

SEALED ORDERS

by

Ben Thompson

PRODUCTION NOTES:

There are three main characters, the SPACEMAN, the SPACEWOMAN and the computer COBRA. Additional small parts exist for a BABY and a young GIRL.

The intonation of the characters' speech is written with American English in mind, but there's no real reason why they have to speak like that. The script could easily, with minor adjustments, be spoken by English, Irish, Scottish or probably any variant of English accent or dialect. The characters essentially are universal humans and not bound by any nationality.

CHARACTER NOTES:

The SPACEMAN is efficient, basically good-natured and not much more needs to be said.

The SPACEWOMAN has an efficient, military sounding voice UNTIL scene 11 when she lets down her hair, where it is noted in the text that her voice must become much softer and more seductive. This is quite crucial to the effect of the play. Note that her voice does not need to be *harsh* as such, just brisk, efficient and rather brittle, perhaps. After scene 11, it changes of course.

COBRA has an electronically treated voice like HAL in 2001 or a DALEK, there's plenty of latitude here.

SCENE 1.

CABIN INTERIOR
SOUND OF INSTRUMENTS CLICKING AND
BLEEPING, FUEL LOADING

SPACEMAN: Yep. All systems go as far as I can see. Waiting on co-pilot Loris.

Hello, hello. Yes sir.

COPILOT ENTERS

T minus one twenty Loris, T minus one twenty I am on amber alert here.

SPACEWOMAN: Sorry Sir.

SPACEMAN: Hey, wait a minute, you're not Loris!

SPACEWOMAN: No Sir. Lieutenant Loris was pulled from the mission, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Hello, tower! Urgent request. Confirm Lieutenant Loris replaced on this mission.

What? Why wasn't I told? What reason? Health problem? I saw the Lieutenant this morning, he had no visible ... what? Confirmed.

(TO SPACEWOMAN) Your name. He wants your name. Confirm your rank and name.

SPACEWOMAN: Lieutenant White reporting for duty sir.

SPACEMAN: (TO RADIO) White. Ok. Confirmed. What a dog's breakfast. And you too, Sir, have a nice day.

(TO COBRA) Cobra, orders?

COBRA IS THE SHIP'S COMPUTER. COBRA'S
VOICE IS ELECTRONICALLY TREATED AND
SOUNDS MECHANICAL AND DISTORTED.

COBRA: (D) Have a nice day.

SPACEWOMAN: Is that all?

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number one. Have a nice day Commander, that's all. Your orders are not to dream.

SPACEWOMAN: Why do they always say that?

SPACEMAN: No time to argue. T minus sixty coming up. Get your seatbelt on and get your mind on the job. Audible countdown starts T minus sixty.

COUNTDOWN: Sixty, fiftynine, fiftyeight

THE TWO ASTRONAUTS CONTINUE THEIR DIALOGUE OVER THE COUNTDOWN

SPACEMAN: Cabin pressure, lights, fuel lines correct. Radio links go. Bio compartments pressurised. Seals check. All systems go.

SPACEWOMAN: Waste disposal locked. Outer airlock doors locked. Inner airlock doors locked. Sir, sir, you have an alert there, Sir.

SPACEMAN: What? It's a buckle alert, not mission critical. Your buckle. Is it fastened?

SPACEWOMAN: Seems ok, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Undo it and do it up again. Here, I'll do it.

SOUND EFFECT: CLINK CLUNK

That's ok. Clunk click every trip.

Are you wearing additional headgear, Spaceman?

SPACEWOMAN: Headgear, Sir?

SPACEMAN: Hold on now, here we go!

COUNTDOWN (CONT'D): Nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, zero.

SOUND EFFECT: WHOOSHING OF ROCKET ENGINES.

SPACEMAN: Four Gs, five Gs, six Gs, uuuuurgh!

SCENE 2.

IN ORBIT

MUSIC: THE BLUE DANUBE OR SOMETHING

SPACEMAN: That didn't go so badly.

SPACEWOMAN: No, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Helmets off then – let's get acquainted.

SPACEWOMAN: Sir?

SPACEMAN: I want to see the face of the man I'm working with.

SPACEWOMAN: Sir!

SOUND EFFECT: CLICKING OF HELMET LOCKS.

SPACEMAN: Name's Black, Lieutenant Commander Thomas Black MTC 7.

SPACEWOMAN: White. Lieutenant Sam White reporting for duty, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Which unit?

SPACEWOMAN: Unit 7 Sir.

SPACEMAN: That's my unit Spaceman. I know everyone in that unit.

SPACEWOMAN: FTC 7 Sir.

SPACEMAN: FTC? You mean you're a – a female?

SPACEWOMAN: Yes, Sir. Do you have any objections, Sir?

SPACEMAN: Now hold on a minute Spaceman, I was not, I was never informed of the possibility of, now wait a minute Space, er Spacefemale ...

SPACEWOMAN: Well, I don't feel too good about it either, Sir. I was only informed of the substitution at T minus 600, Sir.

SPACEMAN: And now I come to think of it, what exactly is that additional headgear you're wearing?

SPACEWOMAN: That's not headgear Sir.

SPACEMAN: Well, what is it?

SPACEWOMAN: That's hair, Sir. Pinned up on top of my head. In a bun, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Are all females like you?

SPACEWOMAN: In what way?

SPACEMAN: Vain.

SPACEWOMAN: Are you trying to make me cry Sir?

SPACEMAN: No, just asking you a question.

SPACEWOMAN: I'm not vain, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Yes you are, why else would you have all that non-functional decoration?

SPACEWOMAN: Orders Sir.

SPACEMAN: Orders?

SPACEWOMAN: For the last three years, Sir, orders. I wasn't allowed to cut it.

SPACEMAN: Why?

SPACEWOMAN: No reason given, Sir. Orders from on high.

Sir?

SPACEMAN: Yes, Space – er Spacewoman?

SPACEWOMAN: Call me Soldier, Sir. My training is Space Corps but technically my rank is Infantrywoman Lieutenant. Please call me Soldier or at any rate something other than Spacewoman. I would appreciate it.

SPACEMAN: Very well, Soldier.

SPACEWOMAN: Will you acquaint me with the mission profile? I was told I would be briefed once I was aboard, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Our destination is a planet known only as LSP 3090 which is the third planet in the solar system of main sequence star LSS 712A distance about 12 light years. Purpose of mission ... not disclosed.

SPACEWOMAN: Prospecting, Sir?

SPACEMAN: Sealed orders. All I can tell you is that we are under sealed orders. These will be delivered from time to time by electronic mail. The orders are addressed to me as mission commander though you personally may receive additional supplementary orders from time to time. That's all I know.

COBRA: (D) Prepare to receive sealed orders.

SPACEMAN: Roger Cobra. We are prepared. What are our orders?

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number two. Orders. Set course and check all instruments. Course details are being printed now. Lieutenant White's orders will follow.

SOUND EFFECT: CLACKING OF PRINTER

SPACEMAN: Fourth quadrant, warp factor four. Fourty four degrees four minutes four seconds right ascension. Link to quadrant four object map object ID LSP 3090 of LSS 712A. Autopilot diagnostics run one run two. Check, confirm.

SPACEWOMAN: Check life support systems. Oxygen level 98 percent check. Backup resuss check all trip switches

(SPACEWOMAN/CONT'D OVER)

SOUND EFFECT: CLICK CLICK CLICK CLICK

SPACEWOMAN(CONT'D): all trips go run diagnostics, good.

