

THE SOUL EATERS
An original screenplay
by Christina Crowe

SYNOPSIS

In spite of their differences, an eclectic group of individuals trapped in
Outer Darkness work together to escape a crumbling world.
“Don’t miss the curfew!”

(No matter how bad life looks, don’t ever, ever kill yourself. It’s worse over
there.)

THE SOUL EATERS takes place in Outer Darkness during a period of great upheaval following
what the inhabitants refer to as “The Disaster”.

SUGGEST: The fight scenes are staged as either Martial Arts or Extreme Boxing.

Because of The Disaster [triggered by previous events on the Earth Level (prequels are being
adapted from the unpublished novel, *Graven Images*, by Sherrill Wark)], all Levels of Outer
Darkness have collapsed like the earthquake-shaken floors of a high rise.

The Soul Eaters are the inhabitants of the Violent Death Level. Murder victims, suicides,
adrenaline junkies, etc., they are spiritually too weak to create their own energy to survive so
they feed off newcomers and anyone who strays into The Tunnels where they lurk. The strong
cannibalize the weaker. Inhabitants of The Tunnels often prowl just outside the compound
where the regulars live.

Unless they are actually drawing energy out of someone (through their fingers), most Soul Eaters
wear gloves so if they accidentally touch one another, they won’t be harmed by it.

The Level where the regular inhabitants await healing toward the transformation which will
enable them to pass over to the next Level, lies dangerously close to the Violent Death Level
now. The regular inhabitants at this Level are gradually raising their consciousnesses and
putting away any attachments which would keep them stuck in this stage of their spiritual
development.

The regulars have arrived over the years, some having died years ago, some recently. They wear
their period clothing and act their generational way.

The activities in The Tunnels have elevated greatly in the last few days. Not only are there more newcomers, but the Soul Eaters are abducting regulars. This means that the number of Soul Eaters is increasing.

The regulars have decided to go into The Tunnels to rescue newcomers before these newcomers turn into Soul Eaters, so some of the inhabitants are purposely practicing their vices in order to stay behind to help the others escape. For example, Netta has a sex addiction; elderly Fred smokes his “one cigar a day”; and young Tully is taking more risks than usual. This is a two-edged sword. Because those who practice their vices do it from an altruistic motive, this makes them more susceptible to suddenly popping out of the current Level into the next one.

THE SOUL EATERS opens in Tunnel 1 where several Soul Eaters are jockeying around some newcomers.

Soul Eater Bob, late 30s, expensive clothing in decent condition, is missing the back of his head. His top front teeth are broken off. (Suicide by shotgun in the mouth.) He is athletic. He has a bit of chin stubble. Nice looking, otherwise.

Smiling, Bob watches Ramon and Zelda and others attack newcomer Gerald, a teenager.

A brief flashback to a school yard, shows us that Gerald is shocked to discover that the bullies he killed himself to escape on the Earth Plane are nothing compared with what is here. He panics, endures great pain while the energy is being sucked out of him by the Soul Eaters. The Soul Eaters laugh at him. The more Gerald struggles and screams in terror, the thicker are the streams of energy emerging from his body.

Zelda is excited about Gerald’s “megawatts of fear energy” and asks if they might get anger energy out of him, too. “I love anger energy,” she says. “It’s so ... energizing.”

Watching, Bob snickers and says: “Somebody’s gonna get hurt.”

Sure enough, during the jostling around Gerald, Zelda bumps into Soul Eater Jeff and they both explode into flames and run away screaming.

Gerald’s agonizing screams become weaker and weaker. He dissolves into a puddle of oozing, open, smoldering holes.

Outside: Netta, 29, beautiful, excellent physical condition, runs along a path in the woods. She wears skimpy jogging shorts and a tiny halter top that show off her tight body. Knife-wound scars pepper her abdomen.

Back at The Tunnel we have Tully, 14, late 1990s style, tall, lean, with a promise of handsomeness in his maturity, and Martin, 26, (stereotypical big, dumb high-school-football-playing jock) set to rescue newcomers Barb and Lou.

Bob spots Barb, and goes toward her. Barb, 60s, plump, holds the hem of her torn-up housecoat to her nose against the stench. Dark circles bruise her fear-widened eyes. Her body is riddled with the fresh scars of dismemberment. Soul Eaters circle Barb menacingly.

Tully and Martin comment on Lou's reluctance to be chivalrous to Barb.

Soul Eater Aaron, Bob's nemesis, is mid-40s, straight-laced. He wears a suit and tie, and glasses with a missing lens over a bullet hole where his eye used to be.

