

'LARKLIGHT'

By Steven Knight

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INT. VICTORIAN DRAWING ROOM, DAY, CURTAINS DRAWN

A beautiful ebony and ivory metronome is being wound up by delicate female fingers.

We pull wide to reveal MYRTLE, a girl of seventeen, who is dressed in prim Victorian lace, sitting at an upright piano, with sheet music on the piano's music stand.

She is alone in the room, but in her head she is on the stage of the Royal Albert Hall, before a huge audience of devoted music lovers. She is terribly serious.

We see that the drawing room is solidly furnished, though the curtains, sofas and chairs have seen better days. A small fire burns in the grate. There's a parrot in a cage. The only brightness in the room is a large oil-on-canvas painting of a woman in her mid thirties with a beguiling smile and kind eyes...(to be revealed later as VALERIE, Myrtle's mother).

Myrtle stands and does a small bow to the wall, then to the 'Royal Box' (the parrot). She then pounces on the opening bar of the music and the room reverberates....

INT. ART'S BEDROOM

Upstairs, a boy of fifteen (ART) is lying on his unmade bed, reading a back issue of the *London Illustrated News*. (We glimpse a headline 'Sir Waverley Rain to design palace for Great Exhibition').

Art reacts with weary disgust when he hears the thunderous first bars of piano music from downstairs. He grabs a large, prosthetic wooden leg (just one of the many bizarre items that clutter his room) and uses it to stamp on the floorboards.

INT. OBSERVATORY IN A FAR PART OF THE HOUSE

EDWARD MUMBY (Art and Myrtle's father) is a cluttered man in a cluttered room filled with gadgets, orbs, charts and dusty books. Myrtle's piano music is seeping through the walls and Edward sighs wearily.

On the observatory table there is an unearthly contraption of pipes, tubes and gaskets. There is an iron water tank and air pipes and a large steel outlet shaped like a trumpet sticking out of one end. This machine seems slightly too advanced for the age...but for now the incongruity is subtle.

Edward mumbles to himself as Myrtle's recital gets louder...

EDWARD (SOFTLY, TO HIMSELF)
Gently Myrtle, gently...

He prepares to turn a valve when suddenly Art enters....

ART
Dad, please tell her to stop making
that dreadful racket...

Edward panics when he sees Art and throws a tablecloth over the contraption...a poor attempt to hide it. Art is a little thrown...

ART (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

EDWARD
Nothing, nothing...

Art goes to peek under the tablecloth but Edward steps in his way.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Go and finish your homework.

ART
How can I when my stupid sister is
in the drawing room beating another
perfectly innocent piece of music
to death?

INT. DRAWING ROOM

Myrtle has her eyes closed as she plays. She is lost in the cavernous spaces of her imagination. Edward and Art enter.

EDWARD
Myrtle my dear...

Myrtle doesn't hear, still banging away...

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Myrtle....

She continues....Suddenly Art yells...

ART

Will you please shut...up!!!!

Myrtle stops in mid phrase. Silence. Slowly she opens her eyes. With great dignity she turns to Art and fixes him with a dispassionate stare.

ART (CONT'D)

We've had a complaint. From a deaf woman on Jupiter.

EDWARD

Myrtle...we do have to think about wear and tear on the piano.

She points to the sheet music.

MYRTLE

It says *fortissimo* you philistines.

She slams the lid of the piano and suddenly there is a corresponding loud bang from beneath their feet.

ART

Oh now look what you've done.

The room begins to vibrate. Another deep thud from somewhere in the cellar.

EDWARD (ANXIOUS)

Better hold on tight everyone!

Suddenly....*The gravity inside the room fails.*

Chaos.

Furniture, sheet music, parrot, clockwork monkey, anything that isn't nailed down begins to float through the air. Edward, Art and Myrtle begin to float around the room too, but instead of surprise there is only resignation and practicality.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Hang on to my leg Art, there's a dear...I'm heading for the stairs...

MYRTLE

Where's the key to the cellar?

Edward begins to fumble in his vest pocket and produces a key...which immediately slips out of his hand and begins to float in space. The three of them begin a slow, elegant pursuit of the key.

As they float, the curtains are freed of gravity too and lift up...to reveal a panoramic view of outer space through the window. The Earth and the Moon fill the window with blue/silver light...

EXT. OUTER SPACE

From outside, among the stars...we see the large Victorian house where Art, Edward and Myrtle live. The red brick mansion is suspended in orbit, beyond it the Milky Way stretches out into eternity. Saturn, Mars and Venus hang above the chimney tops.

Through the window we can see Art, Edward and Myrtle floating around their drawing room in pursuit of the key.

AN OPENING CAPTION... 'LARKLIGHT.'

A big musical flourish.

INT. LARKLIGHT CELLAR

A massive iron and steel complex of machinery is vibrating fit to explode. Pipes, valves, generators. A dozen brass orbs spin on invisible beds of gravity.

Edward has his sleeves rolled up and is floating upside down with his head inside the workings of the machine.

Art and Myrtle are floating around, snatching wrenches and screwdrivers from the air to hand to their father.

EDWARD

Ok...Ready?

A pause. Edward turns a valve with a jerk.

Suddenly all three of them fall to the floor of the cellar with a thud. A wrench hits Edward on the head. They all compose themselves. Myrtle primly brushes her hair from her sooty face.

MYRTLE

This, I'm afraid, is what happens when you buy cheap gravitational machines.

They all get to their feet, dust themselves off.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

For a few pounds more we could have bought a Waverley Rain Gravity Gorgon which is guaranteed for fifty years.

ART

Well we don't have a few pounds more do we.

Edward pulls on his jacket and touches the huge contraption with affection. He speaks softly.

EDWARD

This was your mother's. Sentimental value.

Art and Myrtle look chastened.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go and tidy up.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

The room is now back in order. The family are gathered at the dinner table.

A tin, steam-driven ROBOTIC SERVANT is chugging into the room carrying a silver service tray, covered by a silver lid. The robot is shaped like a wood burning stove and has a large tin can for a head. Smoke issues from the back as it almost reaches the table then stops. Myrtle sighs.

MYRTLE

You see. Buy cheap, buy twice.

Art sighs too and gives the tin servant a kick. It completes the journey to the table and drops the silver service tray on the table with a clatter.

As it turns and begins to chug out of the room...

EDWARD

Thank you...Hermes. Now...

He bows his head. Art hesitates and half bows his head. Myrtle bows her head but pulls a face at Art...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Let us give thanks for the food we
are about to eat.

He glances up at the portrait of Valerie on the wall...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

And let us remember...dear absent
friends.

They all murmur 'amen'. Edward lifts the lid from the tray
and reveals a shrivelled piece of overcooked pork. Edward
looks sheepish. Art jabs at the meat with a fork.

ART

Do we eat it or play hockey with
it?

EDWARD

Thank goodness the provision ship
is due tomorrow.

Edward begins to carve with great effort.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

By the way, the provision ship
won't be the only visitor we have
tomorrow. The Royal Xenological
Society is sending someone to visit
us. A Mr Webster.

Art and Myrtle are astonished.

MYRTLE

To visit us?

ART

Here?

EDWARD

Yes HERE.

MYRTLE

What on earth for?

Edward serves up some charred meat.

EDWARD

Perhaps someone in London has
picked up on one of my inventions.

The idea is obviously absurd to Art and Myrtle and they swap
looks.

INT. KITCHEN

Art and Myrtle are washing the dishes. The tin mechanical servant has obviously seized up with one mechanical hand in the dishwater. Art and Myrtle work around it.

Above their heads a most extraordinary sight. Four plump pink pigs are hovering near the ceiling, their wings beating as fast as hummingbirds.

As Art and Myrtle deal with each plate, they take off the scraps and toss them to the Hover-Pigs, which munch them up noisily. Of course Art and Myrtle don't pay the slightest bit of attention to the hover pigs, except to feed them their scraps..

Myrtle sighs.

MYRTLE

I wonder if he'll bring newspapers.

ART

Who?

MYRTLE

This mysterious Mr Webster.

The robot grinds into life for a few seconds then stops again.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

I want to read about the Great Exhibition. It opens in ten days. There might even be photos of the great Crystal Palace.

Myrtle does a theatrical twirl..

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Just think of it Art. A huge Palace made of glass. There'll be music and ballet...

Art is dreaming too...

ART

And inventions. Contraptions. The most advanced machines ever made from all over the solar system.

MYRTLE

It isn't fair Arthur. I've never been to a great exhibition. Never been to London...

She sits...

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Never even been to Earth. I'm Seventeen for goodness sake.

ART

Yes. And I'm fifteen.

Art sighs and flops his dishcloth down...

ART (CONT'D)

Today.

Myrtle doesn't react at first, then realizes what Art just said.

MYRTLE

It's your birthday?

Art gets up and leaves. The mechanical servant drops a dish which smashes. Myrtle goes after Art.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

Art is sitting in a large armchair which swamps him. He is staring up at the painting of Valerie, his mother. Myrtle enters.

MYRTLE

Art, I'm sorry.

ART

Mum would have remembered.

Myrtle squeezes into the armchair beside him, a child again for Art's sake. She stares at the painting too.

MYRTLE

She would have made a big cake.

ART

Chocolate probably.

MYRTLE

And there would have been pass-the-parcel.

ART

Bobbing for the apple.

MYRTLE

And she would have made us all
dress for dinner.

ART

And there would have been presents.

Silence. Myrtle is filled with guilt. She reaches into the
pocket of her pinafore dress.

She produces a beautiful golden locket on a gold chain. It
glistens in the firelight.

ART (CONT'D)

Don't be silly Myrtle.

MYRTLE

I'm sure she left it for both of
us. I've had my turn. It's your
turn.

ART

I couldn't. You love it so much...

Myrtle puts the chain around Art's neck.

MYRTLE

Happy birthday Arthur.

After a moment he opens the front casing and we see an
animated picture of Valerie. The picture is almost like a
cross between an oil painting and a movie. Inside the locket
Valerie smiles and speaks softly....

VALERIE

*You be good my children. Take care
of your father. Take care of each
other.*

The smile on Valerie's face fades and the picture fades. Art
closes the locket.

ART

How many messages are there?

MYRTLE

I'm not sure. More than twenty.
Sometimes she says exactly what you
need to hear.

Suddenly the door to the drawing room is kicked open. A gigantic box tied with a crimson bow....Edward carrying a huge weight into the room.

Art and Myrtle scramble from their seat as Edward lays the box on the floor.

ART

What the blazes is that?

EDWARD

It's a present. I made it myself.
Took me half the year.

A pause.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Happy birthday Arthur.

Art begins to tear away the wrapping and we see the strange contraption which Edward was building in the observatory.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I'm afraid as usual it's nothing practical or profitable. Just a bit of fun.

Edward begins to turn a handle and adjust a valve on the contraption...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

But it is rather beautiful.
Watch....

The machine purrs gently and then from the trumpet a beautiful colored bubble emerges and drifts towards the ceiling. Another then another bubble is blown. They reflect the lamplight and drift around the room.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Pretty aren't they.

Art and Myrtle stare at the bubbles with awe.

MYRTLE

Dad...it's...beautiful.

A bubble bursts on her hair.

EDWARD

Shall we sing?

He clears his throat and begins to sing 'Happy Birthday.' After the first few words, Art and Myrtle join in. The bubbles blow all around them....

EXT. LARKLIGHT

From outside the window, among the stars, we see the family arm-in-arm, singing, with the painting of Valerie visible...

Then a discordant note. The outer edge of a large Aether ship (a spaceship with the aesthetic of a steam train) enters the frame. We only glimpse the ship but we see that it's bulky, dark, woven around with white webbing.

A window is wiped inside the ship. A pair of eyes are peering in at the happy family inside Larklight as they sing...

The white webbing from around the Aether ship begins to drift through space towards larklight.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM, NEXT MORNING

Art is asleep under the covers. The Earth is visible through his open curtains. A strange Ionian hamster nibbles on a carrot.

Then we see the edge of the sun begin to appear from behind the Earth. A bright shaft of light shines into Art's room. As it does, the dark Aether ship from the night before also glides into view. It is surrounded by what looks like thick white fog.

Suddenly Myrtle bursts in.

MYRTLE

Art! Come on! Mr Webster is about to board.

Art emerges from under the blankets.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Dad said to wear something smart.

Art looks out of the window and sees that the lower floors of larklight are now bound up in white webbing. Art looks puzzled.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

Edward, Art and Myrtle are standing in line waiting for the door to be knocked. Edward is obviously nervous. He straightens his tie, smooths Art's hair. The mechanical tin servant is waiting too.

Then there is a heavy knock on the door. Edward gives the tin servant a gentle kick. There is a single jet of steam but no movement. Myrtle sighs.

Edward gestures for Art to go to the door instead. Art pulls the door open and sees blackness. The mysterious ship hovers in the distance. Then a single iron leg appears at Art's foot. Then another.

Suddenly a giant iron spider (MR WEBSTER) wearing a neat black bowler hat, lifts itself into full frame.

Art leaps backwards. Myrtle gasps.

EDWARD

Dear...Lord.

The spider uses one of its wire haired legs to lift its hat in greeting. He speaks in a gruff, London accent.

MR WEBSTER

Edward Mumby?

EDWARD

Who are you?

MR WEBSTER

My name...is Mr Webster.

The family step back in horror. Mr Webster stretches out a leg and flicks Edward's tie.

MR WEBSTER (CONT'D)

Why did the creator of the universe
pick such a feeble creature?

Art and Myrtle turn to each other, puzzled. Edward suddenly has steel in his voice, as if Mr Webster's words mean something to him.

EDWARD

What is your business here?

Mr Webster scuttles closer....

MR WEBSTER (CONT'D)
My business? (A chuckle)...why...my
business is the destruction of life
itself.

Mr Webster gestures out at the empty space through the open door. Suddenly a dozen giant spiders sweep into view and begin to invade the room.

MR WEBSTER (CONT'D)
Grab them!

EDWARD
Art! Myrtle! Run!!

One of the spiders grabs Edward and lifts him into the air. Art and Myrtle manage to scurry between the legs of two of them and bump heads.

Mr Webster hisses softly.

MR WEBSTER
Just web them....web them all...

ART
Dad, what's happening?

These giant spiders are ARACHNIDS. They begin to produce streams of silky white web which spin around the furniture and around the candlesticks. Art's leg becomes entangled in webbing and he falls to the floor. Myrtle grabs his arm and a barrage of webbing flies towards her.

Quick as a flash Art grabs a jar of marbles and tosses them in the air. The jar smashes and the marbles scatter. The iron-legged Arachnids begin to skid around on the marbles.

Meanwhile Mr Webster has lifted Edward into a cage of legs and is spinning him around like a bobbin into a cocoon of webbing. He yells at Art and Myrtle.

EDWARD
Run!! To the lifeboat!!

Myrtle grabs a candlestick and whacks one of the spiders around the head then they both head for the door.

INT. DARK LARKLIGHT CORRIDOR

Art and Myrtle are running for their lives.

MYRTLE

What about Dad?!

They slow and turn. Four giant arachnids come bundling around a corner.

ART

It's no use. We have to save ourselves.

They both run again.

INT. LIFEBOAT ROOM

Art and Myrtle race towards the lifeboat which is shaped like a barrel and is resting on a giant spring contraption. It looks dusty and neglected. Suddenly....

MR WEBSTER

Won't work you know.

They turn to see that Mr Webster is just outside the door. Myrtle hesitates to hitch her skirt to climb in.

ART

Will you stop dithering!

MYRTLE

Oh do shut up!

Mr Webster suddenly bursts through the door, followed by a dozen spiders. Art and Myrtle jump into the lifeboat through the hatch. Art slams the hatch closed and frantically scan the controls.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Do you remember anything dad taught us.

ART

Yes.

MYRTLE

What?

ART

I remember how to land.

Myrtle squeezes into the pilot's seat beside Art and finds a switch which says 'RELEASE'. She pulls it.

EXT. LARKLIGHT

From beyond larklight we see the lifeboat being fired into the endless darkness by a giant spring loaded catapult. As the barrel lifeboat shoots out into space, iron spiders tumble from the roof and go floating off into darkness.

INT. LIFEBOAT

Art and Myrtle are recovering from the sudden ejection. The stars glide by. The moon is a distant disc of light.

MYRTLE

Art, I know I usually tell you to shut up when you give a boring scientific explanation for everything but I'm going to make an exception. Tell me what's happening to us.

They are suddenly hit by a sudden jolt. They both grab their seats.

ART (CONT'D)

Well that was a meteorite.

MYRTLE

I mean the spiders you idiot.

Another meteorite hits the ship with a huge crash.

EXT. LIFEBOAT

From beside the moon we see the lifeboat being showered by meteorites, dazzlingly lit in the moonlight.

INT. LIFEBOAT

Art has gone into full boffin mode...

ART

They weren't actually spiders. The technical name for them is Arachnids. I read about them in my ancient history correspondence course. They call them the *First Ones* because they were the original life form in this galaxy.

(MORE)

ART (cont'd)
Their civilization was destroyed
millions of years ago when...

MYRTLE (INTERRUPTING)
Arthur.

ART
What?

She simply looks at him.

ART (CONT'D DEAD PAN)
You want me to stick to the point?

MYRTLE
It would be nice.

Art is silenced for a moment and fiddles with the controls.

ART
Well I suppose the point is, I have
no idea what happened. Why would a
bunch of Arachnids invade our
boring suburban house and kidnap
our father?

MYRTLE (SOFTLY)
And what did Mr Webster mean when
he asked why the 'creator of the
universe' had chosen dad? Chosen
him for what?

They are both silenced. Art turns to Myrtle and sees that for
the first time Myrtle looks genuinely upset.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)
Art...we're orphans.

Art stops and thinks.

ART
Not necessarily. They might have
taken him alive. Spiders
sometimes...

He hesitates.

ART (CONT'D)
...store their prey alive to eat
them later.

A pause.

MYRTLE

That's a huge comfort. Thanks.

Art goes back to his controls. He sees that Myrtle is stifling a sob. He finally reaches out to her and speaks softly.

ART

Cheer up. We still have each other.

Myrtle peers out of the porthole at the stars.

MYRTLE

Yes. Just us. And a billion miles of empty space.

Art rallies....

ART

Myrtle, if dad is alive...we'll find him.

Myrtle wipes her eyes.

ART (CONT'D)

But first we have to land this thing. I wonder what this lever does.

Art tries pulling the lever. They are immediately turned upside down and begin to spin. They both yell.