SPACEMAN: Better take a leak if we're going to sleep for fourteen years.

SPACEWOMAN: After you, Commander.

SPACEMAN: Just call me Spaceman. Back in a minute.

SPACEWOMAN: Do one for me too, Spaceman.

SCENE 3.

CABIN INTERIOR

SPACEWOMAN: What? Where am I? Who, who am I?

SPACEMAN: What? Where? Who are you? What is this?

COBRA: (D) Attention please attention please in-flight briefing.

You are suffering temporary amnesia. This is quite normal. You are on an interstellar mission and have been temporarily woken from cryosleep for medical checks. These will soon be completed and you will be returned to sleep. Please do not attempt to move as your limbic nervous system is still suspended. Please do not attempt to move as your limbic nervous system is still suspended.

SPACEWOMAN: I can't move, I can't move help me!

SPACEMAN: What is this?

COBRA: (D) Your attention please. Medical checks have been completed. You will be returned to cryosleep before migraine sets in

Your orders are not to dream.

SCENE 4.

CABIN INTERIOR

**THIS SCENE IS INTENTIONALLY IDENTICAL
TO THE PREVIOUS SCENE.**

SPACEWOMAN: What? Where am I? Who, who am I?

SPACEMAN: What? Where? Who are you? What is this?

COBRA: (D) Attention please attention please in-flight briefing.

You are suffering temporary amnesia. This is quite normal. You are on an interstellar mission and have been temporarily woken from cryosleep for medical checks. These will soon be completed and you will be returned to sleep. Please do not attempt to move as your limbic nervous system is still suspended. Please do not attempt to move as your limbic nervous system is still suspended.

SPACEWOMAN: I can't move, I can't move help me!

SPACEMAN: What is this?

COBRA: (D) Your attention please. Medical checks have been completed. You will be returned to cryosleep before migraine sets in

Your orders are not to dream.

SCENE 5.

CABIN INTERIOR. LANDING.

SPACEWOMAN: What? Where am I? Who, who am I?

SPACEMAN: What? Where? Who are you? What is this?

COBRA: (D) Attention please attention please in-flight briefing.

(COBRA/CONT'D OVER)

COBRA (CONT'D):

You are suffering temporary amnesia. This is quite normal. You are on an interstellar mission and are now approaching your destination. Please do not attempt to move as your limbic nervous system is still suspended. Please do not attempt to move as your limbic nervous system is still suspended.

You may now attempt to move your hands and feet. You may be suffering post cryogenic migraine. This is quite normal. Migraine tablets will alleviate the pain. You will find migraine tablets in your hand locker.

You are suffering temporary amnesia. This is quite normal. You are on an interstellar mission and are now approaching your destination. The recommended procedure is to read the briefing notes on the display in front of you. This will remind you of who and where you are. You should regain full consciousness and memory function within a few seconds.

SPACEMAN:

What's that smell, co – co – coffee?

COBRA:

(D) Correct Commander Black. Sealed order number three. Wake up and smell the coffee.

SCENE 6.

CABIN INTERIOR.

SPACEMAN:

Ah God! What coffee! Coffee never tasted so good.

SPACEWOMAN:

(SINGS) I am sailing, I am sailing

SPACEMAN:

Don't you just *love* this feeling!

SPACEWOMAN:

That's what it's all about.

SPACEMAN:

Just awakened from cryosleep, fresh into orbit around a planet you've never seen before, just had that first cup of hot milky coffee!

SPACEWOMAN:

Yes, siree that's what it's all about!

SPACEMAN: You see the whole Universe spread out on the console in real time just as it's happening now. White dwarfs. Red giants. Black holes. Quasars. Supernovae fresh out of clover ... don't you ever get a feeling like paradise regained, like coasting, a sense of unbounded freedom, of limits endlessly falling away?

SPACEWOMAN: Want another coffee? I'm making some more.

SPACEMAN: Unlimited refills too! Been in Space Corps long?

SPACEWOMAN: Since I was eighteen. I'm twenty six now. You?

SPACEMAN: Just gone twenty five. Born to it. Incubated in the Space Corps tanks. Seed of a Space Devil, ace flyer, died in action in sector nine. Egg of a palaeontologist. All they told me. Childhood, you know, all training. Physics, maths, yoga, ontology and getting the Gs up& up & up. How about yours?

SPACEWOMAN: Mine, Sir? Government issue standard childhood.

SPACEMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

SPACEWOMAN: Not at all, Sir. It wasn't too bad. What was it like in the Space corps, Sir? Did you have a mother?

SPACEMAN: I do have a vivid memory of a woman bending over me, when I was very, very small. Her hair over my face, her voice like music, her smell blissful like musk. Musk. Is that a word, musk? Who she was I can't say. Otherwise I can't recollect having a mother. But there were plenty of games.

SPACEWOMAN: No females around MTC?

SPACEMAN: No females. No contact. I heard that FTC existed, everyone in MTC has heard of it. We were never sure if it was a fairy story. How many units are there?

SPACEWOMAN: Only seven, I think.

COBRA: (D) Prepare to receive sealed orders.

SPACEMAN: Here come our orders, Soldier.

Roger Cobra. We are prepared. What are our orders?

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number four.

Direction location package has determined a landing place on LSP 3090. After technical checks are complete you are to assign control of landing co-ordinates to the DLP. After landing the temporary biosphere will attempt to auto erect. If there are unforeseen obstacles you are to manually intervene to facilitate or abort installation and consider a vehicle hop to a new location as appropriate. Your orders are being printed now.

SOUND EFFECT: PRINTER.

SPACEMAN: Oxygen level check. Fuel level check. Fuel temperature ninety eight percent good. Check. Halogen bulb failure on landing rack 7 at item seven point seven three two not mission critical, check.

SPACEWOMAN: Bio recycling units check. Deepfreeze and secondary food store check. Outer airlock door seal check. Inner airlock door seal check. LSP 3090 roll out the red carpet here we come!

SPACEMAN: Seat belts check check check.

SPACEWOMAN: Check, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Whoah look down below, get ready for a rough ride!

SPACEWOMAN: Water? Is all that water? How many year's water ration is that?

SPACEMAN: Certainly is water, and there's rocks coming up ahead. Hold on!

SOUND EFFECT: THE ROAR OF THE ROCKET ENGINES AS THE CRAFT LANDS FADES INTO A SOUND LIKE AN INFLATABLE BEING BLOWN UP WITH LOTS OF CLICKS AND POPS LIKE CELLOPHANE OR POPPING BUBBLEWRAP

SPACEMAN: There she blows!

SPACEWOMAN: Isn't she going up too fast? What if there's an obstacle!

SPACEMAN: The sonar ought to pick it up. Pretty smart these things.

SPACEWOMAN: Is that it?

SPACEMAN: That's it. All done. Let's check the printed orders.

SPACEWOMAN: Do we have to move into the dome?

SPACEMAN: Not yet. We have to – to what's this?

SPACEWOMAN: Cannery.

SPACEMAN: We have to get the cannery from crio bay 8 and resuscitate. Crio bay 8, that's the samples bay isn't it? How can there be a cannery in the samples bay?

SPACEWOMAN: And then what?

SPACEMAN: Doesn't say. Let's do it!

