

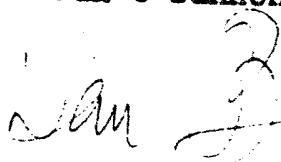
ALIEN

Story by Dan O'Bannon & Ronald Shusett

Screenplay

by

Dan O'Bannon

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan O'Bannon", is written over the printed name.

SYNOPSIS ON LAST PAGE

ALIEN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHAZ STANDARD,
Captain..... A leader and a politician.
Believes that any action is
better than no action.

MARTIN ROBY,
Executive Officer..... Cautious but intelligent -
a survivor.

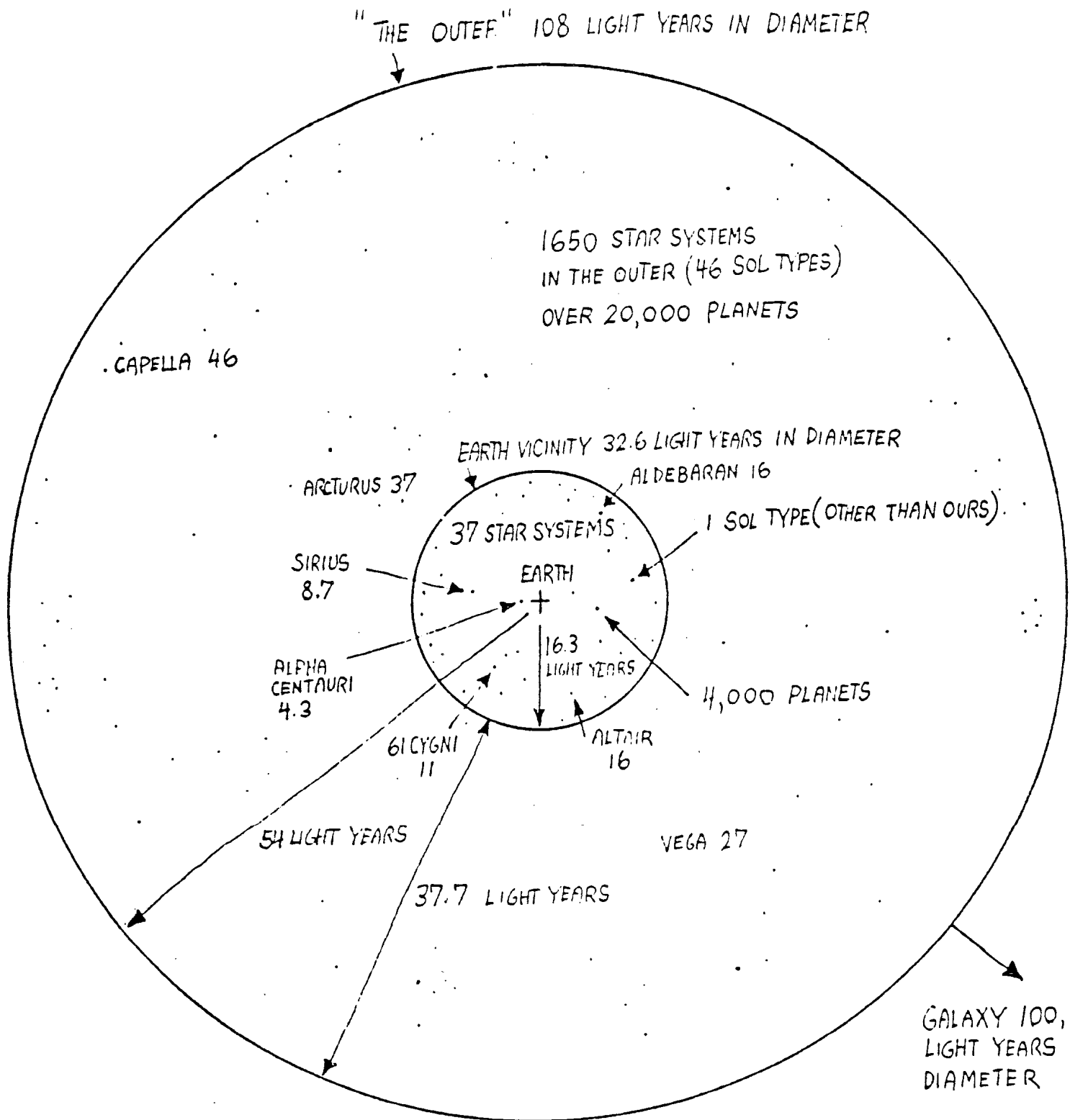
DELL BROUSSARD,
Navigator..... Adventurer; brash glory-hound.

SANDY MELKONIS,
Communications Tech..... Intellectual; a romantic.

CLEAVE HUNTER,
Mining Engineer..... High-strung; came along to
make his fortune.

JAY FAUST,
Engine Tech..... A worker. Unimaginative.

The crew is unisex and all parts are interchangeable for
men or women.



AS OF 2087 A.D.

14 EARTH COLONIES ON PLANETS OF OTHER SYSTEMS IN
EARTH VICINITY SPACE ... NONE BEYOND

FADE IN:

EXTREME CLOSEUPS OF FLICKERING INSTRUMENT PANELS. Readouts and digital displays pulse eerily with the technology of the distant future.

Wherever we are, it seems to be chill, dark, and sterile. Electronic machinery chuckles softly to itself.

Abruptly we hear a BEEPING SIGNAL, and the machinery begins to awaken. Circuits close, lights blink on.

CAMERA ANGLES GRADUALLY WIDEN, revealing more and more of the machinery, banks of panels, fluttering gauges, until we reveal:

INTERIOR - HYPERSLEEP VAULT

A stainless steel room with no windows, the walls packed with instrumentation. The lights are dim and the air is frigid.

Occupying most of the floor space are rows of horizontal FREEZER COMPARTMENTS, looking for all the world like meat lockers.

FOOM! FOOM! FOOM! With explosions of escaping gas, the lids on the freezers pop open.

Slowly, groggily, six nude men sit up.

ROBY

Oh...God...am I cold...

BROUSSARD

Is that you, Roby?

ROBY

I feel like shit...

BROUSSARD

Yeah, it's you all right.

Now they are yawning, stretching, and shivering.

FAUST

(groans)

Ohh....I must be alive, I feel dead.

BROUSSARD

You look dead.

MELKONIS

The vampires rise from their graves.

This draws a few woozy chuckles.

BROUSSARD

(shakes his fist in the air triumphantly)

We made it!

HUNTER

(not fully awake)

Is it over?

STANDARD

It's over, Hunter.

HUNTER

(yawning)

Boy, that's terrific.

STANDARD

(looking around with a grin)

Well, how does it feel to be rich men?

FAUST

Cold!

This draws a LAUGH.

STANDARD

Okay! Everybody topside! Let's get our pants on and get to our posts!

The men begin to swing out of the freezers.

MELKONIS

Somebody get the cat.

Roby picks a limp cat out of a freezer.

INTERIOR - CONTROL ROOM

This is a fantastic circular room, jammed with instrumentation. There are no windows, but above head level the room is ringed by viewscreens, all blank for the moment.

There are seats for four men. Each chair faces a console and is surrounded by a dazzling array of technology.

STANDARD, ROBY, BROUSSARD, and MELKONIS are entering and finding their seats.

BROUSSARD

I'm going to buy a cattle ranch.

ROBY

(putting down the cat)

Cattle ranch!

BROUSSARD

I'm not kidding. You can get one if you have the credit. Look just like real cows, too.

STANDARD

All right, tycoons, let's stop spending our credit and start worrying about the job at hand.

ROBY

Right. Fire up all systems.

They begin to throw switches, lighting up their consoles. The control room starts to come to life. All around the room, colored lights flicker and chase each other across glowing screens. The room fills with the hum and chatter of machinery.

STANDARD

Sandy, you want to give us some vision?

MELKONIS

Feast your eyes.

Melkonis reaches to his console and presses a bank of switches. The strip of viewscreens flickers into life.

On each screen, we see BLACKNESS SPECKLED WITH STARS.

BROUSSARD
(after a pause)
Where's Irth?

STANDARD
Sandy, scan the whole sky.

Melkonis hits buttons. On the screens the images all begin to pan.

CAMERA MOVES IN ON ONE OF THE SCREENS, with its moving image of a starfield.

EXTERIOR - OUTER SPACE

CLOSE SHOT OF A PANNING TV CAMERA. This camera is remote controlled, turning silently on its base.

CAMERA BEGINS TO PULL BACK, revealing that the TV camera is mounted on the HULL OF SOME KIND OF CRAFT.

When the pullback is finished, WE SEE THE FULL LENGTH OF THE STARSHIP "SNARK," hanging in the depths of interstellar space, against a background of glimmering stars.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

ROBY
Where are we?

STANDARD
Sandy, contact traffic control.

Melkonis switches on his radio unit.

MELKONIS
This is deep space commercial vessel SNARK, registration number E180246, calling Antarctica air traffic control. Do you read me? Over.

There is only the HISS OF STATIC.

BROUSSARD
(staring at a screen)
I don't recognize that constellation.

STANDARD
Dell, plot our location.

Broussard goes into action, punching buttons, lighting up all his instruments.

BROUSSARD
I got it. Oh boy.

STANDARD
Where the hell are we?

BROUSSARD
Just short of Zeta II Reticuli. We haven't even reached the outer rim yet.

ROBY
What the hell?

Standard picks up a microphone.

STANDARD
This is Chaz speaking. Sorry, but we are not home. Our present location seems to be only halfway to Irth. Remain at your posts and stand by. That is all.

ROBY
Chaz, I've got something here on my security alert. A high priority from the computer...

STANDARD
Let's hear it.

ROBY
(punches buttons)
Computer, you have signalled a priority three message. What is the message?

COMPUTER
(a mechanical voice)
I have interrupted the course of the voyage.

ROBY
What? Why?

COMPUTER

I am programmed to do so if certain conditions arise.

STANDARD

Computer, this is Captain Standard. What conditions are you talking about?

COMPUTER

I have intercepted a transmission of unknown origin.

STANDARD

A transmission?

COMPUTER

A voice transmission.

MELKONIS

Out here?

The men exchange glances.

COMPUTER

I have recorded the transmission.

STANDARD

Play it for us, please.

Over the speakers, we hear a hum, a crackle, static...
THEN A STRANGE, UNEARTHLY VOICE FILLS THE ROOM, SPEAKING
AN ALIEN LANGUAGE. The bizarre voice speaks a long sentence,
then falls silent.

The men all stare at each other in amazement.

STANDARD

Computer, what language was that?

COMPUTER

Unknown.

ROBY

Unknown! What do you mean?

COMPUTER
It is none of the 678 dialects spoken by
technological man.

There is a pause, then EVERYBODY STARTS TALKING AT THE
SAME TIME.

STANDARD
(silencing them)
Just hold it, hold it!
(glares around the room)
Computer: have you attempted to analyze the
transmission?

COMPUTER
Yes. There are two points of salient interest.
Number one: it is highly systematized, indi-
cating intelligent origin. Number two: certain
sounds are inconsistent with the human palate.

ROBY
Oh my God.

STANDARD
Well, it's finally happened.

MELKONIS
First contact...

STANDARD
Sandy, can you home in on that beam?

MELKONIS
What's the frequency?

STANDARD
Computer, what's the frequency of the
transmission?

COMPUTER
65330 dash 99.

Melkonis punches buttons.

MELKONIS
I've got it. It's coming from ascension
6 minutes 32 seconds, declination -39
degrees 2 seconds.

STANDARD

Dell--show me that on a screen.

BROUSSARD

I'll give it to you on number four.

Broussard punches buttons. One of the viewscreens flickers, and a small dot of light becomes visible in the corner of the screen.

BROUSSARD (CONT'D)

That's it. Let me straighten it out.

He twists a knob, moving the image on the screen till the dot is in the center.

STANDARD

Can you get it a little closer?

BROUSSARD

That's what I'm going to do.

He hits a button. The screen flashes and a PLANET APPEARS.

BROUSSARD (CONT'D)

Planetoid. Diameter, 120 kilometers.

MELKONIS

It's tiny!

STANDARD

Any rotation?

BROUSSARD

Yeah. Two hours.

STANDARD

Gravity?

BROUSSARD

Point eight six. We can walk on it.

Standard rises.

STANDARD

Martin, get the others up to the lounge.

INTERIOR - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

The entire crew--STANDARD, ROBY, BROUSSARD, MELKONIS, HUNTER, and FAUST--are all seated around a table, with Standard at the head.

MELKONIS

If it's an S.O.S., we're morally obligated to investigate.

BROUSSARD

Right.

HUNTER

I don't know. Seems to me we came on this trip to make some credit, not to go off on some kind of side trip.

BROUSSARD

(excited)

Forget the credit; what we have here is a chance to be the first men to contact a nonhuman intelligence.

ROBY

If there is some kind of alien intelligence down on that planetoid, it'd be a serious mistake for us to blunder in unequipped.

BROUSSARD

Hell, we're equipped--

ROBY

Hell, no! We don't know what's down there on that piece of rock! It might be dangerous! What we should do is get on the radio to the exploration authorities...and let them deal with it.

STANDARD

Except it will take 75 years to get a reply back. Don't forget how far we are from the Colonies, Martin.

BROUSSARD

There are no commercial lanes out here. Face it, we're out of range.

MELKONIS

Men have waited centuries to contact another form of intelligent life in the universe. This is an opportunity which may never come again.

ROBY

Look--

STANDARD

You're overruled, Martin. Gentlemen--let's go.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

The men are strapping in, but this time it is with grim determination.

STANDARD

Dell, I want greater magnification. More surface detail. I want to see what this place looks like.

BROUSSARD

I'll see what I can do.

He jabs his controls. The image on the screen ZOOMS DOWN TOWARD THE PLANET; but all detail quickly vanishes into a featureless grey haze.

STANDARD

It's out of focus.

ROBY

No--that's atmosphere. Cloud layer.

MELKONIS

My God, it's stormy for a piece of rock that size!

ROBY

Just a second.

(punches buttons)

Those aren't water vapor clouds; they have no moisture content.

STANDARD

Put ship in atmospheric mode.

EXTERIOR - "SNARK" - OUTER SPACE

The great dish antenna on the SNARK folds down against the main body of the ship, and other parts flatten out, until the ship has assumed an aerodynamic form.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

STANDARD

Dell, set a course and bring us in on that beam.

EXTERIOR - SPACE

The SNARK's engines cough into life, and send it drifting toward the distant dot that is the planetoid.

CAMERA APPROACHES THE PLANETOID, until it looms large on screen. It is turbulent, completely enveloped in dun-colored clouds.

The SNARK drops down toward the surface.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

STANDARD

Activate lifter quads.

BROUSSARD

Activated. Vertical drop checked. Correcting course. On tangential course now, orbiting.

(brief pause as he studies his instruments)
Crossing the terminator. Entering night side.

EXTERIOR - "SNARK" - IN ORBIT

Beneath the orbiting SNARK, night's curtain rolls across the planet.

Descending at an angle, the SNARK drops down into the thick atmosphere of the planetoid.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

ROBY

Atmospheric turbulence. Dust storm.

STANDARD
Turn on navigation lights.

EXTERIOR - "SNARK"

Hydroplaning down through the pea-soup atmosphere, a set of brilliant lights switches on, cutting through the dust, but hardly improving visibility.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

BROUSSARD
Approaching point of origin. Closing at 20 kilometers, 15 and slowing. Ten. Five. Gentlemen, we are directly above the source of the transmission.

STANDARD
What's the terrain down there?

BROUSSARD
Well, line of sight is impossible due to dust. Radar gives me noise. Sonar gives me noise. Infrared--noise. Let's try ultraviolet. There. Flat. It's totally flat. A plain.

STANDARD
Is it solid?

BROUSSARD
It's...basalt. Rock.

STANDARD
Then take her down.

BROUSSARD
Drop begins...now! Fifteen kilometers and dropping...twelve...ten...eight and slowing. Five. Three. Two. One kilometer and slowing. Lock tractor beams.

There is a LOUD ELECTRICAL HUM and the ship shudders.

ROBY
Locked.

BROUSSARD
Kill drive engines.

The engines fall silent.

ROBY
Engines off.

BROUSSARD
Nine hundred meters and dropping. 800.
700. Hang on gentlemen.

EXTERIOR - SURFACE OF PLANET - NIGHT

The night-shrouded surface is a hell of blowing dust. The SNARK hovers above it on glowing beams of light, dropping down slowly.

