FADE IN:

EXT. MAIN STREET USA - DAY

The sun shines over a small town. It’s your typical post apocalyptic scenario. Shattered windows. Abandoned cars. Not a soul in sight.... Oh wait, there’s one.

A WOMAN lumbers along the street. Outstretched arms. Ragged appearance. Constant drooling. Yes, my friends, we have ourselves a ZOMBIE.

SUPER: AFTER

Zombie woman wanders close into frame. A loud horn blares.

She turns, just as ---

-- A black, monster truck with fiery painted flames on the side, reading “BLACK BETTY”, and equipped with a protracted grill, SLAMS into her. The impact decapitates her. Her head bounces off the windshield.

BEN (O.S.)

Whoa!

INT. BLACK BETTY - DAY

Driving the truck is BEN (30). Black. Lean. A little crazy.

BEN

This ain’t no crosswalk lady!

Ben turns to his passenger --

-- A white, scrawny, dude named JOHNNY (20). Quiet. Reserved.

BEN

See that head pop off?

He didn’t. He shut his eyes.

JOHNNY

Are you sure about this? We should have told the others.

BEN

I already know what they would’ve said. Is it worth it? Can we do it? Then they want to form a committee to discuss it. Screw that, we’ll be done and back before they know it.

JOHNNY

How can you be sure it’s safe?
BEN
Trust me kid. It’s well protected.

EXT. MAIN STREET USA - DAY
As Betty exits the town -- she runs over a ratty sign lying in the middle of the road. It reads

Welcome to Historic Culpeper Virginia.

EXT. MAIN GATE - DAY
Betty drives through the open gate, up a curved green hill, toward some large facility.

Tall grass blocks the majority of the granite sign. The only visible part reads --

GRESS
onservation
ony Road

EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY
Betty stops outside the primary entrance. Tipped cars litter the sidewalk leading up to the door. All the windows are boarded up. Barricaded.

A DOZEN ZOMBIES loiter nearby.

INT. BLACK BETTY
Johnny peels a banana. Takes a bite.

JOHNNY
(mouth full)
Umm, I don’t think we’re getting in that way.

BEN
Let’s try the back.

EXT. BUILDING REAR - DAY
Betty turns onto the grass. Drives up a small hill. Crosses over the green to the rear of the building, which for the most part, has been constructed deep into the hillside.

A three story, semicircular, concrete structure. A terraced arcade, covered with creeping ivy. An oval wading pool lies in front. It is like some cross between a Federal government building and a college campus.
DOZENS OF ZOMBIES, mostly students, roam about the area.

I/E. BLACK BETTY - DAY

Ben and Johnny gaze at the imposing structure.

**BEN**
At one time it was a Federal Reserve. One of the most secure vaults in the whole country. Uncle Sam stored billions in there. The front entrance used to have a machine gun nest.

**JOHNNY**
What happened?

**BEN**
When they couldn’t find use for it anymore, they gave it to Congress.

Johnny, still eating, stares at the parade of flesh eaters.

**JOHNNY**
There sure is a lot of them.
(pause)
You sure this is worth it?

Ben shoots him a stern look - You bet your ass it is.

They step out of the truck.

Ben is wearing camouflage cargo pants and undershirt, topped with a black beret. A machete hangs from his hip, a holstered Beretta on the other.

Johnny wears a ripped plaid button down over a “Beck” concert shirt. He’s armed with a hockey stick. The blade has been shaved down to a sharp spear.

Ben retrieves a teargas gun from the bed of the truck. Loads up a cannister. Points it away from the building. Fires it.

Shooom!

**BEN**
Follow the birdie.

The cannister sails through the air -- lands on the grass.

The smoke grenade emits a hazy, pink cloud.

The smoke diverts the zombies attention. They drag their feet away from the building toward the pink mist.
They sure do love that pink shit don’t they?

(mouth full)
Umhf uhh.

Why’re you always eating?

Johnny takes a last bite. Tosses away the peel.

Potassium.

They hop back into Betty. In a low gear, they quietly drive toward the arcade, which is now free and clear of zombies.

