

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

by

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PRE-CREDITS

1 EXT. SITE NEITHER NIGHT NOR DAY

A fog-inshrouded knoll looms up from nowhere. Its outlines are hazy. An orangish glow hangs on the horizon.

The wind blows, the fog passes, yet nothing becomes clearer. Is this a dream, a memory, a lost world, or one yet to be found?

Somewhere, in the far reaches of space, music is playing. The notes drift through space, collide, collude, and pass on.

The mood is ominous: something is going to happen here.

CUT TO:

END PRE-CREDITS

CREDITS

2 OUTER SPACE

The music stretches forward as we plunge into the outer reaches of space.

Here we drift among worlds yet unseen by man. Meteors flow past, supernovas explode and planets whirl endlessly about unknown stars.

CUT TO:

END CREDITS

3 INT. LABORATORY DAY (1975)

The screen goes to white. A tiny red dot appears then elongates and loops into a horseshoe formation.

The white dissolves <sup>into</sup> the pale shaved skin of a man's chest and the razor-thin red incision completes its horseshoe shape. Two drops of congealed blood ooze out of the incision and are quickly absorbed by a miniature blue surgical sponge.

A stainless steel clamp pulls back the thin horseshoe flap of flesh and another clamp, guided by a surgically gloved hand, inserts a thin circular sensing device under the skin. The flap of skin is replaced over the sensor.

3 CONTINUED

We are in a sterile white laboratory somewhere in the present. Soft red and blue lights pulsate against banks of stainless steel machinery.

PAUL VANOWEN, grimacing slightly, looks down at the incision in his lower left breast. Two white-coated doctors, LOU HEKMAN and HARU MIKO, bend toward his chest, examining and suturing the incision. VanOwen, seated on a long laboratory table, wears only grey pin-striped wool trousers.

James Paul VanOwen, age 55, has the studied look of a man in complete control of his life. The worn lines across his forehead are matched by the streaks of grey hair which stretch from his temples to the back of his head. His expression is laconic; it reveals neither emotion nor attitude. He either fully approves of what is now being done to him, or he is a stoicist beyond compare.

Having implanted the sensor in VanOwen's chest, the doctors proceed to test it:

A pulsating red oscilloscope--beep, beep, beep--monitors the newly implanted sensor. Next to the oscilloscope a spectrographic needle vibrates in the dormant position.

Lou Hekman selects several strips of metal from a nearby table and systematically passes them in front of the implanted sensor. Copper, steel, gold, platinum.

The oscilloscope and spectrograph register different values for each metal strip. The TECHNICIAN monitoring the electrographs looks up and nods. He is satisfied.

Hekman returns to the surgical work table. selects another sensor (a square thermocouple) and walks back to the operating table. Haru Mike has begun scrubbing and preping a shaved area on VanOwen's upper left breast.

Paul VanOwen braces himself for the next incision. Hekman poises his scalpel.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. TOM KIESEL'S FRONT YARD

MORNING (1960) ~~STANLEY A. ELIASH~~

Fade in: TOM KIESEL, a 45 year-old physics teacher at Clarenceville Community High School, stands in his front yard on a pleasant Saturday morning. He is wearing Sears work pants and a worn blue flannel shirt with the sleeves rolled up.

4 CONTINUED

A superimposed title reads:

Clarenceville, Indiana  
September, 1960

A faded lawnchair and charcoal burner stand on the front porch of Kiesel's middle-class red brick ranch house. An oversized 1959 Dodge with gigantic fins rests in the driveway. ~~and~~ Directly behind Kiesel waits an old Reo lawnmower.

Kiesel speaks to the camera. He is relating an event which happened the previous night for an unseen interrogator. His monologue begins calmly enough, but as he gets into the story he begins to relive the emotions he felt at the time: curiosity, uneasiness, then fear. His expressions and gestures guide him as he relives these terrifying moments:

#### KIESEL

My wife and I were driving home from the PTA <sup>now</sup> meeting about 10:00 last night. In fact, I ~~think~~ it was 10:00 cause the news had just come on the radio. I was very tense and was trying to relax. We're trying to float the Bond issue for the new Science Building and being head of the department I had to justify the expense. As I said, it was pitch dark and I was trying to let my mind go blank. Janice and I were coming back on Three Mile Road. She sensed it first. We had just passed Mill and she said, "Look at that light." There was a sort of dim glow to our right and rear. She said, "That must be one of those UFOs." I was just about to tell her it must be a helicopter when it pulled alongside of us and I could see it wasn't no helicopter at all. It was gliding very smoothly about 500 yards to our right. About 50 yards above the trees. That would be north. There was no doubting it cause it was the only light in the sky. At first I figured it must be an illusion. I pulled the car to the shoulder and cut the engine to get a better look. Then I heard it--nothing at all. You know, if you're in the house alone at night and everything is still, there still are the sounds of the living. But this thing was there and there weren't even the sounds of the living. It was an erie perfect quiet, like nothing at all. Janice started to get scared. The lights of the car went out and I started to get scared too, but I didn't want Janice to know. I got out of the car and the first thing that hit me was the heat. There was heat everywhere, like I was in the middle of the desert--warm, dry air. I started toward the object. It had stopped and was hovering directly in

(CON'T)

4 CONTINUED

KIESEL  
(con't)

front of me about 100 yards above the ground. I was a pilot in the War and saw a lot and thought I wasn't scared of anything, but let me tell you I was scared then. I've seen just about every kind of aircraft there is and this was like nothing I had ever seen. It started to move slowly toward me, still not making a sound. It looked like two huge pot covers placed atop each other...like this. It was made out of a dull grey metallic substance, like pewter or platinum. Right on top there was a raised portion, like a hub, you know, and where the two pot covers met there was a thin row, not a row exactly, more like a continuous band of blue light. It slowly kept coming closer and I wanted to run but my legs wouldn't move. I didn't know what was going to happen. Later Janice said she tried to start the car but it wouldn't turn over. The object was blotting out the whole sky, then it suddenly shot up vertically at a fantastic speed. In a couple seconds it was gone. It headed northeast. I followed its azimuth with my hand and it covered at least thirty degrees in two seconds, which, if I know anything, would put it at at least 5,000 miles per hour. Listen, I've flown a dozen different planes and studied astronomy and I know that wasn't no kind of plane or star or meteor. It was something else. officers, but I don't know what. I've never seen anything like it before. I'm a good Christian man and I don't lie.

Kiesel stares forlornly at the camera a moment, waiting for an answer which doesn't come.

TIME CUT: two Clarenceville police officers, HALEY LAWSON and JOHN GOUDA, wave goodbye to Kiesel and walk across the lawn to their patrol car. Kiesel watches them get in.

INSIDE THE PATROL CAR, Lawson starts the engine as Gouda thumps his note pad against the dashboard in nervous frustration:

GOUDA

Je-sus.

CUT TO:

5 INT. POLICE STATION DAY

The small Clarenceville police station is a hubbub of activity as Officers Lawson and Gouda enter.

A motley assortment of businessmen, teenagers and housewives are gathered about a few beleaguered note-scribbling officers. Their gestures and agitation indicate they are describing their encounters with flying saucers. Clarenceville is in the middle of a UFO flap.

Amid the clamor of voices one woman's voice stands out:

ANONYMOUS WOMAN

Well, I know it was a UFO because right across the side were the perfectly clear letters: U-F-O.

CLAUDE AMES, who had been listening in on the UFO witnesses, walks over to Lawson and Gouda as they enter. Ames, a 25 year-old stringer for the Chicago Tribune, is "well-dressed" in the fashion of the day: iridescent blue rayon trousers and a pink striped tap-collar shirt.

AMES

Keeping you boys busy?

LAWSON

Ames! You here already?

AMES

Word travels fast. The Indianapolis Bureau said you were having a UFO flap down here.

GOUDA

Then you know as much as we do.

AMES

Where you coming from?

LAWSON

Tom Kiesel's place. You been there yet?

AMES

Yeah. Stopped by on the way in. How many eye witnesses do you have?

LAWSON

Couple-four so far. Kiesel and his wife, the junior high kid who took the picture and Lorraine Blakely, but she's crazy anyway. What do you think?

5 CONTINUED

AMES

About the UFOs?

LAWSON

About Kiesel. You talked to him.

AMES

I'm not paid to think. You can understand that, Gouda.

GOUDA

Nerd.

LAWSON

Seriously.

AMES

I'm waiting until the Air Force comes. Maybe it's a sputnik or some sort of weather ballon.

GOUDA

Where is the Air Force?

Police Caption JOHN MAPLE, a harried man about 40, interrupts their conversation:

MAPLE

You free, Lawson?

LAWSON

What's up?

MAPLE

Go over to Jack Estes' place. He's been calling up every fifteen minutes.

LAWSON

What happened?

MAPLE

More of them...

(can't say the word)  
...whirlymajigs.

GOUDA

Flying saucers?

MAPLE

Yeah.

Captain Maple walks off. Lawson turns to Ames:

5 CONTINUED

LAWSON

That makes five.

AMES

Can I join you boys on this one, Haley?

LAWSON

Sure. Come along.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. CLARENCEVILLE MAIN STREET DAY

Lawson, Gouda and Ames cross the sidewalk in front of the station and climb into a police car.

Clarenceville is what writers would call a "sleepy little town," except this morning it's wide awake. The camera tracks down the main street, picking up some local color:

--A large poster of Richard Nixon hangs in the window of the storefront Republican campaign headquarters. Underneath the photo are emblazoned the words "Integrity" and "Honesty." Passing a nearby telephone pole we see a flyer bearing an unflattering picture of John F. Kennedy. It reads: "Can a Catholic be President?"

--Down the street a cluster of preteen boys hang over their bicycles. A transistor radio hung over one of their handle bars plays "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini." They joke with each other, imitating the motions of flying saucers

--A car of curiosity seekers ambles down the street.

--Three or four local merchants weightily discuss the recent developments.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. JACK ESTES' FARM DAY

JACK ESTES, a 60 year-old farmer, is leading Lawson, Gouda and Ames across the fields behind his farm. His house, barn and a scattering of farm animals can be seen in the distance.

Estes, a garolous old galoot, is dressed in ragtag work clothes. His trusty dalmation stands by his side.

The officers listen tolerantly as Estes relates his expansive tale:



7 CONTINUED

ESTES  
(gesturing)

It came over this way, just over the trees, bobbin and a weavin like a fish on a line. At first it was all big and round, like a giant cookie, then it flattened out and glowed all pinkish, sort of, and made a horrible screechy sound--screreee! Scared me and my dog Jim here. All the animals were just whoopin and a brayin.  
(CON'T)

Estes leads the trio to a circle of matted and slightly singed grass. This is somewhat surprising to them, since they had assumed that it was Estes' senile imagination, not the flying saucer, which had taken flight. Lawson and Gouda examine the ground.

ESTES  
(con't)

It was right here she landed. This is a small circle, but the saucer was much bigger. This here is where the exhaust came out.

GOUDA

The exhaust?

ESTES

Like a blue or purple flame, like a gas burner. I didn't know what they wanted but they weren't gonna get it from me. I hit back toward the house to get the 12 guage. And it was when I came back that I noticed Nell III was gone.

LAWSON

Nell?

ESTES

The Third. My cow. The First and Second ~~one~~ died off. She had been grazing right out here where the saucer came. I was going to run her in earlier, but I didn't. Now she's gone.

LAWSON

(looking around)

She must be around here somewhere. Probably just got spooked.

ESTES

Nope. I looked all over. She's gone alright. They took her.

CONTINUED

LAWSON

They?

ESTES

The space creatures. They was gone when I came back--and so was Nell.

(looking around)

Whatsthematter? Don't you believe me?

GOUDA

(dense)

I think it's a buncha hooey.

ESTES

You callt me a lier?

LAWSON

No, Mr. Estes. It's just a little hard to believe that space creatures came and took your old cow.

ESTES

A man gets his cow stole and the police won't do anything about it. Shee-it.

LAWSON

(calming him)

Now, Mr. Estes.

ESTES

(angrier)

What country is this? Is this the United States of America? Is this the land of the free? Is this a country where a man can get his cow stole and the police stand around farting into the wind?

In an effort to calm down Estes, Lawson gets out his pad and pencil and says officiously:

LAWSON

Alright, Mr. Estes. Now exactly what did Nell III look like?

CUT TO:

8 EXT. CLARENCEVILLE MAIN STREET AFTERNOON

One night of sightings has turned sleepy Clarenceville into a circus town. The main street is jammed with cars and curiosity-seekers. They strain their necks out the windows windows, gawking at the pedestrians, who gawk right back.

All the fringies has descended upon Clarenceville: the curious, the sick, and the UFOphiles. One enterprising man has parked his battered old Plymouth "UFOMOBILE" at the curb and is hawking all manners of outlandish UFO literature ("I Made Love to a Space Creature") from his open trunk.

Further down the street a congregation of the infirm patiently awaits its extraterrestrial savior. One woman is on crutches, another man in a wheelchair, and so on.

Giant hand-lettered signs have been tacked up here and there reading:

Prof. Robt. Allen Smith  
will lecture on the subject  
"Flying Saucers Are Real"  
tomorrow night at Sloan Field  
\$1 8:00 pm

As the camera tracks past the window of the Clarenceville Press, we see Claude Ames inside talking on the phone.

