ALIEN

Story by Dan O'Bannon & Ronald Shusett

Screenplay

by

Dan O'Bannon

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.
"THE OUTER" 108 LIGHT YEARS IN DIAMETER

1650 STAR SYSTEMS
IN THE OUTER (46 SOL TYPES)
OVER 20,000 PLANETS

CAPELLA 46

ARTURUS 37

SIRIUS 8.7

ALPHA CENTAURI 4.3

ALDEBARAN 16

61 CYGNI 11

ALTAR 16

37 STAR SYSTEMS

EARTH VICINITY 32.6 LIGHT YEARS IN DIAMETER

1 SOL TYPE (OTHER THAN OURS)

11,000 PLANETS

54 LIGHT YEARS

37.7 LIGHT YEARS

VEGA 27

GALAXY 100, LIGHT YEARS DIAMETER

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?

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 Earth?

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, indicating 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

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.
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**

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)
Feels 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.
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.

But?

STANDARD

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.

What?

FAUST
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.

BROTOSSARD
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?
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.

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.

What is it?

(Standard

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.

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 stand-
ing 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.
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.

Freening 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 hieroglyphics.

CLICKETYCLICKETYCLICK -- Melkonis accelerates through the slides in a blur, stopping at the one he wants -- which shows a strip of hieroglyphs 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.
HUENER
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.

HUENER
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.

HUENER
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.

HUENER
(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!

Makonis 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 disori-
enting. 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.
If we knew exactly what happened to the beings on the other ship—

MELKONIS

We do know that.

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 tulgy 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

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

Engage artificial gravity.

ROBY

Engaged.

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

Are you in pain?

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.

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

God I'm hungry.

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

...I don't know...

Do you remember the pyramid?

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

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

We're going into the freezers now.

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

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)
OhmygooaAAAHHHHHH!!

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 -- splatterling 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, Melkonia, 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
(locking 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 Ith.

STANDARD
(snarls)
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 CRESCEPDO, 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.
What happened? Where's Sandy?

Dead.

Dead!

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 pingling 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 HISSION 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.
HUPTER
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.

HUPTER
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.

HUPTER
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
Kaboodle.

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 flamethrower, 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 whirs 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 metallically 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, hurlsi 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 hystericis.

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 MIDRIFF.

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 Earth, 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.