Landing struts unfold like insect legs.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

BROUSSARD
And we're...down.

EXTERIOR - SURFACE OF PLANET - NIGHT

The ship touches down, heavily; it rocks on huge shock absorbers.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

The whole ship VIBRATES VIOLENTLY FOR AN INSTANT -- then all the panels in the room flash simultaneously and the LIGHTS GO OUT.

BROUSSARD
Jesus Christ!

The lights come back on again.

STANDARD
What the hell happened?

ROBY
(hits a switch)
Engine room, what happened?

FAUST
(over, filtered)
Just a minute, hold it, I'm checking.

ROBY
Has the hull been breached?

BROUSSARD
Uh...
(scans his gauges)
No, I don't see anything. We've still got pressure.

There is a BEEP from the communicator. Then:

FAUST
(over, filtered)
Martin, this is Jay. The intakes are clogged with dust. We overheated and burned out a whole cell.

STANDARD
(strikes his panel)
Damn it! How long to fix?

ROBY
(into microphone)
How long to fix?

FAUST
(over, filtered)
Hard to say.

ROBY
Well, get started.

FAUST
(over, filtered)
Right. Talk to you.

STANDARD
Let's take a look outside. Turn the screens back on.

Melkonis hits buttons. The screens flicker, but remain black.

BROUSSARD
Can't see a blessed thing.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - NIGHT

Only a few glittering lights distinguish the ship from the absolute darkness around it.

THE WIND MOANS AND SCREAMS. DUST BLOWS IN FRONT OF THE TINY GLIMMERING LIGHTS.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - NIGHT

STANDARD
Kick on the floods.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - NIGHT

A ring of FLOODLIGHTS on the ship come to life, pouring blinding light out into the night.

They illuminate nothing but a patch of featureless grey ground and clouds of blowing dust. The wind shrieks.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - NIGHT

ROBY
Not much help.

Standard stares at the dark screens.

STANDARD
Well, we can't go anywhere in this darkness.
How long till dawn?

MELKONIS
(consults his instruments)
Well...this rock rotates every two hours. The sun should be coming up in about 20 minutes.

BROUSSARD
Good! Maybe we'll be able to see something then.

ROBY
Or something will be able to see us.

They all look at him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR - SHIP - NIGHT (MAIN TITLE SEQUENCE)

The floodlights on the SNARK fight a losing battle against the darkness and the storm. MAIN THEME MUSIC BEGINS, EXTREMELY OMINOUS.

THE TITLE APPEARS:

ALIEN

RUN TITLES.

Gradually, the screen begins to lighten as the SUN RISES. The silhouette of the SNARK becomes visible, like some strange insect crouching motionless on the barren plain. The floods shut off. Dense clouds of impenetrable dust shriek and moan, obscuring everything and reducing the sunlight to a dull orange.

END MAIN TITLES.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

CLOSE ON A SCREEN - it shows nothing but swirling clouds of orange dust.

PULL BACK FROM SCREEN. The men (Standard, Roby, Broussard, and Melkonis) are sitting and standing around the room, drinking coffee and staring at the screens, which reveal only the billowing dust.

ROBY

There could be a whole city out there and we'd never see it.

BROUSSARD

Not sitting on our butts in here, that's for sure.

STANDARD

Just settle down. Sandy, you get any response yet?

MELKONIS

(pulls off his earphones)
 Sorry. Nothing but that same damn transmission, every 32 seconds. I've tried every frequency on the spectrum.

BROUSSARD

Are we just going to sit around and wait for an invitation?

Roby gives Broussard a black look, then stabs a button on his console and speaks into the mike.

ROBY

(into mike)

Hello, Faust!

FAUST

(over, filtered)

Yeah!

ROBY

How's it coming on the engines?

INTERIOR - ENGINE ROOM

Faust is seated at an electronic workbench, brightly lit, speaking into a wall intercom.

FAUST

I never saw anything as fine as this dust... these cells are all pitted on a microscopic level. I have to polish these things smooth again, so it's going to take a while. Okay?

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

ROBY

Yeah, okay.

(puts down the mike)

STANDARD

Sandy...how far are we from the source of the transmission?

MELKONIS

Source of transmission is to the northeast... about 300 meters.

Close... ROBY

BROUSSARD
Close enough to walk to!

STANDARD
Martin, would you run me an atmospheric?

ROBY
(punches buttons and consults his panels)
10% argon, 85% nitrogen, 5% neon...and some
trace elements.

STANDARD
Nontoxic...but unbreathable. Pressure?

ROBY
Ten to the fourth dynes per square centimeter.

STANDARD
Good! Moisture content?

ROBY
Zero. Dry as a bone.

STANDARD
Any microorganisms?

ROBY
Not a one. It's dead.

STANDARD
Anything else?

ROBY
Yeah, rock particles. Dust.

STANDARD
Well, we won't need pressure suits, but
breathing masks are called for. Sandy--can
you rig up some kind of portable unit that
we can use to follow that transmission to
its source?

MELKONIS
No problem.

BROUSSARD
I volunteer for the exploration party.

STANDARD
I heard you. You want to break out the side arms?

INTERIOR - MAIN ARM LOCK - DAY

Standard, Broussard and Melkonis enter the lock. They all wear gloves, boots, jackets, and pistols.

Broussard touches a button and the inner door slides silently shut, sealing them into the lock.

They all pull on rubbery full-head oxygen masks.

STANDARD
(adjusting the radio on his mask)
I'm sending. Do you hear me?

BROUSSARD
Receiving.

MELKONIS
Receiving.

STANDARD
All right. Now just remember: keep away from those weapons unless I say otherwise. Martin, do you read me?

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

ROBY
Read you, Chaz.

INTERIOR - MAIN AIR LOCK - DAY

STANDARD
Open the outer door.

Ponderously, the outer lock door slides open. ORANGE SUNLIGHT streams into the lock, and clouds of dust swirl in. We hear the MOANING OF THE WIND OUTSIDE.

A mobile stairway slides out of the open hatchway, and clunks as it hits the ground.

Standard walks out into the storm, followed by the others.

EXTERIOR - PLANETOID - DAY

The three men trot down the gangplank to the surface of the planet. Their feet sink into a thick layer of dust and loose rock.

The men huddle together, looking around. The wind screams and tugs at their clothes. Nothing can be seen.

STANDARD

Which way, Sandy?

Melkonis is fiddling with a portable direction-finder.

MELKONIS

(pointing)

That way.

STANDARD

You lead.

Melkonis walks into the blinding dust clouds, followed closely by the others.

STANDARD

Okay, Martin. We're on our way.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

Roby is the sole occupant of the bridge. He is huddled over his console, smoking a cigarette and watching three moving blips on a screen.

ROBY

Okay, Chaz, I hear you. I've got you on my board.

STANDARD

(over, filtered)

Good. I'm getting you clear too. Let's just keep the line open.

EXTERIOR - PLANETOID - DAY

The three men plough their way through a limbo of yellow dust and shrieking wind. With their rubbery masks and deliberate movements, they look like deep-sea divers at the bottom of a murky ocean.

Melkonis leads the column, following the compass on the direction finder.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Can't see more than three meters in any direction out here. We're walking blind, on instruments.

They wade on, following Melkonis. Abruptly he halts.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

MELKONIS

My signal's fading.

He studies the direction finder.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

Roby is listening intently to the dialogue from the helmet radios.

MELKONIS (CONT'D)

(over, filtered)

It's the dust, it's interfering...

His concentration is so great that he does NOT NOTICE HUNTER COMING UP BEHIND HIM.

MELKONIS (CONT'D)

(over, filtered)

...Hold it, I've got it again. It's over that way.

Standing DIRECTLY BEHIND ROBY, Hunter speaks.

HUNTER

What's happening?

Startled out of his wits, Roby GASPS and whirls around to face Hunter.

ROBY
(startled silly)

Hell!

Hunter stares at Roby, whose momentary terror dissolves into embarrassed anger.

EXTERIOR - PLANETOID - DAY

The three men push their way through the storm. Melkonis stops again, studies the direction finder.

MELKONIS
It's close, real close.

STANDARD
How far?

MELKONIS
We should be almost on top of it. I just can't quite...

Suddenly, Broussard grabs Standard's arm and points. The others stare in the direction he is pointing.

REVERSE ANGLE - THEIR POINT-OF-VIEW

Through the dense clouds of swirling dust we can just barely make out some kind of HUGE SHAPE.

As we watch, the dust clears slightly, REVEALING A GROTESQUE SHIP RISING FROM THE SAND LIKE SOME GIGANTIC TOADSTOOL. It is clearly of non-human manufacture.

ANGLE ON THE MEN.

They are struck dumb by the sight of the craft. Finally, Standard finds his voice.

STANDARD
Martin, uh, we've found it.

ROBY
(sharply - over, filtered)
Found what?

STANDARD

It appears to be some sort of spacecraft.
We're going to approach it.

They start toward the alien ship.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(over, filtered)

There are no signs of life. No lights...
no movement...

Roby and Hunter are listening with hypnotic concentration.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(over, filtered)

We're, uh, approaching the base.

EXTERIOR - BASE OF TOADSTOOL SHIP - DAY

A strangely shaped DOOR yawns open at the base of the ship.
Dust and sand have blown in, filling the lower part of the
entrance.

With great caution, the men approach the entrance and group
around it.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Appears to be a door hanging open, the
entrance is clogged with debris.

BROUSSARD

Looks like a derelict.

STANDARD

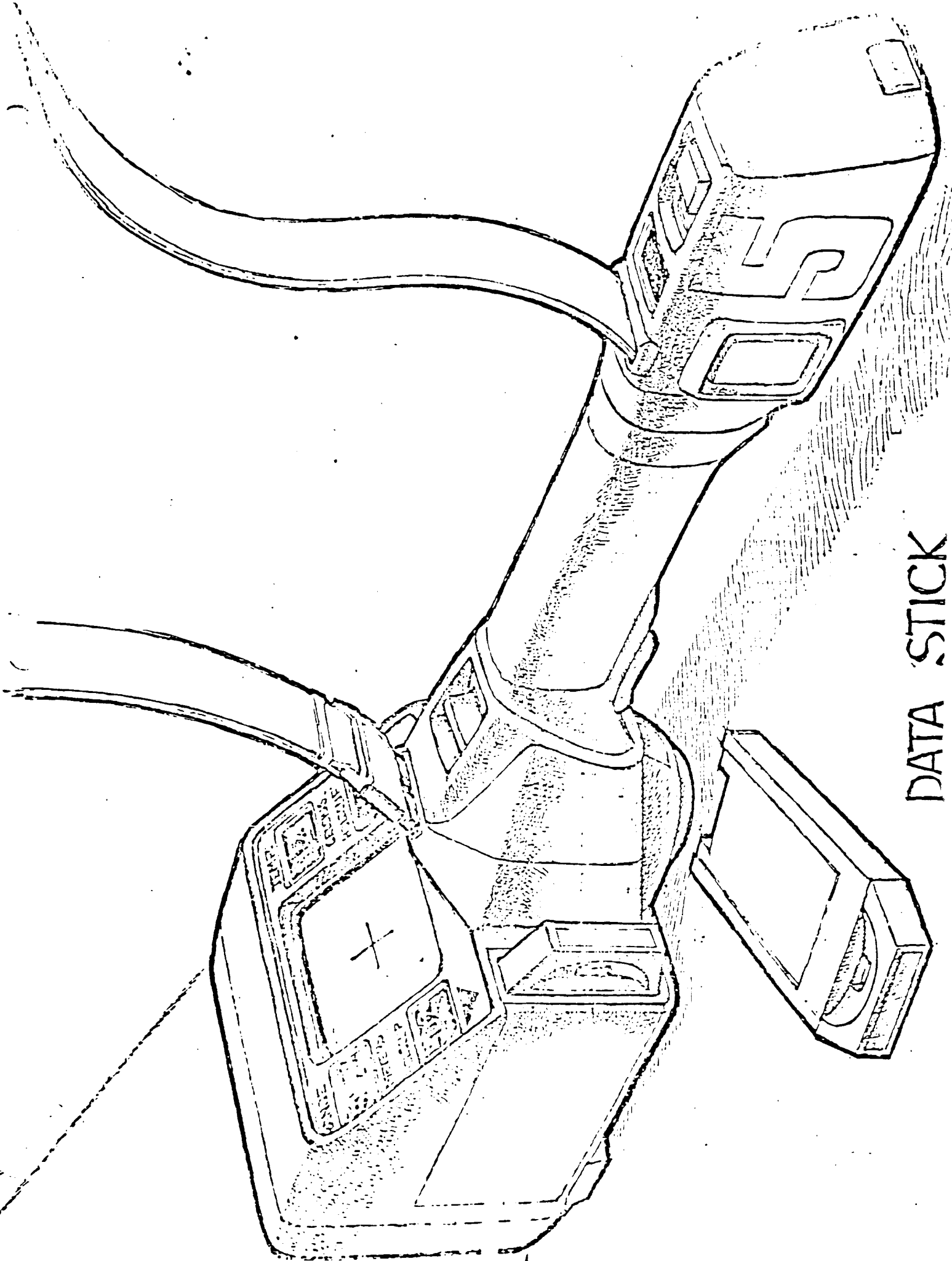
Martin, we're going in. I'm going to hold
the conversation to a minimum from here on.

INTERIOR - ALIEN SHIP - DAY

The doorway is a glowing geometric blur of light against
blackness, spewing dust. In the darkness of the chamber
are huge, formless shapes.

Standard, Broussard and Melkonis appear silhouetted against
the doorway. They switch on flashlight-like devices called
"DATASTICKS", and step in.

DATA STICK



Carefully, peering around, they pick their way past the indistinct machinery.

MELKONIS

Air lock?

STANDARD

Who knows?

BROUSSARD

Let's try and find the control room.

As they move their lights around, they can see that the walls, ceiling, and machinery are FULL OF HUGE, IRREGULAR HOLES.

MELKONIS

Look at these holes. This place looks like a Swiss cheese.

Broussard shines his light up into a huge hole in the ceiling.

BROUSSARD

This hole goes up several decks--looks like somebody was firing a military disintegrator in here.

They all peer up the hole into darkness.

STANDARD

Climbing gear.

Standard draws out a stubby spear gun with a graplon attached to it. He aims it up into the hole and fires.

The graplon is launched up into darkness, trailing a thin wire. There is a dull CLUNK, and the wire dangles.

BROUSSARD

I'll go first.

STANDARD

No, you'll follow me.

Standard attaches the wire to a powered gear box on his chest, and presses a button. With a mechanical whine, he is pulled up into the hole, using his feet for leverage where he can.

Broussard attaches the wire to his own chest unit.

INTERIOR - CONTROL ROOM OF ALIEN SHIP

This chamber is totally dark as Broussard arrives at the top of the hole.

Standard stands with his flashlight/camera ("datastick") tracing a beam through the hanging dust.

Broussard unclips himself from the climbing wire, then raises his own light. At that moment, Melkonis arrives at the top of the hole.

THEIR LIGHTS SCAN THE ROOM. The beams are clearly visible as columns of light in the floating dust. They reveal heavy, odd shapes.

Broussard stumbles over something. He shines his light down on it.

It is a large, glossy urn, brown in color, with peculiar markings. Broussard stands it upright. It has a round opening in the top, and is empty.

Suddenly, Melkonis lets out a grunt of shock. Their lights have illuminated something unspeakably grotesque: A HUGE ALIEN SKELETON, SEATED IN THE CONTROL CHAIR.

They approach the skeleton, their lights trained on it. IT IS A GROTESQUE THING, BEARING NO RESEMBLANCE TO THE HUMAN FORM.

MELKONIS

Holy Christ...

Standard shines his light on the console at which the hideous skeleton is seated. He moves his light closer and peers at the panel.

STANDARD

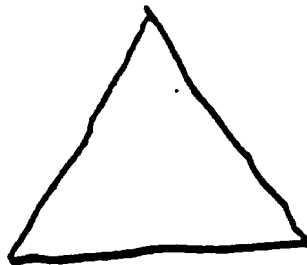
Look at this...

They approach.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Something has been scratched here...into the veneer. See?

Traced raggedly onto the surface of the panel, as by the point of a sharp instrument, is a small triangle:



Hearing something, Broussard flashes his light across the room. As the beam scans the walls, it briefly touches on SOMETHING THAT MOVES.

Melkonis convulsively yanks out his pistol.

MELKONIS
LOOK OUT, IT MOVED!

Standard knocks his hand down.

STANDARD
Keep away from that gun!