CUT TO:

9 INT. CLARENCEVILLE PRESS AFTERNOON

Ames has a coffee cup in one hand and a telephone in the other.

Notes and photographs are scattered across the desk beside him. A CRUSTY OLD LOCAL REPORTER watches him without comment from a worn office chair.

AMES

Don't worry, don't worry, I'll file the rest by 10:00.

(a beat)

It's a goddamn circus down here, Harry. Every sickie within fifty miles has shown up hoping to get a cure.

(a beat)

Extraterrestrial vibrations, I guess. The lame, the halt, the blind, they're all here. Is it always like this after UFO flaps?

(a beat)

No, the Air Force isn't here yet.

(CON'T)

9 CONTINUED

AMES  
(con't)

They're sending some people? Great. They should be here now. These UFO reports are like fish stories, they keep getting bigger.

(a beat)

I don't know, Harry, it's strange. It's like somebody's pulled the plug on this whole town.

(a beat)

OK, OK, I'll stay with it. Don't worry. Talk to you later.

Ames hangs up the phone and turns to the crusty reporter:

AMES

The Air Force is sending some investigators.

The reporter nods expressionlessly.

AMES

Did you ever have anything like this in Clarenceville before?

OLD REPORTER

No, sir. Not that I remember.

AMES

Did you see any UFOs?

OLD REPORTER

Yep.

AMES

What are you going to do?

OLD REPORTER

I'm going to write a book about it.

AMES

Have you filed your story?

OLD REPORTER

Nope.

AMES

Have you notified the police?

OLD REPORTER

Nope.

9 CONTINUED

AMES  
(enthused)

Can I have the story? I'm a stringer for  
the Chicago Trib.

OLD REPORTER

Nope.

AMES

Why not?

OLD REPORTER

I'm saving it for my book.

Ames turns and throws up his arms in frustration.

CUT TO:

10 EXT. DAYTON CHURCH MORNING

A stately white colonial church. Organ music sifts softly  
through the morning air. Middle America on a Sunday morning.

SUDDENLY, the doors swing wide open and the organ music pours  
out into the street.

REVEREND HENRY SCHUUR, about 50, steps outside and greets his  
parishioners as they file past.

Among his parishioners are Air Force Lieutenant Paul VanOwen, age  
40, his wife SHARON and their 8 year-old daughter BECKY. VanOwen  
shake hands with the Reverend and strides briskly outdoors.

VanOwen is wearing regulation AF shoes, trousers, shirt and tie  
with a patterned summer sportcoat. As he steps out into the sun  
he seems not only much younger than when we first saw him, but  
also more casual and easygoing. The brooding gaze, the defensive  
gait, the grey hair and wrinkles are all still years in the future.

A shiny new regulation blue USAF<sup>1966</sup> Chevrolet station wagon is waiting  
at the curb for VanOwen. The words "Air Force Intelligence Center,  
Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, O." are stenciled on the door.

Behind the wheel, S/Sgt. BILL HIGBY, about 30, waits for VanOwen.

Paul VanOwen, removing his sportcoat as he walks, strides directly  
toward the station wagon. Higby gets out of the car and holds out  
a freshly pressed Air Force coat and cap for VanOwen.

VanOwen gives Higby his sportcoat and <sup>exchanges</sup> puts on his AF coat and cap.  
He is now in full dress uniform.

10 CONTINUED

VanOwen kisses his wife and daughter goodbye. He gets behind the wheel and drives off with Higby. Sharon and Becky watch the station wagon pull away.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. HIGHWAY MORNING

The station wagon heads south toward Clarenceville.

Seated beside VanOwen, Bill Higby loads a 35mm still camera. Higby is a recognizable type: the constipated career officer. The kind of guy who can read a paperback novel without once cracking the spine.

A stack of papers, files and newspapers lies on the beat between them. On top is a folded copy of the Sunday Chicago Tribune. It carries a 3-column photo of the Clarenceville UFO (an ill-defined glowing object) and the headline, "Indiana Town Gets UFO Fever." The story carries Claude Ames' byline.

The rear of the station wagon is stacked with suitcases, boxes, files, forms and electronic equipment.

VanOwen and Higby sit comfortably beside each other. Their relationship is a professional one; they have worked together for some time and feel no particular need to make conversation. Higby finally breaks the silence:

HIGBY

Sorry we ~~had~~ to pull you away from your family like this...

VANOWEN

Ah, nothing lost anyway. Just another Sunday afternoon at home. This is much more interesting. How does it shape up?

HIGBY

Average. I was going through some of the reports before. Some good, some bad. There's one nice report from a physics teacher, and a couple of looney ones. There's one real zinger.

VANOWEN

An all-timer?

HIGBY

Not quite an all-timer. Lorraine Blakely, something of the town crackpot. She says it's all an attempt to defeat Kennedy. The space people told her so. She says Nixon was sent by

## 11. CONTINUED

VanOwen nods knowingly and keeps driving.

CUT TO:

## 12 INT. POLICE STATION DAY

VanOwen, Higby, Lawson and Captain Maple sit and stand in Maple's office.

Higby has a camera round his neck and takes pictures of Maple and Lawson as they talk. In fact, we'll find he snaps the picture of just about everybody he meets.

MAPLE

I sure appreciate your coming Lieutenant VanOwen. This has been one helluva mess.

VanOwen is checking off several names he has written on a notepad:

VANOWEN

Let's see who we have for sure. There's Tom Kiesel and his wife Janice, there's Jimmy Simpson, the kid who took the picture, Lorraine Blakely, who I'm going to put off talking to as long as possible, and Jack Estes, the guy with the cow.

LAWSON

Nell III.

MAPLE

Yeah, but I wouldn't take old Jack too seriously. A couple years ago he was convinced the Chinese Reds were stealing his carrots. He said the Chinese had dug a hole through the center of the earth and that they would crawl up by night, see, and grab the ends of his carrots by the roots...

(gestures)

and, zip!, yank them back down to China. We finally had to send Gouda out there for a whole night to watch Jack's carrot patch with him before he was convinced.

VANOWEN

Whew, you got 'em alright. UFO sightings always bring the loonies out of the woodwork. But I want to check out this Jack Estes thing, anyway. There's supposed to be some secondary evidence.

(a beat)

Did anybody get the negatives from the kid who shot the picture?

12 CONTINUED

LAWSON

No.

VANOWEN

We'll have to do that. All the evidence is government property. We have to go over everything.

(to Maple)

Can I borrow Officer Lawson here for the day? It'll make things easier.

MAPLE

Take my whole force. You can't imagine what it's been like the last day and a half.

(seriously)

What exactly did happen here, Lieutenant?

VANOWEN

I don't know. That's not even my job. I'm just a field investigator. I just collect all the facts and pass them on.

LAWSON

I'll tell you, Lieutenant, I'm starting to be belief this stuff myself.

VANOWEN

Is the reporter from the Chicago Trib still in town?

LAWSON

Claude Ames? Sure. I think so.

VANOWEN

I'd like to talk to him too. In addition, we'd like to have all the witnesses, any witnesses at all, get together for a general meeting here tomorrow morning at 9:00.

They move toward the door.

VANOWEN

One other thing, Captain.

MAPLE

You name it, Lieutenant.

VANOWEN

Please instruct your officers not to speak to anyone from the news media. This is an official Air Force matter now. There may be Top Secret information involved. Who knows what we're dealing with? There may even be national security considerations. We have to be prepared for every contingency.



12 CONTINUED

MAPLE

Of course.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. CLARENCEVILLE MAIN STREET DAY

VanOwen, Higby and Lawson makes their way through the pedestrians toward VanOwen's station wagon.

As they walk they find a town increasingly gone carnival. Newsboys hawk a special "UFO Extra" of the Clarenceville Press. Simpson's drug store advertises its "UFO Sundae." The posters promoting Prof. Smith's UFO lecture have been updated to read "tonight." Tourists walk in packs down the sidewalks.

A bumper sticker on a passing out-of-state car reads:

FLYING SAUCERS ARE REAL  
THE AIR FORCE DOESN'T EXIST

VanOwen throws his arms around Higby and Lawson in a friendly gesture as they walk.

CUT TO:

14 INT. JIMMY SIMPSON'S HOME DAY

A MONTAGE SEQUENCE shows VanOwen, Higby and Lawson interviewing various UFO witnesses.

They ~~TD~~ stand in the Simpson's middle-class living room as VanOwen admiringly examines the Brownie Starflex with which the 12 year-old JIMMY SIMPSON took the UFO photo. Jimmy's proud PARENTS watch on.

VanOwen places Jimmy's negatives into an envelope marked "Top Secret." Higby takes a picture of Jimmy posing with his 8X10 glossy and his beaming parents.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. JACK ESTES' FARM DAY

VanOwen and Higby collect dirt and grass samples from the area where Estes claims the flying saucer landed. VanOwen and Lawson walk across the landscape listening tolerantly to the expansively gesturing Estes as Higby snaps more photos.

Estes poses with an artist's representation of the UFO he saw and Higby takes his picture.

15 CONTINUED-

Here, as in Jimmy Simpson's home, VanOwen's modus operandi seems designed as much to make the witnesses feel important as it is to get the facts. VanOwen has been selected for his job because his talents are psychological as well as technical.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD DAY

VanOwen, Higby, Tom and JANICE KIESEL walk across a grassy area fifty feet off the side of a two-lane country road. Tom is talking, VanOwen is dudifully listening and Higby is snapping pictures.

They turn and walked back toward the shoulder where VanOwen's station wagon and Kiesel's '59 Dodge are parked. Officer Lawson is catching a catnap in the front seat of the station wagon.

VanOwen is carrying a plastic bag containing an odd-shaped SCRAP OF METAL. Kiesel walks beside him, a bulky UFO Report Form in his hand. Higby lags a little behind.

VANOWEN

Is this the car you were driving, Mr. Kiesel?

KIESEL

Yes.

VANOWEN

We'd like to borrow if for a couple hours, if we may.

(calling to Higby)

Bill?

HIGBY .

(catching up)

Yes?

VANOWEN

Find a mechanic to go over Tom's car from top to bottom. See if there is any possibility of ignition or engine failure.

KIESEL

You do think my car stalled of its own, do you?

VANOWEN

I've got to check it out. It's my job. This is a very good report, Tom, one of the most lucid Encounters of the First Kind we've had.

KIESEL

16 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

That's just Air Force jargon. A Close Encounter of the First Kind is simply a close range sighting where a clearly identifiable object is seen. We got a report of a second kind encounter at Jack Estes' farm, but there haven't been any valid third kinds reported in this series of sightings. A Close Encounter of the Second Kind is where there is material evidence, such as soil depressions, burnt grass and so on. If we could prove your car stalled without mechanical reason, it would make yours an Encounter of the Second Kind.

KIESEL

And the third kind?

VANOWEN

A Close Encounter of the Third Kind is one in which some form of extraterrestrial life is seen, humanoid or otherwise. Very few of these are credible.

Kiesel gestures to the plastic bag containing the scrap of metal:

KIESEL

What are you going to do with that?

VANOWEN

We send all the samples on to the Research and Development Lab. They file a report.

KIESEL

Could I have it back when they're finished. I'd like to use it in my class.

We take a closer look at the scrap of metal: it does seem quite peculiar.

VANOWEN

Honestly, I forward this stuff and never see it again. But I'll pass along your request. I'm sure something can be done.

VanOwen places the plastic bag containing the metal into the back of the station wagon with the other equipment. Camera CLOSES on the odd scrap of metal.

CUT TO:

17 INT. SIMPSON'S DRUG STORE AFTERNOON

The malt shop, circa 1960. The local teen crowd is killing off what remains of a Sunday afternoon by hanging around, telling jokes, and playing the old Wurlitzer.

Paul VanOwen and Claude Ames sit in a corner booth sipping coffee. VanOwen motions toward the Chicago Tribune which lies of the table before him:

VANOWEN

Now is this any way to run a paper? Three-fourths of this stuff is hearsay and the rest is gossip. "The objects had blue glowing lights and traveled at speeds up to 9,000 miles per hour." What kind of crap is that?

AMES

Lieutenant...

VANOWEN  
(amiable)

Call me Paul.

VanOwen has a frightening ability to make split-second tactical shifts from stern to conciliatory poses. Ames is disarmed by VanOwen's manner, but determined to hold his own against this older and more experienced oponent.

AMES

Give me some straight information then. I've got to file another story by 9:00. I can only write what I hear and see.

VANOWEN

Honestly, Claude, there's no more information I can give you. There's nothing to write about here. Just people seeing things in the sky. It happens all the time.

AMES

Alright, you want "facts." Then answer me some straight questions.

VANOWEN

Anything. Ask.

AMES

The Air Force ran a check on air activity last Friday night, right?

VANOWEN

Yes.

17 CONTINUED

AMES

Were there any jets from Jefferson or Wright-Patterson in the area?

VANOWEN

No.

AMES

Were there any commercial planes in the vicinity? Any private aircraft?

VANOWEN

No. Not that I know of.

AMES

Any sputniks or weather balloons?

VANOWEN

No.

AMES

(a beat for emphasis)

Then what the hell was up there?

