

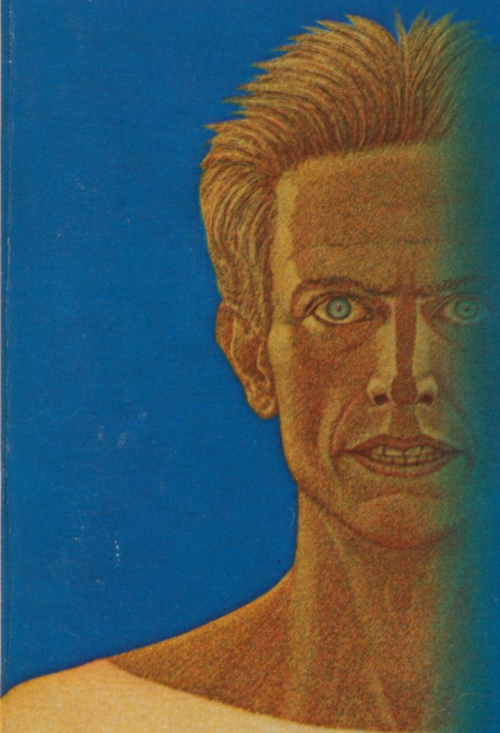
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SIX SCIENCE FICTION PLAYS

Edited by Roger Elwood

Included for the first time anywhere is Harlan Ellison's
original script for The City on the Edge of Forever,
the "Star Trek" smash hit.



Science-fiction plays have not often been collected. In fact, there are not many of them available. But the good ones are—even in script form—as dramatic and compelling as novels or short stories, especially when written by such masters as are included here.

When you open these fascinating pages, be prepared to stay with them. They won't let you go.

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—Barry N. Malzberg

SIX SCIENCE FICTION PLAYS

**Edited By
ROGER ELWOOD**

**WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS
POCKET BOOKS • NEW YORK**

SIX SCIENCE FICTION PLAYS

WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS edition published January, 1976



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INTRODUCTION

Collections of plays are not especially unusual. From Shakespeare to Tennessee Williams such anthologies have been appearing for a long time. But science fiction plays have not often been collected.

In fact, there are not a great many science fiction plays available. The two forms do not meld easily. It is difficult to translate the imaginative leaps characteristic of science fiction writing into the hard reality of dialogue between articulate characters. Writing a science fiction play is a bit like trying to picture infinity in a cigar box. The whole effort can too easily degenerate into space opera. So you do not often find a playwright who writes science fiction, or a science fiction writer who writes plays.

Besides that, the science fiction plays that do exist usually require sets and costumes that are more elaborate and expensive than those used in traditional theatrical productions—and when corners are cut, it seems to show. Fortunately, films and television expand the possibilities of translating science fiction into a dramatic format. And works from all three media—stage, television, and motion pictures—are represented herein. Writing for each medium has its specific requirements, and the pieces in this collection form an interesting survey of the field while presenting, at the

same time, some very telling contrasts between the different dramatic forms involved.

Harlan Ellison's script, "The City on the Edge of Forever," has won two awards. In its original, uncut, untailored-to-fit-budgets version, it won the prestigious Writers Guild of America award as the Most Outstanding Teleplay of the 1967-68 season in the category of Dramatic-Episodic; the televised version won the 1968 Achievement Award (the "Hugo") of the World Science Fiction Convention as the Best Dramatic Presentation. The version you will read has become something of a *cause célèbre*. Though many hundreds of copies of the many-times-rewritten shooting script have been sold through merchandising channels catering to "Star Trek" fans, the original Ellison version—quite different from what eventually was aired—has been held back by Mr. Ellison and has only been read by those who worked on the first year of "Star Trek," or by close friends. Now, after almost ten years, Harlan Ellison has consented to release for publication the original version, and it appears here for the first time anywhere; accompanying the script is a specially written introduction by the seven-time Hugo and Nebula award winner, detailing the background of how the script was conceived, the machinations that followed the work from the author's typewriter to 23-inch screen, and some most lively comments about writing for television in Hollywood.

Tom Reamy's "Sting!" is in some ways typical of a science fiction film subgenre—the weird monster flick. These movies are quite distinct from their counterparts in the Horror film category because the monsters in them almost always originate in outer space or from atomic mutation. The monster in "Sting!" is firmly from outer space and very hungry. While the script

has yet to become a film, it is so taut and suspenseful that it rises above the limitations of the genre.

A one-act play is a particularly tall order because it must be so tightly constructed and so much information must be conveyed in so short a time. "Contact Point" is a particularly successful one-acter and, requiring little scenery or special effects, is perhaps the most easily produceable play in this volume. Ted and George Cogswell are the playwrights. Ted is deeply involved in the Science Fiction Writers of America and George is his wife.

John Jakes' "Stranger with Roses" is an especially interesting play, different in tone and method from the others herein. Jakes is one of the few science fiction writers who is also a prolific playwright. As this volume was being put together, Jakes' name was invariably recommended. Most people I approached felt the book wouldn't be fully representative without a Jakes' contribution. "Stranger with Roses" was originally written as a short story and later adapted as a play. Quite a lot can be learned from a comparison of the two.

The remaining two plays in the volume, although quite different in style and content, share a common thread: things not normally assumed to be capable of speech or other independently motivated intelligent activity play an important role. Fritz Leiber's "The Mechanical Bride" stars an exceptional robot, while Paul Zindel's "Let Me Hear You Whisper" features an eloquent dolphin. Fritz Leiber's appearance in any science fiction collection is hardly a surprise—he has been a mainstay of the industry for many years—but Paul Zindel is a distinguished dramatist and novelist whose inclusion here may seem baffling. His name is not usually associated with science fiction. Only after you have read "Let Me Hear You Whisper" will you

realize how he came to be included. The play demonstrates perhaps better than any of the others in this volume how the traditional stage play can be enlivened by the inclusion of elements from speculative fiction.

—ROGER ELWOOD

The City on the Edge of Forever

An Original Teleplay

by HARLAN ELLISON

THE CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER [original author's version, *not* rewritten shooting script as aired], by Harlan Ellison. (In greatly altered form, this material was first telecast over the National Broadcasting Company network on 6 April 1967 as produced by Desilu Productions, Inc., in association with Norway Productions, Inc., for NBC.) Copyright, ©, 1975, by Harlan Ellison.

One of the most important reasons "Star Trek" was so successful can be summed up in a familiar phrase—one of a kind. There was nothing else like it on the air at the time. Another science fiction series, "The Outer Limits," bore no resemblance whatsoever to "Trek." Furthermore, it was pure science fiction (some say not *good* science fiction but *pure* in any event), with all of the trappings: spaceships, ray guns, alien monsters, unexplored planets, a stalwart commander and so on. And it was produced by people who believed in what they were doing, and were not simply out to make a buck.

"Trek" has become, in many respects, more popular since its cancellation than it was before. Now in reruns throughout the country, it has grown into a cult object, a rallying point for "trekkies." One convention of fans in New York City had an attendance of 16,000!

Harlan Ellison was one of the most talented script-writers for the series. A novelist, award-winning short story writer and anthologist of note (the *Dangerous Visions* books), he was contacted by the creator of "Star Trek," Gene Roddenberry, even before the series had its network slot finalized. Through Ellison, "Star Trek" employed many well-known science fiction writers for its first year's scripts. But even Harlan

Ellison had problems with changes in his original teleplay, changes which he discusses in the special introduction he has written for this Washington Square Press edition.

The author of this remarkable script has fought production company and network censorship with virtually every teleplay he has done in Hollywood (and they now number well over two dozen, for the top shows on all three networks); the things he has to say about working conditions for writers in TV, therefore, are from the inside, and they come from the only writer in the twenty-six-year history of the Writers Guild of America awards for Most Outstanding Teleplay to win that honor *three* times. His ethics are beyond reproach, incidentally: he walked away from \$93,000 in profits when a series he created, "The Starlost," was creatively butchered.

"The City on the Edge of Forever" is one of those three award winners and appears here for the first time anywhere in its original, uncut—first draft—version.

Harlan Ellison:

Introduction to

The City on the Edge of Forever

It's almost ten years since the day Gene Roddenberry called me to say he had sold a series to NBC called "Star Trek." "It's going to be a sophisticated 'Wagon Train' to the Stars," Gene said; and we both laughed. We laughed, because Gene was making fun of the tunnel-vision thinking of many television network programming clowns who cannot perceive of any new property in an original way, but must tag it in as being "just like 'The Fugitive,' except the guy is running to keep people from taking his blood, which makes people immortal" ("The Immortal"), or "similar to 'Bonanza,' except the father is married to a beautiful Mexican woman" ("The High Chapparal"), or "it's 'Mannix' with a fat detective" ("Cannon"), "an old, thin detective" ("Barnaby Jones"), "a blind detective" ("Longstreet"), "a crippled detective" ("Ironside").

"Star Trek" went on the air in September of 1967 and despite the wild enthusiasm of science fiction aficionados, it had a rough go its first year, due mainly to that purblind arrogance of the nameless decision-makers on their skyscraper mountaintops.

(As an aside: I was asked to do a magazine piece

Introduction to THE CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER
written specifically for this volume. Copyright © 1975 by
Harlan Ellison.

on the show, in 1968, and in researching the subject, from an intimate knowledge of what went on behind the scenes because of my personal involvement, I discovered that at one point, early in the show's existence, NBC wanted to make Mr. Spock more "human." He wasn't going to be that jaundiced shade of yellow, he wasn't going to have the arched eyebrows that always made Lenny Nimoy look as though he'd just been caught in the act of doing something unspeakable, he wasn't going to have the pointy hobbit ears. He was going to be a more human-style extraterrestrial. NBC even went so far as to have photos of Nimoy in the Spock regalia retouched, and those air-brushed photos were included in promotional flyers. I managed to get hold of one, long after the series had become a hit, and when I started following up the chain-of-command that had ordered the alterations [what Trekkies would term a desecration], I found no one would cop the rap for it. Every network official I spoke to said it had never happened . . . until I whipped the actual flyer on him. Then he'd go fumfuh-fumfuh and aim me in the direction of the next higher-up. Till finally I confronted the then-president of NBC—I can't remember his name nearly a decade later; they change scapegoats at the networks more regularly than normal people change their socks—and he feigned an attitude of *horror* that such a thing could even have been considered; an attitude so convincing he should have been nominated for an Emmy in the category of Executive Dissembling. With all the ethic of a Nixon throwing a Mitchell to the dogs, he picked up his phone and demanded his staff find out exactly *who* had been responsible for such a cataclysmic awfulness. Naturally, all the well-creased and dryer-blown dudes who had second-guessed the alien makeup were covered, and the only martyr they

could serve up was some poor *schlepper* in the art department who, they assured me, had taken it upon himself to make the changes. Now, *you* know and *I* know there isn't any rational way in which a 32nd art assistant down in the advertising department at NBC is going to presume to alter one of the major elements of a prime-time series, but they actually thought I'd go for it. And they fired the poor slob. To prove they were upright and conscientious. I must confess I felt considerable guilt about that chain of events, even though I was innocently the catalyst that caused the reaction. But it solidified for me, for all time, the reality of just how far, and how low, television executives will go to cover up their mistakes and avoid even the faintest scintilla of bad press.)

World's longest aside.

Anyhow, I went in to work on "Star Trek" and devised a story I was anxious to tell. I called it "The City on the Edge of Forever." I wrote it carefully, with considerable love, and with enthusiasm at being part of what looked to be the most faithful translation of pure science fiction to the television medium since the second year of "The Outer Limits." (Not the first year: that was all bogeymen and monsters; but the second year was SF, and some bloody fine shows they were. Now *that* was a series I dug working on; I'll tell you about it some time.)

I handed in my script to rave comments by Gene, Dorothy Fontana—who was, herself, writing scripts for the show, even while she was serving as Roddenberry's assistant—and the then-story editor, John D. F. Black. They all said it was dynamite and that they'd be "putting it up on the boards" at once, for early shooting. But then, peculiar things began happening.

The script was put aside for several months and

scripts I'd been told were "lesser in quality" began to slip into the slots "City" had been intended to fill. I kept checking back, to see what was going down—I was writing a segment for another series at that time, I don't remember which one—but kept getting run around.

Now, understand something: for many years after the period I'm talking about here, Gene Roddenberry and I didn't speak to each other. Considerable bad vibes and poisoned blood between us. I felt I'd been badly used; Gene felt I was being unfair and unnecessarily condemnatory (not to mention loudmouthed) about my treatment on the series. Those days are past. Gene and I have reached rapprochement and he has done a number of very gentlemanly, wholly unsolicited good deeds in my behalf. I choose, and so does Gene, to forget the hassles of that period. So I won't lay them out here like dismembered corpses. Suffice to say, Gene's contention was that I had written a script that cost too much to film on the budget NBC had allowed (a budget that kept getting smaller as the season wore on and one segment after another ran over cost); I contended that unnamed parties had leeched all the humanity from the story and had turned it into just another melodramatic, implausible action-adventure hour. Those who have read the original version of the script, the one that this piece introduces, assure me my teleplay has greater depth, emotionalism and quality than that which finally was aired. The original version won the Writers Guild award as the best dramatic-episode teleplay of the 1967-68 season. But "Star Trek" fans swear by the aired version, awarded it a Hugo at the World SF Convention and a George Méliès Fantasy award at the International Film Festival in Los Angeles in 1973. I like to think the latter awards were

given because that which I bled into the script could not be totally drained off, even by several rewrites by other people. But, who's to know? It could be that I was, and maybe still am, too close to the material to know when it's been bettered by other hands.

But even though I have reached peace with myself about the script, I continue to maintain the belief that art-by-committee is *never* great, or even good art. It is cobbled-up like Frankenstein's monster, with bits and pieces from different minds.

The solitary creator, dreaming his or her dream, unaided, seems to me to be the only artist we can trust.

However, that's a judgment you'll have to make yourself. I'm permitting the script in its original version to be published here for the first time anywhere, because it has come to my attention that copies of the shooting script, the rewritten version, have sold hundreds of copies in high-priced mimeographed editions; and everywhere I go . . . to conventions, to colleges where I lecture, to autograph parties in bookstores when my books are published . . . invariably I'm asked, "Where can I get a copy of the original version of 'City'?"

Till now, my answer has always been: nowhere.

James Blish attempted to turn it into a short story, using the best elements of both versions for the first "Star Trek" paperback. It didn't really satisfy. Not even Jim, who admitted same, even though he did as good a job as he could trying to meld two disparate scripts into a coherent whole. But here it is, unedited, intact, just as I wrote it back in 1966.

Naturally, I hope *you* think it's dyn-o-mite, but even if you *still* prefer the aired version (which shows up regularly on syndicated reruns of the "Star Trek" series all over the country), I have the personal satisfaction

that all creators retain when they know they've brought a dream to life with what Balzac called "clean hands and composure."

A few words now about the form in which a teleplay is written, and then a few words about some elements of the script that were pivotal in my writing the script the way I did.

Television terminology is more complex than that used for either radio plays or stage productions, naturally. A scenarist writes not only the plot, dialogue and sequences, he or she also writes the camera angles, the description of characters, the sets, sometimes—if it's important—even the music for a certain mood.

When you see O.S. it means "offstage," as when someone is speaking but isn't on camera. POV means "point of view" and refers to that which the character in question sees, through his or her eyes. An ARRI-FLEX shot is one made with a hand-held camera. The Arriflex, or "arri" as it's usually called, used to be the basic hand-held implement for such work—useful in getting around quickly with that jerky, documentary feel that's so important for scenes of rapid movement or personal combat—but these days they use a French-made camera, the Eclair. When you see (*beat*), as in some character's speech, it merely means taking-a-beat, a pause. A SMASH-CUT is a sharp, dramatic cut from one scene to another, and is scenarists' mickey-mouse, because a cut is a cut, and that's the long and short of it, but a HARD CUT or a SMASH-CUT means that the action preceding and following the cut should be very slambang, the way they used to do it on "Mission: Impossible" or "The Man from U.N.C.L.E." An ESTABLISHING SHOT is a full frame shot that is used to orient the viewer as to where the coming action will take place, a street, a

ballroom, a vast plain with armies poised to battle. A LAP-DISSOLVE is a very slow dissolve in which one scene is superimposed over another for a few beats, one fading, the other coming in stronger, so we have a sense of passage of time.

Beyond those few technical details, I don't think you'll have any trouble deciphering the jabberwocky of the TV medium. Just sorta kinda picture what's going on as if it were playing on a screen in your head. Get visual. That's what *we* have to do when we write the stuff.

Now. There are things in this script that were taken out entirely. The first is the character of Beckwith. I was advised by NBC network continuity, at the time of the turn-in of the first draft of this teleplay, that drugs—even something as clearly a fantasy construct as the *Jewels of Sound*—could not be permitted on a show that was airing so early in the evening. Further, there is a killing on board: one crew-member kills another. I was told that was nixed because no one onboard the starship *Enterprise* could be a bad guy. I railed at that concept. It always struck me as nonsense that the network could try to pass off a space battle-cruiser of that size, with a complement of many hundreds of people, without a few rotten apples in the barrel. Just the rigors of space, exploration and tight confinement should have made *somebody* go bananas. But, no, they didn't want to shatter that silly myth that all TV heroes are just that: heroes. I was going for some reality, but the network gets inordinately uptight about such stuff. In the televised version, the entire *Jewels of Sound/Beckwith/LeBeque* situation was replaced by the ship's doctor injecting himself with some drug that made him go loonie, and *he* became the Beck-with character, going back in time.

The entire alternate universe thing with the space marauders was excised. Much of the relationship between Kirk and Edith Keeler was watered down, to my way of thinking. But the two most significant changes, the ones I resented most bitterly, were these:

The joy of writing television is small. Once having written a script, once having poured one's hours and emotions into a story, the script is passed into the hands of others, who alter the dream to fit their own interpretations and their own need to put their mark on something someone else has created. They have to justify their own jobs, even their existences in some cases.

To hear directors tell it—with that moronic “auteur theory” by which they bamboozle audiences into believing it is *they* who have the vision—nothing comes to life without them. If the truth be told, were it not for the writer, who has the idea, orders it sequentially and logically, builds the characters and gives them their words, the directors would be standing around with their fingers in their mouths waiting for divine guidance. Producers, network continuity people, production personnel, every advertising executive who has bought time on the show, and his wife, and his mother-in-law . . . all of them take credit for the script. But it is the writer who starts it all rolling. Without the writer you would turn on your television set tonight and be dazzled by uninterrupted hours of test patterns or, at best, recorded organ music.

So the primacy of a writer's investment in the work is frequently ignored. He or she is never consulted about the script, never invited to sit in on the shooting, seldom even asked to rewrite if such becomes necessary. Ham-handed assistants, all of whom know in their secret heart of hearts that they could write “if they only had the time la-de-dah,” these are the ones

who dumb up a script. With working conditions like that, is it any wonder that writers who care move on to other mediums? Films, books, quiet evenings around the campfire. And for those of us who *do* care, who make nuisances of ourselves by sticking with a script despite the baleful stares of producers and studio personnel, it becomes a matter of inserting those small things in a script that enrich us as creators.

For me, in this script, the personal, secret things I planted were the character of Trooper, and what happens to him, and the characterization of Kirk that said he was willing to sacrifice the ship, the crew, himself, Spock, all time itself if need be, for love. In the end, he would allow time to be warped and never returned to its original state, just to keep Edith alive. It was Spock, logical and rational, who held Kirk back from saving Edith's life.

I was told: "Our character wouldn't act like that."

Bull. Who *knows* how someone will act when pressed to the final, ineluctable confrontation with himself? I felt it vastly deepened the one-dimensional character of Kirk-the-rock-jawed, and made a point about mortality and the necessity for love that television seldom considers. And it was to be topped off by the first (and perhaps only) time in the series when Spock spoke to Kirk calling him by his first name. It was supposed to be a pair of scenes filled with genuine emotion and some kernel of human anguish, not the counterfeit emotion which TV usually substitutes for genuine pain, thereby dulling and diminishing all of us who watch the little box.

Trooper was removed entirely. I think he is the best character I've ever written into a script. I would have liked to've seen him come to life. His death in the show says, I think, something fearful and important about

the passage of our lives on this tiny grain of dust we call the Earth.

I am sad he never had the breath of life blown into him by the magicians of the coaxial cable.

Perhaps some other time, in some other script.

Well. That about logs it closed. Had I but world enough and time, I would go through the months and events of this script and what happened to it, in much greater detail. But that's the past, and as has been said, past is merely prologue. Here is the script. I've just re-read it, after almost ten years, just to see if it needed any touching up. I still like it. My hope is that you feel similarly. And it was nice visiting with you.

HARLAN ELLISON
New York City
6 December 74

FADE IN:

1 ESTABLISHING SHOT - ANGLE IN SPACE

The USS ENTERPRISE hanging in mid-foreground over a strange, silvery planet under a wan and dying red sun. CAMERA MOVES IN on ship and OVER this (and subsequent pantomime shots), we HEAR the VOICE of KIRK:

KIRK'S VOICE OVER

Ship's Log: star-date 3134.6.
Our chronometers still run backward. We have followed the radiations to their planet-source here at the Rim of the Galaxy, but something else is happening . . .

(beat)

When we left Earth each of the 450 crew-members of the Enterprise was checked out stable.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

But it's been two years -- so much stress on them. We have continuous psych-probes, but we know some have been altered. Even some who may have gone sour: we can't know till the flaw shows up. And by then, it's too late . . . much too late . . .

While VOICE OVER carries, CAMERA MOVES IN on Enterprise smoothly till we

RAPID LAP-DISSOLVE TO:

2 INT. ENTERPRISE - BECKWITH'S CABIN - EXT. CLOSEUP

on a small, isometrically-shaped metal container as it is opened by a hand. VOICE OVER is heard (after beat) as we HOLD CLOSE on the lid of the box, opening with tambour doors, so the interior of the box rises and a strange DULL LIGHT FLOODS the FRAME. As the container opens, the black velvet interior slides up to reveal possibly half a dozen glowing jewels. They are faceted solids, but not stone; more like a hardened jelly that burns pulsing with
(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

an inner light: gold, blue, crimson. As KIRK'S VOICE OVER ends we hear:

LeBEQUE'S VOICE O.S.

(trembling)

Beckwith, stop it! Give me one!

CAMERA PULLS BACK to MED. 2-SHOT showing LT/JG LeBEQUE, a French-Canadian with a strong face -- a face now beaded with sweat, a face in torment -- and another officer, RICHARD BECKWITH, a man whose face shows intelligence and -- something else. Cunning, perhaps, or even subdued cruelty. Beckwith holds the pulsing Jewels in their container. He smiles unpleasantly as LeBeque stares transfixed by the Jewels. Beckwith, without moving, taunts him with them.

BECKWITH

(conversationally)

Jewels of Sound. So expensive, so illegal. You want me to give you a dream-narcotic they've banned all through the Galaxy? Tsk-tsk, Lieutenant, how far you've fallen.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

LeBEQUE

I won't beg, Beckwith.

BECKWITH

No? How long have you been my man, Lieutenant? How long have you been hooked on the Jewels?

LeBeque's face tightens, his fists clench at his sides. He isn't a weak man, nor a toady. But Beckwith holds his life.

LeBEQUE

You gave me my first taste on Karkow, that was a year ago. One taste and I was addicted. I need one . . . stop playing with me.

Beckwith extends one, a golden Jewel. But as LeBeque reaches for it, Beckwith closes his fist, and the light is shut off. LeBeque gasps, winces, as though physically hurt. Then with his hand still extended, Beckwith gets down to business.

BECKWITH

(directorially)

I want to know about that

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

planet out there. What the log says about valuable commodities. I'll want a landfall pass, and I'll want you to cover for me when I trade with the natives.

LeBEQUE

(amazed horror)

After the slaughter you caused on Harper Five, you'll do it again? If Kirk finds out --

BECKWITH

(chill steel)

He won't find out, will he, Lieutenant? If he does, you'll never hear these Jewels sing inside you again. I'm your only source, remember that.

(1/2 beat)

I'm coming back from this a rich man, and I'll never have to go to space again. Nobody's getting in my way, LeBeque: I want to live an elegant life, but that takes resources.

LeBEQUE

(it takes guts)

So you cheat aliens, get them hooked on illegal dream-

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

narcotics, and steal what they
could trade for cultural
advances.

BECKWITH

Hooked like you, LeBeque.
Hooked like you.

LeBEQUE

(bitterly)

Yeah, like me. And I'm already
paying.

BECKWITH

(with finality)

But you'll pay a little more.
Do I get what I want?

LeBeque nods slowly. Beckwith
slowly opens his hand and the
golden light shines. LeBeque
grabs it quickly and swallows it.
CAMERA HOLDS past Beckwith smiling
knowingly at the Lt/Jg as a look
of almost orgasmic pleasure
crosses LeBeque's face.

3 REVERSE ANGLE - LeBEQUE'S POV -
WHAT HE SEES

as shot THRU HIS EYES as Beck-
with's face begins to shimmer with
weird lights, like a Van deGraaf

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

generator, like heat lightning off a rain-slick pavement. We HEAR the incredible MUSIC OF THE JEWELS as they reach through LeBeque's head: part electronics, part orchestral and something like a scream from a creature dying horribly. Everything goes OUT OF FOCUS as the LIGHTS collide and merge and swirl and dance in patterns of no-pattern, and for SEVERAL BEATS we SEE THRU the drug-drunken eyes of a man in the grip of an alien narcotic. The MUSIC RISES and the SCREAM BUILDS as Beckwith's face fades away with that damnable smile and everything blurs as we

COME BACK INTO FOCUS TO:

4 INT. BRIDGE - MED. CLOSE ON
LeBEQUE

as everything leaves its fuzziness and we HEAR the VOICE of MR. SPOCK O.S. and we see LeBeque at a huge bank of ship's controls, knife-switches depressed, and a control bar in his hand, gauges oscillating wildly and all of them in the DANGER RED country. There is a frightening HIGH PIERCING

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

WHINE of machinery stressing to implosion level that is the tail end of the SCREAM we have heard through the drug-vision. The FOCUS COMES SHARPER thru VOICE O.S.

SPOCK'S VOICE O.S.

(urgent but Spock-ish)

LeBeque! Damp that starboard unit, you're running in the red! You'll blow the entire drive! LeBeque!

And as CAMERA PULLS BACK we see LeBeque being dragged away from the controls by TWO CREWMEN as Spock dashes in to damp the power controls. The WHINE SUBSIDES RADIDLY.

Spock whirls on LeBeque. He is as coldly furious as an alien without emotion can get. Menace in his voice.

SPOCK

You've been walking around this bridge like a man under water for two hours. If you're unwell, Mr. LeBeque, relieve yourself and leave the bridge.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED:

LeBEQUE
(horrified)

T -- two hours . . . oh
God . . .

He shakes his head as though to clear it, and then stumbles away, up the risers to the hatch which sighs open at his approach. He pauses for a beat at the portal, hand on the wall to steady himself as we HOLD PAST Spock who watches him with concern. He goes through the portal.

5 INT. CORRIDOR - CAMERA WITH LeBEQUE
(ARRIFLEX)

as he passes down the passage, pausing for a moment to fight with himself, and the Arriflex camera SQUIBS ABOUT his FACE showing us the self-loathing, the torment. Then he makes a decision that is visible in his expression and goes away from us as we

QUICK CUT TO:

6 INT. BECKWITH'S CABIN - ANOTHER
ANGLE THAN SCENE 2

as LeBeque careens in through the
(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

portal. Beckwith looks up from some paperwork he's doing at a desk on which reels of tapes are held in place by bookends that are TWO HUGE FACETED BLOCKS OF GREEN CARNELIAN. prominent in the ANGLE of the SHOT.

LeBEQUE

(shaking)

I'm done. I almost blew the ship. Whatever Kirk wants to do with me, I'll deserve it; but I'm turning you in, Beckwith.

He whirls to leave as Beckwith leaps up from the desk, reaching for one of the blocks of carnelian.

7 INT. CORRIDOR (ARRIFLEX)

CLOSE on LeBeque as he COMES TO CAMERA, hurrying. Beckwith seen over his shoulder, plunging after him, raising the block of carnelian as LeBeque passes out of FRAME and CAMERA HOLDS on Beckwith swinging the heavy weight. PAST HIM we see a PAIR OF CREWMEN (man and woman) coming around the corner as the SOUND of a heavy weight hitting something soft is HEARD O.S. and CAMERA ZOOMS IN on the FACE of the
(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

FEMALE CREW-MEMBER as she SCREAMS
and we

HARD CUT TO:

8 LONG ANGLE DOWN ANOTHER CORRIDOR
- BLACK FRAME

as the BLACK FRAME becomes Beckwith
dashing away from CAMERA IN
PERSPECTIVE toward the Transporter
Chamber. There is a GUARD on the
portal, but Beckwith rushes INTO
FRAME at such a breakneck pace --
full out, dammit! -- that he is on
the Guard, grabs his phaser rifle
and smashes the man to the deck
with the butt of it before the man
can raise a hand to stop him.
CAMERA WITH him as he plunges
through the hatch and it closes
behind him as CAMERA WHIP-PANS
back down the corridor in the
direction from which Beckwith came.

Around the bend in the corridor
boils a throng of Enterprise
personnel -- led by CAPTAIN JAMES
KIRK, Spock, YEOMAN JANICE RAND
and DR. McCOY -- all ad-libbing "He
came this way" . . . "Down there,
the guard . . . ", "Transporter
chamber . . ." et al.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

They dash TOWARD CAMERA and FRAME BLACK as CAMERA in ARRIFLEX GOES WITH and FRAME OUT OF BLACK as they dash away from us. McCoy drops to one knee, to aid the Guard, who lies twisted at an odd angle, possibly dead. Kirk and Spock try the hatch. Sealed from the other side. Yeoman Rand moves in between them with a phaser and begins to puddle the sealtite as we HEAR the SOUND of the SHIP'S TRANSPORTER.

9 INT. TRANSPORTER CHAMBER -
FULL SHOT

as they burst through the hatch. The Transporter is still glowing. On the floor the TRANSPORTER CHIEF, half-conscious, struggles to sit up. He points to the machine.

TRANSPORTER CHIEF

(mumbling)

B -- Beckwith . . . he went
down . . .

KIRK

(tight, to Spock)

Fit out a patrol! Jump!

CAMERA HOLDS on Kirk as the crew rush everwhichway to equip a

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

patrol to transport down after the
killer. Kirk turns to stare at
the still-glowing Transporter with
its EERIE HUMMING as we see his
concern and we

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

10 EXT. PLANET - ESTABLISHING - DAY

CLOSE on booted tracks as CAMERA ANGLE WIDENS to show us the desolate face of the barren world. Silver-grey sands that take a good impression of the Beckwith tracks receding toward the horizon. Nothing else. No rise, no hill, no foliage, no break or relief from the sheer flat desolation of the terrain. As though some cosmic god had flicked an ash and it had grown into a world. A burnt-out ember of a sun hanging dolorously in the cadaverous sky. As we HOLD a beat on the empty panorama, we HEAR the VOICE of KIRK OVER:

KIRK'S VOICE OVER

Ship's Log: star-date 3134.8.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

This cinder, this empty death of
a world.

As these lines are SPOKEN OVER we
see the tell-tale shimmering and
coalescing that means crewmen from
the Enterprise are materializing
from the Transporter. As Kirk,
Spock, Yeoman Rand and THREE
ENLISTED CREWMEN appear, VOICE
OVER CONTINUES:

KIRK'S VOICE OVER

This is the source of the
strange radiation that had our
clocks running backward. How
odd that Beckwith should choose
this ghost of a world for his
escape. I am transporting two
shifts for patrol -- Rand,
Spock, myself, and six crewmen.
We'll find him.

As these lines are SPOKEN OVER we
see Spock indicating the tracks to
Kirk, and pointing in the direction
they vanish; we see Kirk deploying
his crew-patrol in a search-pattern
as they move forward. VOICE OVER
CONTINUES as we

LAP-DISSOLVE THRU:

11 LONG SHOT - THE SCENE

patrol (now comprised of nine people: we have not seen the last three materialize, but Kirk has told us about it) moving across the wide empty face of the planet as
VOICE OVER CONTINUES.

KIRK'S VOICE OVER

But something more important has us nervous. A world with a dying sun such as this . . . it should be frigid, without atmosphere . . .

(beat)

CAMERA MOVES IN SLOWLY as VOICE OVER CONTINUES and the LAP CONTINUES THRU. (NOTE: we should see 3 scenes overlapping.)

KIRK'S VOICE OVER

(after beat)

But we aren't cold . . . and we can breathe.

CONTINUE SLOW LAP-DISSOLVE TO:

12 EXT. PLANET - ANOTHER ANGLE -
MED. CLOSE SHOT

PAST Yeoman Janice Rand IN F.G.
as she turns her head sharply to
(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

look just PAST CAMERA. A console is strapped on her, just below the bosom, and dials dot the face of the machine. A HUM grows stronger from machine.

RAND

(into camera)

Captain: there's the source of the radiation.

CAMERA PULLS BACK RAPIDLY to show Kirk, Spock and the rest just behind her, and as CAMERA FILLS we see the full landscape. Mountains on the horizon. Mountains that rise up into the sky, till they become vague and wispy. Rising straight out of the flat terrain like pilasters.

SPOCK

The tracks . . . straight for the mountains.

CAMERA MOVES BACK IN and TO THE LEFT to come in CLOSER on Kirk, and past him, as if they were miniatures right over his shoulder, the mountains, with a strange glittering on one far, distant peak.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

KIRK

(almost dreamily)

Mr. Spock: do you see the city
up there?

SPOCK'S VOICE O.S.

It's there, Captain.

CAMERA HOLDS as Kirk moves away
toward the horizon and the others
move with him. CAMERA HOLDS on the
far distant view of that gleaming
city, seen almost in opaque dimness
as we

DISSOLVE TO:

13 PLATEAU OF THE GUARDIANS - LATER
DAY - CLOSE SHOT

ON KIRK as he climbs up the last of
what is obviously a rocky defile.
The stones are a peculiar silvery
material, with buried shimmers of
light in them. As Kirk climbs up
onto the plateau, CAMERA GOES WITH
HIM as the ANGLE OPENS to show us
bracing rock walls and niches all
around us.

14 THE PLATEAU - ESTABLISHING SHOT -
KIRK'S POV

PANNING SHOT from Kirk's immediate right, around the bowl of the plateau. Grey sky past the rock prominences, light and eerie mist that gives the entire area an ethereal look, niches up in the rock walls, boulders of the same bright substance here and there, on a higher peak but still quite far-off -- the city, glittering like a hyper-sensitive's dream. And as the CAMERA PANS AROUND we see, for the first time, THE GUARDIANS OF FOREVER. The shot continues a beat and then CAMERA ZOOMS IN on them who, for that beat, had looked almost like part of the stone walls. But as CAMERA CLOSES in the ZOOM we see they are men. But such men as have never before been seen:

The instant impression is age. Old, terribly old, as old as time itself, as old as the dying sun overhead. Nine feet tall, grey-silver in tone, shapeless beneath the long white robes that reach to the mist-laden ground. They seem incredibly tall, not merely because
(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

they are a motionless nine feet in height, but because of their hair which rises up like mitered headpieces, because of the beards that hang down from their silent and ancient faces. Though only their heads show, they seem almost religious in tone; there is a vast dignity, an immense holiness about them. They do not move ever, and for a beat we suspect they may be stone.

15 CLOSING SHOT - WITH KIRK

as he moves toward them. They wait and watch, silently. Spock moves in behind, then the others, fanning out. One of the crewmen hefts his phaser, but without seemingly seeing him, Kirk makes a gentle motion with his hand, to lower the weapon. They move closer. Finally, after many beats:

KIRK

(with wonder)

Who are you?

1st GUARDIAN

(a voice of power)

We are the Guardians of Forever.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

You live in that city?

1st GUARDIAN

Since before your sun burned hot
in space. Before your race was
born.

SPOCK

This place is dead, empty.
Why do you stay?

1st GUARDIAN

Only on this world do the
million pulse-flows of time and
space merge. Only here do the
flux lines of Forever meet.

(beat)

Only here can exist the gateway
to the past, where the time
vortex of the Ancients can work.
Only here.

(beat)

And we were set to watch the
time vortex, so many hundreds
of centuries ago that even we do
not have clear memories of it.

KIRK

The gateway to the past? A time
machine?

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

1st GUARDIAN

Not a machine. A creation, a
vortex.

Kirk is about to ask what they
mean, but Spock -- logical -- cuts
in.

16 ON SPOCK

SPOCK

Have you seen another man,
dressed as we are?

1st GUARDIAN

What we see has already been,
or is yet to be. No. No other
like you.

CUT TO:

17 ROCKY NICHE - CLOSE PAST BECKWITH

past him hidden in a shadowy
crevice, the phaser aimed at Kirk,
listening. He looks around
himself, trying to find a way
out, but we see it is a
cul-de-sac. The only escape
route is past the Enterprise
crewmen. He looks desperate but
vicious, far from finished. KIRK'S
VOICE CARRIES.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

KIRK

There are legends in space.
About you.

1st GUARDIAN

You are the first visitors we
have had for twice two hundred
thousand years.

18 ANGLE PAST KIRK IN F.G.

to the Guardians, the mist rising,
the light changing. Kirk ap-
proaches another step. We can see
something in him we have never seen
before: wonder, absolute all-con-
suming wonder. He has found a key
to the secrets of the universe
that compel him. He is being
filled to the top with amazement,
and he leans forward almost like a
child.

KIRK

I always thought stories about
time machines were the drunk-
stuff of lab technicians when
they'd had had too much pure
grain to drink.

1st GUARDIAN

That which is . . . is.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

And he turns his head only infinitesimally. Kirk looks in the direction the Guardian has indicated, and his eyes open wide, delight and amazement and confusion and belief there.

19 THE TIME VORTEX - ESTABLISHING

Set in a tall, narrow rocky defile, it rises up, different to each who see it. A pillar of flame, a shaft of light, a roiling brightness of smoke, whatever wonder you care to make of it, the obvious aspects are light, height and insubstantiality. Construct it as you choose.

1st GUARDIAN O.S.

Pure matter. Built by a science man will not understand for a hundred thousand times the span of years he has already existed.

20 PAST GUARDIANS TO KIRK

and the others near him, wondering, listening.

KIRK

(awed)

And it's possible to go back

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

. . . and forward . . . in
time . . . ?

1st GUARDIAN

All time, all space. They meet
in this brightness, the vortex.

SPOCK

(very scientific)

Can you give us a demonstration?
Is that possible?

The Guardians' answer is oddly
tinged with weariness and pleasure.

1st GUARDIAN

Time is weary for the craftsman
who cannot demonstrate his
craft. We have nothing to do
but desire to show you. The
past.

KIRK

Can you show us the past of any
world?

There is the faintest possible nod
of: Yes, we can.

KIRK

(softly)

The past of Old Earth . . .
please . . .

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

The Guardians look toward the pillar of light and as Kirk does so, the CAMERA SHOOTS PAST HIM. At first there is no change, but in a moment there is movement in the light. . . a thickening . . . a roiling like oil . . . like quick-silver mixed with smoke . . . and a scene begins to take FORM IN THE VORTEX. (NOTE: this, and other scenes in vortex will be MATTE INSERTS.)

21 CLOSE ON VORTEX - FEATURING MATTE INSERTS (STOCK)

A scene of primordial times; great saurians; a woolly mammoth; steaming prehistoric jungle; reality!

It FADES OUT to be replaced by:

A scene in the days of the Clipper ships; something typical of the period; reality!

It FADES OUT to be replaced by:

A scene of New York City in the time of the Depression, 1930-32.

(NOTE: At Director's discretion,
INTERCUTS of the Earthmen marveling
(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:
at this demonstration may be
inserted.)

22 PAST BECKWITH TO VORTEX

as he watches with as much rapt
attention as Kirk and his patrol.
But the cunning is there, the
arched brow and the faintly smiling
mouth. The animal has sensed an
avenue of escape, as we HEAR KIRK
SAY:

KIRK

Could we go back, any of us
. . . say, to this time, 1930
of Old Earth?

Beckwith strains for the answer.

23 UP-ANGLE ON GUARDIANS

SHOT FROM TILT they look immense,
rising up, almost Messianic in
tone, something reverential as they
speak about their religion -- time.

1st GUARDIAN

Yes, but it is not wise. Man
and non-Man must live in their
present or their future. But
never in their past, save to
learn lessons from it. Time can
(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

be dangerous. If passage back is effected, the voyager may add a new factor to the past, and thus change time, alter everything that happened from that point to the present . . . all through the universe.

24 SPOCK AND GUARDIANS PAST HIM

fascinated by the concepts, not the magic of it all.

SPOCK

Then time is not a constant. It isn't rigid?

1st GUARDIAN

Time is elastic. It will revert to its original shape when changes are minor. But when the change is life or death -- when the sum of intelligence alters the balance -- then the change can become permanent . . . and terrible.

SPOCK

Like changing the flow of a river.

1st GUARDIAN

A river, a wind, a flow,

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

elastic. It makes no difference
how you imagine it to yourself.

KIRK

How long has it been since
anyone went --

1st GUARDIAN

We do not go back. We guard.
For one hundred thousand years
no one has gone back.

SPOCK

(to Kirk)

Captain, I understand now why
we can breathe here, and why
our chronometers turned back-
wards.

The Time Vortex has been left set
at 1930. While CAMERA DOES NOT
dwell on it, whatever shot we
enter, we should see the scene of
of the Depression back there, to
remind us it's on.

KIRK

They've created a zone of no-
time here.

SPOCK

Within the sphere of influence
of the vortex time doesn't move.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

All through the rest of the universe it flows at its normal rate, but here --

KIRK

(softly)

If they can control time, how much simpler it must be for them to control the atmosphere.

1st GUARDIAN

There is wisdom that lesser species have not grasped. Perhaps you who call yourselves "men" will be next to guard all of time.

SPOCK

But if this is true . . . how old you are . . . if time does not move at its normal rate here . . . how long have you been here to get as old as you are . . .

25 FULL SHOT - THE SCENE -
ARRIFLEX

But they have no time to ponder an answer, for at that moment Beckwith breaks from cover and makes a long run toward the time vortex. He is

(CONTINUED)

halfway there before they realize what is happening. Kirk and Spock plunge forward to stop him. Spock gets to him first, and knocks the phaser out of Beckwith's hands, but Beckwith slams Spock across the jaw and keeps going. He grabs Yeoman Janice Rand as a shield and rough-houses her in front of him, ever closer to the vortex. She half-turns and elbows him; he leaves her and Kirk reaches him just as he closes on the vortex. Kirk sees he is going for the vortex (from which the 1930s scene is gone, but which still flickers and glows so we know it is in operation) and makes a flying dive for him. But Beckwith does a little dance-step of broken-field maneuvering and flings himself forward. CAMERA WITH HIM as he dives headfirst into the vortex. There is the SOUND of a LOUD WHOOOOSH! as space rushes to fill the vacuum where he has been, even as Kirk grabs up the phaser lying near him on the ground and fires at the vortex. A blast of coruscating energy hits the light pillar, but does nothing. The vortex is empty. Beckwith is gone.

26 WITH KIRK

as he crawls back to Spock, who is just rising. Yeoman Rand joins them and the rest of the crew patrol.

KIRK
(to Spock)

Are you --

SPOCK
I'm undamaged, Captain.

Kirk looks at Janice Rand. She nods tightly that she's fine also. Then Kirk turns quickly, speaks to the Guardians.

KIRK
He went back?

1st GUARDIAN
(panic)
Yes. The vortex was active.
Your world, Old Earth.

KIRK
But you said --

1st GUARDIAN
All past history has been
changed.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

But how can that be . . . it
all looks the same here?

1st GUARDIAN

Yes, here. But from here
outward, everything has been
changed. It is another universe
in which we stand.

SPOCK

How has it been changed?

27 ANGLE ON GUARDIANS - CITY
IN B.G.

high on that farther crag, the
CITY BEGINS TO PULSE & GLOW. We
SEE IT over the Guardians' shoul-
ders. One of the other two who
has been bone-silent all through
this action suddenly begins to show
animation. His body quivers ever
so faintly under the robes, and his
face makes a slight movement.

1st GUARDIAN

The time-flow has been diverted.
We are being summoned. The
machines of the Ancients are
registering traumas in time.
We must return.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

And THEY VANISH! The vortex dies out. Kirk et al alone.

28 TWO-SHOT - KIRK & SPOCK

with the crew patrol behind them.
Yeoman Rand prominent.

KIRK

We have to get back to the ship.

SPOCK

(to Rand)

Yeoman. Signal Enterprise for
Transporter pickup; give these
coordinates.

RAND

Yes, sir.

She fiddles with the console,
BLEEPS a signal.

KIRK

If they were right -- if it's
changed . . .

SPOCK

Conjecture has no merit.

