

The Pegasus Project

by

Daphne Olivier

27 837035035
dfo@iuncapped.co.za

FADE IN:

EXT. PARKING LOT FRONTING BELLS BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE.
JOHANNESBURG.DAY.

A dilapidated old bakkie drives in from a busy Johannesburg street and pulls up in front of a palatial office building. A sign on the roof displays the words: BELL'S BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE.

A young man, JACK RANDALL, steps out of the vehicle. He glances at his watch then walks toward the steps leading to the imposing entrance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA BELLS BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE. DAY

A SECRETARY looks up from her desk as Jack approaches.

SECRETARY

Can I help you?

JACK

I have an appointment. At ten. The name's Jack Randall.

SECRETARY

Randall? Just a sec...

A pause as she checks a list

SECRETARY

Yes. Go right in. Over there, the door on the left. Mr. Brandt is expecting you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.RUBEN BRANDT'S OFFICE.JOHANNESBURG. DAY.

Jack walks into a large, luxuriously furnished office.Plush carpet, potted plants, wildlife pictures on the wall.

RUBEN BRANDT, a tall, distinguished-looking man, seated behind the desk, looks up as Jack enters and gives him a polite smile.

BRANDT

Jack Randall? I'm Ruben Brandt.

He turns to ARNOLD MASON, a thin, grey-haired man, seated next to him and waves a hand.

BRANDT

And this is my colleague, Arnold Mason. Come in. Please... Take a seat.

JACK

Thank you.

Jack walks to a chair and sits facing both men. He waits expectantly, tense but not nervous.

BRANDT

Mr. Mason and I have read your c.v. I see you majored in microbiology and genetics. Those qualifications are essential. But we'd like to know a bit more about your background. Can you please fill us in?

JACK

I was born and brought up on a farm so have an agricultural background. I majored in Microbiology and genetics, but took other courses as well- soil science, plant pathology and entomology. That gives me a pretty broad base.

MASON

(clears throat)

Your qualifications are adequate, but your occupational record seems to have been more than a little... let us say ... unstable. Let me see...

Mason picks up Jack's C. V. and reads from it.

MASON

... security guard, truck driver, bungee-jumping guide, white-water rafting and abseil instructor. Game ranger...

(pause)

I don't see anything in the agricultural line.

JACK

That's because there isn't any.

BRANDT

I find that strange. You grew up on a farm and have all these qualifications, and you choose... ... bungee-jumping? Would you mind telling us why?

JACK

There were reasons. On looking back, I have no regrets.

MASON

No regrets? How do you justify that?

JACK

Because I've gained more than I lost. And because I know it hasn't affected my ability to do the kind of work I've been trained to do.

BRANDT

(frowning)

That may be so, but we happen to be looking for a man who has his sights set on a career in agricultural research, not jumping off cliffs.

Jack gets to his feet as though about to leave.

JACK

Well then, I'd better be going. Thank you for your time...

BRANDT

(sharply)

Please sit! I said we're looking for a man who's interested in a career in agricultural research. I need to be sure you're in that category, that's all.

Jack sits down, obviously relieved.

JACK

I am interested. Very much so.

BRANDT

Good! Our research farm is way off the beaten track. The man we appoint must be prepared to live in a rural community, cut off from the conveniences most folk take for granted. Kudufontein is the nearest town and that's a good half-hour away.

JACK

That's no problem. I'm used to country life.

BRANDT

We provide accommodation for our staff, but I'm afraid housing is limited. If you have family commitments, there might be a problem.

JACK

I'm on my own. My father died a month ago. My mother moved to a retirement home. There's no one else.

Brandt and Mason exchange glances.

BRANDT

The farm may be isolated, but it's quite self-sufficient. We have a supermarket, library, clubhouse and sporting facilities. Oh, and a clinic.

JACK

Sounds great.

MASON

The settlement has most amenities -electricity and telephones, but unfortunately no cell phone reception. That bother you?

JACK

Not at all.

BRANDT

Do you have any questions?

JACK

I'm wondering... why is the farm located in such a remote area?

MASON

Because we produce genetically modified products. And that means we need space, lots of space. The further we are away from neighbours, the better.

Brand nods agreement.

BRANDT

You've no idea how much trouble anti-GMO activists give us. Given half a chance, they'll storm our farm and destroy our crops.

Mason gives a small, nervous laugh.

MASON

They picket supermarkets and write letters to the press. But there's no way they'll get onto our research farm. We make sure of that.

BRANDT

That's why I'm glad I live there.

JACK

(surprised)

You live on the farm?

BRANDT

We both do. Mason and I flew down this morning.

Brandt looks at his watch and gathers up the documents on the desk, indicating that the interview is over.

BRANDT

Well, that wraps it up. Thank you for your interest in Bells. We'll consider your application and let you know our decision as soon as possible.

MASON

(apologetically)

I must warn that we've had a large number of applications. It'll take a bit of time to go through them all.

BRANDT

That's right. I'm afraid it's a long list. Very long.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.RUBEN BRANDT'S OFFICE.JOHANNESBURG. DAY.

Brandt and Mason remain seated as ROLF KRUGER, chief of security,gives a brief knock then opens the door. He is a tall, powerfully built man with heavy features and thin, sandy hair.

BRANDT

Ah, Kruger... Come in, come in.Did you see okay? Hear everything?

KRUGER

(chuckling)

Got a bird's eye view. Heard every word, too.

Kruger saunters in, finds a chair and sits. Mason glances up nervously at a small,round hole in the ornate frame of a picture hanging on the wall.

MASON

You think Randall saw the camera?

KRUGER

Not a chance. You'd need x-ray eyes to spot the lens.

BRANDT

(to Kruger)

So... what's your opinion?

KRUGER

He was edgy at first, but settled down soon enough. He's hungry for the job, I can tell you that much.

(beat)

How'd he shape with you?

BRANDT

I don't know. Randall's got the credentials, but he's too cocky for my liking. Too independent. Guys like him mean trouble. We need someone easier to handle.

Mason frowns worriedly.

MASON

There isn't anyone else.

KRUGER

Maybe you should take another look at one of the guys we saw earlier. That kid Carter, for instance. He hasn't got much in the way of qualifications, but he's not the type to go around asking questions. And that's what we're looking for, isn't it?

BRANDT

(irritably)

It wouldn't work. We need someone capable of running B Block, someone with the know-how to step in and take over Evans's job. An agriculturist, not a goddamn gardener. I need to spend more time on the Pegasus Project. A lot more time if we're going to get six-nine-four on the market before someone else pops up with a similar product.

Kruger's head jerks up and he stares hard at Brandt.

KRUGER

Is that likely?

BRANDT

Every bloody plant breeder in the world is working on a new bio-fuel. We have to get in first. This business with Kemp and Evans has thrown my schedule right out of gear.

KRUGER

(loud and aggressive)

Kemp and Evans? You blaming me for their deaths?

BRANDT

(soothingly)

Of course not. Kemp got what he deserved. The bastard was drunk. And Evans was poking his nose in where it didn't belong. You did the right thing. Absolutely.

Somewhat mollified, Kruger leans back in his chair, crosses legs and runs fingers through his hair.

KRUGER

This Pegasus Project... I keep hearing how much it's going to bring in, but I don't hear about when. How much longer do I have to wait for my share?

In the sudden tension, Brandt's jaw clenches and he shifts uncomfortably. His gaze moves to the window and back again.

BRANDT

I've told you - not much longer now. One or two...maybe three more generations. Then our troubles will be over.

MASON

(hurrying to ease the tension)

It'll change everything. Farmers will grow crops in near-desert conditions and produce a fuel that'll cut the oil price by half. When Pegasus six-nine-four hits the market, we'll hit the jackpot. It'll be worth waiting for, believe me.

KRUGER

I sure as hell hope so. This waiting game is giving me the shits.

BRANDT

Yeah, well... if we fill Evans's post it'll speed things up. What we have to decide is whether Randall's the man for the job. We'd like to hear what you found out about our man - the interesting stuff - drugs, booze, sex, whatever.

KRUGER

I didn't get much. A couple of speeding fines. A fistfight in a pub a few years back. That cost the shithead a night in jail. That's about it. No drugs or, at least, no record I could uncover. And no alcohol binges worth talking about.

MASON

What about women?

KRUGER

A couple of casual relationships. Nothing serious and nothing permanent. Definitely no wife lurking in the background. Not even an ex-wife. I double-checked that.

MASON

Well, that's a plus. We don't want a repeat of the Evans debacle.

BRANDT

I don't get it. The guy's been a drifter for ten years. Now, all of a sudden, he wants a steady job. When I asked for an explanation, he evaded the question. What do you make of that?

KRUGER

(short laugh)

There's a simple explanation. His father died a while back, but the farm Randall thought he'd inherit is in deep shit. If he doesn't pay off the debts pretty smartly, the bank will foreclose. The man's desperate.

BRANDT

I see. Well, we've covered just about everything. What's your opinion? Do we, or don't we take him on?

MASON

There's no one else anywhere near qualified.

BRANDT

Well, that's it then We employ
Randall. All agreed?

MASON

Agreed.

KRUGER

Agreed.

MASON

You want me to call him and let him
know?

BRANDT

Yeah. And put on the pressure. Tell
him the job starts Monday.

MASON

(surprised)

Monday? But that's four days away.

BRANDT

I know. But it'll do him good to
sweat a little.

KRUGER

(Chuckling)

He'll be there. I'll take a bet on
that.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.JACK'S FARM. DAY.

Jack drives along a dusty road toward an old farmhouse. A broken-down fence, ramshackle barn and lands overgrown with weeds make it obvious that this farm is in a sad state of neglect. Jack pulls up, gets out of the bakkie and makes his way into the house. As he opens the front door, the phone rings. He runs to pick it up.

JACK

Hello?

MASON (V.O.)

Jack Randall?

JACK

Speaking.

MASON (V.O.)

This is Arnold Mason from Bells
Biological Research Centre. I'm
phoning to let you know that Mr.
Brandt and I have considered your
application and have decided to
offer you the post.

JACK

Oh! Thank you. Thank you very much.

MASON (V.O.)

We'd like you to start on Monday,
eight o'clock sharp.

JACK

Monday? You mean Monday next week?

MASON (V.O.)

Short notice, I know, but we need
the post filled. If you can't make
it, we'll have to reconsider and
offer the job to the next man on
our list.

JACK

That won't be necessary. I'll take
the post. Sure I will. You can take
that as definite.

MASON (V.O.)

Good. I'll fax a road map. It's
wild country up there so stick to
the route and don't try shortcuts.
That way you won't get lost.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.ROAD LEADING TO BELLS BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE. DAY.

Jack drives his bakkie along a dusty road. He stares out at a vast landscape of veld and trees. Most are acacias but here and there a baobab stands out against the skyline. He rounds a corner and, suddenly, there is a high, barbed-wire fence stretching way into the distance. A skull and crossbones sign warns that it is electrified.

Jack slows then pulls up in front of a gateway with the sign, BELLS BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE, displayed in large letters across the top. A guard, holding a clipboard, emerges from the guardhouse.

GUARD

Name please?

JACK

Jack Randall. Mr. Mason is
expecting me.

The guard checks his list then nods.

GUARD

Ah yes. He told me to look out for
you and phone as soon as you
arrive. He said to tell you to go
straight to the Admin Centre.It's

(MORE)

GUARD (cont'd)
the big building on your left at
the end of this road. He'll meet
you there.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.STEPS FRONTING THE ADMIN CENTRE.DAY.

Mason waves from the top of a flight of steps fronting a large, glass building. As Jack's Bakkie draws to a halt, he walks down the steps. Jack turns off the engine, gets out of the vehicle and goes to meet him.

MASON
Hi there! You've made good time.
Did you have a smooth ride?

JACK
No problems. But I was glad of the
map. Wouldn't have got here without
it.

MASON
So... what do you think of our
setup?

Jack looks around taking in a tree-lined street flanked by rows of bungalows. Further away, as far as can be seen, are row upon row of greenhouses.

JACK
It's big! A lot bigger than I
expected.

MASON
(chuckles)
This is only part of it. The high
security zone is further on, fenced
off from the rest of the farm.

JACK
High security?

MASON
Where we keep our special projects.
High priority stuff.

JACK
Oh! That's interesting! I'll look
forward to seeing what you've got
in there.

MASON
I'm afraid that won't be possible -
at least not for three months. But
once your security checks are in
place, you'll be issued with a
gate-card.

JACK

Gate card?

MASON

To access the Zone. Once you've got your card, you'll be free to come and go as you please. Until then, I'd advise you to keep well clear of the Zone.

Mason puts a hand in a pocket and brings out a bunch of keys.

MASON

Here... these are your keys. You'll need them to get into your cottage. It's on your right at the far end of the village. Number fifteen, just past the clinic.

Jack takes the keys.

JACK

Thank you.