Standard shoulders himself in front of the others. Then, slowly, he begins to move toward the far side of the room.

They approach a console on the wall, training their lights on it. There is a machine. On the machine, a small bar moves steadily back and forth, sliding noiselessly in its grooves.

STANDARD (CONT'D)
Just machinery.

BROUSSARD
But functioning.

Melkonis looks down at his direction finder.

MELKONIS
That's where the transmission is coming from.

He throws a switch on the direction finder -- with a crackle and a hum, the UNEARTHLY VOICE fills their earphones.

BROUSSARD

A recording. A damned automatic recording.

EXTERIOR - PLANETOID - SUNSET

SINISTER ANGLE ON THE SNARK. As we watch, the sunlight turns the color of blood, and then the sun is down, leaving murky blackness in its wake. The ring of floodlights on the ship flares into life, feebly combatting the darkness and the storm.

INTERIOR - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

The entire crew is seated around the conference table, watching holographic pictures projected onto a screen. These are photos taken by their "datasticks" (flashlight/cameras).

Standard is commenting on the changing slides.

STANDARD

...This is the control room...

Two or three pictures click onto the screen in succession, showing the suited men standing against banks of machinery.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

...Some details of the control room...

The SKELETON appears on the screen. The men react with mutters.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

...This is the skeleton...another view of the skeleton...the transmitting device...

The triangle that was cut into the alien's console appears.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

...This is a closeup of the triangle we found scrawled on the console in front of the skeleton...

Standard changes the slide. The screen goes white.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

...And that's it.

He turns off the projector and brings the lights up.

HUNTER

Phenomenal. Staggering.

BROUSSARD

We've got to go back and take a lot more pictures, holograph everything.

MELKONIS

And bring back as much physical evidence as possible, too. The rest of the skeleton. Some of the machinery. Written records, if there are any.

Roby is slumped in his chair. He has said nothing.

STANDARD

Martin?

ROBY

I agree. This is the single most important discovery in history.

STANDARD

But?

ROBY

What killed it?

BROUSSARD

Hell, that thing's been dead for years. Maybe hundreds of years. The whole planet's dead.

FAUST

The way I figure it, they landed here for repairs or something, then they couldn't take off again. Maybe the dust ruined their engines. They set up an S.O.S. beacon, but nobody came. So they died.

ROBY

He died.

FAUST

What?

ROBY

Not they...he....

They all turn to look in the direction of Roby's nod.
CAMERA MOVES OVER TO REVEAL THE ALIEN SKULL SITTING ON
A TABLE.

ROBY (CONT'D)

...There was only one skeleton.

There is a moment of silence.

STANDARD

Jay...how's it coming on the repairs?

FAUST

Well....I'm going to have to blow the engines
out...

STANDARD

And when will you be ready to do that?

FAUST

Oh--I'm not near ready yet.

STANDARD

Then why the hell are you sitting around here?

FAUST

Right.

The men rise and begin to disperse, but Roby remains seated,
deep in thought, staring at the skull. Melkonis lingers in
the room with him.

MELKONIS

And there sits man's first contact with
intelligent life in the universe.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - NIGHT

ANGLE ON THE SHIP, its spotlights cutting into the gloom.

INTERIOR - ENGINE ROOM

A room throbbing with power, enormous pulsing engines
capable of releasing unimaginable energies.

Faust has a complicated arrangement set up at the base of one of the engines, with spotlights on it. He is wearing goggles and thin gloves.

FAUST

You ready up there?

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Broussard and Melkonis are seated at their consoles, conversing with Faust while they watch their instruments.

BROUSSARD

Sure, we're ready.

INTERIOR - ENGINE ROOM

FAUST

Okay. I'm going to start the extraction procedure now.

He pauses to wipe his brow.

INTERIOR - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

Roby is alone in the room, slumped into a chair, watching the photographic slides on the screen. He is clicking slowly through them. He stops on an angle of the skeleton, and stares at it.

The alien's misshapen skull is sitting on the table next to him. He picks it up, holds it up to the screen for comparison, and studies it.

Standard appears in the doorway.

STANDARD

Alas, poor Yorick.

Roby STARTS, puts down the skull. Standard sits at the table.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(nodding at the screen)

Find anything we missed?

ROBY

(shrugs)

I don't even know what I'm looking for.

STANDARD

Still worried?

ROBY

Oh well...you know me.

STANDARD

I've always respected your opinion, Martin.
If something worries you, it worries me.

Roby reaches over and changes the slide, to the one of the
CRUDELY DRAWN TRIANGLE ON THE ALIEN CONTROL PANEL.

ROBY

What would you say that was supposed to mean?

STANDARD

Well...it's obviously intentional...some kind
of attempt at communication...maybe it's a
symbol that means something to them...

ROBY

But why draw it on the wall?

Roby switches off the projector, sits up, and rubs his face
wearily.

He rises and goes to the coffee machine.

ROBY (CONT'D)

(picking a hair out of the coffeepot)
This ship is full of cat hair.

STANDARD

Tell you what, Martin. As soon as the engine's
fixed--

BEEP! The communicator interrupts Standard. He leans across
and presses the button.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

This is Chaz.

BROUSSARD

(over, filtered)

Chaz, this is Dell. Can you come topside
for a minute?

STANDARD

What's up?

BROUSSARD

(over, filtered)

Well, the sun just came up again, and it seems the wind's died down. It's as clear as a bell outside. There's something I think you ought to see.

STANDARD

I'm on my way.

He and Roby head for the door.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

Broussard is alone in the control room when Standard and Roby arrive.

STANDARD

What is it?

BROUSSARD

Take a look.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - DAY

The dust no longer blows. The day is crisp, clear, and silent.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

BROUSSARD

I was scanning the horizon to see what I could pick up. Look there, on that screen.

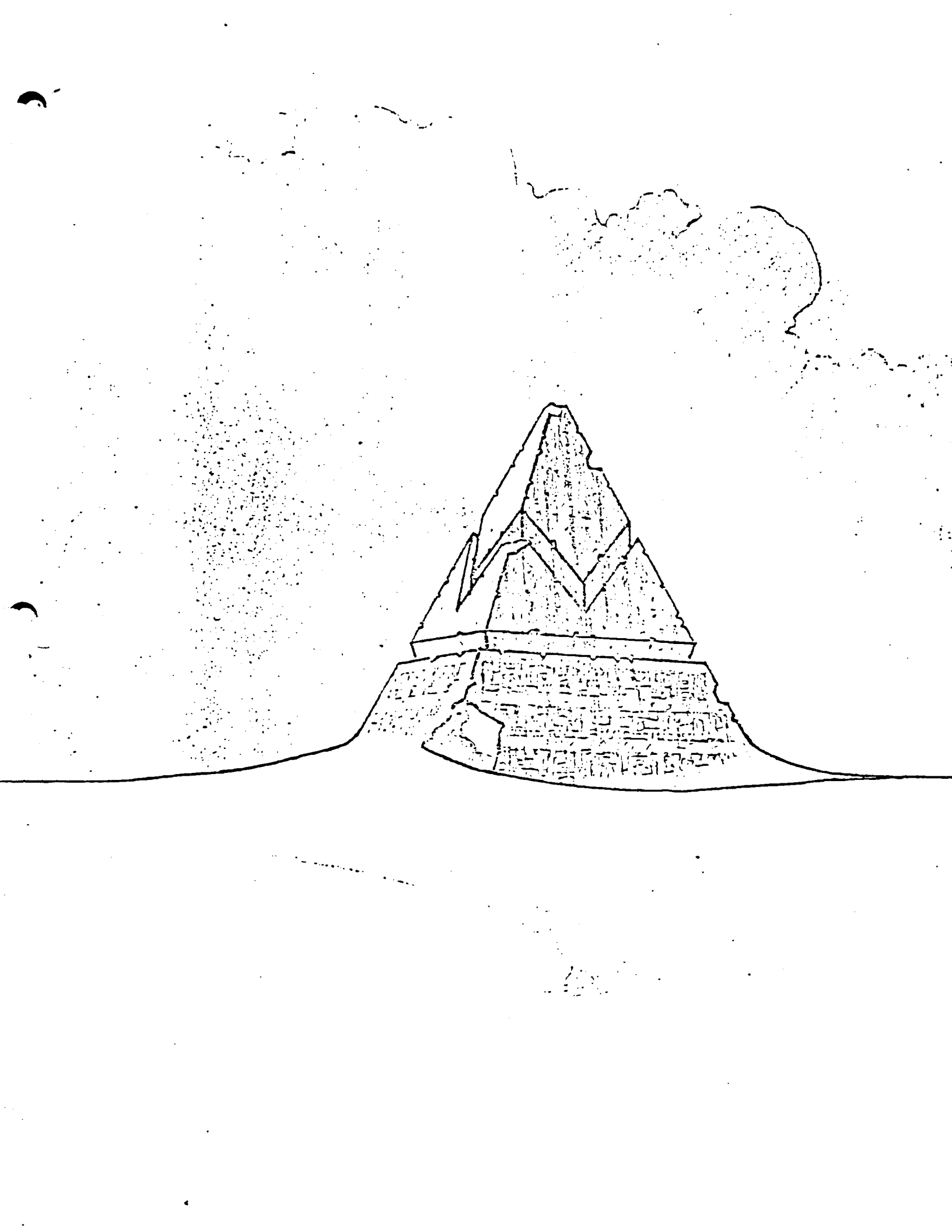
STANDARD

What is it, I can't--

BLIP! Broussard enlarges the image.

The screen now shows a TAPERING STONE PYRAMID on the horizon.

They all stare at the image for a long moment. The silhouette of the PYRAMID IS INSTANTLY SUGGESTIVE OF THE SCRAWLED TRIANGLE in the alien ship.



Standard presses the nearest communicator and speaks into the grille.

STANDARD

This is Chaz. All hands topside. Now.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY - A LITTLE LATER

ANGLE ON A VIEWSCREEN. It shows the PYRAMID on the horizon. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal all the men, sitting and standing around the room.

STANDARD

Doesn't seem much doubt about it, does there?

MELKONIS

That creature sure must have considered it important...using his last strength to draw it...

BROUSSARD

Maybe they built it.

FAUST

As what?

BROUSSARD

A marker for buried instrumentation?

HUNTER

Or a mass grave.

BROUSSARD

Maybe the rest of the crew is in there--in some kind of suspended animation, waiting to be rescued.

MELKONIS

It wasn't necessarily built by them.

On the screens, a puff of DUST blows in front of the pyramid.

ROBY

Here comes the dust again.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - DAY

WITH A SHRIEK, THE DUST STORM RETURNS, completely obscuring the SNARK.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

STANDARD

Well, does anyone else agree with Martin that we should not explore it?

Everyone looks around the room, but no one volunteers.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Then the sooner we get moving, the better.

EXTERIOR - PLANETOID - DAY

LONG SHOT OF THE STONE PYRAMID, dust blowing in front of it. It is a crumbling, ancient edifice, made of eroded grey stones, windowless, tapering toward the top.

Standard, Broussard, and Melkonis, wearing the protective suits, approach the pyramid. As they draw near, it becomes clear that the pyramid is roughly 50 feet tall.

STANDARD

We can't make out any details or features yet...but it's definitely too regular for a natural formation...

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

Roby and Hunter are present. They are listening to Standard's VOICE ON THE RADIO.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(over, filtered)

...There's one thing I can say for sure though...

BUZZZZZ! Standard's voice is DROWNED OUT BY STATIC.

ROBY

Now what's wrong?

HUNTER

I've completely lost their signal.

ROBY

Can you get them back?

HUNTER

I'm trying.

EXTERIOR - BASE OF PYRAMID - DAY

The three men come to the base of the massive structure. Dust and sand have piled thickly around the crumbling, grey stones that form the base.

MELKONIS

This looks ancient.

STANDARD

Can't tell--these weather conditions could erode anything, fast.

They walk around the base.

BROUSSARD

There's no entrance.

MELKONIS

Maybe the entrance is buried. Could be under our feet.

STANDARD

Maybe there is no entrance; the thing may be solid.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

ROBY

Well, there ought to be some way we can get through to them--

The INTERCOM BEEPS. Faust's voice is heard.

FAUST

(over, filtered)

Sorry to interrupt, but I'm gonna charge up the engines for a minute, okay?

ROBY

Yeah, okay. Go ahead.

A LOUD, POWERFUL THROBBING BEGINS, drowning out all other sounds, as the engines are tested.

A light on Roby's panel is FLASHING. We can see that it is the COMPUTER ALERT.

Irritably, Roby throws the switch.

ROBY (CONT'D)

Yes!

COMPUTER

I have a temporary sequence on the monitor--

ROBY

Hold it, I can't hear a damn thing!

He puts an earphone to his ear and switches the computer's voice over.

ROBY (CONT'D)

Go ahead!

There is a PAUSE while Roby listens to the computer. His eyes widen.

ROBY (CONT'D)

You mean...you've translated it?

Another PAUSE as he listens to the earphone.

ROBY (CONT'D)

Well come on, come on! What does it say?

Another PAUSE. Roby's face changes; he looks CHILLED TO THE BONE. His mouth works.

Abruptly, THE ENGINES SHUT OFF, LEAVING A RINGING SILENCE.

HUNTER

(looking over at Roby)

What? What was that?

ROBY

The computer just translated the goddamn message. It's not an S.O.S. It was a warning.

EXTERIOR - BASE OF PYRAMID - DAY

BROUSSARD

Maybe we can get in by the top.

STANDARD

You want to try?

BROUSSARD

Sure.

Broussard takes out the graplon-gun, and fires the hook up toward the top of the pyramid. It catches. He clips himself to the wire.

BROUSSARD (CONT'D)

You guys just wait down here till I say it's okay to come up.

Broussard turns on the climbing device, and begins to walk up the side of the pyramid.

OMINOUS ANGLES showing Broussard climbing the pyramid, the dust blowing, the wind shrieking.

EXTERIOR - TOP OF PYRAMID - DAY

The peak of the pyramid is in extreme disrepair. Broussard ~~arrives~~ at the top and clings to the jagged, crumbling stones.

BROUSSARD

There's a hole at the top.

EXTERIOR - BASE OF PYRAMID - DAY

STANDARD

Can we come up?

BROUSSARD

(over, filtered)

No, it's too small, only room enough for one person.

STANDARD

Can you see anything in the hole?

EXTERIOR - TOP OF PYRAMID - DAY

Broussard leans over and looks into the hole. He sees only blackness.

Freeing one arm, he unclips his datastick from his belt, switches on the "flashlight" function, and shines it down into the hole.

BROUSSARD

I can see...partway down. It just goes down like a stovepipe. Smooth walls. I can't see the bottom--light won't reach.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

Faust comes trotting up the steps, a questioning look on his face.

FAUST

Yes? What is it?

ROBY

Jay, we've got a problem. I was wondering if there was any way you could shortcut the repairs and give us immediate takeoff capability.

FAUST

(quickly)

Why, what's wrong?

ROBY

The computer's translated the alien signal, and it's kind of alarming.

FAUST

What do you mean?

ROBY

It couldn't translate the whole thing, only three phrases. I'll just read it to you the way I got it:

(reads from a strip of paper)

"...HOSTILE...SURVIVAL...ADVISE DO NOT LAND..."

(looks up at the others)

And that's all it could translate.

EXTERIOR - TOP OF PYRAMID - DAY

Hanging from the lip of the hole, Broussard is unclipping gear from his belt.

STANDARD

(over, filtered)

Dell, you want to come down, we can figure out where to go from here.

BROUSSARD

No, I want to go in.

EXTERIOR - BASE OF PYRAMID - DAY

Standard and Melkonis exchange a glance.

STANDARD

Okay, Dell, but just for a preliminary look-around. Don't unhook yourself from your cable. And be out in less than ten minutes.

EXTERIOR - TOP OF PYRAMID - DAY

BROUSSARD

Right.

Broussard has rigged a tripod across the mouth of the hole. He unspools a couple feet of wire from the device, and attaches the end of it to his chest unit.

He climbs over the lip and drops into the hole. He is now hanging by the wire, with his head and shoulders out of the hole.

BROUSSARD (CONT'D)

Okay, I'm in the mouth of the chimney now, and I'm starting down.

STANDARD

(over, filtered)

Take care.

Broussard activates the climbing unit and lowers himself down into the hole.

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
Martin, are you there?

Roby leans forward and speaks into the microphone.

ROBY
Here, Chaz.

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
We're coming up now, open the outer lock door.

ROBY
Chaz--what happened to Broussard?

