

# Circus Adversus

by  
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(For an Animated Short)

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INT. TELEVISION

STATIC. Channel flips of it's own accord to:

G.W. BUSH giving his post-9/11 "Go shopping" speech.

Channel flips - more static - lands on:

A CELEBRITY on a late night TALK SHOW dissing Bush's "Go shopping" speech, and announcing he'll move to Canada if Bush is reelected.

Channel flips - NEWS COVERAGE on 9/11 - video of the towers burning.

The COLOR BAR flips up accompanied by its DRONING sound.

INT. LESLIE'S BEDROOM - PREDAWN

In the background, the TV rests on the color bar. An ALARM CLOCK BLARES to life: it's 3:00 am. LESLIE CORE, late 20s, is startled awake in the dark. She hits off the alarm clock.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - PREDAWN - AN HOUR LATER

Leslie walks down the mezzanine, yawning and carrying a poster board. She passes bland stores with BLAND CLERKS lifting up the SECURITY BARS that make loud mechanical moans and thuds.

[The stores include NATIONAL DE-FORESTATION PAPER CHAIN, NATIONAL SOLE-LESS SHOES CHAIN, NATIONAL DEGRADING CLOTHES FOR INSECURE WOMEN CHAIN, NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR COLUMBIAN WAR-LORDS COFFEE CHAIN.]

Leslie reaches her quirky and vibrant boutique with a kitchen-style door called *MY UNIQUE SMALL BUSINESS*.

Her keys dangle and jangle from her hip. A HOMELESS WOMAN shuffles around by Leslie's door, and holds out an empty PAPER CUP. Leslie drops a few coins in the cup.

Leslie flips over the poster board and sticks it in the window. It reads: BLACK FRIDAY SALE - MY MORTGAGE PAYMENT % OFF.

Down the hall, a SECURITY GUARD begins to UNLOCK - with heavy clicks - the mall entrance door behind which pulses a MASSIVE CROWD OF HUNGRY CONSUMERS. **Cue music: "Rustabout" by Beats Antique**, creepy circus music.

The MASSES descend on the mall. Leslie and the Homeless Woman watch with fright as they push forward with zombie-like zeal for consumer goods.

The MASSES begin to jump on one another, not chaotic, but like insane cheerleaders, they build up into a human pyramid that takes the shape of a huge, staggering HUMAN STICK FIGURE. It marches forward destroying everything in it's path.

The long SHADOW of the monster's foot pushes down toward Leslie - she tries to run but is unable to move. She ducks, and the Giant crushes the petrified Homeless Woman.

The Giant takes large ungainly steps down the mezzanine and eventually breaks through the wall, to the outside world.

Leslie cradles the lifeless Homeless Woman in her arms. The grey skyline of NEW YORK CITY appears over the horizon, with two twin PILLARS OF SMOKE rising up where twin buildings once stood. The Giant continues toward the city, leaving a path of destruction in it's wake.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY - LATER

Leslie, disheveled, picks through the pile of bricks, boards and quirky merchandise that used to be her store. The roof is gone. Dark clouds roll in over head.

Around her, the National Chains have been restored and operate as usual. Cash registers ZING and POP, ZING and POP. CUSTOMERS go in and out, in and out.

Leslie hears the WHINE of a toy whose batteries are about to die. She picks up a PLASTIC DAISY wearing sunglasses. Daisy bops back and forth, but her dance slows and finally grinds to a halt.

Leslie climbs down from the pile, and wraps Daisy in the hands of the dead Homeless Woman.

EXT. LESLIE'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Leslie, covered in soot, tearfully regards the pile of RUBBLE that used to be her house. Several other houses on her block are crumbling too, as the atmosphere turns the color of pennies soaking in urine. Leslie looks to the sound of CLAPPING and a DRUM ROLL. Across the street...