KIRK

Yeoman, stay with us for the
(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

second shift. Send the enlisted men up first.

RAND (cont.)

Yes, sir. Pickup commencing.

CAMERA ANGLE EXPANDS as the six enlisted men group together. They begin to shimmer as we have seen previously, then vanish.

RAND

Captain?

Kirk looks at her.

RAND

What's happened up there, sir?

KIRK

(distant)

Beckwith may have killed again . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

29 INT. TRANSPORTER CHAMBER - CLOSE
ON KIRK & SPOCK

in the last stages of materialization. Rand behind them. As they appear corporeally, suddenly we see Kirk's face assume a BROAD EXPRES-

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

SION of disbelief and consternation. Rand's eyes widen in total confusion. Even Spock is momentarily set back. Rand gives a small YELP of anxiety.

30 REVERSE ANGLE - PAST KIRK
IN EXT. F.G.

(NOTE: this must be shot past the three people in the Transporter to show the entire chamber before them.

WHAT THEY SEE: the six enlisted men, herded into a corner, being held at bay by men and women with weapons totally unlike those used by the Enterprise crew. The captors are RENEGADES. Their dress is not regulation uniforms, but motley garb, each one wearing what he or she feels like. They are unkempt, and as vicious-looking as a crowd of free-booters can look. There are as many in the group as is needed to hold the Enterprise crew at bay.

In the forefront of the group stands the RENEGADE CAPTAIN whose evil nature is so evident on his face that no one could doubt for a

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

moment that this man is the vilest scum of a million worlds. He has a weapon of extreme ugliness pointed at Kirk and Spock and Rand. His smile is the smile of an animal.

RENEGADE

(with chill warmth)

Welcome to The Condor.

HARD CUT TO:

31 CLOSE ON KIRK

his expression of -- yes, possibly -- fear and bewilderment and then dawning realization that he has, indeed, wandered helplessly into a world he never made. HOLD ON THAT thought as we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

32 INT. TRANSPORTER CHAMBER -
ESTABLISHING

the renegades holding the Enter-
prise patrol at bay. Kirk and
Spock make a slight move, but guns
come up, and they settle back.
The Renegade Captain seems per-
plexed, but still a threat.

RENEGADE

Whoever you are, you shouldn't
have come aboard.

33 CLOSE 2-SHOT - KIRK & SPOCK
(RAND IN B.G.)

Kirk's bewilderment has passed. He
speaks in an undertone to Spock.

KIRK

He was right. Time's been
altered.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

SPOCK

Renegades.

KIRK

This isn't the Enterprise any-
more.

34 PAST RENEGADE CAPTAIN TO THEM

on the Transporter stage. Beside
the Renegade is a TECHNICIAN who is
operating the complex Transporter
console.

RENEGADE

Now step down off that stage
slowly.

35 SAME AS 33

Kirk frantically seeks an escape
route. We see it in his face.

KIRK

(to Rand, softly)

Yeoman . . . give that console
full feedback!

36 CLOSE ON JANICE RAND

as she hesitates a fractional beat
to understand his order. Then

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

CAMERA TILTS DOWN SLIGHTLY to show us the console still strapped on her, and her hands moving to two big calibrated knobs. She suddenly twists them as far as they will go. There is an ABRUPT PIERCING WHINE.

37 SAME AS 32 - ARRIFLEX

as the Transporter console erupts in a shower of sparks and a WHAMMMM! and the Technician is thrown half across the room. The Renegade Captain and his men naturally turn with a start, and in that instant, Kirk leaps off the Transporter stage.

KIRK
(yells)

Go!

And Spock joins him in a flying leap that carries him off the stage and onto the nearest renegade. The Enterprise crewmen begin punching, grabbing weapons. There is a pitched battle in the cramped confines of the Transporter chamber and the tactic resolves itself into forcing the remaining members of the Condor's crew out the hatch, and sealing it behind

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

them. The final tally has one Enterprise crewman dead on the floor, and three Condor renegades in similar condition.

38 MEDIUM SHOT - KIRK PROMINENT

as several crewmen with phasers stand guard at the door, waiting for a counter-attack. Others gather around Kirk. Janice Rand is trying to pull her torn uniform around her. Spock has a cut on his cheek. He is bleeding yellow.

RAND

Captain, where's the Enterprise crew?

KIRK

Not here. Maybe nowhere.

SPOCK

Logically, with time altered, they were possibly never born, or they've become those.

(He jerks head in direction of the hatch and renegades.)

KIRK

There are 530 enemies out there.

CUT TO:

39 CORRIDOR OUTSIDE TRANSPORTER
CHAMBER

as the Renegade Captain regroups.

RENEGADE

Nimblek, Owstian, blast through
that hatch!

Two renegades with weird hand-
weapons move on the hatch, start
to blast at it. The door gets
smokey, smudgy.

40 INT. TRANSPORTER CHAMBER -
ANOTHER ANGLE

CLOSE ON CREWMAN nearest hatch.
He turns head sharply into CAMERA
and speaks as FRAME OPENS to SHOW
FULL SCENE.

CREWMAN

Cap'n, I feel heat. They're
blasting.

SPOCK

(to Kirk)

There are too many variables to
this problem.

KIRK

We have to change things back.

(CONTINUED)

SPOCK

Then all the possibilities come back to a single course of action.

KIRK

(nods understanding)

Yeoman Rand . . . can you hold this chamber?

RAND

(unsure)

How long, sir?

KIRK

Indefinitely.

There is a beat of silence. Everyone knows what he means. She nods. Kirk looks at Spock.

KIRK

Let's get back.

They hasten to the Transporter stage, get on. Rand moves to the big control panel which her feedback exploded.

RAND

I'll have to cut in alternate circuits, Captain. My feedback burned out the central sources.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

KIRK

Do your best, Yeoman.

As she works, rehooking circuits, moving hurriedly, Spock moves off his Transporter plate to Kirk's side.

41 EXT. CLOSE TWO-SHOT - KIRK & SPOCK

as Spock leans in, to speak so the crew won't hear him.

SPOCK

They may not allow us to go back after Beckwith.

KIRK

They've got to.

SPOCK

Time is something sacred to them. They may not think as we do -- that it should be changed back.

KIRK

(more insistent)

They've got to!

RAND'S VOICE O.S.

Ready, Captain. It's jerry-rigged, but it ought to hold.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

KIRK

Energize!

42 ANGLE ON KIRK, SPOCK IN CHAMBER

The dematerialization EFFECT --
they become transparent . . .

RAND

Hurry back, we might not be
here when you --

. . . they dissolve. A few faint
sparkles fade. Empty chamber.

43 EXT. PLANET - THE PLATEAU

as we left it. The REMATERIALIZA-
TION EFFECT occurs: first the spar-
kling, then the transparent outlines
of bodies, then the solid appear-
ance of Kirk and Mr. Spock. They
look around and then the Guardians
POP INTO EXISTENCE where they had
stood before.

KIRK

Send us back. We'll get him.

1st GUARDIAN

There is a problem. Time cannot
be doubled.

(CONTINUED)

SPOCK

(grasps immediately)

You can't send us back to the
precise time?

1st GUARDIAN

Before or after.

KIRK

Earlier. We'll grab him when he
comes through.

1st GUARDIAN

Warning: his passage has caused
only a temporary change.

SPOCK

If we bring him back, then the
river resumes its natural
course, everything goes back the
way it was?

1st GUARDIAN

(nods)

But in each time-period there is
a focal point. An object, a
person, something that is indis-
pensable to the normal flow of
time. Unimportant otherwise,
but as a catalyst . . .

KIRK

And if Beckwith tampers with it
-- time is changed permanently.

(CONTINUED)

SPOCK

Will Beckwith know what this focal point is?

1st GUARDIAN

No, but the stresses of the time-flow will draw him to it. If he influences it, nothing can restore the shape of the past.

KIRK

Then how can we stop him?

1st GUARDIAN

(mystically)

Bring him back. He will seek that which must die, and give it life. Stop him.

KIRK

I don't understand. Can't you tell us more?

1st GUARDIAN

Blue it will be. Blue as the sky of Old Earth and clear as truth. And the sun will burn on it, and there is the key.

Kirk and Spock look at each other. The Guardians have obviously said all they can say. They nod resignation at one another, and turn

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

to the time vortex, just as it flickers to life. They move toward it. Flames and light burgeon, and the SOUND of the vortex is HEARD.

44 ANGLE ON TIME VORTEX

as they step up to it, hesitate a beat, then step in. Flames leap up about them (or whatever SPECIAL EFFECT is employed) and they vanish. CAMERA PANS SMOOTHLY BACK to Guardians.

1st GUARDIAN

As night falls, they run like hunters, and for all our wisdom, we are helpless.

RIPPLE-DISSOLVE TO:

45 LIMBO

against the blackness, fluorescently-illuminated, Kirk and Mr. Spock, REVERSE-IMAGE as though they were negatives, hurtling toward CAMERA out of the dark, a sense of intense motion. They hurtle STRAIGHT FOR CAMERA and FRAME TO BLACK.

a seamy, down-at-the-heels street; murky glass storefronts; automobiles of the period, but very few; prominent in the scene is a store with a large sign proclaiming:

CCC CAMPS -- SIGN UP HERE

and beside it another store with a sign that says FREE SOUP and a smaller sign with an arrow that says FORM A LINE. In front of these two shops there is a small group of men. They are in a line, and though we can only see six or seven shabby men in caps and shapeless coats outside on the sidewalk, the way they are queued up, with the line disappearing into the soup kitchen, we know there are many more in the crowd. On a soapbox between the two stores, a tall, wild-eyed man with a typical moustache of the time, dressed in the same shabby garb, holding an American flag on a pole, is haranguing the crowd. The penniless men listen to the ORATOR, who is slowly inciting them to riot, as
(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

we SEE the sudden materialization of Kirk and Spock at the rear of the crowd. Kirk faces the Orator, but Spock is turned the other way, as though they had come through time turned-about.

47 CLOSE ON KIRK & SPOCK

as they look around, startled and disoriented. They find each other, and there is wonder in their eyes. Not till this moment have they believed what the act of time-travel was really like. Now they turn to the Orator as he howls.

ORATOR

What kind of a country is this, where men have to stand in bread lines just to fill their bellies? I'll tell you what kind . . . a country run by the foreigners! All the scum we let in to take the food from our mouths, all the alien filth that pollutes our fine country. Here we are, skilled workers, and they want us to sign up for CCC camps. Civilian Conservation Corps, men -- is that what we're gonna do? Work like coolies inna fields while these

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

swine who can't even speak our
language take the --

He CONTINUES UNDER as we CLOSE on
Kirk and Spock. Spock looks at
Kirk with disbelief.

SPOCK

Is this the heritage Earthmen
brag about? This sickness?

KIRK

(disgusted)

This is what it's taken us five
hundred years to crawl up from.

48 REVERSE ANGLE - ORATOR'S POV

as he sees Spock in the rear of the
crowd. The fanaticism of his
harangue is suddenly halted. He
rises on tip-toe and suddenly
points a finger.

ORATOR

There! There's one! There's
one of them foreign trouble-
makers. Whyn't we show him how
we like his kind!

The crowd turns almost in a body,
and there is a definite MURMUR
THRU THE CROWD as they see Spock
(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

-- an obvious alien though they have no idea how alien -- who looks around uneasily. Kirk edges away with his phaser rifle, and we wonder for a beat if Kirk is possibly deserting his companion.

ORATOR

(hysterically)

They're the ones sending this country deeper into the Depression! They're the ones want your babies to die with swollen bodies, they're the ones . . .

But he doesn't need to finish. The crowd suddenly HOWLS and goes for Spock. Spock lays about with vigor, sending men sprawling. Kirk backs away. And then, he levels the phaser at a lamp-post, and with a ROAR the weapon goes off, disintegrating the lamp-post. The crowd falls back in horror. Spock and Kirk run like hell out of FRAME.

49 EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - LATE DAY
thru - MONTAGE

55

as they run. An attempt should be made in this sequence by use of CAMERA TILT and SMASH-CUT and

(CONTINUED)

49 thru 55 CONTINUED:

LAP-DISSOLVE to give a tone of plunging disorientation. They are in another time, strictly speaking an alien world, and they are being pursued by a mob, though we need not show the mob. But by use of ERRATIC ANGLES (up from street-level; flashing past camera; down on them as they race by) with MUSIC OVER we can obtain a sense of phantasmagoria in seven shots:

DOWN A LONG EMPTY STREET OF
ECHOING BUILDINGS

AROUND A CORNER AND AWAY FROM US

INTO AND DOWN THE LENGTH OF AN
ALLEY KNOCKING OVER GARBAGE CANS
IN THEIR WILD FLIGHT

STRAIGHT FOR US AS THEY JUMP TO
CATCH

THE TOP OF A FENCE AND TENNESSEE -
ROLL OVER IT

THROUGH A BACKYARD HUNG WITH WASH

KIRK GRABS SPOCK AND PULLS HIM
INTO A BASEMENT ENTRANCE DOWN
SOME STEPS TO A BASEMENT.

as they plunge through the darkness, their momentum carrying them all the way to the rear near a coal bin from which coal spills onto the basement floor itself. A furnace of the old stoke type. They slip behind it and slide down to sit with their backs against the wall as CAMERA CLOSSES ON THEM.

SPOCK

Barbarian world!

KIRK

They were hungry, and afraid.

SPOCK

As violent as any aborigine world we ever landed on.

KIRK

All right, we're safe now.

SPOCK

My race never had this. We went to space in peace. Earthmen came with all of this behind them.

KIRK

(aroused)

And that's why you hit space two hundred years after us!

(CONTINUED)

SPOCK

Try to tell me Earthmen uplifted my race. Tell me that, and use Beckwith as an example of nobility.

KIRK

I should have left you for the mob!

Spock is about to say something that borders on violence. He starts, stops, resumes his mask of imperturbable alien calm.

SPOCK

I won't fight with you.

Kirk simmers down. He chuckles.

KIRK

Mr. Spock. You're picking up dirty habits hanging around with Earthmen. Emotionalism.

SPOCK

(piqued, but not about
to show it)

We have some immediate problems
. . . Captain.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

KIRK

(bemused)

You draw a certain amount of attention, Mr. Spock. We'll have to disguise you.

Spock says nothing, but there is a look of disgust on his face. He half turns away. Kirk rises.

KIRK

There's a line of clothes back there. I'll see if I can, uh, liberate some period costumes for us.

SPOCK

See if you can locate a ring to go through my nose.

Kirk smiles with amusement, and slips out of the basement as Spock settles back uneasily, looking around, and we

DISSOLVE TO:

57 INT. BASEMENT - ANOTHER ANGLE

ON SPOCK & KIRK now dressed in ill-fitting (NOTE: please please please let these clothes not be tailor-made for them, it always

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

looks phoney!) 1930s-style garb.
They are buttoning the last buttons
as we COME TO THEM.

KIRK

We'd better get out of here.

JANITOR'S VOICE O.S.

What's your hurry, fellahs?

They turn sharply and in the dim
light from the stairwell leading
upstairs we see a man in overalls,
a JANITOR, who is watching them.

KIRK

We were just going. It's cold
out there.

The Janitor comes down toward
them. He has a shovel in his
hands, but though he holds it
ready, there is nothing menacing
about the pose. He is an older
man, early fifties, with a
friendly, open face. He ap-
proaches. Spock fades back a bit,
letting shadows obscure him.

JANITOR

Oh, don't fret it none. I get a
lot of bindlestiffs down here.
You can hang around awhile if
you like, get the chill off.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

KIRK

(uneasily)

No, we'd better be going.

They start past him and he turns to watch them.

JANITOR

Hey . . . Bo.

Kirk and Spock stop, turn around.

JANITOR

I need a couple of men to clean up the alley, sweep out the airshaft -- you know, tenants always dumping stuff down there.

(beat)

I'd be willing to let you bunk out down here in exchange.

Give you some bedding.

Kirk and Spock look at each other.

KIRK

Well, that's kind of you, but . . .

JANITOR

Long as you didn't swipe nothing, it'd work out fine. You need a place, I need some help.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

CAMERA MOVES IN PAST Janitor to
CLOSE 2-SHOT of Kirk and Spock as
Kirk looks at Spock and murmurs
SOTTO VOCE:

KIRK

Worse than any barbarians . . .

HARD CUT TO:

58 INT. AIRWELL TENEMENT BLDG. - DAY -
SPOCK & KIRK

They are sweeping up. Kirk lays
down his broom and starts to
wrestle a huge garbage can loaded
with refuse toward a small dolly.
Spock wears a stocking-cap, pulled
down over his pointed ears. He
shovels refuse into another can.
He pauses, and wipes his perspiring
forehead with his sleeve. He has
been made up to faintly resemble
a Chinese.

SPOCK

It seems dubious we will find
the focal-point of this period,
hidden away in a garbage dump.

KIRK

You don't make a half-bad
Chinese laborer. They barely
(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

looked at you in that bar last night.

SPOCK

(not amused)

You have an amazing facility for picking up the local language patterns, Captain, but we don't seem much closer to getting Beckwith.

KIRK

He won't be coming through for another ten days.

SPOCK

And he might head right for that focal point blue as the sky with the sun burning on it.

KIRK

I'm going out to get a job today.

SPOCK

Perhaps I should do the same.

KIRK

Forget it. Too risky.

The Janitor emerges from the entrance to the basement.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

JANITOR

What's too risky . . . ?

KIRK

Uh, nothing . . . his going out
for a job . . .

JANITOR

Listen, these days, everybody's
on the dodge. Least thing'll
get a man pinched. Saw a stiff
just last week got thrown in
the pokey for tryin' to steal
bread for his kids.

(beat)

What'd the Chineese do?

KIRK

Some, uh, friends of his are in
trouble . . .

As he says this we

CUT TO:

59 INSERT SHOT - TRANSPORTER ROOM
ON ENTERPRISE

NOTE: this is intended as a shock-
value shot, only a few frames in
duration, almost subliminal in
nature. It should be there, hold
a scant beat, and be gone. Longer
will be confusing. It is intended
(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

to link the Old Earth action with the imperativeness, the sense of moment, of action in the future. A jab in the eye, not a punch in the mouth.

The beleaguered Enterprise patrol as one of the crewmen wrenches open the door and Yeoman Rand fires a phaser through the instant-open hatch, at the Renegades, and the hatch -- with its tell-tale burned spots -- is thrust closed immediately by hand. The action takes place in only three or four beats and we

CUT BACK TO:

60 SAME AS 58 PRECISELY

as though we haven't lost a beat in the conversation, as though we have seen through the eyes of thought of Kirk or Spock, to the urgency of what they must do.

JANITOR

Leave it t'me. I got a job down the street he can fill . . .

CUT TO:

61 INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN -- ANGLE
ON SPOCK

FRAME OBSCURED by a cloud of steam.
As CAMERA PULLS BACK we see Mr.
Spock, still wearing the stocking-
cap pulled down over his ears, in
an old-style button-down undershirt
with the sleeves rolled up, indus-
triously working over a double-sink
of filthy dishes. As he works,
we HEAR the VOICE of the COOK O.S.

COOK'S VOICE O.S.

Okay, Chineese No-Talk, time to
quit!

Mr. Spock straightens up, with
difficulty. His face is drenched
with sweat, the front of his wool
undershirt stained with a thousand
kinds of refuse. He turns and
CAMERA PANS WITH him as the Cook
comes INTO FRAME.

COOK

Night shift comin' in, you can
knock off.

Mr. Spock starts to leave, slowly,
painfully, the way it feels after
a day of boring, nauseating drudg-

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

ery. He takes his seedy jacket from a peg near the sinks, and starts away as the Cook stops him.

COOK

Hey, Yellow Peril! Payday today, you been onna job a week, doncha even know when you collect?

Spock stops. There is an expression of infinite weariness there, and resignation. The Cook takes some money from his pocket.

COOK

Lessee now . . . fifteen cents an hour for ten hours a day . . . that's, uh, nine dollars fifty for the week . . .

He starts to count it out. He hands it over to Spock and starts to put the rest of the money back in his pocket. Spock's hand snakes out quickly, and he grabs the Cook's wrist in a grip that is obviously painful. The Cook's face screws up in anguish and he bends a little to the angle of Spock's pressure. Then, in a very calm voice, Spock addresses him.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

SPOCK

(matter-of-factly)

Ten dollars and fifty cents for
the week. Seventy hours at
fifteen cents an hour.

COOK

(in pain)

Hey! Leggo, you're gonna bust
it.

SPOCK

(calmly)

Ten dollars and fifty cents . . .

COOK

(real anguish)

Okay, okay, ten, ten, anything
you say . . . yeah, I figgered
it wrong . . .

Spock releases him. The Cook rubs
the wrist furiously.

COOK

(continues)

Jeez, you don't haveta ruin a
stiff jus' cuz he misfigured
somethin', do ya? Here's your
lousy buck . . .

He hands Spock the extra dollar.
Spock moves toward door.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

COOK

(shouts after)

You sure learned to figger
money pretty quick . . . an'
you dint speak so good last
week like that . . . you was
just playin' dumb . . .

But Spock has slammed the door to
the alley exit as we HOLD on the
Cook and he says his last line.

DISSOLVE TO:

62 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - EVENING
(DAY FOR NIGHT)

as Spock moves down the block out
of the alley. CAMERA WITH HIM as
he PASSES THRU FRAME. It is a
typically dressed 1930 scene, with
enough people on the street to give
an impression of a populated eve-
ning. Cars in the street, vendors
with pushcarts, street lamps il-
luminating a stickball game. And
on the corner, as Spock nears it,
we see a crowd gathered. Not a
large crowd, but enough bodies to
indicate a sizeable small gather-
ing. There is a woman on a tiny
dais, there on the corner, and
around her are several Salvation

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

Army types (though not in Army uniforms) with bass drum, cornet, triangle and clarinet. She is speaking to the crowd as Spock draws abreast of them. We HEAR HER VOICE as he comes toward the group. The VOICE of SISTER EDITH KEELER, the voice of truth.

NOTE: an actress with a VOICE that is warm, mature and truthfully effective is absolutely necessary in this role.

EDITH

(to crowd)

Shadow and reality, my friends. That's the secret of getting through these bad times. Know what is, and what only seems to be. Hunger is real, and so is cold. But sadness is not.

Sister Edith Keeler is a young woman, possibly middle twenties, but with a voice that is instantly arresting. (It was said of the old-time radio announcer, Graham MacNamee, that anyone passing a room in which there was a radio playing his voice was compelled to stop. Sister Edith's voice has that wonderful quality.) She is
(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

quite lovely. Not beautiful, but fresh and vibrant, truly alive. With no adolescence in her loveliness, but a kindness, a radiance. She wears a simple dress, but over it she wears a blue cape fastened at her throat by a scatter pin in the shape of a sunburst. The color of the cape is an attractive, though not gaudy, blue. And the sunburst is not overly obvious at first.

EDITH

And it is the sadness that will kill you, that will ruin you. We all go to bed a little hungry every night, but it is possible to find peace in sleep knowing you have lived another day, and hurt no one doing it.

Spock is passing them now, and he turns with a nod of agreement in f.g. as she says these words of profound simplicity.

63 XTREME CLOSE ON SPOCK

as his eyes widen and he sees something.

64 REVERSE ANGLE - SPOCK'S POV -
WHAT HE SEES

CAMERA ZOOMS IN on Edith's cape as
we HEAR in ECHO OVER or FILTER
OVER the words of the Guardian.

VOICE OF GUARDIAN
(echo filter)

Blue it will be. Blue as the
sky of Old Earth . . .

Edith's VOICE UNDER runs concur-
rently with this phantom sound.

EDITH

Love is only the absence of
hate.

CAMERA MOVES UP to her FACE as she
says the preceding line while
VOICE of GUARDIAN OVER continues.

VOICE OF GUARDIAN
(echo filter)

. . . and clear as truth. And
the sun will burn on it . . .

as CAMERA MOVES DOWN OVER CAPE to
the sunburst scatter pin.

as his eyes widen with recognition of the focus point in this time era. And as we HOLD on Spock, he MOVES TOWARD HER in FRAME and we see revealed a placard that was obscured before, while the VOICE of the GUARDIAN ends its phantom reminder.

VOICE OF GUARDIAN

(echo filter)

. . . and there is the key.

And we HOLD on the edge of the crowd with SPOCK prominent and the placard whose message is simply:

Hear SISTER EDITH KEELER Speak.

SLOW FADE TO
SOFT-FOCUS IRIS ON WORD "KEELER"
AND
FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

66 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

MED. SHOT on Sister Edith Keeler, selecting a few meager fruits and vegetables from a pushcart at the curb on the busy street we saw in 62, DIFFERENT ANGLE. CAMERA ZOOMS CUT to INCLUDE Spock and Kirk PROMINENT IN F.G., watching her from the security of an apartment entrance.

KIRK

You're certain?

SPOCK

The cloak was blue as the sky of Old Earth, fastened by a sunburst pin, and they said "there was the key." Her name is Kee-ler.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

An amazing coincidence.

SPOCK

There are no coincidences in time. The Guardian said Beck-with would be drawn to the focal-point. So were we. It was inevitable.

Edith moves away, waving gaily to the pushcart vendor who calls something bright and friendly after her. She moves down the sidewalk as CAMERA MOVES WITH HER even though HOLDING the Enterprise men in f.g. as their heads move to follow her passage. She stops to talk to two women, who seem bent under a burden of sorrow. They straighten and smile as she leaves them. She pauses to talk to a child sitting on the curb, playing with a cat. The child laughs. The CONVERSATION BETWEEN Kirk and Spock goes on OVER this.

KIRK

She seems such a pleasant girl.

SPOCK

She's a catalyst. Things will happen to time because of her.

(CONTINUED)

66. CONTINUED:

KIRK

I wonder what things . . . ?

SPOCK

Or what things won't happen.
That isn't our concern. We have
to stay with her. Beckwith
will find her, and we'll find
Beckwith.

67 EXT. TENEMENT - ANOTHER STREET -
DAY

as Edith ENTERS FRAME and climbs
the worn and sooty stoop and enters
the building. CAMERA PULLS BACK
to show Kirk and Spock standing
beside a closed-up store with a
GONE OUT OF BUSINESS sign on the
soap-smeared front window.

SPOCK

This is where she came last
night. She's in cubicle number
eighteen.

KIRK

Apartment.

SPOCK

(shrugs)

Nomenclature.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

I'd probably better get an apartment here, if I can, if there's a vacancy.

SPOCK

Will I be able to live here?
These people seem to have all sorts of irrational categories for who can live where.
Ghettos? Is that right?

KIRK

Sometimes.

(1/2 beat)

Yes, you can live here, too, but you'd better keep out of sight as much as possible. Find some place where you can keep an eye on the apartment without being seen.

SPOCK

He'll be coming through day after tomorrow.

KIRK

Will it take him as long to reach her as it took us?

SPOCK

(shrugs)

There's no way of knowing.

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

KIRK

It's incredible to think of
Beckwith coming through hundreds
of years, in a straight line to
her, the day after tomorrow.

SPOCK

We traveled the same line . . .

We SEE the special look Spock is
giving his Captain, whose eyes are
still on that building; a look that
seems perplexed and a shade
concerned, as he adds:

SPOCK

(murmurs)

. . . straight to her.

HOLD on SPOCK and KIRK each locked
with secret thoughts as we

DISSOLVE TO:

68 EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT - HIGH ANGLE -
BOOM

DESCENDING TO Kirk and Spock, flat-
out on the tenement roof, staring
across an airshaft to a lit window,
apartment eighteen. From time to
time, Edith can be seen, moving

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

back and forth. She SINGS a popular song of the period which can be HEARD UNDER. Kirk has just crawled in.

KIRK

Okay, go get some sleep. I'll spell you.

SPOCK

Is there anything to eat?

KIRK

I bought nine pounds of cabbage and asparagus. The grocer is beginning to look at me.

SPOCK

It's the only Earth food I can keep down. No hydroponics, no synthetics, my system needs youbash and keva . . .

KIRK

I can imagine how inconspicuous you'd be with purple keva juice running down your Chinese face. Stick with the asparagus.

SPOCK

She's keeping a regular schedule.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

(musing)

Mmmm. She's quite lovely, isn't she, Mr. Spock?

There's that EXPRESSION of concern again. SPOCK in b.g. of FRAME with KIRK in f.g. watching that lit window.

SPOCK

This isn't an easy pursuit to begin with. Complications could make it impossible.

KIRK

(as if hearing him
for the first time)

What?

SPOCK

I have a theory, Captain, that the easiest world for a spaceman to "go native" on -- is his own world.

KIRK

Don't be ridiculous. The stakes are too high here.

SPOCK

(with meaning)

That was precisely my feeling.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

He crawls away in the dark as Kirk looks after him for SEVERAL MEANINGFUL BEATS and then slowly looks back toward the brightness of the window, and Edith silhouetted, with her SONG on the ascendant. HOLD on Kirk, ambivalent.

DISSOLVE TO:

69 INT. TENEMENT - SHOT UP STAIRWELL - DAY

as Edith comes down TOWARD CAMERA brightly. There is joy in her movement, enthusiasm and spring in her step. A man could delight in this female, so very womanly and yet so self-possessed in her maturity. A VOICE O.S. halts her.

KIRK'S VOICE O.S.

Hello.

She is CLOSE TO CAMERA now and as she pauses with her hand on the bannister, she looks back up the way she came and we see Kirk leaning over the bannister on the floor above. HOLD Edith CLOSE IN F.G. to Kirk in b.g. above her.

EDITH

Hello.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

(nervous beat)

I wanted to say hello.

EDITH

(amused)

And you do it very well. Would
you like to try it again?
Hello.

KIRK

(grins widely)

I guess it was a pretty lame
way to get to meet you.

EDITH

On the contrary. It worked mar-
velously well. I'm Edith
Keeler.

Kirk comes around the bannister,
down the stairs to her as CAMERA
FOLLOWS holding her in f.g.

KIRK

I'm Jim Kirk. I just moved in.
I saw you a couple of times.

EDITH

You have a very pleasant accent.
Iowa?

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

Uh, Iowa. Yes, that's very good, most people don't catch it.

EDITH

I have a good ear. From singing in church choir. You get to know pitch.

Now they stand beside each other.

KIRK

(at a loss now)

Well . . .

EDITH

You're quite handsome.

KIRK

(nonplused)

Why, uh, thank you. And you're quite lovely.

EDITH

Now that all that is out of the way, would you like to take a walk with me? I'm going to pick up some stolen merchandise.

Kirk is astonished. His expression tells us so. She notes.

EDITH

(laughs)

Don't be bothered. I'm not a thief. Some young boys I know, well, they made a mistake. I talked to Lt. Gleeson at the precinct, and he said if the goods were returned --

KIRK

(pleasured)

You do quite a lot of that sort of good work, don't you?

EDITH

I try to keep busy.

KIRK

Love to walk along with you.

71 REVERSE ANGLE

ON THEM as they move together toward the door to the tenement leading onto the street. They carry the FOREGOING DIALOGUE with them as they go. As they go out the door, CAMERA PANS SWIFTLY RIGHT to a mirror hanging on the wall, which gives us an ANGLED VIEW UP the stairwell. Spock is there, watching.

CUT TO:

against blackness. Why? Because this conversation is as much inside their natures as out in the world. And played in close two-shot without recourse to sets or distractions, it will illuminate their characters more cleanly.

SPOCK

You're my Captain, I can't tell you.

KIRK

If I'm wrong I want to know.

SPOCK

That's my opinion.

KIRK

Why? It's necessary to be near her . . . we can't possibly know the precise moment Beckwith will find her.

SPOCK

I don't think that's your reason.

KIRK

Since when did you become a telepath?

(CONTINUED)

SPOCK

Empathy is not telepathy. I can feel it coming off you in waves . . . you're getting involved.

KIRK

I just want to find Beckwith.

SPOCK

Captain, fooling me is simple. Just give me the order, I'll change my opinion.

KIRK

(a bit sadly)

But . . . we talk, Mr. Spock. We sit and we talk about . . . everything.

SPOCK

She's a fine person.

KIRK

Listen: I've been on the move since I was old enough to ship on as wiper in one of the old chemical-fuel rockets. It's been time, Mr. Spock, a lot of time.

SPOCK

(understandingly)

And the women you've known have
(CONTINUED)

been casual liaisons, in the port cities and the pleasure planets. It's that way for every spacer, Captain.

KIRK

But this is something else. Total communication. I can say to her in the morning, "I bought a bad pair of shoes they're too tight," and not say anything more about it, till late at night, and then if I say, "I should have known better," she'll say, "We can try to stretch them a little."

(beat)

She knows, Mr. Spock. She understands -- everything!

SPOCK

It can be a foolish thing, Captain. We're only phantoms here, we haven't even been born yet.

KIRK

Why? Why does it have to end here --?

SPOCK

You can't change the past without changing the future . . .

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

They are speaking faster now,
almost atop one another's words.

KIRK

Why can't I bring her back with
me? She isn't important here,
the way she feels, the goodness,
the things she believes for the
world, they aren't ready for
it --

SPOCK

(suddenly)

She's going to die!

There is a shocked moment of
silence.

SPOCK

(continues, softer)

The Guardian told us. We just
didn't interpret it. But I've
been running his words again in
my mind.

KIRK

No.

SPOCK

(recites)

He will seek that which must
die, and give it life.
Stop him.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

I don't believe that. . . they didn't mean that at all. How could her death alter the course of history?

SPOCK

In a million ways. If she lived, she might give birth to a child that would become a dictator . . .

KIRK

That's all extrapolation, none of it real. You're guessing . . .

SPOCK

. . . in a few years this planet will have a war, a great war. What if her philosophy spread, and it kept America out of the war for a mere two years longer . . . and in that time Germany perfected its atomic weapons? The outcome of the war would be reversed.

KIRK

That's insanity.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

SPOCK

History, Captain. There are
spools of records on the Enter-
prise. I've played them all
. . . it's just one possibility.

(beat)

She has to die; history and time
demand it.

KIRK

I don't want to think about it.
Leave me alone.

SPOCK

I'll leave you alone, Captain --

(beat)

but time won't.

Their IMAGES BEGIN TO FADE into the
blackness, like a light being
turned slowly down, dimmer and
dimmer, till all we see is the
tormented face of Jim Kirk, in the
mid-f.g.

FRAME TO BLACK.

73 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

BLACK FRAME becomes the back of
Kirk, as he walks AWAY FROM CAMERA
(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

hand-in-hand with Edith Keeler. Street dressed for a Saturday night, people out on the sidewalk, cars passing, women leaning out of upstairs windows calling their kids to come in, men sitting on stoops talking, the activity, the life of the city, consistent with the image of the times. CAMERA GOES WITH THEM. As they pass a series of shops, we begin to HEAR MUSIC from one of them, a jaunty tune of the times, played on a raggy piano, being sung by one of those girls who sang from sheet-music in the Thirties. She is singing a song called "Please."

As they pass the down-below-street-level music shop, Edith stops, turns and cocks her head to one side. CAMERA IN CLOSE. She smiles, rocks to the music. Kirk grins.

74 2-SHOT - KIRK & EDITH

EDITH

Let's go down for a minute, Jim.
We have time before I speak,
and I love this song.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

CAMERA PULLS BACK SLIGHTLY as Kirk nods agreement. Edith starts down the wrought iron stairs to the shop as Jim walks behind her. CAMERA BACK to give us FULL SHOT now. Edith slips. She starts to fall, Jim Kirk reaches out to catch her as CAMERA ZOOMS IN on his hand. Just before he could catch her arm, his hand closes, spastically.

75 FULL SHOT - ANOTHER ANGLE

as she falls down the stairs. CAMERA ZOOMS IN on Kirk's face. He let her fall. He remembered what he was there for. CAMERA ZOOMS BACK out and for a beat we think Edith may have died. But we see she is merely lying there bruised. CAMERA ZOOMS IN AGAIN on her face, as she looks at Jim with his clenched hand still extended. She seems to know he let her fall, and a confused, hurt expression crosses her face. CAMERA OUT AGAIN and Kirk rushes down to her, helps her up.

KIRK

(means it)

Are you all right?

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

EDITH

(slowly, mixed up)

Yes . . . I'm all right . . .

Jim . . .

CAMERA HOLDS on their faces as Kirk turns away slightly and we see the torment in his expression . . . and the wonder on Edith's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

76 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - SAME
SCENE AS 46 - DAY

the street with the CCC Camp shop and the bread line shop, now minus the lamp post Kirk vaporized with the phaser. But there is nothing happening in front of the two shops. The cars and trucks still roll, but very few people on the sidewalks. Kirk and Spock in XTREME F.G. MOVE INTO FRAME from opposite sides, looking at each other, then turn to stare at the street opposite. They form the left and right sides of the FRAME with the sliver of scene between them.

SPOCK

My computations could be wrong.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

Let's hope not.

SPOCK

Where's Miss Keeler?

KIRK

At the Free Milk Kitchen.
She'll be out of the way for at
least two hours.

SPOCK

(suddenly)

There!

They BACK OUT OF FRAME so we have a
FULL SHOT of the street opposite,
and CAMERA MOVES IN so we see the
brick wall and a sudden shimmering
(NOT THE TRANSPORTER MATERIALIZA-
TION EFFECT -- ANOTHER) as Beckwith
abruptly becomes substantial,
standing there looking around,
trying to get oriented, still wear-
ing his Enterprise garb. Then Kirk
and Spock dash INTO FRAME from
XTREME CLOSEUP so the FRAME IS
BLACK for a beat as they race away
from us.

77 REVERSE ANGLE - PAST BECKWITH -
HIS POV

as he looks across the street and sees Spock and Kirk coming for him. He recognizes them instantly and turns first one way, then another, to run -- but he doesn't know which way. Spock gets across the street, but as Kirk moves to follow, just a beat behind him, a huge beer truck rumbles down the street, and Kirk is cut off. Spock reaches Beckwith, who falls back against the brick wall, and raises a booted foot. He catches Spock in the stomach with the foot, and hurls him back. Then Beckwith rushes OUT OF FRAME RIGHT as the truck passes and Kirk reaches Spock. He helps him up. CAMERA ANGLE NARROWER now.

KIRK

Which way?

SPOCK

Toward the Milk Kitchen . . .

They tense, and race off down the street as we HOLD for

DISSOLVE TO:

on the front door, as it opens and Kirk brings Edith Keeler in behind him. He is rushing her, holding her by the arm.

EDITH

Jim . . . what is this?

KIRK

You shouldn't be out there alone.

She pulls away, stands her ground. She's wearing the cape with the sunburst, but a different dress of the period.

EDITH

What in the world are you talking about? You come dashing into the Milk Kitchen and practically abscond with me! Now, Jim, I've got responsi --

Kirk moves to her, takes her lovely face in his hands, and if we are ever to see the inner man James Kirk, this is the moment. Gathered here in his hands is everything that means anything to him. Kirk is deeply in love.

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

Edith, do you trust me?

EDITH

Jim . . . I . . .

KIRK

No, please, do you trust me?

EDITH

(looks down demurely)

I love you, Jim.

A stricture of pain/pleasure crosses his face. She does not see it. He tilts her face up and stares at her for a long moment, then kisses her. She clings to him. After a long beat they move apart a bit and CAMERA COMES CLOSER.

KIRK

Edith . . .

EDITH

Do you love me, Jim? It's the first time for me, so I don't know.

KIRK

Very much. More than anyone I've ever known. You've become very important to me.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

EDITH

And you're afraid, Jim, what is it?

KIRK

It's nothing, I just want you to be --

He can't finish. She stares at him, with wonder.

79 ANOTHER ANGLE - FEATURING
STAIRWELL

as Mr. Spock appears. He is carrying a burlap parcel, quite long. It contains the phaser rifle, but we don't know it. He stops on the stairs. Kirk looks at him, and draws away from Edith. She looks, sees only a Chinese laborer. Spock watches them with silent understanding, then moves down the stairs and past them. He goes out.

KIRK

You'd better go upstairs. I have to go out for a while.

EDITH

(deeply troubled)

Jim, if it's something you've done . . . some trouble . . .

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

KIRK

Nothing, Edith. I'll be back.
Just stay in your room and keep
the door locked.

EDITH

Please tell me, Jim!

He moves to the door, opens it,
starts to go.

EDITH

(softly)

I love you, James Kirk.

CAMERA ON KIRK as he pauses, without turning, hearing her words. Then his jaw muscles tighten, and he goes out the door. HOLD ON HER staring after him.

80 EXT. STREET - ANGLE ON ALLEY - DAY

as Kirk passes, sees Spock waiting, the burlap-wrapped package still in his arms. He moves into the alley as CAMERA GOES WITH him. Spock is looking at him with a silent condemnation.

KIRK

Mr. Spock --

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

He stops. A silent bit of character flow. He knows how Spock feels about all this. But he can't defend himself.

SPOCK

Are they still alive in the
Transporter Chamber, Captain?

KIRK

You don't understand. You're
not --

SPOCK

I'm not what, Captain? A human,
subject to the pains and
pleasures of love? No, I'm not.
I'm merely concerned with saving
the lives of the ones who
trusted us.

KIRK

I can't let her die! I can't.

SPOCK

Then Beckwith wins. Time is
changed.

Spock starts past him. Kirk grabs
his arm. The package slips out of
Spock's grasp, falls, and the
phaser is revealed.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

KIRK

You can't use that on Beckwith.
We have to bring him back ali --

He stops, his eyes widen.

KIRK

almost a whisper)

It wasn't for Beckwith, was it,
Mr. Spock?

Spock stares at him. They stand there across a sudden abyss of conflicting interests. Spock says nothing. He gathers up the phaser, rewraps it and leaves the alley. CAMERA HOLDS on Kirk's expression of growing helplessness. He turns away abruptly as we

SMASH-CUT TO:

81 BACK STREET - DEAD NIGHT -
ESTABLISHING

as Mr. Spock slips through shadows. There is a rustle of cloth behind him. He carries the phaser now. He turns suddenly, and Beckwith is there. The scuffle is only a moment in duration, with the two of them wrestling among wooden crates and cans of refuse. Spock

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

falls, Beckwith grabs the phaser and dashes off with it. Spock follows as CAMERA IN ARRIFLEX GOES WITH. Beckwith snaps off a shot, and Spock dives sideways to escape the lethal blast.

82 ON SPOCK

as he looks up from sidewalk and HEARS the SOUND of FOOTSTEPS RUNNING AWAY in the darkness. HOLD on his fixed expression which says time is growing deathly, inescapably short.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

83 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - EVENING
- ESTABLISHING

CLOSE ON a hand-lettered placard
that reads:

I FOUGHT AT VERDUN

as CAMERA PULLS BACK we see the sign is hung around the neck of a legless cripple, hunkered down on his stumps on a wooden push-board that rolls on roller skate wheels. He has a tray of apples and pencils beside him. His cap is pulled down far over his eyes, and the beard stubble looks as though it nests a troupe of nits. A VOICE O.S. speaks to him just as a PAIR OF LEGS MOVES INTO FRAME. All we see are the legs.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

KIRK'S VOICE O.S.

Are you Trooper?

TROOPER looks up with rheumy eyes. In that face is the true meaning of the worst social era America ever faced. He is a man destroyed. The light has gone out in the eyes, the mouth speaks a silent sadness. Disillusioned. He was the drummer boy who went to war, and came back to find no one needed him. He nods up at the unseen person.

TROOPER

Good apples, fellah. Pencils?
I fought at Verdun.

KIRK'S VOICE O.S.

Someone told me to come see you.

TROOPER

(shakes his head as
if to clear it)

I just sell apples and pencils.

KIRK'S VOICE O.S.

Perhaps it's time for you to
diversify your wares.

TROOPER

Who are you?

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

Kirk hunkers down next to him on the filthy sidewalk. Trooper looks nervous about it.

KIRK

I'm just a Bo who needs some information.

TROOPER

I don't know much 'cept there's nine guys on this block sellin' apples. Try them.

KIRK

There's two bucks in it for a few words.

TROOPER

I din't do nothin'. I been right here sellin' --

KIRK

I'm not after you, mister, I want you to find out something for me . . . I was told you know everything that goes on in this neighborhood.

TROOPER

(warily)

How do I know you ain't crooked as a hairpin?

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

Take a two-dollar chance.

Trooper ponders a moment, licks his lips, nervously nods.

KIRK

A man wearing peculiar clothes.

TROOPER

What kind of clothes?

Kirk looks around (without being melodramatic) and pulls a parcel toward them. He opens it enough to show Trooper the Enterprise comet ensignia, the velour material, the bright color, so stark beside Trooper's own drab garb.

KIRK

He'd be carrying a . . . weapon.

TROOPER

What'dya want him for?

KIRK

For about two bucks.

TROOPER

Let's see it.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

Kirk fishes out two crumpled dollar bills. Trooper touches them with an outstretched hand. But doesn't take them.

TROOPER

I s'pose I gotta find out before you give it to me.