MASON

You'll find it's fully furnished. Just the basics, but quite comfortable.

(pause)

Any questions?

JACK

Where and when do I report for work?

MASON

Be here at eight. Make sure you're on time. I'll pick you up, show you around and get you started.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASON'S OFFICE. DAY.

Mason sits at his desk, lifts the phone and dials. It rings and rings, ten times.

BRANDT (V.O.)

Hello?

MASON

It's me, Mr. Brandt. Mason.

BRANDT (V.O.)

(irritably)

For Christ's sake, Mason, it's Sunday! Can't a man get any peace in this place? What's so important it can't wait?

MASON

it's Randall. He's here. I thought you wanted me to let you know when he arrived.

BRANDT (V.O.)

Oh! ... Yes, of course. Have you told Kruger?

MASON

Not yet. I thought I'd let you know first.

BRANDT (V.O.)

Phone Kruger now. Tell him to keep an eye on Randall. Make sure he doesn't go wandering around where he shouldn't be. We've had enough trouble lately. We don't want a repeat of what happened to Kemp. Or Evans.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MASON'S COTTAGE AND GARDEN. DAY.

Mason drives along the road, turns into his cottage driveway and pulls up outside the garage. As he steps from his vehicle, the front door opens and ELSA, a young girl(16) comes hurrying to meet him. She runs with the clumsy, awkward movements of a Downes Syndrome child and, as she draws closer, it becomes apparent that she has a handicap of some kind. She carries a rag doll and holds it up for him to see.

ELSA

(high-pitched, childish voice)

Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Look at the doll Anna made for me. Her name's suzy. Isn't she pretty?

Mason bends to give her a hug then straightens up wearily.

MASON

Very pretty.

(beat)

Where is Anna, darling?

ELSA

Gone.

MASON
Gone? Where?

ELSA
Don't know. She's been gone a long
time.

MASON
(dismayed)
You been here all by yourself?

ELSA
Yes, but I don't mind. I got Suzy
to play with.

Mason stares down at her, shaking his head, then puts an arm
around her shoulder.

MASON
Come on, sweetheart. Let's go
inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.SUPERMARKET IN BELL'S BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE
VILLAGE.DAY.

Jack walks up and down the aisles, stopping now and then to
take an item off a shelf and place it in his trolley - a
loaf of bread, milk, butter, eggs, a kilo of steak and a
six-pack of beer. He pushes the trolley to the checkout and
begins unloading. The youth at the checkout point looks up
with interest.

YOUTH
You new here?

JACK
Just pulled in.

YOUTH
Thought so. I know everyone around
here. They all come in to shop
sooner or later.

He begins ringing up the items, one by one, then stops to ask:

YOUTH
You plan to stay long?

JACK
Depends on how the job pans out. I
start tomorrow.

YOUTH
Ah... Bernie's job! Or Bob Evans'
maybe.

Jack looks up with interest.

JACK

Do you know why those guys left?

YOUTH

They didn't... leave. Evans had a heart attack. Dropped down dead, just like that. Poor Bernie got himself killed.

JACK

Really? What happened?

YOUTH

There was an accident. A fire in one of the greenhouses.

JACK

(horrified)

A fire! How did it start?

The youth shrugs.

YOUTH

A gas leak. That's what we heard, but no one really knows for sure.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JACK'S COTTAGE. DAY.

Jack drives along a street lined with neat bungalows. He passes a larger building displaying the sign, CLINIC, then slows as he approaches a bungalow with the number '15' on the door. He stops, gets out of his bakkie and, with keys in hand, walks up to the front door. He pushes a key into the lock and opens the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S COTTAGE. DAY.

In the kitchen, Jack unpacks his recently purchased groceries. As he closes the fridge, he hears a knock on the front door. He walks from kitchen, through a small lounge and opens the door to find BEN FERGUSON, a dishevelled, grey-haired man, standing there. Ben (55) is shabbily dressed. His hair is overlong and in need of a comb. He grins when he sees Jack.

BEN

I saw you move in and thought I'd pop over and say hello. I'm Ben Ferguson. Live over there, right next door.

JACK

I'm Jack Randall. Would you like to come in?

BEN

No, no. I've come to invite you over to my place.

JACK

Thank you, but I've only just got in. Maybe another time.

BEN

You've unpacked, haven't you?

JACK

More or less.

BEN

Well then, what's stopping you? We'll be working together. I thought you might like to hear a bit about the place before you start.

JACK

(surprised)

You work in Research?

BEN

That's my job. Been here since the day it opened. If you're interested, I can fill you in with who's who, what's going on and what to expect.

(pause)

You want to hear?

JACK

I would. Very much.

BEN

Good. Come on over.

JACK

You mean now?

BEN

What's wrong with now?

JACK

Nothing, I guess. It's just... well, I haven't quite settled in.

BEN

If it's supper you're worried about, stop worrying. Maggie will be over in a little while and she'll bring grub.

JACK

Maggie?

BEN

My daughter. She's a nurse. Runs the clinic and lives in the cottage next-door. She knows I don't do much cooking so comes over most evenings with a basket. Enough to feed an army. But you'll see, you'll see. Now, are you coming, or not?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S COTTAGE. DUSK.

Jack and Ben sit in the lounge of Ben's cottage, drinking beer from tall mugs. The room is cluttered with books, papers and scientific journals. Those that do not fit into the bookcase, are piled up on tables, chairs and on the floor.

JACK

So... You're a geneticist. How did you come to land up on this farm?

BEN

I spent most of my life lecturing. Then my wife died, and I decided to make a move. Looked about for something new. My friend, Arthur Bell, offered me a job. I took it.

JACK

(surprised)

Arthur Bell? The president of Bells Biological Research Centre?

BEN

Yes. Arthur and I went to school together, then varsity. We've been friends a long time.

JACK

Does he visit here often?

BEN

He used to, but his heart's not as good as it ought to be and he doesn't get about much any more. But he likes to know what's going on, and relies on me to keep him up to date. So, when anything important or out of the ordinary happens, I pack a bag and head for Johannesburg.

JACK

That's a long trip!

BEN

It is, but I don't mind. I tend to get too wrapped up in my work and it does me good to get away now and then.

Ben's gaze drifts to the window. His eyes light up and he smiles.

BEN

Ah, there comes Maggie. I think you'll like her. She's a great girl.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATHWAY TO BEN'S COTTAGE. DUSK.

MAGGIE FERGUSON, carrying a covered basket, walks along the path toward Ben's cottage. She is an attractive young woman with striking red hair.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM IN BEN'S COTTAGE. NIGHT.

Jack, Ben and Maggie sit around the dining table. Jack places knife and fork on an empty plate, and smiles at Maggie.

JACK

That was great! I can't remember when I enjoyed a meal so much. Thank you.

MAGGIE

Glad you liked it. I make a point of shopping at the farmer's market whenever I go to town so can guarantee there are no GMOs in that pie.

JACK

Does that makes a difference?

MAGGIE

I think so. Dad doesn't agree with me but I believe natural foods not only taste better but are healthier than genetically modified organisms.

BEN

You have no proof of that.

MAGGIE

(heatedly)

Maybe not. But then neither do you have proof that GMOs don't do any harm.

BEN

(sighing)

Here we go again. Off on your hobby-horse, are you?

MAGGIE

It's not my hobby-horse. People all over the world are worried about the effect of GMOs on health, or what might happen if a GMO happened to cross with a local strain.

BEN

It won't happen.

MAGGIE

How can you be so sure?

BEN

Because we don't release a plant till it's been thoroughly tested. If there's the slightest doubt a new variety might cause trouble, the entire batch is terminated.

MAGGIE

That's what you say, but I still don't like the idea of mixing DNA of unrelated species. Fish and maize; sorghum and beets; grapes and some obscure bug; potatoes and God-knows-what.

BEN

(short laugh)

As far as I know, no one has mixed the DNA of those particular species.

MAGGIE

That's beside the point. The point is-

BEN

(cutting her off)

The point is you've been reading too many Greenie handouts.

MAGGIE

(to jack)

You'll have to excuse us. Dad and I argue about this sort of thing all the time. I don't suppose there's any point in asking your opinion. You're bound to agree with him. Everyone in this place does. Their jobs depend on it.

JACK

You work here too.

MAGGIE

But I'm a nurse. I work in the clinic, not in a lab or greenhouse.

JACK

Makes no difference. This is a research farm. You knew that when you took the job.

MAGGIE

(pause)

You've got a point. I know I shouldn't get so worked up. But--

JACK

(cutting her off)

But now I have another question.

MAGGIE

Oh! And what's that?

JACK

What do you do in your spare time?

MAGGIE

(puzzled)

My free... Why do you ask?

JACK

Because I thought we might spend some of it together. That's if you don't mind.

MAGGIE

(laughing)

I won't mind in the least. In fact, I rather like the idea.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.STEPS FRONTING THE ADMIN CENTRE.DAY.

Jack stands on the steps fronting the Admin Centre.He glances at his watch then gazes around, obviously waiting for someone. A moment later,Mason, driving a company vehicle, pulls up beside him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMPANY VAN DRIVEN BY MASON. DAY

Jack steps down, opens the passenger door and climbs in.

MASON

Morning. You ready to go?

JACK

Sure. I'm looking forward to making a start.

Mason changes gear and drives on. Jack stares out the window as they head toward a long row of greenhouses.

JACK

Where, exactly, will I be working?

MASON

B Block. That's that section over there.

Mason points to a group of tunnels on his left.

MASON

I'll drop you there in a little while, but thought I'd show you around the place first. This is a big farm. You wouldn't be the first to get lost. Or get into trouble for being where you oughtn't to be.

JACK

Sounds good. So... where do we start?

They drive past row upon row of tunnels, stretching way into the distance. Here and there workmen, dressed in green overalls, make their way along pathways between tunnels. A tractor drives past. In the distance, a truck loaded with pipes and barrels can be seen.

MASON

With the High Security Zone. It's the nerve centre of this entire setup.

He points to a three-metre-high fence looming in the distance.

MASON

See that fence up ahead?

JACK

Sure do. What's it doing there?

MASON

Safe-guarding our most valuable assets. Every GMO we produce starts there, and our scientists need to know that their work is safe from prying eyes.

JACK

I see.

MASON

Viable specimens are grown in greenhouses inside the zone. The most promising are moved to B Block and, from there, to A Block. Those that pass all tests, are released and marketed.

They drive up to a solid-looking gateway displaying the sign: HIGH SECURITY ZONE. AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY. Through the fence, a large building, flanked on both sides by many greenhouses can be seen.

JACK

What's on the other side of the zone?

MASON

Nothing but bush all the way up to the North gate. Kruger lives up there.

JACK

Kruger?

MASON

Our chief of security. You'll get to meet him sooner or later.

(pause)

Well, that's about it. Time to head to B Block.

Mason turns and heads back the way they came.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARKING AREA B BLOCK. DAY.

Mason drives up and parks in front of a small, neat building bearing the sign: OFFICE. B BLOCK. A group of greenhouses can be seen in the background.

MASON

Here we are. Come on in. I'll introduce you to the staff and show you around.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. B BLOCK OFFICE. DAY.

Mason leads the way into the office. CONNIE PIETERSON, a plump, middle-aged secretary looks up from her desk, and smiles.

CONNIE

Good morning, Mr Mason.

MASON

Morning Connie. This is Jack Randall. He'll be running this section from now on.

(to jack)

This is Connie Pieterston. She keeps tabs on the data that pours into this office. So, if you want info about anything, just ask. She'll find it in a jiffy.

JACK

(to Connie)

Nice to meet you.

Mason walks on, opens a door and leads the way into a neat, well-appointed office.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE. DAY.

MASON

This is your office. I think you'll find everything you need, but if you want anything, just give me a call.

Jack looks around taking in the surroundings - desk, computer, filing cabinets.

JACK

Looks great. But I'd like to see the greenhouses before I settle in. Do you have time to show me around?

MASON

I'm very busy. Zondi will do that.

JACK

Zondi?

MASON

Your assistant. He should be here any minute.

He turns as a tall, Black man approaches.

MASON

Ah... there he is now. Come on over. I'll introduce you, then I really must go.

(to Zondi)

This is Mr Randall. He'll be in charge here from now on.

ZONDI

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Randall. I hope you'll like it here.

JACK

Jack. Call me Jack.

MASON

Well, I'll be on my way. Remember... if you need anything, anything at all, give me a call.

Mason exits. Through a window, he is seen climbing into his vehicle and driving away.

ZONDI

So... what would you like-a quick tour or a long one? I'd better warn - the long one will take the best part of the morning.

JACK

The long, please. And give as much info as you can as we go along. I'm going to need all the help I can get till I figure out what's going on.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.GREENHOUSE, B BLOCK. DAY.

Jack and Zondi walk through a greenhouse filled with lush, green plants bearing a heavy crop of tomatoes. Jack pauses now and then to examine a plant more closely. They reach the door and exit.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.PATHWAY BETWEEN GREENHOUSES. DAY.