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
It's some kind of organism, it's attached
itself to him. Let us in.

Roby does not reply.

STANDARD (CONT'D)
(over, filtered)
You hear me, Martin? Open the outer door.

ROBY
Chaz, if it's an organism, and we let in in,
the ship will be infected.

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
We can't leave him out here, open the door.

ROBY
(urgently)
Chaz, listen to me--we've broken every rule
of quarantine. If we bring an organism on
board, we won't have a single layer of defense
left.

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
Martin, this is an order! Open the door!

Hating it, Roby leans forward and throws the switch.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK - NIGHT

A RED LIGHT goes on, on a console on the wall. The whine of a large servo is heard, followed by a solid metallic CLUNK.

HUNTER

Outer door's open.

After a moment, they hear the motor sound again, followed by another CLUNK. The outer door has closed again. The red light goes off.

The inner door slides open, and Standard and Melkonis stagger through, carrying the sagging body of Broussard. A cloud of choking dust follows them out of the lock.

STANDARD

(pulling off his mask)

You men stay clear, there's a parasite on him.

Hunter and Faust RECOIL.

HUNTER

Oh--God--oh--

FAUST

Is it alive?

STANDARD

I don't know but don't touch it. Give us a hand here, let's get him up to the Autodoc.

Hunter and Faust move in carefully to help with the limp burden.

INTERIOR - INFIRMARY

One of them flicks on the lights as they come shuffling into the medical room, carrying Broussard.

Revealed is a rather small cubicle whose walls are lined with machinery. The principle item of interest is a mechanized bunk bed, which rests in a cradle and slides in and out of a slot in the wall.

STANDARD

Help me, come on, let's get him up here.

They slide the man onto the bunk.

HUNTER

That thing, God almighty, didn't you try to get it off him?

STANDARD

It wouldn't come.

Standard yanks off his gloves.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Medical gloves.

They pull thin elastic gloves from a dispenser in the wall, and pull them on.

Gingerly, they approach Broussard.

Standard places his hands on the octopus-thing that is slowly pulsing on Broussard's face. He grasps the tentacles in his hands and tries to pull it free.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

It's really on there tight.

FAUST

Here, let me try.

Faust takes a pair of pliers from a rack, and carefully grasps the tip of one of the tentacles. Squeezing tightly, he leans back with all his weight.

STANDARD

(grabbing Faust's hands)

Stop it, you're tearing his face.

A trickle of blood begins to ooze down Broussard's cheek.

MELKONIS

It's not coming off--not without his whole face coming off too.

STANDARD

Let's let the machine work on him.

Efficiently, they strip Broussard naked, then Standard presses a couple of switches on the wall. The machine lights up, and Broussard is sucked into the slot in the wall.

He is visible inside. The machine immediately sprays a cloud of disinfectant on him, then sterilizes him with a blinding pink light.

A bank of video monitors pops on, revealing X-ray images of different parts of his body. Sensors begin to scan, relays chatter.

ROBY APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY.

Standard turns and looks at him. For a long moment, the two men regard each other, then STANDARD STEPS FORWARD AND SLAPS ROBY ACROSS THE FACE.

The others are shocked.

HUNTER

Hey now, what is this?

STANDARD

Ask him.

ROBY

(slowly puts his hand to his cheek)
I understand why you did that.

STANDARD

Good.

MELKONIS

He wouldn't open the lock; he was going to leave us out there.

HUNTER

Yeah...well, maybe he should have. I mean, you brought the goddamn thing in here. Maybe you deserve to get slapped.

FAUST

(embarrassed)

Excuse me, I've got work to do.

Faust exits.

HUNTER

I keep my mouth pretty much shut, but I don't like hitting.

ROBY

(to Standard)

I guess I had it coming. Let's call it settled.

After a hard stare at Roby, Standard gives him a curt nod and turns his attention to the machinery.

ROBY (CONT'D)

(slowly)

Would somebody fill me in?

STANDARD

He went into the pyramid alone. We lost radio contact with him. When we pulled him out, it was on his face. It won't come off, not without injuring him.

HUNTER

Where did it come from?

MELKONIS

He's the only one that knows that.

HUNTER

How does he breathe?

They study the monitors.

MELKONIS

Blood's thoroughly oxygenated.

HUNTER

Yeah, but how? His nose and mouth are blocked.

STANDARD

Let's look inside his head.

Standard punches some buttons, and on the monitors, a kind of X-ray image in vivid colors appears, depicting Broussard's HEAD AND UPPER TORSO.

The parasite is clearly visible on Broussard's face. In X-ray, the creature is a maze of complicated biology. But the shocking thing is that, in X-ray, we can see that Broussard's jaws are forced wide open, and THE PARASITE HAS EXTRUDED SOME KIND OF LONG TUBE, WHICH IS STUFFED INTO HIS MOUTH AND DOWN HIS THROAT, ending near his stomach.

ROBY

Look at that.

HUNTER

What is it--I can't tell anything--

ROBY

It's some kind of organ--it's inserted some kind of tube or something down his throat.

HUNTER

(turning sick)

Oh...God...

Hunter bends over and RETCHES.

ROBY

I think that's how it's getting oxygen to him.

HUNTER

It doesn't make any sense. It paralyzes him... puts him into a coma...then keeps him alive.

MELKONIS

We can't expect to understand a life form like this. We're out of our back yard. Things are different here.

HUNTER

Well, can't we kill it? I mean, we can't leave the damn thing on him.

MELKONIS

We don't know what might happen if we tried to kill it. At least right now it's keeping him alive.

HUNTER

How about cutting it off? We can't pull it loose, but we can cut off everything but the bottom layer, where it's stuck to his face.

STANDARD

You're right...we can't stand here and do nothing.

Standard picks up his dusty breathing mask and pulls it over his head. Then he pulls back on his bulky gloves. Finally, he presses a switch and Broussard slides back out of the booth.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(muffled in his mask)

Somebody give me a scalpel.

Melkonis takes a glittering surgical blade from a slot in the wall, and carefully passes it to Standard.

Clumsily because of the gloves, Standard manipulates the knife in his hand till he has a decent grip on it. Then he flicks a little button with his thumb. The scalpel begins to hum.

Standard advances on the parasite. The others draw back nervously. Roby reaches over and draws yet a longer blade from the rack, and holds it inconspicuously at his side.

Standard bends over the parasite. Carefully, he touches the scalpel to the extreme end of one of the tentacles, where it curves toward the back of Broussard's head.

Effortlessly, the electronic blade slides through the alien tissue. Immediately, a urine-like fluid begins to flow from the wound.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(muffled)

I've made an incision...it's not reacting...
but some kind of yellowish fluid is leaking
out of the wound...

The noxious-looking liquid drips down onto the bedding next to Broussard's head. Instantly, it starts to hiss, and a thin stream of smoke curls up from the stain.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(muffled)

Hold it, this stuff's smoking!

The others REACT nervously.

By now, the yellow fluid has eaten a hole through the bunk bed and has dripped down onto the floor below. The metal floor begins to bubble and sizzle, and more smoke rises.

The men start to COUGH.

MELKONIS

God, that smoke's poisonous!

HUNTER

(pointing)

It's eating a hole in the floor!

Abruptly, the men jostle their way out of the room and huddle in the corridor outside, coughing their lungs out.

Standard, who is masked, remains. Frantically, he attempts to put a bandage on the wound, but the fluid instantly melts the bandage, and in the process, some of the stuff gets on Standard's gloves. They begin to smoke.

Frantically Standard leaps back, pulling off the smouldering gloves. Then he runs out into the corridor and yanks off his mask.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE INFIRMARY

STANDARD

That stuff's eating right through the metal!
It's going to eat through the decks and right out through the hull!

By this time Standard has started to run for the stairs.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Followed by the others, Standard frantically clangs down the stairs to the level below.

STANDARD

There! Look!

A droplet of the fluid is sizzling on the ceiling. It oozes down and drips to the floor.

It bubbles on the floor.

MELKONIS

Jesus, what can we put under it?

Standard and Hunter charge down the stairs to the level below.

INTERIOR - LEVEL BELOW

Standard and Hunter move cautiously down the corridor, looking up at the ceiling.

STANDARD

(pointing)

There. Should be coming through about there.

HUNTER

Careful, don't get under it!

INTERIOR - LEVEL ABOVE

Roby and Melkonis crouch by the spot on the floor where the acid sizzles.

MELKONIS

Christ, that stinks.

Roby fishes a pen out of his pocket and probes into the hole in the floor.

ROBY

Seems to have stopped penetrating.

Hunter comes charging up the steps.

HUNTER

What's happening up here?

ROBY

I think it's fizzled out.

Hunter approaches and looks. Roby straightens up, starts to put the pen back in his pocket, then changes his mind and stands holding it by the end.

MELKONIS

I never saw anything like that in my life...
except molecular acid.

HUNTER

But this thing uses it for blood.

MELKONIS

Hell of a defense mechanism. You don't dare kill it.

Standard comes up the stairs.

STANDARD

It's stopped?

MELKONIS

Yes, thank heaven.

STANDARD

We're just plain lucky. That could have gone right through the hull--taken weeks to patch it.

MELKONIS

Reminded me of when I was a kid and the roof leaked--everybody running for the pots and pans.

ROBY

My God, what about Broussard?

They turn and run up the stairs.

INTERIOR - INFIRMARY

They all come into the room (Roby carrying the partially melted pen). Broussard is still motionless on the bunk, with the thing on his face.

ROBY

Did it get on him?

Standard approaches and peers at Broussard's head.

STANDARD

No, thank God...just missed him.

MELKONIS

Is it still dripping?

STANDARD

(examining it)

It appears to have healed itself.

HUNTER

It makes me sick to see him like that.

MELKONIS

Isn't there some way we can get it off him?

STANDARD

I don't see how. But let's do what we can for him.

Standard presses a button, and Broussard slides back into the diagnostic coffin. He presses more buttons, and the displays light up again, showing different parts of Broussard's body.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

I think we'd better get some intravenous feeding started. God knows what that thing is leaching out of him.

Standard operates some controls, and the machine begins to invade Broussard's body, sliding needles into him.

ROBY

(studying the screens)

Look there, what's that stain on his lungs?

The X-ray reveals a spreading dark blot in the vicinity of Broussard's chest. In the center, the stain is completely opaque.

MELKONIS

It appears to be a heavy fluid of some sort... it blocks the X-rays...

ROBY

That tube must be depositing it in him.

MELKONIS

Could be some kind of venom, or poison...

HUNTER

This is horrible.

ROBY

Hey, what about the film?

STANDARD

What film?

ROBY

Broussard had film in his datastick, didn't he? We can see what happened to him.

INTERIOR - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

Again we are watching slides in the darkened room. This time Standard, Roby, Melkonis, and Hunter are watching the sequence of photographs taken automatically by Broussard's datastick as he probed the tomb.

The camera reveals the "urns." The climax of the sequence of stills comes when THE CREATURE LEAPS OUT OF THE "URN" TOWARD THE CAMERA -- and after that the camera drops to a useless angle and proceeds to show a series of meaningless blurs. Then the reel ends.

HUNTER

That must have been when he got it.

ROBY

The same thing must've happened to the creatures on the other ship...except they took one of those jars on board, and opened it there.

MELKONIS

(clicks back through the slides
to a picture of one of the "urns")

At first I thought they were jars too, or artifacts anyway. But they're not. They're eggs, or spore casings. Let's go back to the heiroglyphics.

CLICKETYCLICKETYCLICK -- Melkonis accelerates through the slides in a blur, stopping at the one he wants -- which shows a strip of heiroglyphs on the wall of the tomb.

STANDARD

I personally can't make any sense out of it...

CLICK. CLICK. Melkonis is changing the slides as they talk, showing different angles on the glyphs.

MELKONIS

It's a crude symbolic language--looks primitive.

HUNTER

You can't tell--that kind of stuff could represent printed circuits...

STANDARD

That sounds a little fanciful...

MELKONIS

Primitive pictorial languages are based on common objects in the environment, and this can be used as a starting point for translation...

ROBY

What common objects?

HUNTER

Listen, hadn't somebody better check on Broussard?

STANDARD

(rising)

I'll do it. The rest of you continue.

HUNTER

(rising)

I'll come with you.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE INFIRMARY

Standard and Hunter come down the passageway.

STANDARD

You know, it's fantastic--the human race has gone this long without ever encountering another advanced life form, and now we run into a veritable zoo.

HUNTER

What do you mean?

STANDARD

Well, those things out there aren't the same, you know--the spaceship and the pyramid. They're from different cultures and different races. That ship just landed here--crashed like we did. The pyramid and the thing from it are indigenous.

HUNTER

How could anything be indigenous to this asteroid? It's dead.

STANDARD

Maybe it wasn't always dead.

They arrive at the infirmary.

INTERIOR - INFIRMARY

The door slides open, and they step into the room. Hunter activates the bed, and it slides out of the wall.

INTERIOR - INFIRMARY

The door slides open, and they step into the room. Standard activates the bed, and it slides out of the wall.

THERE IS A LONG, HORRIFIED PAUSE.

HUNTER

It's gone.

They rush to Broussard's prone form. THE PARASITE IS GONE FROM HIS FACE.

Broussard is still unconscious, but he is breathing. HIS FACE IS COVERED WITH SUCKER MARKS.

HUNTER

Now we're in for it.

STANDARD

The door was closed. It must still be in here.

They immediately grow very tense. Hunter starts edging toward the door. Standard grabs his arm.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

No, don't open the door. We don't want it escaping.

HUNTER

(very nervous)

Well, what the hell good can we do in here?
We can't grab it--it might jump on us--

STANDARD

Maybe we can catch it.

Standard picks up a stainless steel tray with a lid.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

As long as we're careful not to damage it...

Tray in one hand, lid in the other, Standard begins moving slowly around the room. There are very few places to hide.

He bends down and peers under the bunk.

As he is down on his hands and knees, WE SEE ONE TENTACLE OF THE THING, VIBRATING ON A LEDGE JUST ABOVE STANDARD.

He rises, and HIS SHOULDER BRUSHES THE TENTACLE. THE PARASITE DROPS TO THE FLOOR.

STANDARD

(leaping back)

Shit!

But the thing is not moving. It lies motionless on the floor, its tentacles curled up. Its color has faded to a dead-looking grey.

Without taking his eyes off the thing, Standard reaches behind him and takes a long probe from the wall. He prods the thing; it does not respond.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

I think it's dead.

With great care, he uses the probe to fish the motionless parasite into the tray. Then he quickly closes the lid.

INTERIOR - LABORATORY

Standard, Roby, and Melkonis have the parasite spread-eagled on a stainless steel table, with a bright light on it. It is belly-side up.

Wearing gloves, Standard probes at the thing with an instrument.

STANDARD

Look at these suckers--no wonder we couldn't get it off him.

ROBY

Is that its mouth?

MELKONIS

More likely that organ--the tube-like thing--fits up in there.

With a pair of needle-nosed pliers, Standard fishes in the fleshy aperture. Carefully, he extracts the end of the tube-organ.

ROBY

Ugh.

Suddenly, it starts to FALL APART IN THE PLIERS.

STANDARD

Quick--it's decomposing--gimme something to grab it with!

It begins to SMOKE AND BUBBLE.

Roby grabs a long pair of tongs from the wall and thrusts them at Standard -- who throws down the pliers, snatches the tongs and seizes the thing in the tongs.

It is smouldering and dripping acid on the floor.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Christ! Let's get it out of here!

Carrying the thing, he heads for the door.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

The men run down the passageways, Standard carrying the dripping thing in the tongs. It leaves little smoking droplets on the floor.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK

They come running up to the airlock. Roby stabs the button and the inner door slides open. By the time Standard is in the lock, Roby is already on the intercom:

ROBY

(shouts into intercom)

For Chrissake, open the main lock!

INTERIOR - AIR LOCK - DAY

Roby stumbles in as the inner door closes; and with a heavy whine, the thick surface door rumbles open. Orange sunlight billows in, followed by the inevitable dust.

Standard HURLS THE CARCASS OUT, tongs and all.

EXTERIOR - BASE OF SHIP - DAY

The parasite hits the ground and begins to sink into the dust, smouldering and fuming.

INTERIOR - AIR LOCK - DAY

The outer door rolls shut.

ROBY

(slumping against the wall)

My God, it's lethal even when it's dead!

Melkonis gets down on his knees and studies the small burn-holes in the floor.

Standard opens the inner door and steps out into the corridor. There, he activates the wall intercom and punches out a combination.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK

HUNTER

(over intercom, filtered)

Yes?