Kirk gives him the two crumpled balls of money. Trooper is astonished. It is the first real life we've seen in his face.

KIRK

I think I can trust a man who fought at Verdun.

There is disbelief and a kind of grandeur in Trooper's face as he is confronted with dignity, trust and honesty. He nods firmly as Kirk rises, the legs MOVE OUT OF FRAME and Trooper watches him go. Then, determined, he gathers his wares and using two padded blocks of wood with hand-grips, he propels himself down the sidewalk on the roller skate platform as we

DISSOLVE TO:

84 INT. EDITH'S APARTMENT - KIRK &
EDITH - NIGHT

a plain little room. Feminine touches, but nothing very elegant. She lives in the same simplicity of decency which she preaches. They are eating cake and having coffee, at a little square table covered with oilcloth. There is MUSIC OF THE PERIOD UNDER.

EDITH

Too rich?

KIRK

(preoccupied)

Pardon?

EDITH

The cake. Did I make it too rich?

KIRK

No, it's delicious. I've never tasted anything like it before.

EDITH

(surprised)

You've never tasted angel food cake before?

(beat)

Jim . . . ?

(CONTINUED)

KIRK

Yes?

EDITH

I'd like to ask you a great many questions. But I'm afraid you might give me answers.

Kirk lays down his fork, gets up and walks to the window. He stares out at the night. She follows him in the shadowy room, stands behind him, barely touching.

EDITH

A skyful of stars.

KIRK

(softly)

You'll never know how many.

EDITH

Are you going away, Jim?

KIRK

Perhaps. I don't want to.

EDITH

It's that Chinese fellow, isn't it?

KIRK

In a way. I know him. And he knows me.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

Edith turns him to her. She puts her arms around him, lays her head against his chest.

EDITH

All my life I've belonged to other people. I know things will be cleaner, happier, I try to tell them, so they'll wait, so they'll hope. But now, I -- I don't belong to anyone. And I'm losing my own hope . . .
Jim . . .

He holds her away for a moment, speaks earnestly.

KIRK

You're right. There are a million tomorrows. The one you believe in is the best one. I know.

EDITH

How do you know, Jim?

KIRK

(helplessly)

Because I love you, and I know.

A KNOCK on the DOOR. They stand a moment. Another KNOCK. Edith

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

looks at Jim, he nods for her to open it. She goes to the door. It is Spock. She steps aside. He doesn't come in, just stares at Kirk. Kirk nods and walks past Edith. He turns for a beat to look at her, then follows Mr. Spock out. The door closes and we HOLD on EDITH.

85 INT. TENEMENT - HALLWAY - SPOCK
& KIRK

CLOSE 2-SHOT in the dim hallway, one bulb glowing far down the passage.

SPOCK

The little man without legs was here.

KIRK

Beckwith?

SPOCK

He thinks so. Good chance.

KIRK

Where is he?

SPOCK

I have the address.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

Kirk nods, and they go. Down the corridor as we

DISSOLVE TO:

86 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - ANGLE ON ALLEY MOUTH

REDRESS OF ALLEY SCENE 80. A group of SHADOWY MEN wait in the corners and behind crates. Trooper is there, as Kirk and Spock come upon the group. As they arrive, the burly men in the shadows turn to look and we catch their faces. The dregs. The gutter men. The outcasts. The strongarm types one sees on any skid row. We can almost smell the stench of sour rye and sweat. (Redressed extras from previous crowd scenes can be used here as the men will be seen in shadow only.)

TROOPER

He's back in there somewhere.

KIRK

Has he got the pha -- the weapon?

TROOPER

If he has, he isn't using it.

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:

SPOCK

(softly, to Kirk)

We can't let him kill anyone --
the time flow --

Kirk nods understanding. He
motions the street thugs back.

KIRK

Thanks. Now he's ours.

87 ANOTHER ANGLE - FULL SHOT

as the gutter men fade away into
the night. Kirk and Spock start
down the alley, holding close to
the wall, half in crouch, moving
stealthily.

88 WITH KIRK - ARRIFLEX

CLOSE BEHIND HIM as the alley tilts
and weaves in the FRAME. Across
the alley, past Kirk, we can see
Spock moving like a mountain cat,
smooth as oil, silent. Suddenly,
a garbage can comes clanging with
NIGHT-SHATTERING IMPACT down on
Spock, who is sideswiped by the
can, and falls beneath it. ARRIFLEX
CAREEN-PANS UP-ANGLE to the low
rooftop, and Beckwith framed
against the night sky, the phaser
(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

leveled at Kirk. Spock is struggling with the garbage can as Kirk in f.g. looks up, sees Beckwith and realizes he is pinned against the wall and cannot escape.

89 ANGLE FROM BECKWITH

as he fires. A blur of movement from the alley mouth and Trooper is there, hurtling toward Kirk on his little cart. He hits Kirk dead-center and the Enterprise Captain is flung sidewise as the phaser blast lances out. Trooper is hit, and with a SHARP, SHORT SCREAM THAT CUTS OFF IN MID-NOTE he is gone.

90 WITH SPOCK - ARRIFLEX

as he springs to his feet, grabs the garbage can, and with incredible strength hurls it toward Beckwith. The can strikes Beckwith and he falls, dropping the phaser into the alley where it shatters with a cascade of sparks, burning itself out. Beckwith clambers to his feet and vanishes over the rooftops. Spock stands a beat, watching, then goes to Kirk, who is rising. They look down at the

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

power-blasted spot where Trooper was vaporized. The bricks are cleaved in half, the cement is sun-dered, and the cripple is gone. All that remains is one of the hand-pedaling devices with its raggedy grip.

SPOCK

Any death in this era that alters the sum of intelligence . . . alters time permanently.

KIRK

If he mattered in the time-flow.

SPOCK

Why did he do that for you?

KIRK

Because I gave him two dollars.

(beat)

Mr. Spock, you know history:
where is Verdun?

Spock does not answer. They stare down at the hand-grip left by Trooper and CAMERA RISES UP AWAY FROM THEM in the alley as we

DISSOLVE TO:

91 EXT. NEW YORK STREET - SAME AS
62 - DAY

Edith Keeler in her blue-as-the-sky cape with its sunburst, on her little dais, talking to a tiny crowd of half a dozen men and women.

EDITH

There are great times on their way. Days of gold and nights cool and sweet-smelling. This isn't the only happiness, this world turning under us. Look up tonight, see them all out there . . . see them burning, smiling . . .

CAMERA PANS RIGHT to a doorway where Kirk and Spock are standing beside one another, watching Edith from concealment. CAMERA CLOSE ON THEM, the street scene in b.g. with EDITH'S VOICE UNDER.

SPOCK

She speaks as though you've talked to her.

KIRK

(a little dead)

She doesn't know who we are.

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

SPOCK

Her ideas are years ahead of
their time.

KIRK

Yes.

SPOCK

My race has a word for her kind
of person: liira: open.

KIRK

Yes. That, too.

SPOCK

Captain . . .

Edith finishes, the crowd leaves
at once, and Kirk does not even
wait for Spock to complete his
sentence. He steps out where she
can see him.

92 SEQUENCE - SELECT BEST ANGLES

thru

96 (NOTE: this sequence is the heart
of the climax. It is imperative
that the order of action, and the
angles on closeups, be tight and
specific. No camerawork has been
indicated here purposely, so the
pace and layout of shots can be
best developed by on-set choices.)

(CONTINUED)

92 thru 96 CONTINUED:

Spock moves away so Edith will not see him.

Edith comes to the curb with a smile, waving across to Kirk.

Kirk sees Beckwith emerging from a building. Beckwith does not see Kirk. The building is between Kirk and Spock where he has now moved.

A huge beer truck lumbers into the street as Edith steps off the curb. She doesn't see it.

Kirk and Beckwith and Spock see the truck as it bears down on Edith.

97 ANOTHER SEQUENCE - SLOW-MOTION -
thru NO SOUND

103 as though time -- which is our primary subject here -- were being silently stretched to the point of unbearability.

Beckwith starts toward the girl.

Kirk's face twists in anguish as he starts toward Beckwith to stop him from saving Edith's life. He stops, his hand closes on empty air
(CONTINUED)

97 thru 103 CONTINUED:

as it did when she fell down the stairs. He cannot stop Beckwith! He will sacrifice everything for her.

Spock sees what is happening. He moves toward Beckwith.

The truck slips slowly, silently toward Edith.

Spock reaches Beckwith and grabs him in a body-lock that immobilizes him.

Kirk's mouth opens to scream.

Edith laughs a word at Kirk.

104 EXT. CLOSEUP KIRK.

105 EXT. CLOSEUP SPOCK.

106 EXT. CLOSEUP EDITH.

107 EXT. CLOSEUP THE TRUCK.

} ALL IN
SLOW-
MOTION

CUT TO:

108 CLOSE ON KIRK - NORMAL SPEED

and HOLD HOLD HOLD on his face as we HEAR the SOUND of the TRUCK SCREECHING TO A HALT. As Kirk's face crumbles, we know what has happened.

109 ANOTHER CLOSE ON KIRK - IN LIMBO

SPECIAL EFFECT as his face RECEDES FROM CAMERA back and back and back as though it were falling into a bottomless pit, until it is barely a speck of tortured light against a blackness that becomes in

RIPPLE-DISSOLVE:

110 ANGLE IN SPACE - THE ENTERPRISE

as the speck of light that is Kirk's face becomes a star, one of many in an infinity of stars with the Enterprise against it. All of this INTERCUT in RIPPLE LAP-DISSOLVE so we get the impression of something happening to the warp and woof of space and time. The face of Kirk, the Enterprise, the stars, all OVERLAP as we

RIPPLE-DISSOLVE TO:

111 EXT. PLANET OF THE GUARDIANS -
THE PLATEAU

as Kirk in EXTREME CLOSEUP emerges from the Time Vortex CAMERA PULLS BACK to FULL FRAME showing us his emergence from the pillar of light. Behind him comes Mr. Spock with Beckwith in a judo-like hold. Both Kirk and Spock are in 1930s garb, Beckwith still in his Enterprise uniform. The Guardians are there, waiting. The Time Vortex continues to make its distinctive SOUND, indicating it has not turned off.

1st GUARDIAN
Time has resumed its shape.

SPOCK
What of the death of the
cripple?

1st GUARDIAN
He was negligible.

SPOCK
But he found Beckwith for us.
He must have counted.

1st GUARDIAN
Not in the eternal flow, the
greater river.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

Kirk, through all this, stands there as if stunned by the hammer. His face is dead. He cannot co-ordinate.

SPOCK

Everything is the same as before?

1st GUARDIAN

Everything.

112 CLOSER ON SPOCK & BECKWITH

with the Time Vortex behind them, fairly close. Beckwith abruptly twists out of the grip Spock has on him, and without a moment's hesitation, flings himself back into the Time Vortex. Mr. Spock gives a strange HOWL of frustration -- so uncharacteristic of him -- and makes a move to follow, but at that instant the VORTEX GOES OFF. Spock whirls on the Guardians.

SPOCK

He went back! It was all for nothing!

1st GUARDIAN

No.

(CONTINUED)

SPOCK

But he's in there, Old Earth.
1930!

1st GUARDIAN

The vortex cannot be set for
the same exact time twice. He
has created a fracture and
plunged into it.

SPOCK

Then where is he? Escaped?

1st GUARDIAN

Not this time. He wanted
Forever. The vortex has given
him Forever. Like the Mobius
strip that has no end, that
curves back on itself eternally,
he is locked in time.

SPOCK

Forever? He cannot escape?

1st GUARDIAN

His Forever will be in the
heart of an exploding sun, a
nova. He has named his own
doom . . .

HARD CUT TO:

113 SPECIAL EFFECT - ON BECKWITH

as he materializes in the exploding, fiery heart of a supernova. We see him appear, scream in incredible anguish and then vanish . . . then reappear alive, scream as he dies again . . . and then vanish once more . . . reappear . . . scream . . . die . . . over and over and over as we

RAPID DISSOLVE TO:

114 INT. KIRK'S CABIN - ESTABLISHING

as Kirk stares out at the stars through a port. (If there is no port in the cabin, dammit, build one! This is absolutely essential to this scene, and the tone of the climax!) He is now dressed in Enterprise uniform.

SPOCK'S VOICE O.S.

Co-ordinates from the bridge,
Captain.

Kirk does not turn around. Spock moves INTO FRAME behind him.

SPOCK

Jim . . .

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

Kirk holds a beat, then slowly turns. The deadness in his eyes is there, then a small change in expression tells us he is startled.

KIRK

Mr. Spock . . . that's the first time you've ever called me anything but Captain.

SPOCK

(gently)

On my world the nights are very long. The sound of the silver birds against the sky are very sweet. My people know there is always time enough for everything. You'll come with me for a rest. You'll feel comfortable there.

KIRK

(hopelessly)

All the time in the world . . .

SPOCK

And filled with tomorrows.

KIRK

(a bitter smile)

He was negligible. He fought at Verdun, and he was negligible. And she . . .

(CONTINUED)

SPOCK

No, she wasn't negligible.

KIRK

(simply; groping for
understanding)

But . . . I loved her . . .

SPOCK

No woman was ever loved as much,
Jim. Because no woman was ever
offered the universe for love.

Kirk looks at him. There is understanding in his face. A sadness he will never ever lose, because his loss is so great. But through friendship, caring, Spock has shown him understanding. His smile is in no way happy, but it shows resignation. He nods at Spock, and Spock goes. We HOLD several BEATS on Kirk staring out at the star-flecked distance as the SOUND of FULL-AHEAD ALARMS RING through the Enterprise and the CAMERA MOVES SMOOTHLY IN PAST KIRK to FULL FRAME on the stars.

DISSOLVE TO:

115 EXT. SPACE - U.S.S. ENTERPRISE
(STOCK)

as the ship speeds off into the
darkness and we HOLD on the stars
once more. The stars, like Kirk's
love -- eternal.

FADE OUT:

THE END

Sting!

An Original Screenplay

by TOM REAMY

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The weird monster formula goes way back in the history of science fiction films. One of the first examples, the original production of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, dates from the 1920s. The 1930s and 1940s were relatively devoid of such films, but in the 1950s they began to flourish.

One of the first monster films of the '50s was *Them*—and a fine, exciting one it was. Directed by Gordon Douglas (who never made another monster film), it became a box-office smash and spawned a host of imitators, such as *Tarantula* and *The Deadly Mantis*. Most of these were not as good as *Them*, but they were far from mediocre. Ultimately, Japanese film makers began cranking out monster movies by the score and the cycle went rapidly downhill. *Godzilla* made a great deal of money but was poorly dubbed, amateurishly acted and generally artistically inept. But the worst travesty occurred when the Japanese resurrected King Kong and put him through several grade-Z quickies. Of all the monster films, *Kong* stands as *the* classic. No film has ever surpassed it as a technically compelling tour-de-force, a claim that still holds today, some forty years after it was made!

Tom Reamy's "Sting!" is more like *Them* than it is like *Kong*. It could prove to be another classic in time.

- 1 FADE IN. *Eliasville, Texas. Population around 100. It was considerably larger at one time because the single street contains numerous large brick store buildings now empty. The town nestles at the foot of a steep hill on the bank of a river. The highway bridges the river, goes a hundred yards or so through the business district and up the hill. An abandoned schoolhouse crests the hill. On one side of the bridge is a small dam. On the other are the concrete pylons of a former bridge. The abandoned store buildings on this side are some distance from the road as the street has been moved with the bridge. The area is thickly wooded. Eliasville is situated on a farm-to-market road about midway between two minor state highways. It sees virtually no through traffic. It's an old farming town that reached its peak in the Twenties. It has been in a slow decline ever since and is now almost dead. There are only three businesses still open. Crossing the bridge into town, a cafe is the first building on the right. Farther down is a grocery/general store. Across the street in the large vacant area caused by the moving of the highway is a small gas station.*

The camera offers several shots of the town, moving in closer with each, finally closing in on the service station.

CUT TO:

- 2** *At the station, a young man works on a battered pick-up truck. His name is AARON HIBBITS. He is twenty-three, could pass for younger, slim, sandy-haired, with a pleasant lightly freckled face.*

CUT TO:

- 3** *Another angle. Camera pans from AARON to two elderly men sitting in the sun, playing dominos on the porch of an empty frame building next to the station.*

CUT TO:

- 4** *Another angle. The camera watches the elderly men for a moment, then moves in Close on the dominos.*

CUT TO:

- 5** *TITLES appear over still shots of the dominos.*

CUT TO:

- 6** *AARON emerges from beneath the hood of the pick-up, washes the grease from his hands, and leaves the station. He is wearing battered Levi's and a tee shirt.*

CUT TO:

- 7 *Another angle. As he leaves, the two elderly men look up. AARON smiles and nods at them. They nod back pleasantly and resume their game. AARON crosses the street and enters the cafe.*

CUT TO:

- 8 *Cafe interior. AARON enters. There are two or three customers. AARON sits at the counter. The proprietress is a plump, middle-aged lady with white hair and a weary country face. Her name is CALLIE OVERCASH. She puts a glass of water before AARON.*

CALLIE: Mornin', Aaron. Ready for lunch?

He glances at the wall clock. It reads 10:55.

AARON: Still early. Just coffee, please, Callie.

CALLIE gets the coffee.

CALLIE: Made my special stew today. If it looks like I'm gonna run out, I'll save you some.

AARON: I'd appreciate it.

CALLIE: How's your dad feelin'?

AARON (*smiles*): A lot better. He got a good night's sleep.

CALLIE: Poor man. This on top of everything.

CALLIE moves back toward the kitchen. Two middle-aged men sit at a nearby table drinking coffee.

1ST MAN: Hey, Aaron. You gonna get Luther's truck to runnin'?

AARON turns to face them. He grins.

AARON: Probably. At least he'll be able to drive it to the junk yard.

The men laugh.

2ND MAN: He's spent enough money on that truck to buy two new ones.

1ST MAN: He's gotta face up to it. Even Aaron can't cure old age.

AARON: That's true.

2ND MAN: Truck ain't so old. Hadn't had it more'n ten years.

1ST MAN: That's old if you drive like Luther.

CUT TO:

- 9 *Another angle including AARON, the two men, with the gas station visible through the plate-glass windows. A newish, medium-price convertible pulls into the station from the direction of the bridge. The two old men playing dominos stop their game and watch the people in the car.*

2ND MAN: Hey Aaron, you got a customer.

AARON turns, looks out the window, hurriedly drains his coffee cup, leaves a dime on the counter and rushes out.

CUT TO:

- 10 *The two old men with the convertible in the background and AARON coming across the street.*

CUT TO:

- 11** *AARON goes around the car and approaches the driver. The driver is NICK BENEDICT, late twenties, nice-looking, easygoing. Beside him is his wife, FRAN. She is a few years younger, cute, vivacious, with a boyish hair style. In the back seat is LANEY (short for Frank Delaney), mid-twenties, rather arrogantly handsome, blond, and BELINDA HANCKS, about twenty, pretty, long hair tied in a scarf, and quiet. All are dressed modishly.*

AARON: Yes, sir?

NICK: Fill it with premium, please.

AARON starts filling the car.

CUT TO:

- 12** *The two elderly men watching the car. Their names are IRA and LESTER TIDWELL.*

IRA: Reckon that's some of them hippies we hear about on the TV?

LESTER: Naw, Ira, hippies got long hair. They got hair not much longer'n Aaron's.

IRA: Aaron ain't a hippie.

LESTER: Never said he was. Hippies all come from big cities.

IRA: Bet they're from the city. Probably Fort Worth.

LESTER: Maybe even Dallas.

CUT TO:

- 13** *AARON filling the gas tank. He looks over the people in the car. NICK and FRAN are talking but the words are indistinguishable. LANEY is*

looking around the town. BELINDA is leaning over listening to NICK and FRAN. AARON watches the back of her head. She turns slowly and looks at him. Flustered, he looks at the gas pump. BELINDA smiles slightly. AARON embarrassedly returns the smile. NICK turns around to look at AARON.

NICK: Pardon me, which is the best road to Dallas?

CUT TO:

14 *The TIDWELL brothers. LESTER nods sagely to IRA.*

CUT TO:

15 *AARON removes the gas nozzle, replaces the cap and the nozzle, and walks to NICK.*

AARON: Just keep on the way you're goin' 'til you get to the highway, about ten miles, turn right until you get to one-eighty, make a left. Goes straight through.

FRAN: You and your shortcuts.

LANEY: We'd already be on one-eighty if we hadn't turned through here.

NICK: Peace, peace. Isn't there another way? We'd have to double back that way.

AARON: Well, you can go on to the highway and turn left and go through Graham, but it's farther and you miss the interstate.

NICK: I'll take your word for it. How much?

AARON: Five-twenty. I'll get the hood.

He opens the hood and checks as NICK gets out the money.

NICK: Is there any place around here to eat?

AARON looks up from under the hood with the oil stick in his hand. He points to the cafe across the street.

AARON: Over there.

LANEY: Why don't we wait 'til we get to a larger town?

NICK: The food is usually great in these small towns. Real home cookin'.

LANEY: And usually it's just grease and gravy.

AARON closes the hood and returns to NICK, who hands him the money.

AARON: It's not Cattlemen's or Ports O' Call, but the food's good.

NICK: Thanks. Will the car be all right over here?

NICK indicates a space just past the domino players.

AARON: Sure. I recommend the stew.

CUT TO:

- 16** *Another angle. NICK starts the car and backs it up past the domino players who watch them. The four get out of the car. BELINDA removes the scarf and gives her hair a quick combing. AARON leans across the gas pump watching her. NICK goes around the car and opens the door for FRAN. As they pass the TIDWELLS, FRAN smiles and waves at them. Rather startled, they smile back. NICK takes FRAN's hand and they cross the road. BELINDA and LANEY follow.*

LANEY *takes* BELINDA's arm. *They go into the cafe.*

CUT TO:

17 *The* TIDWELLS.

IRA: Mighty good-lookin' girl.

LESTER: Which one?

IRA: The one that waved at me.

LESTER: She waved at both of us. The one in the back seat was prettier, anyway.

IRA: I don't know. I kinda liked the other one.

CUT TO:

18 AARON *puts the money in the cash register and looks across the street.*

CUT TO:

19 *Interior of cafe. The same two men still sit at the table. They watch with interest as the four strangers enter. FRANK SPAIN sits alone at a table next to the window. The four of them sit at a table. CALLIE brings water and menus. BELINDA barely glances at hers.*

BELINDA: I'll have the stew, please, and coffee.

CALLIE (*laughs*): You been talkin' to Aaron.

BELINDA: Aaron?

CALLIE: Over at the station. That boy sure does like my stew.

FRAN: He recommended it. I'll have the same, with ice tea.

NICK: Same for me.

LANEY *studies the menu for a moment.*

LANEY: I'll have smothered steak, green beans, corn on the cob, salad, and coffee.

CALLIE *raises an eyebrow at him.*

CUT TO:

20 AARON *is back under the hood of the pick-up truck. He looks up and across at the cafe.*

CUT TO:

21 The TIDWELLS *playing dominos.*

CUT TO:

22 *Cafe interior.*

LANEY: Well, it's cheap at any rate.

FRAN: Oh, Laney. Why are you such a grump?

NICK: So we came a little out of the way. We're in no hurry and the country's very nice.

CALLIE *appears with the food and puts it on the table.*

FRAN: That was quick.

CALLIE: Had it all ready.

BELINDA: Looks good.

CALLIE: Thanks. Try it.

BELINDA *tastes the stew.*

BELINDA: Terrific.

NICK *and FRAN taste it.*

NICK: Great!

FRAN *nods in agreement*. CALLIE *smiles proudly and leaves the table*.

FRAN: How's the smothered steak?

NICK: Oh, okay.

FRAN: Laney.

LANEY: All right. It's very good.

BELINDA: Not as good as the stew, I'll bet. Here, taste.

He tastes.

BELINDA: Well?

LANEY: May we drop the whole subject?

The others laugh.

CUT TO:

23 AARON *emerges from underneath the hood of the pick-up and looks at a clock. It reads 11:20. He grins to himself and washes up. He puts a shirt on over the tee shirt, closes the door of the station and hangs an "Out to Lunch" sign on it.*

CUT TO:

24 *The TIDWELLS. They look up as AARON starts across the street.*

IRA: Aaron's knockin' off kinda early today.

LESTER (*chuckles*): Saw him lookin' at the one in the back seat.

IRA (*grins*): Guess he misses them Dallas girls.

CUT TO:

25 *Interior of cafe. The four at the table are in the foreground. Visible through the plate-glass windows are the two old men playing dominos, NICK's car, and the service station. AARON walks toward the cafe.*

CUT TO:

26 *CLOSE ON BELINDA. She looks up and sees AARON crossing over.*

CUT TO:

27 *Back to 25. AARON walks across the road. Suddenly, there is a terrific explosion. The abandoned building in front of which the two old men are playing dominos explodes. NICK's car is tipped over by the blast, AARON is knocked down, the two old men disappear in the explosion, and the plate-glass windows of the cafe shatter and fly inward. There is general pandemonium in the cafe. FRANK SPAIN staggers away from his table, bleeding from multiple cuts. A couple of elderly women run out of the kitchen. CALLIE runs to FRANK. NICK and the group are sitting some distance from the window and have no serious injuries. NICK has a couple of small cuts on his face. FRAN has a cut on her shoulder, LANEY one on the back of his head. BELINDA is untouched. A dozen or so people come running toward the explosion and are joined by more periodically. BELINDA looks around and sees AARON lying in the street near the front of the cafe. She runs toward the door.*

CUT TO:

28 *The street. AARON lies in the foreground. BELINDA rushes out the door of the cafe to him. He is lying on his face, unconscious. She turns him over. There is blood on his face from an abrasion caused by the fall. Several townspeople rush up.*

BELINDA: Help me get him inside.

They pick him up and carry him into the cafe.

CUT TO:

29 *Cafe interior. They bring AARON in and put him on the floor. CALLIE, NICK, and LANEY are helping FRANK SPAIN. FRAN joins BELINDA as they lie AARON on the floor.*

CALLIE: Somebody get Doc Turner.

MAN: He's comin'.

There is general ad-libbed dialogue of, "What happened?" "I don't know, something blew up." "Who was hurt?" etc. BELINDA gets a napkin, wets it, and begins washing AARON's face. DOCTOR TURNER rushes in carrying a medical bag. He is middle-aged and is wearing paint-splattered painter's overalls. He goes to FRANK, kneels down and examines him. AARON opens his eyes.

CALLIE: Over here, Doc. Frank's cut up pretty bad.

AARON (groggy): Good Lord. What happened?

BELINDA: There was an explosion. Are you all right?

AARON: Explosion? The station?

FRAN: No. The building next to it.

BELINDA: Are you hurt?

AARON sits up, wincing.

AARON: I don't think so. Just had the wind knocked out of me.

CUT TO:

30 *The group around FRANK SPAIN.*

DOC: Help me get him to the office. I need more equipment. (*To Nick and Laney.*) I'll patch you up too. Was anybody else hurt?

NICK: My wife has a cut on her shoulder.

DOC: Bring her along. Anybody else?

CALLIE: Aaron.

DOC: Take Frank to the office. I'll be right along.

NICK, LANEY, and a couple of other men lift him and leave. DOC goes to AARON.

DOC: What happened to you?

AARON: I'm all right. I just got knocked down.

He looks out the window.

AARON: Doc, the Tidwells were playing dominos.

DOC looks out the window. There are quite a few people gathered around the demolished building. Others are milling about the street. A man enters the cafe.

MAN: Doc, the Tidwell brothers . . . they're both dead.

DOC (*nods sadly*): I've got to tend to Frank. Callie, call the sheriff and tell him what's going on.

He motions to FRAN.

DOC: Come on, young lady, I'll fix up that cut. You sure you're all right, Aaron?

AARON: Yeah, I'm fine.

DOC: Come on up when you're steady on your feet and I'll put something on those scratches.

DOC leaves with FRAN. AARON gets to his feet and staggers slightly. BELINDA grabs his arm to steady him.

AARON: Thanks . . . uh . . .

BELINDA: Belinda Hancks.

AARON: Pleased to meet you, Belinda Hancks. I'm Aaron Hibbits.

BELINDA: Pleased to meet you, Aaron Hibbits.

AARON: I'd better see what damage the station suffered.

BELINDA: Can you make it?

AARON: I think so if . . . if you'll come along and prop me up.

She grins at him and puts his arm around her shoulder. They leave the cafe.

CUT TO:

31 *The street. AARON and BELINDA emerge from the cafe and cross to the station. About halfway across AARON forgets about playing invalid. They look seriously at the demolished building, the people gathered around it, and the two covered bodies.*

CUT TO:

32 *The station. AARON looks it over. The window is broken and numerous things have fallen off shelves.*

AARON: Doesn't look too bad.

They leave the station and go to the demolished building.

BELINDA: Look at Nick's car.

AARON: Doesn't look good.

CUT TO:

33 *They reach the building. Where the building had stood is a small crater. A bit of black rock is visible, partly buried, at the bottom. They stand looking down at it. The rock is smoking.*

AARON: My God. It's a meteorite.

MAN: Hot as hell. Can't get near it.

AARON: I'd better check on my father. He'll be wondering what happened. Would you like to come along?

It's just next door to Doc's house, up the hill.

BELINDA (*nods*): Is your father ill?

They leave the crater and walk up the road toward the hill.

AARON: He had a stroke a few months ago. He's in a wheelchair.

BELINDA: Is he getting better?

AARON: Yes. Doc says he should be able to walk soon.

The inactivity is pretty hard on him. He's had that station for nearly thirty years and can hardly wait to get back to it. Course he's gonna have to take it real easy for quite a while.

CUT TO:

- 34 *Medium long shot of AARON and BELINDA walking away still talking. Pan to crowd around the crater. Move in to CLOSE on the meteorite.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 35 *AARON and BELINDA entering AARON's house.*

CUT TO:

- 36 *Interior living room.*

AARON: Dad!

CAL: In here.

They leave the living room.

CUT TO:

- 37 *Kitchen. CAL HIBBITS is in his early fifties. He is very thin and ill-looking but determinedly cheerful. He sits in his wheelchair at the kitchen table eating a bowl of soup. AARON and BELINDA enter.*

CAL: What's going on? Heard something sounded like an explosion. What happened to your face?

AARON: Wildest thing. A meteorite hit the shack next to the station. Dad, this is Belinda Hancks. She and some friends were at Callie's when the meteorite hit.

BELINDA: Hello, Mr. Hibbits.

CAL: Hello. A meteorite? How big?

AARON: I don't know how big it is. You can just see

a little bit of it sticking out of the ground and it's too hot to get near. Made a pretty good-sized crater.

CAL: Was anybody hurt?

AARON: The Tidwell brothers were playing dominos.

They're both dead. Frank Spain is pretty cut up. He's over at Doc's. The station's okay. Just broke the window and rattled things around.

CAL: What happened to your face?

AARON: The explosion knocked me down. Landed flat on my face. If you're all right, we're going over to Doc's. Belinda's friends are there and he wants to put something on my face.

CAL: Sure. Nice to have met you, Miss Hancks.

BELINDA: Mr. Hibbits.

AARON: See you later, Dad.

CUT TO:

38 *DOC TURNER's office in his house. Through an open door, the living/waiting room is visible. The office is rather scantily stocked. It is equipped for little more than elaborate first-aid. DOC is bandaging FRAN's shoulder. LANEY and NICK are already bandaged. FRANK SPAIN is lying on an examination table, watching. He has already been tended to.*

LANEY: This town doesn't look big enough to have a doctor.

DOC: It isn't. And it hasn't been for twenty years. Don't tell anybody, but I am officially retired.

NICK: You don't look retired.

DOC: I found retirement to be far too inactive. My father was doctor here back when the town needed one. As a matter of fact, this was his office. I was

at the hospital in Graham until I retired. I puttered around boring myself to death for a few months, then decided to reopen my father's office. I get two or three patients a week. Never much more than elaborate first-aid. Anything serious goes to the hospital. But it gives me something to do and I guess it serves its purpose.

He finishes with FRAN.

DOC: There. Check with your own doctor when you get home. He'll let you know when he wants to take out the stitches.

FRAN: Thanks. Didn't hurt a bit.

DOC (*grins*): Don't worry, it will as soon as the local wears off.

FRAN (*grimaces*): You have a wonderful bedside manner.

DOC: I only tell lies to patients under twelve.

AARON and BELINDA enter.

DOC: Come on in, Aaron.

BELINDA: Is everybody all right?

FRAN: Fine. Except for the anticipation of future agony.

DOC gets antiseptic and a swab.

DOC: Okay, Aaron. This won't hurt a bit.

FRAN: He looks more than twelve to me.

DOC laughs and begins swabbing AARON's face.

AARON winces.

BELINDA: Did you see your car, Nick?

NICK: You had to remind me. Come on, Laney. We'd better see what the damage is so I can give my insurance agent a call.

AARON: Just a second and I'll go with you.

DOC: Hold still. Frank, I want to get you to the hospital just to be safe.

FRANK: Whatever you say, Doc.

DOC: Okay, Aaron. Your schoolgirl complexion will be messed up for a few days, but it shouldn't leave any scars.

AARON: Thanks, Doc. I was really sweatin' it.

DOC: Go help the man with his car.

DISSOLVE TO:

39 *NICK's car lying on its side. AARON, LANEY, NICK, and several townspeople push it over up-right.*

AARON: See if it'll start.

NICK climbs in and tries the motor. It starts. FRAN and BELINDA cheer. NICK puts the car in gear and drives it a few feet. It wobbles.

AARON: Looks like the frame's bent.

NICK: And you can't fix it.

AARON: Right on. Haven't got the equipment. You'll have to get a wrecker to tow it to Graham.

NICK: Let me call my insurance man first and see if he's got any bright ideas.

FRAN: You and your shortcuts.

NICK makes a face at her.

AARON: You can use the phone in the station . . . if it's still working.

NICK goes into the station. The others go over and look at the meteorite.

CUT TO:

40 *The crowd gathered around the crater.*

LANEY: Seems to have cooled a little.

MAN: A little. Still can't get close enough to dig it out.

LANEY: How about puttin' water on it? That oughta cool it down.

AARON: I think the hose from the station will reach.

AARON trots to the station. NICK can be seen through the window talking on the phone. AARON returns with the hose, turns it on, and sprays water on the meteorite. There is a billowing cloud of steam and everyone backs away. AARON continues the stream of water. There is a loud cracking noise.

AARON: Oops!

He turns off the water.

AARON: I think the cold water split it.

They wait as the steam clears. LANEY excitedly points at the meteorite.

LANEY: Look!

CUT TO:

41 *The meteorite. As the steam clears, it can be seen that a large piece has flaked off the top. A red spheroid slightly smaller than a volleyball can be seen protruding from the larger piece. The spheroid does not glow but it seems to be-cause of its translucency.*

CUT TO:

42 CLOSE ON LANEY.

LANEY: It looks like a giant ruby.

CUT TO:

43 *The group.*

AARON: Better not put any more water on it. It should be cool enough by morning.

CUT TO:

44 *Another angle. The sheriff's car pulls up. The sheriff and a deputy emerge and walk over to the group around the crater.*

SHERIFF: What a mess. Anybody know what happened?

AARON (*points*): A meteorite landed.

SHERIFF: A meteorite, huh? What's that red stuff?

LANEY: We don't know. It's too hot to get near.

SHERIFF: Where are the Tidwells? I've got an ambulance comin' for 'em.

MAN: We put 'em over there. They're really messed up.

SHERIFF: Harry, get statements from some of these people and make out a report.

The deputy takes a notebook from his pocket as several people begin talking to him at once. The sheriff motions for the man to take him to the TIDWELLS. NICK returns from telephoning.

NICK: They said leave the car here until the adjustor can look it over.

FRAN: What are we gonna do?

NICK (*to Aaron*): Is there a hotel, motel, anything?

AARON: Nothing closer than Graham. You could probably get a ride with the sheriff. Or I could take you.

NICK: Then we'd have to come back here tomorrow when the insurance man gets here.

AARON: Why don't you stay here? Doc's got a couple of extra rooms. Do you . . . ah . . . need two or three?

FRAN *cocks an eyebrow at LANEY, who snorts.*

BELINDA: Three.

AARON: We've got a spare room. (*to Laney*) You can stay with us.

FRAN: Maybe we'd better not. We don't want to be in the way.

LANEY (*glances at the crater*): I think it's a good idea.

NICK: Maybe we'd better check with the doctor first. He might not want to be descended upon by total strangers.

AARON: He won't mind. Get your bags out of the car and come on.

DISSOLVE TO:

45 AARON and LANEY in AARON's spare bedroom.

AARON: Make yourself at home. The bath is just across there.

LANEY (*looks at his watch*): It's only one o'clock. What do people *do* around here?

AARON: Never thought much about it. I guess everyone has work to do. I'm goin' down to clean up the station. You could watch television but my father's asleep.

LANEY: No, thanks.

AARON: Well, you could go swimming in the river or play dominos with . . . no, can't do that anymore.

LANEY: A swim sounds like a good idea.

He opens his suitcase, takes out a bathing suit and some other clothes, takes off his clothes, puts on the bathing suit, and puts on a pair of old blue jeans over it during the following dialogue.

LANEY: I'll check with the others and see if they want to go.

AARON: Go down the other side of the bridge and go north. Can't miss it. I may join you when I finish at the station.

LANEY: What do you think they'll do with the meteorite?

AARON: I don't know. I suppose the sheriff will take it. That red thing in it looks pretty unusual. It'll probably wind up at the University or something.

LANEY: Aren't you even curious about it?

AARON: Sure. But they can't do anything with it until it cools off.

LANEY: I wonder what a ruby as big as a volleyball would be worth.

AARON: How do you know it's a ruby?

LANEY: Well, it looks like a ruby.

AARON: You could be right and I have no idea how much it would be worth. There's towels in the bathroom if you need one. See you later.

AARON leaves. LANEY stands thoughtfully for a moment and then slips on his shirt.

LANEY (*softly*): As big as a volleyball.

DISSOLVE TO:

46 AARON *is in the station putting things back on shelves. A car drives in. AARON goes out. The driver is a middle-aged woman.*

AARON: Hello, Mrs. Spain. How's Frank?

MRS. SPAIN: Hello, Aaron. Frank's okay. He looks awful but the doctor says none of the cuts are serious. Took thirty-eight stitches all together. Would you fill it up? Soon as I get the chores done, I'm gonna go sit with Frank. He sure hates to be in the hospital.

AARON (*starts filling the car*): Sure glad he's okay. He looked half dead.

MRS. SPAIN: That he did. Shoulda got a picture of it. Never saw so much excitement around here.

AARON: You don't get a meteorite in your front yard every day.

MRS. SPAIN: That you don't. I hear those folks from Dallas are staying over with you and the Doc.

AARON (*laughs*): Word sure gets around.

MRS. SPAIN: Now Aaron, you didn't live in Dallas long enough to forget small-town gossip. How's your father?

AARON: Just fine. Doc said he should be out of the wheelchair soon. Tell the truth, Mrs. Spain, you already knew, didn't you?

MRS. SPAIN (*laughs*): Yes, but I had to ask to be neighborly, didn't I?

AARON: That's four even.

MRS. SPAIN *hands him the money, waves and drives away. AARON waves, watches the car pull away and sees BELINDA walking toward him. He puts the money in the register, still watching her, and goes back outside as she arrives.*

AARON: Hi. Wondered where you were. The others went by a while ago.

BELINDA: I was talking to Doc. He's a dear.

AARON (*laughs*): He sure is.

BELINDA: Can I help?

AARON: I'm just about through. You might get grease on you.

BELINDA: It'll wash off.

AARON: Okay.

They go inside and continue putting things on the shelves.

BELINDA: Laney thinks that's a ruby in the meteorite.

AARON: Yeah, he told me.

BELINDA: What do you think?

AARON: Me? I don't know. Could be, I guess, but I doubt it. Is that what an uncut ruby looks like?

BELINDA: I never saw an uncut ruby.

AARON (*laughs*): Me neither. Well, that about does it. I'll get some glass for the window tomorrow. Ready to go swimming?

BELINDA: What about the station?

AARON: I got somebody to watch it for me. Come on.

They leave the station and head for the crater.

CUT TO:

47 *The crater. There are only a couple of people still there plus the deputy, who sits bored in the car. AARON speaks to one of the men standing there.*

AARON: I'm leaving now. Be back in an hour or so.

MAN: Okay, Aaron. It's cooled off quite a bit.

AARON: Yeah. Should be able to dig it out in the morning.

The man looks at BELINDA.

MAN: Take your time, Aaron.

AARON: Thanks.

CUT TO:

48 *Camera tracks with AARON and BELINDA as they leave the crater and walk toward the bridge.*

BELINDA: I saw that look. If the others weren't down there, I'm not sure I'd go.

AARON (*laughs*): Oops! My secret is out.

BELINDA grins at him and he takes her hand. They cross the bridge and start down a trail into the river bed.

CUT TO:

49 *The river bed. BELINDA takes off her shoes and digs her toes into the sand. AARON does the same and they run across the sand until water forces them back to the bank. They reach a natural pool in the generally shallow water. LANEY, FRAN and NICK are splashing about in the water. FRAN waves at them.*

FRAN: Come on in! The water's freezing!

BELINDA: Thanks a lot.

AARON and BELINDA both strip off their clothes, revealing bathing suits underneath. AARON jumps in the water but BELINDA tests it with her toe before wading in. They splash around for a few moments.

DISSOLVE TO:

50 NICK *and* FRAN *lying on the sand, sunning.* LANEY *is walking around apparently in deep thought.* AARON *and* BELINDA *are still in the water.* FRAN *sits up and watches AARON and BELINDA for a moment, then looks at NICK, who is lying on his back apparently asleep. She slaps him on the stomach. He grunts and sits up quickly, then grabs FRAN and they wrestle around in the sand. He finally pins her down and kisses her.*

FRAN: Darling. Control yourself.

NICK: One more slap like that and you may not survive the carnage.

FRAN: I'll risk it (*She kisses him back.*) Get a load of those two in the water.

NICK: I have been. I told you not to be a matchmaker.

FRAN: Okay. L-A-N-E-Y was definitely a mistake. I'll make a deal with you. Don't mention my matchmaking and I won't mention your shortcut.

NICK (*laughs*): It's a deal.

He notices that the bandage on her shoulder has come off.

NICK: You've lost your bandage. We probably should have checked with the doctor before going swimming.

FRAN: I'll just slap on a little iodine and a new bandage. You ready to go?

NICK: Yeah.

They get up, gather their clothes, and start back for the bridge.

NICK: You comin', Laney?

LANEY: Yeah.

FRAN (*yells to Aaron and Belinda*): We're going back.
See you later.

They wave as the others leave. After a moment, they leave the water and lie on the sand. Neither says anything for a moment.

AARON: The others are gone and you're still here.

BELINDA: I think I can run faster than you can.

AARON: In that case, I'll have to use trickery.

He takes her hand. Neither says anything more for a moment.

BELINDA: How come you're the only young person I've seen in town? Everyone seems middle-aged or older.

AARON: There are a few others . . . but not many. I don't know. I guess there's not much to stay here for. They go to college and stay . . . or get married and move where there's work. Most of the ones still here are working with their parents. Town gets smaller every year. Pretty soon it won't be here at all. Callie's been talking about closing the cafe but she decided as long as she wasn't actually losing money, she'd keep it open. It's the best place to keep up on all the latest gossip.

BELINDA: Why did you stay here?

AARON: I didn't. I went to college in Dallas and stayed. I was what is called "a rising young executive," Last year my mother died and I came back for a while. First time I'd been here for more than a weekend in five years.

BELINDA: And you liked what you saw?

AARON: I guess I did. When I was in high school I could hardly wait to get away.

BELINDA: Were you born here?

AARON: Yep. Born here, went to school here until they closed it. You can see it up on the hill. Then we rode the school bus to Graham.

He rolls over on his elbow looking down and sideways at her.

AARON: Then, when my father had a stroke, I quit my job and came back to run the station for him.

BELINDA: Will you go back when he's well?

AARON: My job's waiting for me.

BELINDA: Are you gonna take it?

AARON: I don't know. I'm a good mechanic, you know.

I worked in the station from the time I was ten 'til I went away to college. (*Laughs.*) I hated every minute of it.

BELINDA: And now?

AARON: Now, I'm not so sure. Do you think it's . . . well . . . dropping out to enjoy this? You know everyone in town and they all know you. Everything's slow and peaceful, no hurry. You know, your coming into town was the most exciting thing that's happened all week.

BELINDA: More exciting than the meteorite?

AARON: Well, maybe not to everyone else.

He looks at her for a moment and she looks at him. He bends down and kisses her gently. He pulls his head back and smiles.

AARON: See how tricky I am.

She reaches over and pushes his elbow out from under him and he falls to his shoulder with a grunt.

BELINDA: Now see how fast I can run.

