

Outline: 2nd draft

4 February 1997

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Out of the Mouth of the Dragon

Projected 100,000 words



Part 1: Four Weeks

Part 2: Seven Days

Part 3: Forty-eight Hours



The first earthquake recorder was invented in 132AD by Chang Heng. It consisted of eight bronze dragons in a ring, with eight frogs below. Each dragon held a ball loosely in its mouth. When the earth shook, one ball would fall into the mouth of the frog beneath. The direction of the earthquake's epicentre was given by a line drawn from the centre of the ring through the ball that fell out of the mouth of the dragon.

Part 1: Four Weeks

1. We are in the well-kept university town of Berkeley, California. It is seven o'clock in the morning. An old Chevrolet convertible, painted in fading psychedelic colors, pulls up outside an apartment building. There are three people in the front of the car.

Melanie Day, 30, is a drop-dead-gorgeous blonde woman in a miniskirt. She is charming and clever, but also manipulative and self-absorbed.

With her is her son, Dusty, 4. He has a serious health problem: multiple allergies. He sneezes uncontrollably, swells up, and breaks out into itchy skin rashes. Drugs only partly suppress his symptoms.

At the wheel is Melanie's current man friend Jess, 45, a rangy, long-haired unreconstructed hippie: dark, brooding, exceptionally intelligent.

The atmosphere is tense, as if they are about to commit a crime.

Melanie enters the building, leaving Dusty and Jess in the car.

This is the home of her husband, Michael Quercus, 40, a seismologist. Melanie left him six months ago to move in with a prosperous San Francisco stockbroker, but that relationship did not last. Michael is still carrying a torch for Melanie.

Knowing he will be asleep at this hour, she knocks hard and rings long. Eventually he comes to the door, bleary-eyed, and lets her in.

Michael is a good-looking, studious type with a mild manner and a strong will. He could be played by the young Dustin Hoffman.

His living room is his office. One wall is taken up by a large-scale map of the San Andreas fault, beginning at Point Arena lighthouse a hundred miles north of San Francisco in Mendocino County, and running south and east all the way to San Bernadino, inland from Los Angeles.

Michael has a sophisticated computer setup that was put together for him by Melanie before she left. She is a software whiz, though she has not had a job since Dusty was born.

Michael quit his university professorship a year ago to start a one-man business, a consultancy advising insurance and construction companies on earthquake risks. He has his own formula for calculating the odds of an earthquake using various measures of the tension at the fault zone. To get started he borrowed from his parents, a retired couple living in Fairfield. Business is slow and he is worried.

Right now he is angry with Melanie. Three weeks ago she went on holiday, taking Dusty, without letting Michael know. She now explains that she was offered free use of a friend's cabin in the redwood country at the northern end of the state.

Michael says she should have called him first. She says he could have reached her at any time on her mobile phone—except that it was cut off because he had not paid the bill.

While this family row is proceeding, Melanie is trying to think of ways to get Michael out of the room.

She now announces that she has decided to move permanently to the neighbourhood where she has been staying. She will live with her new man, Jess, in the hippie commune in the mountains where he has been resident for twenty years.

Michael protests. She should not take their son to live hundreds of miles away from his father.

At this point it occurs to Michael to ask where Dusty is right now. Outside in the car with Jess, says Melanie; Jess is very good with him. Michael says angrily: And what about me—am I not very good with him? He storms out to get the boy.

Melanie has her chance at last. She bends over the backup disk drive, ejects the optical disk, and replaces it with a blank disk from her purse. She notes that Michael is still using the same brand, so there is no visible difference between the disks.

She set up the system to back up all Michael's data every night between 4am and 6am. When he switches on his screen in the morning, he takes the disk out of the backup drive and puts it in a fireproof box.

If his system crashes or his computer is destroyed, he should be able to retrieve his precious data from the backup disk. Should there be an accident today, he will find the disk blank. But a crash is rare, and the likelihood is that he will never suspect anything. By tomorrow, the system will have backed up again and everything will be normal.