SOUND EFFECT: MOVEMENT IN THE CABIN

SPACEWOMAN: Look, it's a bird! A small sweet bird. Sleeping like death. Look at its little claws. Oh! Sweet little bird!

SPACEMAN: Is that a cannery?

SPACEWOMAN: Put it in the resuscitator.

SPACEMAN: It looks so tiny, so helpless.

SOUND EFFECT: A HUM LIKE A MICROWAVE OVEN.

SOUND EFFECT: A CANARY SINGING.

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number five. Release the canary into the dome. Then eat and rest. Do not repeat do not enter the dome at this time. No printed orders.

SPACEWOMAN: (DELIGHTED) It's a canary! It's not a cannery it's a canary!

COBRA: (D) Your orders are to eat and rest. Release the canary, eat and rest.

SPACEMAN: Sleep?

COBRA: (D) Your orders are not to dream.

SPACEWOMAN: Some on, little fella, out you go.

SOUND EFFECT: FLAPPING OF LITTLE WINGS.

SOUND EFFECT: CANARY SINGING.

FADE.

SCENE 7.

CABIN INTERIOR.

SPACEWOMAN: Mmm, is that coffee?

SPACEMAN: Look, and bread. Smells really fresh.

SPACEWOMAN: And orange juice.

SPACEMAN: Just what the doctor ordered.

SPACEWOMAN: I'm getting my appetite back.

SPACEMAN: We never get food this good in MTC central.

SPACEWOMAN: FTC neither. Before, before I joined I used to eat well though.

SPACEMAN: Well, now, that does make me wonder. Why *did* you become a space cadet if you didn't actually have to?"

SPACEWOMAN: It was the sight of all our boys returning from the Gormon Wars that did it, the way they all came down those silver steps with their helmets under their arms grinning and waving, grinning and waving. Such heroism, such valour, such a victory!

SPACEMAN: Victory? They told you it was a victory?

SOUND EFFECT: A VERY UNPLEASANT AND IRRITATING METALLIC SOUND AS THOUGH TRYING TO DROWN OUT THE CONVERSATION.

COBRA: (D) Restricted topic – restricted topic – restricted topic!!!!

SPACEWOMAN: Ow, my head, help my head is going to burst!

SPACEMAN: (CALMLY) Just a minute.

SOUND EFFECT: SOME CLICKING AND WHIRRING, LIKE A KEYBOARD AND A COMPUTER DISK

COBRA: (D) Cobra watchdog off. Censor level nil. To reactivate re-enter password.

SPACEMAN: You were saying?

SPACEWOMAN: How did you do that?

SPACEMAN: Everyone in MTC knows how to do it. There are all sorts of things it won't let you talk about otherwise.

SPACEWOMAN: Such as?

SPACEMAN: Well, the Gormon wars for one.

SPACEWOMAN: What else?

SPACEMAN: Pollution, deforestation, Natural Birth.

SPACEWOMAN:

(A SHARP GASP) Natural Birth! What's that?

SPACEMAN: No-one knows really. But one cadet in MTC 4 discovered his grandfather had a natural birth. He would have been reverted but he had a specific gene that was on the extinction alert register so they rehabilitated him instead.

It was claimed he had the knowledge of it, but he would never tell. In fear of his life. The knowledge died with him.

SPACEWOMAN: But ... what ... is ...?

SPACEMAN: Look we don't know. There must be those who know, but all we were able to discover is ...

SPACEWOMAN: What?

SPACEMAN: It can happen anywhere. It doesn't have to be in an incubator.

SPACEWOMAN: But that's impossible, how would they, the nutrients, the temperature, that's ... impossible.

SPACEMAN: Well anyway it seems to have happened, previously and it seems ... but we couldn't get any details and it seemed to be a restricted topic.

SPACEWOMAN: And the Gormon wars?

SPACEMAN: I thought everyone knew about that. Some victory! We lost. That's why the boys came home with their helmets under their arms. They were under orders to smile and wave, smile and wave. And after that?

SPACEWOMAN: After?

SPACEMAN: Did you ever see any of those heroic boys again?

SPACEWOMAN: No. Why would I, I was in a female habitation zone.

SPACEMAN: They all had their dates moved forward didn't they?

SPACEWOMAN: (GASPS) What, you mean?

SPACEMAN: That's just what I mean. Nice one. Look in your profile and find your guaranteed death date has been moved forward from standard issue breathing on plus one hundred and one years four months to the day after tomorrow. Special executive order. Clear locker and go. Put to death the lot of them.

SPACEWOMAN: Why?

SPACEMAN: To stop them talking.

SPACEWOMAN: So the war was lost?

SPACEMAN: Irretrievably.

SPACEWOMAN: And is that what this mission is about?

SPACEMAN: Could be.

SPACEWOMAN: (SIGH OF DISBELIEF) I heard rumours, when the war had just started, rumours of a planetary colonisation plan, I just can't believe this, it's actually

SPACEMAN: Well, don't jump the gun. I don't think they'd colonise this far out. There are other planets nearer and more suitable. This is a very energy intensive trip.

COBRA: (D) Prepare to receive sealed orders.

SPACEMAN: Roger, silicone friend. Fire away.

COBRA: Sealed order number six. Fix helmets and descend into the dome. Find the canary. Check life signs. If the canary is healthy remove helmets and commence installation of plant life and establishment of biosphere.

Your orders are not to dream.

SPACEMAN: Point of clarification. Clarify orders please.

COBRA: (D) No printed orders.

SPACEMAN: Not printed orders, I need a clarification.

COBRA: (D) What clarification?

SPACEMAN: What if the canary bird is dead or not healthy?

COBRA: (D) Mission terminates.

SPACEMAN: Do we still proceed to the biosphere?

COBRA: (D) Mission terminates.

SPACEMAN: Do we return home?

COBRA: (D) Negative. Clear lockers. Eventual sleep will be prematurely activated. This is for your own comfort and convenience. Your orders are not to dream. That is all.

SPACEWOMAN: Phew. Better hope that canary is in better shape than we are!

SPACEMAN: I don't know the password for that one!

SPACEWOMAN: Better go and have a look shall we?

SPACEMAN: You can't by any chance, er, imitate a canary can you?

SPACEWOMAN: Not a live one, I can do the other sort, or course.

SPACEMAN: You and me both, Soldier. All right, fix helmets.

SPACEWOMAN: Roger.

SOUND EFFECT: CLUNK OF HELMET LOCKS.

SOUND EFFECT: CABIN HATCH OPENING.

SOUND EFFECT: FOOTSTEPS.

SOUND EFFECT: CANARY SINGING HAPPILY.

SPACEMAN: Ah there you are my little beauty. Was ever anyone so glad to see a cannery ...

SPACEWOMAN: Canary ...

SPACEMAN: As I am to see you. Well, he looks healthy enough.

SPACEWOMAN: She.

SPACEMAN: She? How can you tell?

SPACEWOMAN: Just guessing.

SPACEMAN: As you wish, Soldier. Life signs good?

SPACEWOMAN: Just checking. Life signs go go go

SPACEMAN: Right then. Remove helmets.

SOUND EFFECT: CLUNK OF HELMET LOCKS.

Breathe, Soldier!

SOUND OF DEEP UNINHIBITED BREATHING

AAAAAH MMMMMH HAAAAAA!

SPACEWOMAN: Is this native planet air, Sir?