STANDARD

How's Broussard?

HUNTER

(over, filtered)

He's running a fever.

STANDARD

Still unconscious?

HUNTER

(over, filtered)

Yes.

STANDARD

Can you do anything for him?

HUNTER

(over, filtered)

The machine will bring his temperature down.
His vital functions are strong.

STANDARD

Good.

He switches off the intercom.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(suddenly exhausted)

I need some coffee.

He turns and walks away.

INTERIOR - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

The cat is strolling around as Roby and Melkonis drop into seats; Standard draws a cup of coffee from the machine.

MELKONIS

These day and night cycles are totally disorienting. I feel like we've been here for days, but it's only been how long?

ROBY

... (stroking the cat)

About four hours.

STANDARD

(staring into his coffee cup)

I'm sorry to say it looks like you were right in the first place, Martin. We never should have landed here.

ROBY

Look, I'm not trying to rub anybody's nose in anything. The important thing is just to get away from here as fast as possible.

STANDARD

I can't lean on Faust any harder--he's been working non-stop on the engines.

ROBY

If we knew exactly what happened to the beings on the other ship--

MELKONIS

We do know that.

ROBY

Yeah?

MELKONIS

They never made it off the planet. The parasites won.

This brings a CHILLY SILENCE.

ROBY

Where did the parasites come from?

STANDARD

They seem native to the planet. It's got an atmosphere and a dense gravity. It's dead now, but once it must have been fertile.

MELKONIS

No. It's just too small to support fauna as big as the parasites. If there were a native ecology, it would have to be microscopic.

ROBY

Couldn't the pyramid have been built here by space travellers?

STANDARD

Too primitive. It's a pre-technological construction. That slab was engineered by an Iron-Age culture at best.

MELKONIS

They're from a dead civilization; they're spores from a tomb. God knows how long they've been here.

ROBY

I think we better take another look at those heiroglyphs.

Suddenly the door opens and Faust sticks his head in. He is covered with dirt and grime.

FAUST

Hey, guess what?

STANDARD

What?

FAUST

The engines are fixed.

EXTERIOR - PLANETOID - DAY

The SNARK's engines cough and then with a ROAR BEGIN TO BELCH OUT STREAMS OF SUPERHEATED AIR, cutting through the tuggy dust.

The ship roars and vibrates like a huge beast, capable of unlimited power.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

They are all at their posts.

STANDARD

Switch on tractor beams.

There is a hair-tingling ELECTRICAL HUM which permeates the whole ship, and it begins to float, like a cork in water.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Lock tractor beams.

The pitch of the hum changes, and the ship levels itself.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Retract landing struts.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - DAY

The ship is hovering above the ground on beams of shimmering force. The landing struts fold up under the belly of the ship.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

Take us up.

STANDARD

ROBY
(into intercom)
Up one kilometer, Jay.

EXTERIOR - PLANETOID - DAY

The SNARK begins to levitate up into the sky, on the beams of light.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

STANDARD
Switch on lifter quads.

A POWERFUL, DEEP THROBBING BEGINS. THE SHIP VIBRATES.

EXTERIOR - "SNARK" - DAY

The hovering SNARK begins to accelerate through the choking atmosphere.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

STANDARD
Engage artificial gravity.

Roby throws a switch, and the ship LURCHES.

ROBY
Engaged.

STANDARD
Let's take her into an escape orbit.

The men get busy with switches.

ROBY
I'm altering our vector now; should give us
an easy escape velocity--

A HUGE TREMOR RUNS THROUGHOUT THE SHIP.

ROBY & MELKONIS
(in concert)
What was that?

. In answer, THE COMMUNICATOR BEEPS.

FAUST
(over, filtered)
This dust is getting clogged in the intakes
again!

STANDARD
Just hold us together till we're in space,
that's all!

The pitch of the engines changes, deepens.

EXTERIOR - SKY - DAY

The SNARK swoops up at an acute angle into the boiling clouds.
Visibility is zero.

INTERIOR - ENGINE ROOM

Faust is pulling on a gasmask, because the engine chamber is
beginning to fill with dust. He turns on a huge exhaust
unit which begins to suck up some of the dust.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - DAY

On the screens, nothing but clouds. Then, ANOTHER TREMOR
SHUDDERS THROUGH THE SHIP. The men no longer speak; their
expressions are grim, set, and sweating; they are watching
their instruments. Periodically they mutter technical
instructions to each other.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - DAY

Abruptly the ship CLEARS THE TOP OF THE CLOUD LAYER AND
BURSTS OUT INTO STAR-SPRINKLED SPACE, trailing a wake of
dust behind it.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - OUTER SPACE

They all CHEER.

ROBY

(pounds his panel)

We made it! Damm, we made it!

STANDARD

You bet we made it. Martin, set course for Irth and accelerate us into stardrive.

ROBY

With great pleasure.

Roby begins to punch buttons.

MELKONIS

I feel like an escapee from Hell.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR - SHIP AT LIGHT SPEED - LATER

The ship's speed is so great that there is perceptible movement in the universe all around.

There is a strange corona effect which causes the stars approaching the ship to appear blue, and the receding ones to be red. This is redshift, made visible because of their incredible velocity.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE - OUTER SPACE

They are unstrapping.

ROBY

That's the part that always makes me feel like I'm gonna puke--when we accelerate into light speed.

STANDARD

Quit complaining; we're in space.

They rise and head out of the room.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR

As they walk along.

STANDARD

I think the best thing to do with Broussard is to just freeze him as he is. It'll arrest the progress of his disease, and he can get complete medical attention when we get back to the Colonies.

ROBY

We'll have to go into quarantine, maybe for quite a while.

STANDARD

That's okay, he can remain in hypersleep until they're ready to treat him.

They enter the infirmary.

INTERIOR - INFIRMARY

As they enter the room, THEY ARE SHOCKED TO SEE BROUSSARD SITTING UP IN BED - AWAKE.

BROUSSARD

(hoarsely)

...Mouth's so dry...can I have some water...

Instantly, Roby brings him a plastic cup of water. Broussard gulps it down in a swallow.

BROUSSARD (CONT'D)

More.

Roby quickly fills a much bigger container and hands it to Broussard, who greedily consumes the entire thing. Then he sags, panting, on the bunk.

STANDARD

(softly)

How do you feel, Dell?

BROUSSARD

(weakly)

Wretched. What happened to me?

STANDARD

Don't you remember?

BROUSSARD

Don't remember nothing. Can't hardly remember my name.

ROBY

Are you in pain?

BROUSSARD

Not exactly, just feel like somebody's been beating me with rubber hoses for about six years.

Melkonis laughs at this remark. Broussard smiles faintly at him.

STANDARD

Hell, you're in great shape, you've got your sense of humor back!

BROUSSARD

God I'm hungry.

ROBY

Dell, what's the last thing you can remember?

BROUSSARD

...I don't know...

ROBY

Do you remember the pyramid?

BROUSSARD

No. Just some horrible dreams about smothering. Where are we?

STANDARD

We're going home. We're in hyperspace.

MELKONIS

We're going into the freezers now.

BROUSSARD

I'm really starving; can we get some food before we go into the freezers?

STANDARD

(laughs)

I think that's a pretty reasonable request.

INTERIOR - MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

The entire crew is seated around the table, eating huge portions greedily. The cat eats from a dish on the table.

HUNTER

Boy do I feel a lot better. It's a straight shot back to the Colonies, and then we can start taking bids on the paydirt. Any bets on the top bid?

FAUST

(chewing)

Well, we should at least be able to each buy our own planet.

They all CHUCKLE.

MELKONIS

I'm going to write a book about this expedition. I'm going to call it "The Snark Log."

STANDARD

(stiffly)

The commander normally has first publication rights.

MELKONIS

Maybe we could write it together.

ROBY

First thing I'm going to do when we get back is eat some biological food.

MELKONIS

What's the matter, you don't like this stuff?

ROBY

Tastes like something you'd feed a chicken to make it lay more eggs.

STANDARD

Oh it's okay. I've had better cag than this, but I've had worse too, if you know what I mean.

FAUST

I kind of like it.

ROBY
You like this shit?

FAUST
It grows on you.

ROBY
You know what they make this stuff out of?

FAUST
(annoyed)
Yes, I know what they make it out of, so what? It's food now. You're eating it.

ROBY
I didn't say it was bad for you, it's just kind of sickening, that's all.

HUNTER
Do we have to talk about this kind of crap at the dinner table?

Suddenly, unexpectedly, BROUSSARD GRIMACES AND GROANS.

STANDARD
What's wrong?

BROUSSARD
(his voice straining)
I don't know...I'm getting these CRAMPS!

The others stare at him in alarm. Another GROAN is torn from his lips. He clutches the edge of the table with his hands, his knuckles whitening.

STANDARD
Breathe deeply.

BROUSSARD
(screaming)
OH GOD IT HURTS SO BAD!

ROBY
What Dell--what?

Broussard's face is screwed up into a mask of agony, and he is trembling violently from head to foot.

BROUSSARD
 (incoherent shriek)
 OhmygooaaaAAAHHHHH!!!

A RED SMEAR OF BLOOD BLOSSOMS ON THE CHEST OF BROUSSARD'S TUNIC.

THEIR EYES ARE ALL RIVETTED TO BROUSSARD'S CHEST AS THE FABRIC OF HIS TUNIC IS RIPPED OPEN, AND A HORRIBLE NASTY LITTLE HEAD THE SIZE OF A MAN'S FIST PUSHES OUT.

Everybody SCREAMS and leaps back from the table. The cat spits and bolts.

The disgusting little head lunges, comes spurting out of Broussard's chest trailing a thick, wormlike tail -- splattering fluids and blood -- lands in the middle of the dishes and food on the table -- and scurries away while the men are stampeding for safe ground.

When they finally regain control of themselves, it has escaped. Broussard lies slumped in his chair, a huge hole in his chest, spouting blood. The dishes are scattered and the food is covered with blood and slime.

HUNTER
 Oh, no. Oh, no.

FAUST
 What was that? What the Christ was that?

MELKONIS
 It was growing in him the whole time and he didn't even know it!

Slowly, they gather around Broussard's gutted corpse.

ROBY
 That thing used him for an incubator!

EXTERIOR - SHIP - OUTER SPACE

A hatch slides open on the side of the ship, and Broussard's wrapped body tumbles silently out.

AN ELECTRONIC BASS DRUM BEATS A DIRGE as Broussard drifts into eternity.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS

The entire remaining crew is walking toward the bridge.

MELKONIS

We can't go into hypersleep with that thing running around loose.

HUNTER

We'd be sitting ducks in the freezers.

ROBY

But we can't kill it. If we kill it, it will spill all its body acids right through our hull and out into space.

FAUST

Shit...

STANDARD

We'll have to catch it and eject it from the ship.

MELKONIS

(sighs)

Well, I kind of hate to point it out, but all our supplies are based on us spending a strictly limited amount of time out of suspended animation...and as you know, we used up most of that time in harvesting.

STANDARD

We've got about a week left, right?

HUNTER

And then we run out of food and oxygen.

FAUST

The water will still recycle.

ROBY

We won't need it then.

STANDARD

All right, so that's what we've got. A week. It's plenty of time.

ROBY

But if we haven't caught it in a week, then we have to go into the freezers anyway.

They enter the bridge.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

STANDARD

So does anybody have any suggestions?

FAUST

We could put on our pressure suits and blow all the air out of the ship. That would kill it.

STANDARD

No, we can't afford to lose that much oxygen. We're going to have to flush it out.

MELKONIS

How?

STANDARD

Room by room, corridor by corridor.

No one likes this thought.

MELKONIS

And what do we do when we find it?

STANDARD

We'll have to trap it somehow. If we had a really strong piece of net, we could bag it.

FAUST

We could cut a section out of that metallite netting. It won't hold up to that acid, but aside from that it's pretty strong.

ROBY

We have to avoid injuring it. What we really need is some electric animal prods.

HUNTER

I think I could cobble something together. A long metal rod with a battery in it. Give it a hell of a shock.

STANDARD

Good. Get on it. But first, I'm issuing a standing order: from this moment forth, every one of us will wear protective garments, including helmets. Let's get down to the locker and change.

They start for the exit.

EXTERIOR - OUTER SPACE

The SNARK continues on its way through the weird vortex of hyperspace.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Standard is walking purposefully along the corridor, alone. He is garmented in an unusual outfit which makes him look like a riot policeman, including clear plastic helmet.

He reaches a corner and turns. But this new passageway has a different gravity orientation -- Standard seems to be walking down a vertical wall.

He makes yet another disorienting turn, and now he is walking upside-down. He reaches a set of steps and climbs up them-- or rather, down them.

INTERIOR - VENTRAL OBSERVATION DOME - VIEW OF OUTER SPACE

Melkonis is seated in the dome, upside-down, peering down into space. He also wears the protective suit.

Standard, upside-down, climbs into the dome. It is dark and eerie here, under the stars of interstellar space. A few glowing panels provide the only illumination.

STANDARD

I thought I'd find you here.

MELKONIS

I was thinking of a line from an old poem: "Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink." All that space out there, and we're trapped in this ship.

STANDARD

That's the one about the albatross, right?

MELKONIS

We can't even radio for help; the carrier wave wouldn't reach its destination till long after we'd died and turned to dust. We are utterly, absolutely alone. Can anybody really visualize such a scale of distances? Halfway across Creation...

STANDARD

We came out there, we'll go back. A long time by the clock, but a short time to us.

MELKONIS

Time and space have no meaning out here. We're living in Einsteinian equation.

STANDARD

I can see you're putting your spare time to good use.

(leans forward and taps him on the knee)
Let me tell you something: you keep staring at hyperspace for long enough, they'll be peeling you off a wall. I've seen it happen.

MELKONIS

(smiles at him)

We're the new pioneers, Chaz. We even have our own special diseases.

STANDARD

Come on--let's go above and see how they're coming with the gear.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

The whole crew has assembled. Faust is unfolding several yards of shimmering metallic netting.

Hunter hands out five thin rods, like metal broom handles.

HUNTER

These have portable generators in them. They're insulated down to here--just be careful not to touch the end.

He demonstrates by touching the tip of one of the rods to a metal object. A blue spark leaps.

FAUST
Might even incinerate the damn thing.

STANDARD
(sharply)
I hope not.

HUNTER
Don't worry, it won't damage it, it'll just
give it a little incentive.

STANDARD
How do we locate the creature?

FAUST
With these.

He picks up a small portable unit.

FAUST (CONT'D)
Tracking device. You set it to search for a
moving object... It hasn't got much range,
but when you get within a certain distance,
it starts beeping.

Standard takes the device and studies it.

STANDARD
These will be very useful. At least we won't
have to go digging around in closets with our
bare hands. All right, here's the battle plan:
we're going to break into two teams and start
systematically covering the ship. Whoever finds
it first, catches it in the net and ejects it
from the nearest airlock. Clear?

ROBY
Even simple.

Standard shoots him a vicious look, then continues:

STANDARD
For starters, let's make sure the bridge is
safe.

Faust takes the device and turns it on. He scans it around
the room.

FAUST

It's clear.

STANDARD

All right--Roby and Melkonis will go with Faust.
Hunter and I will make up the second team.

They start doling out the equipment.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

We'll all carry communicators. We want to
keep in constant touch.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Melkonis and Roby carry the net, while Faust walks directly
behind it, carrying the tracking device. He continually
scans it from side to side.

FAUST

Nothing yet...nothing...we can move pretty
fast as long as there's nothing on the tracker.

INTERIOR - OTHER CORRIDORS

Standard and Hunter move silently along. Standard is forced
to serve a double function, carrying one edge of the net and
the tracker as well.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS

Roby's team is moving at a fairly brisk pace, when:

FAUST

Hold it.

Faust's tracker is BEEPING, and a small light flashes.

FAUST (CONT'D)

I've got something.

Immediately, they grow very tense and start looking around.

ROBY

Where's it coming from?

FAUST
(peers closely at tracker and frowns)
Machine's screwed up, I can't tell. Needle's
spinning all over the dial.

MELKONIS
Is it malfunctioning?

Faust turns the tracker on its side, and the needle stabilizes.

FAUST
No, just confused. It's coming from below us.

They all look down at their feet.

INTERIOR - MAINTENANCE LEVEL

Roby, Melkonias, and Faust come carefully down a set of crude metal stairs, into a drab, functional section of the ship.

The corridors in this level are lit by rows of bare bulbs in the ceiling. The effect is ugly and confining.