Michael comes back in with Dusty. The boy tells his father that he likes it in the mountains because he doesn't sneeze there. Melanie confirms that Dusty has been free of symptoms for the last three weeks, presumably because the mountain air is unpolluted. This puts the move to the mountains in a new light. Michael and Melanie reach some kind of resolution, and she leaves.

Getting into the car, she triumphantly shows Jess the stolen disk.

2. In a courtroom in San Francisco, a judge is handing out long sentences to four men found guilty of running a money-laundering ring in cooperation with one of the Hong Kong triads.

As they are taken away, congratulations are showered on the FBI agent who brought them to book: Judy Maddox, 35, a unit head in the San Francisco field office. Small, dark and beautiful, she is half Vietnamese. Her approach to her work is neat, logical, scrupulous.

Her arch-rival is Marvin Hayes, an agent of the same age with a contrary philosophy. Lazy, intuitive and brutal, he is willing to beat up suspects and fake evidence in order to put bad guys in jail. He is a close friend of the special agent in charge (SAC) of the San Francisco office.

Judy now confidently expects promotion to assistant SAC with responsibility

for organised crime, a post that is vacant. But the job goes to Hayes.

Judy is assigned to investigate a nutcase threat received by the governor of California. The threat purports to come from a group calling itself Stop Now and claiming to be the radical offshoot of the Green California Campaign, a legitimate environmentalist group based in San Francisco. The threat first appeared on an Internet bulletin board, but it got little attention until it was publicised by John Truth, talk radio host on a Sacramento station.

Stop Now demands a freeze on the building of electric power plant in California. If the demand is not met, the group will cause an earthquake in four weeks' time. No one believes the threat is real but, because of the publicity given to it by John Truth, the governor has been obliged to respond. He has done so by asking the FBI to investigate. In short, the case is bullshit.

Judy lives with her father, a pony-tailed Vietnam veteran, now a San Francisco Police Department detective nearing retirement. He met and married Judy's mother in Saigon. When Judy was 13 her mother died of cancer. Since then, she and her father have stayed close. He nags her gently to get married and give him grandchildren before it is too late.

Disappointed and angry, she tells him her troubles. He cooks Vietnamese food for her and says the only thing she can do is make a terrific job of investigating the nutcases.

3. Michael Quercus gets a visit from Judy. He is one of numerous earthquake experts she is consulting.

He finds her attractive and is very drawn to her, even though his heart still belongs to Melanie.

Judy asks Michael if it is possible for an earthquake to be triggered by human agency.

Certainly, he says. Most underground nuclear tests cause an earthquake in the immediate vicinity and tremors at some distance.

The answer does not help her. A terrorist group that possessed a nuclear device would threaten to explode the device, not cause an earthquake. Could it be done without a nuclear bomb?

Again the answer is yes.

Michael explains. Imagine a door that is stuck shut, jammed in the door frame. On one side, someone pulls on the handle, creating tension at the point where the edge of the door is jammed against the doorpost. Now a second person, on the other side, strikes the door a sharp tap, in just the right place, and dislodges the door, which flies open.

Along a fault such as the San Andreas, two pieces of the earth's crust—called tectonic plates—are jammed together like the door and the doorpost. Slow natural movement of the plates exerts tension at the points where they are stuck, just like the person pulling on the door handle.

Meanwhile, natural vibrations resonate through the earth's crust intermittently. These weak forces normally do no harm. But when a section of the fault is under extreme tension, a vibration, coming at just the right place, may act like the sharp tap on the jammed door, and dislodge the tectonic plates. They move, causing an earthquake. Seconds later, the plates become lodged in a new position, and the process begins all over again.

Theoretically, the vibrations could be duplicated by human agency. The oil exploration industry routinely sends shock waves through the earth's crust. They have numerous ways of doing this: the simplest is to drill a shaft several hundred feet deep and set off a small explosion at the bottom.