Jack and Zondi walk along pathway.

JACK

That was interesting and, I might say, very impressive. Just one thing puzzles me.

ZONDI

And what's that?

JACK

The plants look much the same as regular crops. I expected GMOs to be different.

ZONDI

Looks don't count. It's the stats that comes out of the animal lab that matter.

JACK

Explain that.

ZONDI

The food we produce is fed to rabbits and rats in the lab next door. If they thrive, the specimen is given a green light. If not...

Zondi shrugs.

ZONDI

Well, that's the way a good many of our plants end up. Disappointing, but that's the way it is.

JACK

Can we take a look? I'd like to see the lab.

ZONDI

(hesitates)

Um... I'm not sure. Dr. West runs the lab.

JACK

Dr. West?

ZONDI

The big cheese around here. Not a man you want to cross. I'd keep out of his way if I were you.

JACK

He surely won't mind if I take a look? Lead the way. I'll handle West if needs be.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANIMAL LAB. DAY.

Jack and Zondi step into a large room filled with cages set on long trestle tables. Some contain rabbits, others rats. All cages have charts with data attached to doors.

Jack, trailed by Zondi, walks down an aisle. He stops now and then to peer into a cage and read the data on the door. He is about to turn and exit when something in a nearby cage catches his eye.

JACK

Hey! Take a look at that. A rabbit with a litter of newborns.

Zondi steps closer and peers in.

ZONDI

(surprised)

They're dead. Every last one.

JACK

Just as well because they're malformed. Look - no eyes. No nose. And the mouth... What on earth could have caused the mother to produce a litter like that?

ZONDI

(fearfully)

Who knows? But this has nothing to do with us. Let's get out of here. Quick, before West comes.

JACK

No, hang on... I'd like to take a closer look.

ZONDI

It doesn't pay to stick our noses into business that has nothing to do with us. Come on, let's go. Let's GO.

Zondi turns and runs out the door. Jack stares after him then follows more slowly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMALL WARD IN CLINIC AT BELLS BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH CENTRE. DAY.

Maggie stands at the bedside of THANDI, a young Black woman. NURSE JOHANNA stands nearby. The patient is pregnant and obviously in labour.

MAGGIE

Tell me your name then tell me how long you have been in labour. I need to know before I examine you.

THANDI

My name is Thandi. It is three days since the pain started.

JOHANNA

(horrified)

Three days! Why you wait so long
before coming for help?

Maggie catches Johanna's eye and shakes her head in disapproval. At that moment, Thandi throws back her head and moans in pain.

MAGGIE

(to Nurse Johanna)

Stay with her. I'm going to call Dr West. Something's wrong. We need help. If the baby doesn't come soon, we may lose it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S DESK IN CLINIC. DAY.

Maggie sits at the desk, picks up the phone and dials. It rings and rings. She is about to put it down when DOCTOR WEST answers.

WEST (V.O.)

(curtly)

Hello?

MAGGIE

This is Maggie Ferguson. Can you come to the clinic? As soon as possible. We have an emergency.

WEST (V.O.)

I'm in the middle of something important. What's the problem?

MAGGIE

A maternity case. The woman's been in labour three days. It doesn't look good.

WEST (V.O.)

For Christ's sake! Three days! When was she admitted?

MAGGIE

A short while ago. I've only just assessed the situation.

WEST (V.O.)

(clicks tongue)

These people! Why do they leave things till the last bloody moment and then expect a miracle?

MAGGIE

The woman needs help. Will you come?

WEST (V.O.)
 (irritably)
 All right. All RIGHT! I'll come as
 soon as I can.

As Maggie replaces the receiver, Nurse Johanna can be heard calling from down the passage.

JOHANNA (V.O.)
 (loud call)
 Nurse! Come! Come quick. I think
 baby coming.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMALL WARD IN CLINIC. DAY.

Thandi grips the bedrail above her head and, with face contorted with pain, pushes hard in an effort to give birth to her baby. Maggie (wearing gloves) stands by ready to receive the infant.

MAGGIE
 (encouragingly)
 Push, Thandi, come on, take a deep
 breath and PUSH!

JOHANNA
 It's coming! I can see it coming!

Thandi takes a deep breath and pushes one more time. Then, quite suddenly, she lets out a loud scream and, falling back onto her pillow, lies still.

Maggie's hands emerge from the sheet covering Thandi's legs and, as she lifts the newborn, a small infant is briefly glimpsed. Johanna stares, her eyes widen with terror, then she shrinks back away from the bed.

JOHANNA
 (small horrified scream)
 Eeeee! The curse! A child of the
 curse!

MAGGIE
 (sharply)
 Stop that. Pull yourself together.
 There is no such thing as a curse.

Maggie places the infant in a nearby crib.

JOHANNA
 Is... Is it alive?

Maggie bends over the crib to place a stethoscope on the infant's chest. She holds it there a moment or two then shakes her head.

MAGGIE

No heartbeat. Nothing at all.

JOHANNA

Thank God for that!

MAGGIE

You're right - I never thought I'd say that about a newborn, but it is a blessing that the poor little thing didn't live. A baby as malformed as that is better off dead.

As Thandi begins to moan, Maggie wraps a towel around the small lifeless body, and hands it to Johanna.

MAGGIE

Quick, take the baby away. Place it in the crib next door. Hurry, before the mother comes round.

Johanna takes the bundle and exits the room. Thandi stirs and opens her eyes.

THANDI

My baby... Where is my baby?

MAGGIE

I'm so sorry, but your baby died before it was born.

THANDI

(tearfully)

I was afraid... Was it a boy or a girl?

MAGGIE

A little girl.

THANDI

Can I see her?

Johanna returns and stands quietly to one side.

MAGGIE

(hesitates)

You have a right to see your child but I must tell you that she was not perfectly formed. It will be better for you to remember her as the little girl you wished her to be.

THANDI

(wails)

No! No, I want to see her. I want my baby. Please...

JOHANNA

(firmly)

Listen to the nurse, Thandi.
Believe me, it will be better that
way for the baby is a child of the
curse.

Thandi's eyes fill with terror. She falls back onto her
pillow and begins wailing, again and again and again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.CLINIC ENTRANCE. DAY.

The clinic door opens and Dr. West comes striding in. He
walks up to the nurses station where Maggie is standing. She
looks up and frowns.

MAGGIE

(coldly)

I phoned an hour ago. What took you
so long?

WEST

I was held up. One of those things.
So... Where's the patient? How's
she doing?

MAGGIE

You're too late. She's already
delivered. The baby was stillborn.

WEST

(brusquely)

Well, in that case, I won't waste
any more of my time.

He turns to go. As he reaches the door, Maggie calls out:

MAGGIE

Wait! Come back, please.

West turns. He glances at his watch then, with obvious
reluctance, retraces his steps.

WEST

Yes? What is it?

MAGGIE

The baby. It's grossly malformed.
I'd like you to take a look at it.

WEST

Malformed? In what way?

MAGGIE

No eyes. No nose. And where the mouth should be, just a gaping hole. Really awful! I've never seen anything like it.

WEST

Very well. Where is it?

MAGGIE

In ward B. This way. Come, I'll show you.

Maggie leads the way down a passage. West follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.NURSES STATION IN CLINIC. DAY.

Maggie sits at her desk. Nurse Johanna walks in carrying a tray of tea.

JOHANNA

Our patient's asleep and I thought you might like a cup of tea.

MAGGIE

Thanks. I sure could do with one. It's been a bad day.

Johanna sets the tray down and pours out two cups. Hands one to Maggie. Pulls up a chair and sits.

JOHANNA

What did Dr. West have to say? About the baby?

MAGGIE

Not a lot. He just stared down at the poor little thing, then shook his head and walked away. I asked what may have caused such awful malformation, but all he came up with was, maybe a virus or a defect in the parent's genes.

JOHANNA

Did you ask if he'd seen one like that before?

MAGGIE

I did, and he said, no. It must be very rare because I've never seen anything like that either. Nowhere near as bad.

JOHANNA

I have.

MAGGIE
(surprised)
Really? Where?

JOHANNA
In my village. Several women have given birth to babies like that in the past year. Three that I know of. Maybe more because people hide such things.

MAGGIE
(astonished)
Three? All in your village?

JOHANNA
And more in villages nearby. My people believe it's caused by a curse. I know you don't believe in curses, but then how do you explain a thing like that?

MAGGIE
I can't. But I can tell you one thing. It is not caused by a curse. That's for sure.

Maggie takes a sip of tea then places the cup on the desk.

MAGGIE
I'm thinking... I'd like to do a bit of research and wonder whether you'd consider helping.

JOHANNA
In what way?

MAGGIE
I'd like to record the number of malformed babies born in this area. Dates, places, things like that. If I had an accurate record, I could send it to someone who may be able to find what's causing it. Do you think you could get that info for me?

JOHANNA
(doubtfully)
I'll try. It won't be easy but...
(pause)
Okay, I'll see what I can do. No promises, mind you...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.JACK'S BAKKIE.DUSK.

Maggie sits beside Jack as he drives along the road to Kudufontein, a small town some thirty kilometres from Bells Research Centre. From the way they are dressed, it is apparent that they are on their way to enjoy a night out.

Maggie stares out at the passing scene - small hills rising from a sea of green, a baobab silhouetted against a vivid sunset.

JACK

Why so quiet? Something on your mind?

MAGGIE

(sighing)

I had a bad day at the clinic. And, on top of that, I'm worried about Dad.

JACK

Ben? Is he ill?

MAGGIE

No, but he's off his food. And he's not sleeping well.. Something's wrong, I can tell.

JACK

What's bugging him?

MAGGIE

I don't know and he won't tell. But it's something to do with his work.

JACK

Hmmm... I'll have a word with him. Maybe he'll open up to me.

MAGGIE

You can try, but I doubt it'll do any good. If he won't tell me, he won't tell anyone. Except his old friend, Arthur Bell.

(beat)

Dad's planning to visit Arthur one of these days.

JACK

Is he well enough to drive all that way?

MAGGIE

I think so. He could do with a break. I'm hoping it'll do him good.

JACK
You want to tell me about your bad
day at the clinic?

MAGGIE
(sighs again)
Later perhaps. Right now, I just
want to unwind and relax.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie sit in a cosy restaurant, enjoying their meal. Jack swallows a last mouthful and places knife and fork on the empty plate.

JACK
That was great! Best steak I've had
in a long time. This restaurant may
be off the beaten track, but they
sure know how to serve a good meal.

MAGGIE
I'm glad we came. It's good to get
out now and again.

TURNER, a middle-aged man seated at a nearby table, gets up
and steps toward them.

TURNER
Excuse me. Would you mind if I
joined you for a few minutes?

JACK
(coldly)
I'm sorry-

TURNER
(cutting in)
This will only take a few minutes.
You are Jack Randall, aren't you?

JACK
(astonished)
How do you know my name?

TURNER
I'll explain later. First allow me
introduce myself. I'm Stan Turner.
Here's my card.

He digs in a pocket and hands Jack a business card.

TURNER

As you see, I'm a Private Investigator. Sue Evans has engaged me to investigate her husband's death. I'm hoping you'll be able to help.

Jack hands back the card.

JACK

You've made a mistake. I don't know anyone by that name. Now would you mind -

TURNER

(cutting in)

Bob Evans is dead. You've taken his job. If Mrs Evans is right, it may well be in your interest to assist in my investigation.

JACK

(puzzled)

In my interest...? What the hell are you talking about?

TURNER

I'm talking about murder.

JACK

(incredulous)

Murder?

TURNER

Mrs Evans believes her husband was killed to stop him leaking information that may have been damaging to Bells.

JACK

That's crazy! Do you expect me to believe a wild tale like that?

MAGGIE

Hold on, Jack, I know Sue Evans. She was devastated when Bob died, but she's not crazy. I heard her say she didn't believe he died from a heart attack. At the time, I put that down to her emotional state. Now... now, I'm not so sure.

JACK

(astonished)

What? What on earth makes you say that?

MAGGIE

Because... because of what happened
in the clinic today.

JACK

Hold it, honey, I know you had a
bad day, but this may not be the
right place to talk about it.

TURNER

Let the lady speak. What she has to
say may shed light on things.

JACK

(to Maggie)

Okay, go ahead.

MAGGIE

A woman gave birth to a malformed
baby. A stillborn. Just as well,
because I've never seen anything so
awful - no eyes, no nose and just a
gaping hole where the mouth should
be.

(beat)

That was bad enough, but Johanna -
the assistant nurse - told me that
several babies with similar defects
have been born in her village
recently. That's so far from
normal that I can't help wondering.
whether... Well, whether there's
any connection between those poor
babies and what Bob Evans knew.

JACK

(gasps)

Malformed babies! Good God - that's
a coincidence!

MAGGIE

(puzzled)

What do you mean?

