT
Mayor Green keeps trying channels. Static. Static. Mary
Bailey looks at Peter. Peter looks away. The EMT CREW CHIEF
enters with the sealed envelope.

EMT CREW CHIEF
Sir... a letter from your wife.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT
The Fire Chief listens to the radio.

RADIO (V.O.)
We’re 2 minutes from the Shell
station, chief.

The Fire Chief puts his radio away. He looks at the portable
generators, flashlights, and lanterns on the streets. Sighs.

FIRE CHIEF
We’re just not going to have enough
light.

FIRE MAN
Maybe torches? I don’t know.

VOICE (O.S.)
Turn on your headlights.

The Fire Chief looks around in the crowd. They find the face
of... Rod Hawkins.

ROD HAWKINS
Have everyone turn on their head-
lights and point them at the street.

The Fire Chief looks at Rod Hawkins.
FIRE CHIEF
Are you sure you’re not the science teacher?

EXT. GRACIE LEIGH’S SUPERMARKET – BACK ALLEY – NIGHT
Dale Turner exits the store, his arms loaded with frozen dinners. And just when we thought he was indeed looting, Gracie Leigh follows, her own arms loaded with frozen foods. The image follows Gracie as she lays the dinners on...

... and enormous stack of frozen foods. Dale has turned the freezing alley into a makeshift freezer. It looks like Dale and she put the whole store in the back alley.

DALE
The food won’t go rotten as long as the weather stays below freezing. But we need to get a tarp up to keep the sun off of it tomorrow morning. Hopefully, they’ll fix the power before then.

GRACIE LEIGH
Thank you for this, Dale. But I can take it from here. You should get on back to your mother.

Dale is silent. Then, he begins crying. It finally dawns on Gracie that Dale is all alone in this world. She holds him.

INT. BAILEY’S TAVERN – NIGHT
The crowd watches as Mayor Green reads the letter. We see a few words. “Bonnie Peterson...” “Atlanta...” At the bottom of the letter... “Honey, how many pills do you have left?”

PETER
What does the letter say, dad?

EXT. SCHOOL BUS – NIGHT
Jake tightens that last lug nut. Starts to lower the jack.

INT. SCHOOL BUS – CONTINUOUS
Julie sits with Heather, who looks ghastly now.

HILDA
Miss?

HEATHER
Yes, Julie?
JULIE
Are we going to have school anymore?

Heather is about to say, “Of course” when she stops. She realizes she has no idea what tomorrow will bring.

HEATHER
We’ll figure it out, honey.

JULIE
I vote no.

Heather smiles, weakly. Just then, Hilda and the two boys rush into the bus, followed by Jake. He moves to the school bus driver, grabs him with his right arm, and struggles to drag him out of the seat.

INT. BAILEY’S TAVERN - NIGHT

Mayor Green looks at the frightened crowd. Somberly. He folds the letter.

MAYOR GREEN
Bonnie Peterson’s boyfriend was killed outside of Atlanta by... another explosion. We can rule out accidents now. We’re under attack.

EXT. SHELL GAS STATION - NIGHT

The fight has spread. People are beginning to loot more than the water at the convenience mart. The Fire Men scream.

FIRE MEN
“For God’s sake!” “Stop it!”
“We’re all in this together!”

INT. BAILEY’S TAVERN - NIGHT

The Mayor turns back to the ham radio. He struggles to keep his composure in front of the distraught crowd as he leans into the ham radio microphone.

MAYOR GREEN
This is Mayor Johnston Green of Jericho, Kansas. Is there anyone out there who might have seen... (voice breaks) ... my son?
Jake gets in the driver’s seat. He starts the engine. He
blinks twice. Feeling faint. His leg bleeding. He fights it. But he can’t. He collapses. His head hits the steering
wheel with a...

GONG! The church bell is ringing. The Mayor, Peter, Mary
Bailey, and the others look at each other.

GONG! Gail and Ann leave the house to see what’s going on.
Ann carries the baby. Gail holds Woody’s hand.

Hilda, crying, pounds on Jake’s shoulders.