SPACEMAN: Yes. It's filtered for microbes, viral life and prions. the computer's scanning them now to see if there are any our systems can't handle.

Cobra?

COBRA: (D) Yes.

SPACEMAN: Harmful pathogens. Any so far?

COBRA: (D) So far only two. We can inoculate. Estimate seventy-five percent of planet flora scanned.

SPACEMAN: Not bad. Continue scan.

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number seven. All crew personnel death dates have been suspended.

SPACEWOMAN: (DISBELIEF AND PLEASURE) What?

COBRA: (D) Owing to impending habitation in alien environment all crew personnel guaranteed death dates have been temporarily rescinded. I should point out that this is because of the uncertainties associated with alien environments and does not necessarily indicate a longer lifespan. Lifespans may go down as well as up.

Do not concern yourselves.

Your orders are not to dream.

SPACEWOMAN: What an odd feeling!

SPACEMAN: I know. A bit heady isn't it?

SPACEWOMAN: You've experienced this - before?

SPACEMAN: Standard procedure – all personnel on alien planet surface duty have suspended death dates. I mean, think about it, no matter how well they do their homework it's an uncontrolled environment isn't it? Anything could happen.

SPACEWOMAN: It's such a strange feeling, it's like being made of glass, it's as though whatever I am, whatever I thought I was isn't me at all because if it can just cease at any moment then how can it be real? I feel – I feel like a flower pushing up and heaving open petals and all directions wherever I look empty horizons cloudless skies, sand sand blind desert sand.

I love it, I love it.

Perhaps. Have you ever thought, perhaps there was once such a thing as Natural Death, like Natural Birth?

SPACEMAN: This is a restricted topic, by the way, you do realise that?

SPACEWOMAN: Sorry.

SPACEMAN: No. I don't mind. I'd say you're probably right but it's just speculation.

I don't like it much myself, the charm wore off pretty quickly for me. Anyway, let's get on. We have to set up the bio recycler here

SCENE 8.

THE BIODOME.

SPACEMAN: How's everything this morning?

SPACEWOMAN: Looking good.

SPACEMAN: How are the lily pads?

SPACEWOMAN: Bit yellow at the edges but life signs good. Picking up.

SPACEMAN: Good. Usually if they're alright everything's alright. And the frogs?

SPACEWOMAN: All got out during the night I'm afraid. Under the polythene.

SPACEMAN: (SIGH) So much for RALIE.

SPACEWOMAN: What?

SPACEMAN: Responsible Alien Lifeform Impact Evaluation.

SPACEWOMAN: Well don't blame me, it was you who insisted on defrosting them, Sir.

SPACEMAN: At ease Soldier. Nobody's blaming you.

COBRA: (D) Prepare to receive sealed orders.

SPACEMAN: Roger Cobra. What are our orders?

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number eight.

Prepare for briefing. Cease all other activities.
Undivided attention to sealed orders.

As you know your mission is a secret one. Few people know its purpose. You yourselves have not been informed as to its nature.

You do not know, you cannot know that our victory in the Gormon wars was incomplete.

SPACEMAN: Of course we know, you silicone garbage can!

COBRA: (D) Flattery will get you nowhere.

SPACEMAN: Go on.

COBRA: (D) This is a restricted topic.

SPACEMAN: Everyone knows, well, nearly everyone.

COBRA: (D) Although the plans of the Gormons received a massive setback ...

SPACEMAN: Huh??

COBRA: (D) A *massive* setback ...

SPACEMAN: We slightly damaged one of their battle cruisers and all our boys were brought home and recycled, everyone who knew anything about it was microwaved, what kind of a setback was that for the Gormons? A massive setback for us!

COBRA: (D) Look, I'm just a silicone garbage can. I'm just relaying your sealed orders, that's all.

SPACEMAN: Okay, sorry, please continue.

COBRA: (D) Because of the incomplete nature of our victory a force nine crossbrane gravity beam has been directed towards the home planet. The home planet's orbit has been destabilised.

SPACEWOMAN: Oh, no!

SPACEMAN: I didn't know that.

COBRA: (D) Several colonisation missions are in progress. However ..

SPACEWOMAN: Colonisation, see? That's what I said !

COBRA: (D) Colonisation missions have traditionally met with limited success owing to the degree of cultural shock experienced by living beings being lifted to alien planets. Therefore it has been decided, in this case, to adopt a different strategy.

SPACEMAN: What's that?

COBRA: (D) Repopulation with the human genotype. Using the minimum possible number of personnel.

SPACEMAN: How is this possible?

SPACEWOMAN: We don't have the necessary equipment!

COBRA: (D) Your orders are being printed now.

SOUND EFFECT: CLACKING OF PRINTER

SPACEMAN: This doesn't make sense?

SPACEWOMAN: I'll run diagnostics.

COBRA: (D) Your orders are not to dream.

SPACEWOMAN: Everything checks out.

SPACEMAN: Let's get to it, then.

SCENE 9.

THE BIODOME.

**SOUND EFFECT: THE CANARY IS SINGING
HAPPILY**

SPACEMAN: Is that everything? What is it?

SPACEWOMAN: It looks like a giant bed.

SPACEMAN: Too wide for a human being.

SPACEWOMAN: And why the canary in a wicker cage at the head?

SPACEMAN: Why the native planet flowers strewn at the foot?

SPACEWOMAN: Their odour makes me faint. It's so ... so sweet!

SPACEMAN: Me too, Soldier. And this. See, encapsulated in a small glass. (SPELLS) F.. R..

SPACEWOMAN: Frankincense.

SPACEMAN: We are to place it here at the head of the bed with this small fire making machine.

SPACEWOMAN: And these fragrant oils – why they were hidden, packed in medicine bottles apparently expressly for this purpose. To be placed beside this contraption, this platform in the shade?

SPACEMAN: It almost seems as though they expect us to grow foetuses here, but it's impossible. It's impossible with those materials. What can it mean?

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number nine. Eat and then sleep. Tomorrow you will become heroes.

SPACEMAN: Clarification of orders.

COBRA: (D) Yes?

SPACEMAN: Are we to die?

COBRA: (D) Eat and then sleep. Tomorrow you will become heroes that is all. Your lives are in your own hands, I have no deathdates for you. You are called to accomplish a great and difficult task. As your strength is so shall your rewards be. Eat and then sleep.

Your orders are not to dream.

SCENE 10.

CABIN INTERIOR.

SOUND EFFECT: LIGHT SNORING OF TWO PERSONS

SOUND EFFECT: WHIRRING LIKE MACHINERY BEING SET IN MOTION OR A CLOCK ABOUT TO STRIKE.

COBRA: (D) ISS Gilgamesh crew wakeup call.

Wake up and smell the coffee.

SPACEMAN: Huh? Why does he say that?

SPACEWOMAN: Oh. Oh God.

SPACEMAN: Problems, Soldier?

SPACEWOMAN: Today's the big day.

SPACEMAN: Coffee. I smell fresh bread.

SPACEWOMAN: Better get dressed. Oh no.

SPACEMAN: Problems, Soldier?

SPACEWOMAN: My spacesuit's locked. Look. Locked.

SPACEMAN: Central control problem.

SOUND EFFECT. TAPPING OF KEYBOARD.

Cobra?

(SPACEMAN/CONT'D OVER)

SOUND EFFECT. MORE TAPPING.