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

A MARCHING BAND in full uniform begins to play in the school parking lot. Blindfolded and tired the Band marches and plays a pitiful rendition of the "**The Star Spangled Banner.**"

CROSS CUT:

EXT. LESLIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Leslie's hand automatically goes to her heart - she loves her country. But just then she spots something that's unsavory.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

In the bandstand are local POLITICIANS and THEIR WIVES. Leslie focuses on the MAYOR, a fat little man wearing a sash that says "MAYOR" on it.

Leslie's stomach turns and her face turns into a scowl. She walks swiftly and with purpose up to the Mayor.

Meanwhile, about a dozen ANGSTY TEENS wearing black "(Bush) NOT MY PRESIDENT" T-shirts pop their greasy heads out from behind the bandstand - comically, one atop the other.

They watch as Leslie tries to speak to the Mayor, politely, but the Band drowns out her words. The Mayor ignores Leslie. She waves her hands in front of him, and yells, but no sound comes out. She taps him on the shoulder, but he simply lifts a finger and SECURITY PERSONNEL pick Leslie up and escorts her away. Leslie bucks against them.

EXT. LESLIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Security Personnel roughly disengage Leslie from their grasp. The jerks probably left a bruise.

On their way back across the street, they pass the Angsty Teens slithering their way over to Leslie on skateboards and Wheelies.

Leslie begins picking up pieces of rubble and SNAPPING them together - to make what, we do not yet know.

The Angsty Teens stop at attention before Leslie on the mound of her destroyed life. They kick up their skateboards, and retract the wheels of their shoes.

Leslie finishes her assembly - a Steampunk version of a RIFLE. She aims it at the Mayor.

In unison, the Angsty Teens salute Leslie.

Leslie pulls the trigger of her gun - a bent spoon - and a BUSHEL OF DAISIES pops out of the barrel.

Noticing the formation of Teens, Leslie twirls her "rifle" around then catches in her palm.

"The Star Spangled Banner" is muted down as "**Battle**" by **Beats Antique** cues up.

The Angsty Teens mimic her action with their skateboards or their arms if their are without.

Leslie does a slow fluid dance with definitive ending places (like Tai Chi), which her Angsty Teens follow to the T.

Then Leslie twirls her "rifle" ending with it pointing straight up into the air.

The Angsty Teens mimic her action - their skateboards or fists raised to the sky.

Leslie surveys her Army, and nods in approval.

The white daisies flutter in the murky sky.

INT. TELEVISION

STATIC then the channel flips to the LOCAL NEWS.

NEWSCASTER

(gravitas)

They call themselves Circus  
Adversus.

(then)

This band of querilla "artists" are  
responsible for the rash of  
terrorist activity on American  
soil. Defacing public property...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. INNER CITY SCHOOL - DAY

A MURAL of pretty summers day (heavy on the daisies) in the middle of the ghetto. The mural is signed by Circus Adversus Solem Ne Loquitor (subtitle: The Don't Argue What's Obviously Wrong Circus).

NEWSCASTER

Endangering the lives of innocent  
Americans...

EXT. MIDTOWN - DAY

A huge, happy man-made flower wearing sunglasses sits atop a skyscraper, flapping in the wind. The wind tears off the large silken PETALS, which then float down to the street landing on pedestrians and the windshield of an angry cabby.

## NEWSCASTER

In their boldest move yet, the terrorist group made an attack today near Wall Street, threatening the stability of America's economy.

INT. A STORE OFF BRAODWAY - DAY

Security footage of: a scene that eerily resembles that Visa commercial where people twirl around in concentric circles swiping their credit cards, only in this version Leslie and her army of Angsty Teens hold up the row of check-outs by writing checks for ridiculously small amounts like \$2.17.

CUT TO:

INT. CIRCUS ABVERSUS HQ - NIGHT

[Exactly as you image the combined living/working space of circus performers would look like.]

Leslie and her Angsty Teen brigade (more than 100 in all) watch the news with delight. She high fives her neighbor, setting off a chain reaction of the high fives around the room.