VANOWEN

If you were a good reporter, you'd investigate the other possibilities, Claude. Plasmas, electrostasis, corona discharge, secret flight maneuvers, sundogs, optical mirages, ~~and~~ looming, lenticular cloud formations, meteors, hallucinations.

AMES

(a beat)

You're really trying to deceive me, aren't you?

VANOWEN

Why would I deceive you? I'm a good church-going man. I just want to find the truth.

AMES

There's no way you would except the reality of flying saucers, is there?

VANOWEN

Claude, how can you say that? I can't even answer that question. My job requires total objectivity.

AMES

(a beat)

VanOwen, you are a worthy antagonist.

CUT TO:

18 INT.

MOTEL ROOM

EARLY EVENING

Papers, files and toiletries are all neatly stacked on the dresser in VanOwen's motel room.

VanOwen is comfortably slouched in a tacky motel chair with a telephone receiver wedged into the crook of his neck. With one hand he holds a cigarette and with the other absent-mindedly works a crossword puzzle as he talks on the phone. But most of all, VanOwen seems to be resting his mind: he is a man capable of accomplishing many tasks simultaneously.

He seems blithely uninterested in the conversation he is having; his answers are only of the most perfunctory and obligatory nature. Between snatches of conversation, VanOwen takes short puffs on his cigarette. He also manages to solve three crosswords before the conversation is over.

VANOWEN

'Bout the same. Everything seems to be in order. I'll be back by Tuesday, Wednesday at the latest...how's everything at home?...that's nice...she did?...oh...OK, sure...well, do what you think best...I trust your judgement...sure, sure, that'll be alright...whatever you want...of course...no, I'm not upset, dear...yes, everything's alright. How's Becky?...good, put her on...Becky?...been a good girl, puddin'?...that's nice...she did?...oh...well, I'm proud of you...be a good girl, now. Daddy loves you...of course...put Mommy back on the phone now...Hello, Sharon?...

(CON'T)

Bill Higby sticks his head in the open door. VanOwen waves him in.

VANOWEN

(con't)

yes, it's no problem...listen, I've got to ring off now, dear. Bill's ready to go...yes, I will...don't worry...goodbye, love.

VanOwen cradles the phone and looks up at Higby.

VANOWEN

You all set?

HIGBY

Yeah. I'm leaving.

VANOWEN

I'm going over to hear the lecture at Sloan  
 Field. Mom will pick me up in a half hour.

18 CONTINTUED

HIGBY  
I'll see you later then.

VANOWEN  
Bill?

HIGBY  
Yes?

VANOWEN  
(looking at the crossword)  
What's a five-letter word for meaningless?

It takes Higby a second to realize VanOwen's question is rhetorical.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. SLOAN FIELD EVENING

The sign above Sloan Field reads:

Robert Allen Smith  
"UFOS ARE REAL"

VanOwen, Ames, Lawson and Gouda stand in one of the two lines leading to the small municipal baseball field.

VanOwen jokes with Ames and Gouda as they pass through the turnstiles. VanOwen has slipped back into his role as the artful Air Force public relations man.

CUT TO:

23 INT. SLOAN FIELD EVENING

The citizens and tourists of Clarenceville are taking their places in Sloan Field. Among the faces in the crowd we recognize those of Tom and Janice Kiesel, Jimmy Simpson and his parents, and some teenagers from the malt shop.

Tarps, blankets and cushions have been placed over the playing field. The spectators have been encouraged to lie on the field so they can watch the stars as Prof. Smith speaks. The older spectators assume seats in the bleachers while the younger and more adventurous ones lie on the playing area.

Ames, Lawson, Gouda and VanOwen are uncertain where to sit. Gouda looks for a seat in the stands while Ames heads toward the cushions.

AMES  
Common, Gouda, let's lie on the playing field.

23 CONTINUED

GOUDA

You kiddin? Me lie down on the ground?  
I'm an officer of the law?

LAWSON

La-te-da.

VANOWEN  
(joking)

You mean the guy they sent out to watch  
Jack Estes' carrots all night long?

GOUDA  
(hurt)

Who told you that story?

AMES

Common, Gouda, sit down.

They compromise by propping themselves up against the first row of seats. VanOwen watches the podium.

**TIMECUT:** The field lights have been dimmed and Prof. Robert Allen Smith is speaking from the spotlighted podium. Behind him is a giant slide screen upon which has been projected a photograph of a UFO. We cut into Smith's speech:

PROF. SMITH

Now turn your eyes to the skies.

VanOwen, Ames, Lawson and Gouda comply, as do we. It is a rich, dark stary night.

PROF SMITH O.S.

There are aproximately 150 billion stars in our galaxy, of which the sun is but one medium-sized member. Using the laws of probability, astronomers have estimated there are a minimum of 100,000 planets in our galaxy with life-supporting atmospheres indentical to Earth's. And there are at least 3,000 more known galaxies, some as far as 30 million light-years away...

**SUDDENLY,** as Prof. Smith speaks, **THREE GLOWING BLUE LIGHTS** move in slow progression across the sky. One. Two. Three.

A shocked silence fills the ball park, then Prof. Smith's hushed voice is overheard over the loudspeaker system:

PROF. SMITH O.S.

Ho-ly Cow.



23 CONTINUED

The UFOs pass slowly over the stadium. Exclamations of fright and surprise are ~~now~~ heard everywhere. A child calls, "They're back!"

PROF. SMITH

Does anyone have a camera? Is there a camera in the house? Please take pictures immediately.

Ames is already on his feet snapping pictures with a miniature pocket camera. Gouda stares in wide-mouthed awe. VanOwen, taking a more objective view, watches without comment.

The blue lights fade into the western skies.

Ames makes a mad rush for exit. Mass confusion reigns. Spectators turn to VanOwen for his opinion but he indicates he is as baffled as the next person.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. SLOAN FIELD NIGHT

A few cars (including Ames') screech out of the parking lot in the general direction of the UFOs.

Lawson and Gouda try to direct the hopelessly emeshed traffic in the Sloan Field parking lot.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. CLARENCEVILLE MAIN STREET NIGHT

Pedestrians and drivers stand watching the fading blue lights.

Ames' car is parked at an odd angle in front of the Clarenceville Press office. Inside we see him talking on the phone.

CUT TO:

26 INT. CLARENCEVILLE PRESS NIGHT

The clock above Ames' head reads 9:00. A REPORTER at the night desk listens as Ames speaks:

AMES

Yeah, Harry, I know, I know. Can we still make the morning edition?

(a beat)

Well, this is a Special. There's been more sightings here. Put a stenographer on the extension.

(CON'T)

26 CONTINUED

AMES

(con't)

Just a couple minutes ago. I saw them.  
Along with 500 others.

(a beat)

OK, are you ready? Take it from here:

(he pauses to collect his thoughts)

"The saucers have returned to Clarenceville,  
Indiana. Five hundred spectators at a  
municipal baseball field saw a regular pattern  
of three blue saucer-shaped discs moving at  
great speed from east to west." New paragraph.

(a beat)

"This reporter was among them... ."

Ames is more than satisfied with himself. This is the scoop of  
his young career. By tomorrow evening his name will be in every  
paper in the country.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. HILL OVERLOOKING SLOAN FIELD NIGHT

Bill Higby stands behind the AF station wagon on a hill  
overlooking Sloan Field. In the distance we see the massive  
traffic jam and hear the honking horns.

Higby holds up a large metal cup covered with folded blue  
rubber. He sharply pulls a wire on the bottom of the cup and  
the rubber immediately inflates with a hissing sound into a  
large glowing blue helium-filled balloon.

Higby lets the balloon go and it shoots quickly upward and drifts  
in the general direction of Sloan Field.

Higby quickly slams the rear gate of the station wagon and, taking  
one last glance at the airborne balloon, gets into the front seat  
and drives away.

The balloon drifts on, looking indistinguishably like the pseudo-  
saucers which threw Sloan Field into a panic. All in all, a  
very successful hoax.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN NIGHT

The first three UFO balloons <sup>explode</sup> pop one by one and glide toward  
the earth.

Clarenceville UFOphiles, following the balloons by car, drive  
in the direction of the descending "saucers."

28 CONTINUED

One by one, the balloons return to earth. The first crashes in front of a dimly gas station at a rural intersection.

The "flying saucer" lies in the middle of the road, a helpless mass of blue rubber, mangled metal and miniature blue lights.

A gas station attendant and hanger-on move cautiously toward the fallen saucer. Several cars pull up and their passengers get out to inspect the object.

They all cautiously circle the fallen UFO. They ~~curiously~~ ~~peek~~ inch fearfully toward it as if it might emit some dreaded form of radiation.

In the crowd we hear such comments as:

SPECTATOR

What is it?

SPECTATOR

Watch out. Don't go too close.

SPECTATOR

Maybe we should call the police.

SPECTATOR

Don't touch it.

SPECTATOR

Maybe they're real small.

CUT TO:

29 INT. POLICE STATION MORNING

VanOwen has assembled the UFO witnesses for a group meeting. Looking around the room we see Tom and Janice Kiesel, Jack Estes, Jimmy Simpson and a dozen or so others. Claude Ames, chagrined, sits in a back corner.

VanOwen stands to speak; Higby sits at his side. He has several 8X10 glossies in his hand. A folded copy of the morning edition of the Chicago Tribune is tucked into his back pocket.

VANOWEN

I'm sorry to drag you all down here, but there's some confusion in my mind and there are some things I'd like to get straight. We've received the initial findings of the research lab in Dayton and I'd like to get your feelings on them.

(CON'T)

29 CONTINUED

VANOWEN  
(con't)

There is a possibility that a large, rare uniquely-formed plasma passed over this area last Friday night. An Air Force pilot reported a plasma 50 to 100 feet in diameter over Cincinnati and moving west at 2100 hours Friday.

~~Plasmas are an as yet unclassified natural phenomenon.~~ No one knows exactly why they occur; no one can predict how they will act. A plasma is a dense mass of highly ionized air. Under certain freak conditions, such as thunderstorms, oxygen molecules can lose electrons, ~~giving them a net positive charge.~~ The resulting chain reaction produces a compact mass of electrified air. The excess electrons are in turn picked up by dirt particles, salt crystals or even insects, causing them to glow in colors proportional to their chemical composition.

Plasmas, of course, have long existed in the familiar form known as ball lightning. But in recent years there has been a marked increase of plasmas occurring around newly-developed high-tension power lines. These are called corona discharges. Tornadoes have also been known to emit plasmas. Scientists were recently able to create plasmas using ammonia and natural gas--a combination which can be found over newly fertilized farm lands. The Morehead Planetarium has developed synthetic plasmas with controlled electric discharge in gas-filled tubes. This, for example, is a picture of a plasma artificially induced by the Atomic Energy Commission.

(shows photo)

And here is a photo of a naturally occurring plasma taken from a height of 30,000 feet.

(shows photo)

And here is the picture Jimmy Simpson took of the UFO which appeared over Clarenceville last Friday.

(shows photo)

All three photos look remarkably similar. VanOwen is presenting his evidence as skillfully as a courtroom lawyer.

## VANOWEN

The similarities are remarkable. Now this is just a hypothesis, only one of many. I wish to make no more of it than to emphasize the fact that all the qualities ascribed to Friday's UFO can also apply to a freak plasma, such as the one over Cincinnati: they can hover, glow in colors, travel at great speeds, touch ground, burn grass, induce static, cause engines to short out.

(CON'T)

29 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

(con't)

And, of course, there are other possibilities. I won't even go into the possibility of a nasty and vicious hoax, such as the one which was perpetrated on the citizens of Clarenceville last night, a hoax which even fooled a reporter from one of the country's most prestigious newspapers.

Claude Amcs hangs his head in shame. VanOwen has the secret smile of a man who is scoring points and knows it.

TIMECUT: It is a little later in VanOwen's presentation. Having made his case, he is now artfully turning the various witnesses against each other--all in the pursuit of accurate information. Higby watches on silently; he has seen this routine work before.

VANOWEN

In looking over the reports, I was struck by several discrepancies. Tom, you reported the object glowed blue and made no sound whatsoever?

KIESEL

Yes.

VANOWEN

And, Jack, the saucer that landed on your farm had a large pink dome and made a screechy noise, didn't it?

ESTES

~~JACK~~

That's right.

VANOWEN

Jimmy Simpson said it glowed a dim white, and his excellent photo bears that out. Mrs. Blakely said that the object was cigar-shaped and had red port-holes. I don't doubt what anybody has reported, I just wondered if you might have something more to add. Tom?

KIESEL

It was so quick, you know. One can never be 100% sure.

VANOWEN

But it was sort of red, wasn't it Jack?

ESTES

It could have been a sort of bluish red. My eyes ain't so hot on colors.

29 CONTINUED

VanOwen pauses a moment, letting these contradictions sink in. Looking around the room, he finds a much subdued audience. He goes in for the kill:

VANOWEN

Now I'm not excluding the possibility of space ships, but we have to look at the evidence in the cold light of day...

CUT TO:

30 INT. POLICE STATION DAY

The witnesses, discussing the meeting, file out of the room. One voice says, "Well, I still believe in flying saucers."

VanOwen walks out with his arm around the much chagrined Claude Ames. VanOwen has a folded copy of the Trib in his hand. The headline reads, "Trib Reporter Eye-Witness to Clarenceville Saucers."