HILDA
Mister, wake up! Please, wake up!

GONG! The noise quiets down the crowd.

GONG! Alvie, his mother, Stephanie, Rod Hawkins, and the
Fire Chief all begin walking toward the sound of the bell.

Hilda pounds on him. Jake opens his eyes. Shakes out the
cobwebs. Hilda keeps punching.

JAKE
Thanks, Hilda. You can stop
hitting me now.

GONG! The two Margarets leave the house with the children.

GONG! Stanley Peterson puts a comforting hand on Bonnie’s
shoulder. She begins to cry.
The bus inches away from the tree it struck. Jake backs up the bus. Gets it onto the road.

EXT. MAYFLOWER HOTEL - NIGHT

GONG! Mimi Clark leaves the hotel to follow the sound.

EXT. GRACIE LEIGH’S SUPERMARKET - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

GONG! Gracie heads toward the sound. Dale doesn’t.

GRACIE LEIGH
Dale, honey... aren’t you coming?

DALE
Someone has to guard your food.

GRACIE LEIGH
This is Jericho. We don’t lock our doors. No one’s going to steal it.

DALE
Not everyone is as nice as you, Mrs. Leigh. And there are animals. It’s okay. I’ll be fine.

GRACIE LEIGH
Thank you, Dale. You might have just saved the town, you know?

DALE
Anything for you, ma’am. I won’t let anything ever happen to you.

Gracie walks away, but not before looking back to see Dale, stomping his feet and blowing on his hands to keep warm. Having gone from the age of 17 to 40 in the space of 5 hours.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

GONG! The throngs of people descend upon the church. We see quick reunions as Woody runs over to Jimmy’s Margaret.

WOODY
Mom, I took care of the nice ladies!

Peter rushes to Ann, much to Mary Bailey’s dismay. And finally, Mayor Green joins Gail with a hug.
On the last GONG, the headlights and lanterns go on, illuminating... GRAY ANDERSON. He stands in front of the church on the top of the hill, welcoming his town.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

Jake looks at the odometer. The gas gauge is hovering on empty. He turns to Heather, who fights to stay awake.

JAKE
Don’t you quit on me.

Heather nods, weakly. Jake turns back to the road, looks to his left, and his eyes open WIDE.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

The school bus passes the PRISON BUS and keeps moving down the road. The image follows it, then moves to the other side of the prison bus. The Sheriff and all of his men are dead on the ground. Their uniforms stripped off. Their car gone. The image moves to the Sheriff’s hand where his radio starts making a crackling sound.

JIMMY (V.O.)
ACT FIVE

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

The gas gauge is now below the red. Jake glares at it. Woozy, he blinks a couple of times. Pale. He turns and sees Heather, who smiles at him weakly. Until...

JAKE
Does this bus have a gas can?

She shakes her head, no. Jake looks at the gas gauge again. Looks at the rearview mirror at the children.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Kids... do you know what road we’re on?
   (off their “no”)
This is Cedar Run. If you go straight ahead for a long way, you’ll come to a stop light. Then, if you make a left...

JULIE
Which way is left?

Jake looks at Heather, who nods, sadly. She understands that the children might have to make it back on their own.

HEATHER
   (gestures with her hand)
If you hold up your hand and stick out your thumb, it makes an “L”, see? That’s left.

Jake smiles at Heather.

JAKE
They don’t pay you enough.
   (to kids)
So, kids, turn in the direction of the “L” and walk straight ahead for a long way. That’s where town is.

The kids all nod to each other. “Oh.” And then...

JULIE
Why are you telling us this?

Jake looks at Heather.

JAKE
You want to take this one?
The crowd is noisy. Torches, flashlights, and lanterns illuminate faces, casting shadows. Gray Anderson stands at the pulpit as Mayor Green moves to the front of the room.

GRAY ANDERSON
With all due respect, Mr. Mayor, this isn’t a debate about road signs and taxes. We have a missing bus. No police. Fireman doing policemen’s jobs. No plan.

PETER
Gray, how dare you politicize--

MAYOR GREEN
(under his breath)
Dammit, Peter.