JACK

I saw those same malformations- not
on a baby, but on a litter of
rabbits. Six or seven newborns, all
exactly the same. No eyes, no nose
and a gaping hole for a mouth.

TURNER

I'd say that's more than a
coincidence. What I'd like... what
I hope you'll do... is keep your
eyes and ears open. If you come

(MORE)

TURNER (cont'd)
 across anything that may shed light
 on what happened to Evans, let me
 know.

(pause)
 And here, take this.

He digs in his pocket and comes out with another card.

JACK
 What is it?

TURNER
 A gate-card. It'll open the gate
 into Bells High Security zone.

Jack takes the card, turns it over curiously.

JACK
 Where'd you get it?

TURNER
 Mrs Evans gave it to me. She says
 she found it in her husband's
 jacket. Go on, take it. You never
 know, it may come in handy.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE, B BLOCK. DAY.

Jack looks up from his desk at the sound of a knock on the
 door.

JACK
 Come in.

The door opens and Connie walks in. She appears nervous and
 flustered.

CONNIE
 (timidly)
 Are you very busy? I don't want to
 trouble you if you're in the middle
 of something important.

JACK
 There's nothing here that can't
 wait. So, come on in. Sit down and
 tell me what's worrying you.

Connie takes a seat and clasps hands in lap.

CONNIE
 (clears throat)
 It's Rodney. I wouldn't bother you
 but I don't know who else to turn
 to.

JACK
(puzzled)
Rodney?

CONNIE
My son. He's sixteen and running wild. Skipping school and racing about on that bike of his. And... And getting into all kinds of mischief. I'm at my wits end.

JACK
Hey, you're asking the wrong guy. I know zip about raising kids.

CONNIE
You told me you worked in a summer camp. Taught kids rock climbing and bungee jumping - stuff like that. I thought... Thought you could give him a bit of a talk. I'd really appreciate that.

JACK
What about the boy's father? Can't he help.

CONNIE
He walked out when Rodney was three. We haven't seen him since.

JACK
I see.
(pause)
I'll talk to him but what the boy needs is something to keep him busy. And a bit of cash to spend on himself. Do you think it might help if I offered him a job?

CONNIE
(surprised)
You mean here on the farm?

JACK
A part-time job. We need someone to clean cages in the animal lab. It shouldn't take more than an hour a day. He could work in the morning before going to school. That's if he's interested.

CONNIE
Oh, he would be! I'm sure he would. He'd be glad of the money, I know that much. Thank you. That'll help a lot.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUBEN BRANDT'S OFFICE ON FARM. DAY.

Brandt sits at his desk. The phone rings. He picks it up on the third ring.

BRANDT

Yes?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Morning Mr. Brandt. Ben Ferguson is here. He wants to see you. He says it's urgent.

BRANDT

(irritably)

Tell the old fool I'm busy. I haven't time -

The door opens and Ben Ferguson barges in. Brandt stares and slams down the phone.

BRANDT

What the hell are you doing here? I told my receptionist -

BEN

(cutting in)

I heard what you told her, but you WILL make time to see me because what I have to say is vital. I've come to tell you that Pegasus six-nine-four must be terminated. IMMEDIATELY.

BRANDT

(loud with anger)

Terminated? Are you mad? Six-nine-four is the fuel of the future. It'll revolutionise everything.

BEN

If it doesn't destroy the world first. It's lethal. You know that as well as I do.

BRANDT

In it's present form. But that's easily rectified-

BEN

We can't afford to take that risk. I'm taking a ride to Joburg tomorrow. When Arthur Bell sees the data I've documented, he'll decide whether you terminate or not.

BRANDT

(shouting)

Get out! If you don't get out of my office this minute, I'll call security and throw you out.

Ben gets up, walks to the door, then turns to give a parting shot.

BEN

I'm going. But give it careful thought. If you don't do what I advise voluntarily, Arthur sure as hell will make you.

Ben opens the door, exits, then slams it closed. Brandt sits fuming, drumming fingers on the desk. After a second or two, he picks up the phone and dials. He breathes heavily and curses under his breath as he waits for an answer.

BRANDT

Answer, dammit, answer...

KRUGER (V.O.)

Kruger.

BRANDT

This is Brandt. Listen... We got a problem. Get your arse over here in double quick time.

KRUGER (V.O.)

A security problem?

BRANDT

Why else would I call you?

KRUGER (V.O.)

Relax, man, relax. No need to be so uptight. Whatever it is, I'll sort it out.

BRANDT

You'd better. And you'd better do a good job. Good and permanent. No balls up this time.

KRUGER (V.O.)

Permanent? Ha! Ha! No problem. Just leave it to me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE.DAY.

Jack is seated at his desk. The phone rings. He picks it up on the second ring.

JACK

Hello?

MAGGIE (V.O)

(Tearful)

Jack... Oh Jack...I've got such bad news.

JACK

(concerned)

Hey,honey, what's wrong? Why are you crying?

MAGGIE (V.O)

It's Dad. He's dead. Oh Jack, my father's dead.

JACK

Ben? Oh, my God! What happened?

MAGGIE (V.O)

I don't know exactly. He was on his way to Joburg, to see Arthur Bell. I said goodbye to him this morning. And... And a policeman came a short while ago to tell me that there'd been an accident,and that... That Dad was dead.

JACK

Accident? Did he say what kind of accident?

MAGGIE (V.O)

Something about the car leaving the road and plunging down a ravine. I was too upset to take it in. All I could think of was that I won't see my dad again.Never, ever. Oh Jack, how will I bear it?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHURCH.DAY.

Jack and Maggie sit in the front pew of a crowded church. A coffin, covered with wreaths, lies in the centre aisle, near the alter. An organ plays soft, sombre music. As the music stops, a minister walks in and stands facing the congregation. He opens a large prayerbook.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.CHURCH YARD.DAY.

Jack stands beside Maggie, outside the church, as people stream by to offer condolences. Mason is among the first. He looks pale and haggard with dark shadows under his eyes.

MASON

I'm sorry. So very sorry for your loss.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

Mason scuttles away as Ruth and Ruben Brandt arrive. Ruth's hat is askew, her makeup blotched from crying.

RUTH

You poor darling! Your father was like an uncle to me. Uncle Ben. I've known him since I was this high. I'm so sorry. So terribly, terribly sorry.

BRANDT

May I offer my deepest sympathy? Such a tragedy! I want you to know that your father was highly thought of by everyone at Bells. He will be sorely missed.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

BRANDT

If there's anything I can do, anything at all, let me know.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

(pause)

Actually, there is something. The police never did find out the cause of the crash. I was wondering...

BRANDT

Yes?

MAGGIE

I wonder whether Bells security team might investigate a bit further? I'd be grateful if you could arrange that.

BRANDT

(surprised)

Whatever for?

MAGGIE

Because if I knew what actually happened, it would set my mind at rest.

BRANDT

It would be a complete waste of time. So sad, but accidents do happen. That's something we have to accept. Well, then, we'd better be moving along.

(to Ruth)

Come on, there's our car over there.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEN'S COTTAGE. DAY.

Jack and Maggie open the door to Ben's cottage and step inside. The lounge is as he left it - bookcase overflowing, piles of books and journals dotted about on tables, chairs and on the floor. A coffee mug sits on a table beside Ben's favourite chair. Maggie looks around and sighs.

MAGGIE

Getting rid of all this is going to be so hard. Thank you for volunteering to give a hand. I don't think I could do it on my own.

JACK

The sooner we make a start, the sooner it'll be done. Where do we begin?

MAGGIE

The study. Dad's personal stuff. Let's get that over and done with.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDY IN BEN'S COTTAGE. DAY.

Jack and Maggie enter the study and look around at a small, but comfortably furnished room with desk, computer and walls lined with shelves and cupboards.

JACK

Okay, big things first. The computer. Where will that go?

MAGGIE

Charity. But let's take a look at the files first. We might find something personal. I'd like to know what was worrying Dad before he died, if that's possible.

Jack tries to start the computer but after several attempts gives up.

JACK
Something's wrong. It's dead as a dodo.

MAGGIE
You're sure?

JACK
Quite sure. I've checked the connections. All correct there.

MAGGIE
(puzzled)
That's strange! Dad wouldn't have left it like that. He may have been careless about his appearance, but he was meticulous about his work. Whatever went wrong happened after he left for Johannesburg.

JACK
That doesn't make sense.

MAGGIE
No, it doesn't. Unless... unless it was trashed.

JACK
Trashed? Are suggesting that someone broke in here and deliberately trashed it?

MAGGIE
Yes, I am. How else do you explain it?

JACK
Hold on, Maggie. Don't jump to conclusions. A lightning strike could have done it. Or a power surge. Or a virus. Any number of things can wipe out a hard drive.

MAGGIE
Sure, but that would be one hell of a coincidence.

JACK
What about backups? He would surely have kept backups.

MAGGIE
Yeah, but he took them with him. I remember seeing his briefcase on the seat next to him the day he left.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (cont'd)

(thoughtful pause)

But... that's so weird. the police found Dad's wallet at the scene of the crash. They handed that over. But no briefcase.

JACK

Maybe it was stolen before the police got there.

MAGGIE

Why would anyone snatch a briefcase and leave a wallet?

JACK

Good question. No one would, unless... unless they happened to know what was inside the case. And wanted to make sure no one else got their hands on it.

MAGGIE

Oh, my God... Do you think... is it possible ... that someone forced Dad off the road? Someone who wanted him dead? Someone who wanted that briefcase?

JACK

There's no way we'll ever know for sure, but yes, that's what it looks like.

MAGGIE

(hoarse whisper)

What are we going to do? Go to the police?

JACK

And tell them what? That Sue Evans thinks her husband was murdered? That we think a genetically modified plant may have gotten into the local population's food-chain and caused an unknown number of defective births? That your father was deliberately forced off the road? All that without one concrete fact?

MAGGIE

So what do we do?

JACK

Sit tight. Be patient. Keep eyes and ears open. And wait.

MAGGIE

Wait? For what?

JACK

For something to happen. It's bound to, sooner or later. All we have to do is wait.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OUTREACH CLINIC VEHICLE. DAY.

Maggie sits behind the wheel of a utility vehicle that displays the logo: BELLS MOBILE OUTREACH CLINIC. Nurse Johanna sits beside her. Maggie drives along a dusty road that winds through Bushveld country: hills and valleys, rocky outcrops and scattered trees. A village comprising a cluster of huts intermingled with a few larger dwellings is visible in the distance. As they draw closer, Johanna leans forward and points.

JOHANNA

That's my home - there. The house with the pink walls and the mango tree outside.

MAGGIE

It looks cosy and comfortable. How long have you lived there?

JOHANNA

As long as I can remember. It is the home of my mother and father. One day, when I marry, I will have a home of my own.

Suddenly, Maggie gasps and slams on brakes as a pig, followed by a number of piglets, emerges from long grass and runs across the road. In the sunlight, they have a distinct green sheen to their coats. She stares after them with a puzzled frown.

MAGGIE

Hey look! Green pigs! They must have rolled in something. Paint most likely. What a strange sight!

JOHANNA

(laughing)

That's not paint. They're born that way.

MAGGIE

But they're green!

JOHANNA

I know. We were just as surprised as you when we first saw them, but we're used to them now. Most folk have a couple running around their back yard.

MAGGIE

Where did they come from?

JOHANNA

From Bells. Dr. West gave our chief a pair a few years back.

MAGGIE

(surprised)

Dr. West?

JOHANNA

Yes. He and the chief are good friends. We were lucky to get those pigs. And lucky to get seeds too.

MAGGIE

Seeds?

JOHANNA

Yeah. Dr. West hands out a parcel every year - maize, sorghum, pumpkins, vegetables of every kind. Everyone gets a share.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VILLAGE HALL WHERE MOBILE CLINIC IS HELD. DAY.

Maggie and Johanna stand behind a table stacked with medical supplies, and gaze out at rows of empty chairs.

MAGGIE

(worriedly)

Where's everyone? The waiting room is usually full by now. Do you think they've forgotten this is Outreach clinic day?

JOHANNA

(slowly)

I don't think they have forgotten.

MAGGIE

Then what's going on? Why is no one here?

JOHANNA

I don't know. But maybe we should pack up and go home. It's no use wasting time here.

MAGGIE

No! I'm not packing up till I know what's going on. Pregnant women need antenatal care and children may die if they don't get their inoculations on time.

A large figure darkens the door and Johanna shrinks back in fright as MR.GUMEDE, the village chief walks in.

JOHANNA

(hoarse whisper)

That's the chief! Oh god, he's coming here.

MAGGIE

Good! He's just the man I want to see.

Mr. Gumede strides up to the table. His expression and bearing leave no doubt that he is in a bad mood.

GUMEDE

(loud)

Nurse Ferguson? I am Gideon Gumede, the chief of this village, and I am come to tell you that this clinic must close. At once. The people of this village do not want you or your medicines.