BACK TO:

INT. TV - SAME

## NEWSCASTER

In response to public outcry, a task force has been assembled in order to hunt down and capture these anti-American radicals. Spearheaded by Major Task-

On the green screen appears a picture of Major Task, a mustachioed man in dark glasses, smiling broadly with his arms up in front the of Swords of Qadisiyah (Hands of Victory), in Baghdad.

## NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

- a decorated American war hero, the task force has declared martial law until the terrorist group is taken into custody, tried, and hung for their sins. Good night, and thanks for tuning in.

Cut out interview footage with AVERAGE AMERICAN'S.

INT. CIRCUS ABVERSUS HQ - NIGHT - SAME

Leslie stares in abject horror at the TV, while her Angsty Teens high five each other. Leslie raises a hand to her throat, and rubs it gently. She tries to speak ("Why..?"), but her larynx has closed up.

The Angsty Teens follow suit, grabbing their throats and opening and closing their mouths like fish out of water.

Meanwhile...

HILLBILLY (O.C.)

(on television)

I came out the house around eleven or so, I's just woke up, and what do I see but a whole row of a flers planted in ma yard. I din' ask nobody to do that, I don't even like flers. They's trusspassers and they got to be stopped.

Leslie realizes what's happening among her *followers* and stops. She drops her arms. The Teens drop their arms.

MORBIDLY OBESE WOMAN (O.C.)

(crying)

The terrorists came to my car and left this.

We see her on TV holding up a piece of paper that says "WALK MORE."

MORBIDLY OBESE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Walk more.

(breaking down sobbing)

Who does such a thing? It just isn't right.

Meanwhile, Leslie tests her theory: she raises her right hand - the Teens all raise their right hand; she raises her left hand - they all raise their left hand; she quickly shoots out "rock" - they all shoot rock; simultaneously, they shoot "paper" with Leslie, then "scissors," then nothing.

Leslie sits down in shock. They all sit down looking shocked. Leslie clutches her temples and shakes her head in distress - they all do the same.

MAYOR

(on TV)

Nobody speaks Latin anymore. It's just un-American.

INT. CIRCUS ABVERSUS HQ - DAWN

Leslie tiptoes out of HQ past her throngs of sleeping Teens.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAWN

Leslie surreptitiously walks out onto the street at a wide intersection. The sky is still rust and urine stained.

Major Task lurks behind a building down a narrow alley.

Leslie sees the Homeless Woman going into an impressive blond BRICK BUILDING, and rushes into it behind her. Task murmurs into his ear piece.

INT. IMPRESSIVE BRICK BUILDING - DAWN - MOMENTS LATER

Leslie, in search of the Homeless Woman, walks down hall that grows ever more maze like and disjointed. There are lots of little sets of steps, and each new "corridor" is a different kind of hallway (e.g. run down apartment building, crumbling hospital, old music building, etc.). Task follows in sly pursuit.

On the wall next to Leslie is the mural her circus painted, but now it is in grey tones, the flowers wilted, the sun a black-hole. A few TEENS scrawl in bright electric colors the words EAT. SHIT. FUCK. DIE. in drippy spray-paint.

Leslie shakes her head and hands "No," and tries to stop them, but her feet stick. Above her, the giant flower they erected - also black and wilting - threatens to fall and crush her.

Leslie literally picks up her legs one at a time to move a step forward. She is scanned by a bar-code scanner in the wall: BEEEP. In red light, the word INVALID appears on her chest. Leslie scrapes at it with her hands, but it stays put.

Down one end of the hall, a MOB looms forward with PITCHFORKS. Leslie looks for an escape, but down the other end of the hall her Teens loom forward, grabbing at her, zombie-like.

INT. CIRCUS ABVERSUS HQ - DAY - LATER

The Teens roll around on the floor listlessly.

Leslie, out of breath, crashes in and slams the door behind her. The Teens stand up and pant. One of them hands Leslie her "rifle."