GRAY ANDERSON
Politicize? Peter, I’m not talking to my opponent. I’m talking to my Mayor. There was almost a riot at the Shell station, and I haven’t seen him in hours. What? You think I planned that just to get a few votes?

Peter is silenced. He sits down.

GRAY ANDERSON (CONT’D)
I don’t care about the election. I care about survival. We might be on our own here, and I need to know what my Mayor intends to do.

The Mayor takes the stage. Scans the crowd. He collects himself and gives a heartfelt address. He means every word.

MAYOR GREEN
Folks, I know we’ve been through a lot tonight, but I want to tell you something. I have been to big cities. I have been to foreign countries. And I would take the good people...

Shep, the union boss, nods. He’s not being cruel, but...
SHEP
... good people of Jericho over any city. We know, Mr. Mayor. We’ve heard the speech. We need to know what you’re going to do now.

The Mayor is taken aback. If he weren’t such a proud man, you might have seen his heart break a little bit. Gail watches, concerned. Not for the Mayor. For her husband.

MAYOR GREEN
Well, uh... Shep, I hope you don’t think I’ve been asleep at the switch here. I have spent tonight trying to contact the governor to coordin--

SHEP
But what if the governor is dead, Mr. Mayor?

That starts the seed. People we’ve come to know begin asking the real questions. Some helpful. Some frightened. Louder and louder. The Mayor does his best to keep up.

MAYOR GREEN
Now, hold on. There have been no reports of anything happening to Topek--

IRATE WOMAN
How are there going to be reports with no phones?

NORMAN PERRY
Or no televisions.

MAYOR GREEN
Ma’am please. STEPHANIE
Did they hit New York?

MAYOR GREEN
(answer ing irate woman )
We’ll get the phones working ag--
(to Stephanie)
We’ll find out about New York.

MIMI CLARK
My mother is in DC!

GRACIE LEIGH
How are we going to get the power back on, Mr. Mayor?
WOMAN’S VOICE
What about firewood? I’m

MAN’S VOICE
Is the drinking water okay?

MAYOR GREEN
Folks, one at a time.

BURLY MAN
What happens when we run out

JIMMY’S MARGARET
Let the Mayor speak!

Gray Anderson slowly steps back into the shadows and watches as the town swallows the Mayor with questions he can’t possibly answer. Peter bangs the pulpit for order. People shout at him angrily. Teasing.

SHEP
Oh, Peter, put your gavel away.

MAYOR GREEN
Please, folks. Calm down.

IRATE FATHER
Calm down? My boy is still out there, and you--

MAYOR GREEN
The sheriff is looking for your boy and my boy right now.

IRATE MOTHER
And why weren’t there more police in the budget?!

IRATE WOMAN
Why didn’t we have more emergency workers?

MAYOR GREEN
The school needed books.

Gail joins the fray.

GAIL
People, please. This shouting isn’t helping anything.

She is swallowed. Voices shouting. Gray Anderson watches the chaos with a measured eye. A faint, pleased look. He takes the stage, raises his arms to give the town the leadership it needs, and just as he opens his mouth...

HONK. HONK. HONK.
EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The school bus limps into town, through the rows of headlights and lanterns, its horn honking. It stops in front of the proud statue.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Jake, relieved almost to the point of tears, puts the bus in park. And turns off the engine with a shaking hand.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The people rush out of the church, down the hill, to the school bus, as Jake staggers out. He looks like a ghost.

JAKE
Help them.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

Illuminated by the town’s headlights and Mr. Henderson’s lanterns, we see the best of Jericho at work.

The Fire Chief guides the EMT vans to the bus. The EMT Crew Chief pushes little Stacy. Alvie and his mom follow with Stephanie.

TERESA CLEMONS
Oh, Stacy.

EMT CREW CHIEF
Don’t worry, ma’am. We got her.

Little Danny is scooped up by the Young Couple who first told the Mayor about the school bus. The second the Irate Father sees his little girl, Hilda, he bursts into tears of relief. The Irate Mother hugs her precious Julie.