EXT. LIFEBOAT

We see a close shot of the moon's surface, shining silver in the sunlight. Then the lifeboat spins towards the surface. After a moment it crashes on the border line where the dark and light side of the moon meet.

EXT. MOON'S SURFACE

Art and Myrtle clamber out of the lifeboat into the eerie silver light. The weak gravity allows them to move with huge steps and slow graceful bounds into the air. Myrtle holds her nose.

MYRTLE

So dusty. Smells like grandma's house.

Art giggles. He takes a giant leap across the boundary between the light side and the dark side. He laughs.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Oh Arthur, do grow up.

He spins in the air and then lands heavily beside Myrtle.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

What is the Capital of the moon?

Art sighs wearily at his sister's stupidity.

ART

Port George of course.

MYRTLE

So we head for Port George and find the British Embassy.

Art looks all around and studies a distant mountain.

ART

If my memory of lunar geography serves...and I *did* get an A while you only got a C...*that* is Mount Ghastly.

MYRTLE

So?

ART

So we're not far from where Captain Frobisher made his first moon landing in 1678.

Myrtle growls with impatience.

EXT. MOON SURFACE

Art and Myrtle are walking, kicking up clouds of moon dust.

ART

Wait. I've got an idea.

Art takes the locket from inside his shirt and opens it.

MYRTLE

It's not a bloody compass Arthur.

ART

Please don't let your language
deteriorate just because we're in a
jam. We are British.

Myrtle studies Art's face as he stares into the locket. We
see Valerie's face become animated inside the locket.

VALERIE

*Always follow the path that your
heart leads you down.*

Art thinks hard. Myrtle shakes dust from her shoe.

MYRTLE

She says that one a lot.

Art puts the locket back into his shirt...then looks puzzled.
He points at the horizon.

ART

I think she means we go that way.

MYRTLE

Why?

ART

I don't know. But my heart says
follow that path.

Art sets off and Myrtle hesitates for a moment before
following, puzzled. They reach the top of the hill and look
down across a long silver plain. They stop in their tracks.

ART (CONT'D)

What are they?

Stretched out before them there is row upon row of large
white jars, ten feet high. Some are intact, others are
shattered. Through the translucent exteriors shadowy shapes
of skeletons are visible.

MYRTLE

Looks like a giant larder.

Suddenly, from behind them, the flapping of giant wings,
tentacles, legs...Myrtle is grabbed by a gigantic moth which
lifts her off and away into the air. Myrtle screams and Art
begins to give chase...

EXT. POTTER MOTH JARS

Art is running among the jars, following the moth which has picked up Myrtle. We see the moth drop Myrtle into one of the jars. Then another silent moth grabs Art and lifts him into the air. We rise with him as he yells, struggles and kicks.

INT. POTTER MOTH JAR

Art is dropped into the jar. As he lands a long moth-proboscis uncurls and stings Art in the arm. He struggles to remain conscious and through blurred vision sees that he is in the company of a skeleton. After a few seconds he falls into a deep sleep.

Suddenly there is a loud report of gun fire. Then a large crack begins to appear in the side of the jar. The jar cracks open to reveal the moonscape outside.

Framed by the cracking jar, in a burst of silver light, we see the dashing figure of CAPTAIN JACK HAVOC, smoke issuing from his pistols.

Jack Havoc has a gun in each hand. He has high boots, a wide-awake hat and has three swords and a dagger hanging from his belt. He's around twenty years old, handsome and strong.

Suddenly Art feels himself being grabbed by tentacles from behind. He wakes and turns to see YARG and SQUIDLEY, AKA the tentacle twins.

Art screams in terror. Yarg and Squidley resemble sea anemones with large eyes and long tentacles, which they use to lift Art to his feet. He struggles against them at first but they whisper...

YARG

Don't fight...

SQUIDLEY

...against us, Earthlet, we're...

YARG

...here to save you.

(Yarg and Squidley are one creature split into two, which is why they always finish each other's sentences.)

Art sees Jack fire two pistols at a swooping moth, bringing it down in a flurry of wings and legs. Art allows himself to be helped to his feet.

Suddenly a giant Ionian in a Buccaneer hat has scrambled onto the scene and comes close to Art. This is MUNKULUS.

MUNKULUS

Did they sting you boy?

ART

Yes. I think....

MUNKULUS

Captain Jack! Bring rum!

Captain Jack clambers over the dead moth, firing shots as he goes. The moths have begun to swarm above their heads. Jack comes to Art and produces a rum bottle. He holds it to Art's lips...

JACK

Drink.

ART

I'm too young for strong liquor.

Jack and Munkulus laugh.

JACK

Well you're about to do some growing up.

Art spits out the rum and gasps.

MUNKULUS

Rum cures the moth venom. Drink.

A moth swoops and Munkulus slashes at it with a sword. Art gulps down some rum.

JACK

OK. To the ship!!

ART

No! Wait!! They took my sister.

More moths are swooping, with Munkulus and Jack swiping at them with swords. Jack turns to Yarg and Squidley...

JACK

Boys, do you feel another human?

The twins begin to twirl their tentacles in the air. Finally Yarg and Squidley point into the distance...

YARG

Over...

SQUIDLEY

...there. Follow.

INT. POTTER MOTH JAR

Myrtle is unconscious inside the jar. We hear gunfire then the jar cracks. As it shatters, Jack and Munkulus step up to her. Jack takes her in his arms and begins to pour rum down her throat. She coughs, chokes, opens her eyes. Art is nearby.

MYRTLE

Who...on earth are you?

JACK

We're not on Earth my lovely.

Myrtle takes in Jack's appearance and recoils in horror.

MYRTLE

Take your filthy hands off me.

ART

Oh Myrtle. Don't be Myrtle.

MYRTLE

I demand to see the British
Ambassador!

A moth swoops and Munkulus takes it out with a single shot. Myrtle sees the Tentacle twins for the first time and screams. Realizing the urgency, Jack sweeps Myrtle into his arms and is about to run with her. She screams again.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Put me down!!

A pause. Jack shrugs.

JACK

OK.

He drops her. The lack of gravity means she floats gently to the dust. Myrtle hisses at Art.

MYRTLE

Who are these...creatures?

Jack sweeps his hat from his head.

JACK

The name is Captain Jack Havoc.

Art and Myrtle gasp.

ART/MYRTLE

Jack Havoc!!?

Jack is peering into Myrtle's eyes, a smile on his face.

JACK

I may not be quite in your social
class your ladyship, but right now
I'm all you've got.

He raises his pistol.

JACK (CONT'D)

To the Sophronia!

EXT. MOON, SOPHRONIA

A large rusted aether ship built for cargo is parked on the moon dust and we read the name 'Sophronia'. We see that a dozen moths are circling the ship.

INT. SOPHRONIA

Inside the ship, the rest of the Sophronia crew are firing cannonballs at the Potter moths who are gathering above. We are introduced to the crew in the heat of battle.

SSILLISSA is a pretty blue lizard in baggy pirate attire.

NIPPER is a land-crab with his hat at a jaunty angle.

GRINDLE is a hobgoblin who is emitting a stream of Jovian curses as he loads another cannonball.

Ssillissa peers out through the periscope.

SSILLISSA

Where the blazes is Jack?

NIPPER

It'll take more than a few moths to stop Jack.

EXT. MOON/SOPHRONIA

Jack, Art, Myrtle and the others are running and firing and slashing at the moths as they approach the ship. Jack tosses Art a sword and he makes good use of it. Myrtle stands back-to-back with Art and uses her fists.

As they fight the moths they snatch a conversation....

MYRTLE

Art, you do realize we are now in the company of the most notorious pirate in the entire galaxy!

A moth grabs Myrtle and almost takes her but Jack fires a single shot which brings the moth down, saving Myrtle's life. Myrtle peers at Jack, who raises his hat and smiles.

INT. SOPHRONIA

Jack, Art, Myrtle and the others slide down the entry chute in a tangle of limbs. Ssillissa immediately makes her way towards the engine room but stops when she sees Art and Myrtle...

SSILLISSA

What are they?

JACK

Booty! Now fire the engines...

Ssillissa goes behind a semi transparent veil of viscous liquid which separates the engine room from the rest of the ship. Suddenly there are sparks and vivid colors lighting the bridge...

EXT. MOON/SOPHRONIA

Through a cloud of giant moths, the Sophronia begins to take off. Moon dust is kicked up all around.

INT. SOPHRONIA

As the business of take off continues, we get to see the inside of the Sophronia in more detail.

It is a wooden cavern with coiled ropes, barrels, lanterns, ladders, crates, chicken coops with live chickens, cannons, swords, ramrods. All is lit by the beautiful, swirling light which comes from the engine room, where Ssillissa is a silhouette, hard at work.

JACK

Steady as she goes my beauties.
Keep an eye out for those Royal
Navy scum.

Myrtle and Art are just gathering their wits.

MYRTLE

I will thank you not to refer to
Her Majesty's Royal Navy as scum!

JACK (LAUGHING)

I don't give a damn about your
Majesty or her stinking fleet,
Miss.

Myrtle stands her ground.

MYRTLE

I demand you take us to the British
Embassy in Port Jones.

ART

Port George.

MYRTLE

Be quiet Arthur.

Jack has begun to wander towards Myrtle, his eyes twinkling,
the crew smirking.

JACK

Now Miss...?

He's close...

MYRTLE

Mumby.

JACK

There's only room for one Captain
on any ship. And on this ship the
Captain is me.

Jack's stare seems to still Myrtle's heart. From now on the
physical attraction should be obvious but to begin with they
also clash, bicker and test each other out.

JACK (CONT'D)
What's your name?

MYRTLE (SOFTLY)
Myrtle. My name is Myrtle.

He takes her hand.

JACK
Pleased to make your acquaintance
Myrtle.

She removes her hand.

JACK (CONT'D)
You're from Earth?

MYRTLE (PRIMLY)
I've actually never been.

JACK
You have the bloom of soft Earth
sunshine on your cheeks.

MYRTLE (MELTING A LITTLE)
I think it might be moon dust.

Art clears his throat and Myrtle comes to herself. Jack looks at them both.

JACK
Now I've saved your lives, why
don't I show you around my humble
little ship?

After a moment Jack takes Myrtle's hand and Art follows.

INT. SOPHRONIA GALLEY

The ship is cramped and dark, with lots of cabins and trap doors. They step through an iron door studded with brass rivets and into a corridor.

Jack has produced his bottle of rum from inside his jacket.

JACK
Drink anyone?

ART
We're...too young.

Myrtle takes the comment personally and grabs the bottle.

MYRTLE

He's too young. I'm not.

Jack grins. Myrtle takes a small sip and reacts with a hoarse cough.

JACK

So how come you two were wandering around on the moon in Potter moth country?

He holds open a door.

MYRTLE

Our lifeboat crash landed.

Myrtle gets her dress caught on a loose rivet. Jack goes to release it...

JACK

Lifeboat from which ship?

Myrtle releases her own dress.

ART

We weren't on a ship. We were escaping from our home.

JACK

A house-fire?

ART

No, Arachnids.

Jack stops in his tracks.

JACK

Now why would Arachnids go invading someone's home?

ART

We...don't know.

INT. CORRIDOR

As they walk towards the sleeping quarters, Jack grabs some blankets from a small store room.

JACK

As brother and sister you won't mind sharing.

MYRTLE

Well actually we do.

Jack dumps a blanket in Myrtle's arms.

JACK

Well actually, tough.

He walks on.

JACK (CONT'D)

So where was your home?

ART

We live in a dreary outer orbit suburb of Earth.

MYRTLE

It's not dreary it's...respectable. Mostly retired bankers. Very low crime.

JACK

Until the spiders came.

Jack opens the door to a tiny cabin and offers them inside.

INT. ART AND MYRTLE'S CABIN

The cabin is small with two hammocks. Myrtle sniffs the air with disgust, runs her finger through the dust of a porthole. Jack instinctively peers out the window to check for danger.

ART

So do you know about Arachnids?

JACK

Some.

ART

I read they live on reservations around Saturn. Down-cast sort of creatures. Always dreaming of their lost galaxy.

JACK

Yeah well don't believe what you read.

Jack looks pointedly at Myrtle.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sometimes the papers say what's bad
is good and what's good is bad.

Myrtle begins to unfold her blanket but speaks primly.

MYRTLE

Not the London Times.

Art and Myrtle are now making up their hammock beds with the
efficiency of children with no mother.

JACK

Well you can forget your London
Times. Pirates go to parts of the
Universe others don't dare venture.
So I know the Arachnids are
restless.

ART

Restless?

JACK

Getting arsey.

MYRTLE (PRIM)

What a charming word.

JACK

Sorry. Must be something to do with
my class.

MYRTLE (DEFIANT)

Must be.

JACK

There's one word I'm sure we both
understand. Snob.

MYRTLE

Here's another. Cut-throat.

JACK

That's two words.

Art steps in...

ART

Please...tell us what you know
about the Arachnids.

JACK
They've got a new leader. A Mr
Webster.

Art and Myrtle react. Jack sees it.

JACK (CONT'D)
So it was Mr Webster himself who
came to your house.

Myrtle slaps dust from her bedding.

MYRTLE
Art, I'm really not sure we should
be sharing any of this information
with a pirate. He might use it
against the empire.

JACK (SHARPLY)
Or I might use it to help you.

Jack and Myrtle are face to face. Art again steps in.

ART
Mr Webster took our father.

JACK
Was your father an important man?

MYRTLE
He was important to us.

Jack glimpses a softer side of Myrtle.

ART
Where do Arachnids take people?

JACK
Saturn. The death star.

Art jumps into his hammock.

ART
Then that's where we shall have to
go.

Jack peers at Art, smiles at his naive courage.

JACK
Not on my ship you won't.

He turns to leave.

MYRTLE

So where are we going... 'Captain'?

Jack stops in the doorway and smiles.

JACK

To the planet of...Venus.

Art and Myrtle both react with trepidation.

EXT. OF SOPHRONIA FLYING THROUGH SPACE

We see the ship against the beautiful spread of the Milky Way. We hear Myrtle in OOV.

MYRTLE (OOV)

Dear diary. It is now day two of our frightful ordeal. Not only are we orphans we are now pirates.

INT. QUARTERS

Myrtle is lying on the top bunk, writing in her journal. Art is asleep in the bottom bunk, snoring lightly.

MYRTLE (OOV)

We are held captive by the famous pirate Jack Havoc, the brigand who terrorizes Her Majesties shipping and even stoops to ransacking hospital ships...

Art snores loudly. Myrtle hisses at him.

MYRTLE

Art will you shut up!

Art wakes with a start.

ART

Mother?

A pause. He realizes where he is and looks around.

ART (CONT'D)

What's wrong? Can't you sleep?

MYRTLE

Of course I can't sleep.

Art gets out of bed.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

You heard what that horrible pirate said. He's taking us to Venus. No human has set foot on Venus since the great Venutian plague.

Art goes to the window and peers out at the stars.

ART

By the looks of the stars we're on the old venus road.

He looks back at Myrtle, obviously troubled. After a moment he takes the locket from his pocket and contemplates it...

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Medical supplies! He attacks ships carrying medical supplies.

Art has flicked open the locket. Valerie's face smiles out at him. Myrtle can't help but come close to listen...The picture becomes animated...

VALERIE

Take calmly what fate throws in your path for it was always inevitable that this would be your destiny.

Myrtle looks a little puzzled.

MYRTLE

I've never heard that one before.

Suddenly the ship banks sharply and Myrtle tumbles from the bunk onto the floor. The ship is now at a crazy angle, heading downwards.

EXT. SOPHRONIA

We see the Sophronia making an approach to the surface of the planet Venus. Lush forests of blue/green leaved trees stretch out across the surface. Mighty rivers flow into gigantic foaming waterfalls.

Herds of wild animals sweep across the open plains. Here and there church steeples rise from abandoned villages.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE SOPHRONIA

All the crew are making final preparations for landing on the planet. There is frantic activity with the Tentacle Twins busy with their gears and levers.

Ssillissa is operating the engines, Mr Munkulus is on the periscope. Grindle and Nipper are winding ropes. Jack is consulting a chart and giving orders.

JACK

Mr Munkulus look for the church steeple with an iron cockerel for a weather vein.

Art and Myrtle burst in and both speak at the same time..

MYRTLE

Mr Havoc, we absolutely insist...

ART

Jack, we couldn't help noticing through the window that...

JACK

One at a time. Please....

Jack is busy with a looking-glass mirror and a small tooth pick, preparing his appearance as if for an important meeting. Myrtle is at his shoulder.

MYRTLE

Mr Havoc. We appear to be landing on Venus.

JACK

That is correct.

MYRTLE

Venus has been a quarantined planet for seven years.

JACK

Eight.

ART

Venus Tree Sickness is fatal to all humans.

Jack lays down his looking glass and smiles.

JACK
That's why the navy won't follow us
here.

ART
But...

MYRTLE
...we'll die.

ART
We'll turn into trees.

MYRTLE
It was in all the....

He peers at her.

JACK
Papers?

She nods gently. The ship hits the surface of Venus with a gentle thud. Through the window we glimpse the outline of a church steeple, overgrown with vines.

JACK (CONT'D)
Lower the ladders boys.

EXT. VENUS SURFACE

We see the Sophronia landed on the edge of a beautiful English country village which has been overgrown by eight years' worth of unattended vegetation.

Groves of lush trees grow in lines. The church steeple dominates the horizon. A small stream babbles nearby. First Art and then Myrtle walk down the steps of the Sophronia with their hands above their heads. Then comes Jack, pointing a pistol at their backs, followed by the rest of the crew.

Myrtle is shaking with rage.

MYRTLE
He's making us walk the plank onto
a poisoned planet.

Art half turns.

ART
Well he appears to be walking the
plank with us.

They reach the bottom of the ladder. Jack smiles and puts his pistol back into its holster.

Myrtle covers her mouth and nose with her hand. Jack picks up a rock and throws it. A couple of Venusian bushes uproot themselves and scurry away.

JACK

Myrtle you have nothing to worry about here. This planet is perfectly safe.

He picks a wild rose and sniffs it. The rose makes a soft, melodic noise like music.

JACK (CONT'D)

The Changeling trees that caused the plague only pollinate once every fifty years.

MYRTLE

How do you know?

JACK

Because I was born here....

He turns, takes in the beauty of his surroundings...

JACK (CONT'D)

This is my home.

They peer at him but he turns his attention to the crew.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ok Ssillissa, Mr Munkulus, set up camp.