Judy is blown away by this quiet lecture. She embarked on this investigation assuming that no one could cause an earthquake. Now Michael is telling her it is

perfectly possible.

Well, he says, to cause an earthquake by such means, the perpetrator would need the knowledge to choose a location where the fault was under high tension.

Where could that information be found? Judy asks.

Michael says that he has it, as do several universities and other scientific bodies.

“If Stop Now really do know how to cause an earthquake, they may have got their information from you.”

Michael shows her his client list—not very long, he says ruefully. All the names are major corporations.

She asks if he has ever been burgled. He has not.

Could the information have been obtained, without his knowledge, by a relative or friend? He doesn't think so.

What about his wife or girlfriend?

I'm separated from my wife, he says. And I don't have a girlfriend.

4. In a barren landscape in the West Texas oilfield, a handful of men stand around a big vehicle with oversized tires. Mounted on the truck is a piece of heavy machinery. One of the men presses a button. The machine begins to pound the earth rhythmically, first with slow, steady beats, then faster, then slower again.

This is a seismic vibrator. The shock waves it creates travel through the earth and are reflected off rock layers. The reflections are picked up by geophones placed at distances up to several hundred feet. A computer program analyses the data for telltale signs that the waves have passed through underground oil wells.

One of the men is Jess. He has changed his appearance: his long hair is hidden under a cap, and he has grown a bushy moustache and beard. He is using the name Arnie Lane.

The team has about finished its work here. The men begin to disperse. Jess and another man have been assigned to drive the seismic vibrator to a new location several hundred miles north.

They set out, but Jess's partner has other plans. He is going to visit a girlfriend. By agreement, Jess drops him off. A little later Jess pulls into a diner where, by arrangement, he meets a woman called Star.

Famous in sixties San Francisco for her beauty and her insatiable sexual promiscuity, Star is now fifty years old and weighs 180 pounds. She and Jess are a couple, although both take other sexual partners at will, in accordance with the hippie philosophy. They have a daughter, Flower, 11.

Star takes the wheel to relieve Jess. They pull out on to the freeway and head, not for North Texas, but for California.

5. Judy Maddox's boss, Charlie Kincaid, is summoned to Sacramento for a meeting with Robert Cayron, 50, black, special assistant to the state governor. To Kincaid's chagrin, Cayron insists on also seeing the agent handling the case, Judy.

Judy tries to tell Cayron that the earthquake threat could be real but, to her anger and dismay, Kincaid undermines her.

Cayron decides to tell the governor that the threat may safely be ignored.

6. Jess and Star conceal the seismic vibrator in the woods near their commune.

The commune was founded in 1970 on stony, disused land owned by the federal government. It lurched from crisis to crisis until 1975, when Jess showed up.

As a young man, Jess had built up a profitable business, wholesaling drinks. He was a millionaire at 23. Then he sold the business, gave away all his money, and went in search of peace. He found it here.

Although he renounced money, he could not shed his leadership qualities. He

is intelligent, strong-willed and charismatic. Under his direction, the communards terraced a hillside, diverted a stream for irrigation, and planted grapevines. Now they make a chardonnay which is much sought after by connoisseurs.

However, the hippies have not abandoned their principles. They have no bank account and no legal status. They are squatters, with no title to the land they occupy. They use no money: the wine is marketed by an agent who pays them in kind. They have no mains electric power, although they use battery-operated devices such as radios.

The hippie ideal has been realised here. They till the vineyard in the day, then at night they smoke pot, sing folk songs and make love to anyone they fancy.

But now their way of life is threatened with destruction. For now we do not know the details.

Jess has the remorseless willpower of many outstanding business and political leaders. He gave up everything for this ideal, and he has made it work, against the odds. He will do anything to defend it.

He has been considering various extreme measures. He has found out how to manufacture a nuclear weapon, though it would be a problem to get the plutonium. He knows the address of his enemy, the president of a major corporation, and has a plan for kidnapping him.