AMES

I'm sorry, Paul. I should have checked it out more. It'll never happen again. Next time I'll be more careful.

VANOWEN

It's nothing, Claude. Anybody can make a mistake. Live and learn.

AMES

The Trib's running a retraction tomorrow. I'm going to write the follow-up story myself. Try to salvage my reputation.

VANOWEN

I'll do you a favor, Claude. You need a break. I'll rush you the lab reports as soon as they come out this afternoon. That way you can beat the other papers by a day.

AMES

Hey, thanks a lot. That's great.

VANOWEN

You see, we weren't adversaries after all.

CUT TO:

31 EXT.

COUNTRY ROAD

DUSK

The AF station wagon is parked on an obscure dirt pull-off from a two-lane country road. VanOwen and Higby stand behind the wagon.

Two good ol' boys, CLEMSON and MANSE, are seated on the fold-down rear gate. Each man is wrapped in tin foil to his neck. To top off the totally absurd effect, they wear beanie caps with small blue light bulbs on top.

MANSE

Clem, I feel so stupid doing this.

CLEMSON

Hell, Manse, if you didn't feel stupid you wouldn't feel at all.

(chortles)

Clem, already slightly in his cups, takes another swig of Ezra Benson and hands the bottle back to VanOwen--who also tugs at it.

VANOWEN

I'm sure glad this job doesn't require a Civil Service exam. You boys'd never make it.

MANSE

Hell, Lieutenant, I only do this for you.

VANOWEN

And the money.

CLEMSON

And the money.

(chortles)

VANOWEN

Common, boys, let's finish the job.

CLEMSON

One more tug, Lieutenant. Please.

VANOWEN

Alright.

VanOwen hands the Ezra Benson to Clem who takes a deep swig and passes it over to Manse who also has a drink.

Higby wraps Manse's head in tin foil. Soon all that remains of him in the small blue bulb atop his head. Then Higby starts on Clem

MANSE

(through tin foil)

You take care of the money, Lieutenant?

31 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

It'll be sent to you after it's all blown over.

MANSE

Awh, can't me and Clem have a little now.

VANOWEN

You know the rules, Manse.

MANSE

Sheeit.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. ANOTHER COUNTRY ROAD NIGHT

VanOwen and Higby drive the Tin Foil Men down another dark country road.

Checking the shoulder and seeing a house light in the distance, VanOwen finds a good spot and pulls over.

VANOWEN

Alright, boys, this is the end of the line.

CLEMSON  
(drunk)

Where are we?

VANOWEN

Good only knows.

VanOwen and Higby help Clem and Manse out of the back seat. They set them facing forward on the shoulder of the road.

VANOWEN

Can you see the road?

MANSE

I think so.

VANOWEN

Good. Stay off the road. Just shuffle down the shoulder. Real slow.

CLEMSON

Where are we?

MANSE

Shut up, Clem.



32 CONTINUED

VanOwen flips a switch on each of their foil-covered beanie's and the little blue lights begin blinking on and off. VanOwen sets Clem and Manse on course.

VanOwen and Higby say goodbye and get into the station wagon and drive away.

The Tin Foil Men shuffle down the shoulder, the blue lights blinking against their shiny bodies. Topsy Clem wavers along at Manse's side.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. PHONE BOOTH NIGHT

VanOwen and Higby stop by a phone booth outside their motel. The motel is on a highway miles ~~away~~ from Clarenceville.

VanOwen steps into the booth and places a call. When the other party answers, VanOwen alters his voice, imitating a hysterical peckerwood:

VANOWEN

Is this the po-lice? Oh, Lordy, Lordy, Lordy. I seen 'em. They landed. They came from outer space. They're all shiny and glowin with blue eyes. They're coming down Route 19 right now. Oh, Lordy, Lordy, help us.

(a beat)

No, officer, I ain't a-crazy. I seen 'em, and now they're gonna get me!

(a beat)

This is Ike Tindal. Wait! I got to hang up now!

(slams receiver down)

VanOwen composes himself and walks back to Higby who stands by the car.

VANOWEN

You might as well go back to Dayton with the rest of these samples. The motel manager will drive you to the airport. I'll wait this thing out and drive back tomorrow or the next day.

HIGBY

Roger.

They get into the car and drive toward the motel.

CUT TO:

34 EXT. ROUTE 19 NIGHT

A Clarenceville patrol car speeds down Route 19.

Officers Lawson and Gouda scan the road intensely as they pass. Suddenly, ahead they see two silver spacemen with flashing blue heads.

Lawson quickly breaks the car to a crawl. Gouda draws his gun.

GOUDA

(frightened)

Oh, my God. It's them. What'll we do?

LAWSON

Don't panic.

Lawson cuts the headlights and slowly approaches the Tin Foil Men from the rear. Gouda loads the shotgun with trembling hands.

Lawson pulls the patrol car to the side of the road and parks it. Lawson and Gouda open their doors and kneel beside the car. Lawson reaches in and pulls out the mike:

LAWSON

Car 2. Car 2 to headquarters. Are approaching what appears to be two space creatures walking on Route 19 approximately 1000 yards west of Six Mile Road. Appearing to have glowing humanoid shape with flashing blue heads.

(a beat)

Flashing blue heads.

(a beat)

Will do. 10-4.

(hangs up mike)

GOUDA

What did they say?

LAWSON

Try to take them alive.

GOUDA

Shit.

Guns drawn, Lawson and Gouda inch their way toward the Tin Foil Men. Coming up behind Clem and Manse, Lawson and Gouda point their guns and stand up straight.

GOUDA

Halt in the name of the United States of America. We are a peaceful country.

34 CONTINUED.

Clem and Manse awkwardly turn in their tin foil costumes. Clem, still tipsy, trips over his feet and tumbles to the ground. Manse calls through the tin foil:

MANSE

Don't shoot, officers. Don't shoot. We're earth people.

Manse pulls down the tin foil revealing his face:

MANSE

Don't shoot. We're human people.

Lawson and Gouda lower their guns.

CUT TO:

35 INT. POLICE STATION NIGHT

Clem and Manse sit side by side in an INTERROGATION ROOM. Standing around them are Lawson, Gouda and Captain Maple.

Clem and Manse stare dumbly up at their interrogators. Their beanie caps have been removed and the tin foil is stripped below their necks.

MAPLE

So this is your idea of a joke?

LAWSON

Where you boys from?

MANSE

Kentucky, sir.

GOUDA

Where in Kentucky?

MANSE

Custer.

MAPLE

What did you think you were doing, dressing up like that?

CLEMSON

Hell, Capt'n, we wuz jus havin a litt'l fun.

GOUDA

You think it's funny to scare people half crazy? You should of heard the poor man who called here.

MANSE

We din mean no harm, Capt'n.

35 CONTINUED

Captain Maple walks into ANOTHER ROOM, picks up a phone and dials. After a moment there is an answer.

MAPLE

Hello, Lieutenant VanOwen? Could you come down to the station. This is Captain Maple. Sorry to bother you like this, but there's a couple a boys here I think you should talk to.

(a beat)

Thanks. See you in twenty minutes then.

(hangs up)

CUT TO:

36 EXT.

DARK ROAD

NIGHT

Paul VanOwen drives across the dark country roads toward Clarenceville. He appears calm and content with himself. A job well done.

VanOwen drives along for quite some time before he senses something strange. Nothing precise exactly. An odd feeling in the air, the sense of someone following him.

Feeling heat on the back of his head, VanOwen rubs his neck. A florescent glow seems to shine momentarily into the back of the station wagon, but when he turns around to look, it is gone.

Driving on, he feels heat all around him. He looks at the water temperature gauge: it is rising.

There seems to be a faint blue glow all around the station wagon. VanOwen strains his head out the window to look behind him, but sees nothing. He checks the battery gauge: it is discharging rapidly.

The glow grows warmer. VanOwen, <sup>walks</sup> his speedometer fall steadily: 60-55-50-45. He presses the accelerator to the floor, but the car continues to decelerate: 40-35-30. He rechecks the gauges. The water temperature reads "hot" and the battery is fully discharged.

The engine begins to sputter. VanOwen pumps the accelerator but the station wagon only sputters more--then conks out. He slowly guides the dead car onto the shoulder.

The car comes to a halt. The interior and exterior car lights suddenly go dark. But there is still a strange light softly flooding the area: a blue glow. He feels the sweat on his face.

VanOwen opens his door and steps outside. The moment he does, he hears a strange mechanical piercing sound--the SAUCER SOUND--quiet but intense.

36 CONTINUED

He looks up and sees it: a huge bluish saucer hovering hundreds of feet above his head. This is the only time during the sequence that we see the "saucer" itself. All the other shots are played against VanOwen, his car, the road, the landscape. (C)

In fact, the object VanOwen "sees" may not be real at all. It certainly is "real" to VanOwen, but from the evidence available we cannot be sure if it is a hallucination or a genuine close encounter.

At first VanOwen seemed curious, then upset; now fear is setting in. He walks backward down the road.

He staggers off the road. Suddenly, the saucer seems to be directly above him: huge, round and bluish. He is flooded in light.

Without warning, all noise stops. There is stillness everywhere. The light slowly dissolves to pink. VanOwen's eye sockets seem hollow, his cheeks callow.

Sweat pours across his face; his lips tremble. He wants to run but his body won't oblige: he is frozen.

His eyes open as big as saucers. Fear fills his every pore. He is seeing something of incredible grandeur--or horror. It is no plasma.

His face and body are transformed as if by X-Ray. It is an in-depth X-Ray the like of which has been seen on this earth. The ray cuts through him layer by layer: first we see his skin, then the red network of blood vessels, then the grey network of the nervous system, then his skeletal structure, and finally nothing but a pale glow--his very soul.

He raises his hand before him and sees only a skeleton's palm bathed in red light.

The SAUCER SOUND returns then dissolves into the OUTER SPACE SOUND. VanOwen's palm dissolves to the misty view of the SITE and we are back momentarily where the picture began. An orange glow hovers on the horizon. We hear the sound of worlds colliding.

Intertwined, there is also a new sound--the PHONETIC LOOP SOUND--a repeated pattern of sounds which seems to make a coherent sentence. Perhaps something like ka-fa-roo-pho-lie-ka-fa-roo... (final selection, of course, would be made after study of possible phonetic sound loops).

The Site dissolves into OUTER SPACE and we are back among unknown stars, planets and galaxies. The outer space sound grows grander.

## 36 CONTINUED

We hear the sound of a car engine idling and all grows dark and silent.

VanOwen is sitting at the wheel of his station wagon. The engine is running and the car lights are on.

He sees two lights ahead and watches slowly as a car drives past. All has returned to normal.

SCREENWRITER'S NOTE: whatever visual and auditory techniques are used during this encounter and subsequent memories of it, the final impression left by the encounter should be that of a personal experience, not a physical sighting.

CUT TO:

## 37 EXT. MOTEL DAYBREAK

The first rays of morning fall across the parking lot of VanOwen's motel. The station wagon is parked in its appropriate place.

CUT TO:

## 38 INT. MOTEL DAWN-DAY-NIGHT

Morning light breaks through the curtains in VanOwen's motel room.

The bed is rumpled but unslept in. Papers, books and toiletries are scattered over the dresser. Clothes are spread around the room.

Paul VanOwen, wearing his wrinkled uniform from the night before, sits staring into vacant space.

His eyes fall on various objects in the room: a traveler's clock, a Gideon Bible, a wrinkled shirt. What do they mean?

~~DISSOLVE TO:~~ The early morning light <sup>DISSOLVES</sup> ~~dissolves~~ into the organic glow of evening.

VanOwen sits in another chair, staring at his shoes. His AF coat lies on the bed. He examines his fingers as if they were not part of his body.

DISSOLVE TO: night. The room is dark except for the reflected glow of the motel sign.

VanOwen looks out the large picture window into the black night. For a moment he hears the OUTER SPACE SOUND, but it quickly fades.

38 CONTINUED

TIMECUT: later that night. VanOwen sits beside the phone. Presciently, he turns and looks at it: it rings. VanOwen picks up the receiver and Captain Maple's voice comes from the other end of the line.

MAPLE O.S.

Lieutenant VanOwen?

(a beat)

VanOwen?

VANOWEN  
(detached)

Yes.

MAPLE O.S.

Where were you last night? We waited for hours. I finally had to give the story to the press myself.

VANOWEN

I couldn't make it.

MAPLE O.S.

Well, it's alright. I just wanted to tell you it was all a hoax. We had some more pranksters last night. I'm sorry we made such damn fools of ourselves.

VANOWEN

That's alright. It's nothing.

MAPLE O.S.

I figured you'd be in Ashville by now. They're having a bunch of "sightings" there.

VANOWEN

(his interest picking up)  
North Carolina?

MAPLE O.S.

Yeah, it's been coming over the news for the last hour.

(pause: no reply)

Well, I'll see you later.

VANOWEN

Yes.

MAPLE O.S.

Goodbye.

VanOwen hangs up the receiver.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. AIR FORCE BASE NIGHT

VanOwen's station wagon speeds down a deserted Indiana highway.

He swerves sharply into the guarded entrance of an Air Force base. A YOUNG SP examines him suspiciously, but VanOwen flashes a security clearance card at him and drives past.

He pulls up to a hanger.