She gets up and starts running. He gets up and runs after her, both laughing. They suddenly meet several schoolchildren who yell, "Hi, AARON!," etc. Both stop and grin self-consciously.

AARON: I see the school bus made it back.

The kids run past.

BELINDA: Better luck next time. You ready to go?

AARON: I'll get the clothes.

He turns and goes back to the swimming hole. BELINDA stands watching him and smiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

- 51** *AARON and BELINDA come back across the bridge. BELINDA leads him to the row of abandoned store buildings behind the station. She asks him about the stores and the town. He tells her what they used to be and gives her a brief history of the town. Do a little research and give the real story. Intermix the scene with old photos of the town in its heyday.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 52** *Night. The town is quiet. Very few lights are on. After several views, the camera pans to the police car. The deputy is asleep. The pan continues to the crater.*

DISSOLVE TO:

53 *Early morning. The sun is rising. Roosters crowing. Several shots of beginning activity.*

CUT TO:

54 *LANEY in bed. He wakes up, looks at his watch, gets up quickly and dresses. He sneaks out of the house.*

CUT TO:

55 *Exterior of HIBBITS house. LANEY emerges and looks down the hill at the crater. Several people have already gathered around it. He starts hurriedly in that direction.*

DISSOLVE TO:

56 *AARON and several townspeople at the crater. LANEY rushes up.*

AARON: Good morning. Sleep okay?

LANEY: Why didn't you wake me up? Has it cooled yet?

AARON: Still warm. They're bringing some shovels.

LANEY looks around. The deputy's car is empty. A couple of men rush up with shovels and begin digging out the meteorite. After a moment, the deputy comes running out of the grocery store and across the street, yelling.

DEPUTY: What are you doing? Hey! What are you doing? Get away from there!

MAN: What's the matter, Harry?

DEPUTY: The sheriff said I wasn't to let anybody bother that thing.

MAN: We're not bothering it. We're just digging it out.

DEPUTY: The sheriff said to keep people away.

MAN: Come on, Harry. We just want to see what it looks like.

DEPUTY: I don't know. The sheriff said . . .

MAN: Somebody's gotta dig it up, don't they? They're not gonna leave it buried, are they?

DEPUTY: Well, no . . .

MAN: Okay, then.

DEPUTY: But don't do nothin' else.

MAN: Okay, Harry.

DEPUTY: Okay.

He goes back across the street. The men dig out the meteorite and carry it out of the crater with the others, especially LANEY, watching eagerly. When they get it out, LANEY kneels down and rubs his fingers over the partially exposed red spheroid.

LANEY: It feels like glass. Warm glass.

AARON and several of the others feel the spheroid.

LANEY: Why don't we chip away all this stuff?

AARON: We better not. The sheriff probably wouldn't like it.

MAN: It's not the sheriff's meteorite.

2ND MAN: Yeah. It's ours.

MAN: If it had landed outside the town limits, then the sheriff could tell us what to do with it.

AARON (*laughs*): I don't think he'll agree with you.

LANEY: Come on, Aaron, what can he do about it?

AARON: Nothin', I guess.

MAN: You got a hammer and chisel in the station?

AARON *nods and leaves to get them.*

MAN: I wonder what that thing is.

2ND MAN: Looks like a big glass marble.

MAN: How did it get in there?

AARON *returns with the hammer and chisel and gives them to the man.*

AARON: Here.

The man takes the hammer and chisel and begins to chip away at the encrusting rock. The crust is generally thin, seldom more than two or three inches thick, and chips away relatively easy. The group watches intently as he chips. At one point the chisel slips and hits the red ball.

LANEY: Careful! Don't damage it!

The man feels the red ball.

MAN: Didn't even scratch it. Guess it's not glass.

AARON: Glass would have melted.

LANEY *looks excitedly smug. They continue until the red ball is completely clear of the encrusting rock. It is perfectly round and polished. The translucency is about half an inch deep. Beyond that, it is opaque as if something were inside. The man holds it up.*

MAN: It's not very heavy. About five pounds, I'd say.

LANEY: Let me.

The man hands it to LANEY, who holds it caressingly and looks at it in awe. AARON takes it, examines it, and passes it on until all have held it.

MAN: Looks like there's something inside it.

AARON: I suggest we don't try to find out what it is.

They all look around as a car drives up.

CUT TO:

57 *Another angle. It is a station wagon with the call letters of a TV station emblazoned on the door. Two men get out. One carries a notebook and the other a 16mm movie camera. The cameraman almost immediately begins taking pictures. The reporter walks over to the men.*

REPORTER: Is this where it landed?

MAN: That's right. Completely demolished the building.

2ND MAN: Couldn'ta done it better with dynamite.

REPORTER: I heard a couple of people were killed.

MAN: Yeah. Old Ira and Lester Tidwell. Sittin' right here on the porch playin' dominos when it hit. Messed 'em up real bad.

The cameraman moves around, taking shots of the men talking and the crater and the meteorite fragments. LANEY has the spheroid and keeps it out of sight. He whispers to AARON.

LANEY: I'm gonna take this up and show it to Doc.

AARON: Do you think you ought to?

LANEY: Why not?

AARON: The reporters will want to see it.

LANEY: Send 'em up to Doc's.

LANEY walks away with it as the deputy rushes once more out of the store. The camera tracks with LANEY, who keeps the ball out of sight of the others. In the background the deputy sees

the fractured meteorite and begins gesticulating wildly. The men protest. AARON watches LANEY, who begins to walk faster.

CUT TO:

- 58** *CLOSE ON AARON. He has a slightly puzzled expression on his face. The noise of the argument is in the background.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 59** *LANEY going into the HIBBITS house.*

CUT TO:

- 60** *Interior, living room. LANEY enters. He goes into the hall.*

CUT TO:

- 61** *The hall. LANEY peeks into CAL's room.*

CUT TO:

- 62** *LANEY's POV. CAL is sitting in his wheelchair asleep.*

CUT TO:

- 63** *The hall. LANEY leaves CAL's door and goes into his own room.*

CUT TO:

64 LANEY's room. He enters and closes the door. He places the ball on the bed, gets down on his knees with his arms on the bed and looks at it as if hypnotized. There is a great deal of repressed excitement in his face.

LANEY (softly): A ruby as big as a volleyball.

He stands up and moves restlessly about the room. He wants the ball but doesn't know how to go about getting it. He beats his fists together in frustration. He picks up the ball and looks around the room. He suddenly looks closely at it. The interior is turning milky. The milkiness grows as he watches it. With a gasp, he puts it on the floor and backs away from it. He watches it with mixed emotions. He is angry that it isn't a ruby but fearful and apprehensive because he doesn't know what it is. The ball turns completely white and froth begins to ooze from cracks that appear. LANEY approaches it closer, studying it. The froth continues to build from a network of cracks. Finally, a piece of the shell falls away exposing a portion of the reddish body of an animal. LANEY watches. More pieces fall away until the tightly curled body is completely revealed. It moves slightly. LANEY backs away. The animal begins to uncurl. It is about eighteen inches long and about eighteen inches tall when standing erect. It looks vaguely like an insect. It stands on six legs and has a tail and stinger similar to a hornet. The legs all stem from an area between the tail and thorax. The thorax stands upright and sports two arms ending in claws resembling human hands. The head is

about half human and half insect and has two large mandibles. The creature emits an alien, chittering sound, weakly at first, then stronger. LANEY backs farther away. The creature ignores LANEY, intent on cleaning and grooming itself. When it is finished it looks at LANEY, quizzically. LANEY moves farther away. The creature walks about, testing its legs. It glances occasionally at LANEY. LANEY watches with growing fear. The creature starts moving slowly toward him. LANEY glances toward the door and begins to move toward it. The creature stops and watches him. LANEY is nearly to the door when the creature tenses and suddenly rushes at him very rapidly. It jumps on his leg, jabs him once quickly with its stinger and darts to the other side of the room. LANEY screams and falls to the floor, clutching his leg.

CUT TO:

- 65** *CAL's room. CAL wakes from his doze in his wheelchair. He looks around startled, not sure what awakened him.*

CUT TO:

- 66** *LANEY's room. LANEY writhes on the floor, clutching his calf, obviously in agony. The creature watches him excitedly, making quick, tense movements. LANEY reaches for the doorknob. The creature darts in again, stings him on the hip, and darts away. LANEY screams.*

CUT TO:

67 *CAL's room. CAL begins wheeling himself toward the noise.*

CAL: Aaron! Aaron! Is that you? Mr. Delaney? What's wrong?

CUT TO:

68 *LANEY's room. LANEY moans and sobs in agony. He is obviously paralyzed from the waist down. He tries to drag himself into position to open the door. The creature hops about in a frenzy of excitement. LANEY once more tries to open the door. The creature darts in and stings him between the shoulder blades and darts away. LANEY moans and manages to roll over on his back, leaning against the door, before he becomes completely paralyzed. CAL's voice is heard off-screen.*

CAL (O.S.): Mr. Delaney? Is that you in there? What's happening?

LANEY, unable to move, watches the creature as it walks slowly toward him. It reaches his feet, pauses, and then starts up his legs.

CUT TO:

69 *The hall outside LANEY's door. CAL reaches the door.*

CAL: Mr. Delaney?

He tries to open the door but cannot because LANEY is leaning against it.

CUT TO:

- 70 LANEY's room. *His body shakes as CAL tries to open the door. The creature pauses, looking at the door. Then it continues up LANEY's body.*

CUT TO:

- 71 CAL in the hall. *He is unable to open the door but can push it open far enough to see LANEY's hand lying limply.*

CAL: Mr. Delaney? Are you all right?

CUT TO:

- 72 LANEY's room. *The creature crawls up on LANEY's chest as he watches it. It examines him closely, feeling his shirt with its hands. It tugs at the shirt. Then, with its mandibles, it rips away the front of the shirt.*

CUT TO:

- 73 The hall. *CAL hears the shirt tear, pauses, and tries to push open the door again.*

CUT TO:

- 74 LANEY's room. *The creature stands on LANEY's chest. LANEY's body moves once more as CAL pushes on the door. The creature looks up. The movement stops. The creature looks in LANEY's face.*

CUT TO:

- 75 LANEY's POV. *The creature lowers its head below screen level and comes up with a hunk of bloody meat in its mouth which it swallows. The creature holds the meat delicately with its little hands.*

CUT TO:

- 76 Close on LANEY's face. *He watches in horrified fascination. He feels no pain because the venom has completely anesthetized his body. He is even incapable of closing his eyes.*

CUT TO:

- 77 LANEY's POV. *The creature finishes the first bite and lowers its head again.*

CUT TO:

- 78 Close on LANEY's face. *He watches as the creature devours him.*

CUT TO:

- 79 The hall. CAL hears the sound of eating, turns from the door and wheels himself to the telephone. *He dials in a panic, dials incorrectly and tries again. He completes dialing and waits, breathing heavily.*

CUT TO:

80 *The gas station. The phone begins ringing. The camera dollies into the station to the ringing phone, then pans to show the group gathered at the crater. The sheriff, the deputy, the newsmen, AARON, NICK, FRAN, BELINDA, and a group of townspeople are there. The sheriff, the deputy, and several townspeople are arguing about the fragmented meteorite and AARON doesn't hear the phone.*

CUT TO:

81 *CAL on the phone. He agitatedly listens to the ringing. He hangs up and dials again.*

CUT TO:

82 *The cafe interior. Close on the phone. It begins ringing. Camera pans to reveal that the cafe is closed; cardboard covers the shattered windows. The phone continues to ring.*

CUT TO:

83 *CAL on the phone. He listens to the ringing. Camera pans to the door of LANEY's room.*

CUT TO:

84 *LANEY's room. LANEY is not seen. The creature worries about the blood-smeared door, looking for a way out. It walks away from the door and steps over the picked-clean bones of LANEY's arm. The bones are red and moist with bits of flesh still clinging to them.*

CUT TO:

85 CAL *on the phone. He hangs up and dials again.*

CUT TO:

86 *The creature. It goes to the door, feels it with its hands and then leans over and bites through the thin part with its mandibles, tearing away a chunk.*

CUT TO:

87 CAL *on the phone. He listens to the phone ringing.*

CUT TO:

88 DOC's office interior. Camera pans past the ringing telephone to show that the house is empty.

CUT TO:

89 *The outside of LANEY's door. The creature rips away another chunk of wood.*

CUT TO:

90 CAL *on the phone. He hears the wood tearing, hangs up the phone, and wheels himself to where he can see. He watches as another chunk is torn from the door and the creature crawls through. CAL gasps. The creature whirls to look at him. CAL begins to back away in the wheelchair. The creature walks slowly toward him. CAL backs*

into the wall. The creature stops. CAL frantically tries to get through the doorway out of the hall. The creature lunges at him.

CUT TO:

91 *DOC walks up to the group around the crater. AARON turns to greet him.*

AARON: What did you think of it?

DOC: Think of what?

AARON (*grins*): The giant ruby.

DOC: What are you talking about, Aaron?

The reporter approaches DOC before AARON has a chance to explain.

REPORTER: Are you Doctor Turner? We'd like to get some shots of the red ball found in the meteorite.

DOC: Red ball? I don't know what you're talking about.

AARON: Haven't you talked to Laney this morning?

DOC: No, I haven't.

AARON: We chipped the rock away from the red thing a while ago. Laney had it and said he was taking it to show to you.

DOC: I haven't seen either of them.

NICK, FRAN, BELINDA have joined AARON, DOC and the reporter.

NICK: Where do you think he went?

FRAN: He's been acting a little peculiar ever since he saw it. You don't suppose he tried to swipe it?

DOC: That would be a stupid thing to do.

BELINDA: He probably tried to swipe it.

The sheriff overhears.

SHERIFF: Who tried to swipe what?

DOC: Mr. Delaney had the red thing out of the meteorite and said he was bringing it to show me but I haven't seen him.

SHERIFF: Where's he staying?

AARON: With us.

SHERIFF: Let's check your house then. Maybe he went there first and Doc missed him.

The sheriff, DOC, AARON, NICK, FRAN, BELINDA, and the two reporters leave the crater and start toward AARON's house.

DISSOLVE TO:

92 *Interior HIBBITS house. The camera pans showing neither body but showing that the house is quiet. The front door opens and the group enters.*

AARON: Dad! Where are you?

NICK: Laney!

They go into the hall.

CUT TO:

93 *The hall. They go to LANEY's room and see the hole in the door. AARON opens the door but it meets an obstruction. He pushes harder. The head of LANEY's skeleton falls into view. They enter the room. The photographer begins taking pictures. LANEY's entire skeleton is in the same condition as the previously seen arm. The floor is covered with blood. AARON suddenly looks worried and leaves the room. BELINDA follows*

him. He goes to the door of his father's room and pushes open the door. He sees CAL's skeleton sprawled half in and half out of the wheelchair. He moans and staggers. BELINDA goes to him and sees what has happened. She holds him tightly. He returns her embrace. She leads him away from the door. He stands, trembling, as BELINDA tries to comfort him. They return to LANEY's room.

AARON: Doc. Dad . . . in there. He's the same.

DOC goes to AARON and puts his hand on his shoulder but says nothing.

CUT TO:

94 LANEY's room. NICK examines the remains of the egg. He reaches out and picks up one of the pieces. He drops it with a yell and nurses his fingers. DOC goes to him and looks at his hand. The burns on his fingers appear to be made by acid.

DOC: Let's go over to my office and I'll put something on that. All of you! Come with me. Come on, Aaron. Let the sheriff take care of this. Come on, son.

CUT TO:

95 The hall. DOC hustles everyone except the sheriff and the reporters out of the bedroom and toward the living room.

CUT TO:

96 HIBBITS house exterior. *The group emerges and crosses to DOC's house and enters.*

CUT TO:

97 DOC's living room interior. *They enter. AARON and BELINDA sit on the couch. DOC takes NICK on into the office. FRAN looks at AARON and then follows. They leave the door open.*

CUT TO:

98 The office. *FRAN watches as DOC examines NICK's hand.*

DOC: Looks like an acid burn.

He cleans NICK's hand and puts on an ointment during the following dialogue.

NICK: It feels like it, too.

DOC: What exactly did you touch?

NICK: You saw them . . . on the floor. It looked like a broken egg shell. There was some kind of fluid on them. I got it on my fingers.

FRAN: What . . . what happened to Laney and . . . Mr. Hibbits?

DOC: Yes, that is the problem, isn't it?

NICK: Is there any connection with the red thing from the meteorite, do you think?

DOC: Those pieces of . . . ah . . . egg shell on the floor. How large would you say it would be if the pieces were put back together?

NICK looks at him.

NICK: I don't know, I didn't think about it. I guess about the same size as the red . . . but these were white.

DOC: The discoloration could have been caused by the . . . acid.

Finished with NICK's hand, they move back into the living room. AARON and BELINDA have been listening to them through the open door.

CUT TO:

99 *The living room.*

NICK: I guess, but where did the acid come from?

DOC: Yes, where did the acid come from?

AARON: Do you think it was an egg of some kind?

DOC: That's a possible explanation.

AARON: When they were chipping away the meteorite, the chisel slipped and didn't even scratch it.

DOC: If it was that hard, and it was an egg, how would whatever hatched from it ever get out?

NICK: Acid?

DOC: That is also a possible explanation. The . . . animal . . . whatever . . . that was in the egg might secrete an acid in order to get out of the shell.

NICK: But, if it was an egg, then . . . it's an alien life-form. The meteorite came from space.

DOC begins brewing a pot of coffee on a hotplate just inside the office door.

DOC: That's a logical assumption, to be sure. The egg—I think we can safely assume that it *was* an egg—was encrusted in a meteorite. For how long, we can hardly even speculate. Did it come to the earth by

accident or design? Did it get in the meteorite by accident or design? Right now, those are unimportant questions. The important question is: what hatched out of the egg—and where is it now?

FRAN: And whatever hatched . . . ate . . .

DOC: Apparently, yes.

NICK: But . . . it wouldn't be large enough. Laney and . . . I mean, there was a lot of . . . bulk there. Whatever hatched couldn't have been much larger than a . . . a . . . cat.

DOC: Yes, but we don't know anything about it. Most birds eat ten or twenty times their own weight every day. We don't know what this thing's metabolism is like. Maybe conditions here have caused it to accelerate beyond reason. Or, maybe it normally eats that much. Who knows? Maybe it needs that much food every hour. Maybe it needs that much every day. Maybe it eats that much at birth and never eats again. We have no way of knowing. At least not now.

AARON: Now? You mean we won't know until it . . . kills again.

DOC: I'm afraid that's correct.

NICK: What can we do about it?

FRAN: We don't even know what it looks like.

NICK: We should know it when we see it.

DOC: Probably. However, there is always the possibility that it might look very ordinary.

AARON: It's also very formidable. Laney was a strong man. It either took him completely by surprise or it's stronger than he was. Dad didn't . . . didn't have a chance. We ought to tell everything we guess to the sheriff. And we should also warn the town.

DOC: Yes, you're right, of course.

One of the townspeople enters.

MAN: Hello, Doc. Mr. Benedict, your insurance man is here. He's lookin' over your car.

NICK: Thank you. Fran, you stay here and keep all the doors and windows locked.

FRAN: Locked doors don't seem to do much good.

NICK: Do it anyway. Do you have any guns, Doc?

DOC: I've got a shotgun and a squirrel gun. Aaron and I can hold the fort until you get back.

MAN: What's going on, Doc? What are the guns for?

DOC: We've got troubles. Nick, stop by and tell the sheriff to get over here. And be careful.

NICK: Sure.

He leaves.

CUT TO:

100 *DOC's house exterior. NICK emerges and glances around rather nervously as he goes into the yard. He crosses over to the HIBBITS house and goes in.*

CUT TO:

101 *HIBBITS house living room. NICK enters. No one is around. He goes into the hall.*

CUT TO:

102 *CAL's room. CAL's skeleton has been covered. The sheriff is examining a torn window screen. He looks up as NICK enters.*

SHERIFF: Is the Hibbits boy all right?

NICK: As well as can be expected. Doc wants you to come over. He's got something important to tell you.

SHERIFF: In a minute. I think I've found where something got in.

NICK: That's probably where it got out. Laney brought it in with him.

SHERIFF: You know what it was?

NICK: We think so. Doc will tell you all about it. I suggest you don't delay.

The sheriff nods and speaks to the reporters who have wandered in to listen.

SHERIFF: You guys through in here?

REPORTER: Yeah, I think so.

SHERIFF: Then clear out. I'm gonna lock the place up until the coroner gets here.

REPORTER: What has the doctor discovered?

NICK: I'll let the sheriff tell you.

SHERIFF: You guys wait until I hear what the Doc has to say.

REPORTER: You can't suppress the news, sheriff.

SHERIFF: I'm not suppressing anything. I just want to know what's going on before you do. Now, come on.

They start out of the house.

CUT TO:

103 *HIBBITS house exterior. They emerge. The sheriff and the reporters go to DOC's house while NICK walks down the hill. He walks slowly, casting around occasional nervous glances. The camera follows him down the hill. About halfway down, a dog suddenly leaps from behind a fence and jumps up on him. NICK jumps, then laughs nervously. He stops and pets the furiously wagging dog. He goes on and the satisfied dog trots back*

into its yard. NICK smiles to himself and suppresses a tremble. He reaches his car and sees the insurance man filling out forms.

CUT TO:

104 *NICK's car. NICK approaches the insurance agent.*

NICK: Hello. I'm Nicholas Benedict.

TATE (*shakes hands*): Sam Tate. You're the talk of the office. We don't get too much meteorite damage.

NICK: I guess not.

TATE: Well, I'm through here. If you'll read this over and sign it, I'll get a wrecker to tow your car away.

NICK takes the form and reads it.

TATE: I was filled in on what happened by some of these people.

TATE indicates some of the townspeople standing around.

TATE: We'll furnish you with a rental car, daily rental only; you'll have to pay the mileage. We'll also pay your hotel bill if you want to wait for the repairs.

NICK: That won't be necessary. We're staying with some people here. Could I get the rental car delivered when the wrecker comes for my car?

TATE: I think so.

NICK finishes reading and signs the paper.

TATE: Guess that's it. Sorry you had trouble.

NICK: You don't know the half of it.

TATE: I beg your pardon?

NICK: Nothing. Thanks for your help.

TATE: That's why you pay your premiums. Good-bye,
Mr. Benedict.

NICK: Good-bye, Mr. Tate.

TATE walks toward the cafe.

CUT TO:

105 *Another angle. TATE returns to his car, which is parked in front of the cafe. NICK goes back up the hill. TATE starts the car, rolls up the window, turns on the air conditioner, and backs out.*

CUT TO:

106 *TATE car, interior. He drives up the hill, waves to NICK as he passes, continues past the abandoned school building and out of town. He drives for a moment, turns on the radio. He hears something in the back seat and turns his head to see what it is. The creature stands in the seat looking at him.*

CUT TO:

107 *Car exterior. The car swerves as TATE tries to stop.*

CUT TO:

108 *Car interior. The creature leaps onto TATE's head and stings him twice in the back of the neck. The creature leaps back onto the back seat.*

CUT TO:

109 *Car exterior. The car swerves off the road and down an embankment. The car rolls over a couple of times and is still. The radio is still playing.*

CUT TO:

110 *Another angle. Camera pans around the car to discover TATE lying on the ground, his feet and legs still in the car. Hold the shot for a moment. Then, the creature appears from inside the car and walks down TATE's body toward his chest.*

DISSOLVE TO:

111 *NICK approaches DOC's house. As he goes onto the porch, the two reporters rush out and run down the hill. NICK turns and watches them for a moment and goes in.*

CUT TO:

112 *Interior. DOC's living room. DOC is sitting on the couch. The sheriff is picking up the phone. He dials the operator. NICK enters.*

NICK: What was the matter with them?

DOC: We just told them what we think is going on. They're heading for a phone.

SHERIFF (*the operator answers*): This is Sheriff Nolan. I'd like to speak to Mrs. Hutchins, please. It's an emergency. Thank you. . . . Hello, this is Sheriff Nolan. We have an emergency here in Eliasville. I want your operators to call every number in the Eliasville directory. . . . Yes, every number. Tell

them we want everyone, repeat everyone, without exception, to come to the Eliasville school. . . . Immediately, as fast as they can make it. Tell them that it's by my order and their lives are in danger if they don't come. . . . That's right. And tell all of them to bring shotguns or high-powered rifles and plenty of ammunition. If they don't have transportation, we'll come for them. When you're finished, call me back. I'm at 397-8819, and give me a complete list of all those who don't answer. . . . Yes. . . . Thank you, Mrs. Hutchins. This is very important. Good-bye.

He turns from the phone.

SHERIFF: Doc, you know everyone around. Can you give me a list of everyone you know who doesn't have a phone?

DOC nods and begins making a list. He indicates the coffee to NICK, who gets a cup. Most of the others are already drinking. The sheriff dials another number.

SHERIFF: Hello. This is Sheriff Nolan. I want to speak to Chief Alvarez. It's an emergency. . . . Mel? We've got an emergency in Eliasville. I need all your boys here as fast as they can get here. . . . You wouldn't believe me until you see it for yourself. . . . Yes, just leave enough there to keep the town from falling apart. I want them all armed with shotguns and high-powered rifles. . . . Right. . . . We're gonna comb the town and the woods for a killer and we'll need walkie-talkies. . . . I'd just be wasting my time, Mel. You've got to see what's happening for yourself. . . . Okay, as soon as you can. Thanks, Mel.

He hangs up the phone. Doc hands him the list he's been making.

DOC: This is all I can think of at the moment.

SHERIFF: Thanks, Doc. I'm gonna ask for volunteer deputies when I get everyone together. What about the three of you?

AARON: Count me in.

NICK: Me, too.

FRAN: Nick, you don't know one end of a gun from the other.

SHERIFF: He can still make himself useful.

DOC: You got all three of us.

SHERIFF: Good. I'm gonna take this list down to Harry so he can go see all of them. I'll wait for the police down there. When the operator calls back, get the list of those who didn't answer. We'll check 'em out. Mr. Benedict, would you go on over to the school-house and tell everyone as they arrive to just be patient 'til I get there?

NICK: Sure.

CUT TO:

113 *Long shot. The ATWOOD farm.*

CUT TO:

114 *The barn exterior.*

115 *The barn interior. A milk cow stands contentedly chewing. After a moment, the cow turns her head to look at something. She becomes agitated and moves about restlessly. The creature appears*

over the stable wall. The cow bellows and backs away. The creature chitters. The cow bellows.

CUT TO:

- 116** *The ATWOOD farmhouse exterior. CHESTER ATWOOD comes out of the house carrying a shotgun. He walks rapidly toward the barn.*

CUT TO:

- 117** *Barn interior. The cow bellows. The creature leaps on her back and stings her twice rapidly and leaps away. The cow bellows insanely and falls.*

CUT TO:

- 118** *Barn exterior. ATWOOD approaches. He goes faster, yelling.*

ATWOOD: Crazy old cow! What's the matter with you?
Crazy old cow!

He goes into the barn. The camera remains outside. There is a pause, then the sound of a shotgun blast. Then ATWOOD screams. The camera pans back to the house. The phone begins ringing.

DISSOLVE TO:

- 119** *The schoolhouse. People are arriving. Some come in cars and some come on foot. There is a considerable amount of talking and gesticulating.*

MAN: What's this all about?

NICK: The sheriff said be patient. He'll be here shortly.

MAN: This better be important. I've got work to do.

2ND MAN: Where's the sheriff?

NICK: He'll be here in a few minutes.

WOMAN: What's going on, anyway?

NICK: The sheriff'll tell you all about it when he gets here.

CUT TO:

120 *Another angle. Some of the people go on into the school building and others stay outside. DOC and FRAN arrive. The people begin asking DOC their questions. Five police cars loaded with about twenty uniformed policemen arrive on the highway. They stop and Chief Alvarez yells at the crowd.*

MEL: Where's Sheriff Nolan?

MAN: Down at the crater.

MEL waves and the cars continue on down the hill.

DISSOLVE TO:

121 *The WILLIAMS farm.*

CUT TO:

122 *The backyard of the farmhouse. MYRNA WILLIAMS is in her early thirties. She sits in the yard shelling peas. Near her on a pallet on the grass, her year-old baby sits playing with a toy. The phone rings. MYRNA puts down her bowl and goes into the house.*

CUT TO:

- 123** *The kitchen interior. MYRNA WILLIAMS comes in from outside. The phone is in the hall just outside the kitchen. She can see the baby outside through the window if she leans around the door. Before answering the phone, she glances outside at the baby.*

CUT TO:

- 124** *The hall. MYRNA answers the phone.*

MYRNA: Hello.

CUT TO:

- 125** *The baby on the pallet. It looks up from its toy and sees something. It grins and gurgles and crawls toward the camera.*

CUT TO:

- 126** *The baby's POV. The creature stands in the yard watching the baby. The creature walks toward the camera.*

CUT TO:

- 127** *MYRNA on the phone. She leans around the door to check on the baby*

CUT TO:

- 128** *MYRNA's POV. Through the window the baby and creature are visible.*

CUT TO:

- 129 MYRNA. *She drops the phone and runs toward the back door.*

CUT TO:

- 130 *The backyard. MYRNA runs out the back door.*

CUT TO:

- 131 CLOSE ON *the creature. It turns to look at her and begins to chitter.*

CUT TO:

- 132 *The still-swinging telephone receiver. The operator's voice can be heard thinly from the receiver.*

OPERATOR (O.S.): Mrs. Williams? Hello? Mrs. Williams?

The chitter of the creature can be heard, then MYRNA's scream, then the baby begins to cry.

DISSOLVE TO:

- 133 *The schoolhouse. All of the townspeople have gone inside but several policemen stand outside as if on guard duty.*

CUT TO:

- 134 *Schoolhouse interior. The gathered townspeople are talking excitedly among themselves. DOC stands to one side with NICK and FRAN. The*

sheriff is standing in front holding up his arms for quiet.

SHERIFF: Okay, hold it down! I've got something very important to tell you.

The crowd quietens.

SHERIFF: You all know about the meteorite that landed in town yesterday morning. Some of you know about the red sphere buried in the meteorite.

Mutters from the audience.

SHERIFF: Now, part of this is guesswork but the results are a fact. Apparently that red thing was some kind of egg. We don't know what and we don't know where it came from but it has hatched.

More mutters.

SHERIFF: Some kind of animal hatched from the egg; we don't know what it looks like; everyone who has seen it is dead! I imagine the word has spread pretty thoroughly that Cal Hibbits and Frank Delaney are both dead. Not only are they dead but the thing ate the bodies.

There are gasps and a general uproar from the audience.

SHERIFF: Hold it down!

AARON and BELINDA enter. AARON hands a piece of paper to DOC, who reads it.

SHERIFF: We don't know what it is or where it is, but it's dangerous. Locked doors won't keep it out; it chewed right through the door in the Hibbits house.

I want to deputize everyone who will volunteer to hunt for the creature. We've got to get rid of it before it kills anyone else. If you have a gun and know how to use it, I want volunteers. Mel Alvarez has brought twenty policemen from Graham and we need as many as we can get to search every inch of Eliasville and the woods around it until we find this thing.

Mutters and volunteering.

SHERIFF: I want everyone else to evacuate! Stay in Graham or somewhere else equally far away until we get rid of it. I want you to leave right now. If you have to go home for something, don't go alone and don't go unarmed.

DOC goes to the sheriff.

DOC: I've got the list of the ones who didn't answer the phone.

The sheriff steps aside and DOC speaks to the crowd.

DOC: Twenty-two people didn't answer their phones when we called. I've accounted for all of them but five. Chester Atwood. Does anyone know where he is?

MAN: He should be home, Doc.

DOC: Okay. Jim and Agnes Clark.

2ND MAN: They left for Graham this morning to do some shopping.

DOC marks off the names.

DOC: Lee and Bernice Trimble.

LEE: We're here, Doc.

There is some nervous laughter from the audience. DOC smiles.

DOC: Glad to hear that, Lee. Ralph and Edna Varner?

3RD MAN: They should be home, too. Ralph was planning to paint the house.

DOC: Fred and Myrna Williams? Are they here?

WOMAN: Fred's probably working his horses but Myrna should be home with the baby.

DOC: The operator talked to Myrna but she left the phone in the middle of the conversation.

There are mutters from the audience. DOC steps aside and the sheriff returns.

SHERIFF: All right! I want everyone out of town as fast as you can go. We'll set up roadblocks to keep people out. All of you volunteering as deputies, get back as soon as you get your families off.

The sheriff and DOC go to AARON, BELINDA, NICK, and FRAN as the crowd begins to noisily disperse.

AARON: Sheriff, can you arrange a ride for Belinda and Fran?

BELINDA: I'm staying.

AARON: You can't. It's too dangerous.

BELINDA looks around and sees one of the policemen with a rifle.

BELINDA: Come with me.

She goes to the policeman with the others following and takes the rifle from him. He protests but the sheriff nods. BELINDA goes outside.

CUT TO:

135 *The schoolhouse exterior. BELINDA and the group emerge. BELINDA picks up a can and hands it to AARON, who is a little bewildered. She checks the rifle and nods to AARON. He gives her an ironic look and throws the can into the air. BELINDA brings up the rifle and hits the can three times before it falls. There is applause and a cheer from the crowd. BELINDA grins sheepishly and hands the rifle back to the policeman.*

BELINDA: Now may I stay?

AARON: Where did you learn that?

BELINDA: I happen to be an army brat. I'm very competitive with my father. The result of being an only child. Well?

AARON (*grins*): All right, you can stay but don't get out of my sight.

BELINDA: I wasn't planning to.

Several men approach the sheriff.

MAN: We're ready when you are, sheriff.

The sheriff nods and motions to MEL.

SHERIFF: Mel, will you organize the search parties? I want to check on the people who didn't answer the phone.

MEL *nods*.

SHERIFF: Doc, you and Aaron and Miss Hancks check on the Williamses. You three men check on Atwood. You two come with me to the Varners'. The rest of you, do whatever Mel tells you.

They start to move away. NICK turns to FRAN.

NICK: What are you doing still standing here?

FRAN: I don't want to leave either, Nick.

NICK: Please, Fran. I'd feel a lot better if you were somewhere safe. (*He grins*) However, if you can shoot like Belinda, you can stay.

FRAN (*makes a face*): Well, there goes the ball game.

CALLIE has been standing close enough to hear the conversation and goes to FRAN.

CALLIE: You come with me, Mrs. Benedict. I'm going to Graham to stay with my sister. There's plenty of room for you. I'll get my husband to go with us to get our things.

CALLIE leaves.

DOC: Go with her, Fran. I'd feel a lot better also.

FRAN: All right. But only under protest.

NICK kisses her as CALLIE returns with her husband, who carries a shotgun. CALLIE takes FRAN's arm and they leave. The camera dollies back to show the crowd dispersing; some in cars and some on foot.

DISSOLVE TO:

136 *The ATWOOD farm. A car approaches carrying the three men assigned to check it. The car pulls up in front of the house and they get out.*

CUT TO:

137 *Closer. The men are all carrying guns. They go up to the front door, knock and call. They wait a moment and go inside. After a moment, they*

come out again and start toward the barn, still calling. They enter the barn.

CUT TO:

138 *Barn interior. They find the skeleton of the cow and ATWOOD. ATWOOD's shotgun is lying near him. One of the men picks it up and looks around. He sees where the pellets hit the side of the stall, goes over and examines it. The three men look at each other.*

CUT TO:

139 *The sheriff and the two men approaching the VARNER farm. Each carries a gun. They look around. Everything is quiet. They go to the front door. The sheriff knocks and calls. He hears no answer, opens the door and walks in.*

CUT TO:

140 *Interior of VARNER house. The three men walk through the house looking around and almost collide with plump, middle-aged EDNA VARNER as she comes out of the bathroom wearing only a towel. She screams, runs back into the bathroom, and slams the door. The men laugh in relieved embarrassment.*

EDNA (O.S.): What are you doing here?

SHERIFF: I'm sorry, Mrs. Varner. I called and you didn't answer your telephone.

EDNA (O.S.): I heard it ringing when I was in the barn, but I couldn't get back in time. What's wrong?

SHERIFF: We're evacuating the town. Where's your husband?

EDNA (O.S.): He went to Graham to buy more paint. What's going on?

SHERIFF: Get some things together and we'll explain on the way.

EDNA (O.S.): What about Ralph?

SHERIFF: We've got a roadblock set up. They'll tell him where you are.

EDNA (O.S.): Okay, but this better be important. Now, please, go in the other room!

They move away grinning.

CUT TO:

141 DOC, AARON, and BELINDA getting out of their car at the WILLIAMS farm. They go to the front door, knock and call. When they get no answer, they walk around the house to the back. All are carrying guns. They see MYRNA WILLIAMS' skeleton near the pallet but there is no sign of the baby. They move closer and see the bowl of shelled peas, and the baby's toy.

AARON: Where's the baby?

DOC: Check the house.

AARON and BELINDA go into the house while DOC searches around the yard. After a moment, they emerge from the house.

AARON: The baby's not in there.

They look at each other questioningly.

CUT TO:

- 142** *The creature. It drags the paralyzed body of a rabbit. It drags the rabbit into a freshly dug hole in an embankment.*

CUT TO:

- 143** *Interior of the nest. The nest is an excavation about four feet in diameter with two tunnel entrances. The paralyzed bodies of several small animals and the WILLIAMS baby are in the nest. The creature enters through one of the tunnels and places the rabbit with the others. It checks the baby and each of the animals, then begins to wash and preen itself.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 144** *Several shots of armed groups searching the town and the woods.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 145** *One of the groups finds SAM TATE's overturned car with his skeleton lying half in and half out.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 146** *One of the roadblocks. A car approaches and is turned back.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 147** *DOC's house interior. He, AARON, and BELINDA and a couple of men are boarding up the windows and any place the creature might get in.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 148** *The schoolhouse interior. Another group is boarding it up.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 149** *The Eliasville school bus. At first only a long stretch of unpaved country road is visible. Then the bus comes into view in the distance. It approaches and passes the camera.*

CUT TO:

- 150** *School bus interior. It is nearly full of children. The driver is a middle-aged man. The bus moves along the road intercutting between it and the occupants. DARLENE WATSON, age eight, gets out of her seat with her books and goes to the front of the bus in preparation to get off.*

CUT TO:

- 151** *A mailbox at the end of a lane leading off the road. The bus approaches and stops, the door on the side away from the lane. DARLENE can be seen getting off. The door closes and the bus drives on. DARLENE crosses the road, checks the mailbox and starts up the lane.*

CUT TO:

- 152** *Another angle. The farmhouse can be seen at the end of the lane. The little girl starts walking*

toward it. She sees something move in the weeds and stops. She edges to the other side of the lane. The creature steps out of the weeds. DARLENE screams, drops her books, and runs back to the road. The creature watches her and then follows. The bus is still in sight a distance down the road. The girl runs after it screaming. The creature follows.

CUT TO:

153 *Interior of bus looking out back window. DARLENE can be seen far down the road running after it. Then the bus goes around a corner and she disappears from view.*

CUT TO:

154 *Tracking with DARLENE. She grows more panicky when the bus disappears. She looks behind her.*

CUT TO:

155 *Tracking with the creature following her.*

CUT TO:

156 *CLOSE ON DARLENE.*

CUT TO:

157 *Tracking behind the creature and DARLENE. The but comes into view backing around the corner.*

CUT TO:

158 *Interior of bus. The children are shouting and carrying on. The bus driver looks back and sees DARLENE. There is no place to turn around, so he begins backing rapidly. The children all crowd to the back of the bus.*

CUT TO:

159 *DARLENE running. She falls. She looks back at the creature. It rushes at her, leaps on her back, and stings her. She screams.*

CUT TO:

160 *Interior of bus. The children see what is happening and begin screaming and yelling louder.*

CUT TO:

161 *The creature stands on DARLENE's body watching the bus approaching. The children are crowded against the back window looking in awe and excitement. The bus stops a few yards from DARLENE and the creature.*

CUT TO:

162 *Exterior of bus door. The door opens and the driver gets out motioning for the kids to stay put. He walks cautiously toward the creature.*

CUT TO:

163 *The creature on DARLENE's back. The bus driver approaches.*

CUT TO:

164 CLOSE ON *the creature. It chitters warningly.*

CUT TO:

165 *The bus driver. He picks up a large stick from the ditch and moves closer.*

CUT TO:

166 *The creature backs away.*

CUT TO:

167 *The driver goes to DARLENE and attempts to pick her up. The creature rushes at him and stings him. The driver screams and falls.*

CUT TO:

168 *Exterior bus back window. The children who have been watching in silent fascination begin screaming and yelling again.*

CUT TO:

169 *The creature. It looks up at the children.*

CUT TO:

170 *Behind creature, the children at the window.*

CUT TO:

171 *Another angle. The creature moves toward the bus.*

CUT TO:

172 *Inside the bus. The children watch the creature in terror.*

CUT TO:

173 *The creature goes under the bus.*

CUT TO:

174 *Bus interior. The two paralyzed people can be seen through the window as the children frantically move from one window to another trying to see. The camera pans slowly across the frightened children to the open door of the bus.*

CUT TO:

175 *One of the older boys in the group turns and sees the open door. Worried, he worms his way through the press of children and makes his way to the door.*

CUT TO:

176 *Looking in through the open door. He reaches for the lever and looks down at the steps. He is startled.*

CUT TO:

177 *Boy's POV. The creature is about to crawl into the bus.*

CUT TO:

178 *The boy slams the door in the creature's face. The creature's angry chitter is heard.*

CUT TO:

179 *Creature's POV. It moves around the bus looking up at the windows. The children move with it, watching it and yelling.*

CUT TO:

180 *A group of searchers in the woods. One of them holds up his hand as a signal for the others to be quiet. They hear the distant screaming of the children.*

CUT TO:

181 *The creature. It abandons the bus and moves to the bus driver and DARLENE. It begins tearing away the driver's shirt. There is the sound of a rifle shot and an eruption of dirt where the bullet strikes near the creature. It jumps, chittering loudly and turns to look.*

CUT TO:

182 *Creature's POV. The group of men comes running out of the woods.*

CUT TO:

183 *The creature. It runs into the weeds.*

CUT TO:

184 *The bus door opens and the children come pouring out, running to the group of men. They are all yelling and talking at once. Some of the men examine the bodies.*

CUT TO:

MAN: They're still alive!

The boy who closed the bus door goes to them.

BOY: It looked like a giant ant or wasp or something.
It stung them.

POLICEMAN: Get them on the bus. All you kids get back on. One of you men drive the bus back to Graham. Did anybody else get off?

BOY: Yes. Two others back up the road.

POLICEMAN: Okay. You show the driver where to go and pick them up again. Your parents are all in Graham, or should be. Hurry up! Get going!

The children all scramble back on the bus. The man who elected to drive turns it around by backing into the WATSON lane and starts back the way it came while the rest of the men continue after the creature.

DISSOLVE TO:

185 *The sheriff hangs up the phone in DOC's living room. AARON, DOC, BELINDA, and NICK are present.*

SHERIFF: My God! The school bus! No one thought to call the school!

AARON: Didn't any of the parents go to the school when they got to Graham?

DOC glances at his watch.

DOC: It probably had already left before they got there.

SHERIFF: It was still my responsibility. Darlene Watson and the driver are both in the hospital.

NICK: Did anyone see it?

SHERIFF: The whole bus load of kids saw it. They all pretty well agree that it looked like a giant ant or wasp about eighteen inches long, but that it didn't look *exactly* like an ant or wasp either. It stings like a wasp but doesn't have wings. One of the men took a shot at it and it ran into the brush. They haven't spotted it again. The Watson girl and the driver were stung. They're paralyzed completely but still alive.

DOC: Apparently it hasn't grown any. That's something I was afraid of with the amount of food it's consuming. Paralyzed but still alive. I wonder why?

AARON: What do you mean?

DOC: There's a reason for everything in nature; even, I imagine, on another planet. If the thing stings its victims and the sting paralyzes without killing, there must be a reason.

NICK: Maybe it's just to get them to hold still while it eats them.

DOC: If that were the only reason, there would be no point in not killing them. If you consider venomous earth creatures, that's almost always the case. The ones that paralyze rather than kill have special reasons. Most spiders paralyze because they store the food for later consumption. But this thing doesn't seem to do that. Then there's the tarantula hawk,

a kind of wasp that paralyzes its victims—always a tarantula—and then lays its eggs on the paralyzed, but still living, body. When the eggs hatch, the tarantula is food for the newborn tarantula hawks. I'm wondering why we didn't find the body of the Williams baby.

SHERIFF: You mean this thing is likely to lay eggs?

DOC: It's a possibility. But then, it always takes a male and a female tarantula hawk. This thing is alone. Of course, there are earth creatures that don't require a partner to reproduce.

NICK: My God! We can't even find *one*. What would we do if there were hundreds of the things?

DOC: I don't want to sound like an alarmist, Sheriff, but if we don't find this thing by tonight, have you considered calling in the army?