MUNKULUS

Aye, aye Captain.

SSILLISSA

Where are you going?

JACK

I'm going to take these two humans for a history lesson.

He beckons Myrtle forward.

SSILLISSA

Shall I come and gather mushrooms with you Jack?

JACK

No, no, you take some time and rest
Ssillissa...You deserve it.

*For the first time we notice that Ssillissa is a little upset
that Jack is paying attention to Myrtle.*

EXT. VENUSIAN VILLAGE

A perfect picture book English village is hidden by
overgrowth. Jack cuts away at some vines to reveal the door
of a traditional English confectioners. Art and Myrtle are
following Jack with wonder...

JACK

Look! Old Mr Roper's sweetshop.

Jack puts his nose to the glass panel of the door.

JACK (CONT'D)

Gob stoppers. He's still got Gob
stoppers!

ART

This is....amazing.

Jack races across the street and tears away some more vine
branches. He reveals a traditional barber's shop. *There is
also a large oak tree growing through the middle of the tiled
floor and crashing through the ceiling.*

JACK

Shorty McFee. His clipper had a
tooth missing.

Art and Myrtle come to peer through the window too. Jack
speaks softly to the window.

JACK (CONT'D SOFTLY)

Hello Mr McFee.

Jack turns away and sits down on the kerb, obviously upset.
Art and Myrtle sit beside him.

JACK (CONT'D)

He didn't want to leave his shop,
you see. And over there the
Reverend Oates is growing up into
the steeple. He wanted it that
way.

A pause.

ART
The whole village...

MYRTLE
Turned into trees.

Jack looks away to hide his eyes.

JACK
We didn't know what was happening.
It was before the Royal Xenological
Society boffins came and did their
tests.

A pause.

JACK (CONT'D)
Everyone thought it was just a
touch of flu.

A pause.

JACK (CONT'D)
People just...slowed down. Got
tired. Not wanting to move. They'd
stand for hours staring at the sun.
Their speech slowed down. One word
would last an hour.

Myrtle is warming to Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
Their skin got silver grey. Hard.
Then they'd find a nice spot in the
garden or in a field. They'd curl
their toes into the soil like
roots. And never moved again.

Jack gets to his feet. He smiles shyly.

JACK (CONT'D)
Do you want to meet my family?

EXT. BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH COTTAGE

The cottage is overgrown but the thatched roof and oak gables
still show us that the place was a rural idyll.

Jack leads Art and Myrtle into the overgrown garden. They
stare with wonder at two huge trees growing side by side,
their branches entangled, birds singing among the leaves. A
third smaller tree is nearby.

JACK

That little one is my brother Sid.
He was first to go in our family.
We took him into the garden. I
remember my mom's hand was already
scratchy and hard.

Jack steps forward. Art is about to step forward too but
Myrtle stops him out of sensitivity.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hello Sid. Mom. Hello Dad.

He chokes back emotion. A breeze blows and the leaves in the
trees rustle sublimely. The bird song swells.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I haven't had a lot
luck. But I'm...still searching for
the cure. I'm getting close I
think.

He steps forward and lays a hand on both trunks, feels a
warmth inside.

JACK (CONT'D SOFTLY)

I'll get you out of there some day.
I promise.

Art and Myrtle are listening intently. Finally Jack turns
and smiles then speaks again to the trees.

JACK (CONT'D)

I picked up two humans. Arthur and
Myrtle. I know how you like to meet
new people.

After a moment Myrtle curtseys.

MYRTLE

Pleased to meet you.

Arthur, embarrassed, does a little bow.

ART

You all look...very handsome.

Jack giggles. Art whispers...

ART (CONT'D)

Can they hear us?

JACK
They can feel us. Somewhere.

MYRTLE
'A green thought in a green shade'.

JACK
What's that?

MYRTLE
From a poem. By Andrew Marvell.

JACK
That's very pretty.

MYRTLE
Shall we sit in their shade for a
while?

Jack turns to Myrtle, appreciates the gesture. They sit.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)
So no one survived.

JACK
Everyone survived.

Jack nods sadly.

JACK (CONT'D)
They survived as trees. The entire
colony. Except for me.

MYRTLE
What's special about you?

JACK
That's what the Royal Xenological
society wanted to know.

Jack begins to draw shapes in the dust with a twig.

JACK (CONT'D)
When news about the plague reached
Earth they sent rescue ships. By
the time they got here I was the
only one left.

He looks up at the trees.

JACK (CONT'D)
I have some kind of immunity.
Chance in a million.

MYRTLE
So you were lucky.

Jack looks to the ground.

JACK
Is this lucky?

ART
But they took you to Earth.

JACK
In a medical ship.

Myrtle studies him.

MYRTLE
Was Earth truly wonderful like it
is in the magazines?

He smiles at her. He draws a large circle in the dust with
his twig.

JACK
First time I saw Earth out of the
window of the ship it looked like a
big blue marble.

He stabs his twig into a point near the middle of the circle.

JACK (CONT'D)
And they told me I was being sent
to the rare diseases department of
the Royal Xenological Society.
Right in the heart of London.

The circle that Jack has drawn turns into the Earth seen as
if from a satellite. We hurtle towards Earth and find
ourselves among the rooftops of old London.

FLASHBACK - EXT. VICTORIAN LONDON STREET

The street is a classic vision of Dickensian London, except
for the presence of various Ionian, Martian and other alien
cart drivers, pedestrians and chimney sweeps. Smoke belches
from distant factories. Occasionally there is a flare from
the smoke stacks.

We hear the clank of a bell. An emergency vehicle rushing
through the crowded street, pulled by eight black horses
wearing studded armor. On the side we glimpse the words
'ALIENS IN TRANSIT'.

We hear Jack in OOV.

JACK (OOV)
They brought me from the docks like
I was a prisoner or something.

INT. ROYAL XENOLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE, DAY

A huge reception hall is lit by shafts of daylight. The place has the feel of a Victorian workhouse. The walls are lined with oil paintings of grave looking professors. The place is lit by a candle chandelier.

Suddenly two large doors open. Two guards in blue uniforms step through the door wearing protective masks which resemble World War One gas masks, with huge eye holes.

They lead Jack into the hall and he looks all around, petrified.

JACK (OOV)
The place they took me to felt like
a prison too.

INT. LECTURE HALL

A large Victorian lecture hall is filled with learned looking gentlemen. The gloom is lit by shafts of light. An elderly and cruel looking Professor is addressing the meeting. Above his head is the crest of the Royal Xenological Society.

The Professor reaches for a gas mask.

PROFESSOR
Gentlemen if you would put on your
masks.

All the gentlemen pull on their horrible gas masks and Jack is ushered inside. He shivers with fear as he walks hesitantly into the room, confronted by a hundred gas masks. When the Professor speaks his voice is contorted by the mask.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
Well come on boy, come where we can
see you.

Jack walks into a shaft of light from the ceiling. The Lecturer comes to him and stands beside him. He uses a cane to point out the features he describes.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
As you see he is normal height.
Head dimensions normal...face not
unpleasant...

As the lecturer continues to talk, his voice dips and we hear Jack in OOV.

JACK (OOV)
They poked me and prodded me and
weighed me. And the food was
ghastly.

INT. XENOLOGICAL SOCIETY CANTEEN

Jack is carrying a tray of institution food towards a long table. Various aliens are eating there. *Among them we see Ssillissa and the Tentacle twins.*

JACK (OOV)
But I made some good friends...

Jack dares to sit beside Ssillissa and she smiles.

INT. BARRED ROOM

Jack is sitting in a room which is little more than a cell. He is reading a book, looking desolate. There is a knock at the door.

JACK (OOV)
And there was one particular
Professor who was always kind to
me.

The door opens and DOCTOR PTARMIGAN steps in with a pile of books in his hands. Ptarmigan is mid thirties, scatter-brained. Jack smiles.

JACK (CONT'D OOV)
His name was Doctor Ptarmigan.

Doctor Ptarmigan lays the pile of books down on Jack's desk.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
I...stole them from the library.
Action adventures mostly. Some
worthy stuff about exploration.

Jack picks up the first book from the pile.

JACK
'Understanding the Arachnids.'

Doctor Ptarmigan looks bashful.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
That's...one I wrote myself. Many years ago. You can ignore that one if you want. Bit of an obsession of mine.

Art nods and glances at Doctor Ptarmigan's pockets as if to prompt him.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
Ah yes. Almost forgot. Biscuits.

From his pocket he produces some biscuits. He hands them to Jack, smiles and leaves.

INT. SMALL REST AREA, GYMNASIUM

A large gymnasium is equipped with Victorian equipment, including a vaulting horse, ceiling ropes, medicine balls and mats. A vicious gym teacher is putting Jack and a group of aliens through their paces.

JACK (OOV)
Then one day, after I'd been there three years, Doctor Ptarmigan saved my life.

Doctor Ptarmigan comes bursting into the gym class and hesitates at the door. He urgently calls over to Jack, who glances at the teacher then makes his way towards the door.

INT. DESERTED GYM CHANGING ROOM

Doctor Ptarmigan is pacing the floor.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
They call it the physical explorative option.

JACK
What does that mean?

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
It means they've grown impatient. All the specimens here whose condition they can't explain...

Jack begins to twig...

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
...The mystery cases. They want
them solved. They want to...open
them up for examination.

Doctor Ptarmigan looks grave.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
Look Jack I'm telling you because
you're the only human on the list.

A young teacher walks by and greets the doctor who falls
silent and nods back. After he has passed.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
You have to get out of here Jack.
Tonight.

JACK
But if I go they'll know someone
warned me.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
Don't worry about me. I've managed
to get myself on board an
exploration mission.

He suddenly looks quietly delighted.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
I'm doing a research study for the
Early Universe Society. Onthe
Arachnids.

Jack smiles at Doctor Ptarmigan's obvious delight.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
So we'll both be escaping.

They hug. Doctor Ptarmigan wants no fuss and busies himself
searching his pockets.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
I've managed to get you these.

He produces a bunch of keys.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
They'll get you through reception
and out into the street. After
that I'm afraid you're on your own.

A pause. Jack takes the keys.

INT. LARGE HALF LIT LIBRARY/RECORDS OFFICE

The Royal Xenological Society is lit by moonlight filtering through the glass dome on its roof. We see Jack walking stealthily between the vast lines of dusty books, his moon shadow falling across a section heading marked 'Arboreal and vegetative diseases'.

We hear Jack in voice over.

JACK (OOV)

That night I used Doctor
Ptarmigans' keys to get into the
library.

We see Jack dropping two, three then four heavy text books into a sack.

JACK (CONT'D OOV)

I took every book I could find
about tree sickness. And then...

A door to the library opens. A shaft of light, a jangling of keys...

JACK (CONT'D OOV)

I ran for it.

INT. CORRIDOR

A close up shot of Jack's anxious face as he runs hell for leather down a corridor.

JACK (OOV)

But I couldn't leave my friends
behind.

We pull wide to reveal Ssillissa and the Tentacle twins running with him as best they can. Jack has the stolen books in his sack. The twins are slow and Jack has to wait for them as he unlocks a barred door with his keys.

Then at the end of the corridor they see a member of staff who yells.

STAFF MEMBER

Oi!! What are you lot doing?!!

Jack and the others begin to run, The tentacle twins roll down the corridor like two furry balls and burst through a door into the street.

EXT. DANGEROUS LOOKING LONDON STREET, NIGHT

The rollicking street scene is lit by flares and the lights from distant chemical reactions.

Jack, Ssillissa and the twins are trying to make themselves look tough as they walk through the crowds of vicious looking sailors from every planet imaginable. In the near distance we see the masts of Aether ships. We hear Jack in voice-over.

JACK (OOV)

We made our way to the docks. We needed to get away from Earth fast.

EXT. DOCKSIDE

All kinds of Aether ships, big and small are docked. Sailors and crewmen are drinking and talking on the dockside. They spot a ship which appears to be unattended. They read the name on the rusted hull. It is the Sophronia.

EXT. DECK OF THE SOPHRONIA IN EARTH DOCK

We see Mr Munkulus sitting forlorn on the deck, knotting rope. Beside him is Grindle, who is sobbing quietly. Then they both look up suddenly, hearing a noise. Munkulus peers into the shadows. We hear Jack in OOV.

JACK (OOV)

As luck would have it, we found Mr Munkulus.

Munkulus gets to his feet, peers across the deck suspiciously...

JACK (CONT'D OOV)

He'd been piloting the Sophronia for twenty years as a cargo vessel. He loved the ship like a mother. But he'd been ordered to take the Sophronia on its final journey to the scrapyards.

Munkulus sees Jack approaching from the shadows...

JACK (CONT'D OOV)

Our good fortune had led us to
someone who wanted a way out just
as much as we did...

INT. SOPHRONIA

Munkulus is brewing tea on the Sophronia's old stove. Grindle is preparing the cups. The ship looks more derelict than the ship we've seen, obviously before renovations. Jack, Ssillissa and the twins are huddled by a coal stove. Munkulus hands Jack a mug of tea.

MUNKULUS

So how do I know you're not
contagious?

JACK

We were never contagious. They
just wanted to keep us as
specimens.

Munkulus tips away the dregs of his tea and strokes some pipework on his beloved ship.

GRINDLE (CONT'D)

Lick of paint. Maybe a few rivets
here and there. They've got no
right to break her up.

Jack nods at Munkulus. Grindle eyes his potential new crew mates suspiciously.

MUNKULUS

Anyway it's all academic...We can't
just fly away. We don't have a
registered engineer versed in the
mystery of the Chemical wedding.

JACK

True.

He smiles and turns to Ssillissa.

JACK (CONT'D)

But we do have Ssillissa.

She steps forward. Munkulus studies her.

MUNKULUS

She knows the mystery of space
travel?

JACK

Her species know the chemical wedding process same as we know breathing.

SSILLISSA

Not wishing to sound immodest Mr Munkulus, but I could get this ship out of here faster than a Neptunian bat out of Mercurian hell.

A pause. Munkulus smiles.

EXT. LONDON DOCKS, DAWN

Among a thousand ships of all shapes and sizes, we see the engines of the Sophronia begin to glow. The ship rises into the sky. The Sophronia looks magnificent as it hovers over the skyline, with Big Ben chiming.

JACK (CONT'D OOV)

We've all been together ever since, running fast and loose across the universe.

In a blue flash, the Sophronia makes for outer space....

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. JACK'S GARDEN ON VENUS

The birds are still singing. Jack is digging the earth with his twig as he remembers. Myrtle and Art are astonished.

MYRTLE

So why did you become...a famous pirate?

Jack chuckles and throws his twig away.

JACK

The Royal Xenological Society didn't like me stealing their books. So they put a bounty on my head.

Art has had a realization.

ART

And the attack on the Alabaster.
The medical supplies!

(MORE)

ART (cont'd)
You were looking for a cure for
tree sickness...

He peers up at the trees above their heads.

JACK (CONT'D)
I studied those medical books day
and night. I've been gathering all
the ingredients together to make up
a vaccine. I only took what I
needed. Never more. That and food
and water for my crew. A bit of
tobacco...

Art looks to Myrtle, who looks contrite.

JACK (CONT'D)
Now all I need is to find a doctor
who will show me how to mix them
together.

Art and Myrtle begin to realize.

MYRTLE (SOFTLY)
You're looking for Doctor
Ptarmigan.

Jack nods and looks up to the blue Venusian sky.

JACK
His expedition to study the
Arachnids went missing four years
ago. Missing presumed lost. But
somehow I know he's out there
somewhere. I just have to find him.

A pause. Art and Myrtle both look into the sky too.

ART
Just like we have to find our
father.

Jack's face clouds a little.

JACK
So long as you're aboard my ship my
quest comes first.

A sour moment which is interrupted by a sudden explosion.
They all get to their feet. *An Arachnid spaceship swoops low
and opens fire with cannons.*

EXT. VENUTIAN ORANGE GROVE

Art, Jack and Myrtle are running fast towards the Sophronia. They can see the Arachnid ship swooping in the near distance.

Behind them and out of their vision an Arachnid ship hovers in mid air and two spider's web threads drop to the surface. Arachnid commandos begin to descend.

EXT. DEEPER IN THE ORANGE GROVE

We see Jack and Art still running through the lines of overgrown orange trees, heavy with fruit. Some more Arachnid ships fly over

JACK
Myrtle hurry!

Jack turns and stops running.

JACK (CONT'D)
Myrtle?

Art stops running too. They look back to where Myrtle should be. They see only the lines of weary looking orange trees.

ART
Where is she?!!

A horrified pause. Suddenly a whistling sound of an explosive cannonball.

JACK
Get down!!

They both hit the floor and there is a massive explosion near by. *All the rotten and ripe oranges falls from the orange trees in one clump.*

They are about to turn back to look for Myrtle when from among the orange trees two hundred yards away an Arachnid ship suddenly rises into view. The down-draught of the ship causes a whirlwind of leaves and oranges as Jack and Art cover their faces.

They look up to see Myrtle screaming in the window of the Arachnid ship. Through the window they see Mr Webster is near to her, raising his bowler hat.

ART
Mr Webster!! He's got Myrtle!!

Art begins to hurl oranges at the spaceship. Jack takes his arm. The Arachnid ship hovers for a moment as if to taunt the two boys then it shoots high into the atmosphere. Art turns to Jack.

ART (CONT'D)

We've got to get after her!!

EXT. SOPHRONIA

Munkulus is giving a handful of invading Arachnids both barrels of his deck guns. The Arachnids seem immune to the bullets. The Arachnid ships are high above.

Mr Munkulus takes a wound to his forehead. Ssillissa emerges from the Sophronia and begins to bandage the wound. Suddenly Jack and Art arrive at a run.

SSILLISSA

Jack! We thought you were dead.

JACK

Get inside and fire the engines.

SSILLISSA

Mr Munkulus is hurt Jack.

Jack clambers onto the ship, heading for the hatch, not even hearing Ssillissa.

JACK

They've taken Myrtle! Come on!

SSILLISSA

But Jack...

Jack pays no attention. He dives down into the hatch. Munkulus scrambles to his feet.

MUNKULUS

Stop fussing woman. Jack gave us an order.

Ssillissa registers surprise at Jack's lack of concern for Mr Munkulus.

INT. SOPHRONIA

Through the semi-transparent engine room wall, we see the refracted shape of Ssillissa mixing her cocktail of chemicals to begin the chemical wedding engines.