MAGGIE

But-

GUMEDE

Do not argue. It has been decided. Go and do not come back. You will not be welcome.

He swings on his heel and leaves. Through the open door, he can be seen climbing into a large car. The car departs, sending up a cloud of dust.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S COTTAGE. DAY.

Maggie is in the kitchen, setting out breakfast (toast, orange juice and cereals) when a knock is heard on the front door. She opens it to see a young LAD standing there.

MAGGIE

(surprised)

Hello!What can I do for you?

LAD

You are Nurse Ferguson?

MAGGIE

Yes. Yes, I am.

LAD

I have brought a letter. It is from Nurse Johanna. She said I must give it to you myself.

He hands over an envelope then turns and, without waiting, runs away. Maggie watches him disappear down the road then, with a frown of puzzlement, opens the envelope. Inside is a hand-written note on a single sheet of paper.

She smooths it and reads: Dear Nurse Ferguson, I am sorry I cannot work any more and must hand in my resignation. This is due to ill health. Respectfully, Johanna Mkize.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.RUBEN BRANDT'S OFFICE ON FARM. DAY.

Brandt sits at his desk, scowling. He is obviously in a bad mood. Mason walks in, dragging feet and glancing around at the empty chairs set up against the wall. He twists hands nervously as he faces Brandt.

MASON

I... I've come to ask...would you mind, if I excused myself from the meeting? My daughter... Elsa... She's not well. And-

BRANDT

(harshly)

Shut up! You're involved in this as much as the rest of us, so don't try and wriggle out. If you know what's good for you, sit down and close your mouth.

Mason does as he's told. A moment later, West walks in. He stands facing Brandt, shoulders thrown back, frowning in annoyance.

WEST

This is really very inconvenient. I had to drop everything. I'd appreciate it if you'd give a bit more notice next time you call a meeting.

He moves to a chair and sits.

BRANDT

(apologetically)

Kruger only phoned last night. But security is important and he wouldn't have called a meeting without good reason. So let's sit tight and hear what he has to say.

(pause)

Ah... There he is now.

The door opens and Kruger appears. He glances around then, taking his time, strolls over to last vacant chair and sits.

BRANDT

Right! We're all here. So go ahead, Rolf, tell us what this is all about.

KRUGER

Well, the first thing you need to know is that Sue Evans hasn't given up trying to find out how her husband died. That problem has not gone away.

West swings around, his brows raised in surprise.

WEST

What do you mean? The last time we met, you told us she'd left the area and gone to live in Johannesburg.

KRUGER

She did. But she hired a private investigator before she left. A guy by the name of Turner. And it's come to my notice that he's been nosing about asking questions.

BRANDT

(short laugh)

He can ask all the questions he likes but it won't get him anywhere. The only people who know what happened to Evans are sitting in this room, right here.

WEST

I agree. Turner's in Kudufontein. There's no way he can get onto this farm to come snooping around.

KRUGER

I wouldn't write Turner off quite so fast if I was you. He may not be able to get onto the farm, but that doesn't mean he can't recruit someone who can. Someone like Jack Randall for instance.

BRANDT

What the hell do you mean by that?

KRUGER

What I said. Turner and Randall were seen having a cosy little chat in the Marula Restaurant not so long ago.

BRANDT

You're sure about that?

KRUGER

You're damned right, I am. I got that from a reliable source.

MASON

Just because they were seen in a restaurant doesn't mean they're working together. Maybe they're friends.

KRUGER

(harsh laugh)

And maybe I'm Mother Teresa. What I want to know is how dangerous is Randall. What does he know?

BRANDT

Nothing. How could he? He wasn't here when Evans died.

KRUGER

What about Maggie Ferguson?

BRANDT

What about her?

KRUGER

In case you haven't noticed, she and Randall spend a lot of time together.

(pause and smile)

Most of it in bed, is my guess. The point is, if Randall is involved in helping Turner, you can bet your last cent she is too. That could mean trouble.

WEST

So what you going to do about it?

KRUGER

I'll plant a few bugs and keep an eye on their movements but it isn't easy to keep tabs on what they're up to in a place like this. It might be safer to take them out now, before any damage is done. That's why I called this meeting. I want to know if I've got the go ahead to do that.

MASON

(weakly)

You mean... You mean both... Both of them?

KRUGER

That's for you to decide. I'll do what I'm told.

(pause)

Well, what's the decision? Do I or don't I go ahead?

BRANDT

No, we've had enough casualties as things are. Any more, and we'll have the police knocking on our door. But keep an eye on those two. If you pick up so much as a hint of trouble, let me know. It will only take one phone call to change my mind

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE.DAY.

Jack walks into his office and finds an envelope propped up on his desk. He sits, slits it open and is surprised when a white, embossed card falls out. He opens it, reads and then picks up the phone and dials. It is answered on the third ring.

MAGGIE (V.O)

Bells Clinic. Can I help you?

JACK

Hi Maggie, it's me. Can you spare a mo?

MAGGIE (V.O)

Sure. Not a soul here yet.

JACK

I got an invitation to Bells annual cocktail party. Did you get one too?

MAGGIE (V.O)

Yeah. Apparently everyone in this place gets one. Or just about. It's a big event.

JACK

You want to go?

MAGGIE (V.O)

I'm not in the mood for a party but... Well, maybe we ought to go.

JACK

We don't have to if you don't want to.

MAGGIE (V.O)

Let's go. It'll give us an opportunity to mingle with folk we don't usually get to meet. And you never know... If we ask the right people the right questions, we may dig up something interesting.

JACK

Good point. But take care Maggie. Too many questions could lead to danger.

MAGGIE (V.O)

I know. Don't worry. I'll be careful.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.COUNTRY CLUB HALL.NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie walk in the door of the country club to find the party in full swing. People mill about, laughing and talking, waiters, carrying trays, weave their way through the crowd and, in the centre of the room, a table is laden with platters piled high with food.

RUTH BRANDT, glass in hand, comes swooping to meet them. She wears a lot of jewelry and a dress flowing with frills. Her lipstick is smudged and her hair, piled on top of her head, is starting to come adrift. As she comes closer, it becomes apparent that she is unsteady on her feet.

RUTH

Maggie! My dear. So nice to see you. And this young man? No, don't tell me, let me guess. You must be Jack Randall. I'm so glad you could come. I think it's so important for everyone to know everyone in a small place like this. Don't you agree?

Ruth pauses, looks around, spots a couple coming through the door, and waves.

RUTH
(to Maggie and Jack)
Do excuse me. There are the
Robinsons. I just HAVE to say
hello.

As Ruth rushes away, a waiter arrives with a tray of drinks. Jack and Maggie each help themselves to a glass of wine. Maggie glances over Jack's shoulder.

MAGGIE
(softly)
Don't look around, but I think our
luck is about to change. Dr. West
is headed this way.

West approaches and, ignoring Jack, addresses Maggie.

WEST
Well, well, well, look who's here!
Little Nurse Ferguson. I hardly
recognised you. The last time I saw
you, you were in uniform. Quite a
transformation. And a very
attractive one too, if I may say
so.

West runs his eyes slowly and deliberately over Maggie. She gives him a sweet smile.

MAGGIE
I was hoping we'd meet. There's
something I've been meaning to ask
you. I was going to phone. Now I
won't have to bother.

WEST
What do you want to know?

MAGGIE
I was wondering whether you're
aware of the fact that the last
time I tried to run an Outreach
clinic, I was told by the village
chief that we are not welcome.

WEST
Why did he do that?

MAGGIE
He didn't give a reason. Just told
me not to go back again. But I know
you and the chief are friends, so
was hoping he may have told you.

WEST

Well, he hasn't, but then I haven't been to the village for a while.

(pause)

I wouldn't worry about it if I were you. There's no understanding these people. They're riddled with superstition. Let them be. If they need medical help, they know where to come.

MAGGIE

I'd still like to know why the clinic was closed. I'd appreciate it if you'd call on the chief and find out for me.

WEST

Sure. The next time I go out that way, I'll ask. Whether or not he'll tell me is another story.

(pause)

Well, it's been nice chatting. Enjoy the rest of the evening. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'd better be moving on.

West drifts off into the crowd. Maggie turns to face Jack.

MAGGIE

Well! What do you make of that?

JACK

He's lying. He put on a big act but beneath that smooth exterior, he was as edgy as hell. He's hiding something, I'd bet my last dollar on that.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COUNTRY CLUB HALL. NIGHT.

LATER: From across the crowded room, Ruth Brandt raises a hand and waves.

RUTH

(loud and shrill)

Maggie! Hey, Maggie, come here. And bring Jack. Come and join us.

Maggie and Jack exchange glances then make their way to where Ruth stands waiting, glass in hand. Beside her is Ruben and LOLA, his attractive secretary.

RUTH

(to Lola -slightly
slurred)

I don't think you've met. This is my friend, Maggie Ferguson. We've known each other since we were so high. Isn't that so, Maggie? And this is Jack... Jack Randall.

(to Maggie and Jack)

And this is Lola Swart, my husband's... My husband's...

Ruth breaks off and sways as though about to fall, then regains balance and continues:

RUTH

(slurring)

... My husband's secretary.

A waiter approaches and holds out a tray of drinks. Ruth places her empty glass on the tray and reaches for a full one. As she does, her foot slips and she stumbles forward, knocking the tray out of the waiter's hand. It falls to the ground with a mighty crash. Moving swiftly, Jack catches Ruth as she falls. He sets her back on her feet with a smile.

BRANDT

(angrily)

For God's sake, Ruth, what do you think you're doing?

RUTH

I slipped, that's all. Just slipped.

JACK

My foot got in the way. My fault entirely.

Ruth throws Jack a grateful glance.

RUTH

I'm not sure...

JACK

So clumsy of me. But no harm's done. Now, how about we go get ourselves something to eat? The food looks delicious.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE. DAY.

Jack walks into the office and finds Connie sobbing. She looks awful - hair dishevelled, makeup smudged, face streaked with tears.

JACK

Connie! Hey, Connie! What's wrong?

CONNIE

(sobbing)

It's Rodney... He's gone. Oh Jack,
my boy... My boy's gone.

JACK

What do you mean... Gone? Where did
he go?

CONNIE

I don't know. That's the trouble.
He's just gone. Vanished.

Jack pulls up a chair and sits down beside her.

JACK

No one just vanishes. You know
that. Start at the beginning and
tell me what happened.

CONNIE

I'll try.

Connie sniffs, reaches for a tissue and blows her nose.

CONNIE

He... He left for school this
morning as usual, but didn't get
there.

JACK

How do you know?

CONNIE

The headmaster phoned. He asked if
the boy was sick. When I said no,
he jumped to the conclusion that he
was playing truant. But he wasn't.
He... He's just gone. Disappeared.

JACK

How can you be so sure?

CONNIE

Because I went home and looked. He
wasn't there. I looked everywhere.
And... And his bike was in the
garage. I know Rodney. He wouldn't
go anywhere without his bike.

JACK

What did you do then?

CONNIE

I phoned the animal lab. I didn't expect him to be there at that time of the day but thought I'd better check.

JACK

And?

CONNIE

Dr. West answered. He was in a real bad mood. He said Rodney didn't pitch for work this morning. He went on and on about the cages being in a disgusting state, and that when I saw Rodney I was to tell him not to go back.

JACK

So then?

CONNIE

That's when I phoned the police.

JACK

What did they say?

CONNIE

Sergeant Coetzee came right away. He promised to open a missing person file, but... But...

Connie starts sobbing again.

JACK

But what?

CONNIE

(tearfully)

He's of the opinion that Rodney's run away. He said kids do that all the time. And... And... Oh, Jack, how are we ever going to find him?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN IN MAGGIE'S KITCHEN. DAY.

As Maggie potters about in her kitchen, the phone rings. She picks it up on the second ring.

MAGGIE

Hello?

JOHANNA (V.O.)

That you Maggie?

MAGGIE

Johanna! How good-

JOHANNA (V.O.)

(cutting in)

Can't talk now. But I've got something to tell you. Something important. Can we meet?

MAGGIE

Sure. When?

JOHANNA (V.O.)

The Coffee House in Kudufontein. I'll be there at nine. Can you make it?

MAGGIE

Nine...? Right. I'll be there.

The phone goes dead and, with a puzzled frown, Maggie replaces the receiver.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COFFEE HOUSE RESTAURANT. DAY.

Maggie sits at a table in a cosy restaurant. Now and then she takes a sip of coffee from the mug in front of her. She keeps an eye on the door and, with obvious impatience, watches as people come and go. She glances at her watch, notes the time is twenty past nine then, with a sigh, gets up and walks out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COVERED CAR PARK, SHOPPING MALL. DAY.

As Maggie walks toward her car, she stops and stares at a vehicle that seems familiar. She walks closer, closer still, then, with eyes wide in horror, presses a hand to her mouth and screams.