SHERIFF: I've been thinking about that very thing, Doc.

The walkie-talkie suddenly comes alive.

VOICE: Sheriff.

The sheriff picks it up.

SHERIFF: Yes?

VOICE: This is Pete at the east roadblock. There's a TV mobile unit and a bunch of reporters here. They want through.

SHERIFF: Oh, Lord, I was afraid of that. I guess we can't keep them out. Let 'em in. Send them to the schoolhouse. I'll talk to them there.

VOICE: Right, Sheriff.

The sheriff puts down the walkie-talkie.

SHERIFF: Wish me luck.

He leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

- 186** *The creature. It moves cautiously into a chicken pen. The chickens cackle and scatter. It looks around and then goes into the chicken house. There is a flurry of cackling and fluttering about.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 187** *The creature's nest. It enters dragging a paralyzed chicken. The nest contains a great many more small animals than before. The creature puts the chicken with the others and begins to wash and preen itself. After a moment, it becomes slightly agitated and nervously moves about. It begins clearing a space in the middle of the nest. Then it crouches in the cleared area and lays, one after the other, five translucent red eggs about the size of large marbles. It looks at the eggs, touches each, and leaves the nest.*

DISSOLVE TO:

- 188** *Eliasville. The sun is about to set. A couple of men walk by, carrying guns. Camera pans with them as they enter the schoolhouse.*

CUT TO:

- 189** *Schoolhouse interior. The two men enter. The searchers are all gathered there. The sheriff stands up.*

SHERIFF: Is that everyone?

MEL: That's the last of them.

SHERIFF: Did anyone find anything that might be significant?

MAN: I found one of my horses eaten and the fence down where the rest of them had run off.

2ND MAN: We found a lot of dead animals, Sheriff.

REPORTER: How's the Watson girl and the bus driver?

SHERIFF: No change. The last I heard, they had decided to wait and see if the paralysis would wear off.

NEWSMAN: Excuse me, Sheriff. We've made a drawing of the creature from the descriptions given by the children on the bus. We'd like to check it with the men who fired at it.

He holds up a large drawing that is very much like the creature.

MAN: We didn't get a very good look at it, but that looks like it to me.

2ND MAN: Yeah, except it was red.

Several of the others nod and agree.

NEWSMAN: Thank you, gentlemen.

SHERIFF: There's not any more we can do tonight. There's no point in looking in the dark. If you want to stay here tonight, you can. I think we've fixed it up so it'll be safe. If you want to join your families and return in the morning, you can do that too.

MAN: I gotta tend my stock. The cows gotta be milked and the animals fed.

2ND MAN: We went by your place this afternoon. Your brood sow and one of your cows had been eaten. There was no sign of any of the others.

MAN: Damnation! If we don't kill that thing, there won't be any animals alive in the county.

SHERIFF: If any of you want to check on your homes, don't go alone. If you stay here tonight, we've got

food and plenty of coffee, courtesy of Callie Overcash. Everyone get going. I don't want you out after dark.

MEL: We're gonna have to keep up the roadblocks tonight. This place has suddenly become a tourist attraction.

SHERIFF: Good Lord, yes. Don't let any sightseers in. I think your men will be safe if they stay in the car and keep the windows rolled up.

The men begin dispersing.

DISSOLVE TO:

190 *Eliasville. Night. The town is deserted. Lights can be seen at DOC's house and the school. A dog trots through the street. It stops suddenly and begins to growl. It moves cautiously, still growling, to the river bank. It moves to a clump of bushes and begins barking. The bushes move and the creature's chitter is heard. The dog leaps into the bushes, growling fiercely. Then, he gives a yelp of pain and the bushes are still.*

CUT TO:

191 *Kitchen of DOC's house. DOC, BELINDA, NICK, and AARON are eating. AARON finishes, leans back and rubs his stomach. He sees BELINDA grinning at him and grins back sheepishly.*

AARON: Well, I haven't eaten anything since breakfast.
DOC: We understand perfectly. If everyone's finished, you can all help me with the dishes and we can get to bed.

NICK: You're not gonna stay up and see yourself on the ten o'clock news?

DOC: I saw myself on the six o'clock news. Come on, quit trying to get out of it.

They get up and start on the dishes.

BELINDA: I wonder where it is and what it's doing.

AARON: Let's hope it's staying in the area. If it should take off cross country, it may never be found.

DOC: I rather wish it had taken off cross country.

AARON: You mean, if it stays around here, there must be a reason?

DOC: Yes. And I hate to think what it might be.

DISSOLVE TO:

192 *The creature. It approaches a cat that spits and arches its back. The creature darts toward the cat but the cat is quicker and gets up a tree. The creature approaches the bottom of the tree and looks up at the cat. It begins to climb. The cat snarls at it. It reaches the limb on which the cat sits and begins to crawl out on it. The cat leaps to the ground and streaks out of sight. The creature looks after it and starts back down the tree.*

DISSOLVE TO:

193 *The nest. The eggs are now the size of golfballs.*

DISSOLVE TO:

194 *Doc in bed asleep.*

DISSOLVE TO:

DISSOLVE TO:

196 AARON *on the couch in DOC's living room. The couch is made up as a bed but AARON isn't asleep. He sits smoking a cigarette, wearing only pajama bottoms. After a moment, BELINDA enters wearing a robe.*

AARON: I thought you were asleep.

BELINDA: I couldn't.

AARON: Neither could I.

BELINDA: I heard you moving around.

AARON: I was thinking. About my father and the creature and . . . about you.

BELINDA smiles. He holds out his arm and she sits beside him so he can put his arm around her. She leans her head on his shoulder.

BELINDA: What were you thinking about me?

AARON: Oh . . . things. Very nice things.

BELINDA: You're being tricky again.

AARON: No. No, I'm not being tricky.

She doesn't answer. They sit for a moment.

AARON: Are you going to sleep?

BELINDA: No. I'm listening to you breathe. You have very lovely breathing.

AARON turns his head to look at her, grinning, but her eyes are closed and she has a slight smile on her face.

AARON: Now who's being tricky?

BELINDA: I am.

She opens her eyes and looks into his. He kisses her lightly on the lips.

BELINDA: I thought country boys were supposed to be shy and a little backward.

AARON: We are. I've known you for nearly thirty-six hours.

He kisses her again, more energetically.

AARON: Were you . . . you and Laney?

BELINDA: No. It may be utterly tasteless to say so, but I didn't even like him very much. Fran was playing matchmaker but it was something of a disaster. Besides, I get uncomfortable around men who are prettier than I am.

AARON: My God! I just thought. Did anyone notify Laney's parents or anybody?

BELINDA: Fran did. They'll be here tomorrow. Not here, in Graham.

AARON: Are you going to see them?

BELINDA: No. I couldn't. I've never even met them. What could I say? Fran's there, she knows them.

She suddenly hugs AARON tightly and buries her face on his chest.

Oh, Aaron, I hate to be a cry-baby, but I'm scared.

AARON: I know. So am I.

BELINDA: What if they never find it? What if Doc was right and it reproduces? How could we fight hundreds when we can't even find one?

AARON lifts her head up and kisses her.

AARON: Come on, now. Don't get hysterical on me.

BELINDA: I am not hysterical. I was just playing on your sympathies so you would kiss me again.

AARON (*grins*): You'd better go back to bed and get some sleep. We'll have a busy day tomorrow.

She gets up and walks slowly to the door. AARON watches her. At the door she pauses and turns.

BELINDA: Aaron. Stay with me tonight.

He looks at her for a moment, gets up and walks to her. They stand facing each other. She puts her arms around him and begins sobbing quietly on his chest. They move through the doorway together.

DISSOLVE TO:

197 *The creature. It moves up the walk toward DOC's house. It pauses and looks around, then moves off the walk to circle the house.*

CUT TO:

198 *DOC in bed asleep.*

CUT TO:

199 *NICK in bed asleep.*

CUT TO:

200 *AARON and BELINDA asleep in each other's arms.*

CUT TO:

201 *The creature. It finds an opening and goes under the house.*

CUT TO:

202 *Under the house. The creature moves around looking upward at the floor.*

CUT TO:

203 *Repeat 198, 199, 200.*

CUT TO:

204 *The creature. It moves under the house. It pauses and reaches upward.*

CUT TO:

205 *Interior of the house. The camera moves through the quiet rooms, passing over each sleeper and ends up in the kitchen. It moves through the room and stops at a floor-level cabinet door. There is the sound of wood tearing. After a moment, the cabinet door swings open to reveal the creature with a hole in the floor behind it. It moves out of the cabinet and across the floor.*

CUT TO:

206 *A series of short cuts of the creature exploring the house intercut with the sleepers.*

CUT TO:

207 *The creature finds a door slightly ajar. It enters.*

CUT TO:

208 *Interior NICK's room. The creature enters, pauses, and looks around the room. It moves toward the bed. It crawls over the foot of the bed and up NICK's body to his chest. It stands there for a moment looking into his face. The creature raises its stinger but NICK is too quick. He swings his arm and knocks the creature across the room. The creature chitters madly. NICK yells and leaps out of bed toward the door but trips and falls.*

CUT TO:

209 *AARON and BELINDA. She awakens suddenly and sits up.*

CUT TO:

210 *NICK. Before he can get up, the creature rushes at him, leaps onto his back, and stings him twice between the shoulder blades. NICK screams and slumps onto the floor. The creature darts away and hops about excitedly, watching NICK.*

CUT TO:

211 *BELINDA. She shakes AARON awake.*

BELINDA: Aaron! Wake up!

AARON wakes up groggily.

AARON: What? . . .

BELINDA: Wake up! I heard Nick yelling.

AARON wakes completely and they rush from the room.

CUT TO:

212 *Doc still asleep.*

CUT TO:

213 *The hall. AARON and BELINDA rush into NICK's room.*

CUT TO:

214 *CLOSE ON the creature. It raises its head to look at them, a piece of bloody flesh in its mouth.*

CUT TO:

215 *Behind the creature. AARON and BELINDA stand in the doorway. They stare at it. The creature chitters at them. BELINDA turns and runs.*

CUT TO:

216 *The hall. AARON grabs a broom leaning in the hall and moves into the room with it.*

CUT TO:

217 *The creature backs away as AARON advances. Suddenly, it rushes at him and he swats it with the broom. He backs into the hall.*

CUT TO:

218 *The hall. AARON backs into the hall as BELINDA rushes up with a rifle. She raises the rifle to her shoulder and, as the creature emerges from the bedroom, she fires. The creature flops into the air with a shriek.*

CUT TO:

219 *DOC. He awakens and sits up in bed.*

CUT TO:

220 *The creature. It rushes away chittering madly. Belinda fires again but misses as it darts into the kitchen. They rush after it to see it disappear into the hole in the floor. DOC rushes out of his room. AARON and BELINDA almost run into him as they rush back to NICK.*

DOC: What is it?

AARON: It got in the house.

DOC: In the house?

BELINDA: Nick's hurt.

They rush into NICK's room but DOC stops outside the door and looks at the floor. One of the creature's legs lies there. He rushes into the room.

CUT TO:

221 *NICK's room. AARON and BELINDA are kneeling by NICK. NICK lies face down on the floor, blood pouring from a gash in his shoulder. DOC feels his pulse.*

Doc: He's still alive. Help me get him into the office.

DOC and AARON pick Nick up and carry him out of the room. BELINDA follows.

CUT TO:

222 *The hall. BELINDA looks at the creature's leg lying on the floor. There is a pounding on the front door. BELINDA runs to open it.*

CUT TO:

223 *The living room. BELINDA opens the door. MEL and a couple of policemen, all carrying rifles, enter.*

MEL: What happened? I heard shots.

BELINDA: It got in the house. Nick's been stung.

MEL: Is he alive?

BELINDA: Yes.

MEL: How did it get in?

BELINDA: In the kitchen, through the floor.

MEL motions to the other men.

MEL: Come on.

BELINDA: Its leg. I shot off its leg. It's in the hall.

MEL and the two officers rush out of the room.

BELINDA goes into the office.

CUT TO:

224 *The office. DOC is working frantically on NICK's shoulder trying to stop the bleeding. AARON turns*

as BELINDA enters. She goes to him. He puts his arm around her.

AARON: Pretty good shootin'.

BELINDA: No. It was lousy. All I did was shoot off its leg.

AARON: Its leg?

BELINDA: Yes, it's in the hall.

AARON leaves the room with BELINDA following.

CUT TO:

225 *The hall. They look but the leg is no longer on the floor. They go into the kitchen.*

CUT TO:

226 *The kitchen. MEL and one of the officers are looking at the leg which lies on a handkerchief on the table. The other officer examines the hole in the floor. AARON goes to the table and examines the leg. DOC enters.*

DOC: I've done all I can do here. He has to go to the hospital.

MEL: How is he?

DOC: He's paralyzed. Two stings in the back. The bite on his shoulder shouldn't be too serious if there's no infection. We can't waste any time getting him to the hospital.

MEL motions to the other officers.

MEL: Take Mr. Benedict in the patrol car.

The two officers leave. BELINDA follows them. DOC notices the hole for the first time.

DOC: I'd forgotten about that.

MEL: What is it?

DOC: Used to be a cistern there. When I got indoor plumbing and remodeled the kitchen, I covered it with plywood because the cabinet was over it. We'll get some heavy lumber in the morning and fix it. I don't think it's coming back tonight.

He looks at the leg, as do AARON and MEL.

DISSOLVE TO:

227 *The nest. The eggs are the size of baseballs. The creature crouches nearby worrying with the stub of its leg and chittering plaintively to itself.*

DISSOLVE TO:

228 *Eliasville. Morning. The town is quiet and deserted.*

DISSOLVE TO:

229 *Graham. It is a good-sized town. The main business district circles the courthouse square which occupies two city blocks. The courthouse is on one and a small park is on the other. The town is crowded even at this early hour because of all the excitement in Eliasville.*

CUT TO:

230 *Sign reading "Graham Hospital." Camera pans to the building.*

CUT TO:

231 NICK's room in the hospital. NICK is in bed, his shoulder heavily bandaged. FRAN sits beside him. AARON and BELINDA enter. FRAN gets up and goes to them.

BELINDA: How is he?

FRAN: I don't know. I think his shoulder will be okay but it may always be a little stiff. They don't know about the paralysis.

AARON: What about the bus driver and the little girl?

FRAN: They're still the same. The venom doesn't seem to have had any effect on them other than the paralysis. I don't remember all they said but apparently there's nothing they can do.

AARON: I'm sure they'll find out what to do. On the news last night, they were talking about some famous toxicologists coming here to study the situation.

FRAN: Yeah, the place is crawling with visiting doctors, newsmen and all kinds of gawkers. The state police have put up roadblocks for thirty miles in every direction. Nobody gets through unless they can prove they have business here. I was interviewed four times last night. Once by each network and a Dallas paper.

BELINDA: Yeah, this is the biggest story since the moonwalk. Our first visitor from outer space.

FRAN: If anybody asks who you are, tell 'em you're deaf and blind and you just arrived from Duluth.

They look up as CALLIE enters.

CALLIE: Hello, Miss Hancks. Aaron.

They smile and nod.

Fran, honey, you've been here since midnight. Come on back to the house and eat some breakfast and get some sleep. There's nothing you can do here.

FRAN: I know, Callie.

CALLIE: Come on, now. You two also, Aaron.

AARON: We've already had breakfast but we can use some coffee.

CALLIE: Good. Come on, then. There's about two million reporters down the hall waitin' to see Nick but the sheriff won't let them in. We'll go out the back way.

BELINDA: That's the way we came in.

FRAN goes over, looks down at NICK, leans over and kisses him on the lips. She goes back to the others and they leave the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

232 *The four of them walk through the courthouse square. The streets are jammed with cars and the sidewalks are crowded with people. Suddenly there is the sound of a police siren. A police car enters the square clearing the way for a caravan of army trucks loaded with soldiers, weapons carriers, and jeeps. They proceed through the square and out on the highway leading to Eliasville. The four watch them. They continue on past the square and down a side street to a small neat house. They enter.*

CUT TO:

233 *Interior of the house. They are met by CALLIE's sister, who is near CALLIE's age and general appearance.*

CALLIE: This is my sister, Jewel Ridley. Jewel, this is Belinda Hancks, a friend of Fran's. And you know Aaron Hibbits.

JEWEL: Yes. Hello, Belinda. You two had a close call last night.

AARON: You can say that again.

He puts his arm around BELINDA.

AARON: If it hadn't been for Annie Oakley, here, no telling what might have happened.

JEWEL: Everybody sit down. Breakfast's ready.

AARON: Just coffee for us.

They sit down while JEWEL pours coffee and CALLIE helps serve.

BELINDA: Fran. What do you think about me quitting my job and moving to a small town?

FRAN: A particular small town or just any small town?

BELINDA: A particular one.

FRAN: As the wife of the owner and operator of the only gas station?

BELINDA: Yes.

FRAN: I think it's terrific. Congratulations!

She gives BELINDA a hug.

AARON: Excuse me for interrupting, but I don't remember proposing to anyone.

BELINDA: Well, since you're a country boy, shy and a little backward, I thought you'd probably get around to it. And I just wanted you to know what the answer would be if you did.

AARON: Oh, you did, huh?

BELINDA: Yes, I did.

FRAN looks from one to the other with a smile.

FRAN: I would say that, since he didn't give you a punch in the nose, he's been thinking about it.

AARON: It has crossed my mind.

CALLIE: You could do a lot worse, Aaron.

AARON (*grins*): Does that also mean I could do a lot better?

CALLIE (*flustered*): No. No, I didn't mean . . .

BELINDA (*laughs*): No doubt he could do a lot better, but it's not a good idea to let him know it.

AARON: I think I'm outnumbered.

JEWEL: Now that your father's gone, you need a wife, Aaron.

AARON: I surrender.

FRAN: See, my matchmaking worked after all.

BELINDA: What are you talking about?

FRAN: If I hadn't fixed you up with Laney, you wouldn't have met Aaron.

BELINDA loses some of her high spirits at the mention of LANEY's name.

BELINDA: When . . . when are Laney's parents due?

FRAN: About 1 o'clock. I heard this morning that they weren't releasing any of the . . . bodies, though. I . . . dread the whole thing.

JEWEL: It's a terrible shame. All those people, those poor people.

She brightens.

JEWEL: They'll catch it, don't worry. Now that the soldier boys are here, they'll catch it.

CUT TO:

234 *The creature. It enters the nest with the body of some small animal and places it with the rest. The nest is just about as full as it can get. The creature goes to the eggs, which are now full-size, and touches them, chittering quietly over*

them. It then leaves the nest for the last time, its work done.

DISSOLVE TO:

235 *The hospital room of the bus driver. He lies still paralyzed. A number of people are gathered about his bed. A doctor fills a hypodermic, hesitates, looks at the others, and gives the bus driver an injection. He steps back, his eyes on the man on the bed. The people in the room watch intently. After a moment, the bus driver's eyelids flicker and open. His hand moves slightly. The people look at each other with smiles and a relaxing of tension. The bus driver moves his arm and rubs his face with his hand.*

CUT TO:

236 *JEWEL's telephone ringing. She answers.*

JEWEL: Hello. . . . Yes, she's here. . . .

JEWEL begins to smile.

JEWEL: Yes, I'll tell her. . . . Yes, thank you. Good-bye.

She hangs up the phone and goes into the living room.

CUT TO:

237 *The living room. FRAN, AARON, CALLIE, and BELINDA are watching FRAN being interviewed on television. The interview is heard softly in the*

background during the following dialogue. JEWEL rushes in.

JEWEL: Fran! That was the hospital. They've found, what do you call it, an antitoxin. Your husband's okay. He's not paralyzed anymore.

FRAN looks stunned for a moment and then begins to cry happily. BELINDA puts her arm around her.

AARON: Don't just stand there. Come on, let's go see him.

FRAN laughs and cries at the same time.

FRAN: Okay!

They hurry out the door while CALLIE and JEWEL watch, smiling.

CUT TO:

238 *The creature. It moves through an alley. A man comes out of a door to empty some garbage. The creature watches him. The man empties the garbage and turns. He sees the creature standing, watching him. He stares at it, drops the garbage can and begins backing away. The creature chitters and darts at him. The man yells and trips over the garbage cans. The creature leaps on him and stings him twice in the chest and darts away, hopping about excitedly, watching the man. The man screams when stung and becomes still. The creature creeps cautiously toward him, then darts in, stings him again and hops away, watching. The man does not move. The creature goes to him and begins ripping away his shirt,*

then begins to eat. After a moment, there is a woman's scream. The creature looks up. A woman stands at the end of the alley, watching. The sidewalk behind is crowded with people. They push forward, see what is happening and begin yelling and exclaiming. The creature looks at them and becomes very agitated. It chitters loudly and rushes at the woman. She screams and tries to get away but the press of people have clogged the alley mouth. The creature stings her and she falls. The others begin trying to get out of its way. It darts in and stings someone else.

CUT TO:

239 *LONG SHOT, overhead, of the courthouse square. It is packed with people. People are moving toward the mouth of the alley on the far side of the square from the camera to investigate the commotion. The activity around the alley grows more frantic with more yelling and screaming. People try to move away from the alley while those farther away try to get closer. Gradually the tide of people turns as those farther away discover what is happening. The mouth of the alley is finally cleared as the people reverse directions and flee. As the crowd leaves, several dozen bodies are left behind scattered about the alley entrance.*

CUT TO:

240 *Ground level as the people stream toward and past the camera. AARON, BELINDA, and FRAN meet the tide of people. They look about in be-*

wilderment but soon discover what has happened from the shouts of the people. They back into a doorway to keep from being trampled.

BELINDA: We left the rifles in the car!

AARON: We'd better get them. The army and the police are all out near Eliasville, looking for it. Nobody expected it to show up here.

The tide of people begins to slacken. They run toward the hospital where the car is parked. There are a number of people running in that direction.

CUT TO:

241 *The creature. It stands in the street, hopping about, chittering madly. It is in a frenzy of killing. It sees a large number of people watching it from a store window where they have taken refuge. It darts toward them, leaping against the glass. The people yell and draw back. The creature picks itself up from where it has fallen and looks at the people behind the glass. It walks to the glass, rears up and examines it. It worries at the glass with its mandibles. It begins banging on the glass with its mandibles. The glass cracks. The people begin screaming and backing further away. One man runs out the door. The creature darts at him and stings him. The man screams and falls. The creature stings him again between the shoulder blades. Several others who had started to follow him rush back in and close the door. The creature stands on the man's back looking at the people who have once more crowded against the window. It darts to the win-*

dow and the people draw back. It begins once more to pound on the window.

CUT TO:

242 *AARON, BELINDA, and FRAN as they reach the car parked in front of the hospital.*

AARON: You two go in the hospital and tell them what's happening.

BELINDA: I'm going with you.

She grabs the guns from the car. AARON looks at her in exasperation.

AARON: Belinda!

BELINDA: Come on, you're wasting time.

She reaches up and gives him a hurried kiss on the mouth.

FRAN: There's no point in arguing, Aaron.

AARON (*grins*): I can see that.

FRAN waves and runs toward the hospital.

FRAN: Good luck, you two!

AARON and BELINDA wave, check and load the guns, put extra ammunition in pockets and run back toward the square.

CUT TO:

243 *The creature. It pounds on the glass. A large chunk falls out and the creature jumps in through the hole. The people panic. A number run out the door, several fall through the remainder of the plate-glass window. Others are*

knocked down in the panic. The creature begins an orgy of stinging until there is no one left in the store who isn't paralyzed. It begins to eat.

CUT TO:

244 *AARON and BELINDA run into the square, deserted except for a few people who run from the store. AARON stops one of the men.*

AARON: Where is it?

The man points to the store and continues running. They cautiously approach the store and look in through the broken window. The creature looks up from its eating. It chitters loudly. AARON raises the rifle but before he can fire, the creature darts out of sight.

AARON: We can't shoot in there. Too many people.

Several other men arrive with shotguns and rifles.

AARON: We've got it trapped in there. Some of you go around the back and make sure it can't get out.

Two or three of the men leave.

AARON: Is there a way through the roof or the walls?

MAN: I don't know about the roof but the walls are brick with no openings into the other stores.

AARON: You'd better get up on the roof and make sure.

The man leaves with another man.

2ND MAN: Why don't we seal it up and starve it to death?

AARON: We can't. There are a bunch of people in there. They're just paralyzed now, but if we leave

it in there, they'll be eaten. We gotta drive it out
somesway.

2ND MAN: Tear gas?

AARON: Is there any?

3RD MAN: Sheriff might have some.

A couple of policemen run up. The crowd is beginning to drift back.

AARON: It's trapped in there and we've got to get it
out before it eats all those people. Is there any tear
gas?

POLICEMAN: Tear gas? Not that I know of. What would
we need with tear gas?

2ND POLICEMAN: Maybe the army's got some.

POLICEMAN: They'll be here in a little while. I've
already called Mel and told him the thing was in
town.

AARON: By the time they get here, it could kill all those
people. Do you realize how fast that thing eats?

2ND POLICEMAN: What can we do? Anybody goes in
there is gonna get stung and maybe killed.

CUT TO:

245 *The creature. It crawls over a woman's body and
then begins to eat.*

CUT TO:

246 *The square. Several ambulances arrive from the
hospital and begin gathering up the bodies scat-
tered about the street. People begin edging closer.*

CUT TO:

247 *The group in front of the store.*

AARON: I wish we could keep those people out of the way. If there's any shooting, somebody's liable to get hit.

POLICEMAN: There's just the two of us. Everyone else is out beating the bushes. We'll do our best.

They leave and begin warning the people to clear the area, without much luck.

BELINDA: What're we gonna do?

AARON: I don't know. Wait! What about fire extinguishers? CO₂ extinguishers. If we went in the back door with about a half a dozen and filled the whole shop, it might force it out the front.

MAN: It might not, too.

BELINDA: It's too dangerous, Aaron.

AARON: We've got to do something. You men get the extinguishers. There should be some in most of these shops. Belinda, you and all the men with guns wait out here and get it when it comes out.

AARON and several of the men enter adjoining stores.

CUT TO:

248 *Interior of store entered by AARON. He looks around, spots the extinguisher, gets it and runs out the back.*

CUT TO:

249 *The alley behind the stores. AARON emerges from the back door of the store and the others join him carrying fire extinguishers. They con-*

gregate around the back door which is being guarded by the previous two men. AARON cautiously opens the door and enters. The other men are ready to follow.

CUT TO:

250 *Interior of a storeroom. AARON enters from the alley. The other men follow. He goes to the door into the main shop. He opens it slowly. He sees the creature devouring a body. The creature looks up and chitters. Aaron aims the extinguisher and sends a cloud of CO₂ at the creature. It leaps away toward the front of the shop. AARON advances.*

CUT TO:

251 *Interior of store. AARON advances toward the creature, spraying more CO₂.*

CUT TO:

252 *BELINDA and the armed men wait in front of the store. They can see the clouds of CO₂.*

CUT TO:

253 *Store interior. The other men enter from the storeroom and line up beside AARON. They all begin spraying. The creature backs away, keeping out of range of the CO₂. It attempts to get past them but is cut off. They force it to and out the smashed window. One of the men in the street fires but misses.*

CUT TO:

254 *The street. The creature darts out of the shop and across the street too fast for any of them to hit it. BELINDA takes careful aim but the creature gets between her and the crowd so she cannot fire. The crowd panics and begins running away. The creature runs across the square as the crowd parts hurriedly to let it pass. AARON grabs his rifle and they all give chase. The creature is now intent on escaping and does not attempt to sting anyone. AARON gets a clear shot and fires but hits the ground underneath the creature. It leaps into the air and continues running.*

CUT TO:

255 *A car travels down the street, driven by an elderly lady. The car gets in the creature's path and it leaps up on the hood. The woman screams, loses control of the car, and plows into a gas pump at a service station. The gas pump explodes. The creature is flung clear but it is injured and in a frenzy begins stinging the air. At each jab, a drop of venom drips from the stinger. It recovers enough to run clumsily down an alley.*

CUT TO:

256 *The square. The crowd begins to flow in the direction of the burning automobile. The group with the rifles trails after the creature. They race into the alley, stop and look around but see nothing. They hear the siren of the sheriff's car*

returning. They go back to the street as the sheriff's car noses through the crowd. The fire engines also approach the burning station. The sheriff and his deputy alight from the car and meet AARON and the group.

AARON: We lost it in there. It'll probably head back for the woods.

SHERIFF: Let the army handle it. You've done your share.

He looks around at the crowd.

How am I gonna get all these people to go home?

AARON: I'm glad that's your problem and not mine.

SHERIFF: Thanks a lot.

BELINDA: Come on, let's go see Nick.

They wave to the sheriff and move away.

DISSOLVE TO:

257 *NICK's hospital room. NICK is sitting up in bed. FRAN sits on the bed and DOC stands nearby. They look up as the door opens and AARON and BELINDA enter.*

AARON (*grins*): Hey, how's it going?

NICK: Pretty good. I may have to skip the Olympics this year.

FRAN: He's gonna be all right. He's just enjoying all the attention.

NICK: I guess you know that commotion out there broke up a marvelous interview I was giving to all three networks.

DOC: Don't worry, they'll be back.

NICK: Thanks, you two—for getting that thing off me.

DOC: Yeah, the reporters have been looking for you.

BELINDA: Guess we'd better head for the hills.

NICK: Fran told me that you were gonna be married.

AARON: Well, she's kinda bossy and obstinate, but I guess she'll be okay for the first one.

DOC: If you'll excuse me, I'm sure that I can be of some use down in the emergency ward. They're bringing 'em in by the dozens. See you kids later.

They all say good-bye and DOC leaves. AARON and BELINDA make themselves comfortable.

NICK: Are they ever gonna catch it?

AARON: I think there's a good chance now. From what I could see, it was hurt pretty bad.

CUT TO:

258 *The creature. It is in open country, moving haltingly. It stops, attempts to preen itself, chittering sadly. Suddenly, a raven lands near it. The creature looks up and chitters a warning. The raven flaps its wings and flutters up a few feet but settles back. Another raven lands. They begin walking around the creature which watches them. The creature charges one of the ravens but is too slow. The raven flutters out of the way as the other rushes in and pecks at the creature. Two more ravens land. The creature watches them and they watch the creature. One of the ravens flies at the creature. The creature turns to meet it and grabs it. The raven attempts to escape, fluttering madly. The creature holds it and stings it. As it does, another raven charges in and pecks a large gash in the creature's abdomen. The creature whirls around but the raven*

flies out of the way. The creature examines its wound as another raven rushes it from behind, injuring it further. More ravens arrive and they begin attacking it but it manages to kill a couple more but it is no match in its condition. The creature tries to escape but the ravens cover it and rip it to pieces and begin eating it, squabbling among themselves.

DISSOLVE TO:

259 *The nest. Froth begins to appear on the eggs.*

FADE OUT.

THE END

Contact Point

A One-Act Play

by THEODORE R. COGSWELL
and GEORGE RAE COGSWELL

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"Contact Point" is a very interesting play, but for a change let's talk about the author. Ted Cogswell has been around, as the expression goes. In the 1930s he fought in Spain with the Lincoln Brigade. Since then he has held every conceivable type of job, but it has been writing that has provided most of the bread on the table. Ted is, in personality, rather like Hemingway—tough but sensitive, and not opposed to taking a drink now and then. When he has had several, he bursts into song and dance, with jokes to boot.

Ted's writing varies in type and mood, ranging from humorous to somber, from poetic to detective-story lean. He has not written many plays, but those he has done have been quite exceptional, as "Contact Point" illustrates. Ted and his wife George frequently write together under a split byline. George? Yes! *Her name is* George, and she is a woman. (Why George? Only the Cogswells can answer that.) When Ted is not writing stories, plays, or novels, he is working on *The Forum*, an official publication of The SFWA (Science Fiction Writers of America)—the organization to which most of the established professionals and an increasing percentage of the newcomers in this field belong.

CHARACTERS

KURT BENSTER,
the pilot, aged thirty-eight

DUNCAN CLARK ("Dunc"),
astrophysicist, aged twenty-three

PAUL DAVISON ("Doc"),
extraterrestrial biologist, aged sixty-two

COLONEL WETZEL

SCENE I

The curtain opens to the control room of the Spaceship Arcturus. At stage right are the controls of the ship and the pilot's seat. To the left is a bulkhead containing a door leading to the rear of the ship. Down stage next to the bulkhead is DR. DAVISON's workbench. On the top of it is a microscope and a rack of cotton-stoppered test tubes. Between the workbench and the controls is a plotting board fastened to the rear wall with brackets. Above this and slightly to the right is a bank of dials and switches, the controls for the hyper-drive. To the left of the plotting board is an ordinary light switch. As the curtain opens DR. DAVISON is working at his table, DUNCAN CLARK is at the plotting board, and KURT BENSTER is seated at the controls speaking into a radio microphone in a bored monotonous voice.

KURT: Spaceprobe *Arcturus* calling Spaceport Chicago.
Spaceprobe *Arcturus* calling Spaceport Chicago. (DR.

DAVISON *picks up a couple of test tubes and exits left, shutting the door behind him.*) Approximate position, one hundred and eighty-six million miles out. Estimated time of arrival, thirty-two hours. Over. *(He listens for a minute but the loudspeaker emits nothing but static. He swings around.)* Damn it, Dunc, I told you your figures were off. You haven't been worth a damn since we left Alpha Centauri. Ten-to-one drive ionization won't be down enough for radio contact before 0500.

DAVISON *(enters carrying syringes and hypodermic needles)*: Time for your shots, gentlemen. *(DUNCAN and KURT roll up their sleeves and he swabs their arms.)*

KURT *(as DAVISON sticks DUNCAN)*: Find out anything yet, Doc?

DAVISON *(withdraws needle from DUNCAN's arm and turns to Kurt)*: A little. *(Lifts Kurt's arm preparatory to injection.)*

KURT: Ouch! Why don't you sharpen that thing? *(Rubs his arm and looks up.)* Good or bad?

DAVISON: I'm not sure yet, but I don't think it's good. *(Walks over to the microscope on his workbench and makes a minor adjustment. He then motions KURT to look.)* There she is, Kurt. I know its refractive index and its biaxial interference figure . . . and that's about all.

KURT *(grunts impatiently)*: Yeah, but what is it?

DAVISON *(pedantically)*: A rectangular parallelepiped bounded by pinacoidal faces. Optically anisotropic.

KURT *(mutters)*: Oh, yeah. Sure. Of course. . . . O.K., Doc, climb off it. So we picked up some dust on Centauri and we aren't feeling so good. Why make big words out of green dirt?

DAVISON: Because it's radioactive . . . and crystalline.

It's nasty stuff, Kurt. It attacks every bit of living matter it comes near . . . and there doesn't seem to be any stopping it once it gets going. I've fed everything I've got into the ship's computer. I should get a print-out in a few minutes. Then we'll know for sure.
(Exits.)

KURT (*looks into the microscope again and sings in a lugubrious voice*):

Oh, the dust blows in,
And the dust blows out.

(DUNCAN *shoves KURT aside and looks into the microscope.*) What's your rush, Dunc? It won't run away. Even if it did, there's lots more where that came from. The ship's full of it. (*Walks over to the rear wall, runs his finger along the molding, and then walking over to DUNCAN brings it up, showing it is green with the dust that has settled there.*) Here, want some?

DUNCAN (*pushing KURT's hand away, looks up from the microscope and speaks somberly*): So that's it.

KURT (*grins at him*): Purty, ain't it. Buck up, kid, you aren't a man until you've had it once. How about running a new estimate on radio contact time? Your last try was way off. (DUNCAN *sits at calculator and begins running figures.* KURT *seats himself at the controls, puts his feet up, and begins to sing to the tune of "Frankie and Johnnie."*)

Oh, I left my girl at the spaceport,
Left her at the spaceport gate,
Said, "I hate to leave you, honey,
But the Lunar Queen won't wait."

I'm outward bound
But I'll soon be back.

Now, when I blast off from Denver
With all my jets flaring red,
I'll set my course for the rising moon
That floats out there cold and dead.

I'm outward bound
But I'll soon be back.

DUNCAN: Pipe down, will you? I've got work to do.

KURT: What's the matter, man? With a voice like mine
you're lucky you don't have to pay admission.

I ain't going to hold her to three G's.
I ain't going to hold her to four.
I'm going to make that flight faster
Than she's ever been flown before.

I'm outward bound
But I'll soon be back.

DUNCAN (*blows up*): For God's sake, shut up!

KURT: Aw, relax, will you? You've been so jumpy
lately that there's no living with you.

DUNCAN: That's a good one! You mean dying with me,
don't you?

KURT: Take it easy before you blow a jet. Doc's taking
care of us.

DUNCAN: Sure, he's taking care of us; just like he took
care of Kelly and Schwartzkopf. Dr. Davison's Uni-
versal Panacea. A shot in the arm every three hours
cures everything. With the court's permission, I here-
by submit as exhibit A, three satisfied corpses.

KURT: Two, Dunc. Spencer wasn't sick and you know
it.

DUNCAN: I suppose he threw himself out through the air lock because he had claustrophobia? He knew that he was going to die . . . just like we're all going to die. If we had any guts we'd blow up the ship and get it over with instead of sitting around waiting for that green cancer to make its final jump.

KURT: Aw, climb off it. (*Gets up from the controls and walks over to DUNCAN.*) Look, kid, forget all that; Doc will see us through. (*Slaps him on the back.*) Think of what's ahead of us. Once I get this star wagon in for a landing we'll be sitting on top of the world. Think of it, Dunc, the first men to reach the stars. Sure, we lost three guys. (*Shrugs with a "so what" gesture.*) They knew the chances they were taking when they signed on. The important thing is that we got there and some of us are getting back to tell about it.

DUNCAN (*dully*): We got there. Yeah! And we got something to tell them. About Kelly standing out on the green desert with the dust swirling around him and us goggling down at him through the port. And Doc yelling, "Crack open the bottle of champagne," when the kid came clumping back into the ship with that green dust all over his space suit. "A toast to the first man to set foot on another system!" (*He raises an imaginary glass and then dashes it to the floor hysterically.*) And all the time that damned stuff was spreading through the ship and working its way down into our lungs and . . .

KURT (*grabbing him by the shoulders and shaking him*): Stop it!

DUNCAN: . . . and eating away at our insides.

KURT (*grabs him by the shirt and slaps his face several times*): Damn you, I told you to stop. One more whimper and you're going to get my fist instead of the

back of my hand. Doc's keeping us alive, isn't he? You don't hear him crying about what might happen, do you? He'll fix us up if you give him half a chance. Now sit down at that plotting board and give me a corrected R.C.P. time. (*Turns and goes back to the controls and sits down.*) I've got a blonde waiting for me Earth-side and the sooner I can get this mechanized sky-rocket in for a landing, the sooner I can start putting some of my theories into practice.

DUNCAN (*returns to the plotting board and after a pause looks up with a shamefaced air and speaks*):
Kurt.

KURT (*without looking up from his instruments*):
Yeah?

DUNCAN: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to let myself go like that. It was just that I got to thinking about Kelly and Schwartzkopf . . . and Spencer . . . and . . .

KURT: Forget it, man. Anyone's apt to go off at half-cock once in a while. Hell, I remember back in '92, just after the Ivans atomized New York. I was flying patrol in an old Tri-Jet Cyclone, cruising along easy-like, minding my own business, when all of a sudden down out of the sun came six . . .

(DR. DAVISON *enters carrying a print-out*; DUNCAN *turns to him anxiously.*)

DUNCAN: Well?

DAVISON: Bad news confirmed. Those little specks have an impossible structure, but they're alive . . . alive with a pulsating, malignant life that keeps growing and spreading. I've tried everything and I can't find anything that stops them; they just keep growing and dividing. It doesn't make sense, Dunc. It just doesn't make sense.

KURT: What we need is a large family-sized bottle of Listerine. Want me to run down to the corner, Doc?

DAVISON: It isn't funny, Kurt. I can take care of the radioactivity. The shots I've been giving you do that. If I'd realized what was up sooner I might have been able to save Schwartzkopf and Kelly. (*Softly.*) Perhaps it's just as well they went when they did.

DUNCAN: What do you mean, "just as well"?

KURT: I think maybe he means that he can keep us alive for a while, but he can't cure us. Right, Doc?

DAVISON: I'm afraid that's about it. When the green dust hit our lungs, each tiny crystal began to grow and radiate. Blocking off radiation seems to slow down the growth. It will be a long time yet before they grow big enough to get really hungry.

KURT: How long?

DAVISON: Maybe fifteen years, maybe twenty.

KURT: Hey, that calls for a drink. (*Goes to cabinet and takes out a bottle.*)

DAVISON: There's an answer to it somewhere . . . but answers take time . . . sometimes too much time. We've got twenty years. To get inside this thing far enough to find out what makes it tick would take electronic equipment that's still fifty years in the future. I didn't want to tell you until I was sure.

KURT (*slowly*): So you knew it all along and never told us. Just let us go on week after week thinking you were going to be able to do something. You shouldn't have done that, Doc. Why didn't you tell us?

DAVISON: Would it have helped any? Hasn't the last month been bad enough?

DUNCAN: You've got to do something for us. I can't take it, Doc. It isn't death I'm afraid of . . . it's the waiting year after year, knowing that damned virus is

tearing away at the insides of me. (*He looks around wildly.*) Maybe Spencer had the right idea. He knew what was ahead of him and did something about it.
KURT (*in a brutal voice*): Shut up before I slug you.
(*Starts toward DUNCAN.*)

DAVISON (*motions KURT away and places his hand on DUNCAN's shoulder*): Listen, son . . .

DUNCAN (*shaking him off*): You can't know for sure. You're only one man. Once we get to earth they'll be able to do something. They won't let us die, not after what we've done for them.

DAVISON (*tries again in a soothing voice*): Duncan (*placing one hand on the boy's arm*), don't let yourself go like this. Go aft and lie down for a while. Try to get some sleep. We're all tired and . . .

DUNCAN (*slaps the doctor's hand down*): Leave me alone, damn it. How do you expect me to sleep when I have a torch inside me slowly burning and searing the life out of me? And the glow of it coming out through my skin so that my face looks like a paper skull with a lantern inside. (*Turns to KURT.*) How do you like undressing in the dark and looking at that hellish light coming from your skin? Standing in front of the mirror watching yourself shine like a rotten mackerel? (*He almost screams.*) My God, look at us! (*He jumps over to the light switch and throws off the control room lights. In the darkness the faces and hands of all three shine with a weird phosphorescent glow.**) Shining like stinking god-damn mackerel!

DAVISON: Duncan! (*KURT strides over to DUNCAN,*

* The glow on the faces and hands is obtained by using a fluorescent makeup obtainable from Max Factor. An ultra-violet lamp is mounted on the apron and is switched on as the control lights are switched off.

spins him around and gives him a short left to the face that knocks him to the floor. He then switches on the lights and stands rubbing his knuckles. The doctor gives him an indignant look and without saying anything helps DUNCAN to his feet and leads him out of the control room. KURT looks after them, shrugs, and, seating himself at the controls, begins to sing softly as he makes an adjustment.)

KURT:

Now, when I blast off from Denver . . .

CURTAIN

SCENE II

(Half an hour later)

(DR. DAVISON enters.)

DAVISON: There will be no more of that, Kurt! *(Sits at the microscope and looks into it.)*

KURT *(seated at the controls, speaks without looking up)*: O.K. He had it coming, though. *(There is a long pause, then KURT swings around.)* You said twenty years?

DAVISON *(looking up from microscope)*: What? Oh, yes, something like that.

KURT: How many years before it would really start to bother a guy?

DAVISON: I'd guess fifteen. *(Turns back to his work.)*

KURT: Hell, that's not too bad. I'm thirty-eight now; fifteen more will boost me to . . . fifty-three. No offense meant, Doc, but I can't see hanging around until I'm as old as you are. What good is a woman to a guy of sixty? Yeah, I know, you've got your microscope, but in my racket a guy needs what I've got now, and what I've got now I won't have fifteen years from now. Me, I've got no kicks coming. Most of the guys I started out with have already taken the long

dive. I'd hate myself if I'd let myself get nerved up like the kid back there. Funny thing, that. On the way out and during the landing he was as solid a character as you could ask for. But ever since Kelly and Schwartzkopf bought it, he's been falling apart at the seams. I'll bet he's tossing around on his bunk right now trying to work up enough guts to knock himself off.

DAVISON (*looks up, alarmed*): You don't think he would?

KURT: Relax, Doc. I've seen kids like him go psycho before. It takes them a week to work themselves up to a point where they really can face the idea. When they do take off they usually leave enough farewell notes scattered around so that their friends will be sure and reach them in time.

DAVISON (*uneasily*): I don't know.