While he was mulling these desperate measures, Melanie came into his life. He fell for her, hard. One night, stoned, she began talking about the San Andreas fault, and how someone who possessed her husband's data could cause an earthquake.

Jess formed a plan and put it to the others: blackmail the governor of California by threatening an earthquake.

The hippies were reluctant. In order to make the threat real they would have to trigger at least one genuine earthquake, obviously, and they do not want to harm anyone.

Jess assured them that with Michael's data they can control and limit the quake so that no one will be hurt. This is not true, but they believed him.

Melanie knows the truth, but she does not care. She has found a place where her child can be healthy, and she intends to stay here, regardless of the cost.

On the Sacramento radio station, John Truth reports the governor's statement saying the FBI has advised him to ignore Stop Now.

The hippies drive the seismic vibrator to a deserted area of Owens Valley, near Death Valley in southeastern California.

Melanie carries a laptop and uses Michael's data to pinpoint a place where the fault is under very high tension. Jess parks the truck a quarter of a mile away and operates the vibrator. Everyone is scared, even though Jess has assured them this is safe. (It is not, of course.)

Anyway, it does not work. There is no earthquake.

Jess moves the truck closer and tries again, still with no result.

Melanie recalls a theory of Michael's that the frequency of the vibration could be a crucial factor. Jess tries varying the frequency of the machine.

At low frequency, something happens.

They hear a rumble; the ground beneath their feet shakes; someone screams; then a line appears across the landscape like a gash cut by a giant knife.

They all watch, helpless and terrified, while the shaking dies away. There is a moment of stunned silence. They have done it: they triggered an earthquake! And, Jess and Melanie think, by sheer luck it was limited and did no harm.

They whoop with triumph. Then they head home.

Part 2: Seven Days

7. On the Sacramento radio station, John Truth plays a recording of Star's voice, taken from his answering machine. She announces that a warning earthquake was triggered yesterday, on the date promised in the original threat, in Owens Valley. It was carefully controlled to cause no injury to anyone. Its object was to prove to the state governor that Stop Now can do what it threatens.

John Truth tells his listeners that there was, indeed, a small earthquake in Owens Valley yesterday. Was it coincidence, he asks dramatically—or is this group genuinely able to make earthquakes happen?

Star's recording continues by saying that the next quake will cause billions of dollars of damage to property. It will take place seven days after the last one—unless the governor agrees to the group's demand and freezes all building of power plants in California.

Other media now take up the story.

Judy has been proved right, and she is now in charge of the most high-profile investigation of the moment. But Kincaid takes it away from her and gives it to Marvin Hayes.

8. Star is worried. Naively, she did not foresee that her voice would be broadcast. What if someone identifies her?

Jess points out that she has led the life of a recluse for two decades, rarely speaking to anyone outside the commune. But he is anyway planning to check up on what line of inquiry the cops are following.

He and Melanie pose as reporters and attend a press conference given by the FBI.

Marvin Hayes announces that the Owens Valley earthquake was not human-made: Stop Now are exploiting a coincidence. Nevertheless, he has raided the offices of the Green California Campaign, arrested two staffers and five volunteer workers, and seized their mailing list.

Jess figures him for a blowhard. He asks Melanie to grab a quick private interview with Hayes “for personal background” and try to get some information that will enable Jess to get close to him.

She learns that Hayes collects boxing memorabilia and frequents a bar called the Ring Side. It’s not much, Jess says, but it will have to be enough.

9. Michael’s mother is sure she has heard Star’s voice previously—but she cannot remember where or when. He urges her to let him know if it comes back to her.

Meanwhile he puzzles over the seismic data from the Owens Valley earthquake.

Normally, an earthquake is preceded by a gradual buildup of lesser tremors. By contrast, when an earthquake is caused by an explosion, there is no buildup: the graph begins suddenly with a characteristic “spike”.