They both close in on Barb. Bob tells Aaron to back off. Aaron politely points out to Bob that he was here first. Bob gives Aaron the finger.

Barb calls out for Lou, her husband, who is avoiding her. Lou, 60s, wearing a doctor's gown, has a homemade noose and a stethoscope around his neck. His lips are blue, his eyes bulge.

Aaron touches Barb and becomes stronger. The hole in his face closes up slightly.

The tunnel shudders and shakes. It's a tremor, an aftershock. It signals that the current Level is close to utter collapse and that the inhabitants must escape sooner than soon. Barb and Aaron stagger, Barb nearly falls. Bob rides the tremor with a dancer's grace.

Aaron tips backwards into some Soul Eaters behind him. Sparks fly. Aaron's wound opens up again but the others explode into flames, not him. Bob grins and gives him a thumbs-up. "Never travel on a full tank, right? Not like these greedy idiots."

More rumbles. Debris falls. The dust is thick.

Outside: Netta spots Gary, another newcomer, up ahead. He appears to be running away from something that frightens him terribly. He keeps looking over his shoulder. He has not arrived through the Violent Level, he'll be another regular. Gary, 30s, is without a jacket or gun-belt, but his clothes are a police uniform.

Tunnel: Martin grabs Barb. Tully grabs Lou.

Outside: Netta and Gary chat. She is openly sexual toward him. He thinks it's amusing, but is wary just the same. He is disoriented, doesn't know where he is or who he is. Behind them, in the woods, are brief flashes of shirt tails, or faces in the shadows, etc. Or are there?

Tunnel: Tully, Martin, Barb, and Lou run together toward the exit.

Outside: Netta says: "Newcomers are always a bit foggy at first. Come with me. There are others you should meet."

Tunnel: Soul Eaters at the Tunnel's exit grab Lou. Tully tries to get him back to no avail.

Outside: Netta leads Gary to the compound where they meet Fred, 80s, skinny, chipper; and Paul, mid-30s, large strong grease-embedded hands, muscles rippling beneath his T-shirt, baseball cap, steel-toed work boots. They are guarding the huge compound's gate.

Fred and Paul leer at Gary, knowing full well that Netta will be seducing him later.

Netta asks if Tully has returned yet. Fred says no, "You know Tully. Sticks around till the last dog's hung." Gary shows jealousy.

After Netta and Gary exit, Fred comments "And it looks like she likes this one. For a change." He elbows the displeased Paul and laughs. "But that's not good. Not good at all."

Tunnel: Gloved Soul Eaters carry Lou away, laughing "We got one. We got one. We got one."

Outside: Netta takes Gary into the building proper and shows him around. The wallpaper and carpeting in this huge building are highly patterned. The people wear matching cloaks which camouflage them. To Gary, the camouflage is so good, it looks like food is just appearing on the long buffet table out of nowhere.

Wyndham, early 70s, died 1990, was a high school teacher and looks the part, greets Gary and explains a bit about The Disaster, the tremors, the danger. Netta hands Gary a cloak. Corkery, 4-1/2 (died recently), carrying a bowl of salad like a waitress with a tray of draft beer, gives them all a big toothy grin on her way into the main hall.

Netta leaves to take supper to Fred and Paul. Gary watches her wiggling rear end as she walks away. When he turns back, Wyndham is in animated conversation with a completely bald man, Quigley, looks mid-50s, hard to say. There's something other-worldly about Quigley... Quigley is there to head a meeting explaining that they have to get out quickly. Quigley knows where the Portal is. He won't tell anybody where it is for fear they will be captured and forced to tell the Soul Eaters how to get into the next Level.

Quigley and Wyndham explain more to Gary as they eat, but not enough to satisfy Gary. Gary gets angry with them because he feels they are holding back information from him about the Soul Eaters. "I want to know about them!" He threatens Wyndham.

Outside the gate, unknown to Fred, Paul, and Netta inside, several Soul Eaters are trying to gain entry. The gate is not locked so that anyone out rescuing newcomers can get back in. Once the gate is locked at sunset, the guys outside are on their own.

Tully, Martin, and Barb arrive to cheers. Little Corkery, all excited, calls out "Tully! I thought you got losted!" At first, Gary thinks Martin is Tully, so is relieved when Corkery goes to the younger man. Courtney chats cutely with Tully, making everyone laugh.