CUT TO:

40 INT. HANGER NIGHT

Inside the hanger, we see the desperate situation Paul VanOwen finds himself in: his uniform is disheveled, his face unshaved, his hair uncombed, his skin pale and his expression totally manic.

And he is now trying to talk TWO AF NIGHT PERSONNEL into letting him take a jet up in the middle of the night:

VANOWEN

There's no problem. I've flown these things a hundred times. I have it sent back from Wright-Patterson. I'll bring it back from Ashville myself.

VanOwen again flashes his AF identity, security and flight cards at the night personnel, but they are clearly unimpressed. They're both trying to figure out a way to get VanOwen off the base before he gets himself in trouble.

1ST AF SERVICEMAN

Common, Lieutenant, you've had a rough night.

The 1st Serviceman puts his hand on VanOwen shoulder put Paul shakes it off.

VANOWEN

Call Major Dominick at Wright-Patterson. He'll OK it.

2ND AF SERVICEMAN

You really don't want to do that, Lieutenant. Save yourself a lot of trouble and go home now.

1ST AF SERVICEMAN

Wait until morning, Lieutenant. Then we can get <sup>it</sup> okayed through normal channels.

VANOWEN

I've got to get to Ashville tonight.

2ND AF SERVICEMAN

You're not going anywhere tonight, Lieutenant.



40 CONTINUED

The 2nd Serviceman tries to take VanOwen by the arm but Paul turns and grabs him by the collar:

VANOWEN

I'm going to Ashville tonight!

The 1st Serviceman attempts to restrain VanOwen but catches an elbow in the chest. The 2nd Serviceman grabs VanOwen by the shoulder and punches at him glancing a blow off his cheek.

SEVERAL ADDITIONAL SERVICEMEN hear the ruckus and come running across the hangar.

VanOwen fights and kicks, but he is quickly subdued by greater numbers. During the struggle we hear his panicky voice:

VANOWEN

I'm from Air Force Intelligence! I'm from  
Wright-Patterson!

CUT TO:

1 EXT. VANOWEN HOME DAY

VanOwen's station wagon stands in the driveway of his middle-class ranch style home in suburban Dayton. The house is quintessential Eisenhower: the name on the mailbox; the meticulously groomed lawn, the worn wagon wheels in the front yard.

CUT TO:

42 INT. KITCHEN EVENING

Paul VanOwen, Sharon and Becky have supper around their formica-topped kitchen table. Mashed potatoes, roast beef and corn. Ray Conniff plays on the stereo: pure Americana.

VanOwen is wearing casual slacks and a rolled-up plaid shirt--the first time we have seen him without his uniform. He pokes listlessly at his food but does not eat. Becky catches a furtive glance at her father: she knows there is "something" wrong.

Paul sets his fork down and stands up absent-mindedly. Without saying a word, he walks into the LIVING ROOM.

SHARON O.S.

(concerned)

Paul? Paul, what's wrong?

43 INT. A.T.I.C. DAY

The sign on the door reads: "Air Force Intelligence Center Wright-Patterson AFB."

We hear VanOwen and Major Dominick's VOICES as we track through the offices, past two secretaries, past Bill Higby's office (his door is ajar and he is at his desk) and into Major Dominick's office.

MAJOR DOMINICK is a fifties AF career man: a bureaucrat over troubled waters. Behind his head hangs a large 1960 Air Force calendar picturing the F-86, then the latest in air attack technology.

VanOwen wears his freshly pressed uniform:

VANOWEN

Don't try to make a fool out of me, Major.  
I know what I saw.

DOMINICK

I'm not making a fool out of you.

Dominick seems a decent, reasonable, well-intended sort. VanOwen is, and has been, under some strain and Dominick tries to keep this in mind.

VANOWEN

What does a man have to do to get someone to believe him? Put up an exhibit at the Smithsonian?

DOMINICK

That would be a start.

(backing off)

Now, honestly, Paul. We have your report. We're investigating it now. We are pursuing this matter.

VANOWEN

But I am the investigator--and I'm the only eye witness.

DOMINICK

We'll need a full field report.

VANOWEN

You mean send somebody out to pick up more dirt samples that don't mean a damn thing?

DOMINICK

(deep breath)

Paul, you of all people should understand my position: I must treat this report like I would any other sighting. You have often told me you would not take anybody's statement at face value without an investigation. Why should it be different in your case?

43 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

Major, this has to come out in the open.  
We must end this coverup.

DOMINICK

Coverup? There has never been a coverup.

VANOWEN

What do you think I've been doing for the  
past two years?

DOMINICK

Did you ever think you were covering anything  
up? Be honest, Paul.

VANOWEN

(a beat)

No. But that was because I didn't think there  
was anything to cover up.

DOMINICK

There wasn't. We may have done some secondary  
"public relations" work, but we have never  
covered up the smallest scintilla of evidence.

VANOWEN

If you don't make a public announcement about  
what I saw, Charles, I do it myself.

DOMINICK

Please do. Tell anybody you want. I'm not  
going to try to shut you up. We don't cover-up here.

VANOWEN

I'll go over your head, Major.

DOMINICK

Go ahead. I won't try to stop you from destroying  
your career. But you know there's no one over my  
head on this matter. The UFO buck stops right in  
this office. The job of this office is to inves-  
tigate all reports carefully and analytically, and  
it's not going to change now.

VANOWEN

If you would make one positive assumption instead  
of a negative one, you would believe me.

DOMINICK

You have it just backwards, Paul. Scientific  
method assumes the negative, it proves the positive.

43 CONTINUED

VanOwen pauses a moment before saying what he really feels:

VANOWEN  
Major, you're so full of crap.

Dominick sits back in his chair saying nothing. His feelings are more of sorrow than anger. He is watching a solid Air Force man-- a career officer--go to pieces before his eyes.

CUT TO:

44 INT. CHURCH MORNING

The purple-robed church choir take their seats and the organ music dies out.

Rev. Schuur takes the pulpit:

REV. SCHUUR  
We would like to thank our choir and Mrs. VanDyk for that very moving rendition of the old hymn, "When Faith like a River Attendeth My Way."

Our text this morning comes from Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 5, verses 14 through 17:

Schuur reads the verses in a ministerial monotone. VanOwen, Sharon and Becky, all dressed in their Sunday best, sit in a prominent pew. Sharon and Becky, like the rest of the congregation, are straight-backed and attentive.

All except Paul, that is. VanOwen seems extremely uncomfortable, nervous, restless.

Paul fusses and fidgets through about half of Schuur's reading then he can take it no more. The fuse is burning dangerously low; on his personal time bomb; he must escape or he will explode.

VanOwen stands up abruptly, turns, and walks with long confident strides up the aisle and out of the church. Parishoners turn their heads to watch him pass. Schuur's delivery hesitates as his eyes watch VanOwen.

VanOwen walks down the steps and stands in the empty NARTHEX. He breathes deeply; the claustrophobic feeling is gone.

He looks from side to side, becoming suddenly aware of what he has done. He walks over to the tract rack and scans them inattentively.

The choir has begun to sing; the soothing sound of distant voices drifts through the narthex. VanOwen picks up his bears.

44 CONTINUED

The choir sings an inspiring choral (perhaps "Jerusalem") and VanOwen seems more and more carried away by it.

VanOwen's subconscious mind begins to exert its will over his conscious. The hidden memory begins to emerge.

The CHURCH SOUND is transformed in VanOwen's ears to a new sound, the CELESTIAL SOUND which in turn is mixed with the OUTER SPACE SOUND. The celestial sound is, in fact, an orchestrated mixture of the organ, church, saucer and outer space sounds.

Red and blue nebulae-like mists materialize before his eyes, turning and twisting about like lost worlds.

This is but a rudimentary memory; VanOwen can only make out its vaguest outlines. The memory grows before his eyes, tantalizes him with its tangibility, then evaporates.

The blue and red mists blow past, leaving only the original vision of the SITE--erie, distant and imposing.

CUT TO:

45 INT. KITCHEN DAY

VanOwen's memory is interrupted by Sharon's voice. He and Sharon stand arguing over the kitchen table as Becky watches on from another room.

SHARON

So you think you can just up and walk out when you feel like it. What about me? I was never so mortified in my life.

VANOWEN

I don't want to talk about it.

SHARON

Fine example you set for your daughter. If you don't want...

VANOWEN

(barely rational)

I don't want to talk about it!

SHARON

If you don't want to go to church, then maybe you just shouldn't go.

VANOWEN

Alright then, I won't go. No more church. They don't need me anyway.

45 CONTINUED

SHARON

Paul, please. What's happening? What's got into you? It is somebody else?

VANOWEN

Why don't you just leave me alone?

SHARON

Why don't you let me?

VANOWEN

Alright, I will. I'm going. I need some fresh air.

VanOwen grabs his coat and walks toward the front door. Sharon follows him, pleading:

SHARON

I didn't mean that, Paul. Please stay. Let's talk about it.

VanOwen strides across the lawn toward his station wagon.

CUT TO:

46 INT. A.T.I.C. DAY

The secretaries eye VanOwen warily as he walks past and into the open door of Higby's office. He looks haggard.

VanOwen finds Higby unpacking his briefcase.

VANOWEN

What's this, Bill?

HIGBY

Stopped off in Clarenceville on the way back from Ashville. Investigated your report.

The power balance between VanOwen has abruptly shifted: Paul is now edgy and Higby superior. He relishes his advantage over his former boss.

VANOWEN

(ironic)

I bet it was negative. Why wasn't I told?

HIGBY

The Major's going to insist on you taking that vacation, Paul. You need a rest. He's been talking to your wife.

46 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

He's been talking with Sharon! What ~~business~~  
~~right~~ is that of his?

HIGBY

Take it up with him. I don't want to get involved.

VANOWEN

You probably planned it. You were always against me.

HIGBY

I think you ought to take that vacation, Paul.

VANOWEN

So you can make me look like the village idiot while I'm gone?

HIGBY

Don't accuse me of using your methods.

VANOWEN

My methods?

HIGBY

You need a rest, Paul..

VANOWEN

(pathetic)

I need a chance to find it again, that's all, Bill. They have to send me back out.

HIGBY

I never did approve of your methods.

VANOWEN

(angered)

Get out of here. I don't want you around me.

HIGBY

But this is my office.

VANOWEN

Oh.

He turns and exits.

CUT TO:

47 INT. BEDROOM DAY

Paul VanOwen packs his suitcase with silent efficiency and closes it.

He takes a final look at a sheet of paper, leaves it on the dresser and walks out. It reads: "I'm sorry."

CUT TO:

48 INT. A.T.I.C. DAY

VanOwen has closeted himself in his A.T.I.C. office. Behind him stand boxes and boxes of all UFO files.

He studies the files one by one, jotting down notes. He then pins the notes on a large billboard under various categories: "Daylight Discs," "Close Encounters of the 1st Kind" and so forth.

His half-open suitcase lies on the crumpled sofa.

There is a knock on the door. VanOwen, suspicious, looks up.

Two men in anonymous dark suits walk in. Their names, as we shall learn later, are AUGUST KILNE and LOU HEKMAN. Kilne closes the door behind them.

KILNE

Lt. VanOwen? May we speak with you a moment?

VANOWEN

Did you come to throw me out of my office?

They sit down.

KILNE

Not at all. Excuse our intrusion. You reported seeing a UFO a week ago in Clarenceville, right?

VANOWEN

Yes. I filed a report.

HEKMAN

We read the report.

KILNE

It's a very good report. We have reason to believe it is authentic.

VANOWEN

Who are you?



KILNE

Well, Lieutenant, this is sort of awkward. We represent the governmental body which investigates UFOs.

VANOWEN

That can't be. I represent the governmental body which investigates UFO.

KILNE

Not quite. You represent the governmental body which covers up UFO reports. You are a front. A public relations man.

VANOWEN

Who are you?

KILNE

*SECRET*  
Major Dominick is the only one in your unit who knows its ~~true~~ nature. He has ~~told us~~ <sup>spoke to us</sup> about you. He feels you have become a security risk to your unit and to yourself. He spoke of you only in the highest terms.

VANOWEN

What is all this? A joke?

KILNE

Just the opposite. Major Dominick has suggested that you come and join our staff. We are a small top secret unit entirely within the Air Force. No elected politician knows of our existence; we report only to the Joint Chiefs. We are called Project Grief. We are nonpeople within the Air Force. We have neither rank nor commission. We have neither family nor private lives. We follow orders; we make reports only when we deem necessary. We are only a couple years old but are free to pursue UFO investigations in any way we choose.

VANOWEN

Why don't I just report your existence to the press? That would blow the lid off.

KILNE

What is there to report? We do not exist.

HEKMAN

Major Dominick said you told him you thought your whole life was a lie, that you can created no knowledge, ~~and that you were~~ only deception, ~~and destruction.~~ This is your chance to change all that. You can help us investigate and learn. Major Dominick thinks you could be of great use to us.

48 CONTINUED

KILNE

Well, how about it, Lieutenant?

VanOwen thinks a moment then smiles. This is all he could have ever dreamed for.

VANOWEN

Yes. I want nothing more. Good God, yes.

DISSOLVE TO:

49 INT. PROJECT GRIEF LAB DAY

We dissolve to Paul VanOwen, dressed in civilian clothes, being led into a large white laboratory by Kilne.