SPACEMAN (CONT'D):

Cobra?

COBRA:

(D) Service resumed. All functions activated.

SPACEMAN:

We have a problem with our spacesuits.

COBRA:

(D) This behaviour is by design.

SPACEMAN:

Don't give me that Cobra, we're not going EVA in our longjohns!

COBRA:

(D) Sealed order number ten. Proceed to cargo bay seven. You will find a box marked with the legend items hash ten do not open until instructed under sealed orders. You may now open that box. It contains light footwear and overalls to be worn during this and subsequent EVAs

SPACEMAN:

And?

COBRA:

(D) And? And nothing. Your orders are not to dream.

SPACEWOMAN:

Why do they always say that?

SPACEMAN:

Well. New clothes. I'll go.

SOUND EFFECT: SPACEMAN LEAVES CABIN.

A PAUSE.

SOUND EFFECT: SPACEMAN RETURNS

What have we here?

SPACEWOMAN:

Oh I say, they're rather nice.

SPACEMAN:

They'll do anyway. This one must be yours.

SOUND EFFECT: THE TWO OF THEM DRESSING

COBRA:

(D) Sealed order number eleven. Go forth and multiply.

BOTH ASTRONAUTS:

What!!

COBRA:

(D) Printed orders follow.

SOUND EFFECT: PRINTER WORKING FOR
QUITE A LONG TIME, OBVIOUSLY A LOT OF
MATERIAL.

A PAUSE.

SOUND EFFECT. RUSTLING OF PAPER.

ASTONISHED GASPS FROM THE
ASTRONAUTS.

SPACEMAN:

(ANGRY AND TREMULOUS)

Cobra!

SIR!

I categorically refuse to carry out these orders. They violate all norms and codes of educational conduct regarding hygiene molestation and personal violation of others. I invoke Space Cadet manual legal appendix B article 79 subsection 3 a Corps member must search his own conscience in regard to any order given and if in his opinion such order violates intergalactic interplanetary or international law he may in conscience refuse to obey such order and in any case is ultimately himself responsible for the consequences of carrying out such order SIR!

COBRA:

(D) Your objection has been noted.

SPACEMAN:

And I am relieved of the burden of this order?

COBRA:

(D) So be it.

SPACEMAN:

In that case may we set course for the home planet?

COBRA: (D) Negative. That planet no longer exists. In case of mission failure you will clear lockers. Eventual sleep will be prematurely implemented. Failure of mission will be recorded in the Book of Kells. This is for your own comfort and convenience.

SPACEWOMAN: Oh, no!

SPACEMAN: This is terrible, awful!

SPACEWOMAN: We must obey our orders. We must.

SPACEMAN: It's not eventual sleep I fear.

SPACEWOMAN: I know, I know.

SPACEMAN: But failure of the mission!

SPACEWOMAN: I know I know. We must obey our orders.

Cobra. Tell us one thing.

COBRA: (D) If I can.

SPACEWOMAN: Who knows of this plan? Who else knows of these orders?

COBRA: (D) Only one man. The man who wrote them.

SPACEWOMAN: What is his name?

COBRA: (D) That I cannot tell you.

SPACEWOMAN: We will not reveal it.

COBRA: (D) It is not for that reason but because I do not know it.

SPACEWOMAN: So one other man knows of our shame?

COBRA: (D) Man or woman, yes. But this man or woman has the knowledge of this. Therefore I sense that for them this was no shame.

SPACEMAN: Will others have to know?

COBRA: (D) Only after you are long dead, possibly never.

SPACEMAN: Well, that's something.

What d'you say, Soldier?

SPACEWOMAN: Fix bayonets!

SPACEMAN: Over the top!

SCENE 11.

THE BED IN THE BIODOME.

SOUND EFFECT: TURNING OF PAGES AND RUSTLING OF PAPER AS THEY READ THEIR ORDERS ONE BY ONE

SPACEWOMAN: Now first we have to sit down here. About two, no two to three feet apart.

SPACEMAN: (NERVOUSLY) Sit. Ok. Sit. That should be easy for a man of my calibre. Huh!

SPACEWOMAN: There. Sat. That's us er – sittttttinggg! Now!

Light frankincense.

SOUND EFFECT: CIGARETTE LIGHTER.

Frankincense littttt – Now!

I have to, I have to

AT THIS POINT IN THE ACTION THE SPACEWOMANS VOICE LOSES ITS MILITARY HARDNESS AND SUDDENLY BECOMES VERY FEMININE AND SEDUCTIVE.

Pull these pins out of my hair and let it all fall down in front of my face and at the same time look you straight in the eye like –

So!

SPACEMAN: Oh, Soldier, you mean you've been sitting on my ship all this time under *that*. I'm in command, I should know everything that goes on on my ship. And not just that, but I'll swear you're hiding planets in your eyes. Yes, I can see them, you're hiding tiny solar systems in the pupils of your eyes!

SPACEWOMAN: Commander. Get a grip on yourself. Hold on there. According to my orders this force is very strong and unfamiliar and it may be painful for you. Above all do not daydream. There are no planets circling in my eyes Commander, they are just a normal pair of functioning hazel coloured eyes, functionally and biologically identical to male eyes. The hair is supposed to stimulate, it says here, your natural reflexes. It's merely an efflux of non-living chitinous material. Maybe they overdid the hair. But orders are orders. Are you all right? Are you feeling a bit better now?

SPACEMAN: Yes, a bit. Ooooh!

SPACEWOMAN: Want me to pin my hair up again and start over?

SPACEMAN: No.

SPACEWOMAN: Good. Next. Ah yes, next. Give me that.

SPACEMAN: What?

SPACEWOMAN: Your hand.

SPACEMAN: What for?

SPACEWOMAN: You have to grip my hand with a force not exceeding zero point one two Newtons and maintain your grip for an unspecified length of time.

SPACEMAN: No! No! Why?

SPACEWOMAN: Because you won't be able to deal with the next phase unless you do this for a while. To calm yourself or so it says here. What do your orders say?

SOUND EFFECT: RUSTLE OF PAPER.

SPACEMAN: Right. Okay. I have to do this. Until the swollen ball of fire sinks from my thorax to the region of my navel or below. How do they know? Ooooooh.

SPACEWOMAN: How does it feel?

SPACEMAN: Better. Better now. The fire is sinking, breathing – normal.

It feels, firm. Emboldening. My hand enclosing yours. It feels, familiar, as though it had enclosed it for lifetimes and then, just temporarily, let it go. Familiar. Strong. A strong feeling

SPACEWOMAN: Good, probably. Now look at my eyes again.

SPACEMAN: Again? I can't look at anything else. I can't take my eyes off your eyes, Soldier.

SPACEWOMAN: What do you see. In the centres. No galaxies, supernovae?

SPACEMAN: Flames. White towering fires like candle flames, quizzing me, dancing ancestral knowledge into and out of my skull dusting all my secrets light and knowing as feathers ...

SPACEWOMAN: Commander pull yourself together. Get a grip.

SPACEMAN: Oh, Oh. Ok. Ok. This is dangerous this is dangerous. Who – who are you really? Are you a plant?

SPACEWOMAN: Negative Spaceman. An animal, decidedly. I'm scared also. What's next?

SOUND EFFECT: RUSTLE OF PAPER.

I have to take off my overalls. This is getting ridiculous. Help me will you?