Ben and Johnny walk across the arcade’s lower terrace. Enter the building through one of the many blown out windows.

Natural light streams through the open three tiered space. Beech wood panels line the walls from ceiling to floor.

This way.

Ben heads past a large staircase. Johnny follows close.

How do you know your way around?

I took the tour here once.

They walk toward an antiquated in-house

MOVIE THEATER

The white marquee heralds William Cameron Menzies – “The Shape of Things to Come”

Film posters hang behind glass frames -- Tourneur’s “I Walked with a Zombie” – Vincent Price’s “The Last Man on Earth”.

TWO ZOMBIES loiter about, waiting for the next screening.

Ben takes out his machete. Jogs toward the zombies.
It was 1966. Ten guys from Pittsburg, who didn’t have a pot to piss in, or a window to throw it out of.

In fluid motion, he swings his blade, slicing the first zombie’s head clean off --

But each one managed to scrape together six hundred bucks... And with that...

-- He plunges the machete into the second zombie’s skull.

Thwack!

They changed history.

They move briskly down an empty hallway.

The selection process started in 88. Only twenty-five entries a year were chosen. Those deemed worthy of cultural significance.

Ben opens the door to the stairwell.

It made the list in 99. The last year before the new millennium.

A final warning cry.

They step inside.

Walking down. Johnny stares up at the dim emergency lights.

I don’t get it. How does this place still have power?

At the height of the cold war, this place was used as a possible fallout shelter. At one time it could support five hundred people for an entire month.
JOHNNY
Wait!

They stop. Ben turns.

JOHNNY
How do we know it’s not. Maybe there’s people holed up down there?

BEN
I gotta doubt it. The shit all went south too fast.

Ben takes another step. Stops.

BEN
But stay frosty.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY

Ben pokes his head out the stairwell door. A cold, long, empty hallway. Dimly lit. Clear of the undead.

They walk. Ben whispers.

BEN
It first premiered, October 1, 68. Nobody had ever seen anything like it. The first audiences went wild.

They turn a corner into a small space filled with FOUR ZOMBIES. Past employees: dressed shirts, ties, and lab coats.

Across the room, Ben spots a door marked - Record Room

Ben taps his machete against the wall. Tink, tink.

The zombies turn. Move toward them.

Ben readies his blade.

BEN
It struck a chord like nothing before. The word began to spread.

Ben slices the head of ZOMBIE 1. Snatches the dead woman’s long hair before the lopped head can drop.

Swings it like a bowling ball --

BEN
This was something different.

-- Splattering the head of ZOMBIE 2.
The man was a genius, influencing a whole generation who followed him.

Johnny swings his stick/spear into the neck of ZOMBIE 3. Zombie 4 lunges for Ben. Too close for his comfort. He sticks the machete blade into the creatures mouth -- Pushes the zombie’s back toward the wall.

Craven.

Wham! The impact slices off the top off his head. Shhwink!

Hooper.

The body drops to the floor.

Carpenter.

Ben turns to Johnny.

It all started with him.

INT. RECORD ROOM

A small space. Rows of ordered keys line one wall. A dusty computer desk in the corner. Ben checks the computer, but the system remains dormant.

Ben finds a dusty binder marked - Film Catalog

Nobody realized it was a warning call from the future.

Ben moves to the desk. Opens the binder.

Nobody listened.

He flips through the pages. Finds the record list.

They’re listening now.

He runs his finger down the registry. Stops.

Found it! Vault room 242.
He swivels the chair around. Jumps up from his seat. Searches the wall of keys. Finds the corresponding vault key.

Holds it up to Johnny.

BEN

Magic.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT - CORRIDOR

They enter a cold, long corridor. Fifty doors on each side. Very militaristic. Bunker like. Dim emergency lights.

JOHNNY

This place is massive.

BEN

Ninety miles of fortified underground tunnels. You could drop a nuke on this place, and it would shake it off.

They creep along another long corridor.

BEN

Should be right around here.

They round the corner where --

-- DOZENS OF ZOMBIES roam the corridor.

They quickly step back out of sight.

BEN

I guess we know what happened to everyone who was holed up.

JOHNNY

There’s too many. What now?