A glimpse into the open window of the vehicle reveals an awful, blood-splattered scene with Johanna in the driver's seat, head thrown back, her throat slashed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION. DAY.

Maggie, pale and visibly upset, sits in police station. A POLICEMAN, seated at a desk opposite, takes notes as he questions her.

POLICEMAN

How well did you know the deceased?

MAGGIE

We worked together at Bells Research Centre clinic for almost a year. I regarded her as a good friend.

POLICEMAN

Do you know why anyone may have wanted to kill her? A jealous husband, a boyfriend maybe, anyone at all?

MAGGIE

No. I can't think why anyone would want to harm her. Johanna was a kind, caring woman. As far as I know, she didn't have an enemy in the world.

POLICEMAN

I see. Well, if you can think of anything that may help, let me know.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S CAR. DAY.

Maggie drives home. The dusty road winds through a pleasant vista of grassy plains broken here and there by an outcrop of rock and scattered acacia trees. In her rear-view mirror, Maggie sees a large, black Merc speeding toward her. As it draws close, she pulls to one side but, instead of passing, the car bumps her from behind then slackens speed.

Realizing her life is in danger, Maggie presses down hard on the accelerator. Dust billows up behind all but obscuring the Merc. A second bump sends her skidding toward the edge of the road. She regains control and drives on at full speed. The Merc follows, drawing closer and ever closer. It seems inevitable that it will crash into her once more, but at the last moment, Maggie rounds a bend and there is the gate leading into Bells Biological Research Centre. As she swings off the road, toward the gate, the Merc goes racing past in a cloud of dust.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE. DAY.

Jack sits at his desk. When the phone rings, he reaches out and picks it up.

JACK

Hello?

MAGGIE (V.O)
(tearfully)
Jack? Please come. Can you come
right now?

JACK
(concerned)
Hey, what's wrong? Are you ill?

MAGGIE (V.O)
Not ill, but I've had a bad day. A
very bad day. Can you come?

JACK
Where are you?

MAGGIE (V.O)
At home. I took the day off.

JACK
Sit tight. Be there in five
minutes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOUNGE IN MAGGIE'S COTTAGE. DAY.

Jack sits facing Maggie, listening in shock and horror as she relates her story.

MAGGIE
(heaving a big sigh)
So that's it. I think I've told you
everything. Or as much as I can
remember.

JACK
Oh my God! Johanna murdered and you
almost run off the road! It's a
miracle you weren't killed.

MAGGIE
The question is, what do we do now?

JACK
The way I see it, we have three
options. One - we pack up and get
out of here before something worse
happens.

MAGGIE
I'm not leaving till I find out who
killed my father.

JACK
I'm with you there. Option two - we
go to the police.

MAGGIE

We've been over that before.
Without evidence, it'd be a waste
of time.

JACK

Right. That leaves option three.

MAGGIE

Which is?

JACK

Find the evidence, then go to the
police.

MAGGIE

And where will we find that?

JACK

In the Zone. Whatever triggered all
this is on the other side of that
fence. Not sure what it is, but
it's there, I'm sure of that.

MAGGIE

And how do you propose to get in?

JACK

With Bob Evan's gate card. Turner
gave it to me, remember?

MAGGIE

It's outdated. Chances are it won't
work.

JACK

It's worth a try. It's our only
chance.

MAGGIE

Okay. So the next question is,
when?

JACK

Tonight. The sooner the better.
Problem is...

(pause)

The problem is, I don't know what
to look for. What I need is data -
info to point me in the right
direction.

MAGGIE

And where do you propose to find
that?

JACK

In Ruben Brandt's computer.

MAGGIE

(sighing)

Well, that puts paid to that.
Brandt keeps his PC in his house.

JACK

I know. But, with a bit of help, I
can get in and copy the files onto
my flash-drive.

MAGGIE

(puzzled)

Help from who?

JACK

From you. At least, I hope you'll
give a hand.

MAGGIE

Me? What can I do?

JACK

Ruth Brandt is your friend, right?

MAGGIE

Yes... We've known each other for
ever. But so what?

JACK

Well, pick up the phone and invite
yourself to tea. And while you're
there, take a trip to the bathroom.
Don't open a window but lift the
latch off its hook and leave it
that way. Think you can do that?

MAGGIE

I can. But...

(pause and gasp of
horror)

You're not thinking of... Oh, no,
Jack. You're not really thinking of
breaking in. Are you? Are you?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S CAR. NIGHT.

Jack (in passenger seat) and Maggie (behind the wheel) are
parked in a dimly-lit road outside Brandt's house. Both are
wearing dark tracksuits.

MAGGIE

(tense and anxious)

What's the time?

Jack looks at his watch.

JACK

Ten-thirty.

MAGGIE

See anything?

Jack peers out the window.

JACK

No. Everything's quiet. Not a light to be seen.

MAGGIE

Think they're asleep?

JACK

More than likely. I think it's safe enough to make a move.

MAGGIE

(nervously)

Wait! It's too early. What if they're still awake?

JACK

Okay, I'll give it another quarter-hour. They should be dead to the world by then.

MAGGIE

Right. The last thing you want is to go barging in while they're awake.

JACK

I won't. You can rely on that.

The silence is broken by the sound of an owl hooting. Maggie tenses.

MAGGIE

(frightened whisper)

What was that?

JACK

Just an owl.

He looks at his watch then opens the car door.

MAGGIE

(urgent)

Where are you going? You said-

JACK

(cutting in)

Relax. I'm not aiming to go in just yet. I want to scout around and get my bearings. I won't go near the house till I'm sure it's safe.

MAGGIE

You got the flashlight? And memory stick? Everything you need?

Jack pats his pockets.

JACK

All set. Keep your eyes on the gate. Start the engine when you see me coming. I may want to get out of here in one big hurry.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GROUNDS SURROUNDING BRANDT'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Jack opens garden gate. Leaves it open. Moonlight reveals a wide expanse of lawn bordered by flower beds and shrubbery. The big, double-story house is silhouetted against a starlit sky. Frogs croak from a nearby pond. Crickets chirp and, further away, a nightjar calls.

Keeping to the shadows, Jack moves closer to the house. As he approaches, moonlight glints on glass, lighting up a row of windows. He pauses a moment, gazing about, then heads for the third window to the right of the front door.

He reaches the window, tugs on the frame and breathes a sigh of relief when it opens. He looks around once then, satisfied he has not been seen, climbs in through the open window.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRANDT'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Jack switches on his flashlight and tiptoes out of the bathroom, into a passage. He passes several closed doors, stops briefly at the foot of a flight of stairs, moves quietly through a dining-room, a lounge, past the kitchen and on into another passage. A few more steps take him to yet another closed door. He opens it and steps into Ruben Brandt's study.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRAND'S STUDY. NIGHT.

Jack closes the door and looks around. A computer stands on a large desk. At the touch of the mouse a screen-saver, displaying a series of scantily-dressed women, springs to life, filling the room with an eerie green light.

Jack digs in his pocket, brings out a flash-drive and inserts it into a port. He moves the mouse and watches as a long list of documents fill the screen. He scrolls up and down then settles on one labelled, Pegasus 694. A few clicks

of the mouse and the file is copied. Jack pulls out the flash-drive, drops it into his pocket and turns to go. Then freezes as a light springs on in the passage. He shrinks back against the wall as footsteps draw closer and steadily closer.

Trapped and with no way to escape, Jack awaits his fate. The door opens. And there, framed against the passage light, is Ruth Brandt - a tall, thin figure, dressed in an ankle-length nightdress, her hair an untidy mop around her face.

She holds a glass in one hand and, for a moment, can do no more than stare, eyes wide with shock. Her mouth opens as though to scream. Then, as recognition dawns, she smiles and holds up her glass as though in a toast. Then without a word, turns and walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAGGIE'S CAR. NIGHT.

Breathless with haste, Jack opens the car door and slips into the passenger seat. As he lands, Maggie puts her foot down on the accelerator. The car roars into life and speeds away.

MAGGIE

What took you so long? I was sick with worry.

JACK

It took time to find the file, and then... And then I ran into a spot of trouble.

MAGGIE

Trouble? What kind of trouble?

JACK

I got caught red-handed.

MAGGIE

Oh, my God! Where?

JACK

In Brandt's study.

MAGGIE

By Brandt?

JACK

No, Ruth.

MAGGIE

RUTH! What was she doing there?

JACK

Getting a drink of water. Or something stronger. She must have seen the light and wondered what was going on.

MAGGIE

What did she do?

JACK

Nothing. That's what's so weird. She just stood there, looking at me then turned and walked away. Totally crazy.

MAGGIE

It's not so crazy. Ruth poured her heart out to me this afternoon. She's sick and tired of Ruben's affairs and the way he treats her. She's filing for divorce.

JACK

What's that got to do with what happened tonight?

MAGGIE

I'd say it's payback time. Ruth must have known you were up to no good, but if it lands Brandt in trouble, she won't mind in the least. I rather think she'd be pleased.

JACK

Well, she sure gave me a fright, I can tell you that.

MAGGIE

But you got the file? That go okay?

JACK

Got it right here, in my pocket.

MAGGIE

When can we see it?

JACK

As soon as we hit home. Then we'll know what we're up against.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.STUDY IN JACK'S COTTAGE. NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie enter the study and hurry toward a computer which stands on a large desk. He pulls up two chairs and positions them in front of the desk.

JACK

Come sit - here beside me. That way we'll both see what comes up.

MAGGIE

Got the flash drive?

Jack puts a hand into a pocket and brings out the memory stick.

JACK

Yeah, right here.

MAGGIE

Put it in. Hurry Jack. I can't wait to see what we've got.

Jack inserts the flash drive and leans forward as the screen lights up.

MAGGIE

(breathless)

Look - A number! Six-nine-four. And symbols. Pages and pages of formulae. Do you have any idea what they mean?

JACK

It would take time to figure out and we haven't got that kind of time right now. Hang on. I'll scroll down and see if I can find something that makes sense.

The computer screen flashes with symbols and figures as Jack scrolls down. He pauses now and then to look more closely, then carries on scrolling.

JACK

(gives a low whistle)

This is big. Much bigger than I imagined. I've just skimmed the surface, but it looks like a record of a new type of bio-fuel, interspersed with informal notes. Look - here and here, and here.

MAGGIE

It's too technical for me. Can you break it down to bits I can understand?

JACK

Sure. If I home in on Brandt's notes, we should be able to figure it out. Here's a record of the DNA that went into the first generation of plants. The seedlings were assessed for vigour, oil content, drought resistance, seed production and every other possible characteristic.

Jack scrolls down further then stops to point.

JACK

And look - here's a note summarizing the results: Pegasus six-nine-four. Ratings all well above average.

Maggie leans forward to point.

MAGGIE

Look - there's another note down there.

JACK

And here. The process was repeated again and again. New DNA, new seedlings, new trials, each generation different from the one before.

MAGGIE

Hold it. You're scrolling way too fast. What about that entry there?

The screen steadies and Jack reads aloud.

JACK

Pegasus six-nine-four. Fourth generation. Outstanding specimen. Positive characteristics include abundant spore production and vigorous growth. With a few adjustments this specimen could become the fuel of the future.

MAGGIE

The fuel of the future! So that's what Brandt was aiming at! A fuel that would make him super rich.

JACK

Yeah, and famous. But he struck a problem. Take a look here:

(reads aloud)

Spores are airborne, produced in great abundance and germinate in an incredibly short time. Every effort will be made to eliminate this characteristic in future generations.

MAGGIE

(puzzled)

Why should airborne spores and swift germination be a problem? I'd have thought the exact opposite.

JACK

It's a GMO, remember, as different from any plant on earth as a one evolved on another planet. Airborne spores means it could become invasive - a super weed, almost impossible to eradicate. Activists have been warning about that kind of disaster for years.

MAGGIE

Hey! What's that down there? At the bottom of the page?

JACK

(reading aloud)

The spores are not only attracted to moisture, but have the ability to propel themselves toward the source. In a controlled experiment, rats exposed to the spores died within minutes. On dissection, their lungs were found to be coated with swollen spores. As a precaution against accidents, Pegasus six-nine-four will, in future, be grown in airtight domes.

MAGGIE

Accident? What does he mean?

JACK

Don't you see? The plants are lethal. The rats died within minutes. If the spores escaped, they'd kill every living thing they came in contact with.

MAGGIE

Oh, my God! Do you think that's what happened to Bernie Kemp?

JACK

More than likely. With so much at stake, Brandt would have had the place torched in an instant.

MAGGIE

And Dad? He must have known about Pegasus six-nine-four. Do you think they killed him to keep him quiet?

JACK

I'm almost sure that's what happened. And Evans. And Nurse Johanna.

MAGGIE

(hoarse with horror)

Oh Lord, Jack, what are we going to do?

JACK

Stop the project before it's too late.

MAGGIE

How?

