

IMPACT

A SCREENPLAY BY

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FADE IN:

EXT. NORTHERN TUNDRA - NIGHT

Under a star-filled sky, lights from a domed radar outpost pierce the darkness. Nearby, a huge parabolic antenna slowly revolves.

SUPER: RESOLUTION ISLAND
 Friday August 1, 2007
 21:55 hours

INT. ALASKA TRACKING STATION - NIGHT

Perched atop a bank of hi-tech radar equipment, two GI Joe dolls resemble the two soldiers at the consoles below.

The clean-cut LIEUTENANT checks his watch. In a Hawaiian shirt, a RADAR TECH squirms, straining to hear the TV in the next room.

 ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 ...And with two out, Yankee fans
 sense the end is near.

 RADAR TECH
 C'mon, I got money on this game!

Ignoring him, the Lieutenant adjusts his controls.

 ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 (voice rising excitedly)
 It's a single up the middle.

The Tech gets up, but the Lieutenant freezes him with a look.

 RADAR TECH
 This is bullshit, Sir! We would have
 seen it coming weeks ago!

The Lieutenant sets his communications to SCRAMBLE. He glares at the Tech until he sits back down. The Tech jimmies open a panel. On the Lieutenant's signal, he disconnects a wire.

The red RECORDING light goes off.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

A silent sea of stars. An OBJECT falls toward Earth. It's too dark to make out what the object is.

INT. ALASKA TRACKING STATION

An ALARM sounds. The two soldiers stare in stunned disbelief at a flashing panel -- TRACKING... TRACKING... TRACKING...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 ...it's over the wall! And we've got
 us a whole new ball game.

EXT. SHENANDOAH BASE - NIGHT

A desolate mountain area. Just visible through the driving rain is a huge bunker with a massive sliding door.

Clumped around it are a few smaller structures, a large radar dish and a giant fixed phased-array antenna.

SUPER: SHENANDOAH BASE
 VIRGINIA
 21:58 HOURS

INT. BASE OPERATIONS ROOM, LEVEL 10

Lights from radar and weapons consoles illuminate the faces of the high-strung CORPORAL TROON and CAPTAIN DRAKE, a walking recruitment poster. An anxious voice cuts through the speaker static.

LIEUTENANT (OVER SPEAKER)
 Tracking Station Six to Shenandoah.
 We are tracking an object at three
 hundred thousand feet.

A chill runs through the men.

EXT. EARTH FROM SPACE

The Object burns through the atmosphere.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM

Tense silence. Then --

LIEUTENANT (OVER SPEAKER)
 Target confirmed. Locust One is
 heading your way, Shenandoah.
 Repeat, you are the target.

Troon and the Captain exchange a nervous look. The Captain turns to a man in the shadows. The man nods, and the Captain punches a button on his control panel.

OUTSIDE

Blinding halogen lamps flash on, lighting up a runway.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM

The Radar Proximity Tracker BEEPS. Troon picks up a fast-moving blip on his screen. He struggles to stay composed.

CORPORAL TROON
It's coming down right on top of us!

EXT. NIGHT SKY

The Object breaks through dark storm clouds and plummets toward the runway lights far below.

EXT. BIXBY - NIGHT

Despite the storm, the tiny hamlet of Bixby is asleep.

EXT. FARMHOUSE

JEFFREY, a five-year-old in pjs, sits with his MOTHER, watching the lightning from their porch. He points at a streak of light heading toward them. Uneasy, his mother stands up.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM

Troon is glued to his monitor.

CORPORAL TROON
It's dropping fast! Thirty
thousand... Twenty thousand...

The Captain looks panicked.

CAPTAIN
Off target point zero one degree!

INT. ALASKA TRACKING STATION

The Lieutenant and the Tech are frozen in their seats, listening.

CORPORAL TROON (OVER SPEAKER)
...Ten thousand...

CAPTAIN (OVER SPEAKER)
Point zero three degrees!

The Tech rubs the crucifix around his neck.

EXT. BIXBY CORNER STORE - NIGHT

A man in a phone booth stops talking as the line suddenly goes dead. He's puzzled. Then shocked by a fireball blurring past overhead.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM

Troon turns to the man in shadows.

CORPORAL TROON
Five thousand feet!