KURT: Forget it. You know, Doc, I never could understand people like Dunc and Spencer. Spencer blows his top and goes off the deep end before he's really sick at all, just because the other two went out in a nasty way. And there's Dunc with fifteen or twenty sure years ahead of him, getting his wind up so there's no telling what he might pull next. (*Cheerfully.*) Complicated organic structure or not, once Science Center gets to work on the dust they'll pop up with an answer in no time. And if they don't, what the hell, I've got fifteen years. After that . . . (*Shrugs.*)

DAVISON: Kurt, I know you're tough enough to take this, so I'm not going to sugar-coat the pill. We can't go back to Earth.

KURT (*gets slowly to his feet*): I guess I'm not hearing

so good these days. Would you mind saying that again?

DAVISON: I said, *we can't go back to Earth.*

KURT: And who's going to stop us?

DAVISON: Nobody—and everybody.

KURT: Look, Doc, would you mind going back to the beginning and starting all over?

DAVISON: It should be obvious, Kurt. (*Ticking them off on his fingers.*) Kelly, Schwartzkopf, Spencer, Duncan, you (*laughs sadly and looks down at his hands*), even the great doctor. Do you think it would stop with us? (*Kurt shrugs.*) If we ever land, Earth is done for. The dust will spread—and spread—until there's nothing left. You saw Centauri. There was a civilization there once that makes us look like cave-men. Where is it now?

KURT: Dead. Everything dies sooner or later. But me, I'll take the later, if it's all the same with you. (*With a touch of menace in his voice.*) Or even if it isn't.

DAVISON: But, Kurt—

KURT: Relax, Doc. You've been too close to this thing for too long. Once we get home they'll be able to knock out those green bugs in no time. Any guys that had brains enough to cook up a ship that would reach as far out into space as this one has are smart enough to be able to handle anything we bring back.

DAVISON: Smart enough! Centaurian scientists worked with forces we can't even understand and they couldn't stop the dust. My God, man, you saw what happened to them. Great shining cities rearing up out of swirling clouds of green dust. Cities full of massive machinery ready to whirr into motion at the touch of a button . . . (*Slowly and with emphasis*), and not a solitary spark of organic life left in the

whole system! One boneyard in the Galaxy is enough, Kurt.

KURT: What the hell do you want us to do, hang a bell out in front of the ship and wander through space until our supplies run out, jangling the damn thing and yelling, "Unclean! Unclean!"?

DAVISON: Not quite. If we stay on course until we reach radio contact point, we'll be able to transmit to Earth the information we picked up in the Centaurian system. Once we've done that, the sensible thing to do would be to put the hyper-drive on emergency power, throw the converters out of phase, and wait for them to blow. A quick, clean sun-burst and then nothing left but a wispy trail of dust.

KURT (*slowly and quietly*): I don't mind taking chances. I wouldn't have signed on for this flight if I had. But I told you before that I couldn't understand guys that committed suicide. I'm not going to throw away fifteen years of my life for anybody, not even you. Doc, we're going in.

DAVISON: I'm not going to argue with you. Even if I have overestimated, we can't take a chance. I'm going back to check on Duncan. (*Starts to exit, pauses at the door, and turns and speaks in a stern voice.*) This ship will not be taken past radio contact point. That's an order! (*Exits.*)

(KURT sits staring at the controls, obviously concentrating intensely. Then without a change of expression he rises slowly, walks to a locker beside the exit, takes out a pistol and pistol belt and straps the holster on. Pulling the gun out, he cocks it and checks carefully to see that it is

*ready to fire. He stands by the controls waiting
for DR. DAVISON to re-enter.)*

(Lights dim and out.)

CURTAIN

SCENE III

(DR. DAVISON enters and stops suddenly when he sees KURT with the gun in his hand.)

DAVISON: Kurt, what's that for?

KURT: This? (*He flips the gun over in the air and catches it.*) This is for you, Doc.

DAVISON: This is no time for joking.

KURT: I'm not. Sit down over there and relax. You might as well spend your last few minutes being comfortable. You haven't many of them left.

DAVISON: For God's sake, man, what's come over you?

KURT: Nothing . . . except that I've decided that this ship is going home . . . and I'm going with it.

DAVISON: You can't be serious. Listen to me, Kurt . . .

KURT: Now you just sit there quietlike while I speak my little piece. There isn't any use in us arguing. Right now you've got a bee in your bonnet that says I'm not going to take this baby in for a landing, and I've got one in mine that says I am; and my bee (*Waves his pistol*) has a sting. Look, Doc, I don't like to let a guy have it without giving him a chance. You just give me the go-ahead signal and I'll put junior here back in his holster where he belongs.

DAVISON: You know what my answer is, Kurt.

KURT (*sadly*): Yeah, I was afraid of that. I hate to do

this, Doc, but it's just one of those things a guy has to do sometimes, whether he wants to or not. If you'd like to say a prayer or smoke a cigarette or something before I go ahead, it's all right with me.

DAVISON: There is something I want to say, Kurt, before you . . . go ahead. Do you mind?

KURT: Course not, Doc. Get it off your chest.

DAVISON: When we took off for Alpha Centauri six months ago, we were the third expedition to try the jump. The first ship exploded on take-off; the second had her main drive go out just beyond Pluto. But still when the *Arcturus* was completed, hundreds of men fought for a chance to go out with her. We six were chosen. Did you ever ask yourself why we came, why we always come? (KURT *shrugs*.) It's an itch, Kurt, a God-given itch that will be man's salvation.

KURT: Climb off the pulpit. I'm giving you a chance to change your mind, not to preach a sermon.

DAVISON: Listen, Kurt! We've got something inside us. You can laugh at it. You can even ignore it. But it sent you and men like you blasting out into space in the first clumsy rockets. First to the Moon, then to Mars, to Venus, and on and on until every planet in our system became part of the heritage of man. And now—we're the first to go racing out light years to become masters of the stars themselves. We've just started. Can't you see that? After all the dark centuries we're at last beginning to find our way. This heritage of the past, this promise for the future, cannot be sacrificed for any one man. (*Pause*.) Living doesn't mean much to you, Kurt. The life you've led shows that. You can't murder a whole planet for just a few more years of it.

KURT: That was a pretty speech . . . but it doesn't mean

a thing. What happened before my time is none of my business; what comes after, I won't be around to see. What did your blessed humanity ever give me? They drafted me when I was eighteen. By the time I was twenty I was as fine a killer as the flight schools could turn out. Guys like you sat back in their labs cooking up new ways to pass out death—and guys like me got medals for doing the job. Sure we reached out and settled the planets. And before long, instead of nations we'll have worlds at war. Listen, Doc! I had a family once. They got it when the Ivans wiped out Chicago. That's when I signed up again. I had a girl once, too. She was going to school at Stanford. A space torpedo from Ivan's Moonbase that was heading down for Frisco got off course and left a big gouged-out place where the college had been. You guys had your chance, you could have stopped it once . . . but you muffed it. Now I've got my chance and I'm taking it. (*He stops and tries to recapture his usual calm.*)

DAVISON: I can understand how you feel . . . but for God's sake, give them a chance.

KURT: Chance? Why sure, Doc, I intended to all along. I'll pass along your formula for the shots. That way they'll have fifteen years . . . just like I have. If they can work out an antidote in that time, they may have had enough of a scare thrown into them to get together for once. If they don't . . . (*Shrugs.*)

DAVISON (*desperately*): They won't be able to find it. They don't know enough.

KURT: It's no go, Doc. You've had your say and I've had mine. I'm sorry it has to be like this. (*As the doctor falls back, KURT raises his gun slowly and squeezes off three shots. The doctor clutches his chest and slumps slowly to the floor. KURT walks*

over and stands by the crumpled body with the smoking gun in his hand. DUNCAN comes rushing into the control room, takes in the tableau, and kneels down beside the doctor.)

DUNCAN (*looks up at KURT*): You killed him!

KURT: Considering that there are only three of us left on the ship and you were in your bunk, I'd say that was a pretty good guess. What are you going to do about it, call the cops?

DUNCAN: What did you do it for?

KURT: He wasn't going to let us go home. The crazy fool wanted to overload the main drive and blow us all to blazes.

DUNCAN: But you shot him down in cold blood. You didn't give him a chance.

KURT (*coldly*): I gave him a chance, all right, but he came up with the wrong answer. Now he's got three holes in him. Who do *you* want to go with, me . . . or him?

DUNCAN: I . . .

KURT: Think it over, Dunc. I'm offering you the twenty best years of your life on a silver platter. You've got a lot of living stored up inside you and it would be a shame to waste it.

DUNCAN: But Doc said that if we landed . . .

KURT: Hell, kid, you know as well as I do that the Doc was way off when he said they couldn't work out a cure. In ten years everything will be right as rain.

DUNCAN: Haven't you forgotten something? (*Points to the body on the floor.*)

KURT: Oh, that. Nothing to it! Out he goes through the air lock. When we land we'll tell them he cracked up and killed himself, and play as if we didn't know the green bug was really serious.

DUNCAN: I think you're forgetting something else.

KURT: Look, kid, I've got everything figured out. There's nothing to worry about. We'll pass along the serum and with a twenty-year deadline hanging over their heads, they'll produce a cure fast enough.

DUNCAN (*as he speaks, we are aware that somehow a great change has come over him; he is no longer afraid*): So you're the guy that always takes a chance. The great Kurt Benster, master pilot, veteran of half a dozen wars. "Take-a-Chance Benster," the papers used to call you. You're offering me a way out, but what about Earth? You give me a stacked deck and her a bullet in the back. What kind of a gamble do you call that? Why don't you give those people down there a decent chance?

KURT (*laughs bitterly*): A chance? A chance for what? Earth's suffering from a worse disease than anything that's floating around in this ship. You know that there isn't a country down there that doesn't have its atomic labs running full-blast, cooking up bigger and better ones. Why should I knock myself off so that bunch of carrion rats can go on ripping each other's throats out? (*He catches himself and returns to his usual controlled tone.*) There's been too much talking going on around here the last hour. What will it be?

DUNCAN (*quietly*): The Doc came in to see me after I broke down out here. He talked to me like a father would to a scared kid. After he quieted me down, he told me that we couldn't go back to Earth, and then he told me why. When he was finished I wasn't scared any longer because I knew what I had to do.

KURT: Which was?

DUNCAN: Blow up the ship. (*Hastily.*) But it looks like you've talked me out of it. Like the Good Book says, "A live dog is better than a dead lion."

KURT (*relaxes*): Good boy. I knew you'd see the light. Now to get rid of the lion there (*Gestures down at DAVISON.*) and . . . (*A buzzer sounds and a red light begins to flash on the communication panel. A loud burst of static comes from the speaker.*) Radio contact point at last! (*He slides into the pilot's seat and begins to adjust the controls of the radio. DUNCAN slips up behind him, grabs him by the hair, pulls his head back, and gives him a rabbit punch on the throat. KURT slumps over the controls and DUNCAN moves quickly over to the controls of the hyper-space drive. He slams two control handles all the way up. Red danger lights begin to blink and a crescendo whine of generators is heard. He waits while the indicator needle creeps slowly toward the red danger area. Behind him KURT begins to come to and shakes his head. The needle moves into the red and DUNCAN slowly begins to reach up toward a lever marked PHASE CONTROL. KURT pulls himself to his feet and sees what is about to happen. As DUNCAN's fingers touch the control, KURT whips out his gun and blasts two quick shots. DUNCAN jerks and crumples to the deck. KURT goes down on one knee beside him.*) You crazy kid! Why did you do it?

DUNCAN (*gives a strained grin and mumbles*): What I had to do . . . (*His head rolls back in death.*)

KURT (*rises to his feet and looks down in amazement*): The bastard! The little bastard! And I thought he'd lick my boots for a chance to get back to Earth alive! He knew he didn't have a chance in a hundred and still . . . (*He looks up at the flashing light and then down at the body again.*) a chance in a hundred. (*He suddenly throws back his shoulders and smacks his fist into the palm of his left hand.*) By God, Dunc, it's a deal! (*He walks over to the com-*

munication panel. Just as he reaches it an unintelligible voice comes through in a burst of static. He twists a tuning dial and a bored, monotonous voice comes through.)

VOICE: Chicago Spaceport calling Spaceprobe *Arcturus*.
Chicago Spaceport calling Spaceprobe *Arcturus*.
Over.

KURT: Hello, Chicago. This is the *Arcturus*. Benster speaking, "Take-a-Chance Benster." Looking for somebody?

VOICE: Chicago Spaceport calling . . . (*He lets out a whoop as he suddenly realizes that the long-awaited contact has been made at last.*) the *Arcturus*! Jesus! Colonel! Colonel Wetzel! She's back! The *Arcturus* is back! (*A sound of running feet and excited voices is heard over the speaker.*)

WETZEL: Give me the mike! (*Breathless and excited.*)
Benster? Colonel Wetzel here.

KURT (*in a crisp military tone*): Yes, sir.

WETZEL: Welcome back, boy. Welcome back. You made it?

KURT: We made it, sir. Four light years out and four light years back. Found three planets swinging around that red sun. Doc's hunch was right. Found cities, too . . . cities and machines. No people, though. Alpha Centauri is plum out of people. But we found stuff to fight with. Lovely, lovely stuff to fight with. There's a heat beam that can curl up a man twenty miles away like an ant under a blowtorch . . . a supersonic projector that can churn blood and bone into a pink frothy Jell-O in a tenth of a second . . . a . . .

WETZEL (*breaks in urgently*): Cut it!

KURT: What?

WETZEL: I said cut it! Switch on your scrambler . . .
sub-level 16. We're in trouble down here.

KURT: Trouble?

WETZEL: Plenty of it! The Eastern Federation pulled a sneak attack. Jet atomics coming in over the pole so fast our perimeter defenses are saturated. Pittsburgh's gone up already and London damn near got it. We nailed Belgrade, but the bastards have their launching racks tucked way back in the Urals where we can't find them. Get your scrambler on, and fast. If they get a cross-bearing on your transmitter they'll have their fighters out after you. We're so jammed up down here we can't spare you much in the way of cover. If the stuff you brought back is as hot as you say it is, we need it and we need it bad.

KURT: Scrambler, hell! If you want what *I* brought back, you can have it, but I got a bit of talking to do first. Doc Davison was a guy who loved something called Humanity. What he picked up on Centauri he meant everyone to have.

WETZEL (*snaps*): Scrambler on! That's an order. The Ivans are picking up everything that's being said.

KURT: That's all right, I'm going to do a little censorship . . . right now. Pity, though, I've got stuff in this notebook that would make your eyes shine like a kid seeing his first Christmas tree. (*He tears several sheets out of the notebook.*) You don't have to worry, Colonel, they'll never get hold of the secret of the heat-ray. (*He touches a match to one sheet and drops it into a metal wastebasket.*) Nope, and they won't get hold of the supersonic projector, either. (*Touches a match to another sheet.*) The same goes for the rest. (*He touches a match to the rest of the sheets and drops them flaming into the*

basket.) What's left, like I said, belongs to everybody. Ready, London? Ready, Moscow?

WETZEL: What's got into you, man?

KURT: That's a hell of a good question. I wish I knew the answer. Ready, Earth?

WETZEL: Don't be a fool, Kurt. Get off the air! You can't turn against your own country. You're an American.

KURT: Ready, Earth?

WETZEL: Benster, I'm giving you a direct order to get off the air!

KURT (*drawls*): Mister, you can take those shiny eagles off your shoulder straps and stuff them where they'll do the most good.

WETZEL (*sputtering*): Why, you . . .

KURT: Shut up! Doc left a stack of notes behind and I've got a job of reading to do.

WETZEL: You'll face a general court martial for this, Benster. By all that's holy, I'll see you in a lunar prison pit if it's the last thing I ever do!

KURT: Listen, Colonel, if you can find your swivel chair, you might as well take a load off your feet. This is going to take an hour, anyway. Now pipe down, here it comes. (*He shuffles notes and begins to read in a mechanical voice.*) July 23, 2007. While preparing for landing on the innermost planet of Alpha Centauri the following atmospheric pressure readings were taken. At forty thousand feet, 1.54 pounds per square inch. At thirty thousand feet, 2.78 pounds per square inch. At twenty thousand feet, 5.27 pounds per square inch. At ten thousand feet, 7.98 pounds per square inch. Landing was made on a low plateau, longitude 37 degrees, 28 minutes; latitude 49 degrees, 54 minutes, as reckoned on the Van

Dusan Astronomical Projection. (*Stage lights begin to dim.*) Upon landing an analysis was made of the atmosphere. It was found to contain . . . (*Voice stops as stage lights black out.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE IV

(Half an hour later)

(Stage lights up. KURT is still reading from DR. DAVISON's notes.)

KURT: But eventually tissue destruction would reach the point where death would be inevitable. I am further convinced that the life structure of the organism is so complex that . . . (KURT's voice returns to normal.) That's as far as Doc got before his . . . accident. He intended to finish off something like this. (He attempts to mimic the doctor's careful English.) The life structure is so complex that I believe it would be extremely difficult to develop a curative agent within the estimated twenty-year margin between first contact and complete destruction of all terrestrial life. Therefore, action must be taken to insure that the *Arcturus* and what remains of her crew do not return to Earth. (After a brief pause, KURT continues in his normal voice.) But Doc not being around to say it, and Dunc not being able to back him up, I, being what remains of her crew, held a meeting with myself. It was parliamentary as all hell. I suggested that "what remains of her crew

not return to Earth" be amended by striking out the word "not," and somehow the amendment was unanimously accepted. I trust all this meets with your approval, Colonel?

WETZEL (*grimly*): All right, Benster, you've asked for it. You'll be intercepted by our fighters before you get inside the orbit of the Moon. And when you are, may God have mercy on your soul.

KURT (*in a strangely soft voice*): You know, Colonel, I never thought much about God, but if there is one, I've got a hunch He's grown tired of us. I don't think He wants us around anymore. (*Sudden change of voice.*) Asked for it? Yeah, I guess I did. I could have slipped in at night, landed back in the bush somewhere, and you wouldn't have known about it until the green dust started biting into you. (*Voice strengthens.*) But two men died tonight that could have kept on living for a long time. Died so that bastards like you could have a chance. You're getting it. (*The following speech is given on a rising note of defiance.*) Listen, down there. This is it. This is the big showdown and I'm dealing. I'm the almighty IT, and I'll play tag with your space fleets from here around the Milky Way. You, Chicago! You, Shanghai! You, Moscow! Are you still snarling at each other? Get down on your knees and start praying to the God that made you. And send up your squadrons along with your prayers. Come and get me because I'm coming in! (*He pauses and then in the flat, mechanical voice with which he opened the play, he continues as stage lights dim and the phosphorescent glow on his face and hands becomes apparent.*) Spaceprobe Arcturus ending transmission. Approximate position, one hundred and seventy mil-

lion miles out. Estimated time of arrival, twenty-nine hours and thirty minutes. Over . . . and out. (*Black-out.*)

CURTAIN

THE END

*Stranger with
Roses*

A Science Fiction Entertainment
in One Act

by JOHN JAKES
(based on his short story)

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(STRANGER WITH ROSES)

Time travel is a time-honored ingredient in many science fiction works. From H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* to works of the most modern orientation, time travel, like space travel, is fundamentally associated with science fiction, especially in the mind of the uninitiated. But some notable literary works which can hardly be considered science fiction have also made use of this same ingredient: *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *Berkeley Square* are two examples.

One recent, and highly successful, work which employs the time-travel motif is *Planet of the Apes*, which has engendered several films and a television series. Here astronauts proceed forward in time to a point in Earth's history when apes are the dominant species and man the servant.

Time-travel stories can be among the most interesting of all science fiction story types. A robot story is usually just that, nothing more; an invasion story is usually only an invasion story. But a time-travel story can be a time-travel story and still contain both of these and other elements. The plot possibilities become more diverse and exciting.

John Jakes' play, "Stranger With Roses," is special indeed. And Jakes has probably written more plays than any other science fiction author alive today.

Stranger with Roses

A Play in One Act

For Four Men and Two Women
or Three Men, Three Women

CHARACTERS

VINCENT DEEM
a stranger

SARI CHILDS
a young woman

DAVID CHILDS
her husband

ANDROID
a clerk

DR. STOCKHAUSEN
a scientist

WOMAN

SETTING: *The living room of the Childs home, on the outskirts of a large Western city.*

TIME: *Summer of the year 1997.*

The play is divided into three scenes. The lights are lowered briefly between each, to denote the passage of time.

SCENE I

Scene: The living room of the CHILDS' home. Entrances are DR, leading to a foyer and then outdoors; DL, leading upstairs to the sleeping quarters; and L, leading to the dining room and kitchen. The key pieces of furniture are a sectional sofa LC, a chair DL, and the communications console DR. On top of the console is a small vase of artificial flowers. At URC is a platform which represents a porch. An area ULC is used whenever someone appears on the console viewscreen.

At Rise of Curtain: The sound of a soft chime, twice. Lights come up on the platform and the backdrop—simmering yellow, to suggest the heat of full summer. DEEM is standing on the porch in his heavy black outer coat, his suitcase in hand. He is a trim-looking man for his age, and deeply tanned. But he is obviously hot and a bit nervous. He presses a bell in the imaginary wall in front of him, and the

chime sounds again. In a moment SARI is silhouetted as she enters from the kitchen, L. The lights fade up full stage illuminating the living room as she goes to the communications console, presses a button.

SARI (*speaking to the viewscreen we cannot see*):
Yes?

DEEM (*startled by the voice out of nowhere*): Good morning. Ah—may I ask where you are?

SARI: Inside. Beyond that wall in front of you. I'm watching you on the viewscreen.

DEEM: View—? Oh—yes. I hope I have the right house? One-twenty Alpha Parkway?

SARI: That's correct. Can you hear me all right?

DEEM: Perfectly. I saw your notice in the paper— (*By this time, DEEM has nervously shifted from his original position, prompting SARI to interrupt.*)

SARI: Excuse me. Would you please move a little to the left? Nearer the lens?

DEEM: Lens?

SARI: The security camera is trained on the center of the porch.

DEEM: Oh, of course. (*He moves.*) Here?

SARI: That's fine. You say you've come about the advertisement?

DEEM: Yes. I'm hunting a place to stay. One that doesn't require a long-term lease.

SARI: We'd prefer a lease, of course. But it isn't absolutely necessary.

DEEM: Then you're an exception in—this city. (*Frowning a little, SARI doesn't answer. The silence stretches until:*) Pardon me—are you there?

SARI: I'm here.

DEEM: Is anything wrong?

SARI (*recovering*): No. Not at all.

DEEM: Do you still have the room for rent?

SARI: Yes. It's very nice. So it's not cheap—

DEEM: Price is no great concern. I wonder, Mrs.—?

SARI: Childs. Mrs. Childs.

DEEM: Might I come in? The sun's extremely hot this morning. And it would be easier if we could talk face to face.

SARI: Of course, I'm sorry. I'll unlock the door. (*She presses a button on the console.*) There, it's open. Follow the arcade on your right, turn left, and come right on through the foyer.

DEEM: Right, thank you.

(DEEM *exits UR, enters a moment later DR. His black fur-collared coat and battered suitcase are now distinctly visible.*)

DEEM (*setting bag down*): Ah—that's heavy. Do you always keep your door locked, Mrs. Childs?

SARI: In a city of twenty million people, it's wise.

DEEM: But you live quite far from the center of town.

SARI: Didn't you take the monorail?

DEEM: Part way. I walked the rest. Frankly, I'm worn out.

SARI: Then please sit down, Mr.—?

DEEM: Vincent Deem. Thanks very much. (*Taking his bag to the sofa, he sits.*) You know, while I was on the porch, I couldn't tell whether you really wanted to rent the room—(SARI *seems to be staring through him. He reacts.*) If you're not feeling well—

SARI: I'm fine. Really. (*Beat.*) Wouldn't you like to take your coat off?

DEEM: Yes, indeed I would. (*He does.*)

SARI: It's unusual for someone to walk even part way

from the central city in weather like this. Or any weather.

DEEM: Unusual? Perhaps so. (*A smile.*) I wanted to get the feel of the place.

SARI: You just arrived here?

DEEM: This very morning. Despite the summer heat, I find your city extremely pleasant. So many splendid towers! I'm hoping to stay a good long time. (*A short sigh.*) My, it's comfortable in here. Now, about the room—

SARI (*pointing DL*): It's upstairs. Large—almost thirty by thirty, with a marvelous view. The windows are shielded glass. There's a health ray over the bed, a three-D set—

DEEM: Do you have any other rooms for rent?

SARI: No, just the one.

DEEM: Excellent! I'm looking for privacy.

SARI: I mentioned that the rent is high. Fifty credits a month—

DEEM: Perfectly agreeable.

SARI: You're sure—?

DEEM: Mrs. Childs, is there some reason you don't want to rent me the room? Have I offended you in any way?

SARI: Of course not. Forgive me if I said anything wrong.

DEEM: You didn't! You seemed a bit—disinterested; that's all.

SARI: I—I'm rather tired. I haven't been too well recently—(*A vague gesture: her hand passed across her face. Again she recovers.*) I'll be happy to show you the room.

DEEM: Does the price of fifty—(*Hesitates.*) fifty credits include meals?

SARI: It does.

DEEM: Good. I know I'll enjoy dining with you and Mr. Childs.

SARI: David.

DEEM: A fine old name. Are there children?

SARI: Not so far.

DEEM: What does your husband do?

SARI: He works in the War Claims Bureau, at the government park next to Metro Hospital.

DEEM: Far from here?

SARI: Less than a mile.

DEEM: That's lucky, having a hospital so close. (*Beat.*) In case of emergency, I mean—

SARI: David should be home for lunch soon.

DEEM: You say he's in War Claims. An unusual occupation.

SARI: David is a claims adjuster. After seventeen years, you'd think that everyone who claimed damages from the bombings, and the riots afterward, would be taken care of. But you've no idea of the legal complications—

DEEM: I'm sure I don't. Seventeen years. I sometimes forget it's been that long—

SARI: Just locating all the witnesses in each case is a major undertaking. Of course, the global computer network makes finding one individual easy. (*Goes to console.*) I'm still amazed that I can give this console someone's name—someone who lives anywhere in the world—and probably be speaking to him on the screen in a few seconds.

DEEM: That is astonishing, isn't it?

SARI: What makes David's work time-consuming is the large number of witnesses in a given case. Especially cases involving riots. He says the Bureau will probably operate for another seventeen years at least. There's no escaping the war, it seems.

DEEM: War is a strange, contradictory business. In the struggle to kill the enemy, there are always great developments—breakthroughs—in the most unlikely places.

SARI: In weapons.

DEEM: And elsewhere. More humane areas. Medicine—

SARI: I see what you're getting at. Yes, there were a lot of remarkable advances as a side effect of the fighting. I sometimes wonder if the price is worth it.

DEEM: To people whose suffering has been eased by those advances—yes.

SARI: Are you in the medical field?

DEEM: No, but I'm intensely interested in it.

SARI: What is your field?

DEEM (*seeming not to hear*): Would you like a month's rent in advance, Mrs. Childs?

SARI: If you don't mind.

DEEM: Not at all. Here. (*Fishes in his pocket.*) Ah, I'm afraid I have nothing but very large bills. Is there a place nearby where I could have them changed?

SARI: There's an underground shopping arcade just two blocks—(*Points.*) that way. Try the market.

DEEM: I'll go along and do it right now.

SARI: Unless you want to see the room first—

DEEM: No, that isn't necessary.

SARI: All right. (*Reaching for his bag.*) I'll take this upstairs for you—

DEEM (*stepping in front of her; quickly*): Please—leave it there. (*Beat.*) I couldn't permit a lady to carry my luggage.

SARI (*giving him a puzzled look*): Whatever you say. The room will be ready when you come back. (DEEM *nods, moves his suitcase partially out of sight up-*

stage of the console, puts his coat down on top of it. About to start DR, he pauses by the vase of artificial flowers.)

DEEM: Very pretty. (*Touches flowers.*) Oh, Artificial.

SARI: Why, naturally.

DEEM (*touching the console*): A most unusual piece of furniture.

SARI: It's just the economy model for private homes. Surely you've seen one before.

DEEM: Of course, Mrs. Childs. (*Smile.*) Why would you think I hadn't? (*She stares at him a moment, then shakes her head and smiles, too. But the smile is forced. DEEM exits DR. SARI stands looking after him, a puzzled frown on her face. She walks to the console, touches it, her frown deepening. We hear DAVID's voice off L.*)

DAVID (*off*): Hey, Sari. I'm home—

(*DAVID enters L, putting his key case in his pocket. He moves downstage to her, as:*)

SARI: You're early.

DAVID: Because I'm starved. (*Kisses her cheek.*) We wrapped up that nuclear poisoning business.

SARI: The Armstrong case? (*He nods.*) Oh, David, that's a big relief. It seems as if you've been working on that one claim forever.

DAVID (*relaxed, smiling*): I talked to the last witness this morning. Finally located him in Ceylon. I felt so damn good, I wanted to celebrate. (*Kisses her lips lightly.*) By bringing you a present. Something special. Unbelievable! Like flowers.

SARI (*warm laugh*): You're a treasure.

DAVID: I'd have gone anywhere on earth to find you a real bouquet—paid anything to have walked in with a replacement for these—(*Flicks the artificial flow-*

ers; smiles.) At least you know my intentions were good.

SARI: We had a real garden when I was small, have I ever told you? (*He shakes his head.*) Jonquils, asters, tulips, lilacs—and roses. The smell was indescribably sweet. (*For a moment she is lost in reverie. Then:*) How did the Armstrong business come out?

DAVID: The Bureau is going to find for the plaintiff. A million and a half in damages.

SARI: So much!

DAVID (*sitting*): The Armstrongs lost three children. And the fourth is still crippled. Their lawyers proved conclusively that the workers at the government substation near the Armstrong home did in fact riot that day. The workers damaged the shields—releasing all that radiation—(*Beat.*) I keep asking myself how long it will take to lay the ghosts of the war. Our own people did more harm than the enemy's bombs. (*Beat.*) Anyway, the case is closed. And I'm still starved.

SARI: Lunch is almost ready. I'm running a little behind this morning.

DAVID (*concern*): You still feeling all right?

SARI (*emphatic nod*): Three months in the hospital was quite enough. I don't intend to be sent back.

DAVID: Do any work on your new painting?

SARI: No time. I had to call in the week's order to the market. Then Mr. Deem arrived.

DAVID: Mister who?

SARI: Deem. Our new boarder. (*Points to suitcase behind console.*) I rented the room.

DAVID (*going upstage to look at suitcase*): Terrific! We can use the extra income.

SARI: He's a rather odd man.

DAVID: Odd? How?

SARI: A few moments after he walked in, I had—call it a peculiar reaction. He says he's a stranger in the city. But that doesn't really explain the way he studied everything—the furniture—my clothes—as if he were curious—even a little astonished. A stranger in the full sense of the word.

DAVID: I'd like to have a look at him.

SARI: He just went to the market, to change some bills.

DAVID: What's his line of work?

SARI: I tried to find out. No luck. He didn't even bother to see the room. He was more concerned about whether we had other boarders.

DAVID: Look, we don't need money that badly. If he upsets you, we can get rid of him—

SARI: He didn't upset me, exactly. I just felt—uncomfortable. (*Tries to laugh.*) I suppose the whole thing's ridiculous. Probably a flare-up of the kind of wild fancies that put me in the hospital in the first place. The loneliness of this house seems to breed them—

DAVID: Plus that over-active artist's imagination of yours. Did this Deem actually do something questionable, or suspicious—?

SARI: Nothing.

DAVID: Was he rude?

SARI: If anything, he's overly polite. He speaks softly, but— (*Beat.*) Let's forget it.

DAVID: I'd like to. (*Beat.*) But I wonder if I should.

SARI: What?

DAVID: I care about you, Sari. You mustn't let the phantoms start deviling you again—

SARI: I couldn't help my reaction! I looked at him and I was—uneasy.

DAVID: Try to give me a specific reason.

SARI: In heaven's name—why?

DAVID: Because the doctor said you had to confront your anxieties, remember? Confront them constantly—and completely—

SARI (*nodding*): All right. Let me see— (*Beat.*) For one thing, he acted as if that console was unfamiliar. As if he'd never laid eyes on one before. I don't know an urban home that doesn't have one.

DAVID: Could he by chance come from a rural area?

SARI: He doesn't act or talk like it. His clothes are expensive—or at least not cheap. But they struck me as strange, too.

DAVID: You mean faddish? Bizarre?

SARI: Ancient! When he arrived, he was wearing— (*Points.*) that black coat. It looks twenty years old—and almost brand-new! Besides that, the sun was broiling—

DAVID (*shrugging*): Perhaps he's eccentric. Or just cold-blooded.

SARI: I'm not inventing any of this, David. Believe me, I don't want it to start again. I realize that all the fears that put me in the hospital had no real basis except—in my mind. But somehow, his clothes are—wrong!

DAVID: You'll have to be more definite—

SARI: I can't be!

DAVID (*a gentle warning*): Sari—

SARI (*quickly*): Small differences! So small, they nearly go unnoticed. Look at that coat. The style isn't contemporary. It's almost as if he reached into some twenty-year-old refuse bin and put on the first thing he found.

DAVID (*after a considered pause*): I hate to say it. But I wonder if a call to the doctor might be in order.

SARI: I am not imagining—!

DAVID: A moment ago, you virtually agreed you were.

SARI: I know, but—

DAVID: You said your suspicions were unfounded. You even used the word “ridiculous.” It’s essential for you to keep admitting that your mind can conjure—unrealities. That’s the only therapy that’ll help in the long run.

SARI: You’re right—

DAVID: So say it out loud. There’s nothing really wrong with Mr. Deem.

SARI: There’s nothing— (*Stops.*) I can’t do it. He bothered me! When you meet him—

DAVID: I intend to.

SARI: If he returns before you go back to work—or tonight, at dinner—you’ll see.

DAVID: And if I don’t?

SARI (*slow, chilling realization*): Then that means it is happening again, doesn’t it? (*DAVID is unable to hide his sorrow and dismay. He puts his arm around SARI, holds her protectively.*)

DAVID (*softly*): What do you say we go have lunch—

SARI: I don’t feel hungry.

DAVID: Oh, Sari, please—

SARI (*pulling away*): Leave me alone! (*She moves away from him, stops, turns, looks at him, suddenly rushes back.*) I’m sorry. That was unforgivable.

DAVID (*sadly*): But familiar.

SARI (*quickly*): You’re right, it’s only imagination. Don’t send me back to the doctor. I’m just tired. I’ll rest this afternoon. Rest is what I need. And—I’ll work on my painting! That’s good therapy, too—the doctor said so! Mr. Deem is harmless. There’s nothing wrong with the man. And he doesn’t trouble me—he doesn’t trouble me one bit— (*She stops, buries her head on his shoulder. DAVID touches the back of her head tenderly. But his face shows his grief. After*

a moment, he breaks the embrace, takes her hand, starts to lead her off L.)

DAVID: Come on— *(They start out. A chime.)*

SARI: Go ahead, I'll answer it.

(DAVID hesitates, then exits L. Chime sounds again. The gray, expressionless ANDROID enters UL and stands against the backdrop ULC, facing front. SARI goes to the console, punches it on. Throughout the dialogue, she looks down at the screen, where she is seeing the ANDROID's image.)

ANDROID *(still looking straight front)*: Good afternoon, Mrs. Childs. This is Raymond Seven Two Three, your personal android shopper.

SARI: Yes, Raymond. Didn't you get my grocery order?

ANDROID: Your order is in order, Mrs. Childs. It will be processed and delivered this afternoon. I am calling in connection with a friend of yours.

SARI: Who?

ANDROID: Perhaps I should more properly say "acquaintance." A Mr. V. Deem. He stopped here at the market just a few moments ago. He wished to change a number of large bills. He gave your name as a reference.

SARI: Mr. Deem's our new boarder.

ANDROID: So he stated. I subjected the bills to careful scrutiny, since they seemed unusual.

SARI: In what way?

ANDROID: Old. Very old indeed. Printed on much heavier paper stock than the Treasury uses now. However, a few bills of that antique vintage still circulate, and the ones Mr. Deem presented proved genuine. So I provided him with the required change.

I would have thought no more of it, had he not asked a question which I considered peculiar.

SARI: What did he ask you, Raymond?

ANDROID: He wished to know what year it was.

SARI: What *year*—?

ANDROID: When I replied that it was 1997, he seemed both surprised and pleased.

SARI (*trying to laugh*): He knows the year, Raymond. I'm sure he does.

ANDROID: Nevertheless, Mrs. Childs, I distinctly heard him ask.

SARI: You must have made a mistake.

ANDROID: I was manufactured to eliminate all potential for making mistakes. Mr. V. Deem very definitely asked about the year.

SARI: Where is he now? On his way back here?

ANDROID: I don't believe so. He inquired about directions to the government park. Since he claimed to be your boarder, I thought you should be aware of his puzzling behavior. No doubt there is a suitable explanation— (*SARI has turned away from the console and is staring front as the ANDROID continues.*) And I hope you are not offended by my contacting you about— (*Beat.*) Mrs. Childs? I can no longer see you on the screen. (*SARI stares straight front, one hand pressed to her mouth.*) Mrs. Childs? Are you there?

(*The lights fade.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

(Lights fade up on the set. DEEM's coat and suitcase are gone. The backdrop is darkened, suggesting night. SARI enters L, followed by DAVID.)

SARI: Thanks for helping me clean up.

DAVID (*sitting*): That's the first word you've said since you called dinner. I'm not even counting your silence all through lunch.

SARI (*glancing L*): I can't help it. There's something about that man—why can't you see it, David?

DAVID: Because there's nothing to see! When he didn't get back in time for lunch, I spent the afternoon wondering what he looked like. I expected to come home and be introduced to some—freak. Instead, I find an innocuous middle-aged man who seems to have next to no opinions on anything.

SARI: That's part of it, too! Every question you asked at dinner—every one! He simply muttered. I couldn't understand his answers—if he had any!

DAVID (*edgy*): And I suppose if he were a loud-mouthed boor, you'd find something suspicious in that. I don't consider Deem abnormal. Just dull. Where is he, anyway?

SARI (*moving to console*): He went out to the kitchen

porch for some air. (*Pushes button, watches screen.*)
Come here.

(*Dim area lighting fades up to reveal DEEM standing against the backdrop ULC.*)

SARI: Don't you notice it?

DAVID (*beside her, watching screen*): Notice what?

SARI: His expression! Look at the way he's staring at the city. Bemused—wonder-struck—like a complete stranger!

DAVID: He *is* a stranger. To this part of the country, anyway. He makes no secret of it.

SARI: But what about his clothes?

DAVID: It's narrow-minded to call a man peculiar because he wears old-fashioned clothes. That's his right. Or maybe it's necessity— (*DAVID punches console off. Light fades on DEEM. DAVID takes a deep breath.*) Sari, you know I love you. And I don't want to be unkind. But if you keep raising hobgoblins because Deem doesn't fit some preconceived pattern— (*Beat.*) I'll have to insist you see the doctor.

SARI (*her trump card*): He asked Raymond what year it was.

DAVID: He asked who what?

SARI: Raymond Seven Two Three. The android at the market. I told you Deem went there to change some large bills. Old bills, Raymond said. Old!

DAVID: When did you hear from Raymond?

SARI: While you were eating lunch.

DAVID: Why didn't you tell me?

SARI: I was afraid you'd laugh. All afternoon, I was working up courage—

DAVID: Old bills don't prove anything, Sari. Maybe Deem likes collecting souvenirs of the past!

SARI: Why didn't he know the year?

DAVID: Of course he knew the year. Raymond misunderstood.

SARI: Androids do not make mistakes.

DAVID: Nonsense. Despite the claims of those chemical factories that slop them together out of plastic and God knows what else, androids are still only artificial human beings, designed to handle the limited functions of menial jobs. They're mass-produced—and that means they're subject to production errors.

SARI: Raymond said very distinctly that Deem acted surprised and pleased to learn it was 1997.

DAVID: I find that unbelievable. And all too typical of—what happened before. (*Beat.*) I wonder if Raymond said anything at all—

SARI: You don't think I heard it?

DAVID: I know *you* think so. That's why I'm concerned.

SARI (*rushing to console*): Call the market! Ask Raymond—

DAVID: Sari, the market's closed!

SARI (*staring at him, hopelessly*): How can I prove it to you?

DAVID: Prove there's something wrong about Deem? You can't.

SARI: The way you're staring—you really think—

DAVID: I'm afraid I do. I wish I didn't.

SARI: I am not breaking down again, I— (*Two soft chimes. SARI goes rigid.*)

DAVID: He wants in. Unlock the back door. (*SARI hesitates. A warning:*) Sari—

SARI: I can't. I *can't*— (*Grim, he walks around her to the console.*) Don't, David—please don't—

DAVID: Sari, for the last time—stop it.

(*Silence after the line. Hurt, she draws back. He*

presses a button. In a moment, DEEM enters from L. He wears a jacket and some type of throat scarf. He immediately senses trouble in the room.)

DEEM: Am I interrupting—?

DAVID (*forced smile*): Only a family discussion. Finances.

DEEM (*relieved*): I see. (*SARI turns away, facing up-stage. DEEM moves to the sofa.*) It's still rather warm outside. It feels like we might have rain. (*No response from the others.*) You know, I didn't realize this was such an immense city. The towers light up the whole horizon.

DAVID: Care for a drink, Deem?

DEEM: No, thank you, Mr. Childs. I'm not a drinking man. (*Settles on sofa with a contented sigh.*) Besides, that dinner was quite sufficient to produce a feeling of well-being. Your wife is a superb cook.

SARI: The automatic food center did the cooking.

DEEM: Food center? (*Beat.*) Ah, certainly. But the meal had such a natural taste— (*SARI glances at DAVID, as if to point up the significance of DEEM's slip. DAVID pretends not to notice.*)

DAVID (*to DEEM*): I don't believe you told us your occupation.

DEEM: No, I don't think I did. (*Beat.*) I'm a chemist.

SARI: Laboratory work?

DEEM: Yes, mostly.

SARI: You're very trim and tan for someone who works indoors.

DEEM: But I spend every spare moment outdoors. To keep fit.

DAVID: Chemistry must be a fascinating field these days. You were in it where you came from, right?

DEEM: Yes. A city much smaller than this.

DAVID: Back east?

DEEM: No, only a few hundred miles away. In the northern part of the state. I hope to find a position with a lab or research center here. In fact, tomorrow morning I intend to start making the rounds.

DAVID: You're planning to stay, then?

DEEM: As long as possible. Permanently, I hope.

DAVID: Anything to prevent it?

DEEM: Only lack of a job.

DAVID: Afraid I can't be of any help to you. Especially since I don't know exactly what kind of work you did. (*Pointedly.*) Or where.

DEEM: I understand. (*There is an awkward pause. DEEM sees them both staring. Suddenly tension drains out of him.*) See here, you must forgive me—

SARI: For what?

DEEM: My reticence. It's deliberate. But it's not one bit comfortable. I'm not a secretive person. It's just that I'm trying to wipe out the past. Start over. The truth is—in that other city—I had some trouble—

DAVID (*quietly alert*): With the law?

DEEM: Oh, no, nothing like that. The trouble was over a woman. I won't bore you with what happened.

SARI: We won't be bored. Tell us.

DAVID (*feeling DEEM has explained himself*): He needn't, Sari. Not unless it would make you feel more at ease, Deem.

DEEM: Yes. Yes, it would. In the short time I've been here, you've been exceptionally kind. Since I hope to be staying with you for a while, I would like to explain.

DAVID: By all means—go right ahead.

DEEM: Thank you. A man does need to talk to someone— (*DEEM stands, moves DC, looking out over*

the audience as he speaks in a kind of reverie.) I'm afraid it's a pathetically familiar story. The woman came to work as an assistant in my lab. We fell in love. But she was married. With children. She felt she had a duty to them—and to her husband. Unfortunately, her husband found out. We had words. The woman couldn't see me again—it was all very ugly. I decided it would be best to leave the area completely.

DAVID: So you came here for a fresh start.

DEEM: That's all there is to it.

DAVID: I can certainly understand that, can't you, Sari?

SARI (*unconvinced*): I suppose.

DAVID (*to DEEM*): Did you stop at the market around noon today?

DEEM: Yes, why do you ask?

DAVID: Sari maintains she got a call from the android shopper that handles our account.

DEEM: A call concerning me?

DAVID: Raymond—the android—said you wanted to change some large bills.

DEEM: In order to pay the first month's rent. When I returned around two, I did.

DAVID: Raymond also said—well, frankly, it struck me as idiotic, but you know how unreliable androids can be—

SARI: Perhaps he doesn't. (*A long look from DEEM. SARI doesn't turn away.*)

DEEM: What did the android say, Mrs. Childs? (*She doesn't answer.*)

DAVID: That you asked what year it was.

DEEM: What ye—? (*Laughs.*) How absurd.

DAVID: My reaction exactly.

SARI: Raymond was quite clear about it—

DEEM: Mrs. Childs, do I seem in possession of my senses?

SARI: Yes, of course. But—

DEEM: I asked no such foolish question of the clerk.