In is the same lab we saw fifteen years later (in the opening scene). At this time, however, the laboratory is comparatively old-fashioned and poorly equipped. The walls are hung with appropriate astronomical and UFO charts, maps and photos.

VanOwen's eye catches an object lying on one of the lab tables: it is the oddly-shaped SCRAP OF METAL VanOwen picked up in the field with Tom Kiesel. This is the lab where all his investigations ultimately led.

The staff of Project Grief is lined against one of the tables. They look anonymously efficient in their white jackets. Among the five men and two women, we recognize Lou Hekman.

KILNE

Gentlemen and women, this is James Paul VanOwen, the new staff member I've told you about.

(to VanOwen)

Paul, welcome to our family.

Kilne leads VanOwen down the line and introduces the staff members one by one:

KILNE

Lou Hekman, Haru Miko, Judy Nicholas, Otis Cary, Ken Tabulis...

Screen slowly FADES TO WHITE.

50 INT. PROJECT GRIEF LAB DAY (1975)

Screen dissolves to the same shade of white which opened the picture. The poised scapel tips downward: a red dot appears on the screen and swings into a horseshoe formation.

50 CONTINUED

Fifty-five year-old Paul VanOwen grimaces in pain and we are back to where the opening sequence left off.

Lou Hekman implants the square thermocouple and Haru Miko helps him suture the incision. They are now both in their forties.

Today's work finished, VanOwen stands up from the operating table. He looks down at the six circular bandages which have been placed over the incisions on his chest. He touches one of them gently with his fingertips.

VanOwen walks over to a chair, picks up his clean white shirt and puts it on.

VANOWEN  
(inspecting bandages)  
That's very good work, Lou.

HEKMAN  
(deferential)  
Thanks, chief.

VANOWEN  
(buttoning shirt)  
We'll go back at it same time day after tomorrow.

HEKMAN  
Ill'be be here.

Hekman chuckles depreciatingly: where else would he be?  
VanOwen walks to the door.

CUT TO:

51 INT. VANOWEN'S OFFICE DAY

VanOwen enters his office in the subterranean Project Grief complex.

It is a large prestigious office; VanOwen is obviously a VIP in Project Grief. ~~On one wall hangs~~ A UFO ~~lighting~~ still hangs on the wall

VanOwen the closet and selects a discrete black-and-red tie. He puts on his grey pin-striped vest and suit coat to match his trousers.

VanOwen fastens his watch as he leaves the office.

CUT TO:

52 INT. CORRIDORS DAY

VanOwen walks down the broad white corridor toward the elevator. A large Ellsworth Kelley painting stretches across one wall. He pulls out his key, places it in the elevator switch and turns it. A green light indicates the "Up" elevator has been activated.

He steps into the elevator and the doors close behind him. INSIDE THE ELEVATOR, the floor indicator lights progress from B4 to B3 to B2 to B1 to G. The doors open and VanOwen is on the ground floor.

VanOwen steps out. On the wall by the elevator door there is, instead of a button, a small keyhole and a discrete sign reading, "Access to this Elevator by Key Only."

A armed, uniformed Air Force GAURD sits at a desk near the elevator. He nods to VanOwen.

The guard stands and unlocks the exit door for Paul. The door opens and VanOwen steps out into the brilliant sunlight.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. AFB PARKING LOT DAY

A sign above the door VanOwen has just exited reads, "Restricted Area. Authorized Personnel Only."

As VanOwen walks, we notice the building he has exited is actually a planetarium. In the distance is a large complex of nondescript military buildings.

Striding across the parking lot, VanOwen slips on his sunglasses. Conservatively attired in his three-piece suit, Paul VanOwen is an anomaly in this world of AF uniforms, regulations and staff cars.

VanOwen steps over to a long black 1975 Cadillac limousine with tinted dark windows. A sign inside the windshield reads, "Diplomatic Car. Official Business."

VanOwen gets in and drives out of the lot into the plastic world of 1975.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. HIGHWAY DAY

VanOwen's limousine zooms across the barren fields of Ohio on a modern four-lane Interstate.

Coming into Dayton, he looks across the modernized skyline.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. DAYTON DAY

VanOwen drives down the street where he once lived. He slowly passes his old ranch-style house. A new name is on the mailbox and the neighborhood has been transformed into a low income quasi-urban area. The wagon wheels which once adorned the front yard ~~have been taken out and the holes covered over~~ are gone.

He drives on.

Later, driving through a more affluent neighborhood, VanOwen slows down as he approaches a comfortable suburban home. Checking the address against a small notepad, VanOwen turns into the driveway.

He gets out and walks to the front door. After a moment's hesitation, he rings the bell and waits.

No one answers after a second ring and VanOwen peeks in the front window. Seeing something of interest, he walks around the house.

IN THE BACKYARD, a mature good-looking woman is working in her flower garden. VanOwen sees her from behind and walks toward her.

Looking over her shoulder, we see Paul walking softly across the grass toward her. After a moment, we recognize Sharon VanOwen's ex-wife.

VanOwen steps softly beside her, saying nothing. She is not aware of his presence. After a moment, he says casually:

VANOWEN

Hello, dear. How'd things go today?

Without turning, she answers as if by a long-forgotten reflex:

SHARON

Okay. How about you?

There is a slight pause. Almost against his will, Paul smiles. Suddenly Sharon realizes what she has said and turns around:

SHARON

Is that you? Paul? Is that Paul VanOwen?

VANOWEN  
(nods)

Yes, Sharon.

SHARON

My God. I thought you were dead.

There is an uneasy pause. She gestures toward the house.

55 CONTINUED

SHARON

Come in. Please come in.

Sharon walks toward the house and Paul follows her.

CUT TO:

56 INT. LIVING ROOM DAY

They walk into the living room. VanOwen awkwardly scans the room. The furniture is expensive, but not particularly tasteful. The framed photo of a man stands on the stereo console.

Paul and Sharon are both uncomfortable. They hardly know where to start.

SHARON

Would you like something? A drink or a cup of coffee?

VANOWEN

Just a little scotch. To celebrate the occasion.

SHARON

(releasing her tension)

Well, me too.

VanOwen finds a seat and Sharon pours a couple glasses of scotch.

VANOWEN

How are you?

SHARON

I'm fine.

VANOWEN

Good.

(looking at picture)

How's Jim?

SHARON

He died almost a year ago. Cancer.

VANOWEN  
(awkward)

I'm sorry.

57 CONTINUED

SHARON

Don't be. We had a good life together. We were married eleven years. That's longer than you and I were married. This is his house.

(looks around)

VANOWEN

How's Becky?

SHARON

May I ask you something?

VANOWEN

Sure.

SHARON

Why are you here?

This is a crucial question, and VanOwen himself hardly knows the answer. How does he convey the complex series of emotions which have brought him back?

He hems and haws, looking anywhere but at Sharon:

VANOWEN

Well, I just thought that ahh...I would ahh...

SHARON

(without bitterness)

Why does a man leave his wife and child after nine years of marriage, file divorce papers in absentia, disappear for fifteen years, let people think he was dead, then suddenly show up one day?

VANOWEN

Well, I had to come into this area and I was just thinking that I would ahh... well, see you one...one more time.

SHARON

We hardly know each other any more.

VANOWEN

We have a lot of history in common, Sharon. And I would like to know everything is... alright.

55.7  
(117?)

SHARON  
Paul, what's wrong?

VANOWEN  
Nothing. I just wanted to see you again.  
An impulse.

SHARON  
Well, I'm glad to see you're alive--and  
in good health too.  
(laughs)

VANOWEN  
(smiles)  
I'm getting a lot of medical attention.  
(a beat)  
How's Becky?

SHARON  
She's married now.

VANOWEN  
Already?

SHARON  
For two years. She's 23 now. She has a  
child, six months old. You're a grandfather  
now. We're both grandparents.

VANOWEN  
Did she go to college?

SHARON  
For two years. Then she met Eric and dropped  
out. They live in Indianapolis. I can get  
you her address.

VANOWEN  
Would you do that please?

Sharon stands and walks into another room. Paul watches her  
contemplatively.

CUT TO:



55.β

(2.13)

58 EXT. BANK DAY

VanOwen's limousine pulls up in front of a Dayton bank. Paul gets out and walks inside.

CUT TO:

59 INT. BANK OFFICE DAY

VanOwen stands beside the BANK PRESIDENT in his plush office. The president, seated, goes over a sheath of papers:

BANK PRESIDENT

It's certainly a pleasure to meet the man whose money we've been investing all these years. Before he retired, Charlie said to give you his best if you ever came in. That was four years ago already.

VANOWEN

Is everything in order?

BANK PRESIDENT

Yes. Did you want any changes in the will?

VANOWEN

No, I just wanted to make sure it was all in order. Just hold everything in treasury bonds, ~~until you have to expedite it.~~ There won't be any more payments.

BANK PRESIDENT

Is there anything else you can remember?

VanOwen thinks. As he does the screen FADES TO DARK BLUE.

CUT  
DISSOLVE TO:

60 INT. PROJECT GRIEF GAME ROOM EVENING (1963)

A small red vibrating dot appears on the field of blue. As we fade in we realize the dot is the glowing end of a cigarette being smoking by Haru Miko in the Project Grief Game Room.

Supplied by...

60 CONTINUED

The Game Room is a large wood-paneled "Tudor Style" relaxation room in the otherwise chrome and steel underground Grief complex. The room is richly decorated with deep pile carpets and leather chairs and contains a chess table, a dart board, a pool table, a television and rows of books.

As the camera slowly pans across the room, we find a congenial assortment of seemingly unrelated activities: Haru Niko (his cigarette tip aglow) silently watches an early Sixties episode of "The Beverly Hillbillies," further along Otis Carey and Ken Tabulis play chess intently, beyond them August Kilne and and Lou Hekman are ~~playing~~ a lacadasical game of pool. Behind them, a white-jacketed FEMALE STAFF MEMBER browses through the book shelves.

At the far end of the room Paul VanOwen and Judy Nicholas ~~are~~ <sup>seated</sup> side by side in high-backed leather chairs, ~~reading~~. Paul wears informal clothes and is deeply involved in a heavy tome about radio astronomy. Judy, a good-looking woman about 35, is reading something less weighty. All in all, it seems a happy though highly unusual family.

We watch VanOwen: suddenly, all this intense study gets too much for him. He drops his book to the floor, puts his hands around his neck in a mock-choking manner, stands up, staggers in a circle and finally collapses to the carpet as if choked to death. ~~by himself.~~

Judy looks up momentarily but no one else takes much notice. Their closeted conditions have forced the Grief staff members to be remarkably tolerate of each other's eccentricities.

VanOwen finally pulls himself to his feet, picks up his book, plops back down in his chair and resumes reading.

After a moment, Judy turns to him and says:

JUDY

(pleasant)

Getting a little too much for you, Paul?

VANOWEN

(quoting from his book)

"If we accept the Davis-Greenstein value for the strength of general interstellar magnetic fields, then it becomes necessary to also accept the view, posited by Baade and Minkowski, that still more intense clouds of gases collide violently with each other, though not necessarily in the ratio they proscribed." Aaarrggghh.

60 CONTINUED

JUDY

It's not my fault you wanted to specialize in everybody's field.

VANOWEN

Well, it didn't have any of my own so I thought I'd try to beat out everybody else.

JUDY

Modest.

VANOWEN

The bio-chemistry wasn't that bad. Neither was the astronomy or the nuclear physics. But the speculative math gets me down.

JUDY

Don't worry. You're passing most of us by like a roadrunner. Beep, beep.

(smiles affectionately)

It won't be long before you're head of the whole you-know-what instead of you-know-who.

(nods in Kilne's direction)

VanOwen motions to her secretly:

VANOWEN

Come here, Judy. I want to ask you about something.

VanOwen stands and gestures for her to follow. They walk across the room together.

As they pass the chess table, we notice that Carey and Tabulis have fallen into a violent argument. Both are standing on opposite sides of the chess table, throwing the pieces at the floor and each other. No one pays much attention to them: this type of hostility release is very common within the project.

CUT TO:

61 INT. PROJECT GRIEF CORRIDOR EVENING

There is a stark contrast of decor as Paul and Judy step from the warm wood-paneled Game Room into the cold harsh white corridor of the Grief complex.

They walk past the Ellsworth Kelley painting toward the lab. Paul opens the door for Judy and they enter.

CUT TO:

62 INT. LABORATORY EVENING

Paul and Judy walk into a modernized version of the original lab (though not yet up to 1975 standards). A 1963 Air Force calender hangs on one of the walls; it now sports a newer AF ~~transport~~ than the 1960 version (these AF calenders ~~are~~ not only serve as time devices, but also as a running gag).

*Fighter jet*

VANOWEN

What do you think of Kilne's Rosetta Stone idea?

JUDY

Well, it's what we've been working ~~toward~~ <sup>on</sup> for the last two years.

VANOWEN

I know, but I'm starting to have my doubts. We've got junk and bits and pieces of scraps down here that people have collected over twenty years, yet none of it gives us the slightest clue. I'm not sure there is such a thing as a Rosetta Stone, something that can be decoded and give us the secret.

JUDY

Maybe there isn't. This is no cakewalk, you know.

VANOWEN

But don't you think Kilne is putting too much emphasis on it?