At the buffet table, Abigail, 75, masculine clothing and hair, built like an engine block, died 1959, supervises. She is very gruff and treats everyone rudely. She interacts with a couple of minor characters regarding Gary watching Martin and reacting with male-on-male jealousy.

It becomes obvious that people are divided into groups for kitchen duty, clean-up duty, etc.

Someone takes the disoriented Barb to their quarters.

At the gate, Netta, Fred, and Paul manage to scare the Eaters away. Fred remarks: “Buggers are getting cocky, aren’t they?” to which Netta replies: “They are. I don’t like it one bit.”

Back at the buffet table, Abigail leans toward her partner, Aggie, 70, who sits stiffly in a chair beside her. Aggie was murdered in 1959, too. They discuss kitchen cleanup and “Little Snotnose” Earlene. Aggie claims to have no problem with Earlene, and Abigail suggests that she is the only one in the compound who doesn’t.

Fred, Paul, and Netta come scrambling in laughing, crying, puffing, panting, and carrying on like absolute fools. Abigail confronts Fred for “acting like an old fool.” Martin is overly solicitous toward Netta. Gary doesn’t like it.

Netta goes to Gary and flirts with him. Martin is angry and jealous. Netta leads Gary outside to one of the cabins in the compound. They have sex.

Next day, Tully, Gary, and Martin enter Tunnel 1. There is obvious hostility between Gary and Martin. They are looking for Lou. Tully attempts some humor: “He won’t be here. I mean, he might be here, but he won’t be all there if he’s still here.” Martin gets it, but Gary does not.

They discover dark-haired, hard-faced, Ricky, 12, among some Soul Eaters. Ricky has blood on his shoulders, a horrible fresh wound all the way around his neck. His manner of death was decapitation. He’s tough as nails, full of anger, fear, and hatred.

The rescuers spot Karen, 15, skinny, pretty. Beside her, draining her energy and getting a sexual thrill out of doing it, is Soul Eater Velvet, 14, Goth, extreme bags under her rather vacant eyes. Gary chases Velvet away temporarily.

Karen still has a scarf around her neck from her hanging. It is obvious after a moment that she hadn’t intended to actually kill herself. She panics when Gary brings her attention to the scarf when he tries to remove it.

Velvet takes a shine to Ricky and she and several Soul Eaters spirit him away after a battle between Soul Eaters and Tully, Martin, and Gary.

Gary manages to calm Karen down and lead her away. Tully and Martin follow, but Tully is very worried that the Soul Eaters have captured someone as “strong” as Ricky.

In Tunnel 2, Netta and Earlene, 12, mousy, plump, homely, look for newcomers. Netta — because she was murdered — cannot go into Tunnel 1. Victims of violent death arrive in Tunnel 2 also, but usually by accidental death so it’s not as dangerous for her.

Earlene whines because Netta is starting to “fade” and demands to know why she can’t fade like the others, too. Fading is the proof that a person has developed a high level of consciousness and is the precursor to passing over to the next Level. Before Netta can react to Earlene’s attitude, they spot Dave. Dave’s 42, 5’10”, and he’s still wearing bicycle gear including his helmet, Spandex, and funny shoes. Dave’s eyes are closed, his palms are turned upwards, and his lips are moving. Lip-readers will recognize parts of The Lord’s Prayer, particularly the “deliver us from evil” section.

Brad, 48, tall, handsome, his designer suit disheveled, stumbles toward them.

They are attacked by Soul Eaters. Earlene manages to kick one of the Soul Eaters in the testicles when it tries to spirit Dave away. Brad fights well and he and Netta push Soul Eaters off Dave. In the fracas, Earlene disappears. Brad stops Netta from running off after her.

They leave the area and go back to the compound but by the time they get there, it’s after dark and they are locked out. They discuss trying to get up over the high wall but it is probably impossible. Netta tells Dave to pray. “It can’t hurt.”

Tully, Gary, and Martin are playing cards during a meeting in Tully’s room. They are assuming that Earlene and Netta have been taken because they haven’t returned. The tension is high. Gary and Martin want to go after Netta but Tully says they can’t risk the whole community for two people. Tully is very worried though, especially since they “lost a strong one” that morning. Insults are traded. There’s some humor. Tully explains how dangerous it would be if the Soul Eaters get too strong.

Yvonne raps on the door. They need Tully for something. He leaves with Yvonne.

Martin and Gary decide to go out looking for Netta and Earlene.

Gary and Martin are in Tunnel 1 where Martin is beating Gracie, a Soul Eater with a huge gaping shotgun wound in her chest, trying to make her tell where Netta is. He is very violent. Gary tries to make him stop. Gracie appears to know something about Martin and he’s trying to shut her up. She likes his anger energy. He is beating her so hard, pieces are flying off.