The tentacle twins are pulling levers, tightening chains. Jack, unusually, is a still point, running his hands through his hair, exasperated, studying his circular chart. Art enters the bridge at a run with his arms full of heavy cannonballs.

Art senses the quiet desperation among the crew. The hidden hopelessness.

ART (CONT'D)
Why aren't we flying?

A pause.

JACK
The engines took a hit. Ssillissa is having trouble with the chemical wedding. The process isn't just a science it's an art.

Art peers through at the refracted vision of Ssillissa among her chemicals and flames. A flare of light puts her in silhouette.

JACK (CONT'D)
The Alembic is damaged. (A pause)
And Ssillissa isn't quite herself.

After a moment Art lets the cannonballs drop onto the floor and they roll across the bridge decking. The Tentacle twins look around then busy themselves in their work.

ART
Are you saying we won't be able to catch them?

Jack stares down into his charts.

JACK
It's a big Universe Arthur.

EXT. SIR WAVERLEY RAIN'S MANSION ON MARS

Martian birds fly. Martian gardeners tend the magnificent lawns. Crimson mist wreaths the horizon. A giant sun is rising.

INT. EXQUISITELY DECORATED BEDROOM IN THE STYLE OF LOUIS IV

The bedroom overlooks the landscaped garden, styled after Capability Brown.

A gossamer curtain billows in the wind. The bedroom has oil paintings on the wall, one of them an imposing portrait of a severe looking industrialist who we will later learn is Sir Waverley Rain. There is a grand piano at the far end of the bedroom. An internal water fountain dribbles and sparrows drink in the pooling water.

A beautiful Martian servant girl (ULLA) is pouring fresh lemonade into a glass with ice near to the open window. On the bed, Myrtle lies asleep. Ulla takes the glass of lemonade to the bedside table and as her shadow falls across Myrtle's face, Myrtle wakes. She peers at Ulla for a moment and Ulla smiles. Myrtle smiles back...then sits bolt upright.

MYRTLE

Where the bloody hell am I?!

Ulla lays the glass down.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

And who are you?

ULLA (GENTLY)

You are on Mars. My name is Ulla.

MYRTLE

Mars?! How...did I get to Mars?

Ulla turns and begins to select long flowing robes from a wardrobe. As she lays them on a chair...

ULLA

I don't know. I am just a servant. They do not tell me many things.

MYRTLE

But...I was on Venus. I was with Jack....(suddenly)...Arthur!! Where is Arthur?!

Ulla holds up two long flowing robes.

ULLA

I have selected two. Which do you prefer?

Myrtle studies Ulla and the dresses. Her love of finery temporarily conquers her panic.

MYRTLE

Blue does justice to my eyes.

Ulla hangs the blue dress on a hook near to the bed and opens a set of double doors. A huge marble bathing room is revealed, with steam rising from warm pools of water.

ULLA

You have had a long journey. Do you wish to bathe?

INT. BATHING ROOM

Myrtle is wearing a Japanese style silk robe, staring into a mirror. Ulla is combing her newly washed hair through. They speak to each other's reflections. A flamingo wades in the warm dribbling bath in the reflection.

ULLA

My master only told me you had been in some kind of accident.

MYRTLE

Did he mention my brother?

ULLA

When they found you, you were alone.

MYRTLE

Found me where?

ULLA

I don't know.

Ulla ties Myrtle's hair up in a ribbon.

MYRTLE

And who is your master?

ULLA

He is human like you. His name is Sir Waverley Rain.

Myrtle reacts with wonder.

MYRTLE

Are you serious?!

Suddenly there are heavy footsteps outside. Then the head of a middle aged servant (THE BUTLER) is peeking around the door. Gruff, intrusive...

BUTLER

When you girls are...quite finished.

Myrtle pulls her robe together.

INT. LONG ECHOEY CORRIDOR WITHIN SIR WAVERLEY'S MANSION

The butler is striding quickly through a large marble hall with Grecian style statues. His footsteps echo. Myrtle is hurrying after him in her long blue robe.

BUTLER

You know Sir Waverley? I mean, you've met him?

The butler stops and looks down his nose at Myrtle.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Well of course I know him, I'm his personal Butler.

The butler turns to walk on.

MYRTLE

I'm a huge admirer of his.

BUTLER (DISMISSIVE)

Really.

MYRTLE

But I still don't know how I came to be here?

BUTLER

One of Sir Waverley's cargo ships found you floating in space inside a lifeboat.

MYRTLE

But that's impossible...

BUTLER (LYING)

They said you'd taken a blow to your head. Concussion. Mumbling a lot of nonsense about pirates.

He peers at her...

BUTLER (CONT'D)

You obviously had some very vivid dreams in that lifeboat.

Myrtle hesitates, filled with suspicion. The butler takes her arm.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

Now you listen to me. Master Rain has a very kind heart. Perhaps more than is good for him. Please don't question his hospitality.

He turns and opens a set of double doors to reveal the beautiful, sunlit garden.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

And he doesn't like to be kept waiting.

EXT. WALLED GARDEN, MARS

The garden is beautifully lush, with all kinds of tropical plants, fountains, statues, a typical Imperial garden in the style of the Indian Raj.

A long dining table, big enough for thirty guests, has been laid for two. There is white linen and silver and a dozen waiters standing to attention. Sitting alone at the table is a very fat middle-aged man with a clipped moustache who we recognize from the oil portraits.

This is *SIR WAVERLEY RAIN*.

Sir Waverley is asleep at the table, a magpie standing on his head. The bird flies when Sir Waverley awakes at the cough of the butler.

BUTLER

The girl is here Sir.

Sir Waverley grumbles as he wakes. Myrtle is standing a little way back in the shadows. Sir Waverley reaches over to a silver tray and grabs a chicken leg which he bites.

The butler brings Myrtle to the table. As Myrtle is ushered forward she notices Ulla hurrying to her position of attendance.

BUTLER (CONT'D)

This, my lord, is her.

Sir Waverley looks up from his food and takes another bite.

SIR WAVERLEY

Forgive me for starting without you
but...

He covers a burp...We hear now that he speaks with a broad
Northern English accent.

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)

...I was famished. Well park your
bum then...

Myrtle is a little shocked at his vulgar turn of phrase. Sir
Waverley gestures at her to sit, then gestures at the food.
Myrtle takes a small Yorkshire pudding for her plate.

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)

So have they been looking after
you?

MYRTLE

Exceptionally well Sir. And may I
say straight away what an honor it
is to meet you. I have admired
your industry for many years. I
believe your manufactured products
to be the best in the Empire.

Sir Waverley looks up with piggy eyes, searching for irony.

SIR WAVERLEY

Worked bloody hard to get where I
am.

MYRTLE

I read your life story in the
London Illustrated magazine.

SIR WAVERLEY

Born in a bloody shoe box I was.
Not born to all this. Born to
shovel coal. When Her Majesty Queen
Victoria put her sword on these
shoulders to make me a Knight of
the Realm it was the proudest day
in her life.

MYRTLE (PUZZLED)

In her life?

SIR WAVERLEY

I am living proof that in Her
Majesty's Empire, anybody can make
something of themselves.

He devours another chicken leg.

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)
That's why I'm looking forward to making her acquaintance again. At the great Exhibition. I suppose you've heard about that...

MYRTLE
Indeed I have.

SIR WAVERLEY
Well how would you like to be there?

Sir Waverley tosses a bone aside. Myrtle is utterly thrown.

MYRTLE
You mean...go to Earth?

SIR WAVERLEY
London's on Earth last time I looked.

MYRTLE
But...

SIR WAVERLEY
But what?

MYRTLE
How would I get there?

SIR WAVERLEY
Come with me in my own personal Aether carriage. I'll be cutting the ribbon on the Crystal Palace. Designer's privilege.

He wipes his mouth with a napkin which he tosses onto the table.

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)
So...what do you say?

Myrtle takes a few moments.

MYRTLE
Sir Waverley, in any other circumstances...

SIR WAVERLEY
What circumstances...

MYRTLE

I have a brother...

He studies her.

SIR WAVERLEY

Let's get to the point shall we.

MYRTLE

What point?

He grabs another chicken leg.

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)

You can have all the gold and silver you want, and free tickets to the Great Exhibition. But first...you have to give me what I want.

He studies her.

MYRTLE

What could I possibly have...

SIR WAVERLEY

The locket.

A pause. Myrtle is stunned.

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)

Don't play all innocent with me. I know all about Larklight. I was a friend of your mother's.

Myrtle is astonished.

MYRTLE

You were?

SIR WAVERLEY

You look like her. You're not so pretty though...

Myrtle reacts, clouds a little.

MYRTLE

So my coming here wasn't an accident.

She glances at the butler, who sneers.

SIR WAVERLEY

No such thing as accidents. Only carelessness. Now...your dear departed mother gave you a locket.

The butler has stepped closer. Sir Waverley studies Myrtle. Suddenly wasps buzz around the food and around her face....

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)

A golden locket.

Myrtle glances at Ulla, who looks concerned.

MYRTLE

If she did, what of it?

SIR WAVERLEY

That locket rightfully belongs to me. And I'll be blunt, I want what's mine. So...

A pause. The butler steps closer still. Myrtle is speechless...

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)

For a girl in a vulnerable position you're being very un-forthcoming.

Sir Waverley gets to his feet. Myrtle gets to her feet too, retreating...

MYRTLE

But...I don't have the locket.

A pause. Sir Waverley stares at her.

SIR WAVERLEY

Don't have it?

MYRTLE

I gave it to my brother. The brother I was trying to tell you about. I gave it to him for his birthday.

Sir Waverley stares at Myrtle for a long time. The birds stop singing. The wasps stop buzzing. Sir Waverley's face begins to slowly turn scarlet.

He grabs a chicken leg and bites it in two, bone and all and repeats with incredulity.

SIR WAVERLEY

*You gave it to your brother for his
birthday!!!*

MYRTLE (SOFTLY, PUZZLED)

Yes. Why? Is it important?

The leaves begin to fall from the trees. The birds scatter. The fountains stop dribbling.

Sir Waverley's face begins to contort. The food on the table shrivels. Then the butler and the starched waiters begin to shrivel too...

The whole garden begins to transform from lush tropics to dried up stony desert. Myrtle shrieks with horror. She turns and sees that the butler and the waiters are turning into spiny cacti.

Meanwhile 'Sir Waverley' has begun to expand and transform...from human to skeletal insect and finally....into Mr Webster!

Myrtle shrieks. Suddenly her long dress is torn from her shoulders, leaving her wearing a silk slip. Myrtle turns and sees that it is Ulla who has torn her dress.

For a moment she fears Ulla is an enemy too, but Ulla takes her hand.

ULLA

You can't run in that silly dress.
And we do have to run!

The cacti waiters make a grab for Myrtle. Ulla drags her away from the table. Mr Webster fires a web at Myrtle but Ulla cuts it with a bread knife. The cacti butler comes for Myrtle but Ulla grabs a jug of water from the table and throws it at the cactus. The butler/cactus fizzes and recoils at the touch of the water.

Ulla and Myrtle begin to run.

MR WEBSTER

After her!!

As the girls run, the garden dries up behind them at their heels. From above we see the dryness spreading out to fill the garden in a slow explosion of death and drought.

EXT. GARDEN WALL

Myrtle and Ulla have reached the wall, which is covered in vines. Ulla produces a small knife and cuts a vine. A whole patch of vine falls to the ground, revealing a hidden ladder.

ULLA

Climb!

Myrtle and then Ulla get onto the ladder. As they do we see Mr Webster stop and stare. He makes a gesture and suddenly a thousand tiny spiders begin to expand and come to life from inside the vines. Ulla and Myrtle are kicking and slashing at them.

Finally Ulla and Myrtle have reached the top of the wall, twenty feet high. They sit astride it.

ULLA (CONT'D)

We have to jump.

A pause. They take each other's hands and jump, screaming as they go.

INT. SOPHRONIA

Art is lying on his bunk, the planets and stars filling the window of his room. He has the locket in his hand. He flicks it open and peers at the picture of his mother. He whispers...

ART

Mother? Oh mother I know I always fought with her and pulled her hair and pretended to cry when she hadn't even hit me but...I really miss her. Where is she?

A pause. The picture of Valerie smiles, as it always does, and Art expects another of her wise sayings. He is about to put the locket aside.

Suddenly the face of his mother grows grave.

VALERIE

The planet of war is huge and red...

Art listens with curiosity...he speaks softly.

ART
Mother?

VALERIE
*She is there. Time is short...The
red planet of war...*

Art sits bolt upright to attention...Valerie speaks
urgently...

VALERIE (CONT'D)
And you must remember these
words....

Valerie begins to speak in a strange, melodic language.

VALERIE (CONT'D)
Thearu myhanli ghoulaghgig gos.

The picture on the locket fades. Art shakes it...

ART
Mother? Come back. I don't
understand....

The locket is now dormant. Art looks all around.

ART (CONT'D SOFTLY)
The planet of war?

He leaps from the bed.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE SOPHRONIA

Jack, Nipper, Mr Munkulus and the Tentacle Twins are playing
a complex Ionian gambling game. Jack is winning hands down.
Art comes bursting in, babbling.

ART
I know where she is!

They all look up.

ART (CONT'D)
We must head for Mars.

Munkulus chuckles, not looking up from the game.

MUNKULUS
Mars?

ART

Myrtle is there. In ancient times
it was called the planet of war.
The red planet.

Jack is collecting his winnings, smiling...

JACK

Well these days Mars is the planet
of gold and iron ore.

NIPPER

It's guarded by a hundred Navy
ships.

GRINDLE

We wouldn't stand a chance.

Art confronts Jack.

ART

Ah. So you're afraid.

Jack steps up. Munkulus and Nipper are on their feet.

GRINDLE

I'd take that back if I were you.

JACK

If I knew for sure she was on Mars
no amount of Navy ships would stop
me.

Art comes close. He speaks softly.

ART

Jack? You talk to your mother don't
you. Even though she's a tree.

Jack peers at Art.

ART (CONT'D)

Well my mother just spoke to me.

JACK

You said she was dead.

Art pulls the locket from inside his shirt. The second he
does, the Tentacle twins react. They shuffle back a little.
Jack notices.

ART

I swear it's true. Some of it I
didn't understand...

JACK

Yarg, Squidley...what is it?

YARG

Strong feelings of...

SQUIDLEY

...life and

YARG

...death. As if...

SQUIDLEY

...there were...

YARG

...a Shaper present.

Jack reacts sharply to the word 'Shaper'.

JACK

A Shaper? What do you know of the
Shaper?

The Tentacle twins curl up in fear at the harshness of Jack's
voice. The crew seem anxious. Ssillissa has emerged to check
out the raised voice.

MUNKULUS

The Shaper is a stupid superstition
to scare children, Yarg and
Squidley I'm surprised at you...

JACK

Quiet Mr Munkulus.

ART (SOFTLY)

You mean the Shaper like in the old
myths?

JACK

You've heard of the Shaper, Art?

Art hesitates...

ART

I only know what I've read. Some ancient civilizations believed all life in the galaxy started from a single spaceship. Piloted by a thing called a Shaper.

NIPPER

We have the same myth on my planet.

GRINDLE

Mine too.

MUNKULUS

And on mine but it's all just fairy tales.

GRINDLE (SOFTLY)

We have fairies on my planet. Their tales are true.

MUNKULUS

This is all nonsense, let's get on with the game.

Jack circles Art.

JACK

Show me the locket.

ART

I can't.

JACK

Was it the locket that told you she's on Mars?

Art doesn't answer. Jack has moved towards Yarg and Squidley. Their tentacles are waving gently. He studies them and looks to Art.

JACK (CONT'D)

Doctor Ptarmigan often spoke about the Shaper. He was as obsessed with the Shaper as he was with the Arachnids.

He studies Art.

JACK (CONT'D)

And you seem engaged by both things.

Art sees his chance and dares to speak up.

ART

Perhaps *my* quest is connected to
your search for Doctor Ptarmigan.

Art steps closer to Jack.

ART (CONT'D SOFTLY)

Maybe it's in the stars. Maybe it's
fate that brought us together....

Munkulus reacts with fury...

MUNKULUS

Captain don't listen to this mumbo
jumbo nonsense!

Jack takes a moment then makes a bold decision. He turns
around to the rest of his crew.

JACK (CONT'D)

Chart a course for Mars.

The crew are stunned.

SSILLISSA

With only one third of normal
power?

A pause.

JACK

You heard me Ssillissa.

EXT. VIEW OF THE PLANET MARS

We see the red planet spinning slowly in space. Royal Navy
Aether ships pass through shot, patrolling the orbit of the
planet.

The Navy ships bristle with cannons.

EXT. MARTIAN JUNGLE

Ulla and Myrtle are cutting their way through dense Martian
jungle. It is hot and the insects are enormous. Myrtle is
pulling a gigantic leech from her leg with a screech. Ulla
half turns.

ULLA

Keep that. They're good eating.

Myrtle considers the many legged leech in her hand and finally tosses it away.

MYRTLE

Where are we going?

She cuts down a vine.

ULLA (CONT'D)

To my people. The Free Martian Resistance Army.

MYRTLE

So you're not a servant...

A vicious thorn branch whip-lashes against Myrtle's leg. A gash appears. Ulla instinctively picks a particular leaf and presses it onto the wound.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Who is your army resisting?

ULLA

We believe the rulers of our planet have been replaced by Arachnids. No one else on Mars will listen to us. They say we're insane. Today I saw it with my own eyes.

MYRTLE (WITH WONDER)

One of Europe's foremost industrialists turned...into a spider. It was almost... metaphysical.

ULLA

Arachnids have found ways to appear in any shape.

Myrtle shudders. Ulla gets to her feet.

MYRTLE

But why would Mr Webster want my silly gold locket?

ULLA

I don't know.

MYRTLE (THINKING FAST)
That must be why he took my father.
He thought dad had the locket. Now
he knows that Art has it.

Ulla offers her hand and lifts Myrtle to her feet.

ULLA
We have to hurry.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING

A complete Martian military camp. Martian guerrilla soldiers are training, cleaning camp, drilling.

As Myrtle and Ulla enter, Myrtle sees a line of Martian militia firing a volley of blowpipe darts at targets dressed to resemble spiders. The blowdarts explode on impact and Myrtle recoils. Ulla grabs her.

ULLA
Those blowdarts shoot fire-cactus seeds. If you hit the Arachnids in the right spot it sets light to their webbing. Blows them apart.

A young Martian groom trots by leading three Martian horses.