JUDY

(perceptive)

Is the the Rosetta Stone idea or Kilne you object to?

VanOwen starts to answer but stops when he hears the door open. Judy says under her breath:

JUDY

Speak of the devil.

August Kilne walks in.

KILNE

How would you like to take a trip?

VANOWEN

What's up, Augie?

62 CONTINUED

KILNE

There's a sighting coming across the Air Force hotline. South Dakota. Near Rapid City. Could be the real thing. Thought we might fly over.

JUDY

Who's there now?

KILNE

Nobody. The team from Wright-Patterson won't be there until mid-morning. We can jet and drive over now and take a look around. Never can tell what will turn up. Lou's gonna watch the store. Otis is going and I figured it was about your turn to go upside.

VANOWEN

Let's go.

CUT TO:

63 EXT. SOUTH DAKOTA HINTERLANDS NIGHT

Kilne, Carey, Nicholas and VanOwen, dressed in civilian clothes (as always) are seated in an unmarked 1962 car. VanOwen is at the wheel.

They drive slowly along a deserted road in South Dakota. VanOwen ~~uses the car spotlight to light up~~ the side of the road as they pass. The countryside is lonely and forboding.

JUDY

Cheery part of the country.

CAREY

Should of brought my critter boots.

Ahead they see a dim oblong glow moving across the horizon. Judy gasps and VanOwen hits the accelerator.

The car grows nearer the UFO. They look anxiously at it as Carey leans across Judy's lap to snap photos. In the front seat, Kilne sets the sets the 16mm camera and starts shooting also.

63 CONTINUED

They pull up even with the UFO. It is hovering over a small lake about 100 yards directly to their left.

VanOwen breaks the car in the middle of the road and the all get out. VanOwen swings the spotlight across the open field between them and the lake.

Kilne and Carey trot across the field, taking pictures all the while. VanOwen grabs a pistol from the glove compartment and follows with Judy.

They reach the edge of the lake. The glowing UFO hovers directly in front of them. They run along the edge of the lake attempting to get a closer look. As they run, the UFO slowly turns bluish.

Suddenly the UFO veers and moves directly at them. The air around them takes on a bluish glow and the marshland at their feet sparkles with static. VanOwen is the first to talk:

VANOWEN

It's a plasma! A goddamn plasma!

Carey shakes his fingers as they bristle with electrostatic shock:

CAREY

Shit.

The plasma passes over them, veers sharply upward and takes off. They watch the glowing plasma disappear slowly into the dark sky.

There is a pause and Kilne says:

KILNE O.S.

Let's get some sleep.

CUT TO:

64 EXT. HOLIDAY INN MORNING

Kilne and VanOwen wait as Judy and Otis exit from their separate rooms in an Interstate Holiday Inn. Judy and Otis say good-morning and throw their small travel bags into the trunk.

They all get into the car and pull away. We notice from the diverse license plates and travel stickers that this is a prime tourist area. An impropportionate number of the bumper stickers promote nearby Mount Rushmore.

64 CONTINUED

Their car pulls on the road. After they drive a bit, they pass a familiar station wagon headed the opposite direction: it is Bill Higby and his new assistant headed for the site of the UFO reports.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. MACDONALDS MORNING

Mid-Morning and the local MacDonald's is crowded with hungry tourists and their offspring. Kids carrying battered Donald Duck comics and Mount Rushmore penants nag and tug at their parents. Other children skip from car to car comparing the travel stickers pasted on car windows.

MacDonald's familiar (but now obsolete) yellow arches stretch grotesquely over the assembled vacationers. A sign above their heads proclaims, "Over 3 Billion Sold."

Our eyes catch a local newsrack. The banner of the Rushmore News reads, "Lyndon Johnson's First 200 Days," and, in smaller print, "Air Force to Investigate UFO Sightings."

Nicholas, VanOwen, Kilne and Carey exit with their burgers, fries and malts and locate an outdoor table.

They silently set up their food and begin to eat. Paul finally says:

VANOWEN

A goddman plasma. You know, all those years I told people about plasmas and I never saw one before myself. I didn't really believe they existed. It was like something out of a textbook.

KILNE

I'd seen one from the air before but never quite as good as this.

CAREY

If we were in plasma research we could publish our findings and have it sacked.

JUDY

Instead of being sacked.

65 CONTINUED

CAREY

That's one thing that'll never happen to us.  
World War III could wipe out the government  
and Project Grief would keep going.

VANOWEN

Just learn Russian, that's all.

As VanOwen speaks, his eyes catch something of great interest.  
He stares forward, his jaw unmoving.

From his P.O.V., we see Sharon walking across the MacDonald's  
with her new husband, JIM STAPLES (the man in the framed 1975  
photograph). She is wearing a casual dress; he a sport suit.  
They are obviously on vacation.

Sharon's eyes catch Paul at the same instant and she boldly  
takes Jim's arm and walks toward Paul's table.

Paul barely has time to stand by the time she reaches his  
table.

VANOWEN  
(awkward)

Hello, Sharon.

SHARON

Hello, Paul. This is Jim Staples. Jim,  
this is Paul VanOwen.

Staples is at first curious and friendly, but becomes formal  
and polite after he learns who Paul is. He extends his hand:

STAPLES

Hello, Paul. I've heard a great deal about  
you.

VANOWEN  
(nonplussed)

Ah, Sharon, this is Judy Nicholas, Otis Cary  
and August Kilne.

(to others)

This is Sharon...ahh...

SHARON

Sharon Staples.

The others stand and shake hands politely. Sensing the awkward-  
ness of the situation, they collect their uneaten food. Judy  
takes a particularly careful look at Sharon.



65 CONTINUED

KILNE  
 (excusing himself)  
 We've got to be running along. Nice meeting  
 you.

Kilne, Carey and Nicholas walk back to the car. Jim Staples  
 likewise finds a way to excuse himself:

STAPLES  
 I'll pick up the food, dear.

SHARON  
 Thanks, darling.

Staples walks toward the counter. Sharon turns to Paul:

SHARON  
 I didn't get much of a chance to meet your  
 girlfriend. She seems nice.

VANOWEN  
 Judy? Oh no, she just works with us.  
 (a beat)  
 I gather you got married again.

SHARON  
 Yes, actually Jim and I are on our honeymoon.  
 I know this is a pretty prosaic place for a  
 honeymoon...

(smiles)  
 but Jim could only spare a couple days and  
 we'd never been here before, so... . Better  
 late than never.

VANOWEN  
 I guess we didn't travel much.

SHARON  
 No, I can't say we did.

VANOWEN  
 How's Becky?

SHARON  
 She's in school. Doing quite well.

Sharon offers no more information; Paul doesn't request it. This is  
 the life he left behind. It's too late now to regret the decision  
 or dwell on it.

65 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

I'm glad.

VanOwen starts to say something, but stops.

SHARON

Is there anything you want to say, Paul?

VANOWEN

No, I guess not.

Staples returns with a bag of burgers. VanOwen looks back at the car where Kilne, Nicholas and Carey are finishing their lunches.

VANOWEN

I guess I got to go.

SHARON

I was nice seeing you again.  
(smiles)

Paul smiles and they shake hands awkwardly. VanOwen turns and walks to the car.

When he reaches the car, he turns to have a last look. He sees Sharon and Jim taking their seats under the "Over 3 Billion Sold" sign.

CUT TO:

66 INT. LABORATORY LATE NIGHT

VanOwen is working alone in the lab late at night. He seems despondent, his mind unoccupied on his work.

He finally closes the files he is working on, takes off his white coat and walks out of the lab. He switches the light off ~~behind him~~ and closes the door.

CUT TO:

67 INT. CORRIDORS LATE NIGHT

VanOwen walks past the Ellsworth Kelley <sup>and</sup> down the corridor. ~~toward the elevator~~ His mind is full of thoughts.

He places the key into the elevator and switches it. When the doors open, he steps in.

67 CONTINUED

He steps out of the elevator onto another floor. The stark white corridor is much like the one he just left; in this case, however, the walls are hung with Andy Warhol silkscreen prints and the floor is covered by a rich red carpet.

This is the "dormitory" floor. The doors bear nameplates and are liberally spaced. They also bear, ~~much~~ like in a college dormitory, personalized grafitti and clippings. (For example, under Haru Miko's name someone has written, "From the folks that brought you Pearl Harbor.")

Paul walks slowly down the corridor. He passes Judy Nicholas' suite and notices her door is open and her light on. She is lying on the sofa reading. She is wearing a nightgown and covered by a nineteenth century quilt.

He pauses a moment then pokes his head in the room:

VANOWEN

Judy?

JUDY

(looking up)

Paul. Come on in. Sit down.

He steps in.

CUT TO:

68 INT. JUDY NICHOLAS' SUITE LATE NIGHT

VanOwen walks in and sits in an easy chair across from the sofa. Her darkened room is decorated with tasteful antiques. It is almost as if stepping into an earlier time, a direct contrast to the anonymity of Project Grief.

JUDY

I was hoping someone would come by and talk to me.

VanOwen pours himself a drink from the crystal decanter of scotch on the coffee table. He gestures to Judy but she indicates she already has had enough.

Judy realizes Paul wants to talk so she picks up the conversation:

68 CONTINUED

JUDY  
Was Sharon your wife?

VANOWEN  
Yeah.

JUDY  
Do you want to talk about it?

VANOWEN  
(a beat)  
Yeah.

JUDY  
Had you seen her recently?

VANOWEN  
No, it'd been about 2½-3 years. She's gotten married again.

JUDY  
Aren't you glad for her?

VANOWEN  
Oh, certainly. But it's just that it  
ahh...makes everything so...final.

JUDY  
But you knew that all along.

VANOWEN  
Yes, but it had never hit me quite so...bluntly  
before. She asked me why I did it and I didn't  
know what to say.

(a beat)  
For some strange reason I remembered something  
my mother used to tell me as a child. She was  
a very religious woman and she had pat explanations  
for everything. She had her own definitions of  
heaven and hell. For example, she said that hell  
was just like that moment, you know, that moment  
your finger is pricked by a pin, the instant of pain  
when the pin first breaks the skin, she said hell  
was that fleeting moment of intense pain stretched  
out into infinity. Well, she also had a definition  
of heaven. Heaven, she said, was not harps and  
golden streets, but was the place of all knowledge,  
where all out questions would be answered and where  
we would know everything. Whenever I asked her a  
question she couldn't answer, like, "How does a

(CON'T)

58 CONTINUED

VANOWEN  
(con't)

radio work?" she would always say, "Well, that's something you'll know when you get to heaven."

(smiles)

Now, that really appealed to me. I could never get up much interest in harps, streets of gold and singing the praises of the Lord all the time, but this idea of knowing all the answers fascinated me. And I didn't realize how much it fascinated me until several years ago.

(looks around)

Well, I guess that was pretty much what I wanted to say. ~~Guess I'll be going now.~~

VanOwen moves as if to stand up but doesn't quite make it out of his chair.

JUDY

Do you want to stay?

VanOwen looks at her sympathetically.

JUDY

I always wondered why we never got together before. This is a pretty strange group, as you know. The first commune supported by the United States government. I always thought you were a pretty good-looking sort.

(pause)

Well, I'm going to turn off the light. I don't think it's proper for a lady to ask twice.

VanOwen stands and turns off the light.

CUT TO:

69 INT. JUDY NICHOLAS' BEDROOM NIGHT

Paul and Judy lie in her high-backed ornately carved nineteenth century bed. Judy sleeps soundly, tugging on her red-and-white Early American quilt.

Paul is wide awake; he stares ahead.

As we track toward his face we hear the soft strains of the ORGAN SOUND. The memory is returning.

39 CONTINUED

The organ sound mixes with the SAUCER SOUND and they dissolve into the OUTER SPACE SOUND.

The scene dissolves into the misty, orangish, distant view of THE SITE. As the camera continues to move forward, the site dissolves into OUTER SPACE.

We travel through outer space, moving swiftly and in a single direction. Ahead of us the constellation Orion draws nearer; in the belt we see the TIFID NEBULA.

We approach the Tifid Nebula, a pink-and-red mass of expanding steller clouds which resembles a Georgia O'Keefe "Iris" painting. The sounds merge into the CELESTIAL SOUND.

The Tifid vagina opens wide and we plunge in.

Inside, all is DARK and we hear the PHONETIC LOOP SOUND: ka-fa-roo-pho-lie-ka-fa-roo... .

Faces appear. At first they appear to be those of strange space creatures, but then we realize they are only distorted human faces.

Or, more accurately, half faces. The half face of Sharon merges with the half face of Becky merges with the half face of his mother. A hand is raised up before the faces as if to indicate, "Go No Further."

The SAUCER SOUND reemerges and becomes acute and piercing.

The camera goes into the outstretched pale palm and the images FADES TO WHITE.

CUT TO:

70 INT. LABORATORY DAY (1975)

~~START NEW PAGE~~

A yellow dot appears on the white field then diffuses across the screen.

A black line blinks horizontally across the screen, the images comes into focus and the camera pulls back from an extreme close-up on VanOwen's eye.

Paul, wearing a white shirt, lies on the lab table. His head is on a pillow.

Lou Hekman leans over him with an eyedropper containing a yellow fluid.