They stop at the foot of the stairs and move into position, spreading the net across the corridor.

ROBY
Okay.

FAUST
(looking at tracker and nodding
down the passageway)
That way.

They begin to walk down the passageway, footsteps clanging on the raw metal flooring. It is extremely dark.

ROBY
What happened to the lights?

FAUST
Bulbs burned out, nobody bothered to replace
'em.

They switch on the helmet lights.

CAMERA FOLLOWS THEM AROUND A COUPLE OF TURNINGS, AND THEN:

FAUST (CONT'D)

Hold it.

They all stop quickly, almost stumbling.

FAUST (CONT'D)

(whispering)

It's within 4 meters.

Roby and Melkonis heft the net, each keeping his prod in hand. Faust, prod in one hand and tracker in the other, has the unpleasant job of approaching the source of the signal.

He moves with great care, in a half crouch, ready to leap back at any second, prod extended, constantly glancing at the tracker.

The tracking device leads him right up to a small hatch or door in one wall.

Behind his plastic mask, sweat is pouring down Faust's face as he sets down the tracker and reaches for the little door. He raises the prod, grasps the door handle, yanks it open, and jams the electric prod inside.

WITH A NERVE-SHATTERING SQUALL, A SMALL CREATURE COMES FLYING OUT OF THE CABINET, EYES GLARING, CLAWS FLASHING.

Instinctively, they throw the net over it, but:

ROBY

(very annoyed)

Oh, hold it!

They open the net and release the creature. IT IS THE CAT. Hissing and spitting, it scampers away.

MELKONIS

We're making fools of ourselves!

Roby's COMMUNICATOR BEEPS.

ROBY

(into communicator)

Yes!

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
We've got it up here! It's trapped! Get up
here fast!

ROBY
Where are you?

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
Food storage room!

ROBY
We're coming!

They dash for the stairs.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Roby, Faust, and Melkonis charge down the hallways until
they arrive at:

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE FOOD STORAGE ROOM

Standard and Hunter are waiting for them, in hysterics.

HUNTER
We saw it inside and slammed the door on it!
It's in there now!

On the other side of the door, CRASHING AND BANGING can
be heard.

ROBY
What's it doing, having a seizure?

STANDARD
It started crashing around right after we locked
it in.

ROBY
Now what?

STANDARD
I guess we open the door and net it.

HUNTER
I hate to open that door.

Again the thing can be heard CRASHING AROUND INSIDE.

STANDARD

It looks completely different from the first one--it's more like a worm with legs...and tentacles.

FAUST

Well we better do something.

HUNTER

Maybe we don't have to. It's trapped in there. We could just leave it in there all the way back to Irth.

STANDARD

(snaps)

Don't be an idiot.

FAUST

I know what we can do. We can pump poison gas into the room and kill it. Through those ventilator slots there.

He indicates a row of slots in the bottom of the door.

ROBY

Hey, wait a minute! That's all our food supplies in there! We can't pump poison gas all over them!

STANDARD

Once we kill the thing we won't need the food any more--we can go straight into hypersleep. Also, it sounds like that thing is already doing a pretty good job on our supplies; it may be fouling them all.

ROBY

You win.

FAUST

Somebody gimme a hand, I'll get the stuff.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE FOOD LOCKER - LATER

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL THAT they are fastening a large

funnel-shaped device over the ventilator grill at the bottom of the door. This funnel is attached to a thick hose, which runs back to a large metal tank with pressure gauges.

STANDARD

Get those masks on.

They pull on gas masks.

ROBY

This stuff's deadly--I hope we know what we're doing.

STANDARD

Go ahead, Jay.

Faust turns on the machine. It begins to throb as it pumps the gas through the hose and into the room.

Immediately, THE CRASHING NOISES RISE IN CRESCENDO, AND THE THING CAN BE HEARD SCREECHING AND SQUEALING.

Then the sounds stop altogether.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Shut it off.

Faust shuts off the pump.

ROBY

Now what?

STANDARD

What do you think? Now we go in.

Standard steps to the door and opens it. A thick cloud of gas billows out.

INTERIOR - FOOD STORAGE ROOM

The room is thick with the poison gas. The men look like insects in their gasmasks.

The food packages are ripped to shreds, and foodstuffs are scattered all over the floor.

FAUST

Looks like he helped himself.

Carefully, the men poke through the garbage, net and prods raised.

Then Hunter points.

HUNTER

God damn it.

They all look where he is pointing. In the wall, A VENTILATOR GRILL HAS BEEN RIPPED OPEN.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

It escaped.

They move to the shredded ventilator and shine their lights into it.

ROBY

Where does that go?

FAUST

All over the ship; we'll have to check the charts to know for sure.

STANDARD

Then let's go and do it.

They head for the door.

HUNTER

Have we got any food at all left in the ship?

They slam the door shut and seal it.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

The screens are showing them a schematic of the ship's system of ventilator shafts.

FAUST

That one section of the ventilator shaft has only two outlets--you notice? The food storage room on one end--

HUNTER

--And the cooling unit on the other.

STANDARD

So it's trapped in between--now we have to drive it out.

FAUST

Poison gas...

HUNTER

We can't pump poison gas down into the cooling unit! It'll flood the whole ship!

STANDARD

The only other thing I can think of is for somebody to crawl in there and flush it out.

ROBY

Are you crazy?

STANDARD

The man would need protection, obviously-- as well as some way to drive the thing before him.

FAUST

How about a flamethrower? That wouldn't poison the air.

MELKONIS

So one of us goes into the airshaft and drives the thing along--

STANDARD

While the rest of us wait down in the cooling unit with the net.

HUNTER

Sounds like a rough one.

STANDARD

Got a better idea?

Hunter shrugs.

ROBY

So the only question left is: who gets to
crawl down the airshaft?

STANDARD

Let's be democratic.

He tears five small sheets of paper from a pad on his console.
On one of them, he draws a large X. Then he wads each piece
of paper into a tiny little ball.

He rolls the paperballs between his hands and tosses them
on the table like dice.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Martin, take one.

Roby picks one up and unfolds it. It is blank.

Melkonis picks up another and opens it. Again blank.

Faust picks up a ball, and Standard immediately picks his
own up. They are both blank.

They all look at Hunter, who has not yet unfolded his.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Open it up, Cleave.

INTERIOR - FOOD STORAGE ROOM

Hunter is strapping on an oxygen mask and a flame thrower.
Faust is helping him.

Finally, Faust hands him a tracking device.

FAUST

Well, uh...good luck. I hope you won't need
me, but if you do, I'm here.

HUNTER

(grimly)

Right.

Hunter turns and climbs into the ventilator opening, which
is just large enough to crawl through.

INTERIOR - AIR SHAFT

It is completely dark in the shaft. Hunter reaches up and turns on his helmet light. Then he switches on his radio.

HUNTER

Hey, do you guys read me down there?

INTERIOR - CLIMATE CONTROL ROOM

Standard, Melkonis and Roby are spreading out the net. We hear the hum of huge cooling plants, and their hair ruffles. Large airshafts run off in different directions.

STANDARD

Yeah, we're getting into position.

INTERIOR - AIR SHAFT

HUNTER

Okay, I'm starting now.

He begins to crawl forward into the narrow metal tunnel. He turns a corner.

After a couple more tight turns, THE TRACKER SUDDENLY BEEPS.

Hunter twitches. He raises his flamethrower and FIRES A BLAST INTO THE DARKNESS. It roars loudly in the confined tube, and the air instantly heats up. Smoke drifts back into his face. He begins to sweat.

INTERIOR - CLIMATE CONTROL ROOM

Roby points to a large rectangular opening in one wall.

ROBY

(pointing)

There. That's where it's got to come out.

He throws a switch, and a large metal panel rises and seals off the opening.

ROBY (CONT'D)

That's a flip-flop gate to channel the air, but we can use it to trap the thing.

STANDARD

Right now let's keep it closed.

Melkonis is setting up a little portable unit with a screen on it. The screen shows a section of the ship's schematic.

MELKONIS

I've got Hunter...and something else as well, in front of him.

STANDARD

Are they close?

MELKONIS

They're on the next level up.

STANDARD

Let's get moving with this net.

They lift the net up, holding it in front of the opening.

INTERIOR - AIR SHAFT

Hunter is still crawling on hands and knees. Up ahead, he can see that the shaft takes an abrupt downward turn.

He crawls toward the down angle, then fires another blast from his flamethrower.

Then he starts crawling down, head first.

When he is nearly upside-down, the shaft takes yet another turning which puts him into a nearly impossible position, almost immobilized.

Then the tracker starts BEEPING LIKE CRAZY.

Frantically, he fumbles the flamethrower around, but the space is narrow -- it is difficult maneuvering. He hears a HISSING CRY up ahead, and claws scrambling on metal.

Then he has the weapon into position, and sprays another lethal flaming burst toward the sound.

INTERIOR - CLIMATE CONTROL ROOM

Melkonis is staring at his screen.

MELKONIS

They're getting pretty close now.

STANDARD

All right, then--when it gets to the other side of the door, you sing out, then drop the door. Okay?

MELKONIS

Okay.

STANDARD

(to Roby)

And you and I will bag it, and then we'll take it to the ventral air lock, got it?

ROBY

(tensely)

Uh-huh.

INTERIOR - AIR SHAFT

Hunter is huddled against a wall of the shaft, clutching the flamethrower.

HUNTER

(whispers)

Hey, you guys.

INTERIOR - CLIMATE CONTROL ROOM

STANDARD

(into communicator)

Yes!

INTERIOR - AIR SHAFT

HUNTER

(whispering)

I don't think this shaft goes on too much farther...anyway it's getting pretty hot in here...

INTERIOR - CLIMATE CONTROL ROOM

STANDARD

(into communicator)

Okay, our screens show you as being near to
(CONT'D)

STANDARD (CONT'D)
 the opening. We'll open it up, then we'll cue you and you can start blasting. That'll drive it right out. You don't have to go any farther.

INTERIOR - AIR SHAFT

HUNTER

Good.

He readies the flamethrower.

INTERIOR - CLIMATE CONTROL ROOM

STANDARD

Okay, get ready.

He and Roby heft their respective ends of the net, crouched to catch the small creature when it darts out. Melkonis picks up his electric prod.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

Open the vent, Sandy.

Melkonis reaches over and throws the switch. The metal gate drops down, opening up the shaft.

A SIX-FOOT MONSTROSITY STANDS IN THE OPENING. GHASTLY BEYOND IMAGINATION, SQUAMOUS, COVERED WITH TENTACLES, IT HOPS DOWN LIKE AN OVER-SIZED BIRD AND GRABS MELKONIS IN RAZOR-SHARP TENTACLES.

Melkonis lets out a horrible shriek, and the thing grabs his head in one claw and TWISTS IT OFF LIKE A MAN PULLING THE HEAD OFF A CHICKEN, THEN THROWS IT TO THE FLOOR WITH AN AUDIBLE CLUNK.

CLUTCHING MELKONIS' BODY TIGHTLY AGAINST ITSELF, IT TURNS AND BOUNDS DOWN THE HALL. MELKONIS' HEADLESS BODY IS STILL KICKING AND STRUGGLING AS THE MONSTER LEAPS HEAD-FIRST INTO ANOTHER AIR SHAFT.

Standard and Roby are left standing in shock. After a moment, Hunter climbs out of the shaft.

HUNTER

What happened? Where is it?

They break from their paralysis, and run toward the opening the creature just leaped into. It is another shaft, going down into darkness.

STANDARD

(awed)

How did it get so big?

ROBY

By eating our food supplies.

HUNTER

Where's Melkonis?

INTERIOR - FOOD STORAGE ROOM

Faust is still waiting.

FAUST

(into his communicator)

Hey, are you guys still there? What's going on?

STANDARD

(over, filtered)

Meet us on the bridge. Be careful--it's huge now.

FAUST

Right.

Faust lets himself out of the food storage room and carefully locks the door behind him.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS

Standard, Roby and Hunter are rapidly ascending toward the bridge.

HUNTER

You mean his body was still kicking when it ran off with him?

ROBY

It was horrible--horrible. Like a chicken.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

Standard, Roby and Hunter enter and drop into chairs. Faust follows shortly. They all look blank, stunned.

FAUST
What happened? Where's Sandy?

ROBY
Dead.

FAUST
Dead!

ROBY
It's monstrous--it grew, like some horrible
tapeworm. We were completely unprepared.

FAUST
It's still in the ship?

STANDARD
We'd better seal off the lower maintenance
level; at least trap it there.
(throws a switch; circuitry lights up)

HUNTER
At least it can't get up here now.

ROBY
Two down, four to go.

STANDARD
(angrily)
What's that supposed to mean?

ROBY
Nothing.

HUNTER
Listen, it sure didn't like this flamethrower.

STANDARD
That's right--we can't kill it on the ship,
but we can at least keep it at bay--and maybe
drive it into the air lock.

HUNTER
Thing is, I'm about out of fuel.

FAUST
There's some more combustible fuel down in the
storage lockers next to the lounge.

(CONT'D)

FAUST (CONT'D)

(rises)

I'll go get it.

STANDARD

No, I don't want us separated.

FAUST

You just sealed it off; it can't get to that section.

ROBY

Don't count on it.

HUNTER

We sure need this flamethrower.

STANDARD

All right...but do not go below decks.

FAUST

Right.

(heads for the door)

STANDARD

And be right back.

Faust exits.

ROBY

I think it's time we took a hard look at those heiroglyphs.

Roby begins to punch buttons; the photographs of the heiroglyphics appear on some of the screens.

ROBY (CONT'D)

Can you make out any pattern in all that?

STANDARD

(baffled)

Well...yes...there's a pattern...but it's meaningless to me.

ROBY

I know it looks like a senseless jumble, but if you look closely, there are recognizable forms.

HUNTER

Recognizable! In that?

ROBY

In symbolic form...very stylized...but if you stare at it, you can see some of the different creatures we've been dealing with.

HUNTER

Well...I suppose that star-shaped thing could be the parasite that got on Broussard. Is that what you mean?

ROBY

And right next to it, that oval design with the markings--it's a dead ringer for the spore casings.

STANDARD

That next thing there--six legs, tentacles--that's the thing we saw in the food locker.

ROBY

So the next step should be--

HUNTER

--The big one. And there it is.

Out of meaningless geometric symbols on a wall, it has become possible to recognize each stage in the alien's life cycle.

ROBY

This is all the same creature. We're seeing the different stages in its life-cycle.

STANDARD

Then that tomb...must have been some kind of fertility temple...where they stored their eggs, and maybe held mating rituals...

HUNTER

...And Broussard got caught in their reproductive cycle.

ROBY

You will notice, though, that there are no more phases. Only four forms are shown. After that the pattern repeats.

STANDARD
Which presumably means...

ROBY
...More spores coming.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK

Faust quickly turns a couple of corners and then comes to an abrupt halt when he notices that a DOOR LEADING TO THE LOWER DECKS HAS BEEN WRENCHED OFF ITS HINGES.

He hesitates, uncertain what to do, then there is A SOUND FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE AIR LOCK...AND THE INNER LOCK DOOR IS OPEN.

Faust hesitates and peers into the lock.

INTERIOR - AIR LOCK

The creature is squatting in the middle of the floor, gnawing on a bloody thigh bone. It does not see Faust.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK

Stealthfully, dropping back into the shadows, Faust presses the wall intercom and speaks into it.

FAUST
(whispering)
It's in the lock--blow the main lock.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

Standard, Roby and Hunter are staring at the pictures. The call from Faust catches Standard in mid-sentence.

STANDARD
(into intercom)
What?

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK

FAUST
(whispering)
It's in the main air lock. Blow the lock.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

Standard hesitates, starts to frame a reply -- then changes his mind and runs to his console -- and THROWS THE SWITCH.

INTERIOR - AIR LOCK

With a mechanical whine, the inner door starts to close. The creature hears it and INSTANTANEOUSLY LEAPS OUT OF THE LOCK.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK

The creature comes flying out of the lock and DEALS FAUST A BACK-HANDED BLOW, KNOCKING HIM ACROSS THE THRESHOLD OF THE AIR LOCK DOOR.

FAUST SCREAMS IN MORTAL AGONY AS THE INNER DOOR CLOSES ON HIS WAIST, crushing him to a thickness of about three inches.