Ben checks his pistol. Pulls out the magazine.

BEN

Come too far now.

It’s only half full. He reloads it. Finds an extra full clip.

JOHNNY

Is that all the ammo you’ve got?

BEN

Yup.

Ben readies himself. Turns the corner --

Points the Beretta -- Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam!
Four for four. All head shots. Each zombie drops to the floor. Unfortunately, every other zombie moves toward him.

Ben releases the magazine. Pulls out the fresh new clip. Loads it. Pulls the slide. Flashes a crazy smile.

BEN
Freaky Deaky.

Ben walks toward them. Fires his pistol. Screams defiantly.

BEN
You! You! You! You! You! You!

Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam!

SIX ZOMBIES drop to the ground.

Johnny, in awe, watches this courageous display.

Ben continues to fire -- Drops TWO MORE.

And then... CLICK! The magazine is empty.

One FINAL ZOMBIE lunges forward.

Ben reaches for his machete, but he’s too late.

The zombie clasps Ben’s throat. Dives in! And then -- -- Johnny plunges his spear through its skull. It falls.

BEN
(sighs)
Thanks kid.

A loud gurgle. A ZOMBIE HORDE comes around the corner they just came from -- Another GROUP comes the other way.

BEN
Move!

They race down the corridor. Ben checks the door numbers.

The zombies converge on them -- Twenty-five feet away.

They stop. There it is - Vault Door 242.

TWENTY FEET AWAY

Ben turns the knob. It’s locked.

FIFTEEN FEET AWAY

JOHNNY
The key!
Ben fumbles with keys. Drops them.

TEN FEET AWAY

JOHNNY

Hurry!

FIVE FEET AWAY

Ben fits the key. Turns the handle. They rush inside.

INT. VAULT ROOM


JOHNNY

How are we supposed to get out of here?

Ben ignores him. Searches the reels. His fingers flies across the cannisters.

BEN

C’mon, baby ...where you at?

And then his eyes light up. He finds it

BEN

Here it is!

He holds it with a biblical reverence.

BEN

The harbinger of our times...

INSCRIBED ON THE CANNISTER:

Catalog #242 – Night of the Living Dead (1968)

BEN

...The Grail.

JOHNNY

That really it?

BEN

Damn right it is. This here...

Ben holds it up to the dim light.

BEN

This here’s a little piece of history.
He takes the remaining reels. Tucks them into an army surplus canvas bag. Throws it over his shoulder.

Ben moves to the door.

JOHNNY
What if they’re still out there?

BEN
Oh, they’re out there.

JOHNNY
They’re gonna tear us apart.

Ben reaches down. Grabs something from his pocket.

BEN
Not if they don’t see us.

He opens the door. Tosses a smoke grenade out. Slams the door closed. Waits a beat.

BEN
Ready?

INT. SUB-BASEMENT – HALLWAY

The vault door creaks open. Ben and Johnny peek their heads out. The pink mist fills the hallway making it impossible to see what awaits them.

JOHNNY
What do we do?

BEN
We go slow.

They creep down the hallway. Johnny points his stick/spear ahead of him, while Ben, machete at the ready, walks backward, covering their rear. Neither one has more than two feet of visibility.

Ben, compulsively, continues his lecture. Whispers.

BEN
The first company who owned it. The Walter Read group. They faked incompetence. Pretended they didn’t know what they were doing.

A ZOMBIE appears out of the mist. Ben slashes him down.

BEN
They purposefully never put a copyright seal on it. Claimed it was an accident...
Another zombie appears. Johnny spears him through the mouth, up into its brain.

BEN
It was no accident. This was a film which needed to be seen.

TWO ZOMBIES come up from behind.

BEN
They tried to tell us...

Ben takes both of them down.

BEN
But we took their warnings, and turned them into entertainment.

They finally reach the doorway. Johnny turns to him.

JOHNNY
Got some pretty cool shows though.

Ben frowns.

Johnny, looking the other way, opens the door. A ZOMBIE HAND lunges out for his throat.

BEN
Watch it.

Ben swings his machete. The arm drops at Johnny’s feet. Ben swings the door open. Finishes him off. Smiles at Johnny.