EXT. FARMHOUSE

The fireball hurtles toward the house. The Mother sweeps up Jeffrey and hurries inside. The fireball screams past overhead. A RUMBLE of a distant crash.

INT. ALASKA TRACKING STATION

Only static on the speaker now.

LIEUTENANT
Shenandoah, are you still there?

No response. The silence is frightening.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM

A look of dread on the soldiers' faces.

LIEUTENANT (OVER SPEAKER)
Are you there, Shenandoah? Respond.

The Captain shuts off communications. Troon is in disbelief.

CORPORAL TROON
Locust One is down. Time: 2200 hours.
Point of impact... three point five
miles south-southeast of target.

At a tall upright glass map, the Captain plots the landing area. The plot lines intersect beside the town marked BIXBY.

CAPTAIN
Jesus.

He looks to the man in shadows. COLONEL JAMES BLACK steps into the light. Maintaining an illusion of calm, he unwraps a stick of gum.

COL. BLACK
Saddle up.

INT. GIANT CARGO ELEVATOR, LEVEL 9

In the eerie glow of flashing red lights, a handful of soldiers in yellow biohazard suits file into the massive cargo elevator, then climb into two army trucks and a jeep.

The motor hums as they ascend from Level 9. Visible through the huge steel mesh door, each level is gutted -- equipment ripped from walls... wires hanging from ceilings...

They stop at Level 0. A no-nonsense SERGEANT watches the lights marked CONTAMINATION -- one red, one green. To his relief, the green light finally blinks on.

SERGEANT
You know the drill, ladies!

He puts on his self-contained respiration headgear and punches a button. The huge doors GRIND OPEN. The trucks RUMBLE forward.

EXT. SHENANDOAH BASE

As the trucks spill into the night, a sleek black COMANCHE HELICOPTER lifts off the roof.

INT. COMANCHE

The PILOT scans the ground with night vision goggles. Behind him, the GUNNER switches on his INFRARED TARGETING MONITOR.

In stealth mode, the helicopter sweeps silently over the vehicles, heading for the distant lights of Bixby.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The Oval Office is dark, but lights shine from the windows of those who hold the real power.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - NIGHT

DAN THORPE, strolls confidently through the door marked CHIEF OF STAFF, a file tucked under his arm. The ASSISTANT gives him a big, sexy smile.

ASSISTANT
Well, hello, Congressman. You can go
right on in.

She follows him with her eyes as he heads into the inner office.

INT. TAYLOR'S OFFICE

White House Chief of Staff ETHAN TAYLOR sits behind a desk big enough to land a small plane on... if it could find a clearing.

TAYLOR (INTO PHONE)
...Yeah, I know he's the Vice
President. His wife reminds me every
day. Explain to him again what the
"Vice" part means, then tell him no!

He hangs up just as Dan starts to sit down.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Don't get comfortable, Dan.
You won't be here that long.
I've got a full plate right now.

DAN
You'll make room.

Dan tosses down the file and plops in the chair. Taylor sees the cover - "NETFIRE. TOP SECRET. EYES ONLY." He tries not to sweat.

DAN (CONT'D)
To think how gullible I must have been. Believing Reagan's Star Wars lunacy had been put to rest all those years ago. And yet, here it is. The return of Brilliant Pebbles. Buried nice and deep in the new Defense Shield plans. And with your fingerprints all over it.
(watching for a reaction)
And actually increasing the funding? Gutsy move, Ethan. I just hope the voters appreciate the effort you've put into this.

Taylor glares menacingly.

DAN (CONT'D)
Now personally, I might have been tempted to put these billions toward health care, or medical research, or something, you know, actually useful.

TAYLOR
It's quite simple, Dan. The President feels that it's not in our best interest to weaken the country's military position at this time.

DAN
"Our best interest" meaning the American people's, or yours and the President's?

Taylor gives him a look, then stabs the report with his finger.

TAYLOR
If you'd bothered to read the damn thing, you'd know that there are a half dozen factions in the Russian states with nuclear weapons under their control. Not to mention China, North Korea, India, Pakistan and a bunch more working real hard to make the list. Nuclear weapons and unstable governments make a volatile cocktail, in case you didn't know.