Gary stops him, Martin leaves. Gracie whispers to Gary to be careful: “They want you, too. Careful, Gary.”

She passes out before she can answer his question “How do you know my name?”

Gary lies to Martin that he couldn’t hear what she was saying. Martin does not seem quite so dumb anymore ...

Deep in Tunnel 1, Aaron chairs a meeting. Lou and Ricky are in attendance. Velvet is Ricky’s girlfriend now. Aaron attempts to make plans to learn where the escape Portal is. He tells the group that they need to capture more of the strong ones — “take the leaders.” He says they need to send out spies. Bob is very funny and bratty, making fun of Aaron as much as he can. He

does a good James Bond impression, wanting to be one of the spies. Velvet provides humor also because she imitates everything Ricky does. She giggles a lot. Lou, angry, says: "Stop it. This is serious." Ricky gives Lou the finger. Velvet follows Ricky's example and giggles like crazy. A Soul Eater runs in to announce that there's "a big strong one" coming (Martin). The Soul Eaters hide in wait for Gary and Martin.

Netta and Brad come out of the bushes adjusting their clothing. Netta is solid again. Dave, who had been half asleep, leaning against a tree, raises his eyebrows when he realizes what they were doing. Dave mentions that the gate is now unlocked because "two guys came out". When Netta pieces together that it was Martin and Gary, she convinces the two men to go with her to rescue them. From the trees, Soul Eaters watch. Netta, Brad, and Dave leave the area.

They go into the Tunnel and sneak along trying to find Gary and Martin. Netta shouldn't be in this Tunnel.

Gary and Martin are attacked. Netta, Brad, and Dave arrive and they all fight. Martin is taken. Netta starts to cry and blame herself.

Meanwhile, Quigley holds his meeting in the Community Centre. It takes quite a while to get the meeting started with everyone finding a place to sit. People visit. Corkery and a minor character make fun of another. Abigail tells them to shut up and behave. Once the meeting starts, Fred heckles Quigley.

Quigley explains that the time is very short and that people need to get rid of their attachments right now. People start throwing cigarettes, gum, bags of coffee, a few joints, etc., toward the front of the stage. They leave to go to their rooms. Fred pitches his cigar onto the pile.

Quigley says he will lead them to the Portal.

Netta, Gary, Brad, and Dave return.

Up at the skylight, Aaron, Bob, and Martin watch the goings-on. We realize that Martin has been a spy for some time. When they are done spying, they leave but realize they can't all go out and lock the gate at the same time. They decide to leave Martin behind knowing that the people won't know he's now on the side of the Soul Eaters.

Everyone is asleep when Martin tiptoes into the Community Centre.

Next morning, as usual, people line up for breakfast, while quakes and shakes disturb their equilibrium.

A couple of tough 1950s teenagers ask Martin if they can go out looking for newcomers with him. He says sure, he's not working with Tully anymore.

Martin soon returns without them and takes Fred along.

The group holds an emergency meeting in the kitchen. They know that Martin has gone to the other side and think he might have taken Fred with him. They argue that Fred would never “turn against them.” Netta states that they have to kill Martin and Fred. Gary is shocked. They now know that they have to pass through Tunnel 1 to get there. Nobody is amused with that prospect.

Aaron, Bob, Ricky and Velvet, and Lou and Fred are at the compound’s gate trying to get in. They have a rope. Ricky shows off and acts mouthy about how stupid they are not to be able to shinny up the rope like he could. Fred has obviously been strong enough to withstand the Soul Eaters because he and Lou are plotting against them, pretending to go along with Aaron’s plans.

In Tunnel 2, Netta, Paul, Tammy, and Dave find Earlene, weak but still alive, and drag her out.

Quigley and Windham host more meetings. They are ready to go. Various characters rush off to inform the others that they need to line up now to follow Quigley to the Portal.

Having heard their plans, Aaron holds another meeting so they can prepare for the arrival of the people passing through Tunnel 1.

Sleepy community folks line up to drop off the last few remaining attachments they might have with them. Netta hides a revolver in the back of her pants. Little kids are handing in their dolls and other toys. One little boy sneaks through with his action figure.

Aaron, Bob, and the other Soul Eaters hide as people start coming through the Tunnel. They attack. Children are taken. People are taken. People lose their energy. Soul Eaters bump each other and explode. Mayhem! Fred and Lou grab the little boy who sneaked through with the action figure and they pretend to take his energy so they can smuggle him through the gang of Soul Eaters.