Gail, Mayor Green, Peter, and Ann move to the bus. The crowd parts and they see Jake, being loaded on a stretcher.

GAIL
Oh, Jake!

Gail rushes up to him. Grabs his left hand. Winces. “Ow!”

GAIL (CONT'D)
(cries laughs)
Sorry. Sorry.

The crowd whispers, “Is that Jake Green?” Seconds later... Peter, Mayor Green, and Ann approach Jake.
EMT MAN
Mrs. Green, we have to move him.

Gail backs away. Mayor Green and Jake look at each other. A mixture of every emotion. Mayor Green touches Jake’s good shoulder. Peter watches with a trace of jealousy.

JAKE
Dad, there’s an empty prison bus out there.

MAYOR GREEN
I’ll take care of it.

Mayor Green backs away, but not before...

JAKE
Oh, Dad. One more thing.

Mayor Green approaches and Jake puts something in his hand. The EMT Crew carts Jake away and loads him on the ambulance with Heather Lisinski. The doors close.

INT. AMBULANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Heather and Jake ride in the back of the Ambulance. Jake turns to Heather. They smile. A lifetime in one night.

JAKE
What’s your name?

HEATHER
Heather.

JAKE
Jake.

HEATHER
It’s nice to meet you, Jake.

JAKE
You, too.

They both finally close their eyes for sleep.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

As the ambulances pull away, Mayor Green looks at the SWISS ARMY KNIFE in his hand. He turns to his town. Mayor Green is now a man who has seen the dark side of his town and will never be the same. He speaks from the heart.
MAYOR GREEN
You said you’ve heard the speech before, Shep. But you ever wonder why I say it? Because I happen to trust you people. Because I love my town so much that I never thought you could riot.

The crowd stares back at him. He doesn’t blink.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
You want to blame me for that? Well, you go right ahead if you’re fresh out of mirrors. Have someone treat you like children. Have a dictator if you want. But it’s never going to be me.

The crowd looks down.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
Something happened in Denver. Something happened in Atlanta. And there’s a chance we could wake up and find out that’s where it stopped. So, until we know, are we going to use our imaginations to solve problems or cause them?

The Burly Man and Norman Perry look at the ground.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
We can get the power on. We can find out how big this thing is. We can feed ourselves. Protect ourselves. Fight if we have to.

Mimi Clark looks over at Stanley and Bonnie Peterson.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
But the only way that’s going to happen is if we work together. I know where I stand. How about you?

Gray Anderson watches the crowd. Silent. Digesting.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
My son said there is an empty prison bus out there, so until the police return, I need guards on every entrance and exit out of town. Volunteers?
The Fire Chief, Rod Hawkins, and the Burly Man raise their hands along with some of the other men in town.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
Thank you. Everyone else, go home. We’ll meet at the town hall in the morning. And folks... don’t you dare break my heart again.

As the crowd disperses, the Mayor turns to his family.

MAYOR GREEN (CONT’D)
Come on. Let’s go to Jake.

Some people shake hands. Like the EMT Crew Chief and the Fire Chief. Other people are more suspicious. Like Shep and Norman Perry - union and management. Still others reach out to each other. Like the two Margarets with the kids.

BILL’S MARGARET
Don’t worry. Jimmy and Bill will be home soon.

Just before the Mayor gets into Peter’s Oldsmobile, he looks over at Gray Anderson. The men lock eyes. Both smart, both tough, both savvy. It’s going to be a dogfight.

As the volunteers team up to stand watch, the Fire Chief approaches Rod Hawkins, looking out into the night. The world outside of Jericho.

FIRE CHIEF
What are you thinking, Mr. Hawkins?

ROD HAWKINS
I was just wondering what it was all going to look like in the morning.

The two men stand silently, watching. The image pushes past them into the darkness. Into the world outside of Jericho.

INT. EMILY SPENSER’S HOUSE - NIGHT

We see the champagne. The ice is now melted. We see the “Welcome Home, Roger” sign. We see the candles, still waiting to be lit. We end on the Post-It Note: Roger’s flight. Kansas City Airport. 11:00pm.

END OF EPISODE