The Owens Valley data do not fit neatly into either category. Eventually he figures it out. The vibrations preceding the quake bear the characteristic signature of a seismic vibrator.

In great excitement, he calls Judy and tells her.

He also tells her that, no matter what Stop Now may think, they can *not* control or limit the earthquake once they have triggered it.

10. Star is realising that Melanie is more than just a passing fancy for Jess. Star genuinely does not mind his sleeping with other women, but she is afraid of losing him permanently.

One night when they are all stoned, Star gets into bed with Melanie and Jess. This is something she has done before with Jess's girls. But Melanie rejects her brutally.

11. Judy is now quite certain that Stop Now have caused one earthquake and intend to cause at least one more. She goes to Kincaid with Michael's information. She is shocked when he brushes her off. He accuses her of trying to get back on the case because she is publicity-mad. He tells her she will be fired if she works on it against his orders.

She is so sure she is right that she defies him. She gets her father to put out a nationwide inquiry for a missing or stolen seismic vibrator. She gets a call from a cop in West Texas. Such a vehicle was stolen on his patch a week ago. An employee called Arnie Lane is suspected. He e-mails her a photofit picture. (But remember how Jess altered his appearance.)

12. Jess spends an evening at the Ring Side bar. In Hayes' hearing, he talks about a pair of boxing gloves owned by his father which were once worn by Joe Louis. With pretended naivety, he wonders if they might be worth a few bucks.

Hayes makes a point of talking to him. They drink heavily, and Hayes blabs about the case. Jess is relieved to learn that the FBI is concentrating its investigations on the Green California Campaign, but dismayed that they do not believe the earthquake threat is real.

13. Michael brings Judy to see his mother. Both his parents take to Judy. Naturally they hate Melanie for having left their son, especially as he is taking so long to get over her, and they show their approval of this pretty new acquaintance with the elephantine tact normal to parents in such situations.

Judy uses special interrogation techniques to help his Mom remember where she previously heard the voice on John Truth's answering machine. It was on an obscure record in the late sixties, reading poetry against a background of psychedelic music. She still has the album. She plays it to them. Although the woman was thirty years younger, it does sound like the same voice. Judy's father will have both voices computer-analysed by the San Francisco PD, to be certain.

On the album sleeve is a small black-and-white mug shot of the woman. Her name is given as Stella Higgins.

14. Star confronts Jess and tells him she fears Melanie is a threat to their relationship. Jess will not give Melanie up.

15. At the next meeting with governor's assistant Cayron the FBI, as represented by Hayes and Kincaid, comes empty-handed. Their investigation of the Green California Campaign has yielded nothing. All they can do is repeat that the earthquake threat is not real.

Judy gatecrashes the meeting. She shows Cayron the seismographs that show how the Owens Valley earthquake was triggered by a seismic vibrator. Then she produces photographs of two suspects!

Kincaid and Hayes look like complete assholes. The governor calls FBI headquarters in Washington and insists that Judy be put in charge of the case.

She says the governor should open negotiations with Stop Now. She repeats Michael's warning that the perpetrators cannot possible control or limit the earthquake. He refuses, saying it would be political suicide. Judy must prevent the second earthquake by catching these people.

16. The hippies are astonished when TV and the newspapers carry photos of Jess

and Star. Neither is really recognisable, nor are they known by the names Arnie Lane and Stella Higgins, but all the same it is incredible that the Feds have got so far so fast.

Worse, for Jess, are the photographs, carried by every newspaper and TV station, of a seismic vibrator just like the one they have stolen. Every cop in the state will now be on the lookout for such a truck.

Several of the hippies suffer a failure of nerve and want to abandon the whole thing. Star, wanting Melanie out of Jess's life at any price, backs the quitters. But Jess talks everyone around.

He says he will solve the problem of how to move the truck around. He borrows Melanie's phone and starts calling carnivals.