ULLA (CONT'D)
Hey soldier! Where's Garl?

INT. MARTIAN MILITARY TENT

The interior is lit by a flickering fire made from molten stones which ooze lava. A good looking Martian commander (GARL) is pouring Martian wine into three crystal glasses on a table made from carved pumice stone. Ulla and Myrtle sit together.

Garl and Ulla begin to speak in Martian to each other. It is a soft, flowing language and we perhaps recognize it as the same language Valerie spoke to Art in the locket. Garl is evidently annoyed. We see a translation in sub-title.

GARL
(Two years work. Wasted.)

ULLA
(What choice did I have?)

GARL

(Why risk everything for the life
of one human?)

Ulla glances at Myrtle who looks uncomfortable, and switches
to English.

ULLA

Their leader was asking about a
locket.

GARL

What locket?

He glares at Myrtle.

MYRTLE

I don't know. My mother gave me a
locket when I was little girl.
It's just a novelty. My mother
recorded words of wisdom for us.

Garl shakes his head, takes a swig of wine from the bottle.

GARL

Our best placed agent blows her
cover for an Earth trinket.

Ulla gets to her feet.

ULLA

Your 'best placed agent' has learnt
that the Arachnids don't do
anything without a reason.

A pause. Garl studies Myrtle. He speaks in Martian.

GARL

(What makes you sure she isn't an
Arachnid spy herself?)

ULLA (DISMISSING THE IDEA)

If the Arachnids want this locket
so badly then we should make sure
they don't get it.

Garl glares at Myrtle.

MYRTLE (SOFTLY)

I really don't mean to be any
trouble but do you think you could
find me some clothes?

He looks at her for a moment then shakes his head and smiles.

EXT. LONG SHOT OF MARS

The red planet spins. Then the Sophronia glides into shot and into the orbit of Mars. A few moments later, a Royal Navy gun ship passes through shot in pursuit.

INT. SOPHRONIA

The Sophronia is in the middle of a huge battle with Navy ships. The bridge is rocked by an explosion. Art, Jack, Nipper and Mr Munkulus are thrown to the floor.

Ssillissa emerges from the chemical wedding engine room.

SSILLISSA

I have the chemical wedding up to half capacity.

JACK

Anything to spare for fun?

SSILLISSA

A little...

JACK

OK, Mr Munkulus return fire...

The crew go into action stations. Ssillissa speaks softly.

SSILLISSA

But be careful Jack. I'm not sure how much more this ship can take.

EXT. MARS, SOPHRONIA CRASH LANDING SITE

The Sophronia hurtles down to the surface and lands with a crash on soft sand, its landing legs digging deep into the ground.

First Jack, then Munkulus then Art emerge from the ship. Munkulus pulls his sword. The Tentacle twins emerge and spin around to 'taste' the air.

JACK

What do you feel?

YARG

War and...

SQUIDLEY

...danger.

Jack pulls out his sword too.

JACK

That's how I like it.

Art tries hard...

ART

Me too.

JACK (TO YARG)

Do you feel anything of Myrtle?

YARG

We feel...

SQUIDLEY

Only strong emotions...

YARG

Of fear...

SQUIDLEY

...and uncertainty.

A pause.

YARG

...from amongst our own.

Jack peers at the twins, then at Munkulus.

JACK

Uncertainty?

A pause. Jack looks to each of his crew members, who look to their feet. Munkulus speaks up...

MUNKULUS

Mars is a giant planet Captain...

Ssillissa appears to be exhausted. She stands on the body of the Sophronia and sniffs the air.

SSILLISSA

It will be like finding a needle in a haystack.

Jack turns to see the looks of concern on the faces of his crew. He can sense resistance. A new feeling.

JACK
What is it? Ssillissa?

SSILLISSA
We have followed you through the
entire galaxy Captain. We have
never questioned any of your
decisions.

JACK
And now?

YARG
We are not...

SQUIDLEY
...sure why we are...

YARG
...here.

SQUIDLEY
...Sir.

Jack patrols the line in front of them.

JACK
You think I've lost my mind...

NIPPER
No. Your direction.

Jack studies them then pulls his sword.

JACK
My orders are that we find Myrtle.
Follow me or be damned.

Silence.

SSILLISSA
Then it is true. Human love is a
most powerful thing.

She looks up, almost tearful. Jack is contrite and replaces
his sword. He sits down on a Martian rock.

JACK
So...you think Captain Jack Havoc
has lost his mind over some girl.

Silent confirmation.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well maybe I have. But I also believe what our new shipmate Arthur said. It was destiny that crossed our paths.

Jack looks at Art. He doesn't respond. Nipper steps up...

NIPPER

But Jack, what would destiny want with us? A bunch of poor orphans in a broken down freight ship.

JACK

It's true that each one of us is an orphan. But together we're a family. Unbreakable. So come on now...

Art gets to his feet.

ART

Wait Jack. We should put it to the vote. Like they do in London.

A pause. Jack is about to object but Art has a new found authority. He takes the locket from his pocket and holds it as if it were a talisman. He surveys the faces of the crew.

ART

Those who want to abandon this quest to find Myrtle raise their hands...

A pause.

YARG

We don't...

SQUIDLEY

...have hands.

Art reacts.

JACK (SOFTLY)

Democracy is never easy.

ART

Very well then, if you want to abandon this quest, raise your hands or your tentacles.

A pause. No movement.

JACK (CONT'D)

Now those who want to stay and find Myrtle.

Art is first to raise a hand. Then Munkulus then the others. Finally...Ssillissa. A pause. With a smile, Jack raises his hand.

JACK

So we are together again then.

A dusty Martian wind blows. A deep uncertainty but Jack has new respect for Art. After a moment there is a huge explosion on the horizon and a plume of scarlet smoke. They all turn to look. Art speaks softly to Jack.

ART

That's probably my sister.

EXT. REBEL CAMP

Arachnid ships are pounding the rebel camp. Myrtle and Ulla are making a dash for cover. Garl is calling out orders to his troops. He turns to Ulla and yells in English.

GARL

I thought you said your friend was no Arachnid! She has led them here!

Garl is pulling canvas away from a huge anti-Aether ship gun, ready to open fire.

GARL (CONT'D)

She has a spider in her soul!

ULLA

You think I can't tell the difference by now!?

An Arachnid cannonball lands nearby and they are all thrown to the floor by the explosion. Garl is first to his feet. He calls out to some troops nearby...

GARL

You! Arrest this Earth girl.

ULLA

No!

GARL

Ulla we can't take chances...

The guards come to arrest Myrtle and she shakes their hands loose. Ulla twirls around and doublekicks the guards to free her. At that moment an Arachnid ship swoops low and begins to fire shot into the camp. The tents are torn to pieces. Ulla and Myrtle duck for cover then Ulla yells.

ULLA

Follow me!!

They race to a line of Martian horses. Ulla leaps aboard one of them. Myrtle hesitates then clammers awkwardly aboard.

EXT. MARTIAN RIVER, FLOWING THROUGH DENSE JUNGLE

Ulla and Myrtle are following the line of a fast flowing stream, leading their horses behind them.

The undergrowth either side of the stream is thick. The sky is streaked with crimson flares and the scarlet plumes of smoke from the battle.

Myrtle stumbles and Ulla returns for her. A huge explosion behind them. Ulla looks up to the smoke in the sky rising from the Martian camp. Myrtle can see that Ulla fears the worst for her comrades.

MYRTLE

Are you OK?

ULLA

We have been attacked before. Many times. Always we scatter and regroup. It is my duty to survive.

She turns and releases the horses. She slaps them to make them run back the way they came.

ULLA (CONT'D)

They would slow us down. We must head for the mountains.

Ulla cups some water in her hand and cools her head.

MYRTLE

You're worried about him.

ULLA

Who?

MYRTLE

The Commander. You argued like people who love each other.

Myrtle can see that Ulla knows what she means.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

I argued with Jack like that.

Ulla smiles.

ULLA

When you were sleeping you spoke
often of Jack. He is someone you
love?

Myrtle is about to answer but at that moment an impossible sight. Sir Waverley Rain suddenly drops into view from above the tree canopy, attached to a silver thread of spider's web. Above him an Arachnid spaceship hovers, lowering him slowly into the stream...

Sir Waverley makes a gentle landing in the stream and smiles. He raises his hat.

SIR WAVERLEY

My dear girl, you left before
pudding.

Ulla is looking for an escape route but suddenly a dozen black spiders drop from the sky and surround them. Ulla reaches into her shirt and produces a blowdart but before she can use it Sir Waverley barks an order...

SIR WAVERLEY

Web her!!

The spiders fire silver webs at Ulla and she is spun around into a cloud of sticky web.

MYRTLE

Leave her alone!!

SIR WAVERLEY

By all means my dear...

He begins to wade awkwardly up the stream.

SIR WAVERLEY (CONT'D)

But first you have to tell me where
I might find this brother of yours.
The one with the locket.

Myrtle turns to run but a single web is fired at her ankle and she is held fast. Sir Waverley approaches. Myrtle struggles but Sir Waverley grabs her arm.

MYRTLE

I don't know where he is!

Sir Waverley sighs...

SIR WAVERLEY

Doing these tiresome
transformations really does use up
enormous amount of calories...

He begins the process of transformation into Mr Webster. Once he is an Arachnid he spins a perfect hexagonal web of silver threads. Myrtle is lifted head first and swung into the web. She begins to struggle. Mr Webster approaches her.

MR WEBSTER

Now. Let's try again. Where is
your brother?

Suddenly a voice.

ART

I'm over here!!

Mr Webster turns. The crew of the Sophronia drop from the trees and are amongst the spiders. Jack pulls his sword.

JACK

You are in the company of Universal
pirate Captain Jack Havoc! Have a
care!!

A huge fight breaks out. Jack uses his sword and his pistols to bludgeon and dismantle the nearest spider. Munkulus uses his blunderbuss but it has little effect. The tentacle twins roll among the legs of the spiders. However the spiders use their webs to good effect and the battle looks to be going badly...

Meanwhile, Myrtle has broken free and has torn away the webbing from Ulla's body. Once she is loose she puts the blowpipe to her lips and fires at the nearest spider. The spider explodes. She fires two more shots and two more spiders are destroyed.

Mr Webster, who has been engaged by Nipper, sees the destruction and pulls twice on a hanging spiderweb. He is lifted quickly from the scene of the battle. As he rises he yells a farewell....

MR WEBSTER

One battle is not a war! All You
disgusting life-forms will soon be
extinct!!

He swings high on his web. The rest of the spiders begin to
flee. Art finds Myrtle and they are about to hug each other
but both stop themselves just in time. Myrtle feigns
impatience.

MYRTLE

Art what kept you?

Jack is nearby, wiping oozing webbing from his sword with a
leaf.

JACK

We were detained by your wonderful
Royal Navy...

Myrtle and Jack's eyes meet. They too resist the temptation
to go to each other. A huge explosion from the direction of
the rebel camp makes them all duck.

JACK (CONT'D)

We'd better get out of here.

Ulla reacts.

ULLA

Myrtle you go. I must stay.

Myrtle takes Ulla's hand.

MYRTLE

What if they're all killed?

ULLA

I'll fight on alone.

JACK

Myrtle come on!! If they find our
ship we're lost.

MYRTLE

I don't want to leave her. She
saved my life.

Munkulus growls at Myrtle.

MUNKULUS

We didn't come all this way to
leave you behind. Now move!

MYRTLE

How dare you speak to me like that?!

MUNKULUS

What, me a mere servant?

Even in the heat of emotion Myrtle recognizes her old fault of snobbery which she has begun to grow out of. She looks contrite. Another huge explosion. An arachnid ship swoops over them.

MYRTLE

I'm sorry Mr Munkulus but if she stays I stay.

Ulla takes Myrtle's arm and peers into her eyes.

ULLA

Myrtle, in my language we have a saying. 'Myshin gohana na he'. It means... 'friendship means letting each other go'.

Art has heard the words and reacted. Suddenly he steps in to the impasse and addresses Ulla, *repeating the words Valerie used in her message in the locket.*

ART (STAMMERING A LITTLE)

Thearu myhanli ghoulaghgig gos.

Ulla looks shocked.

ULLA

You speak Martian?

ART

Yes. I mean...no. Only those words.

MYRTLE

Ulla ignore him, he's just showing off.

ART

No, Myrtle. The locket gave me the words.

ULLA (SOFTLY)

The locket?

Art turns to Myrtle.

ART

Mother gave me a message I didn't understand. Now I realize she was speaking Martian.

Everyone turns to Ulla as Art repeats.

ART

Thearu myhanli ghoulaghgig gos.
What does it mean?

ULLA (WITH WONDER)

It means... 'the Great Creator says my destiny lies with you'.

A chill runs through the crew. Suddenly a wave of smoke blows through the jungle trees. Arachnid ships in a huge column fill the skies.

JACK

So let's go and meet our destiny.

EXT. SOPHRONIA

An Arachnid ship swoops low as the crew, Myrtle, Jack, Art and the others race towards the ship.

EXT. MARTIAN JUNGLE

We see the thick canopy of the Martian jungle, with the smoke of battle rising. Then the Sophronia rises into view, Arachnid ships buzzing around it and taking shots. The Sophronia suddenly gains speed and heads for the outer atmosphere, taking hits as it goes...

EXT. MARS

We see the giant red planet orbiting, the smoke of the battle just a tiny smudge of purple smoke.

We see the glint of a spaceship hull, a small speck leaving the surface. Then close to shot we see the giant hull of a Royal Navy Destroyer, complete with Navy insignia.

We hear the disembodied voice of a Naval Commander, speaking through the crackle of an intercom.

NAVY COMMANDER

Pirate vessel located. Leaving
Martian atmosphere at two hundred
knots. Prepare to engage.

INT. CHEMICAL WEDDING ENGINE ROOM

Ssillissa is working among the brilliantly colored flashes of the chemical wedding process. We haven't seen the process close up before and the flames and sparks and controlled explosions are a beautiful symphony, with Ssillissa as the conductor.

A whole trail of multi-colored sparks begin to fizz and Ssillissa leans back against the wall of the engine room.

As she does, Jack enters. There is a moment between them. Jack produces a bottle of rum from inside his shirt. He offers it to her...

JACK

I know you don't drink but..I
thought you might make an
exception.

Ssillissa smiles, takes the bottle and takes a tiny swig.

JACK (CONT'D)

You did well Ssillissa.

SSILLISSA

I did my duty, Captain.

A pause.

JACK

Back on Mars you mentioned love...

SSILLISSA

Please...it's Ok...

JACK

It's just that...Myrtle is my own
species.

Ssillissa busies herself in her work.

SSILLISSA

And so pretty.

JACK

So are you.

SSILLISSA

How do you know what is pretty and what isn't in my species?

JACK

I don't.

SSILLISSA (SOFTLY)

Neither do I.

A pause.

SSILLISSA (CONT'D)

How could I? I was born in the institution where we met.

A pause.

JACK (ASTONISHED)

You never told me that.

Ssillissa smiles.

SSILLISSA

We never did do too much talking did we? Too busy having adventures.

Jack looks contrite.

SSILLISSA (CONT'D)

The Professors hatched me from an egg that was frozen inside a meteor floating in space. I am the truest of orphans. I've never even met another of my own species. And no one in the institute had any idea which galaxy I came from.

A pause. She turns to Jack, tears in her eyes.

SSILLISSA (CONT'D)

That is my quest, Jack. To find out what I am. That's why I keep on travelling with you. It isn't just because I love you.

Jack understands. He takes the rum bottle back.

SSILLISSA (CONT'D)

Go to her. Tell her how much you risked for her.

INT. BRIDGE

All is quiet. The Tentacle twins are snoozing. Art is at the Capstan, steering the ship. Munkulus is bathing his feet in a bowl of warm water.

Jack enters from the engine room. He comes to Art and studies his progress. He is impressed.

JACK

You'll make a good Captain some day.

Art smiles. A pause.

JACK (CONT'D)

Art, I was going to pay a visit to your sister. In the temporary absence of your father, do I have your permission?

Art looks up from the periscope.

ART

You're out of your head, you know that don't you?

At that moment a huge explosion rocks the bridge. Everyone is knocked from their feet. Munkulus skids across the floor with bare, wet feet. He grabs the periscope.

MUNKULUS

Hell and high water it's the Royal Navy!! Will they never leave us alone?!!

EXT. SOPHRONIA DOING BATTLE WITH THE ROYAL NAVY DESTROYER 'INDEFATIGABLE'

The Sophronia takes two early broad-sides from the Navy ship, but manages to return fire. The ships circle each other, firing all the way, until finally the Sophronia scores a direct hit on the Navy ship's engine.

The exchange of fire ceases.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE SOPHRONIA

Smoke, steam and spurting water confuse the scene. Grindle is helping to drag a wounded Nipper towards a make-shift medical area. Myrtle has her hair tied back and is bringing water and tea to the deck. Ulla is helping.

Art and Mr Munkulus are busy wrapping canvas around a ruptured fuel pipe. Jack is striding around the bridge, getting status reports.

JACK
Munkulus? The pumps?

MUNKULUS
Still pumping. Just.

JACK
Nipper? How's your sore head?

NIPPER
I'll live Captain.

Ssillissa emerges from the engine room. Jack is busy with a fallen beam but calls out to her...

JACK
Ssillissa! You did it again! How goes the Chemical wedding?

The noise and chaos continues for a while and Jack repeats the question, wiping Nipper's green blood from his hands...

JACK (CONT'D)
Ssillissa? The engines...what horsepower do we have left?

Slowly everyone registers the importance of the question and stops what they're doing. All eyes are on Ssillissa. She looks defeated.

SSILLISSA
All gone Captain.

A pause.

JACK
Gone?

SSILLISSA

We took a direct hit to the Alembic. The Sophronia has no more power. Listen...

They all fall silent and for the first time there is silence. As if to confirm her words the glowing lights of the engine room begin to dip and fade. Jack grins...

JACK

Ssillissa? This is no time for a faint heart?

Ssillissa angrily addresses the whole crew...

SSILLISSA

It isn't my heart. It's the heart of the ship. It is broken. I can do no more.

Ssillissa hurries off the bridge into the steam and smoke. Jack is left with all eyes upon him. The moons of Saturn glide into view in a porthole behind him. Jack chuckles and leaps onto the chart table and addresses Ulla.

JACK

You mustn't worry Ulla. The dear old Sophronia has been in a thousand scrapes. We always think of a way out in the end. Right Mr Munkulus?