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - LATER

People go about their business - MASSES enter the revolving doors of stores empty handed and come out laden with bags; cars drive in circles spewing out exhaust fumes.

Leslie, clad in black, appears on the roof of the impressive brick building.

On the street, Task murmurs into his ear piece - his dark glasses reflecting the image of Leslie's Teens appearing, also clad in black, in a line around the perimeter of the roof with Leslie at the center.

A SNIPER on an adjacent roof touches his ear piece then aims his cross hairs at Leslie.

The Circus begins to CLAP in a loud, quick staccato.

The MASSES on the street notice. They point, and scream, run, and duck for cover.

Task gives the order, and the Sniper shoots Leslie.

She is knocked down. The clapping stops. Her Teens look at their fallen leader - they all fall down.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY - LATER

The DIN of many voices: "Rubbarb, rubbard, rubbarb." "Peas and carrots, peas and carrots." Leslie sits in the defendant's chair, her shoulder wrapped in WHITE GAUZE. Behind her sit her Teens - they all wear a white bands tied symbolically to their upper arms.

Leslie's "rifle" is on display as EVIDENCE. The JUDGE raps his GAVEL.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY  
(standing and pointing)  
Rhetoric! Rhetoric! Rhetoric!

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
(standing and pointing)  
Semantics! Semantics! Semantics!

JUDGE  
(pounding gavel)  
Contempt! Contempt! Contempt!

The Defense Attorney sits. Leslie tries to speak, but her voice doesn't work. She holds her head in her hands and shutters violently. She weeps.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY  
(snide to D.A.)  
Hubris.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
Habeas corpus.

JUDGE  
Verdict.

The JURY, made up of HILLBILLY, MORBIDLY OBESE WOMAN, MAYOR, MAJOR TASK, and others all rise at once and point at Leslie.

JURY  
GUILTY!

The Judge raps his gavel: "It's settled."

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
(jumping up)  
Insanity!

INT. INSANE ASYLUM - DAY - LATER

**Cue "Caterpillar" by Beats Antique.** The BARRED DOOR SLAMS closed in front of Leslie's crestfallen face.

CROSS CUT:

EXT. COURT HOUSE - SAME

A MEDIA FRENZY. REPORTERS hold out their microphones to The Defense Attorney.

REPORTERS  
Comment! Comment!

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
No comment.

INT. INSANE ASYLUM - SAME

Leslie sits, shaken and crazed. She is in a STRAIGHT JACKET. A red spot of BLOOD seeps through on the shoulder.

She is surrounded by her Teens, also in straight jackets. The ORDERLIES drag in a lumpy brown sack - the Homeless Woman, dead and rotting, but still holding the PLASTIC DAISY. They drop her by Leslie's feet.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - SAME

The Reporters hold out their microphones to the jubilant Prosecuting Attorney.

REPORTERS  
Comment! Comment!

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY  
Victorious!

INT. INSANE ASYLUM - SAME

Leslie hears the music. Her eyes - staring at the corpse - are dead, but she begins to writhe in her seat to the tune, writhes right out of her chair. The Teens follow in suit.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - SAME

The Reporters hold out their microphones to Major Task. As Major Task steps into frame we switch to:

REPORTERS  
Comment!

INT. TELEVISION - SAME

A huge AMERICAN FLAG waves in the wind behind Major Task.

MAJOR TASK  
My fellow Americans, today's  
successful capture and maiming of  
Circus Adversus leader, Leslie  
Core, and her legion of Satan's  
minions--

INT. INSANE ASYLUM - SAME

Leslie and her Teens writhe around on the floor, and the corpse. In their straight jackets they resemble an orgy of maggots.

MAJOR TASK (V.O.)  
-- is proof positive that our  
beloved Old Glory stands for just  
one thing: freedom, and  
overwhelming force.

The image cuts out. TV snow, followed by the DRONE of the color bar.

FADE TO BLACK.