17. Under great pressure, Judy goes to work.

Instinct tells her that Hayes went down the wrong track. The reference in the original threat to the Green California Campaign looks like calculated disinformation. She theorizes that Stop Now may be interested in one particular power plant.

She checks on Lexis-Nexis for controversial power plant building projects and comes up with a snowstorm of clippings on the Happy Valley Dam, a project to build a dam and power station in a valley in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, near Lake Tahoe.

She obtains a list of property owners affected by the project. It has more than a hundred names. She starts a team of FBI agents interviewing them, looking for people who could be Arnie Lane or Stella Higgins.

18. The hippies are shocked when an FBI agent walks into their commune.

We now realise that Melanie lied to Michael about the location of the commune. He still believes it is in the redwood country to the north of the state. In

fact it is here in Happy Valley.

There was a protest movement against the dam project, of course. Residents farther down the valley, where the land is valuable, fought the proposal at every step of the approval process. The hippies could take no part in the protest for fear of drawing attention to their illegal occupation of federal land. The protest failed. Property owners are being compensated, but the hippies get nothing.

Although no one in the commune is a property owner, so it does not appear on Judy's list, and it is remote from all other properties in the valley, this agent is particularly thorough, or particularly curious. Jess and Star have to hide.

But Melanie bamboozles him and he leaves.

19. Michael and Judy go out on a date. He begins to think that with her he might forget Melanie.

20. Jess gets a phone call and says: "At last! I've found one!" He sends Melanie off on an assignment. A carnival is selling a worn-out ride called the Dragon's Mouth. Like most carnival rides, it folds up on the back of a truck. Melanie has to buy it and drive it back to the commune.

Meanwhile, Jess spends another evening with Marvin Hayes. To his disappointment, he learns that Hayes is off the case, and it has been taken over by another agent, Judy Maddox. Jess is getting ready to leave when Hayes reveals that Judy is working closely with an earthquake expert called Michael Quercus.

21. Twenty-four hours before the deadline, Judy has nothing.

She gets from Michael a list of the most likely locations for the second earthquake (based on his knowledge of tension factors in the fault line). She has each location staked out by police.

Michael arranges for on-line seismography, so that he will know the instant the vibrator starts up.

22. On Jess's instructions, Melanie goes to see Michael, seduces him, and learns Judy's strategy.

Michael, not knowing Melanie's motives, decides he is still in love with her after all, and he becomes cool to Judy.

23. The hippies take the gaily-coloured panels from the Dragon's Mouth carnival ride and nail them all over the seismic vibrator, disguising it.

They drive to a vacant lot near Highway 101 in the vicinity of Santa Cruz. The lot is reached by a side road which, they plan, will not be wrecked by the earthquake.

They fear constantly that someone will see through the disguise, but they go for a strategy of boldness, and even give free ride tickets to a couple of bored cops in a patrol car parked nearby.

24. The moment the vibrator starts up, Michael sees it on the seismograph. He is able to figure out the location instantly by triangulation. He and Judy jump in an FBI helicopter and rush to the scene.

They land in the right neighbourhood and search frantically for the seismic vibrator, fearful all the while that the vibrations will take effect at any moment and they will be caught in the earthquake.

It happens. The quake rips up the freeway. Cars crash, people are killed, and the police cannot move because the road is impassable. Both Michael and Judy receive minor injuries.

In the confusion, the hippies escape.

Part 3: Forty-eight Hours

25. While most of the group return to Happy Valley in the psychedelic Chevrolet, Jess and Melanie head off in the seismic vibrator.

It will not take the FBI long to realise that the Dragon's Mouth is the seismic vibrator. Therefore they have to hide the truck.

They must hide it in position for the next earthquake. There just has not been time to plan all this. Now Melanie checks Michael's data on her laptop and reviews the possibilities. The problem is to find an earthquake location where the truck can be concealed.

One possibility is Bodega Bay, on the coast north of San Francisco. Melanie knows the neighbourhood. There is a shopping mall that features Toys, Toys, Toys! which is the largest warehouse outlet for toys in the state. She now recalls an abandoned building nearby where the truck might be concealed.