Munkulus is peering through a rear port hole which is clouded by the smoke of battle. He hears the question, turns his head.

MUNKULUS

I fear...not this time Captain. Look....

Munkulus uses his sleeve to wipe the large window clean. Suddenly we see clearly the planet Saturn with its spinning rings, bright and beautiful amongst the stars.

MUNKULUS (CONT'D)

Saturn.

There is a collective gasp from the crew.

YARG

The death...

SQUIDLEY

...star.

NIPPER

The home star of the Arachnids.

MUNKULUS

If we don't get crushed to death by
the rocks and ice....

A pause. Art and Myrtle look to each other, move close.

MYRTLE

....we will be pulled straight into
the webs of Mr Webster.

EXT. OUTER SPACE, SATURNS' ORBIT

We see the giant planet with its molten rings. The Sophronia
is a tiny speck against it, slowly being absorbed into its
gravity.

We hear Myrtle in OOV.

MYRTLE (OOV)

Dear diary. I am trying hard today
to be positive. I have been re-
united with my brother and have
made a new and dear friend...

INT. MYRTLE'S DORM

Myrtle and Ulla are sitting in their hammocks which are a
couple of yards apart, both swinging gently with the motion
of the ship. Ulla is using her small knife to carve a piece
of wood into the shape of a blowpipe. She blows a breath of
air through it.

Myrtle is writing in her diary. We hear her voiceover
continue as we discover her writing in her diary...

MYRTLE (OOV)

...however, it seems that our
friendship will be a short one.
The deadly rings of Saturn are just
a day away.

Myrtle looks up at Ulla and smiles.

MYRTLE (CONT'D OOV)
But at least before the end I found
a boy I love and a girl I can call
a best friend.

Ulla smiles back.

ULLA
Do you put the whole truth in your
diary?

MYRTLE
Yes.

ULLA
Everything?

Myrtle nods.

ULLA (CONT'D)
What if someone found it?

MYRTLE
Simple. I would kill myself.

There is a knock on the door. Art enters, glancing at Ulla.

ART
Myrtle, can we...talk?

MYRTLE
You can talk in front of Ulla.

Art hesitates. After a moment he very carefully reaches into
his pocket and produces the locket.

ART
Myrtle...since you gave this locket
to me...it has...changed.

After a moment Myrtle and then Ulla climb out of their
hammocks and come to stand either side of Art. He prepares
himself and then opens up the locket.

ART (CONT'D)
She's inside it, Myrtle. Really
inside it.

They see the smiling face of their mother, as usual. Art
speaks softly to the picture.

ART (CONT'D)
Mother...Myrtle is here.

They all wait. The locket doesn't change. They wait some more. Art gently shakes it...

ART (CONT'D)
Mother? Can you hear me?

Myrtle glares at Art.

MYRTLE
Is this a game Arthur?

ART
I swear to you Myrtle, she doesn't just say those silly messages anymore...

Myrtle looks away.

MYRTLE
They weren't silly.

A pause. Art is staring at the locket, waiting.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)
And if she *is* there perhaps she just doesn't choose to speak to me.

After a moment Myrtle sets off for the door.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)
You always were the clever one.

ART
Myrtle....

MYRTLE
Oh what does it matter? We're all going to die soon anyway.

She leaves the cabin. Art and Ulla are left alone. After a moment.

ULLA
You don't seem to have lost hope.

Art gestures at the locket.

ART
She gave me another message.

He looks at Ulla.

ART (CONT'D)
*'You will all be saved if you aim
for the heart of the one who seems
heartless.'*

Saturn shines brightly on their faces.

ULLA
What does that mean?

A pause.

ART
I don't know. But I think soon we
will find out.

EXT. SOPHRONIA CORRIDOR

Myrtle is walking away angrily. She bangs her head on a low doorway and curses. Then she hears the sound of a mouth organ playing a melancholy tune, echoing down the corridor.

INT. JACK'S CABIN

A hammock swings gently with the slow movement of the ship. A leg hanging over the hammock, Jack playing the mouth organ...

MYRTLE
Jack?

The mouth organ music stops. Jack sits up and sees Myrtle.

JACK
Sorry. Not exactly Beethoven.

She takes a seat on a sea chest.

MYRTLE
It sounds nice.

A pause. A coy tension between them. Jack goes to the port hole window.

JACK
It's funny...having no power. At the mercy of blind fate. Maybe that's what life is anyway. You have to enjoy the journey I suppose.

He peers at her. She recites softly...

MYRTLE

'If we had world enough and
time...this coyness lady would be
no crime.'

JACK

What's that?

MYRTLE

It's a poem. Andrew Marvell again.
It's about...the fact that we all
have so little time. So if we love
someone we should tell them.

A pause.

JACK

So?

Just as they are about to touch Mr Munkulus blunders in.

MUNKULUS

Captain, I've fixed the leak in the
starboard pump and....

He sees their closeness and realizes.

MUNKULUS (CONT'D)

Oh. Sorry.

He is about to leave. Jack calls out.

JACK

Mr Munkulus.

MUNKULUS

Yes Captain.

JACK

Go and tell someone you love them.

Munkulus looks puzzled. He shifts from foot to foot.

MUNKULUS

Yes Captain.

He leaves. Jack and Myrtle smile. They step closer. After a
moment they kiss.

EXT. SATURN

The planet is bigger yet, the rings of ice and rock now visible. Huge chunks of granite sweep through shot.

Then the Sophronia enters the outer edge of the storm. A huge piece of rough rock slams against the Sophronia.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN

Jack and Myrtle have been thrown to the floor and are just recovering. Jack dusts himself off.

JACK

I've kissed girls before but it never felt quite like that.

INT. ART'S CABIN

Art is in his hammock, practising with the blowpipe which Ulla made for him. He fires a pea and hits a bullseye on a small spider which has woven a web in the corner of the cabin. The ship is rocked by blows but Art's attention doesn't waver.

Footsteps outside. The door is knocked.

ART

Come in.

Myrtle enters. The ship takes another blow.

MYRTLE

Arthur..I've come to...

ART

...Say goodbye? Well don't. We're not going to die.

She ignores his optimism and hugs him hard. Art doesn't respond.

MYRTLE

I just wanted you to know it was me who set your first Andromeda guinea pig free. I did it on purpose to spite you. I'm really sorry.

Art smiles.

ART

That's OK.

He takes the locket from the hammock and lies down. Myrtle lies down beside him.

ART (CONT'D)

Do you remember, Myrtle? Those days when we were little? When it was me and you and Mother and father. By the fire...

The ship is rocked by another blow.

ART (CONT'D)

Do you never go back there in your dreams? Imagine we're still a whole family?

MYRTLE

Sometimes.

ART

Don't you think that somewhere in this whole endless Universe we're still children. The fire still burning?

She looks up at him as if he's struck a chord.

MYRTLE

They say there are a million Universes...all parallel. At this moment I wish I could jump into any one of them.

Art smiles and suddenly the open locket comes to life. It glows brighter than it has ever done. Art seems to have been expecting the response. He takes Myrtle's hand....

ART

Now Myrtle. Now look....

Myrtle peers into the locket and the image of Valerie begins to swirl. Myrtle gasps as Valerie smiles and speaks...

VALERIE

Myrtle my dear...

MYRTLE

Mother!?

A huge blow rocks the ship but Art and Myrtle are staring at the locket.

VALERIE

Only when you believe in the possibility can the possibility happen...There are a million universes....

MYRTLE

Mother...are you speaking to *me*?

Valerie's image begins to break up....

VALERIE

You must be strong. Stay close to your brother....

MYRTLE

Mother I...Mother I miss you...I...

Suddenly the ship is hit by an enormous tremor. Art and Myrtle are sent spinning. The locket flies from Art's hand. As the ship shudders to a halt Myrtle scurries across the slope of the deck to grab the locket. She takes it and shakes it.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Mother?....Are you still there?

Art comes to her and holds her.

ART

She's always there. She has always been there. *There are a million million Universes Myrtle.*

Art has noticed that the ship has stopped moving. He gets to his feet and peers out of the window.

ART (CONT'D)

We've stopped.

Myrtle comes to the window and presses her nose against it, looking down.

MYRTLE (SOFTLY)

And look. Cobwebs.

EXT. SATURN

The mighty planet is now huge, the surface sparking with explosions. The rings of rock and ice swirl fast like the mighty wheel of a giant turbine.

The Sophronia is stuck fast just below the swirling ring, held there by a huge hexagonal cobweb. Other threads of spider-web glint in the light of Saturn, stretching all the way to the surface of the planet.

An army of Arachnids are making their way up the spider webs towards the stricken ship.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE SOPHRONIA

Jack has his eyes glued to the periscope. Nipper and the tentacle twins are easing steam from the landing gear mechanism. Ulla is kneeling down, peering through a floor porthole.

JACK

Mr Munkulus! For the love of God
where is Mr Munkulus?

Munkulus comes racing on to the bridge from the engine room, putting his sailor's cap back on his head..

MUNKULUS

Sorry captain I was just...

He looks embarrassed. Ssillissa emerges from the engine room shortly afterwards, looking rather swept off her feet. (*We should infer that Munkulus has told Ssillissa that he loves her but we don't need to dwell on the moment.*)

JACK

There are spider ships buzzing us.
Nipper, prepare the cannons.

NIPPER

We have no power for cannons
Captain.

Jack slams his hand against the chart desk.

JACK

Damn those six legged devils!

Art and Myrtle have entered quietly.

ART

Eight legs actually.

Ulla gets to her feet and gestures at the floor porthole.

ULLA

They've attached webs to the underside. I think they're going to pull us in.

The ship is rocked side to side.

EXT. SOPHRONIA ATTACHED TO SATURN'S WEBS

The Sophronia is being pulled slowly towards the domed roof of the Arachnid City by two huge spiderwebs. Arachnid ships buzz around it as it moves closer to the domed roof.

Then a giant hatch opens in the roof and the Sophronia is pulled inside.

INT. ARACHNID CITY DOME

The Sophronia enters the City and we are confronted by an awesome sight. A huge metropolis of lights, built around a single gigantic hexagonal spiderweb.

Spiders and Arachnid vehicles use the web to transport themselves. Below the web there are vast chambers and giant searchlights sweeping the dome.

INT. SOPHRONIA

Everyone is glued to the windows, awed by what they can see.

ART

The books say the Arachnids are a backward civilization.

ULLA

Someone has introduced them to technology.

The Sophronia shudders to a halt. Iron legs snap into place, holding the ship firmly in position. Jack grabs a sword.

JACK

Ok everyone. The least we can do is die well. Prepare to make a last stand.

Everyone grabs a weapon. Then there is a loud knocking on the bow door. Everyone freezes. They hear the voice of Mr Webster.

MR WEBSTER

All resistance is now useless.
Please open the door and let us
settle this business peacefully.

JACK

Go to hell!

Suddenly they hear a horrible squeaking, scratching sound. Then sparks begin to appear at the window nearest the bow doors. Then a hole is punctured in the thick iron of the bow door.

MUNKULUS

They're drilling in!

Suddenly a single spider leg is pushed through the iron of the door and begins to saw downwards through the iron. Art swings at the leg with a sword while Munkulus fires his blunderbuss at it. Nipper leaps on the leg and is pulled back and forth by it as it saws through the door.

As the crew begin the futile business of attacking the legs, Ulla quietly slips her blowpipe into her back pocket along with three sharp, red tipped seeds. Art sees her move and speaks softly...

ART (SOFTLY)

Ulla? Don't fire until I say. OK?

Ulla looks puzzled. The door creaks open and a dozen black, iron spiders, all tangled together, spill into the Sophronia. Mr Webster is at the head. He clears a space and raises his hat.

MR WEBSTER

Good day Mr Havoc. I believe we
have some unfinished business....

Jack is about to lay into Mr Webster when he hears a very loud voice. A voice he recognizes.

VOICE

Stop!! No violence. We come in
peace!!

Suddenly, striding over the bodies of the spiders we see a figure in long flowing robes, decorated with a beautiful hexagonal web design. He has long hair and a beard but we recognize him.

Doctor Ptarmigan.

Jack drops his sword.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Jack. My dear boy.

The spiders clear a path and form a guard of honor with legs raised as Doctor Ptarmigan steps onto the bridge of the ship. Ptarmigan stands beside Mr Webster. Jack half turns to the rest of the crew.

JACK

This is him. Doctor Ptarmigan...So this adventure is my destiny!

After a moment of disbelief Jack suddenly races to the Doctor and hugs him. Doctor Ptarmigan embraces Jack but his smile is sinister, his emotion is controlled.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Now Jack, let's not get sentimental.

Jack pulls away.

JACK

I've been looking for you all over the galaxy.

Doctor Ptarmigan sweeps away and begins to study the controls of the Sophronia.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Well...you've found me.

JACK

Doctor I stole some books. I read them a thousand times...I think I have a cure for...

Doctor Ptarmigan is apparently not listening.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (INTERRUPTING)

This ship really is quite primitive. I'm amazed you managed to get the thing to fly at all...

He then spots Ssillissa. He angles his head.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

Ah. You have a Tlingin aboard.
Natural alchemists. Mystery solved.

Ssillissa arches her back, her skin rising...amazed and joyful...

SSILLISSA

A what? What did you call me?

Jack is so overwhelmed by Doctor Ptarmigan he ignores Ssillissa's astonishment. Doctor Ptarmigan is still busy studying the ship's controls.

JACK

Doctor Ptarmigan? I think I've come up with a cure for the tree sickness. Don't you remember? My parents are on Venus...

Finally Doctor Ptarmigan addresses Jack directly.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Really Jack...your...poor wooden parents are not what this is all about at all.

Jack is hurt. Ulla pulls her blowpipe a little way from its hiding place. Munkulus can see Jack is weakened and steps in.

MUNKULUS

So if we may ask...what is this all about?

Doctor Ptarmigan begins to walk among the crew. Studying each one. He stops at Yarg and Squidley.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Ah yes. The Bipolar specimens from Duallos. We were going to try splitting you two up...

Yarg and Squidley hug each other in terror. Jack has recovered a little and is seeing Doctor Ptarmigan with new eyes.

JACK

Doctor Ptarmigan? Why are you here with these Arachnid devils?

Doctor Ptarmigan suddenly turns around quickly.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
Devils?! I fear it is you and I
who are the devils.

Doctor Ptarmigan has identified Art and Myrtle. He steps
closer to them, then grabs Art by the collar.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
I believe you have something I
need.

Art shoves him away and clenches his fist.

ART
I'd say you need a punch in the
mouth. I'd be happy to give it to
you.

JACK
Doctor Ptarmigan please! I told
them all about you. I said you
were...once my only friend...

Doctor Ptarmigan studies Jack. A moment of regret quickly
smothered.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
That was a long time ago.

JACK
So what happened?

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
I left Earth on a mission to study
the Arachnids.

He turns to the spiders who are standing to attention at the
entrance to the bridge.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
I came to study them as if they
were...mere specimens.

He goes close to an Arachnid and strokes the iron leg.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
The more I learnt. The more I
realized...These are the highest.
The most advanced. The most
beautiful...

ULLA

Beauty is obviously in the eye of
the beholder.

Doctor Ptarmigan glares at her.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Ah. A Martian savage.

JACK

You are not him. You are not
Doctor Ptarmigan...

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Oh but I am Jack. You see...on my
mission...I found out the truth.

Doctor Ptarmigan steps back and is entangled among the legs
of the spiders. They caress him gently.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

The bodies the arachnids inhabit
are just...shells.

A pause. He turns to Mr Webster and strokes his leg.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

Inside...there is a tiny creature.
It is almost...pure soul. The most
evolved form of life in the
universe...Each one...a tiny God.

Mr Webster hisses....

MR WEBSTER

Really, Doctor Ptarmigan, you are
too kind.

Ptarmigan begins to walk towards Art and Myrtle.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

For billions of years they lived in
peace among the planets. Hanging in
their palaces of silken thread.
Listening to the music of the
spheres. Their artists catching
sunlight in discs of web and
spinning it into rainbows.

He has reached Art and Myrtle and peers down at them.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
But then the Shaper came...and
infected the Universe with...the
diversity of organic...life.

A pause. Myrtle confronts him.

MYRTLE
What has this to do with us?

Doctor Ptarmigan smiles, looks all around.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
You mean you haven't worked it out?

A pause.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
The Shaper...was your mother.

Art and Myrtle react.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
She brought the infection of life
to this galaxy two billion years
ago.

ART
You're insane!

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
And now the infection spreads.
Spaceships pollute the Universe,
factories poison the planets.

He turns sharply....

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)
But the time has come to destroy
the work your mother did. It is
time to turn back the flow of time
itself.

Art suddenly yells....

ART
She wasn't a Shaper!! She was our
mother and she was kind and lovely
and...

As Art yells the locket begins to glow under Art's shirt.
Doctor Ptarmigan sees it and looks with wonder.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Ah! The key of life. Give it to me...

Doctor Ptarmigan goes to grab the locket but Art climbs some pipework and throws open a porthole, threatening to throw the locket out. The drop from the window is two hundred feet to the City below. The locket dangles on its golden chain, sparkling in the City lights.

Mr Webster goes to shoot a web but Ptarmigan stays his hand. Instead he pulls a pistol and grabs Myrtle. He holds the pistol to Myrtle's head.

PTARMIGAN

Give me the locket or I shoot her.

Jack pulls his sword but Mr Webster fires a web to hold his hand firm. Munkulus is pinned back against the wall. All eyes are now on Art.

ART

Let her go!

PTARMIGAN

Give me the locket!

An impasse. Art is thinking hard. The locket begins to glow. As Art thinks fast, Jack breaks free and yells out...

JACK

Doctor Ptarmigan what happened to you?! How did you become so heartless?!

Art hears the words and repeats softly....

ART

'The one who seems heartless'...

Ulla looks up at Art, a question in her eyes, her blowpipe ready....

ULLA (SOFTLY)

Shall I aim for his heart?

ART

No...(A pause)...I will.

Art has made a decision. He slowly climbs down the pipe work and confronts Ptarmigan. After a moment...

ART
Biscuits.

PTARMIGAN
I beg your pardon?

ART
You used to give Jack biscuits.
When he was a poor orphan boy. Out
of the goodness of your heart.

Ptarmigan's face is steely but there is a flicker of
reaction. Art waves his arm at the spiders...

ART
If your heart was good once it will
always be good. In your heart you
don't want to kill my sister do
you?

Mr Webster sees equivocation on Ptarmigan's face and steps
forward.