JACK

Get proof and take it to the authorities. What we need are photographs and tissue samples.

Jack pauses to glance at his watch.

JACK

It's going on twelve-thirty. If I go now, I can be in and out of the Zone well before sunup.

MAGGIE

I'm coming too.

JACK

No you're not.

MAGGIE

I'm not staying here on my own. That's definite. Someone tried to kill me this morning. If they try again, I'll be a sitting duck.

Jack considers, biting his lip, then gives a small nod.

JACK

You've made your point. Okay. But I want your word that you'll do as I say. Right away. No arguing. No backchat.

MAGGIE

Okay.

JACK

And keep close at all times. No wondering off on your own. Got that?

MAGGIE

Got it.

JACK

We'll go as soon as you're ready. Wear something dark. And running shoes. Bring a flashlight and spare batteries. I'll bring one too, but we don't know what we'll run into and may be glad of the extra light.

MAGGIE

Will do.

JACK

I'll meet you at the gate in front of your cottage.

MAGGIE

I'll be there. Give me ten minutes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM IN JACK'S COTTAGE. NIGHT.

Jack kicks off his soft-soled sneakers and pulls on a pair of running shoes. A jacket goes on over his tracksuit. He searches in a drawer, finds the gate card and slips it into an inside pocket. He searches about, finds a camera, flashlight and penknife, and pockets all. Extra batteries go into another pocket. Satisfied he has everything he needs, Jack turns and leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE JACK'S COTTAGE. NIGHT.

The settlement is in darkness. A full moon casts a soft light. Jack runs past the clinic and on towards Maggie's cottage. As he draws near, she steps from the shadow of a large tree. Like Jack, she is dressed in black. A scarf covers her hair.

JACK

(softly)

Got everything? Ready to go?

MAGGIE

As ready as I'll ever be.

JACK
Come on, then, let's go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD CUTTING THROUGH CENTRE OF SETTLEMENT. NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie run side by side. A full moon gleams above. Jack's flashlight throws pools of light on the road as they run. They pass the library, the clubhouse, the admin. building and on past numerous tunnels. When they reach a thicket of trees, beyond the tunnels, Jack halts.

JACK
You okay? We can slow down a bit if you like.

MAGGIE
(breathing hard)
No, no. I'm fine. I'll let you know when I'm tired.

JACK
Right, let's move on. Not far now.

They jog on toward a tall fence just visible glinting in the moonlight. Maggie points.

MAGGIE
Look - the Zone! There, up ahead.

JACK
Yeah, and take a look at the sign hanging from the fence. Skull and crossbones. Anyone fool enough to touch that will get more than a slight shock.

They jog on. The fence grows closer. When the gatehouse looms into view, Maggie slows to a halt.

MAGGIE
(panting)
Look - the gatehouse. So dark and creepy. What if we run into a guard?

JACK
There are no guards. This place is so well fortified they don't need guards.

MAGGIE
Are you quite, quite sure?

JACK
That's what Mason told me. There's no reason he would lie.

MAGGIE

Right then, let's go. Last sprint.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GATE HOUSE.NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie reach the gatehouse and stop in front of a heavy metal door. Jack reaches inside his jacket pocket and produces the gate card.

JACK

(breathing heavily)

Well, this is it. The card will either open the gate or it won't. We'll know in a sec.

MAGGIE

(worriedly)

What if it goes in, but doesn't shoot out the other side?

JACK

That's not going to happen. If goes in, it'll shoot out. Here, hold my hand. The gate won't stay open long, so keep close. When I give the word, we'll nip through together.Okay?

MAGGIE

Okay.

Jack pushes the card into the slot. There is a whirring, humming sound from deep inside the machine, then a rolling sound as the gate slides open.

JACK

NOW! Come on, let's go.

Holding hands, Jack and Maggie leap through the gate. They turn and watch as it closes behind them with an ominous clang.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GROUNDS OF HIGH SECURITY ZONE. NIGHT.

MAGGIE

(breathless)

Did the card come through?

JACK

Got it! No problem.

MAGGIE

Thank heavens!

She gazes about. Moonlight outlines an enormous building - the research centre - flanked on both sides by row upon row of greenhouses.

MAGGIE

Look at all those greenhouses! A hundred at least. How will we ever find the one we want? The one with Pegasus 694?

Jack points.

JACK

See that one over there? The one with a high-pitched roof? That's where they are -in there.

MAGGIE

How do you know?

JACK

It's different from the rest. Newer. Obviously a replacement for the one that burnt down. I'm pretty sure we'll find them in there.

MAGGIE

Shall we go look?

JACK

Not yet. We'll leave the plants till last. I don't want to carry dangerous specimens around any longer than I need to.

MAGGIE

Right. So what's first?

JACK

The research building. I brought a few tools. Shouldn't take long to open one of those windows. Follow me.

(beat)

You ready?

MAGGIE

Yeah.

JACK

Come on then, let's go.

Jack and Maggie sprint across the lawn then, crouching low, make their way to a window on the side of the building. Jack takes out his knife and slips it into the groove between window and frame. He presses down and grunts with satisfaction when the latch gives. A tug and the window swings open. Jack climbs through then reaches out to give Maggie a hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.LOBBY INSIDE RESEARCH CENTRE. NIGHT.

As Maggie lands, Jack switches on his flashlight to display a row of hand basins, lockers and lab coats hanging from hangers on the wall.

MAGGIE

Where are we? What is this place?

JACK

A lobby of some kind.

Jack moves his flashlight around the room, then steadies it on a door.

JACK

Look a door! Let's see what's on the other side.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PASSAGE IN RESEARCH CENTRE. NIGHT.

Jack opens the door. His flashlight reveals a long passage lined with closed doors. Jack and Maggie enter the passage, flashing light on doors as they walk.

MAGGIE

Hey! Look at the sign on this door:
'Source Material. I wonder what that means.

JACK

Let's find out.

He opens the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOURCE MATERIAL ROOM INSIDE THE ZONE. NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie step into a large room, and stare about at tables laden with flasks and jars filled with a variety of plant and animal specimens, all neatly labelled. Beams of light crisscross as they move about the room, examining the specimens.

MAGGIE

Whew! That smell! What is it?

JACK

Formaldehyde. And something else.
Something sharper.

MAGGIE

This is amazing! Like a museum.

JACK

Yeah, just about any type of DNA a scientist might need to produce a GMO - plant or animal. I could spend hours here, but we haven't time. Come, let's move on.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PASSAGE IN RESEARCH CENTRE. NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie continue down the passage, flashing beams of light on doors as they go.

MAGGIE

Take a look here. This sign says, 'Terminated Projects. Authorized Personnel Only. What on earth does that mean?

JACK

Won't take long to find out.

He opens the door.

JACK

Come, let's take a look.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TERMINATED PROJECTS ROOM.ZONE. NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie step into another large room. At first glance, it appears much the same as the previous one but closer inspection reveals a ghastly display of "Failed Project" specimens.

Flashlights move here and there, illuminating one horror after another.

MAGGIE

(gasping)

Oh, how awful! These specimens are all ... monsters. Look - a piglet with green fur. And a lamb with two heads and eight legs.

Maggie moves about shining her light on one specimen after another.

MAGGIE

And these vegetables... a cabbage covered in slime. And this... I think it's supposed to be a tomato but it's putrid inside.

As Maggie's flashlight lights up a jar containing a blob of jelly-like substance, she gives a small shriek.

MAGGIE

Oh no! Look - a blob of jelly with
a pair of perfectly-formed eyes.

Jack's flashlight joins hers to highlight a misshapen blob
sporting a pair of bright blue eyes.

JACK

There's more, over here -

MAGGIE

(cutting in)

Oh, God, Jack, come take a look
here. A human baby in a jar. It's
malformed - just like the one I saw
in the clinic. For heaven's sake,
let's get out of here, before I
throw up.

For a brief moment, a flashlight shows a small human baby
floating in a yellow liquid, then Maggie and Jack head for
the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM IN RUBEN BRANDT'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Ruben Brandt is woken from a deep sleep by the persistent
ringing of a telephone. At the tenth ring he puts on the
bedside light and, with a muttered curse, picks up the
phone.

BRANDT

Who the hell-

KRUGER (V.O.)

(cutting him off)

We got trouble. Someone's in the
Zone.

BRANDT

(shouting)

WHAT?

KRUGER (V.O.)

You heard me. Someone's in the
Zone. Randall and the Ferguson
woman.

BRANDT

You crazy? No one gets through-

KRUGER (V.O.)

(cutting in)

Shut up and listen, will you? They got through the gate. Don't ask me how, but they did. The camera picked them up when they crossed the lawn. I heard the alarm, and there they were clear as anything. Then I heard another buzz. That means a window opened. They're in the research centre right now.

BRANDT

Oh, my God! What now?

KRUGER (V.O.)

I'll come quick as I can, but someone your end better get there and make sure those two don't skip. If they're in the building, I'll make sure they disappear for once and for all. But if they've gone...

BRANDT

Get moving. I'll see to it that they stay put.

Brandt slams the phone down then, muttering to himself, picks it up again and begins dialing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PASSAGE IN RESEARCH CENTRE.ZONE. NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie hurry along the passage.

JACK

This way. Come on, time's running out.

A flashlight lights up a sign on a closed door.

MAGGIE

Wait! This door has West's name on it. Let's peep in. There's bound to be something worth seeing there.

JACK

Okay, but let's make it snappy. We haven't time to waste.

The door opens.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WEST'S LAB IN RESEARCH CENTRE. NIGHT.

As Jack and Maggie step into the room, a dozen baboons, housed in a row of small cages set against the wall, set up a din, screaming and rattling their cages. Flashlight beams show the animals leaping up and down, displaying razor-sharp fangs.

MAGGIE

Baboons! Oh, the poor things locked up in such small cages. What kind of project can West be working on that needs so many baboons?

JACK

Who knows? But take a look here. Something strange is going on under this dome.

He points to a table holding a large glass dome. Beneath the dome is a baboon, spread out as though for dissection.

MAGGIE

(gasps)

It's alive! I can see its chest rise and fall.

JACK

You're right. It's breathing! Not conscious but definitely alive.

Maggie swings her flashlight around the room, revealing more tables, each supporting a baboon covered by a dome.

MAGGIE

There's another here. And another. This is so weird...

Jack swings his flashlight to the far corner of the room.

JACK

Hey! That table ... There, over there. That's not a baboon under that dome. It looks... oh, my God... it looks like a man!

Maggie runs to get a closer look then steadies her flashlight on the dome.

MAGGIE

(gasp of horror)

It's not a man... It's... It's a boy!

JACK

It's Rodney! Connie's son - Rodney Pieteron.

MAGGIE

Rodney? The boy everyone thought had run away?

JACK

That's him, no doubt at all.

MAGGIE

Oh, my God, what are we going to do? We can't leave him here.

JACK

We'll have to - for the time being, at least. We can't carry him, that's for sure.

MAGGIE

There's a phone on West's desk. We could call the police.

JACK

And tell them what? That we just happened to be strolling through Bells high security Zone at one in the morning and found the boy lying under a dome? There's no way they'd believe us. Even if they did, the first thing they'd do is phone Brandt. And by the time they got here, there'd be nothing to see. Rodney would be gone. And, more than likely, so would we.

MAGGIE

So what do we do?

JACK

I'll take photographs. That's the kind of evidence we need before we go to the police.

Jack takes out his camera and begins taking photos of Rodney lying under the dome. Suddenly, as though at a signal, every baboon in the room shrieks and jumps up and down with expressions of fear and rage.

MAGGIE

For heaven's sake! What set them off?

JACK

They sense something! Or someone. Someone they hate.

MAGGIE

West! He's here. Somewhere in the building.

JACK

He knows we're here! We must have triggered an alarm when we came in.

MAGGIE

What now?

JACK

If he finds us here, there's no way we'll get out alive.

MAGGIE

Run! Let's run.

JACK

Wait! Let the baboons out first. Help me open the cages. Hurry! Hurry!

Jack and Maggie rush from cage to cage, opening doors. One by one, the baboons leap out and go scampering out of the room, shrieking as they go.

JACK

That's it! All gone. Come, let's go. Run, run.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PASSAGE IN RESEARCH CENTRE. NIGHT.

Jack's flashlight lights the way as he and Maggie run along the passage. Up ahead, in the darkness, baboons can be heard shrieking as they race for freedom.

MAGGIE

Which way? Where are we going?

JACK

Follow the baboons, They're heading for the front door. They sense it's open. If we get past West, we may have a chance.

The pair race on and on, past numerous doors and dark cavities that mark interconnecting passages. A light springs on and they stop in their tracks at the sight of West standing in the entrance doorway. He, quite clearly, has a gun in his hand.