BEN
They’re coming to get you Johnny.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

They climb the stairs back up.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

They’re back in front of the theater, where THREE ZOMBIES are now prowling the area.

Ben takes out ZOMBIE 1 with a hard kick. The zombie flies into the framed film poster. It shatters. A shard falls, wedging deep inside the monster’s brain.

Johnny spears ZOMBIE 2 in the stomach. Swings him around, slamming the creature into ZOMBIE 3. Knocking them over.

Ben climbs on top of them. Cracks both their heads open with the butt of his blade.
A FOURTH ZOMBIE

Appears out of nowhere. Right behind Ben. The zombie lunges forward. It’s teeth at Ben’s neck.

Johnny slides across the slick floor. Winds back --

JOHNNY
Duck!

Ben does. Johnny swings like Gretsky. Driving the pointed blade into the zombie’s eye socket. It drops to the ground.

BEN
Nice one.

Johnny helps Ben back on his feet.

JOHNNY
I think I’m finally getting the hang of this.

BEN
I think so too.

Johnny puts his foot on his spear. Pushes down, removing the punctured eye-ball of the fallen zombie.

INT. GRAND LOBBY - DAY

They’re back at the blown out window they came in through.

They peek outside.

The pink mist has now dispersed. The ZOMBIE HERD has returned, wandering about, blocking them from reaching Betty.

JOHNNY
(re. the gas gun)
Fire up a grenade.

BEN
I can’t.
(pause)
I had to use the last one down there.

JOHNNY
So, we’re trapped?

BEN
Kinda looks like it.

Johnny stares at Betty, then the zombies, then at Ben.

JOHNNY
I’ve got an idea.
BEN
Spill it junior.

JOHNNY
I run like hell. They chase me. You hop in the truck, and pick me up.

BEN
(chuckles)
You know, that’s almost stupid enough to work.

JOHNNY
Stupid is, as stupid does.

Ben looks out at the zombies.

BEN
You sure you can outrun em’?

JOHNNY
Yeah, just don’t take your time.

Johnny psyche’s himself up. Turns to Ben. Cracks a smile.

JOHNNY
I still can’t believe I let you talk me into coming here?

Ben smiles back.

BEN
Me neither cracker barrel.

EXT. ARCADE - DAY

Johnny races out the door. Screams at the top of his lungs.

JOHNNY
Aaaahhhhh!!

All the zombies turn their heads. Follow after Johnny.

Ben races to Betty. Watches Johnny tear across the lawn.

BEN
(yells)
Run, white boy, run!

Ben opens the door. Throws the canvas bag on the seat. Jumps inside. Fires her up. Drives toward Johnny.

JOHNNY
Sprints through the wading pool, then across the green area.

THE ZOMBIES
Converge on him from all directions.
Johnny has a good lead on his undead pursuers.

BETTY
Speeds over the green hill. Pulls up alongside him. Ben yells out the passenger window...

BEN
Get in!

Ben slows the truck down to jogging speed.
Johnny runs along side the door.
Ben leans over -- opens the passenger door.

The door swings open.
Johnny’s fingers skim the door frame. He’s got it. Holds tight. He’s all clear. Smiles --
-- And then he SLIPS on his discarded BANANA PEEL, and TUMBLES hard to the ground.
Ben hits the brakes. Looks in the REARVIEW MIRROR
Johnny lies on the ground. Struggles to stand.
The ZOMBIE HORDE heads straight for him.

BEN
Get up kid, get up.

But it’s too late -- the zombies swarm him.
Johnny reaches out his hand.

JOHNNY
Agghhh!

Ben watches in horror. Winces, as his friend is eaten alive.

BEN
Sorry, kid.
(long beat)
You know, I never did get a chance to tell you why all this was so important to me.

Ben puts Betty into gear. Drives away.
BEN
It was the first time I ever saw a movie where the black dude survived in the end.

EXT. FRONT GATE
Black Betty speeds past the gate.
Heads for the horizon.

FADE TO BLACK.

END TITLE:
Dedicated to the preservation of film, and the one and only George Romero.