MR WEBSTER
We want to kill all life forms. Rid
the Universe of the impurity.
Isn't that right Doctor Ptarmigan?

Ptarmigan still has the gun raised but is blinking fast.
Myrtle is trembling in his arms. Jack has seen Art's strategy
and joins it....

JACK
You were kind to me.

ART
These grand schemes of destruction
are fine in theory. On the grand
scale. But in practise? When it is
one poor girl trembling in your
arms?

Ptarmigan is trying to steel himself...

JACK
The Doctor Ptarmigan I knew would
never kill an innocent girl.

ART
An orphan....

Ptarmigan is puzzled by his own weakness. He cocks the
trigger...but does not pull it. Mr Webster hisses...

MR WEBSTER

Doctor Ptarmigan! They're all going to die anyway. Show them we mean business....

ART (SOFTLY)

Biscuits, Doctor Ptarmigan.

A pause. Mr Webster goes to grab Myrtle but Ptarmigan waves the pistol at him. There is a short struggle and Art yells to Ulla...

ART

Now!! Fire!!

Ulla fires a dart at a nearby Arachnid and the explosion sends Doctor Ptarmigan flying. The light from the locket is blinding and Doctor Ptarmigan is forced to shield his eyes. Art has his own blowpipe in his mouth and is firing at the Arachnids. His first shot misses but his second takes out an Arachnid.

Yarg and Squidley yell out to Doctor Ptarmigan.

YARG

You thought about....

SQUIDLEY

..splitting us up...

YARG

...did you?!!

They roll themselves into balls and roll into Doctor Ptarmigan, knocking him off his feet. Ulla and Art are firing darts, cutting a path through the Arachnids.

Through the smoke and splintering Arachnid bodies, the crew make their escape from the bridge.

After they have gone, Doctor Ptarmigan struggles to his feet.

MR WEBSTER

You idiotic weak *human!*

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

Shut up and get after them!!

INT. ARACHNID CITY

The entire crew of the Sophronia is running in single file along one of the huge silver webs that make up the hexagon.

The lights of the City are a hundred feet below. Arachnid ships fly past.

JACK
Is everyone ok?

MUNKULUS
Ssillissa? Are you hurt?

SSILLISSA
No, I'm in one piece. (Proudly)
Tlingins don't bruise easily.

YARG
Squidley? Are....

SQUIDLEY
...you alright?

YARG/SQUIDLEY
I'm fine. Thank you.

GRINDLE
I'm ok too if anybody's bloody interested!

Suddenly they see a dozen Arachnids running towards them on the same thread of web. Jack has turned around to see a dozen Arachnids coming at them from the other direction, led by Mr Webster.

The crew are trapped on the web as if it were a tight rope, with giant spiders coming towards them from both directions. The drop below them is two hundred feet.

Munkulus pulls his sword.

MUNKULUS
I think the game is up Captain....

At that moment the locket begins to glow in Art's pocket. Then in the darkness above him he sees a glowing light...a shimmering shape which begins to resemble the outline of Valerie. Art turns to Jack....

ART
Do you see that?

JACK
See what?

Art realizes only he can see the light. The Arachnids are getting close. Then Art hears a voice whispering...

VALERIE

Cut the thread....

Art shields his eyes from the light....

ART

But...we'll fall...

VALERIE

*Cut the thread that holds
you...trust me.*

Art thinks fast. The Arachnids are almost upon them. Finally Art grabs Jack's sword and begins to hack at the web they are walking on.

JACK

What the hell are you doing?!!

ART

Hold on tight! Everyone!! Grab the web!

Jack is about to pull Art to his feet but Myrtle holds him back.

MYRTLE

Trust him. Hold tight.

Finally Art has cut through the strand of web. It immediately gives way and swings out towards the edge of the hexagon. The Arachnids fall from the web while the crew all hold on as it swings. Mr Webster shoots a web and saves himself.

In the wall around the hexagon Art sees that there is a door.

Art is at the bottom of the swinging web and manages to grab the handle of the door. This stops them from swinging. He opens the door and slides through it. The rest of the crew slide down the web one by one, like beads dropping from a severed necklace, and fall through the door.

INT. CATACOMBS

The door opens onto a dark chamber. Ulla lands with a bump. Myrtle lands on top of her, then Munkulus and the others. They get to their feet and look around. Art stops in his tracks. He senses something...

ART (SOFTLY)

Danger...

The second he speaks three Arachnid guards drop from the darkness above on silver threads. Myrtle shrieks. Ulla fires a dart to destroy one of the Arachnids and Munkulus and Jack take care of the others.

In the half light they see row upon row of bundles of web, spun around ghostly shapes. Ulla takes out a flint and lights a small candle.

As they step closer they see that the shapes are the bodies of creatures, all of which have been spun up into translucent coffins made of webbing.

JACK

What is this place?

ART

It is the place we've been heading for all along.

Art pulls some webbing away from the face of a body. They all begin to tear webbing away from the faces of the captive creatures. Myrtle gasps as she reveals a particular face.

MYRTLE

Sir Waverley Rain.

ULLA

The real Sir Waverley Rain.

Myrtle breaths deeply.

MYRTLE

I knew the man who invented the self cleaning lavatory couldn't really be evil.

Art feels the locket in his hand. He turns to Myrtle and speaks softly.

ART

Myrtle. They're here.

MYRTLE

Who are here?

ART

Follow me.

INT. DARK VAULT WITHIN THE CATACOMB

A large iron door is pushed open. A thin blue light enters and on the shaft of light, Art, then Myrtle then Jack and Ulla step inside.

A body wrapped in web is close to shot. Art approaches and after a long hesitation, pulls the webbing from the face.

Art and Myrtle both see their father's face.

Next to his body is a second body. Myrtle gently pulls the webbing away and reveals Valerie's face. A long moment. Myrtle touches her hair.

MYRTLE

She's real. This is really her...

Art steps forward and places the locket in the hand of his mother. He speaks softly.

ART

There, mother. My mission is fulfilled.

A long pause when there is no reaction. Then the locket glows. Suddenly Valerie smiles. She sits up and Myrtle shrieks. They all stare in wonder as Valerie slowly sits up and stretches, as if waking from a long sleep. Art reaches out to touch her.

ART (CONT'D)

She's...solid.

Valerie goes to first Art then Myrtle and hugs them. Then she begins to pull the last of the webbing from her body.

VALERIE

Help me.

Art and Myrtle help remove the webbing. Valerie then turns to Edward's body and gently reaches over to kiss him. She then puts the locket in his hands and Edward begins to wake. His eyes flicker then he looks up and smiles at Valerie.

EDWARD (MATTER OF FACT)

Oh, hello dear. Did you sleep well?

VALERIE

Very well thank you Edward.

Edward gets to his feet and dusts himself down as if waking up in a perfectly ordinary bedroom. Art and Myrtle, out of sheer joy, are half giggling, half crying.

ART

It's really them! Our boring,
boring parents!

EDWARD

Oh, do behave yourselves.

Art and Myrtle hug him hard...

ART

Yes, father! Yes....

MYRTLE

Always and forever.

Edward straightens his collar.

EDWARD

By the way, before you left home
did you remember to turn the
boilers off. You see I...

Valerie is dusting his shoulders.

VALERIE

Oh don't fuss Edward. We have to
get a move on.

At that moment, Valerie notices Ulla and Jack standing in the shadows.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

And who are they?

MYRTLE

One of them is my best friend Ulla.

A pause.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

And the other is....

JACK

I'm her boyfriend.

Valerie and Edward smile to each other.

VALERIE

We'll have to see if we approve,
won't we Edward.

Edward smiles and takes her arm. They walk between Art and Myrtle then between Jack and Ulla.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Come along everyone. The grown ups
are here now. Follow us.

INT. BLUE LIT TUNNEL

Valerie is leading the single file gang with a stately air. Art skips to catch up with Myrtle and Jack.

ART

I feel safe. For the first time in
ages I feel safe!!

JACK

I wouldn't speak too soon. Look...

Up ahead, they see three Arachnids heading their way. Valerie then Edward stop. Valerie raises her hand and turns to the following gang.

VALERIE

OK boys and girls. Our path is
blocked.

Ulla steps up with her blowpipe at the ready.

ULLA

It's Ok. I'll take them.

Valerie smiles.

VALERIE

No need for that dear.

Edward smiles and speaks softly...

EDWARD

I love it when she does this.

The spiders are approaching fast. Valerie takes a deep breath then looks to the others.

VALERIE

You can all swim can't you?

MYRTLE

Swim?

VALERIE

They're spiders. I'm going to wash them down the plughole.

Valerie raises her arms and turns around. Suddenly water begins to dribble then pour from her fingers. She opens her arms in one graceful movement and the water becomes a torrent shooting from her fingers. The tunnel begins to fill with water....

Art and Myrtle look to each other with astonishment. Myrtle speaks softly....

MYRTLE

Art? I think Doctor Ptarmigan may have been right about mother.

A wall of water suddenly sweeps them away.

INT. TUNNEL

The wall of water rushes by. First broken Arachnids then Art, Myrtle, Jack and the rest of the crew. They sweep by the foot of a web thread which is hanging down from the darkness.

Valerie grabs the web as she rushes past and the others grab on to her.

INT. DOME

In long shot we see all the crew climbing up the web like tiny spiders. They reach a platform where there is small Arachnid ship at anchor.

As they all climb on to the platform, Valerie dusts herself down....

VALERIE

Edward? Do you know how to hot-wire Arachnid delivery vehicles?

Edward examines the Arachnid ship and yanks open the door.

EDWARD

Actually I do believe I do.

He looks around the interior.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Going to be a bit of a squeeze
though.

INT. ARACHNID CITY

We see the commerce of the Arachnid City. Then see the stolen delivery vehicle flying erratically between webs...Ssillissa, the tentacle twins and Mr Munkulus are squeezed against the porthole windows.

INT. SPACE TENDER

Edward is at the controls of the stolen spaceship, getting the hang of it as he goes along. A sudden swerve has sent everyone else sprawling.

EDWARD

Fascinating. Absolutely
fascinating. It has a reverse
thrust which compensates for
steering errors...

ART

Dad, please just get us out of
here.

Suddenly Ulla calls out from a porthole window.

ULLA

I think we've been spotted.
Battleships on our tail.

Suddenly the ship is rocked by an explosion.

EDWARD

Ok. Better hold on tight.

The ship banks away again.

INT. DARK CORRIDOR

Doctor Ptarmigan is striding down the long half-lit corridor, where spiders webs hang in heavy drapes. He is being followed by Mr Webster, who scuttles at his heels on iron legs.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

It was a temporary moment of
weakness and won't happen again.

MR WEBSTER

So we shoot them on sight.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

No! Tell your Arachnids not to fire on them.

Mr Webster stops.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

We need that locket in one piece!
Let them get to their ship and we'll do a deal. (Pause) Then we'll kill them.

INT. ARACHNID CITY

The stolen ship increases speed dramatically to escape the pursuing Arachnid ships.

Finally it reaches the docking area of the Sophronia and comes to a halt. A hatch opens and the crew emerge.

INT. SMALL REST AREA INSIDE THE SOPHRONIA

Back on board the Sophronia, Art, Myrtle, Edward and Valerie are sitting at a table near to the porthole window, looking out at the roof of the dome. There is an awkward silence. A clock ticks.

EDWARD

So....I suppose we owe you both an explanation.

MYRTLE (HALF ANGRY)

Just a little.

Art speaks bitterly.

ART

Oh I'm sure it's all perfectly simple. Our mother who we thought was a nurse from Cambridgeshire was in fact a mythical being a billion years old!

Edward gets to his feet, begins to peer out at the stars.

VALERIE

Two billion.

MYRTLE

Let's just say you're old.

A pause.

VALERIE

It is the task of Shapers to plant the seeds of life. That's what I did. And for many millions of years I was a shapeless spirit who watched that life grow into all the beautiful varieties we know today.

Art is looking at the table, angry but fighting tears now.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Arthur are you alright?

He looks up.

ART

You're human too. You're our mother.

Myrtle puts her hand on his. Valerie turns to hide tears. Edward goes to her and holds her.

EDWARD

Yes. She is human. All Shapers must eventually choose a mortal form. She chose to become human. She did it because...

He hesitates...

EDWARD (CONT'D)

...for some bizarre reason she fell in love with me. A rather unsuccessful human inventor.

A pause. Valerie and Edward kiss.

ART

But why do they want the locket so badly?

VALERIE

The locket is a very...complex mechanism. It's power is...belief. Memory. Like any other keep-sake. You stare at it and feel the presence of someone who is long gone.

(MORE)

VALERIE (cont'd)
In this locket that energy is
multiplied many billions of times.

A pause.

MYRTLE
I always felt it.

Valerie smiles and Valerie and Myrtle hug each other. Edward
clears his throat.

EDWARD
But the reason Mr Webster wanted
the locket was because it is also
the ignition key.

ART
The ignition key of what?

EDWARD
Of Larklight.

Art and Myrtle look astonished.

VALERIE
Are you ready for another shock?

MYRTLE
No, but go on.

Suddenly the door to the rest area bursts open and Munkulus
enters.

MUNKULUS
Arachnid ships approaching!! All
hands on deck!!

INT. SOPHRONIA CORRIDOR

Art, Myrtle, Edward and Valerie are making their way toward
the bridge. As they hurry...

ART
Tell us about Larklight!

Valerie gets her dress caught on the same nail that Myrtle
caught her dress on. Myrtle helps her release it.

VALERIE
Larklight was my original
spaceship. It was how I reached
this galaxy.

ART

Our house? Our old pile of junk?

EDWARD

....Is the most powerful life force engine in the Universe.

Myrtle stops in her tracks.

MYRTLE

But the plumbing doesn't work! The doors creak and the floorboards are coming up.

VALERIE

Let's call it a very clever disguise.

EDWARD

If the Arachnids ever got those old engines started they could put them into reverse and destroy all life as we know it.

Art and Myrtle look at each other.

ART

No pressure then.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE SOPHRONIA

Jack is preparing for battle as Valerie, Art, Myrtle and Edward appear. Myrtle goes to Jack's side.

JACK

Are you Ok?

MYRTLE

You're still speaking to me even after you met my parents?

He smiles and touches her tenderly.

JACK

We both have unusual parents. The wedding will be...memorable.

Myrtle smiles. Suddenly the ship is shaken by an impact.

EXT. SOPHRONIA

The Sophronia is still tangled up in webbing, and two Arachnid ships are firing silver threads of web at the ship to fasten it even tighter. Two huge threads untangle in space and slap against the hull of the ship.

INT. ARACHNID SHIP

Mr Webster is peering through a periscope. Arachnid engineers are at the controls. In the porthole window we can see the Sophronia stuck fast in webbing and also held in place by five heavy silver threads.

Doctor Ptarmigan enters.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
You have them secured Mr Webster?

MR WEBSTER
They're going nowhere.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN
Prepare another landing pod.

MR WEBSTER
Yes Doctor.

Mr Webster turns...

MR WEBSTER (CONT'D)
And this time leave your humanity
out of it.

INT. SOPHRONIA

Jack and Art are peering out at the third thread of web stuck to the window. Ssillissa is beside Jack.

JACK
Is there anything you can give us
Ssillissa?

SSILLISSA
Even with full power we'd never
pull ourselves free of this.

Edward smiles as if there were no problem and turns from the space chart.

EDWARD

Captain, I've charted a course that will take us straight to Larklight.

ART

Dad, you don't understand. We're stuck in a giant spiders' web.

MUNKULUS

Trapped like a big juicy fly.

Edward ignores them as Valerie enters from the engine room.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Everything sorted dear?

VALERIE (SMILING)

Yes. All ship-shape.

Jack turns. There is a huge flash from the engine room. The ship begins to vibrate. The entire bridge then begins to glow orange, then blue then violet...

SSILLISSA

What have you done to my engines?

VALERIE

I had a conversation with them. They seemed to think they were old nags built to pull cargo. I told them they were race horses.

She turns to Munkulus and the crew.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I suggest you fasten seat belts.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE ARACHNID SHIP

Mr Webster scuttles in through an air tight door.

MR WEBSTER

Landing pod ready Doctor Ptarmigan.

As Ptarmigan reacts the Arachnid ship trembles a little. There is a flash of light from the Sophronia's rear engines.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

What was that?

The Archanid engineers begin to check their controls. There is another burst of flame and the Arachnid ship trembles again. Slowly the Sophronia begins to move...stretching one then two then three of the silver webs that hold her in place.

MR WEBSTER

This...isn't possible. Those webs are stronger than steel...

The Sophronia is now pulling the threads and stretching them further. Doctor Ptarmigan has to hold on to the bridge.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (BITTERLY)

The power of life.

The webs are being stretched thin and we hear them vibrating. Finally they snap. Suddenly the Sophronia shoots forward through space at a speed which makes it contract into a ball of light. The light fills the window of the Arachnid ship and Doctor Ptarmigan has to cover his eyes.

Then the Sophronia is gone.

EXT. SOPHRONIA

The moon hangs bright and silver among the stars. We see the silhouette of the Sophronia pass before it at lightning speed.

INT. ARACHNID SHIP

The bridge of the Arachnid ship is in darkness. There is a long pause. Ptarmigan is staring out at the eerie lights of the Arachnid City. Mr Webster shuffles close.

MR WEBSTER

So. What now...Doctor?

A pause. Ptarmigan finally smiles and speaks to the window.

PTARMIGAN

Plan B.

A pause.

PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

Chart a course for Earth.

EXT. SOPHRONIA/LARKLIGHT

The Sophronia shoots through shot then suddenly slows.

It begins to drift. Then in silhouette against the moon we see the turrets and towers of larklight.

The old house has thick banks of white webbing all around the walls and foundations. The Sophronia moves slowly into docking position.

The bow doors of the Sophronia open and we see Edward, then Valerie then the others making their way towards the back door of the house.

EXT. LARKLIGHT BACK DOOR

The entire crew of the Sophronia along with the Mumby's, Jack and Ulla are waiting to enter the house. Edward is rifling through his pockets. Valerie registers impatience.

EDWARD

Sorry everyone, I...seem to have
mislaid the key.

Art and Myrtle roll their eyes.

ART

It's Ok dad, we didn't lock it.

Art pushes the door and it opens.

INT. LARKLIGHT DRAWING ROOM

As Valerie, Edward, Art and Myrtle enter their old home they link arms. They all share a moment. Valerie looks all around and straightens her painting on the wall. Then she turns.