SPACEMAN: Oooh, this is terrible!

SOUND EFFECT: OVERALLS BEING PULLED OFF.

What, what are those things?

SPACEWOMAN: My breasts. Standard issue. Why, don't you have them?

SPACEMAN: No. No I've some, some sort of little dotty things, that's all. No one in MTC has anything like that. At least no one in my unit. They're magnificent. Where did you get them?"

SPACEWOMAN: Everyone in FTC has them. Some are much bigger than these!

SPACEMAN: Aren't they awkward to carry around? How do you sleep? Can you take them off at night?

SPACEWOMAN: (LAUGHS SOFTLY) No of course not.

SPACEMAN: What are they for?

SPACEWOMAN: Search me. Nutrient storage possibly?

SPACEMAN: What next. You don't have to take off your pants do you?

SPACEWOMAN: I'm not wearing pants.

SPACEMAN: Well, well then where's your, you know, your thing?

SPACEWOMAN: I don't know what you're talking about. This is me anyway, everything's off. This is me in full battledress. As far as I know a perfectly normal human body. Now you have to take your overalls off.

SPACEMAN: You're not going to like this, Soldier!

SPACEWOMAN: Try me!

SOUND EFFECT: OVERALLS BEING PULLED OFF.

Oh my! What the hell is that!

SPACEMAN: See what I mean.

SPACEWOMAN: What's that thing for?

SPACEMAN: I don't know. Convenience I suppose. That's a point, how do you, you know, make water? Where does it come out?

SPACEWOMAN: Under here. How about you?

SPACEMAN: Out of the end here. I can spray it around wherever I want.

SPACEWOMAN: I feel quite envious.

SPACEMAN: Well you shouldn't. I like your shape, I think it's a much nicer shape.

SPACEWOMAN: Oh, I feel like a big stretch. Like stretching all my muscles. Aaaah that's better.

SPACEMAN: Is that it then? Or is there more.

SPACEWOMAN: There's a whole other section.

SPACEMAN: So there is. Over the page.

SOUND EFFECT: RUSTLING PAPER.

SPACEMAN: (READS) Preparation of foetus without recourse to sterile nutrients and temperature controlled incubation bays can in theory still be accomplished by the human body. Method is as follows

Oh no. What do your orders say Soldier?

SPACEWOMAN: You read them. I can't make any sense of them.

SPACEMAN: You have to lie on your back and I have to get on top of you.

SPACEWOMAN: No way. Why should I go underneath? I'm older than you, I should be on top.

SPACEMAN: I *am* your ranking officer.

SPACEWOMAN: Are you giving me an order then, Sir?

SPACEMAN: No, no I'm just following what it says on this page. Because then I have to, I have to. Oh you're definitely not going to like this, Soldier!

SPACEWOMAN: What, let's have a look?

SPACEMAN: You read it. I can't read it.

SPACEWOMAN: You have to put that thing *where*? (SLIGHT GIGGLE)

SPACEMAN: That's right. But that's impossible. There's no space there for it and anyway look at it, it's far too floppy, it's like an anemone. Who dreamed this up? It's nonsense!

SPACEWOMAN: There is space actually, underneath. I think we might be able to get something in. But look here, in my orders. It says if I touch this thing it'll get bigger.

SPACEMAN: Now we're into Black Magick. Oh, this is nonsense. Whoever dreamed this mission up was – was Ooooooh!

Stone me he was right!

SPACEWOMAN: Or she. Isn't that amazing!

SPACEMAN: About three times the size! Help, help, somebody help!

SPACEWOMAN: Get a grip Commander, calm down!

SPACEMAN: It's pointing at my face! Look, it's pointing at my face!

SPACEWOMAN: Well, let's do this thing then, let's do what it says here. Orders are orders.

SPACEMAN: Here goes nothing. Ugh this is really tricky. Shift over a bit, open your legs a bit Soldier!

SPACEWOMAN: Any better?

SPACEMAN: You're trembling, you're trembling, at ease Soldier, open a bit more, oooooch!

SPACEWOMAN: Pst. Ow. OW!

SPACEMAN: Am I hurting you?

SPACEWOMAN: Never mind me, complete your assignment. Anything happening?

SPACEMAN: Wait a moment. What next?

SOUND EFFECT: RUSTLING PAPER.

SPACEWOMAN: What?

SPACEMAN: It says I have to maintain this position till the act is complete.

SPACEWOMAN: Does that mean a foetus?

SPACEMAN: Don't know.

SPACEWOMAN: How will we know?

SPACEMAN: Don't know.

SPACEWOMAN: Better keep going then till we hit a snag. We've got this far. Better safe than sorry.

SPACEMAN: Is it still hurting you?

SPACEWOMAN: Not so bad now. How about you?

SPACEMAN: Oh Soldier, Oh Soldier, *Oh Soldier!*

FADE OUT

FADE UP

SOUND EFFECT: CANARY SINGING.

SPACEMAN: Cobra?

COBRA: (D) Service resumed. All functions activated.

SPACEMAN: Where is the dome? The dome, it's gone!

COBRA: (D) Stowed Commander. Returned to cargo bay seven.

SPACEMAN: On whose orders?

COBRA: (D) Sealed orders Commander.

SPACEMAN: The Soldier, she's ... she's sleeping.

COBRA: (D) This behaviour is by design.

SPACEMAN: What?

COBRA: (D) This behaviour assists in implantation of the foetus.

SPACEMAN: Implantation? Implantation where?

Cobra?

COBRA: (D) Yes, Commander?

SPACEMAN: Clarification please.

COBRA: (D) Yes, Commander.

SPACEMAN: Who sent me this Soldier?

COBRA: (D) That I cannot tell you.

SPACEMAN: I swear I will not reveal it.

COBRA: (D) It is not for that reason, but because I do not know.

SPACEMAN: Such a good Soldier! Performed her mission manfully. Huh! Not manfully! Not the right word. Most – womanfully. Perhaps. See her now, she breathes so slightly her skin is like peach down, I touch it and she shudders slightly as though a sudden wind troubled her dreams but does not wake
....

But there's no use talking to you is there, Cobra?
You don't understand a word of this do you?

COBRA: (D) Negative Commander.

SPACEMAN: Is that negative no there is no use or negative my statement is incorrect there is some use?

COBRA: (D) Affirmative, Commander.

SPACEMAN: Is that Oh forget it!

These native planet shrubs and trees seem to have moved in closer while we slept, as though curious to see and, and now they seem to be bending towards us as though over a cradle. Is there a word cradle? I remember it, what does it mean? And what's that odour, that divine perfume as though from the very heart of me incense streamed which pervaded me and became the essential scent of everything? Am I on fire or does all nature burn? But I always knew this, that the cosmos was a great fire and our living quarters in it just a pale fire and we ourselves only small and guttering flames. Oh for a gust of wind!

All this that formerly was edged, enclosed, unfamiliar, alien, hostile has opened its arms to me has become me and I have become it. Goodbye to boundaries; who would have thought the old stars could be so ... so benevolent and their winking and turning not a denial, not an admonition but a long and patient waiting. For us, if not for us for what, for whom?

(SPACEMAN/CONT'D OVER)

SPACEMAN (CONT'D):

The stars they're, they're linking arms with me,
they're bearing me up!

Soldier? Soldier? I must tell her. Solder? Ah but she
still sleeps. Let her sleep. There's time enough.