WEST

(booming loud voice)

It's no use running. Come on out you stupid-

West breaks off mid-sentence as a baboon gives a wild shriek and hurls itself at him. West drops it with a single shot but, as it falls, a horde of baboons emerge from the dark and attack him. West fires again and again, but the weight of bodies take him down. He screams just once. There is an awful gurgling sound then, with more shrieks, the baboons leave and race for the open door. A moment later, they disappear into the night.

Jack and Maggie step closer and stare down at the bloodstained body. Maggie shudders at the sight.

MAGGIE

Oh God, how awful! What a way to die!

JACK

He had it coming. Heaven only knows what he did to them, but they hated him, that's for sure.

MAGGIE

Let's get out of here. Come on. Let's go. Let's go.

JACK

Wait. His gun. It may come in useful.

Jack stoops and picks up the handgun.

MAGGIE

Is it loaded?

Jack examines the gun and shakes his head.

JACK

Empty. Pity, but I'll keep it anyway.

He slips it into his pocket.

JACK

(urgently)

Come, come, let's go. Kruger and the rest of them will be here any minute. We'd better be out of the gatehouse before they get here.

Jack and Maggie run out of the open door and race across the lawn toward the gatehouse.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GATE HOUSE.NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie reach the gatehouse and stand breathless in front of the metal gate.

MAGGIE

The card! Put it in, Jack. Hurry!
Hurry.

Jack digs in his pocket and pulls out the gate card.

JACK

Shine here. On the slot. Keep it
steady.

He pushes the card into the slot.

JACK

There!That's it, done.

Beside him, Maggie hops from foot to foot as she waits for the gate to open.

MAGGIE

Open... open.. come on, come on!

Seconds pass but the gate remains closed.

JACK

Something's wrong! West must have
reset the code.

Through the fence, headlights can be seen approaching.

MAGGIE

Someone's coming! Look -
headlights.

JACK

Brandt! That's Brandt's car.

In moonlight, the vehicle draws close at high speed. Tyres squeal as it skids to a halt on the other side of the fence. A figure (Brandt)gets out and slams the door shut. He pulls a handgun from a pocket and fires a shot.The bullet whistles over Jack's head.

JACK

(urgently to Maggie)
Run! This way. Follow me.

Leading the way, Jack races toward the greenhouses. Another bullet whistles overhead. Halfway there, Maggie stumbles and falls. Jack stops to give her a hand.

JACK

You hurt?

MAGGIE
(breathless)
No. just tripped.

JACK
Come on. Come ON. He's coming after
us.

MAGGIE
Where... where are we going?

JACK
The greenhouses. We need somewhere
to hide. Come on. Come on.

Jack grabs her hand and pulls her as he carries on running.

JACK
Come on, Faster. Faster!

They reach the greenhouses and keep running till they reach
one with the sign: PEGASUS 694. AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY,
pinned to the door. Jack holds the door open.

JACK
This is as far as we go. Quick, go
inside. We'll wait for Brandt here.

MAGGIE
You crazy? The plants in there are
lethal. We can't go in there.

JACK
They're under glass. Brandt won't
dare fire a shot in there. He knows
what will happen if a plant gets
out. Come on in. It's our best
chance.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREENHOUSE.NIGHT.

Jack and Maggie enter the greenhouse and, in soft moonlight,
gaze about at row upon row of glass domes set on long
tables. Strange plants with red flowers and large, yellow
pods are visible through the glass.

Jack and Maggie run down an aisle then crouch low behind a
table. From outside, footsteps are heard approaching.

MAGGIE
(whispering)
He's coming. He must have seen us
come in.

JACK
(urgent whisper)

Shhhh.... Stay down. Don't move,
but run for the door when I give
the word. Don't stop. Don't look
back. Get out fast. Got that?

MAGGIE
Right. But -

JACK
Don't argue. Do as I say. Shhh....

The door bursts open as Brandt barges in. He takes a few steps then stops and looks around.

BRANDT
(loudly)
It's no use hiding. I know you're
here, you bastards. Come on out.
With hands up. Don't think of
running because I've got you
covered. And this time, I won't
miss.

Still crouching low, Jack slips a hand in his pocket, takes out the handgun he picked up near West's body and, with a quick, sure movement, tosses it over the row of glass domes. It lands in the next aisle with a loud clatter.

The noise draws Brandt and, with a harsh laugh, he comes stamping down the aisle.

BRANDT
Ha, ha! Your time's run out,
Randall! It's no use hiding. Put up
your hands and come out.

No one moves. Brandt looks around, craning his neck from side to side but, in the gloom, cannot detect where Jack and Maggie are hiding. Jack grips his flashlight and tosses it into the next aisle, a few yards from where they crouch. Once again, the noise draws Brandt. As he comes striding down the aisle, Jack stands, lifts a dome and hurls it with all his might.

The dome hits Brandt in the chest. He falls. The dome falls with him. It crashes onto the concrete floor spilling glass, earth and plant debris.

JACK
(yelling to Maggie)
Run, Maggie, run! Don't stop. Go!
Go! Go!

Maggie runs and exits the door.

BRANDT

(coughing and choking)

You stupid bastard! Do you know what you've done? You've broken a tank and set the spores free. I'll get you for this. I'll get you if it's the last... the last...

Jack takes one last look at Brandt then turns and runs for the door. He exits and slams the door shut.

Inside the greenhouse, Brand's coughing grows worse, becomes a rasping, grunting sound. He gasps, wheezes and gags. He arches his back, kicking heels against the floor. The awful sounds go on and on, until he collapses and stops breathing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SPACE OUTSIDE GREENHOUSE. NIGHT.

As Jack steps out of the tunnel, he sees Maggie standing very still, arms wrapped around her chest, staring at something beyond his vision. Sensing something wrong, he swings around and - sees Kruger! Standing beside him is Mason. Both men hold guns. Kruger's is pointed at Jack, Mason's at Maggie.

KRUGER

(loud with anger)

Interfering bastards! What made you think you could walk in here, cause all this shit, then walk out again? Well, I've got news for you. This is the end of the road.

(to Mason)

Let's not waste time. Do what I told you. Shoot the bitch. Do it! Do it now.

JACK

(shouting)

Don't be a fool, Mason! Do you want to end up with a noose around your neck? What do you think will happen when the police find our bodies? They'll get you for sure.

MAGGIE

(to Mason)

Listen to Jack. West and Brandt are dead, but you don't need to die. Call the police. Do it Mason. Call them now, while there's still time.

MASON

(nervously to Kruger)

Maybe... Maybe...

KRUGER

(cutting him off)

It's too late for that. But quit worrying. There won't be any bodies TO find. The police will blame Randall for Brandt's death. They'll put out a warrant for his arrest.

(harsh laugh)

Too bad they won't find him. Or her. But enough talking. We've wasted enough time already. Do what I said. Shoot. Shoot now.

MASON

Very well. As you say, Sir. As you say.

Mason turns, points his gun at Kruger's head and pulls the trigger. A single shot rings out. Kruger's mouth opens in shocked surprise. Then blood spurts from his head, his knees buckle and he drops to the ground without a sound.

MAGGIE

(stifling a scream)

Oh my God, he's shot Kruger!

MASON

(calmly)

I should have done that a long time ago. It would have saved a lot of trouble.

(to jack)

Here's the gun. Take it. It's no use to me now.

Mason drops his gun onto the ground.

MASON

You'd better phone the police. Tell them I killed Kruger. Tell them I'm ready to make a statement and answer any questions they may care to ask. And now, if you don't mind, I think I'll go home. I'd like to spend a bit of time with my daughter before the police come.

Mason turns and walks away in the direction of the gate.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GROUNDS OF HIGH SECURITY ZONE. DAY.

The gate leading to the High Security Zone stands wide open. A police van drives through and pulls up in front of the research centre building. As four policemen spill out, Jack walks down the steps to meet them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GROUNDS OF HIGH SECURITY ZONE. DAY.

A wailing siren announces the arrival of an ambulance. It drives through the gate at top speed then halts in front of the Research building. Two paramedics get out. As they unload a stretcher, Maggie meets them and leads them into the building.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GROUNDS OF HIGH SECURITY ZONE. DAY.

A short while later, two paramedics, carrying a stretcher, re-appear in the research centre doorway. Maggie walks alongside. As they emerge, we see that the patient on the stretcher is Rodney Pieterse. The paramedics slide the stretcher into the rear end of the ambulance. Maggie and one of the paramedics climb up and seat themselves beside the patient. The driver gets into the cab. A second later, the ambulance drives out of the gate and disappears down the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GROUNDS OF HIGH SECURITY ZONE. DAY.

A vehicle, bearing a Hazmat logo, drives through the gate and pulls up in front of the research centre building. Four men, wearing overalls, jump out. As they unload equipment, Jack arrives and directs them to a greenhouse which has been cordoned off from the rest with ticker tape. A sign, swinging from the door, displays the words, PEGASUS 694.AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.GROUNDS OF HIGH SECURITY ZONE. DAY.

The roar of a helicopter is heard. The sound grows louder and louder until the chopper drops from the sky. It lands on the lawn in front of the research centre building. The rotors slow then stop. As a tall, grey-haired man alights, Jack walks up to meet him. They shake hands.

JACK

Mr. Bell? Arthur Bell? I'm Jack Randall. I phoned earlier. I'm sorry to be the bearer of such bad news.

ARTHUR BELL

This is unbelievable! Three men dead and a biological hazard in one of our greenhouses. My God! What went wrong?

JACK

I can put your mind at rest about the bio-hazard. The area has been cordoned off and a Hazmat team is there, right now. When the decontamination process is complete, everything inside the greenhouse - and a wide area around it - will be sterile. Not a single plant or spore will remain.

ARTHUR BELL

(puzzled)

I don't understand. What happened to Brandt? And to West and Kruger? How did they die?

JACK

Come inside. I'll tell you as much as I know. Then you'd better have a word with Sergeant Coetzee. He's been taking statements so will fill you in with the details.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE.DAY.

Jack is seated at his desk. When the phone rings, he picks up the receiver.

JACK

Randall.

CONNIE (V.O.)

Jack? This is Connie. I'm at the hospital, and I've got such good news! Rodney woke up. He's still woozy and his head aches like crazy, but the doctor says he'll be okay. Isn't that wonderful?

JACK

That's great. Did the doctor say what was wrong with him?

CONNIE (V.O.)

I don't think he knows for sure. He ran all kind of tests but, as far as I know, nothing positive came up.

JACK

How much does Rodney remember? I'm wondering whether he'll be able to tell us what happened - how he came to land up in the Zone.

CONNIE (V.O.)

I asked him that, but all he can remember is getting ready for school one minute, and waking up in hospital the next. But it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter at all because my boy's going to be fine, just fine.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM IN JACK'S COTTAGE. DAWN.

Jack wakes and reaches out drowsily for Maggie then comes fully awake when he finds no one there. Cups rattle from the kitchen and, a moment later, Maggie walks in carrying two mugs of coffee. She hands one to Jack, then sits on the side of bed, holding hers.

JACK

Thanks. Why up so early?

MAGGIE

I woke ages ago and couldn't go back to sleep. Too much on my mind, I guess.

JACK

Why didn't you wake me?

MAGGIE

You were dead to the world and I thought you could do with a few more hours. But I'm glad you're awake now because we need to talk. I need to know where we go from here.

JACK

That's on my mind too. I've been giving it a lot of thought.

MAGGIE

And?

JACK

Arthur Bell offered me a job. He wants my answer today.

MAGGIE

Oh! What kind of job?

JACK

Manager of this setup. Brandt's job, only bigger, because the whole farm needs restructuring. Arthur's in a hurry to fill the post. If I don't take it, he'll advertise the post tomorrow.

MAGGIE

(pause)

Will you take it?

JACK

I've been weighing up the pros and cons.

MAGGIE

And?

JACK

The salary's attractive. Very much so. So are the perks. I'd be more than comfortable. And, in spite of everything that's happened, I'm not ready to join the Greenies camp. Genetic modification has caused bad things - we've witnessed that - but we can't blame it all on GMO. I firmly believe that, with the right checks and balances, GMOs will benefit the world.

MAGGIE

(sighing)

So you're taking the job?

JACK

I didn't say that. I said I've been giving it a lot of thought.

MAGGIE

And?

JACK

I've been trying to make up my mind whether I want to spend the rest of my life working with plants and animals that are different from the kind I grew up with. And... well, I've come to the conclusion that that's not what I want to do.

MAGGIE

So, what do you want to do?

JACK

What I want... what I'd like to do is work the old farm. Bloukrantz has been lying idle for years, rundown long before my father died. The lands are choked with weeds, the barn falling apart and the house little more than a shell. I'd have to raise a loan. A big one. I'd be up to my neck in debt for a long, long time. It won't be easy, but that's what I want to do.

(pause)

It means I'd have to start from scratch. But it's a good farm and it'd be a good life. And ... and I'm wondering... how would you like to come along and give me a hand?

MAGGIE

(happily)

When do we start?

FADE OUT

END