They head there.

26. Judy conducts a high-pressure investigation into what happened and swiftly fastens on the carnival ride. She puts out an alert for the Dragon's Mouth, though she feels it will be too late. She sets her team of agents to calling carnivals to ask if they have sold a ride lately.

27. There is trouble for Jess when he returns to Happy Valley. The hippies are horrified at the deaths and injuries they have caused. They accuse Jess of lying when he assured them the earthquake would be controlled and limited.

Jess anticipated this. Now he pretends to be as shocked as they are. There will be no more earthquakes, he promises.

But, he argues, they do not have to give in. They can *threaten* a third quake. As he has hidden the truck, the threat will be credible. And they may get what they want—without further violence.

There is much resistance to this, but in the end he talks them around.

28. John Truth broadcasts a message from Star saying another earthquake will follow 48 hours after the last.

The roads are jammed as hundreds of thousands flee neighbourhoods near the fault line.

The US president pressures the governor to negotiate with Stop Now. The governor agrees, but will not announce this until the last possible moment, hoping that Judy will catch the perpetrators first.

29. Jess tells Melanie he has decided to go it alone. He will trigger the third earthquake if the governor does not give in.

Melanie agrees to back him.

30. Melanie dumps Dusty on Michael.

Michael is desperately busy helping Judy. He takes Dusty to his parents, who live well away from the fault line.

31. Judy tracks down the vendors of the Dragons' Mouth and gets an e-fit picture of the buyer. She guesses it might be Michael's wife, even though Melanie made some attempt to disguise herself.

32. She searches the FBI files for a hippy commune in the redwood country (which is where Michael believes Melanie is living) but have no success.

Then Judy, drinking a glass of Happy Valley chardonnay, recalls the brief report of the agent who wandered into a vineyard and said the place seemed like some kind of hippy camp. She guesses that Melanie lied about the location of the commune—and then everything falls into place.

33. Dusty is affected by all the tension, and he is unhappy and badly behaved at his grandparents' home. He demands to be taken to his favourite toy store. The grandparents know the place is near the fault line, but the earthquake is threatened for tomorrow, and they are desperate, so they give in and take him.

34. The FBI raid the commune, but Jess and Melanie have gone, and so has the seismic vibrator. The communards have guessed why Jess split, and many of them have also left.

Star agrees to help the FBI locate Jess by reviewing earthquake locations and trying to guess which would appeal to him.

35. Judy puts a tap on Michael's phone so that if Melanie should call the FBI will be able to locate her.

Michael realises how Melanie has used him and betrayed him. He stops loving her at last.

36. The governor goes to the Sacramento radio station. His instructions are to announce his agreement on John Truth's programme. He has a heavy heart, wondering which special-interest group will be the first to emulate Stop Now and blackmail him in a similar way.

37. Melanie calls the grandparents to check on Dusty. The Filipina maid tells her

they all went to the toy warehouse.

She panics, terrified her child will be caught in the earthquake. There are still several hours to go before the deadline, but what if the camper gets stuck in traffic, or breaks down?

She drives to the warehouse, searching for her child. The car park is so big she gets lost looking for the camper. She rushes into the warehouse, but she cannot find Dusty or the grandparents.

Hysterical, she calls Michael and screams at him that he should find his son.

38. The FBI is able to locate her position. Judy, Michael and Star are all in the chopper that flies to Bodega Bay.

They land at the toy warehouse but they cannot find Judy or the seismic vibrator.

39. Jess sees the chopper. When the FBI comes close to where he is he starts the vibrator, several hours before the deadline.

40. The FBI shoot Melanie.

Judy gets into the warehouse and shoots Jess. Star follows her and cradles Jess's body.

Michael turns off the vibrator before it triggers an earthquake.

He walks outside and sees his parents with Dusty.

The end.