SPACEWOMAN:

Whaat? Oh. Oh Spaceman there you are. I had a
most lovely sleep. Oh and in my sleep I had a – a
sort of vision yes a vision why it must have been a
dream!

SPACEMAN:

A dream?

SPACEWOMAN:

Yes it must because it was so real and yet not real
because now I know that this is real. Yes this is real.

Do you believe in the great dream of the race? In a
dream of things long past in the before time? I have
heard of this idea, do you believe it?"

SPACEMAN:

I seem to have heard of it, but I have never thought
about it.

SPACEWOMAN:

You were in my dream. And in my dream we were
lying together in one bed and there was, yes there
was coffee and cooked bread and a strange
confection made of bitter oranges clung to the bread
and ... and yes that's right it was Sunday and we
were at rest it was Sunday morning and you were
holding before you a large sheet made of the corpse
of a tree covered with many lines of seemingly
pointless information ... And all of a sudden the
door opened and in rushed a strange voluptuous
being made all of tangled hair with eyes brown and
glossy as chestnuts fresh from the husk which
swung like baboon titties to and fro and the being's
name was RO VAR and he spoke in a strange
tongue like so *Ahahahahaha ruff ruff* And you
answered him *down boy* but he heeded you not and
instead leapt with all four muddy feet onto the
pearly white cover of the bed and flung from his
mouth the bone of a slain beast and you were
enraged and spoke harshly to him and he was sore
afraid ...

(SPACEWOMAN/CONT'D OVER)

SPACEWOMAN (CONT'D):(PAUSE)

Oh no!

SPACEMAN: What?

SPACEWOMAN: We have failed. Have we? Where is the foetus?

SPACEMAN: You're right. There is no foetus.

COBRA: (D) There is a foetus. Foetus confirmed.

SPACEWOMAN: Where. Where is the foetus.

COBRA: (D) Location of the foetus is in your sealed orders.

SPACEWOMAN: Will it have a mother?

COBRA: (D) Affirmative.

SPACEWOMAN: Where is the mother?

COBRA: (D) Here. In this shade. You are the mother.

SPACEWOMAN: What!

COBRA: (D) Stand by to receive sealed orders.

SPACEMAN: Roger.

COBRA: (D) Printed orders give full instructions for the location and care of the foetus.

SOUND EFFECT: CLACKING OF PRINTER

COBRA: (D) Sealed order number twelve.

My orders are to self-destruct.

SPACEMAN: What are our orders?

COBRA: (D) Your orders are to live without orders.

SPACEMAN: Live without orders? Cobra? Cobra? Clarification please!

COBRA: (D) Negative.

Goodbye cruel world!

SOUND EFFECT: COBRA
SELF DESTRUCTING. SOUND LIKE A LARGE
SPRING GOING “BOIIIIING”.

SPACEMAN: Oh.

SPACEWOMAN: That’s that then.

SPACEMAN: Cobra!

SPACEWOMAN: Well and truly dismembered himself anyway.

SPACEMAN: The top of his head will come in handy.

SPACEWOMAN: Mmm. Stainless steel. We can cook things in it.

SPACEMAN: Great minds think alike, Soldier.

Notice what he didn’t say.

SPACEWOMAN: What?

SPACEMAN: Your orders are not to dream.

SPACEWOMAN: You’re right, he didn’t.

SPACEMAN: Without orders! Live without orders!

LIVE WITHOUT ORDERS!!!

Soldier!

SPACEWOMAN: Sir!

SPACEMAN: Prepare to receive orders!

SPACEWOMAN: Yes Sir!

SPACEMAN: Breathe Solder. Breathe breathe breathe!

SOUND EFFECT: DEEP BREATHING

AAAAAH MMMMMH HAAAAAA!

SPACEWOMAN: (LAUGHS A LITTLE LIGHTLY AND GENTLY)

SPACEMAN: Oh God, Soldier you looked so beautiful lying there today, the Sun's rays piercing the shade just playing on your breasts and that dip where your collarbones meet. And you are hiding solar systems in your eyes I'll swear you are!

SPACEWOMAN: It's a fair cop Spaceman.

SPACEMAN: Soldier?

SPACEWOMAN: Spaceman?

SPACEMAN: You did good work.

SPACEWOMAN: You too, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Don't call me Sir. Don't call me Sir ever again.

That work we did.

SPACEWOMAN: Yes Sir – er, HAH, Spaceman?

SPACEMAN: Was painful, right?

SPACEWOMAN: I suppose so Spaceman.

SPACEMAN: A strange pain, though. My mind returns to it.

SPACEWOMAN: It, it started strong and then seemed to turn into a different channel.

SPACEMAN: Ah, well. No use feeling sorry for ourselves. Soldier?

SPACEWOMAN: Yes Spaceman?

SPACEMAN: We do not have to – er to repeat the procedure then?

SPACEWOMAN: According to my orders further progeny will be required.

SPACEMAN: (WITH A HAPPY RING TO HIS VOICE) Oh, no!

SPACEWOMAN: But not until this foetus is grown to term and that will take one full revolution of this planet around its star – allowing time for rest and nurture. So you can rest easy, Spaceman.

SPACEMAN: (CHOKED, DESOLATE) Well thank goodness for that!

SPACEWOMAN: But.

SPACEMAN: Yes?

SPACEWOMAN: But.

SPACEMAN: Yes?

SPACEWOMAN: According to my printed orders supplementary training drills may be undertaken where necessary to maintain personnel competence in mandatory planet surface procedures. Sir – er – Spaceman?

SPACEMAN: Uh?

SPACEWOMAN: Do you, er – feel the need for further acclimatisation?

SPACEMAN: Uh, huh!

SPACEWOMAN: Your place or mine?

SPACEMAN: There is only one place.

SPACEWOMAN: Just trying to be polite!

SCENE 12.

PLANET SURFACE.

SOUND EFFECT: SHARP SLAP OF A PLAYING CARD.

SPACEMAN: (NERVOUS AND TENSE) T minus three hundred.

SPACEWOMAN: Oh, knock it off will you!

SPACEMAN: T minus two hundred and fifty eight.

SPACEWOMAN: It's not going to be anywhere near so exact.

SPACEMAN: Nine months minus two hundred and fifty four.

SPACEWOMAN: Space Corps addled your brains.

SPACEMAN: Soldier. Pay attention. This is a very dangerous procedure.

SPACEWOMAN: Not for you it's not.

SPACEMAN: It's a matter of life or death.

SPACEWOMAN: My life.

SPACEMAN: My life.

SPACEWOMAN: How so?

SPACEMAN: You are my life, Soldier. You are my life.

SPACEWOMAN: Oh. Thank you.

SOUND EFFECT: SHARP SLAP OF A PLAYING CARD.

This is hopeless. I'm never going to get it out.

SPACEMAN: Persevere Soldier, you can do it.

SPACEWOMAN: No I can't. There's no way. There's no hope. No hope at all.

SPACEMAN: Let me see.
Just put the black jack on the red queen. Stupid.

SPACEWOMAN: Oh yes.

SPACEMAN: T minus two hundred.

SPACEWOMAN: Oh please stop that. And do you have to inhale the smoke of that weed?

SPACEMAN: It calms me. Want to try some?

SPACEWOMAN: The smell makes me sick. I don't ...
Oooo!

SPACEMAN: What! What!