People line up at a huge oak tree that glimmers. Quigley gently guides people through the shimmer. On the other side, they are welcomed with love and smiles by the inhabitants of that Level.

The little boy who sneaked the action toy tries to go through but he catches fire and disintegrates. This freaks everybody out and now nobody wants to go through. Quigley demonstrates that it’s still okay. He passes through.

A teenager who tried keeping his cigarettes explodes into flame, too.

The tremors are extremely strong and almost non-stop. Back in the tunnel, Paul watches helplessly as Martin pushes Wyndham under a falling rock. Wyndham dies instantly. Well, *almost* instantly ... Barb and others are crushed by falling rocks. Abigail’s leg is injured by a rolling boulder. Aggie tries to help her along.

Martin grabs a woman and pushes her down onto the ground where she is knocked unconscious. He grabs a rock and raises his arms to drop it on her head. Paul tries to stop Martin but is unable to prevent Martin from braining the woman. Martin and Paul struggle and the fight seems fairly

even. Paul gets the better of Martin, ends up on top, pulls a knife, holds it to Martin's throat, stares into his eyes. Martin breaks eye contact. Paul asks: "Had enough?" to which Martin replies, "Yeah. Yeah. Lemme up." Martin's left hand grabs a rock. Martin reaches up with his right hand to grasp Paul's right hand so Paul can help him up. Martin gets up and throws his left, with the rock in it, against Paul's skull. Paul goes down, bloody, twitching, aware. His right eye goes a little wonky and he breathes his last.

The falling rocks are so dangerous, that Aaron and Bob emerge from the shadows and follow the regulars.

Abigail and Aggie struggle along but Martin catches up with them. Martin grabs Aggie and throws her to the ground. He picks up a rock. Netta returns, jumps behind a boulder to hide herself. Martin holds the rock up high. Netta shoots him. He lets go of the rock. He falls. Netta tosses the gun away, and it lands on the ground near Martin's hand. Netta goes to help Aggie up.

Aaron, from the shadows, reaches out and grabs Netta by the hair and drags her, kicking and screaming, sparks flying, into the shadows.

Others go through the Portal without incident.

As Netta struggles with Aaron, who is very strong, Bob watches Abigail and Aggie attempting to move along the tunnel. Bob has a flashback: He sits on a couch beside an elderly woman who resembles Abigail. They hold hands and laugh at something on TV. It's a tender moment with his grandmother who died later. He missed her terribly. Bob wipes tears from his eyes. His teeth are no longer smashed off. He helps Abigail and Aggie get away.

Martin's hand reaches for the gun just as Netta gets away from Aaron. She starts running down the Tunnel. Martin gets up on his elbow. He aims. He fires. Netta goes down with a bullet through the back of her head. Martin dies.

The rest of the people are going through the Portal.

Gary turns toward the sound of the gunshot. He makes a move to run toward it but Tully takes his arm and reminds him that he can't pass through "if you have attachments". A woman steps up and takes Gary's hand. Karen takes his hand on the other side. They pass through. One of the not-so-nice minor characters goes through on her own and explodes into screeching flames.

Tully and Brad step through with Earlene between them. Others step through and are greeted. Tully and Brad step through without Earlene. Tully looks at his empty hand, then looks at Brad.

Breathless, just as Earlene catches fire screaming, Abigail, Aggie, and Bob arrive at the shimmering oak. Bob steps away from Abigail's side. In John Wayne's voice and actions, Bob says: "I guess this is where we part company, ladies." But Abigail and Aggie fuss over him and each takes one of his hands. The three of them step toward the tree. The back of Bob's head is

no longer smashed or bloody. It is intact. Smiling, they all look at each other, then step into the shimmer.

Abigail, Bob, and Aggie step into the brightness. With her arms outstretched, Corkery runs to greet them. Corkery laughs: "I thought you got losted." Corkery throws her arms around Abigail, and Aggie steps in for a group hug, too. Bob stands there awkwardly looking around. From the hugging group, Abigail's hand reaches out to grab Bob's to draw him into the group hug.

Netta, with a slight bit of blood on the back of her head and shirt, runs through the woods checking over her shoulder exactly the same way Gary did at the beginning when they first met. Gary greets her the same way she greeted him at the beginning. She is disoriented, doesn't know where she is or who she is. Gary says: "Newcomers are always a bit foggy at first. Come with me. There are others you should meet."

THE END