DAN

Well if you're so sure what you're doing is right, why go to so much effort to hide it?

TAYLOR

Look, all the public wants to know is that we're protecting them.

DAN

The people want to know the truth. And this government has a responsibility to tell that truth, and let the people decide --

TAYLOR

Save the speech for someone who votes. The truth'd just make them lose sleep.

DAN

Well I think the President is going to lose sleep once the press gets hold of this. He'll be their favorite chew toy. When the people hear we're secretly building ray guns in space, he'll draw so much fire he'll have to stop the funding.

Dan grabs the file. Taylor waits until he's almost out the door.

TAYLOR

You're a lousy bluffer, Dan. If you were going to go public, we wouldn't be having this conversation. And the last thing you want during your re-election campaign is to embarrass the President. 'Cause if you did, I'd be so far up your ass I could see out your mouth.

DAN

Your mother know you talk like that?

TAYLOR

That committee appointment you've been lobbying so hard for? Health Care, wasn't it?

DAN

You think I have a shot at it?

TAYLOR

A loyal patriot like you?

Taylor holds out his hand. Dan mulls it over, then smiles. Deal.

DAN

For a moment there, I thought you were really going to let me walk out the door.

(heads back, then stops)

Actually, I'd better re-bury it. I'll be in touch.

He sails out the door. Taylor slumps in his chair.

TAYLOR

It never rains...

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

FRED, his attitude charitably described as casual, fans through a file of blank pages, ending on the same "NETFIRE" cover.

FRED

You bluffed the Chief of Staff?

He passes the file across the table to Dan.

FRED (CONT'D)

What if he'd opened it? Was getting on that committee worth the risk?

(sensing there's more)

What?

DAN

You're missing the point. Now we know the rumors were true.

FRED

So? You can't leak it. He'd know it was you.

(recognizing the glint in Dan's eye)

Don't even think it. I happen to like my meager, pitiful existence.

DAN

You're the most miserable Press Secretary the White House has ever had. You really want to stick it out another term?

FRED

Well I'd like to make it to payday. Besides, if this leaks, you won't get credit for exposing it. No credit, no extra votes.

DAN
 You think that's what this is about?
 Votes?

It takes Fred a moment to read him.

FRED
 All right, I'm tired of the lies too.
 But I'm just as tired of playing
 Sancho to your Don Quixote. What
 good are your principles if you're
 not in power to dictate them? Take
 the appointment, Dan. There'll still
 be plenty of fights. Maybe a few you
 can actually win.

On Dan's determined look, he gives up. A waiter slaps down the bill
 on his way by. Both men are aware the other doesn't reach for it.

FRED
 It's funny, though. In the Clinton
 era, Taylor pushed hard to get the
 plug pulled on the Defense Shield.
 Wore out the carpet on the Hill,
 soapboxing all the way. Now this?
 Kind of...

DAN
 Ironic?

FRED
 Suspicious.

DAN
 So what changed his mind?

FRED
 Money? Fear? How should I know.

DAN
 But you'll find out.
 (off Fred's reluctance)
 Knowledge is power.

He slides the bill across to Fred. The game begins.

FRED
 (slides it back)
 Power rules.

DAN
 (pushes it at Fred)
 Rules are made to be broken.

FRED
 (slides it back)
 Broken promises and little white
 lies.

DAN
 (checks his watch)
 Damn. I promised Kyle I'd be home
 before he was in bed.

FRED
 How's he holding up?

DAN
 He's fine.
 (buckling under Fred's
 stare)
 It's hard on a child.

FRED
 Yeah. It's hard on everyone.

DAN
 We're fine.
 (more honest)
 I try to keep busy.

He shoves the bill at Fred and gets up.

DAN (CONT'D)
 Lies are like onions.
 Call me Monday.

FRED
 Lies are like onions?

But Dan is already heading for the door. Fred watches, concerned.

EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT

The steady rain douses a smoldering brushfire. Yellow-suited soldiers swarm around a charred crater, a hive of activity. Embedded in the ground, the crashed Object is covered by a tarp.

The Comanche drops down a hoist, and soldiers quickly attach it to the Object. As the helicopter lifts it onto a truck, the Sergeant spots two locals watching from the edge of the woods.

He unsnaps his holster.