On the wall, a green light goes on:

"INNER DOOR CLOSED"

INTERIOR - AIR LOCK

Despite the fact that the inner door is still held open a few inches by Faust's squashed body, THE OUTER DOOR BEGINS TO SLIDE OPEN. IMMEDIATELY, THERE IS A TREMENDOUS SCREAM OF ESCAPING AIR.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - OUTER SPACE

In dead silence, a thick spurt of steam comes out of the open air lock door. This is the ship's atmosphere freezing as it squirts out into the vacuum under pressure.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

INSTANTLY, A TREMENDOUS WINDSTORM STARTS UP as the ship's air is sucked out toward the lock.

A SIREN BEGINS TO SOUND, AND A RED LIGHT FLASHES:

"CRITICAL DEPRESSURIZATION"

After a moment of panic and confusion, Roby bolts out of the control room.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS

Loose papers and articles of furniture hurtle through the passageways, as Roby hurries toward the rock, partly running, partly sucked along by the air current.

EXTERIOR - SHIP - OUTER SPACE

A huge plume of steam grows from the side of the ship, with all kinds of tiny loose particles tumbling out in it.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS

Whipped by the hurricane wind, Roby crashes to a momentary halt against a wall. As he hesitates there, trying to regain his balance, HE SEES THE CREATURE SCURRYING AWAY DOWN ANOTHER CORRIDOR.

Ignoring the monster, he pushes off from the wall and starts running again.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE AIR LOCK

Roby stops himself by grabbing the edge of a doorway at the end of the hall down from the airlock. Here, the wind is really terrific -- his clothes flap on his body and all kinds of things fly by -- the sound is a DEAFENING WHISTLE.

Instantly, Roby starts turning a large wheel, which begins to close a sliding hatch door, closing off the airlock corridor. As the hatch closes, THE CURRENT DECREASES, THEN IS FINALLY CUT OFF AS HE SEALS IT.

Done in, he collapses to the floor.

Then he clutches his throat and begins to gasp for breath. Because of the thinness of the air, THE SOUND LEVEL IN THE SHIP IS VERY ODD -- THIN, DISTANT, ALMOST INAUDIBLE. Roby is gasping loudly, but we can barely hear him; and his footsteps boom thinly like a man walking underwater.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS

Clutching his throat, he comes across the others--Standard and Hunter--and they are all choking, clawing at their throats, gasping like fishes out of water. They are sweating heavily and their noses bleed.

They try to speak to each other, but the sound is so muffled we can only hear distant croaks.

Standard mumbles something and stumbles down the hall. The others follow him.

INTERIOR - MAIN AIR TANK ROOM

The door bursts open and Standard reels in, his footsteps pinging thinly on the metal flooring. We see several rows of large oxygen tanks, all connected by hoses to a few petcocks.

Standard staggers to these and starts twisting the handles, opening them. THERE IS A PIERCING HISS OF ESCAPING AIR, AND THE SOUND LEVEL GRADUALLY RETURNS TO NORMAL as Standard and the others sink to the floor, gasping in the oxygen gratefully.

Finally they have recovered enough to be able to sit up.

ROBY

How much oxygen did we lose?

Standard rises unsteadily and peers at the gauges.

STANDARD

We've got six hours left.

HUNTER

(groans)

Oh my God.

STANDARD

Does anybody know what happened?

ROBY

I saw it. Faust got himself jammed in the air lock door. His body held it open.

STANDARD

Can we get to him?

ROBY

No, I had to seal off a whole section. We'd lose too much of our remaining air if we opened the connecting door.

INTERIOR - AIR LOCK

Faust's body, crushed in the inner door, floats weightlessly in the vacuum. His nose and mouth are crusted with huge gobs of dried blood.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

The three survivors--Standard, Roby and Hunter--slump into chairs.

The cat emerges from a hiding place, yowling with fear.

ROBY

(picking up the cat)

Poor kitty; puss puss puss.

STANDARD

At least we're rid of the damn monster. It must have been the first thing sucked out of the ship.

ROBY

No such luck. I saw it running down one of the corridors.

HUNTER

(groans)

Oh no! We can't fight this thing! There's only six hours of air left--we're dead men!

STANDARD

I don't buy that. There's still time to destroy it and get ourselves in the freezers.

HUNTER

How?

STANDARD

It's time for drastic remedies.

ROBY

It was time for that a couple days ago.

STANDARD

That kind of remark is pointless. Now come on--I want to hear every suggestion you can come up with, no matter how wild.

HUNTER

We can't kill it on board. It's huge now and must have tremendous amounts of that acid in its body.

ROBY

I've got an idea, but you're not going to like it.

STANDARD

Let's hear it.

ROBY

Okay. First we shut down all the cooling systems on the stardrive engines.

STANDARD

That'll blow the ship up.

ROBY

Right...but it'll take a few minutes for the engines to overheat and melt down the core. In the meantime, we get in the lifeboat and leave the ship.

HUNTER

Blow the ship up?

ROBY

And the creature with it. We can make it back to Irth in the lifeboat.

STANDARD

But the lifeboat can't accelerate to light speed.

ROBY

Doesn't matter--we're already at light speed. And when we get back to the Colonies, they'll pick us up in the network.

HUNTER

What about all the minerals and elements in the cargo hold? That's the only reason we came out here. We'd have to abandon them all. We'd be broke.

ROBY

Our lives are more important. Anyway, we can take a small amount of the most valuable stuff with us on the lifeboat.

STANDARD

No, it won't work and I just realized why. There's only one hypersleep freezer on the lifeboat. Only one of us could survive.

ROBY

Yeah...I forgot.

STANDARD

But the idea's good, if we could just turn it around somehow.

They think.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

If we could just get the creature into the lifeboat, we could launch it into space and blow it up.

HUNTER

Good! That's good!

STANDARD

We can load the lifeboat up with explosives and trigger them remotely, once the lifeboat is in space.

ROBY

I think it's going to be almost impossible to drive it up into the lifeboat.

HUNTER

We can use the flamethrower.

ROBY

It's not going to work.

STANDARD

You can't say that; I think it's a good plan.

HUNTER

The flamethrower needs more fuel.

STANDARD

Right. We've got a lot to accomplish. Let's get moving.

INTERIOR - MINING & CARGO BAY

The three men come down steps into this rather dirty area of the ship. A lot of tools and large items of machinery are stored around.

LONG RACKS OF SHELVES ARE STOCKED WITH METAL CONTAINERS OF VARIOUS SHAPES. Each container is well packed and labelled.

HUNTER

Which explosive should we use?

STANDARD

I'd suggest the N-13 sticks. They're portable, and they can be radio detonated.

Hunter begins to unlock a locker and draw out long, red sticks like broomhandles, with tiny printing on them.

Meanwhile, ROBY IS STARING AT THE ROWS OF METAL CANNISTERS. He touches one of them.

ROBY

You know, it's funny--this stuff we went to so much trouble to dig up--this treasure, the paydirt--it'll make it back to Irth just fine--even if we're not with it.

STANDARD

Here, carry these.

Hunter takes an armload of the red broomsticks, and stumbles.

ROBY

(grabbing at him)

Hey watch it!

STANDARD

(grinning)

It's stable; it doesn't hurt to drop it.

They begin to carry the explosives up the steps.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR

The three men are carrying their equipment along the hallway, when Hunter's tracker suddenly BEEPS.

HUNTER

Hold it!

They all stop. The tracker BEEPS AGAIN. Hunter puts down his stuff and points the tracker around.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

(nodding up some steps)

Up there.

They all look at each other. Standard puts down his bundle and picks up the flamethrower.

ROBY

So what do we do? Do we ignore it and finish loading the explosives into the boat--or do we flush it out now?

STANDARD

Now. If we can get it into the boat, we won't have to blow it up--we can just eject it into space.

Standard hefts the flamethrower and starts up the steps.

INTERIOR - DIM STAIRWELL

Standard's face is tense as he advances up the circular steps. Suddenly, a METALLIC TAPPING SOUND is heard. He freezes.

Then he continues up.

INTERIOR - DORSAL OBSERVATION DOME - VIEW OF OUTER SPACE

The view of interstellar space is spectacular. As Standard comes up the steps, the METALLIC TAPPING is heard again.

Standard looks around. Then he sees it -- BROUSSARD'S CORPSE FLOATS OUTSIDE THE GLASS OF THE DOME. It is tangled in some rigging, and the movement of the machinery causes the cadaver to tap on the glass periodically.

STANDARD

(shouts)

You can come up! It's safe!

The others come up the steps.

ROBY

(spying the corpse)

Oh--Jesus--

Broussard's corpse is blue and bloated where the wrappings have torn loose. Bumping against the glass, he looks like he wants to come in.

STANDARD

The ship's gravitational attraction must have drawn him back.

HUNTER

(horrified)

Should we go outside and bring him in?

STANDARD

No...the risk is too great. Perhaps after we've destroyed the thing.

Glancing back, the men retreat from the observation dome. Broussard remains against the glass, peering in with dead eyes.

INTERIOR - NOSE OF SHIP

The floor slopes upward slightly here as the corridor funnels in and ends in the entrance to a narrow passageway or crawlway. This passageway connects the nose of the ship with the lifeboat.

The three men come up to the entrance to the passageway, carrying the equipment. They duck in and walk the short distance to the lifeboat.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

The passageway connects into the rear of the lifeboat. It is an extremely simple, stripped-down vehicle; even the metal struts and beams are exposed. A single hypersleep freezer takes up a fair amount of floor space. It is an escape-craft, nothing more.

STANDARD

(pointing)

Along the base of the walls there.

They begin to stack the red broomsticks against the base of the walls on both sides of the lifeboat, and to wire them into position tightly.

HUNTER

This should do it.

ROBY

I should hope so! And we'd better make sure it's pretty far from the ship when we blow it.

STANDARD

It will be.

HUNTER

(surveys the craft uneasily)

What we really need is some red meat in here for bait.

ROBY

Well, if we had some, I'd eat it. I'm starting to get hungry.

By this time, they are exiting.

INTERIOR - NOSE OF SHIP

STANDARD

Well...now we have to herd that thing up here.

HUNTER

(nervously)

Whoever's doing the herding is gonna have their hands pretty full. I think somebody should stay by the lifeboat to slam the door on the thing once it's inside, and to serve as...as...

(searches for a word)

ROBY

Isn't "bait" the word you used?

HUNTER

Hey look, somebody has to have his hands free to lock the creature in the lifeboat!

STANDARD

Yes, and maybe launch the boat and blow it too... if the others are injured.

ROBY

Who gets the privilege?

INSERT: THREE CRUMPLED PIECES OF PAPER. Three hands pick them up.

ANGLE ON ROBY. He unfolds his paper, turns it so the others can see it. It has a big X on it.

ANOTHER ANGLE - SHORTLY LATER. Hunter is showing Roby a small device like a transistor radio.

HUNTER

Just keep your finger off the button till she's way away from the ship, that's all.

ROBY

Is it armed?

HUNTER

If you press the button right now, it will blow the whole nose of the ship off.

ROBY

Thanks for the thought.

(puts detonator in his breast pocket)

STANDARD

All right, Martin, we'll be in touch with you on the communicator.

ROBY

And you'll let me know when you've got it coming this way...

STANDARD

And you stand aside while we drive it in, then shut the hatch, launch the boat, and--

ROBY

Kablooey.

Hunter's face twitches nervously at this.

STANDARD

Come on; we haven't much time, air is a factor.

They leave the nose of the ship, Standard carrying the flame-thrower, Hunter the tracker.

Roby settles himself at the controls, runs through them briefly to familiarize himself. Using a switch, he opens and closes the lifeboat door a couple of times. It slams open and shut quite rapidly.

He presses a few buttons and sets the launch button to "READY."

Then STANDARD'S VOICE comes from the communicator:

STANDARD
(over, filtered)
We've got something on the tracker...got to be it, it's too big for the cat.

This is a VERY SPOOKY SCENE, ROBY ALONE BY THE LIFEBOAT, LISTENING TO THE VOICES ON THE COMMUNICATOR.

HUNTER
(over, filtered)
It's coming from down there.

Roby hears various tinny sound effects, rustlings, clunkings, breathing, etc.

INTERIOR - CORRIDOR IN SHIP

Standard has the flamethrower at the ready, and Hunter is staring at the tracker.

HUNTER
It must have stopped moving. I'm not getting anything.

STANDARD
Let me go first; you stay behind me.

Carefully, Standard advances down the corridor. Then THE CREATURE POPS OUT OF HIDING BEHIND HUNTER, AND PICKS HIM UP.

HUNTER SCREAMS.

Standard whirls around, sees the thing clutching Hunter. It holds him off to one side, as though to keep Standard from getting at him.

Standard doesn't know what to do.

HUNTER

The flamethrower!

STANDARD

I can't, the acid will pour out!

At that moment the creature TAKES A BITE OUT OF HUNTER, WHO SCREAMS IN MORTAL AGONY.

Standard can take it no longer; he raises the flamethrower and fires -- BUT THE CREATURE SWINGS HUNTER AROUND AS A SHIELD AND HUNTER CATCHES THE FULL BLAST OF THE FLAME.

Standard instantly stops firing, but now Hunter is a kicking ball of flame, held out at arm's length by the monster.

INTERIOR - NOSE OF SHIP

Roby is listening to all this on the communicator. He can hear the shrieks and crashing noises.

Then the communicator goes dead, and all he hears is a rush of static.

ROBY

Hello? Standard? Hunter?

He waits quite a while for a response, but we can see from his expression that he expects none.

He drops his face into his hands. When he lifts his head again, he has managed to summon a certain amount of resolve.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Roby walks along watching the tracker, carrying a pistol in the other hand. He comes across Standard's flamethrower, lying on the floor. He picks it up, substituting it for the pistol.

Then he continues to follow the tracker; it takes him down the steps into the maintenance level.

INTERIOR - MAINTENANCE LEVEL

Roby follows the device for a short distance until it indicates that the source of the signal is directly under his feet. Looking down, he sees that he is standing on a square metal plate.

Getting down on his hands and knees, he removes the heavy plate, revealing a black opening with a ladder going down.

Substituting the tracker for a flashlight, but still carrying the flamethrower, Roby starts down the ladder.

INTERIOR - DARK STORAGE ROOM

Shining the light around into the darkness, Roby descends the metal ladder to the floor.

THE PLACE IS A HORRIBLE LAIR, FULL OF BONES, HAIR, SHREDS OF FLESH, PIECES OF CLOTHING, AND SHOES.

Something moves in the darkness--Roby turns his light on it.

HANGING FROM THE CEILING IS A HUGE COCOON. It appears to be woven from some fine, white, silk-like material, and it is slowly undulating.

Flamethrower ready, Roby approaches the cocoon. As he gets close enough, he sees that the cocoon is semi-transparent and THE BODY OF STANDARD IS INSIDE IT.

Unexpectedly, Standard's eyes open, and focus on Roby--who jumps violently.

STANDARD

(a feeble whisper)

Kill me...

ROBY

(sickened)

What did it do to you?

STANDARD

(moves his head slightly)

Look...

Roby turns his light where Standard indicates. Another cocoon dangles from the ceiling, but this one looks a little different. It is smaller and darker, with a harder shell. In fact, it looks almost EXACTLY LIKE THE SPORES IN THE TOMB.

STANDARD (CONT'D)

(whispering)

That was Melkonis...it ate Hunter...

ROBY

(looking around for a tool)

I'll get you out of there.

STANDARD

No...don't...

ROBY

But I can save you--get you to the Autodoc!

STANDARD

No good...it's eaten too much of me...

ROBY

(in horror)

What can I do?

STANDARD

Kill me...

Roby stares at him in horror, then bends down and takes a closer look at him. REACTING, he straightens back up, raises the flamethrower, and sprays a molten blast. When the entire room is in flames, he turns and scrambles back the ladder.

INTERIOR - MAINTENANCE LEVEL

Roby drops to his knees and gasps for breath, trying not to throw up. At length, he regains control of himself.

EXTERIOR - OUTER SPACE - AT LIGHT SPEED

The SNARK appears to hang motionless, with planets and star clusters rolling past in the infinite distance.

INTERIOR - BRIDGE

Roby is putting the cat into a metal, vacuum-sealed catbox, with a little oxygen tank on it.

ROBY

Kitty go bye-bye.

He seals the catbox, then turns on the oxygen. There is a faint hiss of pressurized air. Wild-eyed, the cat peers out of a little window in front. It YOWLS.

He picks up the pressurized catbox and leaves the bridge.

INTERIOR - MINING & CARGO BAY

Carrying the catbox and a shoulder bag (and of course the flamethrower), Roby goes quickly to the nearest rank of metal cannisters.