DAVID (*to SARI*): I told you the android heard wrong. Better call the market manager and tell him Raymond needs to go back to the factory for inspection.

DEEM: I wish you would, Mrs. Childs. I hate to have you doubt my statement. I want to be welcome here. Please call the market. As a personal favor. (*Beat.*) Now, if you'll excuse me, it's been a tiring day. I must be out early.

DAVID: Good night, Deem. And if I miss you tomorrow morning, good luck. I hope you find a job, and that everything works out.

DEEM: I am here, Mr. Childs. In a fine place—among fine people. So as to things working out—they already have. With one exception. And I'm sure that will be cleared up. (*Starts out, nods politely to SARI.*) Mrs. Childs.

SARI: }
DAVID: } Good night. (*DEEM exits DL.*)

SARI: David—

DAVID: I won't hear one word. (*She rushes DL, to be sure DEEM is out of earshot, then wheels back.*)

SARI (*with quiet insistence*): I can't help what Deem says. Raymond—does—not—make—mistakes!

DAVID: You're forcing me to remember you do.

SARI: Did you notice the way Deem looked at me when you told him about Raymond?

DAVID: Why shouldn't he look at you? With that accusation, you as much as called him a lunatic.

SARI: But you think I'm the lunatic.

DAVID: I think that unless you're careful, you're heading for another complete breakdown. I recognize the

warning signs this time—and I love you too much to let it happen—

SARI: There is something *wrong* about that man!

DAVID: It certainly isn't his secret, scarlet past. Which is neither secret nor scarlet. Or even very original.

SARI: That's another thing! What he told us about his past was so glib, so—trite!

DAVID: I agree. But such things happen. Often. That's how they become trite. Deem is ordinary, harmless—and a bit sad.

SARI: I'll prove that's not true—

DAVID: Sari, if you pursue this one more step, we'll have to contact the doctor. Going through the first ordeal was taxing enough. I don't think I can take another outbreak of psychotic delusions—

SARI: You're *cruel* to say—

DAVID: That's *enough!* (*Beat.*) God, I need a drink. (*He stalks out L. SARI stands with hands formed into fists, tears starting in her eyes.*)

SARI: Psychotic delusions! You didn't talk to Raymond! (*Beat.*) But David's right, this is exactly how it started the first time. Imagining enemies all around. Hating me. Threatening me— (*Beat.*) No! Raymond said it! I heard him! (*Beat.*) Didn't I? (*Suddenly begins rubbing her arms.*) David, I'm afraid. I'm so cold. Is it happening again? Won't you answer me, David? Is it happening again?

(*Dimout.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE III

(In the darkness, we hear SARI's low, short scream. Lights snap on. Even though it's morning, the backdrop is dimly lit. There is a rumble of thunder, and thunder is heard intermittently throughout the rest of the play. Disheveled, SARI appears DL, her finger holding her place in a thick reference book. She stumbles to the console, puts the book on it—open to her place—punches buttons frantically. Two soft chimes.)

SARI (*to screen*): Mr. Childs. In the Claims Adjustment Department. Please hurry! (*Single chime. SARI closes her eyes.*) Oh, God. Oh, my God—

(DAVID appears against the backdrop ULC. Lighting frames his head and shoulders.)

DAVID: Childs here. I—Sari!

SARI (*still to screen*): David, I'm sorry to bother you—

DAVID: Look, I'm swamped with work. Did you contact the market manager?

SARI: Not yet. Please listen—

DAVID: I meant it last night. Either do as Deem asked—and clear up the confusion—or I will.

SARI: No—

DAVID: All right, then. After I call the market, I'm calling the doctor.

SARI: David, I saw proof that there's something wrong about Deem!

DAVID: Proof? Where?

SARI: In his room. In his suitcase—

DAVID (*incredulous*): You were snooping in Deem's room?

SARI: I didn't snoop! At least, not to begin with. After he left this morning, I went in to tidy up. He pays for that, you know. I polished the clothes chest—looked inside—

DAVID: And? . . .

SARI: Shirts, handkerchiefs, socks—all the things are so *old*—

DAVID: Get to the point. What about his suitcase?

SARI: It was sticking out from under the bed. At first I didn't want to open it—

DAVID: But you did.

SARI: Yes.

DAVID: Wasn't it locked?

SARI: It was locked. But it's old, too. The locks are very cheap. I got a nail file and pried at them, and they came open—

DAVID (*despair*): A nail file. Oh, my God, Sari, you're—

SARI: I only opened the suitcase because there were strange sounds when I shook it. Something heavy inside, bumping. Something lighter, making a rustling noise. Rustling— (*Beat.*) David, no flowers have grown anywhere since the war.

DAVID: Not since the bombings of 1980, that's true.

SARI: And personal weapons haven't been permitted.

DAVID: If you mean handguns—

SARI: Yes, handguns. After the war riots, private ownership of handguns was made illegal, wasn't it?

DAVID: Yes, but I don't—

SARI: Except for police weapons, handguns are virtually nonexistent!

DAVID: Even the police don't use them much anymore. But I fail to see what all this has to do with—

SARI: I wasn't positive about the guns. So I looked it up. (*She holds book in front of screen.*) Here, in *The Historical Encyclopedia*. There are pictures—David, the gun is exactly like the one shown in this plate! A model from *before* the war. From *before* 1980.

DAVID: What gun?

SARI: The gun in Deem's suitcase.

DAVID: You're joking.

SARI: I saw it. I touched it! He has a gun and—two flowers.

DAVID: Artificial?

SARI: Real ones. Roses. Two wilted red roses. The flowers died back in 'eighty! Even wilted ones don't last seventeen years!

DAVID: Sari, have you taken any medication this morning?

SARI: I am not hallucinating! I am frightened to death but every word is true. If you won't believe me about Raymond, will you believe your own eyes? (*A rumble of thunder.*)

DAVID (*after a pause*): Is Deem still out?

SARI: Yes.

DAVID: I don't understand any of this. But I'm coming home. I have about five minutes' urgent work to finish up—two calls. Then I'll drive to the house as fast as I can. I want to see those things.

SARI: They're real, I swear.

DAVID: If they are, I've done you a terrible injustice.

SARI: That doesn't matter.

DAVID: And the authorities need to know about Mr. Deem.

SARI: Yes, yes, they do. Hurry, David.

DAVID: I intend to.

(Area lighting fades out on DAVID. SARI puts the book down on the console, open. She paces. She starts DL, pulls back, obviously frightened. A double chime shatters the silence. SARI starts, rushes to the console, presses a button. Lights come up on the porch platform to reveal DEEM. The lighting is dim, to suggest stormy conditions outside. SARI sees him, recoils from the console.)

DEEM: Will you unlock the door, Mrs. Childs? *(No answer.)* Mrs. Childs, it's going to rain. Please unlock the door.

(SARI hesitates, then reluctantly presses a button on the console. DEEM leaves platform, exits UR as lights on platform fade out. SARI stands staring, suddenly notices the open book. She moves quickly to close it, doesn't quite reach it as DEEM appears abruptly DR.)

DEEM: I'm back much earlier than I anticipated. Surprisingly good luck, too—I think I've located a position. I must return tomorrow, to speak with the laboratory director. By the way, I really should have a door key. It's inconvenient to ring every time I—Mrs. Childs, why are you staring at me?

SARI: No reason. That is, I wasn't staring—

DEEM: Indeed you were. In fact, ever since I arrived,

your behavior has been—hostile. I wish I knew why you don't like me. (*Starts walking toward her. He notices the book lying on the console.*) You've been doing some reading—

SARI (*extending her hand for book*): Nothing important—

DEEM (*ignoring her hand*): Let's see what topic drew your interest in— (*Glances at book's spine.*) *The Historical Encyclopedia.* (*Studies the open page.*) Firearms, Handguns. (*He looks at her.*) You're making a study of handguns, Mrs. Childs?

SARI: Like the one you have in your suitcase!

DEEM: I see. (*Puts book on console, closes it. Quietly.*) May I ask what is so unusual about a man owning a gun?

SARI: Guns were banned after the war. The war in 1980! And the bombs killed the flowers. All of them. (*Beat.*) Or don't you know that?

DEEM (*touching artificial flowers on console*): Perhaps I do. Then again, perhaps I don't.

SARI: Who are you? *What* are you?

DEEM: I'm sorry you found those things, Mrs. Childs.

It makes matters much more difficult for me—

SARI (*unsteadily*): Pack up and get out of here.

DEEM: Yes. I will. I don't want to cause you any trouble. (*Sigh.*) I feared something like this might happen. But I couldn't bring myself to throw the flowers away. And I didn't know where to hide them. As I told your husband last night, I am not by nature a secretive man—

SARI: How can you have roses? There haven't been any roses on earth for seventeen years!

DEEM: So you informed me.

SARI: Not since before the war!

DEEM: I know that now. (*Beat.*) I come from that time. The time of the guns. The time of the roses.

SARI (*aghast*): From—?

DEEM: Before the war.

SARI: My God, I'm losing my mind—

DEEM: No, Mrs. Childs, rest assured you are not. I'd like to explain, but for your sake, it's best I don't.

SARI: When David gets here, you can explain to him!

DEEM: He's coming home?

SARI: Any minute! I called him when I found the flowers.

DEEM (*swift look DR, then L*): He won't get in. The doors are locked—

SARI: He has his own key.

DEEM: I'm extremely sorry you saw fit to call him—

SARI: I'll bet you are!

DEEM: I'm sure your husband will listen to reason. Understand why I must leave quietly. Disappear—

SARI: You'll probably find the police understanding, too!

DEEM: The police? He contacted them?

SARI: If he hasn't, he will. Hand weapons are illegal!

DEEM: Then perhaps I'd better be prepared for his arrival— (*Takes hold of her wrist. SARI makes a feeble effort to pull away.*) Now please, Mrs. Childs. I don't want to hurt you. But I will if you force me. Let's go upstairs for a moment— (*With a low cry, SARI tries to pull away again. A harder grip by DEEM cows her. Gently, holding SARI's wrist with one hand, DEEM puts his other arm around her shoulder and walks her slowly toward the exit DL.*) In case your husband refuses to be reasonable—I believe I'd better have the gun— (*They exit. Rumble of thunder. As it dies away, we hear DAVID's voice from offstage L:*)

DAVID (*off*): Sari—I'm here. My God, it's almost pitch dark outside.

(DAVID *enters abruptly, carrying his key case.*)

DAVID: There's a real storm com— (*Sees the empty room, stops abruptly. Puts key case in his pocket, looks around.*) Sari, where are you? (*Alarmed.*) Sari! (*Turns UR. As he does:*)

SARI (*off, DL*): David, watch out!

DEEM (*off, almost a yell*): Quiet!

(DAVID *whirls, as SARI enters DL, clutching the two wilted red roses. DEEM follows her on. He wears his black overcoat. In one hand, he carries his suitcase; in the other, the gun.*)

DEEM: Steady, Mr. Childs. Stand right there.

DAVID (*pointing at gun*): Is—is that—?

DEEM: A handgun? Yes. In perfect operating order. And loaded. Sit down, please. (*Gestures to sofa.*) Over there, with your wife.

SARI: David, I'm sorry—I tried to warn you—

DAVID: And I wouldn't listen. Deem, if you've hurt her—

DEEM: I haven't. If you cooperate, I won't. Now, sit down. (DAVID *senses the man's determination, starts toward the sofa. So does SARI. DAVID is fascinated by the roses in her hand. He reaches for the petals.*) Don't touch them! (DAVID *withdraws his hand. He goes to the sofa, sits down, as DEEM speaks to SARI:*) Put the flowers on the console. Carefully! (*She does. He gestures with the gun. SARI sits beside DAVID. DEEM remains standing.*) That's better. (*Puts suitcase down. To DAVID:*) Have you called the authorities?

DAVID: Not yet. Obviously I should have. What are you trying to do, Deem?

DEEM: Survive. (*He walks over to make sure the roses are unharmed, as:*)

DAVID: But who are you? Some escaped lunatic?

DEEM: On the contrary. I am in full command of my faculties. I don't want to use this weapon. I prefer to go out the door and never see either of you again. I only ask that you forget you ever met me.

DAVID: Where do you come from?

DEEM: Didn't your wife tell you?

DAVID: Only hints. The flowers. A private handgun—

DEEM: I come from the year 1979.

DAVID: Eighteen years ago? That's impossible.

SARI: But the roses have to come from before the war!

DEEM: Which you said began in 1980. She is quite correct, Mr. Childs.

DAVID: How, Deem? How?

DEEM: When I returned unexpectedly this morning, to find that Mrs. Childs had rifled my personal belongings, she had— (*Points.*) that book—

SARI: *The Historical Encyclopedia.*

DEEM: Yes. Perhaps if you look up the right article, you'll find a reference to a device called a warp phase effector. It was developed and built in the year 1977 by scientists at the Los Oros Institute, under the direction of a brilliant theoretician named Dr. Hendrik Stockhausen.

DAVID: Warp phase effector? Talk English!

DEEM: A device for traveling in time.

DAVID: That's absurd.

DEEM: No, the device was actually built. At enormous expense—one of a kind. Whether it exists now, I can't say.

DAVID: The Institute is still in operation. Up in the

desert, near the mountains. As I recall, looters burned it during the riots. It was rebuilt on a much smaller scale. I've never heard of a time-travel device.

DEEM: In the late seventies, it was a classified project. Basic research for the government. From what you tell me, I imagine the device was destroyed. Construction of another was probably too costly— (*Suddenly annoyed by their stares.*) See here, it's perfectly simple! Before the war, I worked at the Institute!

SARI: As a chemist?

DEEM (*rueful smile*): Hardly. I was in charge of the grounds.

DAVID: A gardener? Then all that talk about laboratories—just lies?

DEEM: Necessary lies.

SARI (*to David*): I thought his color was too good for someone who worked indoors—

DAVID: Yes, you did. I'm sorry I didn't listen.

SARI (*to DEEM*): I suppose you lied about finding work this morning, too.

DEEM: Not exactly. I located a position in the maintenance department of the Metro Hospital. It's very ordinary work. That's why it took so little time—

DAVID: Do you honestly mean to tell us you traveled from 1979 to right now—to 1997—eighteen years *beyond* the time in which you lived?

DEEM: Correct.

DAVID: Why?

DEEM: Why did I come to this house? Chance—and your advertisement. I wanted a hideaway—sanctuary—until I discovered what I came here to find. (*Beat.*) After my interview this morning, I stopped for coffee in the hospital commissary. Another work-

er was at the same table—and two interns. I drew them into conversation. In minutes, I learned that the drug I need so desperately does exist!

SARI: Drug? Are you some sort of addict?

DEEM: The drug is not for myself. (*Beat.*) I plan to work at the hospital until I can find out more about it. To do that, I must move on. Find a safer place—(*Beat.*) I entered the time device two years after it was finished. They—the people back there—will undoubtedly send someone after me. So I dare leave no trail.

DAVID: Did you know you were going to end up in 1997?

DEEM: Not precisely. (*Beat.*) Hendrik Stockhausen and I were good friends. I helped him with his rose garden at home. When I pretended to have a great interest in his device, he showed me how it operated. It was amazingly simple to program. That was what made it so expensive! Half a dozen controls—a large bell chamber into which you stepped—even I, a self-educated man, could get the hang of it quickly. (*Beat.*) Despite the simplicity, Stockhausen was constantly warning of the theoretical dangers. “Beware the paradoxes,” he’d say—

DAVID: I don’t get you.

DEEM: Suppose I traveled forward in time ten years—to the house where I lived—and I knocked on the door—and the man who answered had my face—only he was ten years older—which would be me? Both?

DAVID: Why, it would be— (*Stops suddenly, frowning.*)

DEEM (*thin smile*): You see? Paradox— (*Beat.*) I didn’t care. I wasn’t planning to visit myself! To an-

swer your original question—no, I wasn't sure whether I'd arrive in 1996, or seven, or eight. Any of those years would have been suitable—

SARI: You lied about everything. Your occupation, the woman—

DEEM: I admit that was a feeble story. I couldn't think of anything more original.

SARI: You still haven't really explained *why* you came—

DEEM: Because of Francesca. (*Beat.*) My daughter.

DAVID: You need some kind of drug for her?

DEEM: A drug that didn't exist in 1979. But medical progress was accelerating so rapidly back then—the cancer virus vaccine, the heart successes—I hoped the drug might have been discovered and perfected by now. Those interns convinced me the gamble paid off.

DAVID: What drug are you talking about?

DEEM: The trade name is Antipar.* They stock it in the pharmacy at Metro Hospital. It was developed as a result of a wartime research breakthrough, and first tested successfully in 1992.

SARI: No wonder you talked about being interested in medical advances.

DEEM: In a few days, I'll learn the drug's chemical composition. When they send someone for me through the machine, I'll have the formula in my head. I'll take it back with me—to help end that—living death—

DAVID: You're speaking of your daughter?

DEEM (*nodding*): She's fourteen—that is, in 1979. I married late in life. My wife was older—not healthy. She died four months after our only child was born. (*Looks from one to the other.*) I'm not asking any—

* Pronounced AN-tuh-par.

thing so terrible, am I? Let me go—pretend we never met—

DAVID: What's wrong with your daughter, Deem?

DEEM: Paralysis agitans. (DAVID *shakes his head.*) The common name is Parkinson's disease. A nervous disorder of unknown origin. It's a despicable, ruinous condition that grows worse by the year. Now and again, it strikes younger people. (*Intense.*) If you saw Francesca when she was small—bright, active, full of energy and optimism—and then if you saw her as I left her—mouth slack—barely able to drag her feet across the floor—if you could look at the terrible, hopeless pain in her eyes—you'd understand why I'll do almost anything to get the time I need.

SARI: Will this Antipar cure the disease?

DEEM: No. But I understand it reverses the paralysis dramatically. Lets the patient live a long and relatively normal life. (*Beat.*) When I left, I hired a nurse to stay with Francesca. I said I had a family estate to settle in the East. The last thing my daughter did was give me those roses. She grew them in our garden. I taught her to love the earth—the seasons— (*Beat.*) Actually, the roses were mostly my work. She can no longer hold even simple garden tools. She asked the nurse to cut the flowers for me. She tried to lift them from her lap. Her fingers were unsteady—clumsy—The flowers dropped on the floor— (*Beat.*) When I picked them up, she was crying. I tried to tell her it didn't matter. But it does. I intend to take the chemical formula of Antipar back to 1979.

DAVID: Will the inventors of the time device allow that?

DEEM: Do you think I plan to tell them?

DAVID: You seem very certain they'll come after you—

DEEM: And that's why I must leave. Elude them for as long as possible.

DAVID: Why do you have the gun?

DEEM: Because the armed guard wouldn't have let me touch the controls, obviously. I didn't want to buy a gun—it was necessary. I left 1979 on a night in late October. It was cool, so I wore my black overcoat. Late that Friday evening, I returned to the Institute and hid outside the warp phase room. I made a noise—the guard stepped into the hall—I struck him from behind with the gun. He never saw me.

DAVID: And after that, you operated the device?

DEEM (*nodding*): Of course, till then, only short trips had been made. A few days into the past. A couple of hours into the future. I set the mechanism ahead. Then I entered the bell chamber. After a short period of semiconsciousness, I found myself outdoors, all alone in the desert. The device moves a person through space as well as time. The Institute was nowhere in sight. I walked to a highway, got a ride, and came here. To this city. This house.

SARI: Won't someone in the past realize you're missing?

DEEM: I arranged that, too. My regular three-week vacation began on the Friday I left. I know they'll suspect me eventually. The gatehouse guard will recall I returned that night, pretending I'd forgotten something. And he'll recall I didn't leave the grounds again—

DAVID: For some crazy reason, I believe your story, Deem.

DEEM: Then you'll let me go—and say nothing?

DAVID: What you're doing is still wrong—

DEEM (*abrupt*): I'd hate to force you.

DAVID (*wary*): Force?

DEEM (*lifting the gun*): You know what I mean. Please don't make it necessary for me to hurt either of you— (*Soft chime. All eyes whip toward the con-*

sole. DAVID takes a step toward it. DEEM threatens him back with gun.) Don't answer! (DAVID stands tensely. Two more chimes.) Whoever it is will go away.

DAVID: If they don't?

DEEM: They will. Wait. (*After a moment, two chimes.*)

SARI: We have to answer!

DAVID: She's right. (*Two more chimes.*)

DEEM: Who the hell can it be? So insistent— (*Two more chimes.*) All right! Answer it, Mrs. Childs. (*Gestures with gun.*) But be careful of what you say. Extremely careful.

(*Numbly, SARI goes to console, pushes button. Lights fade up on the porch platform, just enough so that we can make out STOCKHAUSEN standing there, anxiously eyeing the sky. Thunder rumbles.*)

SARI: Yes?

STOCKHAUSEN (*starting*): Hello? Who is speaking?

SARI: I'm inside the house. You're standing in front of the security camera.

DEEM (*looking at console*): Stockhausen!

DAVID: The scientist?

DEEM (*stricken*): So soon—so soon—

STOCKHAUSEN (*nervous*): Camera? Oh. Ah—I wish to see Vincent Deem. (SARI looks at DEEM. He shakes his head, hard.)

SARI (*to console*): There's no one here by that name.

STOCKHAUSEN: I know otherwise. Let me speak to him.

Better yet, let me in. It's beginning to rain.

SARI: You're mistaken, there's no one—

STOCKHAUSEN: Young woman, I followed him here. Using the warp phase effector. I have searched this city laboriously, calling endlessly over some kind of

computer network—describing his antiquated clothing. A clerk at a nearby market told me he was staying with you. How do I find your front door?

SARI: Please leave us alone. We don't know any Deem—

STOCKHAUSEN: And I tell you I know he's here! Must I involve the authorities in this? (DEEM *shoves SARI out of the way.*)

DEEM: Go away, Hendrik. I beg you, let me go—

STOCKHAUSEN: So there you are, Vincert. You must open the door. Otherwise I'll go directly to the authorities. (DEEM *stiffens, as if ready to say no—and use the gun. Then, abruptly, he wilts. To SARI:*) All right. Let him in. (*Dejected, beaten, DEEM stands aside as SARI presses a button, saying to the screen:*)

SARI: The door's open. Walk to your right, then left—
(STOCKHAUSEN *hurries off UR.*)

DEEM: Perhaps I can reason with him. I won't go back without the drug!

DAVID: You may have no choice in the matter.

DEEM (*trying to convince himself*): He'll listen. I know he will—

(STOCKHAUSEN *enters hurriedly DR.*)

STOCKHAUSEN: In God's name, Vincent—why did you think you could get away with this?

DEEM: I had to do it. For personal reasons.

STOCKHAUSEN: Personal reasons! Francesca! Your blind hope of finding a drug for Parkinson's disease. How many times did you tell me that foolish dream, eh?

DEEM: Foolish? The drug exists!

STOCKHAUSEN: Are you sure?

DEEM: Antipar. On the shelf at a hospital not a mile from here.

STOCKHAUSEN: Still, you must come back with me.

DEEM: No!

STOCKHAUSEN (*nodding*): Vincent, there is simply no alternative. The guard you struck woke briefly just before you entered the device. He identified you.

DEEM: Of all the damned, stinking luck!

STOCKHAUSEN: You must return and stand trial. You don't belong here, you never stayed here—

DEEM: I'll stay long enough to get a sample of Antipar. Buy it, steal it—

STOCKHAUSEN: I can't allow that.

DEEM (*raising gun*): Then I won't go back.

STOCKHAUSEN (*after a pause*): Vincent, you and I are friends. Knowing you well—I also know where you're vulnerable. You could never use a gun to harm another human being.

DEEM (*beaten*): Damn you—

STOCKHAUSEN: It's useless to argue. You're coming back. You did come back. I have evidence—though I prefer not to show you—

DEEM: Evidence? What evidence?

STOCKHAUSEN: Please drop it, Vincent. Pick up your bag and let's go.

DEEM: You have no evidence—you're lying!

STOCKHAUSEN (*resigned; takes out a piece of paper*): You remember my saying so often, "Beware the paradoxes—"? You can't be in two different years at once. You can't be here—and in the past. This document confirms that you returned.

DEEM: It's a trick—

STOCKHAUSEN: No trick. Proof. Shortly after arriving in this city, I checked the existing state records. They show that late in the year 1979, Vincent Deem was placed on trial for illegal entry and operation of the warp phase effector, and sentenced to five years in a state prison that survived the war mentioned in

those same records. (DAVID and SARI stand dumb-founded as DEEM snatches the paper. He seems about to speak. Then something shakes him to his roots. Ashen, he looks up slowly.)

DEEM (*quietly*): This looks genuine.

STOCKHAUSEN: It is. An absolutely authentic photocopy of the original document.

DEEM: You're certain of this date?

STOCKHAUSEN: Unquestionably.

SARI (*to DEEM*): What is that?

DEEM (*very quietly*): My death certificate.

DAVID (*taking the paper*): Dated the tenth of May—1983.

STOCKHAUSEN: Coronary failure, while serving the term in prison. I'm sorry, Vincent. But you see I *did* return you to the past. Alive. (*Takes his arm.*) Come— (DEEM looks at the gun in his own hand, then at the paper in DAVID's—and slowly puts the gun in his pocket. He picks up his suitcase, then suddenly cries out.)

DEEM: At least give me an hour! To go to the Hospital. All I need is one tablet—one! Any competent chemist in 1979 can analyze the sample—synthesize precise duplicates—

STOCKHAUSEN: Years before the drug was actually discovered? That kind of tampering with the past isn't permissible.

DEEM: You're condemning Francesca! You might as well shoot her! Hendrik, I'm your friend! Just one hour!

STOCKHAUSEN: Vincent, I'm not inhuman. But I can't!

DEEM: Why can't you? No one would know—

STOCKHAUSEN: I would! Much as I might like to, I— (*Glances at DAVID and SARI.*) We'll discuss it outside. (*He starts off DR. Wearily, DEEM picks up his*

suitcase, starts to follow. Then he pauses, turns back.)

DEEM (*to DAVID and SARI*). I'm sorry to have brought this trouble on you. I didn't intend for it to happen. (*A small, sad smile.*) But now, perhaps you won't dislike me and fear me the way you did at first. In any case, thank you for sheltering a stranger— (*He sees the roses.*) Oh. (*Indicating them.*) I won't be needing the flowers any longer. There are others waiting for me at home. (*Slowly, he turns and follows STOCKHAUSEN out DR. SARI takes a step after him.*)

SARI: Such a sad, driven man—

DAVID: Yes. You were right from the beginning. He was a stranger with nothing to hold onto but that gun—

SARI (*picking up the two flowers from the console*): And his daughter's roses. (*With emotion.*) David, I feel so ashamed, now that I know why he came. To see him fail— (*Overcome.*) It's too much.

DAVID: I sensed that the doctor was wavering a tiny bit. I imagine Deem is still pleading for that hour—

SARI: But we'll never know whether he got it—or the sample. If he didn't, that makes it all so hopeless and futile—

DAVID (*softly, as an idea dawns*): Sari—give me twenty seconds—

SARI (*looks up, not understanding*): What? (DAVID *moves quickly to console, punches buttons. Single chime. He speaks to the screen.*)

DAVID: Central directory, please. (*Chime.*) Deem, d-e-e-m, Miss Francesca. (*Motioning SARI to him.*) Here comes the display—

SARI (*looking at screen*): Three women with the same name! Uxbridge, England. St. Louis, Honolulu—

DAVID: She'd be—let's see, fourteen in 1979—about

thirty-two now— (*To screen.*) Show the ages, please.
(*Chime.*)

SARI: The girl in Uxbridge is only four—

DAVID: And Mrs. Deem of Honolulu is sixty-eight.

SARI (*with mounting excitement*): But St. Louis—
thirty-two!

DAVID (*to screen*): Connect me with the St. Louis
number, please. (*Two chimes.*)

SARI: Oh, David, maybe he did persuade the doctor—

DAVID: We'll know any second—

(*Lights fade on ULC, revealing the WOMAN. She
speaks in a low, deliberate voice.*)

WOMAN: Hello?

DAVID: Miss Deem? Francesca Deem?

WOMAN: That's right.

DAVID: You don't know me. My name is David Childs.
I'm calling from my home on the West Coast. You
can check that— (*Punches buttons.*) There, I've pro-
grammed in my personal reference number. Please
confirm later that I'm who I say—

WOMAN: I will. What do you want?

DAVID: Miss Deem, what was your father's first name?

WOMAN: Why do you ask?

DAVID: Believe me, it's vital that I know.

WOMAN: His first name was Vincent.

DAVID: Is he alive?

WOMAN: He died in 1983. (*SARI leans against DAVID,
overcome with relief and joy. He puts his arm around
her, holding her tight, as:*)

DAVID: In prison?

WOMAN: Who are you, Mr. Childs? Why are you call-
ing?

DAVID: Miss Deem, please—check that number. You'll
find you can trust me. I'd like to come and see you

in person. I met someone you once knew. A man who gave you a great gift. He left another gift with me. One that you gave him a long time ago. (*He takes the roses gently from SARI's hand.*) I think he'd like for you to have this one, too.

CURTAIN

THE END

The Mechanical Bride

An Original Teleplay

by FRITZ LEIBER

THE MECHANICAL BRIDE, by Fritz Leiber. Copyright, 1954, by Groff Conklin. From *Science Fiction Thinking Machines*, edited by Groff Conklin. (Vanguard Press, New York, 1954.) Reprinted by permission of the author and the author's agent, Robert P. Mills.

Isaac Asimov wasn't the first to use robots in science fiction, but he is generally regarded as the author who popularized them. Otto Binder may have been the man responsible for introducing the robot as a theme in science fiction. He wrote the *Adam Link* stories in the 1930s. A novelized version of these stories came out a few years ago when I was Otto's agent. They present a robot who is an *intelligent* creature with a will of its own. In one story, which was telecast effectively as an "Outer Limits" episode, the robot is even held legally responsible for a murder. Fritz Leiber takes the robot theme a tantalizing imaginative step further in this play.

Fritz Leiber's father was a Shakespearean actor, which may account for Fritz's talent, amply demonstrated in "The Mechanical Bride," as a playwright. Fritz has been one of the best authors ever to work in the science fiction genre for several decades. He can switch from sword-and-sorcery to social commentary to straight action-adventure with equal facility. He hasn't done many plays, but this one, written as an original teleplay, makes us hope he does others before long.

Wild, eerie music with a metallic beat suggesting the operation of a machine shop. As the screen brightens, we see the workshop. The back wall is of brick, covered with cobwebs and dust. Against it rests an empty, upended packing case like an Egyptian sarcophagus. Before it and parallel to it extends a long workbench, leading offstage left. On the bench are tools, small electric motors, an object of metal ribwork suggesting a torso and head, and reels of magnetic tape of which some are carelessly unrolled. Prominently displayed, lies an arm of a mannequin. Just behind the table, stage left, the mannequin stands, clothed but minus the arm. She is in profile, facing stage center, and drooping hair keeps us from seeing her face.

OLD CHERNIK (*He is seated behind the table, stage center, filing a tiny metal part in the same rhythm as the music. The music grows fainter as he finishes the job.*): There you are, my dear. A surgeon couldn't

do better. (*He carefully fits the part into the shoulder end of the arm on the table.*) Steady now, we have to test it. It won't hurt, dear. (*Shift to close-up of what seems to be hand and forearm of arm on table, since it is in same position and on similar surface. Actually it is hand of girl.*) Now. (*A faint hum. Hand makes a caressing movement against empty air. Shift to CHERNIK, smiling.*) Good. (*He looks at mannequin.*) You'll like it, my dear. A beautiful arm. Won't you give Chernik a smile, who works so hard to make you beautiful? (*He approaches mannequin, reaches behind her waist to operate unseen control.*) Come, a smile for Old Chernik. (*Shift to close-up of what seems to be mannequin's face, because of its frozen expression, similar hat, hair. Actually it is head of girl.*) Smile now. (*A faint hum. For a moment the frozen face breaks into a somewhat wooden smile. Then the hum changes to a clanking sound of machinery out of order. The face begins twitching mechanically, one cheek jumping, in the same rhythm as the clanking. Shift back to CHERNIK, who is fumbling hastily. Clanking stops. He sighs with relief.*)

RITA BRUHL (*as yet unseen*): Wouldn't she smile for you? (CHERNIK *starts guiltily.*) Wouldn't she give you just one little smile? (RITA *is coming into view, poised and beautiful but with a distant humor about her.*) Your girls don't appreciate you, Chernik. They have no hearts.

CHERNIK: You startled me, Rita. I thought it was—

RITA (*flatly*): Mr. Shalk is busy taking some new orders for mannequins from wealthy men who have grown tired of living women and want beautiful, brainless robots. He won't be checking up on you.

(*Inspecting the mannequin.*) She's very beautiful, this new one. A real masterpiece.

CHERNIK: But, Rita, you're the one who designs them, who styles them, who creates their gestures, their expressions . . .

RITA: But you're the one who builds them, Chernik. You give them life.

CHERNIK (*indicating the junk on the workbench*): You call that life?

RITA: It's a kind of life. (*Slyly.*) At least you must think so, or you wouldn't want them to smile at you. You know, Chernik, you're lucky. At least you have your girls, even if they have no hearts. I haven't anybody.

CHERNIK (*hesitantly*): But I thought that Mr. Shalk—

RITA (*bitterly*): You call him anybody?

CHERNIK (*still more hesitantly, his obvious adoration of RITA showing*): And then, of course, Rita, there's—

RITA: Yes, Chernik?

CHERNIK: Nothing.

RITA (*musingly*): I did have somebody once. I had a heart, too. But he took it away from me and he didn't give it back when he left me.

CHERNIK (*incredulously*): Do you mean to say that any man would—

RITA: Oh, yes, Chernik. And that's why I'm here, helping Mr. Shalk sell the girls you make for him. Sometimes I think I'm no more alive than they are.

CHERNIK (*angrily*): I don't see how any man could be such a fool as to leave you.

RITA (*with eerie humor*): Didn't you know? Men don't want real women anymore. You and I are behind the times, Chernik. We still believe in love. But most men just want beautiful, brainless robots. That's all

my man really wanted. He didn't want me to have a will of my own. He didn't want me to be alive. (*Reflectively.*) And yet he was so tender and charming. He seemed so very loving. His name was . . . John Ellison.

OTTO SHALK: Rita! (*She does not stir or flinch, though CHERNIK scurries back to his work. SHALK comes into view.*) I thought you were in the office.

RITA (*coolly yet sweetly*): I only wandered in to see the new mannequin, Otto. Is there any harm in that?

SHALK: Perhaps not. But I don't like people to wander. Do you understand me, Rita?

RITA: I often go out to take orders. I interview gentlemen, in private.

SHALK: That's something I tell you to do. Do you understand the difference, Rita?

RITA: Yes, Otto.

SHALK: Good, because I'm sending you out on an assignment right now. I want you to interview a client who is interested in buying a mannequin. He has money. With the right sales talk, he should take one of our deluxe models. He lives at Interplanetary Towers, two hundred and sixty-seventh floor, suite seventeen. His name is John Ellison.

(*We see RITA's eyes widen in her masklike face and we feel her tremendous reaction. As the scene darkens, the machine-shop music comes up again, with the clanking sound of the mannequin who wouldn't smile worked into it rhythmically. Then the music shifts to a strain suggesting fast transport and diminishes.*)

ELEVATOR OPERATOR: One hundred and ninety-eight. (*Sound of elevator door opening and closing.*) Two hundred and thirteen. (*Some sound. Longer wait.*)

Two hundred and sixty-seven. (*Elevator door opens.*) Didn't you ask for the two hundred and sixty-seventh floor, Miss?

(*The music shifts to a sybaritic strain and we see JOHN ELLISON's apartment. It is tastefully furnished. On the walls are a few large, tasteful pictures of futurian pin-up girls. Against the wall are dispensers for lighted cigarettes and drinks; the former is an efficient-looking object with a couple of cigarettes sticking up from it, the latter a little door with some dummy buttons above it. John takes a lit cigarette from the dispenser—the only one that need be lit. He seems both eager and a trifle uneasy. An odd little chime sounds.*)

JOHN (*in the precise tone one uses for vocally triggered robots*): Open up, door. (*The door opens and RITA is standing behind it, a veil now dropped down and concealing her face.*) Won't you please come in? (*She does so. He indicates a chair.*) Won't you sit down?

RITA: No, thank you, I'd rather stand.

JOHN (*He is obviously struck by something about her voice, though he doesn't recognize it yet.*): Will you have a cigarette? And a drink—say, Martian Scotch? And won't you take off your veil?

RITA (*to all the questions*): No, thank you.

JOHN: Then I'll have one, if you don't mind. (*He presses a button above the drink dispenser and studies her curiously as he waits for it to operate.*)

Excuse me, but you are the person? . . .

RITA: Yes, Mr. Shalk sent me. You want to buy a mannequin.

JOHN (*relieved, though something still bothers him*):
That's right. (*Door of drink dispenser opens smoothly and he takes out a glass.*)

RITA (*reciting a sales talk mechanically, though not awkwardly*): Mr. Shalk supplies the finest mannequins in the world. Streamlined, smooth-working, absolutely noiseless, breath-takingly realistic. Each one is powered by thirty-seven midget electric motors, all completely noiseless, and is controlled by instructions, recorded on magnetic tape, which are triggered off by the sound of your voice and no one else's. There is a built-in microphone that hears everything you say, and an electric brain that selects a suitable answer. The deluxe model is built to your specifications, has fifty different facial expressions, sings two hundred love songs, and can carry on a thousand fascinating conversations. (*Her voice changes.*) But she has one serious defect. They all have.

JOHN (*startled*): What's that?

RITA: She has no heart.

JOHN (*chuckling after a moment*): I wouldn't expect her to.

RITA: You don't mind?

JOHN (*He puts down glass.*): Of course not.

RITA (*with gathering feeling*): Wouldn't you rather have a girl with a heart, Mr. Ellison?

JOHN (*a bit angry now*): I don't understand you. I want to buy a mannequin.

RITA: Girls without hearts are dangerous.

JOHN: But Mr. Shalk assured me that the mannequins are foolproof, guaranteed for a year. Do you mean to say—

RITA: Oh, mechanically they're perfect. Still, in the

long run girls without hearts are dangerous, even metal girls. Wouldn't you really rather have a girl with a heart, John? (*She lifts the veil.*)

JOHN: Rita! Rita Bruhl!

RITA: Yes, John.

JOHN (*going into his act, but also really agitated*):

Look here, Rita, you know very well we're through.

It's no use trying to make the past come alive.

RITA: Are we through, John?

JOHN: Yes, completely through. As I've told you a dozen times.

RITA: You'd rather have even a girl made of metal and suede rubber . . . than me?

JOHN: I certainly would! And you didn't do yourself any good by tricking your way in to see me.

RITA: I didn't use any trick to come here.

JOHN: You mean you actually work for this outfit?

RITA: Oh, yes, I work for Mr. Shalk. I work down in the catacombs where old Harry Chernik makes the mannequins. Those two are the only ones who care about me anymore. (*With a little shivery cruelty of her own.*) Shall I tell you about Mr. Shalk and old Chernik, John?

JOHN: Certainly not. Please don't prolong this, Rita.

RITA: Mr. Shalk is a very jealous man, John. If he knew that you and I were old friends, he wouldn't like it at all.

JOHN: Look, Rita, are you trying to make trouble for me?

RITA (*laughing*): Trouble for you? Of course not, John.

JOHN: Then please get out.

RITA: Oh, no, I couldn't possibly do that. We still have some business to transact. (*She pick up his aban-*

doned drink, sips it.) You want to buy a mannequin and I have to take your order.

JOHN (*very bothered*): If you think I'm going to go through this with you—

RITA (*enjoying it*): Do you want a blonde or a brunette, John? Or a redhead? Or one of our exotic jobs? Very slim, I suppose—about an eighteen-year-old. Dimples? A bee-stung lip? And should she be languid or giddy? We can adjust the motors to any speed.

JOHN: I don't see how you can cheapen yourself, Rita, to talk to me about such things.

RITA: It doesn't bother me. Don't you see, John, I don't have a heart anymore. I made one effort to get it back, and I won't ever try again. I'm really not very different from those girls Chernik makes down in the catacombs. And when you can see their steel skeletons, John, they're not so seductive.

JOHN: Please, Rita, I asked you to leave.

RITA: Oh, but I'm forgetting it's their charming outsides we're interested in. Do you like the naïve, cuddly type, or would you prefer a mannequin who's proud and slightly cruel? It's all a question of what we put on the magnetic tapes.

JOHN: Rita, I'm not going to listen to any more of this.

RITA: But I can't go back without your order. You wouldn't want me to disappoint Mr. Shalk.

JOHN: I don't care what you do. Just get out.

RITA: I tell you what, John, I'll select the mannequin for you.

JOHN (*hesitates, but the cruelty of this suggestion appeals to him*): All right, you select her. You know my tastes.

RITA: I'll select her, John. I guarantee she'll be very, very beautiful—the perfect mate for you.

(The scene darkens as she is speaking. The machine-shop music comes up again. Through it we hear RITA calling.)

RITA (*eagerly and with a certain allure*): Chernik! (*Pause.*) Chernik! (*We see the workshop with CHERNIK at the bench and RITA beside him, just arrived. She says winningly:*) Chernik, you'll do something for me, won't you?

CHERNIK (*delighted, though a shade fearful*): Of course I will, Rita.

RITA: It's about the mannequin for John Ellison. There are some details I wouldn't want Mr. Shalk to know. They'd be a secret between you and me.

CHERNIK: What are they, Rita? I wouldn't want to do anything that would make Mr. Shalk angry.

RITA: You're afraid of Shalk?

CHERNIK (*miserably*): Of course I am.

RITA: So afraid that you won't do me a little favor? Why, I thought you liked me, Chernik.

CHERNIK (*agonized*): Rita, I do, I do. But . . .

RITA: It isn't as if you were running any risk. Mr. Shalk will never know about it at all.

CHERNIK: But what are these things you want done to John Ellison's mannequin?

RITA: Well, for one thing, there are the motors and the cables that do the work of muscles. I'd want some changes there.

CHERNIK (*doubtfully*): Yes?

RITA: And then there are the magnetic tapes controlling her voice and her behavior patterns. I'd want to prepare those myself, in private.

CHERNIK: I couldn't let you do that, Rita.

RITA (*wheelingly*): I often prepare tapes for you. You

don't always check them. And I usually sketch out the behavior patterns. This wouldn't be so different.

CHERNIK: But what would be on those tapes, Rita?

You said that you once loved this Ellison and that he left you and that—

RITA (*with some fire*): What would be on those tapes is something that concerns me and John Ellison—and no one else in the world. Do you understand me, Chernik?

CHERNIK (*cowed*): Yes.

RITA: There's only one other thing—the question of the mannequin's appearance. I'd like her to look like . . .

(*She approaches her lips to his ear.*)

CHERNIK (*starting back*): But that would be horrible, Rita.

RITA (*with enigmatic menace*): Do you think so, Chernik?

CHERNIK (*torn*): Well, no. . . . But I couldn't do it. I wouldn't dare.

RITA (*very softly, her face still close to his*): Not for me, Chernik?

CHERNIK: But if Mr. Shalk should find out—

RITA: He won't. I'll see to that. (*Meaningfully.*) If you do it for me, Chernik, I'll like you. I'll like you very much.

CHERNIK (*ecstatic but incredulous*): Me? Me? You're fooling, Rita.

RITA (*with cold conviction*): Why shouldn't I like the man who creates beauty in this tomb, the genius—you are a genius—who so deeply understands the inmost secrets—the machinery—of glamour?

CHERNIK (*almost convinced*): You'd really like me? Old Chernik?

RITA: Yes, I would . . . Harry.

CHERNIK: Then I will, Rita. I'll do it.

RITA: Promise?

CHERNIK: I promise.

SHALK: What are you two whispering about?

RITA (*CHERNIK is frozen, but she takes it very calmly.*):
Hello, Otto. I was telling him how to make Mr. Ellison's mannequin.

SHALK: You were gone a long time, Rita. I phoned Ellison. He said you'd left, but he sounded flustered.

RITA (*moving toward SHALK*): Any man would be flustered after ordering a mannequin. Especially from me. Shall we call it a day, Otto?

SHALK (*pleased but still a bit suspicious*): He sounded very flustered, though, as if he were excited about something.

RITA: He is. About a deluxe mannequin, at our top prices. Come on, Otto.

SHALK (*mollified*): Hadn't you better finish giving Chernik Mr. Ellison's order?

RITA (*drawing SHALK away*): I can fill in the details later. He has enough to go on. Don't you, Chernik?

CHERNIK: Yes, Miss Bruhl.

RITA: You'll follow my directions precisely, won't you, Chernik?

CHERNIK (*beginning to glow with the excitement of creativity*): Miss Bruhl, I will.