VALERIE

Now. We must start Larklight's
engines and get her to safety.

A pause. Edward peers out of a window.

EDWARD

I can't believe they didn't leave
anyone to guard the place.

There is rumble from outside. Munkulus is at a window and calls out.

MUNKULUS

Arachnids on the starboard bow!!

EDWARD

Ah. I see. It's a trap. How jolly.

EXT. LARKLIGHT

Four then five Arachnid ships suddenly appear from behind the moon. They converge on the house and fire silver webs at the windows and doors. They use the webs to scuttle into the house, invading in numbers through every entrance.

INT. LARKLIGHT

The battle has begun, with all hands engaged in fighting off the invading Arachnids. Edward manages to find Art. He has the locket and puts it around Art's neck.

EDWARD

Arthur! Come with me!

INT. CELLAR STAIRS

The dark staircase leads down to the gravitational machine which we saw in the opening scenes. The cellar is half lit and shaken by the rumble of fighting up above.

Edward and Art tumble down the stairs.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

The battle appears to be all but lost. Valerie, Myrtle and Ulla are backed against the fireplace with Arachnids slowly closing in on them. Ulla is out of ammunition. Munkulus is being held upside down in the leg of an Arachnid. Another Arachnid purrs and begins to stroke Myrtle's arm...

Suddenly, Jack Havoc swings across the room on a light fitting and crashes into the Arachnid who has hold of Myrtle.

He balances on an Arachnid leg and uses his sword to force the Arachnid to let her go. He grabs her and then swings with Myrtle in his arms back across the room to where Valerie and Ulla are watching, impressed. As Myrtle recovers, Valerie speaks confidentially...

VALERIE (CONT'D)

He's rather sweet isn't he dear.

INT. CELLAR

Edward is lying on the floor, sleeves rolled up, with a wrench in his hand, just as he did in the opening scenes. Art is standing guard.

EDWARD

Pass me the screwdriver would you Arthur.

Arthur passes the screwdriver and as he does the cellar door bursts open above their heads. Three huge Arachnids come tumbling down the stairs.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Hold them off! Ten seconds.

Art has run out of ammunition too and so grabs a crowbar. He begins to bash away at the Arachnids but one of them grabs him and holds him aloft...

JUMP CUT to close-up of Edward using the wrench to turn a rusted control knob. Through oil and grime we see the words 'STANDARD BRITISH GRAVITY', below that 'ZERO GRAVITY' and high above that, in bright red letters...'SUPER NOVA MAXIMUM GRAVITY'.

As the Arachnid prepares to dash Art against the iron work, Edward manages to turn the gravity control up to maximum.

THE EFFECT IS INSTANT.

The three spiders in the cellar collapse on their spiny legs....

INT. DRAWING ROOM

The spiders closing in on Jack, Ulla, Myrtle and Valerie are all similarly crushed by the extra gravity. The spider holding Munkulus collapses in a heap and Munkulus crawls free. Paintings, ornaments, light fittings, candles and curtains are all sucked from the walls and crash to the floor.

INT. CORRIDOR

Jack leads Myrtle, Ulla and Valerie, half crawling, half walking towards the cellar door. They move as if weighed down by ton weights. The Arachnids try to grab their clothes but the weight of the gravity is too much for them.

INT. CELLAR

Art and Edward are lying side-by-side, almost pinned to the floor by gravity.

EDWARD

The gravity machine won't sustain this level for long. Give me the locket.

Art takes the locket from inside his shirt. As he tries to hand it over to Edward the extra gravity pulls it from his grasp and it falls down through a ventilation grate.

INT. CORRIDOR NEAR CELLAR DOOR

Jack uses his sword to prize the leg of an Arachnid away from the cellar door. The second he's on the top step the extra gravity pulls him down the steep stairs like a snow-boarder. Ulla, Myrtle and Valerie all follow, cascading down the stairs.

INT. CELLAR

Edward and Art have now been joined by Jack, Valerie, Myrtle, and Ulla. They are all half pinned to the floor. Valerie manages to raise herself to her knees.

VALERIE

By the look on your face you've done something silly Edward.

EDWARD

You don't happen to remember where the ventilation shafts go to do you?

Suddenly there is a deep rumbling noise from the gravity machine. Then some loud bangs and a huge jet of steam. The golden orbs that float above the gravity machine suddenly fly into space and begin to bounce around.

Then the gravity indicator switches from super nova to zero.

Once again everyone begins to float. Edward and Valerie rise up almost as one and float into each other's arms. Myrtle and Jack find themselves similarly entwined.

Suddenly....

ART

Dad, look!!!

The locket has floated up to the grille of the ventilation shaft and is almost free. Jack manages to yank it loose and it floats up.

Motion is slowed as everyone watches the progress of the locket. An Arachnid floats into view and swipes at it but just misses. The locket floats past the face of each of them in turn, the chain twisting and swirling in a slow dance.

Finally Valerie grabs the locket and twists herself around. Edward has dived close and has pulled open a small door in the gravity machine.

Behind the door there is a small round hole the exact size of the locket. Slowly, Valerie turns the locket around and fits it into the hole, where it fits snugly.

She pushes it into position and Edward's hand covers her hand to add extra force. A bright light shines through their hands, making their bones appear in X-ray.

Then there is a blinding flash of light.

INT. LARKLIGHT CORRIDOR, NEAR THE CELLAR DOOR

The dust is settling. Normal gravity has been restored. Bits and pieces of Arachnid are strewn around.

We hear bird song, the clatter of horse hooves coming from outside. Bright sunlight penetrates in shafts.

The cellar door is kicked open. First Jack, then Art, Myrtle, Ulla, Valerie and Edward begin to emerge from the cellar, coughing in the dust.

Jack leans against the wall, gathering his wits. Myrtle comes to his side and he takes her arm. Valerie begins to adjust her hair and dust herself off.

VALERIE

We're here.

MYRTLE

We're where?

Edward and Valerie come close to each other.

VALERIE

I suppose all us humans would call
it the same thing.

A pause.

EDWARD

Home.

EXT. LARKLIGHT

From above we see that Larklight is now an ordinary Victorian house in a suburban street, among many other ordinary houses. Art, Jack, Myrtle and Ulla run from the house into the garden.

EXT. GARDEN

Apple trees and Victorian plum trees grow and the hedges are overgrown. Myrtle wipes a tear from her eye. Art looks around and in wonder picks an apple from the tree. Myrtle turns to Valerie who smiles.

VALERIE

Yes. This is Earth.

Myrtle twirls around and around on the lawn, staring up at the sky then goes to Jack.

MYRTLE

Jack!! You didn't tell me.
It's...so...beautiful.

Jack reaches up and plucks an apple from the tree and offers it to Myrtle. She takes it.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

Can we stay here Jack? Forever?

Valerie takes their hands.

VALERIE

I'm afraid we still have work to
do.

A pause. A large Aether ship cruises low over head.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Larklight will have brought us to
this particular spot for a reason.

She looks up and sees the Aether engine is trailing a huge Union Jack flag.

VALERIE

And I imagine it's something to do with that.

They all look up to the skies, which are filled with ships carrying Union flags. Valerie smiles and shades her eyes.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Who fancies going to the Great Exhibition?

EXT. CRYSTAL PALACE/GREAT EXHIBITION

The music of military bands and the shouting of a happy crowd.

The crowd is converging on the grounds of a gigantic glass palace, domed and arched and held together by threads of iron. The throng is parting near to the entrance of the palace gardens, where police on horseback are escorting a golden carriage.

Inside the carriage we glimpse Her Majesty Queen Victoria, waving coldly at the crowds. The crowd swallows up the road in her wake and everyone waves their tiny Union Jack flags.

EXT. CROWDS

The crowd is made up mostly of humans but there are aliens of every kind amongst them too. We see Art, Jack, Myrtle, Valerie and Edward pushing their way through the crowds. Behind them are the crew of the Sophronia.

EXT. CRYSTAL PALACE GRAND OPENING STAGE

From the point of view of the crowd we see Queen Victoria being helped onto the stage by her courtiers. The Crystal Palace itself is sparkling behind her. The crowd is cheering wildly.

Sir Waverley rain is beside the Queen, preparing to cut the red ribbon.

EXT. CROWD

Art, Jack, Myrtle, Edward and Valerie are craning their necks to see the Queen. Munkulus is tossing first Yarg then Squidley high up in the air and catching them so they can catch a glimpse. Valerie looks troubled.

MYRTLE

Mother? What is it?

Valerie gestures towards the stage where the Queen is standing. Jack's face suddenly clouds.

JACK (SOFTLY, WITH DREAD)

By the valleys of Venus...look who
it is.

As the Queen is helped to her feet, ready to make a speech, we see that among the dignitaries, next to Sir Waverley Rain is....DOCTOR PTARMIGAN.

EXT. CROWD

Edward is moving forward in the crowd.

EDWARD

Valerie, what are we going to do?

VALERIE

We have to stop him.

EXT. CRYSTAL PALACE STAGE

Doctor Ptarmigan is making small talk with dignitaries and peers out across the crowd. He suddenly catches sight of the tentacle twins on Munkulus's shoulders. He then sees Valerie, Edward, Art, Jack and Myrtle pushing their way through the crowd toward the stage. He thinks fast....

EXT. CROWD

Valerie is desperately pushing towards the stage. Jack steps on someone's foot and an altercation breaks out. Then there is a gasp from the crowd...

EXT. CRYSTAL PALACE STAGE

Doctor Ptarmigan has pulled a gun and now has Queen Victoria in his arms with the gun pointing to her head. Soldiers and guards step forward but Doctor Ptarmigan yells....

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

If anyone moves one more step not even God will save the Queen.

He engages his pistol. The crowd has fallen silent. Doctor Ptarmigan steps forward to the microphone which has been prepared for the Queen's speech.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

Now. At last. Oh people of Earth, I have the chance to address you all.

A guard makes a grab for him but he shoves the pistol into the Queen's face.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

For a thousand thousand Millennia you life forms have choked and poisoned the planets for your own profit. But soon the old order will be restored.

A pause. Ptarmigan sees a baby in the arms of its mother. The sight makes him pause...hesitate....

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

And the music of the spheres will play again.

He turns and gestures at the Crystal Palace.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

This...beautiful structure, which houses all the very latest innovations of your technical world...is...in fact..a gigantic time-bomb.

A gasp from the crowd. The baby cries and Ptarmigan is distracted again. He wipes his brow...

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

...Designed by a likeness of Sir Waverley Rain...for one purpose.

Sir Waverley begins to transform into Mr Webster.

MR WEBSTER

The destruction of the Earth!

EXT. CROWD

Suddenly a huge shadow has begun to sweep across the crowd. People begin to look up to the sky. A giant Arachnid spaceship is gliding silently into position near to The Crystal Palace. The crowd is awed by its size.

EXT. CRYSTAL PALACE STAGE

Doctor Ptarmigan has seen the spaceship and forces himself to continue.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN

In exactly...twenty seconds, this Palace of technology will explode and destroy the planet. The force of the explosion will be such that there will be a chain reaction which will destroy all life in the solar system...

He looks up at the spaceship...he speaks almost with regret.

DOCTOR PTARMIGAN (CONT'D)

Except for the life of the divine ones.

At that moment, Mr Webster fires a web which attaches to the Arachnid ship. Doctor Ptarmigan hesitates. Jack has fought his way to the front of the crowd and leaps up to confront Ptarmigan.

JACK

Doctor Ptarmigan!! In the name of humanity. Stop this. Stay and help us defuse the bomb!! Don't leave us. You're a good man.

A long moment between them.

PTARMIGAN

Jack...really...there is a higher good....

Mr Webster steps forward.

MR WEBSTER

Don't weaken doctor!! Remember the
music of the spheres!!

Mr Webster grabs the web-thread and beckons Ptarmigan. We expect Doctor Ptarmigan to relent, to see sense...

Instead he chooses destruction. He gives Jack a final look of regret then he grabs the thread of web and is pulled away from the stage by the Arachnid ship. Guards and citizens immediately begin to open fire but Doctor Ptarmigan and Mr Webster are both now swinging high above the crowds.

As he swings, Mr Webster begins a countdown....

MR WEBSTER

Count down to your doom,
earthlings...Fifteen, sixteen...

EXT. CROWD

The countdown is taken up by individuals who mouth then speak the numbers.

LADY(TERRIFIED)

Fourteen?

GENTLEMAN

Thirteen.

IONIAN

Twelve...

Now the entire crowd is chanting the countdown. Valerie is listening to the countdown stoically...Jack is wild with anger...Valerie is a still point.

VALERIE (SOFTLY)

I really thought his kind heart
would win out.

JACK

We have to do something!!

The Crystal Palace begins to rumble. A policeman yells...

POLICEMAN

She's going to blow!!!

Myrtle is fighting to be calm.

MYRTLE

Mother, I don't want to die. I
happen to be in love.

Valerie smiles. She takes Edward's hand.

VALERIE

So am I dear. That's all that
matters.

The crowd has begun to scatter in all directions. Art,
Myrtle, Jack, Edward, Ulla and the entire crew are looking to
Valerie. Finally....

VALERIE (CONT'D)

We will all meet again very soon.

EXT. PLANET EARTH FROM BEYOND THE MOON

The Earth hangs in the empty blackness of space, a beautiful
blue marble, bathed in sunlight. Then it explodes in a giant
ball of flame.

BLACKNESS. SILENCE FOR A LONG TIME. THEN.....

INT. VICTORIAN DRAWING ROOM, DAY

A pyramid shaped metronome is being wound up by delicate
female fingers.

We pull wide to reveal Myrtle dressed in prim Victorian lace,
sitting at an upright piano, with sheet music on the piano's
music stand.

We are seeing a brief repeat glimpse of the opening scene.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM

Upstairs, Art is lying on his unmade bed, reading a back
issue of the *London Illustrated News*. (This time we glimpse a
headline '*Sir Richard Burton discovers new waterfall*').

Art reacts with weary disgust when he hears the thunderous
first bars of piano music from downstairs.

INT. OBSERVATORY IN A FAR PART OF THE HOUSE

Edward is working on the construction of a small toy steam engine, but it is nothing close to the elaborate machine we saw in the opening scenes. Myrtle's piano music is seeping through the walls and Edward sighs wearily.

Then Valerie enters, dressed in smart Victorian attire. She kisses Edward on the forehead.

He turns and smiles.

EDWARD

So. Are you going to tell me how you did it?

Valerie sits down and examines a gasket from the steam contraption.

VALERIE

I'm afraid I had to fiddle with the flow of time and then pop us all into a parallel Universe.

Edward is studying a gasket.

EDWARD (SOFTLY)

Oh is that all.

He goes to sit beside her.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

How far back did you go?

VALERIE

Do you remember I told you that a couple of hundred years ago I was hiding in an apple tree in Isaac Newton's garden?

EDWARD

When you helped him to discover gravity by dropping an apple on his head.

VALERIE

But after that I went too far and told him about the secrets of space travel. I've decided that on reflection...that was a mistake.

EDWARD

So you went back and just did the gravity bit.

She nods.

VALERIE

We are now in a Universe with no Aether engines. No travel to other planets. No Ionians or Arachnids...

EDWARD

How unutterably dull.

VALERIE

Not really. All the important things are the same.

They smile at each other. Suddenly Art bursts in.

ART

Mother, please tell Myrtle to stop making that dreadful racket...

Edward panics when he sees Art and throws a tablecloth over the steam engine...a poor attempt to hide it. Art is a little thrown. Art goes to peek under the tablecloth but Valerie steps in his way.

VALERIE

Why don't you go and tell your sister that dinner is ready.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

The table is set for dinner. Art, Myrtle, Edward and Valerie are sitting with heads bowed.

EDWARD

Dear Lord, for what we are about to receive, may the good Lord make us truly grateful.

VALERIE

Amen.

The door to the kitchen opens and Ulla enters, carrying a large roast chicken. In *this* Universe she is a maid, dressed in a maid's uniform and she's lost the facial markings of a Martian.

ART
Oh that smells good.

VALERIE
Ursula, why don't you sit down and
join us?

ULLA (SHOCKED)
Join you?

VALERIE
It's Art's birthday. He asked
especially that you should sit down
with us...

Art is burning with embarrassment.

ART
Mother!

VALERIE
Shush Arthur. You may not have
asked in words but you do it every
day with your eyes. Ursula, please
sit down.

Ulla hesitates then sits down. As she does there is a knock
at the door. Myrtle is about to get up but Valerie stops
her.

EXT. LARKLIGHT BACKDOOR

The house is now an ordinary house in an ordinary street.
The Victorian scene outside has no aliens of any kind.

Standing at the back door is Jack Havoc, dressed as a
butcher's boy, carrying a basket of meat. The door opens and
Jack is obviously expecting someone else.

JACK
Myrt....oh. Hello ma'am.

VALERIE
Put that basket down and come in.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

Everyone is sitting at the table with the chicken still
steaming. Valerie enters from the kitchen with a wildly
embarrassed Jack in tow. He hesitates.

VALERIE

Oh do stop dawdling.

Jack finally steps into the room. Edward hides a smile.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I believe this is the young man who Myrtle has been..I think the expression is 'carrying on with'.

Myrtle gets to her feet.

MYRTLE

Mother! I will never forgive you!

VALERIE

She hasn't told us about him because she thinks we won't approve of a mere butcher's boy...

Jack and Myrtle speak in unison.

JACK/MYRTLE

Butcher's apprentice.

Valerie smiles and prepares to serve food.

VALERIE

Honestly. The way you've been hiding him away anyone would think he was a famous pirate or something.

Edward stifles a giggle. Art peers at him.

ART

Why are my parents insane?

VALERIE

Take a seat Jack. You're making the place look untidy. Are your mother and father feeling better Jack?

JACK

They had a touch of flu but they're fine now thanks. (Pause) How did you know they were ill?

Valerie doesn't answer. After a hesitation Jack sits down. He and Art swap smiles.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

There now. We are all gathered. As a family. And perhaps this is as good a time as any to remember.

She smiles to them all.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

We are all very lucky to have each other.

She looks to the table.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Apart from the poor chicken.

Edward clinks his glass.

EDWARD

Very well said. And may I say in addition...Happy Birthday Arthur. And many happy returns of the day.

VALERIE

What a curious expression that is. Shall we sing?

They begin to sing 'Happy Birthday'.

As they sing we pull away and out of the room to see the warm family scene from the street outside, where ordinary life continues as if nothing had ever happened.

THE END