ROBY

(reading from labels)

What'll it be, Kitty? Here--how about some Tacitum-35, ten kilos of it. This'll buy us an island on some nice planet.

Putting the invaluable cannister into the shoulder bag, he hurries back up the steps.

INTERIOR - ENGINE ROOM

Catbox in one hand, flamethrower in the other, Roby enters the engine room, containing the massive stardrive engines.

He puts down his parcels and approaches the main control board for the engines. Studying the instructions, he begins to close switches, one by one.

A SIREN BEGINS TO HONK THROUGHOUT THE SHIP.

COMPUTER

Attention! The cooling units for the stardrive engines are not functioning! Engines will overload in 4 minutes, 50 seconds! Attention!

Finally Roby closes the last switch. Shaking with nervousness, he hurriedly picks up catbox, bag and flamethrower and hurries out of the engine room.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Roby hurries on, listening to the siren.

COMPUTER

Attention! Engines will overheat and main core will melt in 4 minutes, 30 seconds!

INTERIOR - NOSE OF SHIP

Roby comes hustling up to where the lifeboat is berthed. Hands full, he starts to enter the connecting passageway.

INTERIOR - CONNECTING PASSAGEWAY

THE CREATURE IS WAITING AT THE OTHER END OF THE PASSAGEWAY, INSIDE THE LIFEBOAT.

It HISSES and starts toward him.

INTERIOR - NOSE OF SHIP

Roby leaps out of the passageway, bounds to the controls, and throws the switch. The hatch door SLAMS SHUT, locking the thing in the lifeboat.

COMPUTER

Attention! Engines will overload in 4 minutes!

Indecisive, Roby stares at the lifeboat "LAUNCH" button. The thing can be heard fumbling around in the passageway.

Finally, he turns and bolts back toward the engine room.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Like a maniac, Roby runs through the ship, level after level, pounding down stairwells, his footsteps clanging metallicly throughout the ship as he sprints for the engine room.

COMPUTER

Attention! Engines will overload in 3 minutes, 30 seconds!

INTERIOR - ENGINE ROOM

The door crashes open and Roby comes running in. The room is full of smoke and the engines are whining dangerously. It is extremely hot in the room; Roby instantly breaks out in sweat.

He runs to controls and begins throwing back on the cooling unit switches.

Still THE SIREN CONTINUES.

COMPUTER

Attention! Engines will overload in 3 minutes!

Roby pushes a button and speaks into it.

ROBY

Computer! I've turned all the cooling units back on! What's wrong?

COMPUTER

The reaction has proceeded too far. The core has begun to melt. Engines will overload in 2 minutes, 35 seconds.

A look of terror comes onto Roby's face. He turns and runs from the engine room.

INTERIOR - CORRIDORS IN SHIP

Again, Roby must run through all the levels of the ship, this time up the stairs, exhausted, stumbling, while the computer counts down:

COMPUTER

Attention! Engines will overload in 2 minutes!

INTERIOR - NOSE OF SHIP

Reeling, gasping for breath, Roby staggers into the vestibule where the lifeboat is berthed. He grabs the flamethrower and turns it toward the passageway.

It is then he realizes that THE LIFEBOAT DOOR IS OPEN AGAIN.

Quickly, he glances around to see if the creature might be behind him. Then he advances on the passageway.

INTERIOR - PASSAGEWAY

Dripping with sweat, his face a mask of fear, Roby enters the passageway, flamethrower gripped tightly in his hands. He is goaded on by the siren and the computer:

COMPUTER

Attention! Engines will explode in 90 seconds!

He makes it all the way to the end of the passageway, then sticks his head into the lifeboat.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

HIS POINT-OF-VIEW as he quickly scans the lifeboat, reveals that it is EMPTY.

INTERIOR - PASSAGEWAY

Immediately, he turns and dashes back to the head of the passageway. There he grabs the catbox and bag, then runs back into the lifeboat.

COMPUTER

Attention! Engines will explode in 60 seconds!

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

He comes in on the run, hurls the catbox and bag toward the front, and does a dive over the back of the control chair. He is no sooner in the seat than he hits the "LAUNCH" button.

EXTERIOR - NOSE OF SHIP - OUTER SPACE

The retainer clips drop away, and with a blast of ramjets, THE LIFEBOAT IS LAUNCHED AWAY FROM THE "SNARK."

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

Roby is frantically strapping himself in, as the lifeboat accelerates away from the mother ship.

EXTERIOR - SPACE

The tiny pod of the lifeboat accelerates away from the larger bulk of the SNARK. The scene is strangely serene for such deadly circumstances.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

Roby finishes strapping himself in, then he reaches and grabs the catbox. The cat is YOWLING. Roby hugs the box to his chest and hunches his head down over it.

EXTERIOR - SPACE

The SNARK drifts ever farther away as the lifeboat leaves it behind, until it is barely a point of light.

THEN IT BLOWS UP.

AN EXPANDING ORANGE FIREBALL WITH PIECES OF METAL FLYING IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

The shockwave hits the escape craft, jolting it and rattling everything inside. Then all is quiet.

Roby unhooks himself from his straps, rises, and goes to the back of the lifeboat. He stares out through the port-hole. His face is bathed in orange light.

EXTERIOR - SPACE

What he sees is the boiling fireball, now fading and fizzling away into nothingness, and a couple of pieces of debris floating past.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

Roby's expression is mournful as he watches the final obliteration of his ship and friends.

BEHIND HIM, THE CREATURE EMERGES FROM SOME HIDING PLACE-- IT HAS BEEN INSIDE THE LIFEBOAT ALL ALONG.

The cat SCREECHES.

Roby whirls, and finds himself facing the thing across the length of the boat. It squats, then pulls out its trophy-- a man's arm.

It begins to eat the arm, watching Roby.

His first thought is for the flamethrower--unfortunately, it lies on the floor right next to the monster. Next he glances around for any place to hide. His eye falls on a tiny locker containing a space suit, with the door standing open.

He begins to edge toward the locker. The creature rises. He freezes.

It throws down the arm. With that, Roby dives for the open locker door, hurls himself inside, and slams the door shut.

INTERIOR - SPACESUIT LOCKER

There is a clear glass panel in the door, and the thing puts its face right up to the glass, peering in at Roby. The locker is so small that Roby's face is only inches away from the creature's. The sight is disgusting. It turns its head, looking at him in curiosity.

Then the MOANING OF THE CAT distracts it.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

The creature waddles over to where the pressurized catbox sits. It bends down and peers inside. The CAT YOWLS LOUDER.

It picks up the catbox in its tentacles.

INTERIOR - SPACESUIT LOCKER

Trying to distract the monster away from the cat, Roby TAPS ON THE GLASS.

But the monster reacts so fast that its face is instantly back at the glass, startling the hell out of Roby.

Getting no more interference from him, the thing returns to the catbox.

Roby looks around. He spies the spacesuit. Quickly, he begins to pull it on.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

The creature picks the catbox up its tentacles and shakes it to see if there is anything inside. The cat MOANS.

INTERIOR - SPACESUIT LOCKER

Roby is halfway into the pressure suit.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

The creature throws the catbox down. It clangs, and bounces. The thing picks it up again and hammers it against the wall. Then it jams it into a crevice in the wall.

With one tentacle, it begins to pound the sealed catbox into the crevice. The cat has gone beyond hysterics.

INTERIOR - SPACESUIT LOCKER

Roby pulls on the helmet, latches it into place, then turns on the oxygen. With a hiss, the suit fills itself.

In a rack on the wall is a long metal rod with a blunt rubber tip. Roby peels the rubber off, revealing a sharp steel point.

Again he raps on the glass.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

The creature turns. It faces the locker, peers at him.

INTERIOR - SPACESUIT LOCKER

ROBY

Try a little of this, you fucking bastard.

HE KICKS THE DOOR OPEN.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

The creature rises, but just in time to catch THE STEEL SHAFT RIGHT THROUGH ITS MIDRIF.

IT MAKES A HORRIBLE NOISE AND CLUTCHES AT THE SPEAR. The yellow acid begins to flow from the wound.

Before the acid can touch the floor, Roby reaches back and pulls a switch -- BLOWING THE REAR HATCH.

In a poof, the tiny atmosphere in the lifeboat is sucked out into space -- and the bleeding creature along with it. Roby grabs a steel strut to keep from being sucked out, but as the creature passes him IT WRAPS THE END OF A TENTACLE AROUND HIS ANKLE.

EXTERIOR - LIFEBOAT - OUTER SPACE

Roby is now hanging halfway out of the lifeboat, with the thing clinging to his leg. He kicks at it with his free foot, but it won't let go.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

Looking for any salvation, Roby grabs the hatch control lever and yanks it.

The hatch slams shut, closing Roby safely inside but TRAPPING THE END OF THE CREATURE'S TENTACLE IN THE DOORJAMB.

It instantly releases Roby, who staggers back.

EXTERIOR - LIFEBOAT - OUTER SPACE

The creature is now outside the lifeboat, in the vacuum, squirming, the tip of its tentacle caught in the closed hatch.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

Where the tentacle is caught in the hatch, it is wounded, and is starting to foam with acid, eating away at the metal.

Roby stumbles forward to the controls and pushes a lever labeled:

"RAM JETS"

EXTERIOR - LIFEBOAT - OUTER SPACE

The jet exhausts are located at the rear of the craft, right where the creature is wriggling. THE ENGINES BELCH FLAME FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN SHUT OFF.

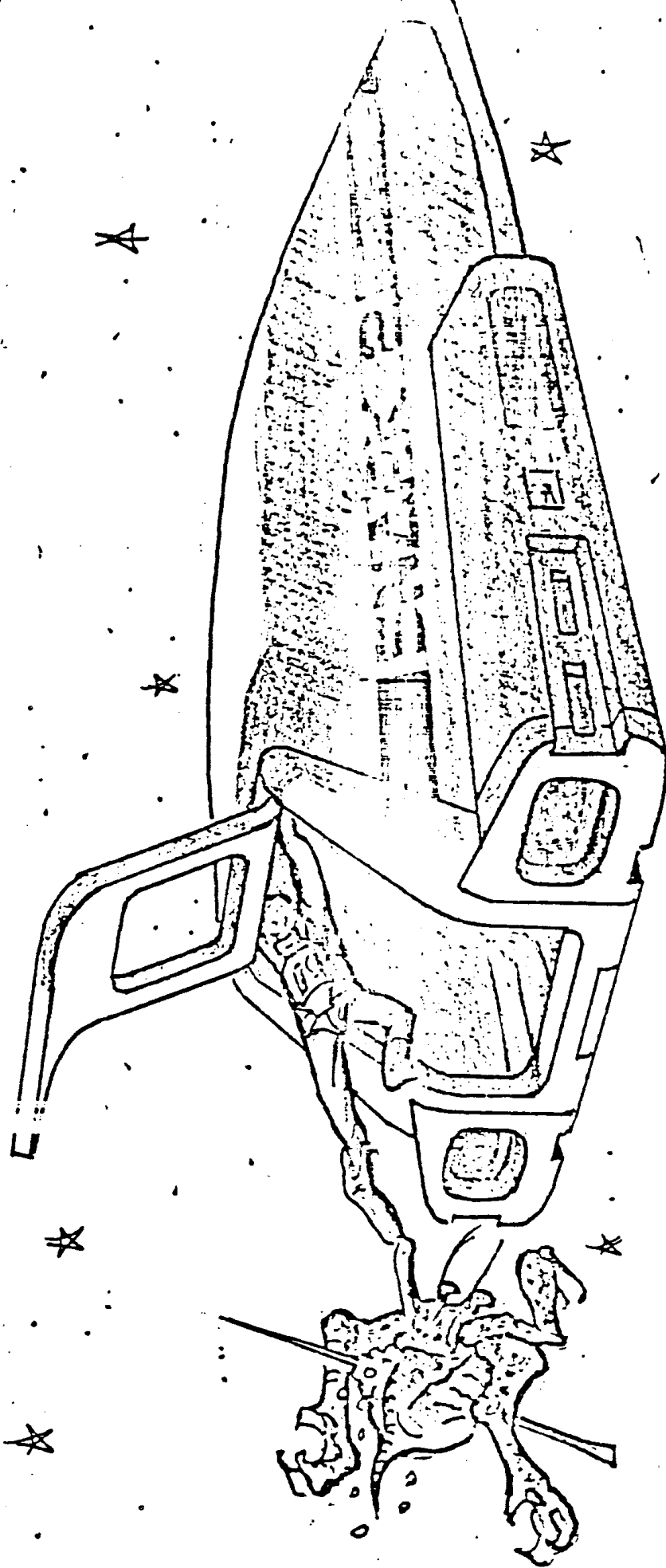
INCINERATED, THE CREATURE TUMBLES SLOWLY AWAY INTO SPACE.

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT

Roby hurries to the rear hatch and looks out after the thing.

EXTERIOR - OUTER SPACE

The burned mass of the monster drifts slowly away into space, a writhing, smoking, foaming mass.



As it tumbles into the distance, pieces drop off it -- it bloats -- then bursts, soggily, sending a spray of particles off in all directions. The last we see of it is a few smouldering rags, dwindling into infinity.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR - LIFEBOAT - LATER

The boat is re-pressurized and Roby is seated in the control chair. He seems calm and composed, almost cheerful. The cat purrs in his lap.

ROBY

(dictating)

...So it looks like I'll make it back to the Colonies on schedule after all. I should be to the frontier in another 250 years or so, and then with a little luck the network will pick me up. I'm not as rich as I was a couple days ago--but I'm not exactly broke either. Incidentally, I did manage to salvage one souvenir out of this whole mess.

He reaches down into the carrying bag he brought on board, and pulls out the ALIEN SKULL.

ROBY (CONT'D)

Poor Yorick here should go at least partway toward proving I'm not a crank. I wish it was him we'd met in the first place--things might have turned out different.

He puts the skull down on a shelf and locks a glass lid over it.

ROBY (CONT'D)

This is Martin Roby, executive officer, last survivor of the commercial vessel SNARK, signing off. Come on, cat, let's go to sleep.

Roby leans forward and switches off the recorder. Then he rises and, carrying the cat, walks to the hypersleep freezer, which stands open.

He climbs in and stretches out on his back, holding the cat against his chest. With one hand, he presses a switch, and THE LID CLOSES OVER HIM.

CLOSE-UP OF THE ALIEN SKULL, watching sentinel over the slumbering Roby like some dead, melancholy pixie.

EXTERIOR - OUTER SPACE

The lifeboat -- SNARK 2 -- sails away toward its rendezvous with Irth, 250 years from now.

As SNARK 2 drifts past camera, we suddenly see that A SPORE POD IS ADHERED TO THE UNDERBELLY OF THE CRAFT.

ROLL END TITLES & MUSIC.

THE END.

SYNOPSIS

En route back to Earth from a far part of the galaxy, the crew of the starship SNARK intercepts a transmission in an alien language, originating from a nearby storm-shrouded planet.

Mankind has waited centuries to contact another form of intelligent life in the universe--they decide to land and investigate. Their search takes them to a wrecked alien spacecraft whose doors gape open--it is dead and abandoned. Inside they find, among other strange things, the skeleton of one of the unearthly space travellers.

Certain clues in the wrecked ship lead them across the hostile surface of the planet to a primitive stone pyramid, the only remnant of a vanished civilization. Beneath this pyramid they find an ancient tomb full of fantastic artifacts. Lying dormant in the tomb are centuries-old spores, which are triggered into life by the men's presence. A parasite emerges and fastens itself to one of the men's faces---and cannot be removed.

An examination by the ship's medical computer reveals that the creature has inserted a tube down his throat, which is depositing something inside him. Then it is discovered that the parasite's blood is a horribly corrosive acid which eats through metal--they dare not kill it on the ship.

Ultimately it is dislodged from its victim and ejected from the ship, and they blast off from the Hell-planet. However, before they can seal themselves into suspended animation for the long voyage home, a horrible little monster emerges from the victim's body--it has been growing in him, deposited there by the parasite...and now it is loose on the ship.

A series of ghastly adventures follow. They trap it in an air shaft and a man has to crawl down the shaft with a flamethrower -- it tears a man's head off and runs away with his body -- a man is crushed in the air lock door and the ship loses most of its air in a terrific windstorm -- another man is burned to death and then eaten by the creature -- and another is woven into a cocoon as part of the alien's bizarre life cycle.

Finally there is only one man left alive, alone on the ship with the creature, and only six hours till his air runs out; which leads to a climax of horrifying, explosive jeopardy, the outcome of which determines who will reach Earth alive--man or alien.