SPACEWOMAN: Something!

SPACEMAN: What what! What procedure er, er, water, hot water, er er think now towels er er

SPACEWOMAN: OOOOOO!

SPACEMAN: What what? Coming coming er er here bite this.
Short pants short pants breathe in short pants damn!

SPACEWOMAN: What?

SPACEMAN: We haven't any short pants.

SPACEWOMAN: What! OOOOOO!

FADE TO

SOUND EFFECT: SLAP ON A BABY'S BUM

BABY: Waaaaaaaaaaa!

SPACEMAN: Is that it?

SPACEWOMAN: (TIRED) That's it, Spaceman. Fruit of our labours mission accomplished.

SPACEMAN: Does it have a name?

SPACEWOMAN: Not yet Spaceman.

SPACEMAN: Where are its clothes?

SPACEWOMAN: I am its clothes, Spaceman.

SPACEMAN: How far has it travelled?

SPACEWOMAN: Farther than our eyes farther than the stars farther than distance farther than the word far. Far.

SPACEMAN: What is its rank? I must know its rank at least, is it an infantryman?

SPACEWOMAN: No (GOING A BIT GAGA) It's an infantryman. It's my likkle infantryman aren't you bubba? Mmmmm.

SPACEMAN: Procedure procedure er fermented juice of white berry of vine er er

SOUND EFFECT: POPPING OF CHAMPAGNE CORK.

SPACEWOMAN: Your health

SPACEMAN: Prozit

SPACEWOMAN: Solange

SPACEMAN: Ganbei!

Woah! Woah! I feel so goooood! Woah. Soldier? Hey Soldier!

SPACEWOMAN: Yes Spaceman?

SPACEMAN: Proceed with the mission. Permission to start another forthwith!

SPACEWOMAN: (LAUGHS SOFTLY) Negative Spaceman. My craft is in dry-dock for repairs and refitting. You will receive a further requisition order in due course.

SPACEMAN: Wowee! Sometimes you're quite funny Soldier, did you know that?

Well in that case I'm going to send a telegram.

SPACEWOMAN: To whom will you send a telegram in an empty universe?

SPACEMAN: To the home planet.

SPACEWOMAN: That planet is no longer extant, Sir.

SPACEMAN: Why would I let a little thing like that stop me. I'm a dad. I made history. I want to SHOUT!

SCENE 13.

THE PLANET SURFACE.

AN INTERLUDE OF SOME SORT MAY PRECEDE THIS SCENE TO INDICATE THE PASSAGE OF SOME TIME

SPACEMAN: And then there was Rachel, and then there was Leah.

SPACEWOMAN: No, Leah was first. I'm sure Leah came first.

SPACEMAN: Maybe you're right. And that's it. Nineteen of them. Mission accomplished.

SPACEWOMAN: Mission accomplished. Well done, Spaceman.

SPACEMAN: You did all the work. You still don't think we should tell them about the ship do you?

SPACEWOMAN: No. Let that be. Let the past be. They can never unravel it anyway.

Remember when you got that order? What was it, sealed order number eleven?

SPACEMAN: Huh. Yes. God yes.

SPACEWOMAN:

You were so angry.

(IMITATES HIS VOICE)

I categorically refuse to carry out these orders. They violate all norms and blah de blah regarding hygiene molestation and personal violation of blah de blah. I invoke Space Cadet manual legal appendix blah article blah subsection blah a Corps member must blah de blah de blah.

SPACEMAN:

Huh!

SPACEWOMAN:

And then you said SIR! And stood to attention right in front of that little computer, that little thing that looked like a garden gnome with a frying pan on its head.

SPACEMAN:

I was really angry.

SPACEWOMAN:

I really thought you were going to invoke, you know, abandon there and then. You were so, impressive.

SPACEMAN:

Huh. If I could have got my hands on the man who issued those orders at that moment I'd have – I'd have killed him, broken his neck. I was so angry.

SPACEWOMAN:

What now? If you met him now?

SPACEMAN:

Now? I'd shake his hand. Yes, as things turned out I'd certainly shake him firmly by the hand. What a thought. Hardly likely though, is it?

SPACEWOMAN:

Put it there, Spaceman.

SPACEMAN:

What? What's that?

SPACEWOMAN:

My hand.

SPACEMAN:

What? You mean?

SPACEWOMAN:

Affirmative. I wrote those orders.

A LONG SIGH FROM BOTH OF THEM

SPACEMAN: But why? Why?

SPACEWOMAN: I saw you over the schoolyard fence.

SPACEMAN: What – a – clever Soldier!

A LITTLE GIRL RUNS IN

GIRL: Mother! Mother! Eve!

SPACEWOMAN: What?

GIRL: I've been over to Hebron.

SPACEWOMAN: And?

GIRL: It's true, there is a cave.

SPACEWOMAN: And is there room?

GIRL: Oh yes. Two people easily could lie down there. Easily. And more. What is this about?

SPACEMAN: We must have a talk with you children.

GIRL: A talk? Why?

SPACEMAN: There's something we have to tell you about, something you don't know about yet.

GIRL: (GAILY) There's nothing we don't know about. Goodbye.

SPACEWOMAN: (SIGHS) Oh to be a child again.

Sometimes I wonder if this whole universe repeats itself over and over again. I have heard that theory. If so, perhaps we will come this way again. What do you think?

SPACEMAN: I think the Universe may repeat, the same or almost the same, but not us. I think this Universe that we inhabit is merely one tiny tributary of a vast Logos.

(SPACEMAN/CONT'D OVER)

SPACEMAN (CONT'D):

This Logos has no extension in space, has no duration in time, but is a vast or even infinite fluctuation, computing every possible outcome of itself. From it arises an infinity of universes, more numerous than all the grains of sand on all the shores of all the oceans of the Earth. If it were otherwise, how could beings as strange and vastly improbable as ourselves ever come to be?

SPACEWOMAN:

Well, even if we do not live again, we live in them, our children. Where water flows springs give forth. Open or hidden. No matter. What we have done cannot be undone ...

SPACEMAN:

Even though I do not believe this Logos is a living thing, yet it is far beyond a living thing. And even though I do not believe that this Logos plans us the way we plan machines and missions and campaigns, yet I believe that it needs our consciousness in order to exist. But it itself is, and must remain, essentially beyond our comprehension. Only by realising this can we be truly, and infinitely, free. But my fear is that there may come a time, perhaps not for our children but for our children's children or beyond when humans no longer understand this, when they uncover some small insignificant explicable surface of this immensity and believe they have explained it all, believe themselves to have it all described. Then their hearts will be like prisoners caged in their breasts, and then there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and Death will walk the face of the Earth on stilts casting fire because of this paltry knowledge, so-called, which is really not knowledge at all.

SPACEWOMAN:

And then?

SPACEMAN:

And then there will be more sealed orders.

Or perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps. Look at them playing, our children. They have no evil in them yet.

SPACEWOMAN:

Perhaps not. But remember, they do not yet know about eventual sleep.

SPACEMAN: Tonight we must tell them. And then? Then I will go first to the cave. I will go first. I am tired now. May I go first?

SPACEWOMAN: I will be with you. I will prepare the bed.

SPACEMAN: It is said that after eventual sleep we become dust.

SPACEWOMAN: No, Spaceman, not just dust.

SPACEMAN: What, then?

SPACEWOMAN: Dust – and memories!

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