(Machine-shop music up as scene fades. We get glimpses of parts of mannequin, electric motors, tapes, CHERNIK working at bench and using various tools, perhaps fitting naked head, seen from rear, onto mannequin, etc. We hear snatches of RITA's voice and his, as, "No, that isn't right yet." "But, Rita, I've tried everything." "Then you've got to try again," etc. Finally the music

fades to silence as the lights come up on CHERNIK's triumphantly happy face.)

CHERNIK: She's finished, Rita! Come with me, Rita. I want you to see for yourself how wonderful she is. Remember what you promised? You're going to have to like me very, very much. This way, Rita, this way. (*We see them move until they are facing a tall, sarcophagus-like box between them and the camera. We can see their faces but we cannot see into the box. CHERNIK opens it.*) There!

RITA: She's perfect, Chernik. Perfect.

CHERNIK (*looking uneasily from RITA to figure in box*): So perfect she frightens me.

RITA: Does she, Chernik? She looks as if she were really listening to us, as if she were just pretending to be asleep.

CHERNIK: Only Mr. Ellison's voice can wake her.

RITA (*nodding*): Snow White and the Prince.

CHERNIK: You like her, don't you? I've kept my promise to you, haven't I? Now you, Rita, should—

RITA: You put in the voice tapes and behavior tapes I gave you—the ones I prepared?

CHERNIK (*This worries him again, which is what RITA intends.*): Yes. What is on those tapes, Rita? I should know.

RITA: That's my secret, Chernik.

CHERNIK: But you might have put anything on those tapes. She might say or do anything.

RITA: That's right, Chernik, she might. (*Playfully.*) I wonder what Mr. Shalk would think of her?

CHERNIK: Rita, please! He'd kill me if he saw her.

RITA: I think he might, Chernik. But you needn't worry. The express men are picking her up in twenty

minutes. (*With an odd laugh.*) Do you think she'll frighten Mr. Ellison?

CHERNIK: Rita! Just what did you put on those tapes?

RITA: That's my secret. Remember our agreement. And now go away. I'll wait for the express men.

CHERNIK (*with some suspicion*): But do you remember our agreement?

RITA: I do, I do. But later, later on. We'll be together later on.

CHERNIK: You promise?

RITA: I promise . . . Harry. And now go away. I want to be alone with her.

(Scene fades with her eyes fixed on the figure in the box. Dreamy, eerie music, broken by an odd little chime—ELLISON's doorbell. Lights come up on JOHN's apartment. Box now stands upright against wall. Its cover is shut. JOHN is looking at it.)

JOHN: That'll be all, porter. I can take care of it now that you've taken the anti-gravities off.

PORTER (*just a voice*): Okay, boss.

JOHN: Double-lock yourself, door. (*He picks up a drink, sips it, smiles at the box in anticipation. Then he puts down drink, takes an envelope from his pocket, tears it open, removes key from it, unlocks the box, and opens the cover. RITA is standing inside, motionless, expressionless, eyes closed. Cushioned pads in the box seem to fit snugly her waist and head, so we understand why she hasn't rattled around.*) Rita!

RITA (*Her eyes open, swing, stop and widen as they see JOHN. She smiles stiffly. Then, sweetly but mechanically.*): Hel-lo, dar-ling.

JOHN: Rita, what's the idea?

RITA: I am so glad to see you, John.

JOHN: Look here, Rita, I told you it was no good trying to see me. Stunts like this won't help.

RITA: I like you ver-y much, John, dar-ling.

JOHN: Stop being silly and come out of there.

RITA (*At the words "come out" she moves for the first time, stepping out of the box with the barest suggestion of mechanicalness. She comes to a halt, facing him.*): I am so hap-py to be here.

JOHN: Rita, it's no use your trying these silly tricks. I told you— (*But as she continues to smile woodenly, he becomes afraid.*) You are Rita, aren't you? You're not—

RITA: My name is Ri-ta.

JOHN: But are you really Rita?

RITA: My name is Ri-ta. I love you, John, dear-est. I was made for you. (*As the double meaning of this percolates into his mind, she lifts her arms.*) Kiss me now.

JOHN (*backing a step*): Get away from me!

RITA (*advancing*): Kiss me, John, dar-ling.

(*The phone begins to buzz and its light to blink.*

JOHN glances toward it, then back to RITA. She has stopped moving. He starts toward phone. Camera shifts to phone and its blinking light. It grows larger. Scene shifts to workshop. SHALK is sitting by workbench, phone in one hand—we hear very faintly the buzzing we have been hearing at JOHN's apartment—gun in the other hand. The gun is pointing at CHERNIK, who cowers at SHALK's knees.)

SHALK (*to CHERNIK*): Not a word out of you now.

(*His expression—and faint buzzing stopping—shows the phone has been answered. He shifts mouthpiece*

so he can speak into it. His voice is most pleasant, in sharp contrast to the expression on his face.) Mr. Ellison? This is Mr. Shalk. I just wanted to inquire whether our little shipment arrived safely. Good! No, that's all. Have fun. Good-bye. *(His eyes still on CHERNIK, he hangs up the phone. During the rest of his speech the screen widens and we see RITA, stiff and expressionless, sitting on the other side of SHALK.)* That tears it. He was so nervous he could hardly talk. Now try to tell me you and Rita didn't make this mannequin to look exactly like her, so she could escape to her lover in its place.

CHERNIK: Please, Mr. Shalk, I didn't dream of anything like that. It's true I made the mannequin for Mr. Ellison to look like Rita, but that was just a little joke of hers, a whim. She didn't want to leave you. This is the real Rita.

SHALK *(with contempt)*: The real Rita! *(He snaps his fingers under her nose, she doesn't blink; slaps her heavily, there is no reaction.)* You didn't even do a good job, Chernik. You didn't even make her so she'd work. And she's cold, Chernik, cold. *(He contemptuously tosses aside RITA's hand, which he has been holding, and grabs CHERNIK by the coat lapels.)* And yet you thought you could fool me with her. You thought I wouldn't know the difference. *(During the next speech he lets go of CHERNIK and the camera shifts to SHALK's face alone.)* And she thought she could fool me. I suppose she's snickering at her cleverness right now. *(SHALK stands and begins to move toward door purposefully, putting gun in pocket.)* She thinks she's got away safely. She thinks there'll be no more Otto Shalk. Thinks. Thinks! *(He goes.)*

CHERNIK *(lifting his head slowly)*: Why did you do it,

Rita? Why did you let him hurt me? Why didn't you tell him you were the real Rita? (*She does not look at him, but her face wears a secret smile, and as 'ie gropes toward her, inching along the floor, CHERNIK finds some hope in it.*) Was it so that he would go away? So that you and I could be alone?

RITA (*jerking away as he is about to touch her*): Keep your paws off me, you old fool!

CHERNIK: But you promised. You said that if I made the mannequin to look exactly like you—

RITA: And you believed me? You are a fool, Chernik. Go back to your metal girls. They're the orly ones you really love.

CHERNIK (*pulling himself to his feet*): Metal girls! Metal girls! I hate them. Do you hear me, I hate them! (*As he says this he brings his hand down on the table and shoves some of the stuff off it.*) I only made them because no real woman in the world would have me. I detested myself for doing it. Then you came. You came smiling into my stuffy tomb and it wasn't a tomb any longer. I adored you. I thought you at least appreciated me a little. I did miracles to impress you. I made metal girls almost as real as life—

RITA (*who has hardly been listening to him*): Yes, metal girls. Stick to your metal girls, Chernik, for they're all you'll ever have.

CHERNIK: Metal girls! (*In his rage he topples a mannequin. Then looking at the abstracted RITA and breathing hard.*) You hate us all, don't you? That's your secret. You want to destroy us all. Me—you knew your contempt would be enough to destroy me. But for the others—for Ellison and Shalk—you had me make the mannequin—the mannequin with motors like a bulldozer's and hands like claws. (*He is*

moving toward door.) But I won't let 't happen, do you hear me! I won't let you have your way. I'll stop it.

RITA (*confidently, still paying him little attention*): If you can, Chernik. If you can. And if you really know what you're doing.

CHERNIK: What do you mean?

RITA: Are you sure that I'm the real Rita and that the other is the mannequin? Shalk thought differently.

CHERNIK: Of course I'm sure. I built the mannequin.

RITA: Perhaps you built her too well. Look at me, Chernik. Are you really sure?

CHERNIK: Only you could treat me as you've done. The mannequin wouldn't have that much hate.

RITA: You think not, Chernik? Remember, it was I who prepared the tapes.

CHERNIK (*continuing toward door*): You're just trying to delay me. I know your game and I'm going to stop it.

RITA: If you can, Chernik. And if you've guessed right as to which of us is which.

(We see the doubt entering CHERNIK's face as he hears these words. The scene darkens and shifts to JOHN's apartment, where he is crouched back against a wall, terrified, watchful, ready to move at an instant's notice.)

RITA (*At first we only hear her voice*): Where are you, John, darling? Say something, dear-est. It is ea-si-er for me to find you, then. Oh, there you are. Come to me, dar-ling. (*He retreats around table. She bumps against it slightly and stands facing him with arms outstretched.*)

JOHN (*almost hysterically*): Keep away from me!

RITA: But I love you, John, dear-est. (*The door chime sounds.*)

JOHN (*desperate for any interruption to this horrible tête à tête*): Unlock yourself, door! (*He darts toward it, but as it opens, there is SHALK, gun in hand.*)

SHALK: Well, this is a nice little party. But you two lovebirds don't seem to be getting on so well. (*Then, to RITA.*) Come on, you. (*She remains frozen.*) Didn't you hear me, Rita? I said, "Come on."

JOHN: But that isn't Rita. That's just a mannequin that looks—

SHALK: Don't tell me fairy tales. (*Then, to RITA.*) Did you actually think you could get away with it? Did you really believe you could fool me with a mannequin of yourself? Are you coming, or do I have to—

JOHN: But I tell you it isn't—

SHALK (*whirling on him in a rage*): You keep out of this!

(*At that instant a shot is heard and SHALK drops gun, claps other hand to hand that was holding it. We see the robot with small gun in her hand. She has just whipped it out and shot gun from SHALK's hand. SHALK, fighting pain, drops to knees, reaches for his fallen gun, but hesitates as—*)

RITA: Don't try it, Otto.

SHALK: Why, you little tramp! (*He snatches at his gun, but there is another shot and he jerks back, really impressed.*)

RITA (*advancing*): That's better. That's much better, Otto. On your knees and trembling. You can go out that way, too.

SHALK (*not altogether a coward, though cringing*

away): Rita, you don't really mean it. You can't do this to me.

RITA: You can go out and go back to that mannequin of me. She's good enough for you. You never could tell the difference between a real woman and a mannequin, Otto.

SHALK: But I love you, Rita. I know I've been rough and jealous, but I love you. (*He has gotten to his feet and is moving back toward the door as she advances.*)

RITA: Love! All you understand is power, Otto, and that's all the metal girls understand, either. They're your type. You couldn't tell a real woman if you saw one, because all you know is mannequins. (*He has been backed to the door.*) Tell me, Otto, are you even sure that I'm the real Rita and not the mannequin? Are you sure?

SHALK (*We see in his face how the doubt and the horror of the doubt invade and break him, rather than any simple physical fear.*): I . . . I . . . (*He backs out in terror. RITA lowers the gun and gives a little laugh. The door is left open.*)

JOHN (*amazed, delighted*): Rita!

RITA (*turning*): Yes, John?

JOHN: Why did you do it?

RITA: Do what, John? (*She puts down the gun.*)

JOHN: Pretend to be a mannequin.

RITA: But I thought that was what you wanted.

JOHN (*coming toward her*): Oh, Rita.

RITA (*retreating somewhat coyly*): But you don't want me. You want a mannequin.

JOHN: That isn't true, Rita. That isn't true anymore.

RITA: The last time I was here you said we were through forever.

JOHN: I was a fool, a colossal fool.

RITA: And now you've changed your mind just because I saved us from poor, stupid Otto. Because I humbled him in front of you, you're interested in me again.

JOHN: No. That just proved to me that you were real, that you weren't . . . that thing. Believe me, Rita, the change in me goes a lot deeper. What happened tonight showed me that my whole idea of life was wrong, that I'd fooled myself into thinking I preferred machines to human beings, that I'd rejected the one person in the world who loved me and whom I really loved.

RITA: So you love me now, John? And you think it makes up for all the years you've tortured me? You think it makes me a real woman instead of a mannequin? You think it gives me back my heart?

JOHN: I hope it does, Rita. I want it to.

RITA: I lost my heart a little bit at a time, working down in a cold tomb, helping to make beautiful dead women. It hurts to lose your heart that way, John—as if it were being frozen very slowly. Do you think you can give me my heart back by snapping your fingers?

JOHN: Not by snapping my fingers, but— (*He is moving toward her.*)

CHERNIK: Keep away from her! (*He has come in through the open door.*)

RITA: Why, Chernik, I believe you're jealous.

CHERNIK: Keep away from her, I tell you.

JOHN: Who is he, Rita?

RITA: This is old Chernik, John. You remember. I've told you about him. (*She slightly circles her hand by her temple.*)

CHERNIK: Don't let her fool you with her clever talk.

She's just a mannequin. I built her. The real Rita is back in my workshop, laughing at you.

JOHN: Don't be ridiculous. How could she talk to me—and to you, too—so intelligently if that were true?

CHERNIK: Our mannequins are made to answer intelligently, and not in just a half-dozen situations. She knew everything you would be likely to say, and she prepared the control tapes herself.

JOHN: But she drove off . . . a certain person at gun-point. How could she have anticipated that and put it on the mannequin's tapes?

CHERNIK: She could anticipate anything! It's as easy for a mannequin to point a gun as to look at you. They had self-aiming guns way back in World War II. And this mannequin's a murder machine. (*He sees that JOHN is beginning to doubt, just a bit.*) Tell me, Mr. Ellison, when you first saw her today, when you first opened that box, didn't you have doubts about her being really alive?

RITA (*She has taken up the gun again and is smiling enigmatically.*): Do you think I'm really alive, John?

JOHN: Why, Rita, of course I . . .

RITA: Or do you still think that I may be a mannequin?
A machine without a heart?

JOHN: Why, Rita, I . . .

RITA (*advancing slowly*): Are you afraid of me, John?

JOHN: I . . . I . . .

RITA (*handing him the gun*): Does this answer you?

JOHN: Yes. (*He turns on CHERNIK as though he might throw him out.*)

CHERNIK (*with a certain dignity*): I'll go by myself. I know when I'm beaten.

RITA: Are you still so sure, Chernik, which is which?
(*CHERNIK goes out with a puzzled, uneasy shrug. JOHN comes to the robot's side.*) He never will

know which is which. Neither will Otto. You're the only one who'll know, John.

JOHN: Darling.

RITA (*tenderly*): You do know, don't you, that I'm not a mannequin made of rubber, steel, and electricity?

JOHN: Yes.

RITA: You know that I've forgiven you for everything?

That I really love you? That I have a heart? (*For answer he takes her in his arms.*) That's right, darling. I want to hold you tight. (*We see her face over his shoulder, then narrow down to her two hands coming around his back in an embrace.*) Very tight. (*Her hands against his back become clawlike and move past each other twice as her arms tighten around him in powerful jerks.*)

JOHN (*in alarm*): Rita!

RITA (*serenely*): Very, very tight.

(*But as her hands jerk again, we suddenly hear the same clanking sound of machinery out of order that we heard at the beginning of the show. Camera comes up to her face and it is twitching mechanically, one cheek jumping, in the same rhythm as the clanking—just as with the mannequin at the beginning of the show. The gun in JOHN's hand goes off six times—harmlessly past RITA's back. The clanking noise continues. It is enough to muffle JOHN's gasps but not the buzz of the phone, which sounds now. The camera goes toward the phone; we see its blinking light and hear its buzz, which now becomes stronger than the clanking sound. We get close to the phone, but no hand reaches out toward it. The scene darkens and shifts to the workshop. RITA is sitting listening to the phone.*)

We hear its unanswered buzzes faintly—the ones that are sounding in JOHN's apartment. RITA begins to laugh, first softly, then hysterically, then the laughter turns to sobs and her face seems to dissolve with tears, as if we saw it through a window running with water.)

RITA: I'm so cold, so very cold.

THE END

*Let Me Hear
You Whisper*

A Play

by PAUL ZINDEL

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Hardly anyone disputes anymore that it is indeed possible to talk *to* animals and even plants. People who are very close to their pets, for example, say with authority that certain animals are gifted with a form of mental telepathy that enables them to anticipate the thoughts (commands, moods, etc.) of the human beings with whom they live. But whether this communication can become a two-way street—whether animals or plants will actually *answer* their masters—is still firmly in the realm of speculative fiction.

The theme of conversations between humans and animals is not as prevalent in science fiction as some others that occur in this volume, but it has been brilliantly handled by André Norton and Alan E. Nourse, among others. It requires special care to keep such a plot from degenerating into the merely silly. Paul Zindel, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and noted novelist, has accomplished this admirably in "Let Me Hear You Whisper." While this play is probably only borderline science fiction, it is an excellent example of what can be done without ray guns and other weird gadgets, where the emphasis of the play is firmly upon *people*.

CHARACTERS

HELEN,

a little old cleaning lady who lives alone in a one-room apartment and spends most of her spare time feeding stray cats and dogs. She has just been hired to scrub floors in a laboratory that performs rather strange experiments with dolphins.

MISS MORAY,

a briskly efficient custodial supervisor who has to break Helen in to her new duties at the laboratory. She has a face that is so uptight she looks like she either throws stones at pigeons or teaches Latin.

DR. CROCUS,

the dedicated man of science who devises and presides over the weird experiments.

MR. FRIDGE,

assistant to Dr. Crocus. He is so loyal and uncreative that if Dr. Crocus told him to stick his head in the mouth of a shark, he'd do it.

DAN,

a talky janitor, also under Miss Moray's control, who at every chance ducks out of the Manhattan laboratory for a beer at the corner bar.

A DOLPHIN,

the subject of an experiment being performed by Dr.
Crocus.

SETTING: *The action takes place in the hallway, laboratory and specimen room of a biology experimentation association located in Manhattan near the Hudson River.*

TIME: *The action begins with the night shift on a Monday and ends the following Friday.*

ACT I

SCENE I

(DR. CROCUS and MR. FRIDGE are leaving the laboratory where they have completed their latest experimental tinkering with a dolphin, and they head down a corridor to the elevator. The elevator door opens and MISS MORAY emerges with HELEN.)

MISS MORAY: Dr. Crocus. Mr. Fridge. I'm so glad we've run into you. I want you to meet Helen.

HELEN: Hello.

(DR. CROCUS and MR. FRIDGE nod and get on elevator.)

MISS MORAY: Helen is the newest member of our Custodial Engineering Team.

(MISS MORAY and HELEN start down the hall.)

MISS MORAY: Dr. Crocus is the guiding heart here at the American Biological Association Development for the Advancement of Brain Analysis. For short, we call it "Abadaba."

HELEN: I guess you have to.

(They stop at a metal locker at the end of the hall.)

MISS MORAY: This will be your locker and your key.

Your equipment is in this closet.

HELEN: I have to bring in my own hangers, I suppose.

MISS MORAY: Didn't you find Personnel pleasant?

HELEN: They asked a lot of crazy questions.

MISS MORAY: Oh, I'm sorry. (*Pause.*) For instance?

HELEN: They wanted to know what went on in my head when I'm watching television in my living room and the audience laughs. They asked if I ever thought the audience was laughing at *me*.

MISS MORAY (*laughing*): My, oh, my! (*Pause.*) What did you tell them?

HELEN: I don't have a TV.

MISS MORAY: I'm sorry.

HELEN: I'm not.

MISS MORAY: Yes. Now, it's really quite simple. That's our special soap solution. One tablespoon to a gallon of hot water, if I may suggest.

(HELEN is busy running water into a pail which fits into a metal stand on wheels.)

MISS MORAY: I'll start you in the laboratory. We like it done first. The specimen room next, and finally the hallway. By that time we'll be well toward morning, and if there are a few minutes left, you can polish the brass strip. (*She points to brass strip which runs around the corridor, halfway between ceiling and floor.*) Ready? Fine. (*They start down the hall, MISS MORAY thumbing through papers on a clipboard.*)

MISS MORAY: You were with one concern for fourteen years, weren't you? Fourteen years with the Metal Climax Building. That's next to the Radio City Music Hall, isn't it, dear?

HELEN: Uh-huh.

MISS MORAY: They sent a marvelous letter of recommendation. My! Fourteen years on the seventeenth floor. You must be very proud. Why did you leave?

HELEN: They put in a rug.

(MISS MORAY leads HELEN into the laboratory, where DAN is picking up.)

MISS MORAY: Dan, Helen will be taking Marguerita's place. Dan is the night porter for the fifth through ninth floors.

DAN: Hiya!

HELEN: Hello. (*She looks around.*)

MISS MORAY: There's a crock on nine you missed, and the technicians on that floor have complained about the odor.

(HELEN notices what appears to be a large tank of water with a curtain concealing its contents.)

HELEN: What's that?

MISS MORAY: What? Oh, that's a dolphin, dear. But don't worry about anything except the floor. Dr. Crocus prefers us not to touch either the equipment or the animals.

HELEN: Do you keep him cramped up in that all the time?

MISS MORAY: We have a natatorium for it to exercise in, at Dr. Crocus's discretion.

HELEN: He really looks cramped.

(MISS MORAY closes a curtain which hides the tank.)

MISS MORAY: Well, you must be anxious to begin. I'll make myself available at the reception desk in the

hall for a few nights in case any questions arise.
Coffee break at two and six A.M. Lunch at four A.M.
All clear?

HELEN: I don't need a coffee break.

MISS MORAY: Helen, we all need Perk-You-Ups. All of us.

HELEN: I don't want one.

MISS MORAY: They're compulsory. (*Pause.*) Oh, Helen, I know you're going to fit right in with our little family. You're such a *nice* person. (*She exits.*)

(HELEN immediately gets to work, moving her equipment into place and getting down on her hands and knees to scrub the floor. DAN exits. HELEN gets in a few more rubs, glances at the silhouette of the dolphin's tank behind the curtain, and then continues. After a pause, a record begins to play.)

RECORD: Let me call you sweetheart,
I'm in love with you.
Let me hear you whisper
That you love me, too.

(HELEN's curiosity makes her open the curtain and look at the dolphin. He looks right back at her. She returns to her work, singing "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" to herself, missing a word here and there; but her eyes return to the dolphin. She becomes uncomfortable under his stare and tries to ease her discomfort by playing peek-a-boo with him. There is no response and she resumes scrubbing and humming. The dolphin then lets out a bubble or two and moves

in the tank to bring his blowhole to the surface.)

DOLPHIN: Youuuuuuuuuuuuu.

(HELEN hears the sound, assumes she is mistaken, and goes on with her work.)

DOLPHIN: Youuuuuuuuuuuuu.

(HELEN has heard the sound more clearly this time. She is puzzled, contemplates a moment, and then decides to get up off the floor. She closes the curtain on the dolphin's tank and leaves the laboratory. She walks the length of the hall to MISS MORAY, who is sitting at a reception desk near the elevator.)

MISS MORAY: What is it, Helen?

HELEN: The fish is making some kinda funny noise.

MISS MORAY: Mammal, Helen. It's a mammal.

HELEN: The mammal's making some kinda funny noise.

MISS MORAY: Mammals are supposed to make funny noises.

HELEN: Yes, Miss Moray.

(HELEN goes back to the lab. She continues scrubbing.)

DOLPHIN: Youuuuuuuuuuuuu.

(She apprehensively approaches the curtain and opens it. Just then DAN barges in. He goes to get his reaching pole, and HELEN hurriedly returns to scrubbing the floor.)

DAN: Bulb out on seven.

HELEN: What do they have that thing for?

DAN: What thing?

HELEN: That.

DAN: Yeah, he's something, ain't he? (*Pause.*) They're tryin' to get it to talk.

HELEN: Talk?

DAN: Uh-huh, but he don't say nothing. They had one last year that used to laugh. It'd go "heh heh heh heh heh heh heh." Then they got another one that used to say, "Yeah, it's four o'clock." Everybody took pictures of that one. All the magazines and newspapers.

HELEN: It just kept saying, "Yeah, it's four o'clock"?

DAN: Until it died of pneumonia. They talk outta their blowholes, when they can talk, that is. Did you see the blowhole?

HELEN: No.

DAN: Come on and take a look.

HELEN: I don't want to look at any blowhole.

DAN: Miss Moray's at the desk. She won't see anything.

(HELEN and DAN go to the tank. Their backs are to the lab door and they don't see MISS MORAY open the door and watch them.)

DAN: This one don't say anything at all. They been playing that record every seven minutes for months, and it can't even learn a single word. Don't even say, "Polly want a cracker."

MISS MORAY: Helen?

(HELEN and DAN turn around.)

MISS MORAY: Helen, would you mind stepping outside a moment?

HELEN: Yes, Miss Moray.

DAN: I was just showing her something.

MISS MORAY: Hadn't we better get on with our duties?

DAN: All right, Miss Moray.

(MISS MORAY guides HELEN out into the hall, and puts her arm around her as though taking her into her confidence.)

MISS MORAY: Helen, I called you out here because . . . well, frankly, I need your help.

HELEN: He was just showing me . . .

MISS MORAY: Dan is an idle-chatter breeder. How many times we've told him, "Dan, this is a scientific atmosphere you're employed in and we would appreciate a minimum of subjective communication." So—if you can help, Helen—and I'm sure you can, enormously—we'd be so grateful.

HELEN: Yes, Miss Moray.

(MISS MORAY leads HELEN back to the lab.)

MISS MORAY: Now, we'll just move directly into the specimen room. The working conditions will be ideal for you in here.

(HELEN looks ready to gag as she looks around the specimen room. It is packed with specimen jars of all sizes. Various animals and parts of animals are visible in their formaldehyde baths.)

MISS MORAY: Now, you will be responsible not only for the floor area but the jars as well. A feather duster—here—is marvelous.

(MISS MORAY smiles and exits. The sound of music and voice from beyond the walls floats over.)

RECORD: Let me call you sweetheart . . .

(HELEN gasps as her eyes fall upon one particular jar in which is floating a preserved human brain. The lights go down, ending Act I, Scene I.)

CURTAIN

ACT I

SCENE II

(It is the next evening. HELEN pushes her equipment into the lab. She opens the curtain so she can watch the dolphin as she works. She and the dolphin stare at each other.)

HELEN: Youuuuuuuuuuuuu. *(She pauses, watches for a response.)* Youuuuuuuuuuuuu. *(Still no response. She turns her attention to her scrubbing for a moment.)* Polly want a cracker? Polly want a cracker? *(She wrings out a rag and resumes work.)* Yeah, it's four o'clock. Yeah, it's four o'clock. Polly want a cracker at four o'clock?

(She laughs at her own joke, then goes to the dolphin's tank and notices how sad he looks. She reaches her hand in and just touches the top of his head. He squirms and likes it.)

HELEN: Heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh.

(MISS MORAY gets off the elevator and hears the peculiar sounds coming from the laboratory. She puts her ear against the door.)

HELEN: Heh heh heh heh heh . . .

MISS MORAY *(entering)*: Look how nicely the floor's

coming along! You must have a special rinsing technique.

HELEN: Just a little vinegar in the rinse water.

MISS MORAY: You brought the vinegar yourself, just so the floors . . . they are sparkling, Helen. Sparkling! (*She pauses—looks at the dolphin, then at HELEN.*)

It's marvelous, Helen, how well you've adjusted.

HELEN: Thank you, Miss Moray.

MISS MORAY: Helen, the animals here are used for experimentation, and . . . well, take Marguerita. She had fallen in love with the mice. All three hundred of them. She seemed shocked when she found out Dr. Crocus was . . . using . . . them at the rate of twenty or so a day in connection with electrode implanting. She noticed them missing after a while and when I told her they'd been decapitated, she seemed terribly upset.

HELEN: What do they want with the fish—mammal?

MISS MORAY: Well, dolphins may have an intelligence equal to our own. And if we can teach them our language—or learn theirs—we'll be able to communicate.

HELEN: I can't understand you.

MISS MORAY (*louder*): Communicate! Wouldn't it be wonderful?

HELEN: Oh, yeah. . . . They chopped the heads off three hundred mice? That's horrible.

MISS MORAY: You're so sensitive, Helen. Every laboratory in the country is doing this type of work. It's quite accepted.

HELEN: Every laboratory cutting off mouse heads!

MISS MORAY: Virtually . . .

HELEN: How many laboratories are there?

MISS MORAY: I don't know. I suppose at least five thousand.

HELEN: Five thousand times three hundred . . . that's a lot of mouse heads. Can't you just have one lab chop off a couple and then spread the word?

MISS MORAY: Now, Helen—this is exactly what I mean. You will do best not to become fond of the subject animals. When you're here a little longer you'll learn . . . well . . . there are some things you just have to accept on faith.

(MISS MORAY *exits*, leaving the lab door open for HELEN to move her equipment out.)

DOLPHIN: Whisper . . . (HELEN *pauses a moment*.)
Whisper to me. (*She exits as the lights go down, ending the scene.*)

CURTAIN

ACT I

SCENE III

(It is the next evening. HELEN goes from her locker to the laboratory.)

DOLPHIN: Hear . . .

HELEN: What?

DOLPHIN: Hear me . . .

(DAN barges in with his hamper, almost frightening HELEN to death. He goes to dolphin's tank.)

DAN: Hiya, fella! How are ya? That reminds me. Gotta get some formaldehyde jars set up by Friday. If you want anything just whistle.

(He exits. HELEN goes to the tank and reaches her hand out to pet the dolphin.)

HELEN: Hear. *(Pause.)* Hear.

DOLPHIN: Hear.

HELEN: Hear me.

DOLPHIN: Hear me.

HELEN: That's a good boy.

DOLPHIN: Hear me . . .

HELEN: Oh, what a pretty fellow. Such a pretty fellow.

(MISS MORAY enters.)

MISS MORAY: What are you doing, Helen?

HELEN: I . . . uh . . .

MISS MORAY: Never mind. Go on with your work.

(MISS MORAY surveys everything, then sits on a stool. DAN rushes in with large jars on a wheeled table.)

DAN: 'Scuse me, but I figure I'll get the formaldehyde set up tonight.

MISS MORAY: Very good, Dan.

HELEN (*noticing the dolphin is stirring*): What's the formaldehyde for?

MISS MORAY: The experiment series on . . . the dolphin will . . . terminate on Friday. That's why it has concerned me that you've apparently grown . . . fond . . . of the mammal.

HELEN: They're gonna kill it?

DAN: Gonna sharpen the handsaws now. Won't have any trouble getting through the skull on this one, no, sir. (*He exits.*)

HELEN: What for? Because it didn't say anything? Is that what they're killing it for?

MISS MORAY: Helen, no matter how lovely our intentions, no matter how lonely we are and how much we want people or animals . . . to like us . . . we have no right to endanger the genius about us. Now, we've spoken about this before.

(HELEN is dumbfounded as MISS MORAY exits.

HELEN gathers her equipment and looks at the dolphin, which is staring desperately at her.)

DOLPHIN: Help. (*Pause.*) Please help me.

(HELEN is so moved by the cries of the dolphin
she looks ready to burst into tears as the lights
go down, ending Act I.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

(The hall: It is the night that the dolphin is to be dissected. Elevator doors open and HELEN gets off, nods, and starts down the hall. MISS MORAY comes to HELEN at closet.)

MISS MORAY: I hope you're well this evening.

HELEN: When they gonna kill it?

MISS MORAY: Don't say kill, Helen. You make it sound like murder. Besides, you won't have to go into the laboratory at all this evening.

HELEN: How do they kill it?

MISS MORAY: Nicotine mustard, Helen. It's very humane. They inject it.

HELEN: Maybe he's a mute.

MISS MORAY: Do you have all your paraphernalia?

HELEN: Some human beings are mute, you know. Just because they can't talk we don't kill them.

MISS MORAY: It looks like you're ready to open a new box of steel wool.

HELEN: Maybe he can type with his nose. Did they try that?

MISS MORAY: Now, now, Helen—

HELEN: Miss Moray, I don't mind doing the lab.

MISS MORAY: Absolutely not! I'm placing it off limits for your own good. You're too emotionally involved.

HELEN: I can do the lab, honest. I'm not emotionally involved.

MISS MORAY (*motioning her to the specimen-room door*): Trust me, Helen. Trust me.

HELEN (*reluctantly disappearing through the doorway*): Yes, Miss Moray.

(MISS MORAY stations herself at the desk near the elevator and begins reading her charts. HELEN slips out of the specimen room and into the laboratory without being seen. The lights in the lab are out and moonlight from the window casts eerie shadows.)

DOLPHIN: Help.

(HELEN opens the curtain. The dolphin and she look at each other.)

DOLPHIN: Help me.

HELEN: You don't need me. Just say something to them. Anything. They just need to hear you say something. . . . You want me to tell 'em? I'll tell them. I'll just say I heard you say "Help." (*Pauses, then speaks with feigned cheerfulness.*) I'll go tell them.

DOLPHIN: Noooooooooooooooooo.

(HELEN stops. Moves back toward tank.)

HELEN: They're gonna kill you!

DOLPHIN: Plaaaaan.

HELEN: What?

DOLPHIN: Plaaaaaaaaan.

HELEN: Plan? What plan?

(DAN charges through the door and snaps on the light.)

DAN: Uh-oh. Miss Moray said she don't want you in here.

(HELEN goes to DR. CROCUS's desk and begins to look at various books on it.)

HELEN: Do you know anything about a plan?

DAN: She's gonna be mad. What plan?

HELEN: Something to do with . . . (She indicates the dolphin.)

DAN: Hiya, fella!

HELEN: About the dolphin . . .

DAN: They got an experiment book they write in.

HELEN: Where?

DAN: I don't know.

HELEN: Find it and bring it to me in the animals' morgue. Please.

DAN: I'll try. I'll try, but I got other things to do, you know.

(HELEN slips out the door and makes it safely back into the specimen room. DAN rummages through the desk and finally finds the folder. He is able to sneak into the specimen room.)

DAN: Here.

(HELEN grabs the folder and starts going through it. DAN turns and is about to go back out into the hall when he sees that MISS MORAY has stopped reading. HELEN skims through more of the folder. It is a bulky affair. She stops at a page discussing uses of dolphins. MISS MORAY gets up from the desk and heads for the specimen-room door.)

DAN: She's coming.

HELEN: Maybe you'd better hide. Get behind the table.
Here, take the book.

(DAN ducks down behind one of the specimen tables, and HELEN starts scrubbing away. MISS MORAY opens the door.)

MISS MORAY: Perk-You-Up time, Helen. Tell Dan, please. He's in the laboratory.

(HELEN moves to the lab door, opens it, and calls into the empty room.)

HELEN: Perk-You-Up time.

MISS MORAY: Tell him we have ladyfingers.

HELEN: We have ladyfingers.

MISS MORAY: Such a strange thing to call a confectionery, isn't it? It's almost macabre.

HELEN: Miss Moray . . .

MISS MORAY: Yes, Helen?

HELEN: I was wondering why they wanna talk with . . .

MISS MORAY: Now, now, now!

HELEN: I mean, supposing dolphins *did* talk?

MISS MORAY: Well, like fishing, Helen. If we could communicate with dolphins, they might be willing to herd fish for us. The fishing industry would be revolutionized.

HELEN: Is that all?

MISS MORAY: All? Heavens, no. They'd be a blessing to the human race. A blessing. They would be worshipped in oceanography. Checking the Gulf Stream . . . taking water temperatures, depths, salinity readings. To say nothing of the contributions they could make in marine biology, navigation, linguistics! Oh, Helen, it gives me the chills.

HELEN: It'd be good if they talked?

MISS MORAY: God's own blessing.

(DAN opens the lab doors and yells over HELEN's head to MISS MORAY.)

DAN: I got everything except the head vise. They can't saw through the skull bone without the head vise.

MISS MORAY: Did you look on five? They had it there last week for . . . what they did to the St. Bernard.

(From the laboratory, music drifts out. They try to talk over it.)

DAN: I looked on five.

MISS MORAY: You come with me. It must have been staring you in the face.

(DAN and MISS MORAY get on the elevator.)

MISS MORAY: We'll be right back, Helen.

(The doors close and HELEN hurries into the laboratory. She stops just inside the door, and it is obvious that she is angry.)

DOLPHIN: Boooooooooook.

HELEN: I looked at your book. I looked at your book, all right!

DOLPHIN: Boooooooooook.

HELEN: And you want to know what I think? I don't think much of you, that's what I think.

DOLPHIN: Boooooooooook.

HELEN: Oh, shut up. Book book book book book. I'm not interested. You eat yourself silly—but to get a little fish for hungry humans is just too much for you. Well, I'm going to tel' 'em you can talk.

(The dolphin moves in the tank, lets out a few warning bubbles.)

HELEN: You don't like that, eh? Well, I don't like lazy selfish people—mammals or animals.

(The dolphin looks increasingly desperate and begins to make loud blatt and beep sounds. He struggles in the tank.)

HELEN: Cut it out—you're getting water all over the floor.

DOLPHIN: Boooooooooook!

(HELEN looks at the folder on the desk. She picks it up, opens it, closes it, and sets it down again.)

HELEN: I guess you don't like us. I guess you'd die rather than help us. . . .

DOLPHIN: Hate.

HELEN: I guess you do hate us. . . .

(She returns to the folder.)

HELEN *(reading)*: Military implications . . . war . . . plant mines in enemy waters . . . deliver atomic war-heads . . . war . . . nuclear torpedoes . . . attach bombs to submarines . . . terrorize enemy waters . . . war. . . . They're already thinking about ways to use you for war. Is that why you can't talk to them? *(Pause.)* What did you talk to me for? *(Pause.)* You won't talk to them, but you . . . you talk to me because . . . you want something . . . there's something . . . I can do?

DOLPHIN: Hamm . . .

HELEN: What?

DOLPHIN: Hamm . . .

HELEN: Ham? I thought you ate fish.

DOLPHIN *(moving with annoyance)*: Ham . . . purrrrr.

HELEN: Ham . . . purrrr? I don't know what you're talking about.

DOLPHIN (*even more annoyed*): Ham . . . purrrr.

HELEN: Ham . . . purrrr. What's a purrrr?

(Confused and scared, she returns to scrubbing the hall floor just as the doors of the elevator open, revealing MISS MORAY, DAN, and MR. FRIDGE. DAN pushes a dissection table loaded with shiny instruments toward the lab.)

MISS MORAY: Is the good doctor in yet?

MR. FRIDGE: He's getting the nicotine mustard on nine. I'll see if he needs assistance.

MISS MORAY: I'll come with you. You'd better leave now, Helen. It's time. *(She smiles and the elevator doors close.)*

DAN (*pushing the dissection table through the lab doors*): I never left a dirty head vise. She's trying to say I left it like that.

HELEN: Would you listen a minute? Ham . . . purrrr. Do you know what a ham . . . purrrr is?

DAN: The only hamper I ever heard of is out in the hall.

(HELEN darts to the door, opens it, and sees the hamper at the end of the hall.)

HELEN: The hamper!

DAN: Kazinski left the high-altitude chamber dirty once, and I got blamed for that, too. *(He exits.)*

HELEN (*rushing to the dolphin*): You want me to do something with the hamper. What? To get it? To put . . . you want me to put you in it? But what'll I do with you? Where can I take you?

DOLPHIN: Sea . . .

HELEN: See? See what?

DOLPHIN: Sea . . .

HELEN: I don't know what you're talking about.
They'll be back in a minute. I don't know what to do!

DOLPHIN: Sea . . . sea . . .

HELEN: See? . . . The sea! That's what you're talking about! The river . . . to the sea!

(She darts into the hall and heads for the hamper. Quickly she pushes it into the lab, and just as she gets through the doors unseen, MISS MORAY gets off the elevator.)

MISS MORAY: Helen?

(She starts down the hall. Enters the lab. The curtain is closed in front of the tank.)

MISS MORAY: Helen? Are you here? Helen?

(She sees nothing and is about to leave when she hears a movement behind the curtain. She looks down and sees HELEN's shoes. MISS MORAY moves to the curtain and pulls it open. There is HELEN with her arms around the front part of the dolphin, lifting it a good part of the way out of the water.)

MISS MORAY: Helen, what do you think you're hugging?

(HELEN drops the dolphin back into the tank.)

MR. FRIDGE *(entering)*: Is anything wrong, Miss Moray?

MISS MORAY: No . . . nothing wrong. Nothing at all.
Just a little spilled water.

(HELEN and MISS MORAY grab sponges from the lab sink and begin to wipe up the water around the tank. DR. CROCUS enters and begins to fill a hypodermic syringe while MR. FRIDGE expertly gets all equipment into place. DAN enters.)

MR. FRIDGE: Would you like to get an encephalogram during the death process, Dr. Crocus?

DR. CROCUS: Why not?

(MR. FRIDGE begins to implant electrodes in the dolphin's head. The dolphin commences making high-pitched distress signals.)

MISS MORAY: Come, Helen. I'll see you to the elevator.

(MISS MORAY leads her out to the hall. HELEN gets on her coat and kerchief.)

MISS MORAY: Frankly, Helen, I'm deeply disappointed. I'd hoped that by being lenient with you—and heaven knows I have been—you'd develop a heightened loyalty to our team.

HELEN (*bursting into tears and going to the elevator*): Leave me alone.

MISS MORAY (*softening as she catches up to her*): You really are a nice person. Helen. A very nice person. But to be simple and nice in a world where great minds are giant-stepping the micro- and macrocosms, well—one would expect you'd have the humility to yield in unquestioning awe. I truly am very fond of you, Helen, but you're fired. Call Personnel after nine A.M.

(As MISS MORAY disappears into the laboratory, the record starts to play.)

RECORD: Let me call you sweetheart,
I'm in love with you.
Let me hear you whisper . . .

(The record is roughly interrupted. Instead of getting on the elevator, HELEN whirls around and barges into the lab.)

HELEN: Who do you think you are? *(Pause.)* Who do you think you *are*? *(Pause.)* I think you're a pack of killers, that's what I think.

MISS MORAY: Doctor, I assure you this is the first psychotic outbreak she's made. She did the entire brass strip . . .

HELEN: I'm very tired of being a nice person, Miss Moray. I'm going to report you to the ASPCA, or somebody, because . . . I've decided I don't like you cutting the heads off mice and sawing through skulls of St. Bernards . . . and if being a nice person is just not saying anything and letting you pack of butchers run around doing whatever you want, then I don't want to be nice anymore. *(Pause.)* You gotta be very stupid people to need an animal to talk before you know just from looking at it that it's saying something . . . that it knows what pain feels like. I'd like to see you all with a few electrodes in your heads. Being nice isn't any good. *(Looking at dolphin.)* They just kill you off if you do that. And that's being a coward. You gotta talk back. You gotta speak up against what's wrong and bad, or you can't ever stop it. At least you've gotta try. *(She bursts into tears.)*

MISS MORAY: Nothing like this has ever happened with a member of the Custodial Engineering . . . Helen, dear . . .

HELEN: Get your hands off me. *(Yelling at the dol-*

DOLPHIN: Looooooooooooooooooooo.

DOLPHIN: Love.

(Helen pats the dolphin, exits. The laboratory becomes a bustle of activity.)

DR. CROCUS: Is the tape going?

DOLPHIN: Love . . .

MISS MORAY: Oh, I fired her. She was hugging the mammal . . . and . . .

DR. CROCUS: Just get her. (To MR. FRIDGE:) You're sure the machine's recording?

MISS MORAY: Doctor, I'm afraid you don't understand.
That woman was hugging the mammal. . . .

DR. CROCUS: Try to get another word out of it. One more word . . .

MISS MORAY: The last thing in the world I want is for our problem in Custodial Engineering to . . .

DR. CROCUS (*furious*): Will you shut up and get that washwoman back in here?

MISS MORAY: Immediately, Doctor.

(She hurries out of the lab. HELEN is at the end of the hall waiting for the elevator.)

MISS MORAY: Helen? Oh, Helen? Don't you want to hear what the dolphin has to say? He's so cute! Dr.

Crocus thinks that his talking might have something to do with you. Wouldn't that be exciting? (*Pause.*) Please, Helen. The doctor . . .

HELEN: Don't talk to me, do you mind?

MISS MORAY: It was only in the heat of argument that I . . . of course, you won't be discharged. All right? Please, Helen, you'll embarrass me. . . .

(The elevator doors open and HELEN gets on to face MISS MORAY. She looks at her a moment and then lifts her hand to press the button for the ground floor.)

MISS MORAY: Don't you dare . . . Helen, the team needs you, don't you see? You've done so well—the brass strip, the floors. The floors have never looked so good. Ever. Helen, please. What will I do if you leave?

HELEN: Why don't you get a rug?

(HELEN helps slam the elevator doors in MISS MORAY's face as the lights go down, ending the play.)

CURTAIN

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