70 CONTINUED

Paul blinks his eye a few times and sits up on the edge of the table.

HEKMAN

Close your eye now, Paul.

VanOwen closes his eye tightly and Hekman tapes a piece of gauze over it.

HEKMAN

Okay, Chief.

VanOwen stands and touches the gauze gently.

HEKMAN

Just leave the patch on a couple days and the solution should integrate into the cornea. If it works, we won't have to do the other eye. Unbutton your shirt.

VanOwen unbuttons his shirt, revealing his bare chest. We see a half dozen dark spots where the sensors have been implated. All the sutures are healing nicely.

HEKMAN

And the leg?

VanOwen pulls up his pin-striped pants leg revealing several long thin wires running up his calf just under the skin.

HEKMAN

Hey, that's coming along real well. You're in great shape.

(taps his head)

Knock on wood.

VanOwen smiles and lowers his pants leg.

VANOWEN

(buttoning his shirt)

Is anybody up at the site?

HEKMAN

No. I didn't think you wanted anyone there, especially with all these sightings. We can bring the equipment in later.

VANOWEN

~~Right~~ But is anybody from the Air Force there?

70 CONTINUED

HEKMAN

Well, Wright-Patterson has sent a couple men up to ~~Evans~~ Idaho. Just to calm the ...ahh, public concern.

VANOWEN

Who's there?

HEKMAN

Higby. The usual guy. Bill Higby.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. EVANS, IDAHO DAY

Lt. Bill Higby stands with a policeman on the crowded sidewalk of a small Idaho town.

The street is congested with out-of-state cars and gawking sightseers. It is, in brief, an updated version of Clarenceville, Indiana, ~~in~~ September 1960.

The same elderly man is selling books and pamphlets from the trunk of his "UFONOBILE." The car is a little newer, though still battered, but the literature is the same: "I Made Love to a Space Creature."

Further down the block, a professionally-printed sign reads:

Prof. Robt. Allen Smith  
will lecture on the subject  
"Flying Saucers Are Real"

The gaudy sign bears a picture of Prof. Smith and a UFO. ~~and~~ underneath is written, "Evans High Auditorium, June 6, 8:00 pm, \$3.00." Prof. Smith has come up in the world.

Higby is talking confidentially with the policeman when LEO ROSS, a modishly dressed young man, walks up to him.

ROSS

Lt. Bill Higby?

HIGBY

Yes?

ROSS

I'm Leo Ross. I'm a reporter from the Chicago Tribune.



2 CONTINUED

HIGBY

Oh, hello. I don't think we've met before.

ROSS

No, we haven't. ~~Lieutenant~~. I was just transferred from the business page.

HIGBY

Is Claude Ames still on the staff there?

ROSS

He's the News Editor now.

HIGBY

A great guy. I really like Claude a lot. Had some dealings with him years ago.

ROSS

About these UFO reports...

HIGBY

The Air Force has already distributed its statement on that.

ROSS

I've got it. I thought you might amplify some things for me.

Higby places his arm around Ross' shoulders in a confidential manner and takes him aside. It is a show of phony sincerity worthy of Higby's mentor, Lt. Paul VanOwen.

HIGBY

Just ask whatever you want. I'll give you the answers as straight as I can.

CUT TO:

73 INT. CHICAGO TRIBUNE DAY

Leo Ross walks past a long bank of teletype machines at the Chicago Tribune offices. He is wearing a floral patterned open shirt and red velvet suit.

INSIDE AMES' OFFICE, the deskplate reads: "Claude Ames." Various banner editions of the Trib hang on the walls. Ames, his feet propped on his desk, is talking into his intercomm.

73 CONTINUED

Claude Ames now shows each of his 40-odd years; the reporter's life is not conducive to physical fitness. His taste in clothes has also changed, but not improved: he wears a Robert Hall knit blazer, yellow shirt and straight tie (or some other mixture of in-out of fashion).

AMES

(to intercomm)

I don't care if he is the President.  
Damn the consequences. What are we,  
men or mice? He still can't park in  
my spot. If he wants to park in my  
spot, then they should find me another  
spot.

Ames smiles to himself: a good bit of game-bravado.

BLACK SECRETARY O.S.

That's telling 'em, boss.  
(a beat)  
Leo is here to see you.

AMES

Send him in.

BLACK SECRETARY O.S.

Yessum.

Leo Ross walks into Ames' office. Ames swings his feet off his desk and sits upright.

AMES

(motioning toward secretary)

Can't get no respect. How's it going, Leo?

ROSS

Just got back from Idaho.

AMES

And?

ROSS

Wild goose chase. A lot of people seeing  
stuff in the sky. Plasmas, whatever.

AMES

Who'd you talk to?

ROSS

A couple witness, police, Air Force Lieutenant  
Bill Higby. He gave me the whole story.

73 CONTINUED

AMES

What did you think of it?

ROSS

A bunch of bullshit.

AMES

That's <sup>Highly</sup> ~~the man~~, alright. Still nothing there?

ROSS

Not much.

AMES

Write it up that way. Page 9. He and a guy named VanOwen really hung me up when I was about your age. Had me chasing UFOs through the night. Phoned in my first "scoop"--air balloons. Almost lost my job. Back then we trusted the military.

ROSS

Bet you bought a fallout shelter too.

AMES

That's not far from the truth. I'll tell you what is interesting, though. This VanOwen guy. Ex-Lieutenant James Paul VanOwen. Goes into some super-secret military operation about 15 years ago, nobody hears from or sees him since. I tried to do a story on him about ten years back, got nowhere plus. Interviewed a scientist name of Judy Nicholas who quit the Air Force and dropped VanOwen's name somewhere. It was like talking to the Buddha--couldn't get a thing out of her.

(a beat)

So here's the kicker. VanOwen shows up in his hometown of Dayton last week. Sees his banker, then his ex-wife. Closes his accounts. Somebody in Dayton tipped me. So what's up? Something happening? Smells funny to me.

ROSS

You want me to follow it up?

AMES

Check it a little. Maybe I'll help you. There could be something there. It's about time to get back into that case.

73 CONTINUED

ROSS

And if there is? Who gets the credit?

AMES

(mock shock)

Leo! You don't trust old Claude? We'll share credit, but I get first position.

share credit.

(a beat)

ROSS  
(smiles)

But I get...

Okay.

CUT TO:

74 EXT. INDIANAPOLIS NIGHT

VanOwen's black limousine is parked along a street of middle-class homes.

CUT TO:

75 INT. DARKENED HOUSE NIGHT

The door opens and the half-lit face of a pretty girl speaks from the shadows:

BECKY

I was expecting you. Mother called me a week ago. She said you might be coming.

Paul VanOwen, wearing his conservative three-piece suit, steps out of the shadows and approaches his daughter.

VANOWEN

Hello, Becky.

She tentatively embraces him; he returns the embrace. She walks into the living room and turns on a soft light. They pause a moment, straining to recognize each other across the darkness of fifteen years.

Becky, now 23, is an attractive though wan young woman.

VANOWEN

Are you home alone?

BECKY

The baby's here. She's sleeping. You want to see her?

VanOwen follows as Becky walks into the bedroom.

75 CONTINUED

VANOWEN  
Where's Eric?

BECKY  
Don't ask.

VANOWEN  
I won't.

Becky turns on a lamp in the bedroom and walks over to the crib. Paul looks at his sleeping grand-daughter.

BECKY  
She looks just like any other six-month old child. But at least she's mine.

Becky looks up searchingly at her father. Paul puts his arm around her and she rests her head against his shoulder.

VANOWEN  
Do you have a neighbor who can watch over the baby?

BECKY  
(hesitant)  
Yes.

VANOWEN.  
Then call her. We're going to go out, You and I. You look like a young lady that could use some cheering up.

CUT TO:

76 INT. BOWLING ALLEY NIGHT

Paul and Becky are sitting in the gallery of a small bowling alley with their legs hung over the row in front of them. VanOwen has unbuttoned his coat and vest, taken off his tie and loosened his collar.

They are holding bottles of beer and laughing. Beckly, slightly drunk, look at the empty lane ahead of them:

BECKY  
Hey, it's your shot.

VANOWEN  
It is?

76 CONTINUED

BECKY

Yeah. I shot last.

VANOWEN

When was that?

BECKY

Just a little while ago.

VANOWEN

(getting up)

Okay. If you say so.

VanOwen gets up and wobbles over to the rack and picks up a bowling ball. His first shot manages to hit six or seven pins. He turns back to Becky with a satisfied expression across his face. She properly acknowledges his accomplishment.

VanOwen winds up ~~with~~ a second ball but his shot not only misses all the pins, it jumps the lane and rolls down the gutter. ~~the adjoining lane.~~ gutter. adjoining

Because the ball has jumped lanes, the automatic pinsetter will not clear the frame. VanOwen, rightfully angered by this malfunction, balances himself on the return rack and carefully steps his way down the lane. All down the alley, bowlers turn their heads to watch him.

VanOwen steps off the rack and kicks over the remaining pins with one broad swing of his leg. Beaming with pride, VanOwen struts back up the lane toward his applauding daughter.

He plops in his seat next to Becky:

VANOWEN

Now it's your turn.

Becky's mood has turned from night to day. She has rediscovered her father.

BECKY

Give me a break.

VANOWEN

O--Kay. It's the double standard, you know.  
But I'll wait.

(swigs from his beer)

/6 CONTINUED

BECKY

Paul, I can't believe you. You flabbergast me. You've completely taken away the little speech I was all prepared to give you.

VANOWEN

(sipping beer)

Which speech was that?

BECKY

(becomming serious)

Well, I was going to start out by asking you where you were when I won the city forensics contest, when I had my first date, when I graduated from high school? Then I was going to ask where you were when I needed a father to give me away in marriage? Where were you when my stepfather had to pay \$5,000 to send me to a shrink three days a week all through college--all of which failed anyway because I only ended up dropping out and getting married much too young? That's what I was going to ask you.

VANOWEN

(saddened)

That's a lot of questions, Becky.

BECKY

But one answer.

VANOWEN

I make no apologies for my life.

BECKY

Can you give me a reason then?

VANOWEN

Not even that. There is a reason, but it only makes sense to me.

BECKY

But I need reasons. Especially now.

VANOWEN

(embracing her)

Becky, I'm so happy to find you again. So happy so find you such a strong healthy young woman.

(kisses her forehead)

6 CONTINUED

BECKY

But when will I see you again? Where can I get in touch with you?

VANOWEN

(evasive)

Well, that's a little difficult to say at the moment.

BECKY

Mother said reporters visited her after you left. They wanted to know about you. It has something to do with that, doesn't it?

VanOwen is upset by the news about the reporters, but quickly hides this from his daughter.

VANOWEN

Not exactly. A little maybe. It's nothing.

BECKY

But when will I see you again.

VanOwen decides to stop being evasive and looks straight at his daughter. His eyes are filled with love and concern, but his message is unequivocal:

VANOWEN

You won't. This is the last time you will ever see me.

CUT TO:

77 EXT.

INDIANAPOLIS

NIGHT

Becky closes the door and VanOwen walks slowly down the front steps and across the lawn toward his limousine. His vest, coat and collar are still open.

Opening the door to his car, VanOwen notices a renovated old Checker parked up the street. He stares at the man at the wheel a moment, but is unable to fix his face. Claude Ames returns his stare; Leo Ross sits beside him.

VanOwen gets into his car and drives off.

Sitting behind the wheel, VanOwen is deep in thought. Screen FADES TO DARK BLUE.

CUT TO:

SECRET NEW PAGE



78 EXT.

BARKSDALE AFB

NIGHT (1967)

Small star-like dots appear on the blue field. The screen comes into focus and we realize they are stars. We are watching the southern skies.

Camera pans down to Barksdale SAC Air Force Base in northern Louisiana.

INSIDE the 142ND SQUADRON HEADQUARTERS, a red emergency light is flashing. A 1967 Air Force calendar hangs on the wall.

Three young pilots, ED TUPELO, MAURICE JOHNS and TIM ROCCO, hastily fasten their Air Force jackets and trot out toward the hanger. A uniformed ~~NON-PILOT~~ runs beside them.

~~OFFICER~~  
OFFICER  
~~NON-PILOT~~

Let's go. Kick it in.

Three F-105 "Thunderbirds" are being prepared for flight as the pilots job toward them.

The pilots climb into their interceptor jets and the hatches are closed behind them.

The jets zoom down the runway into the night skies one by one.

After the last jet leaves, a MEMBER OF THE GROUND CREW hustles over to the ~~non-pilot~~ officer.

GROUND CREWMAN  
What's happening. What's the scramble for?  
OFFICER  
~~NON-PILOT~~  
(watching jets)  
Unidentified radar readings.

CUT TO:

79 EXT.

LOUISIANA SKIES

NIGHT

The F-105s assume a standard flight formation at about 30,000 feet.

Ed Tupelo sits in the COCKPIT of his F-105. The pale red lights of the instrument panel are reflected against his face. To his right and left we can see the lights of Rocco and Johns' jets.

79 CONTINUED

TUPELO

6-10. Honey-Babe to Ground Control. 30,000 feet on on course. Mach 1. 18 degrees north-northwest. We don't see anything yet.

Tupelo's P.O.V.: the black skies yield only the familiar twinkling lights of distant stars.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

Ascend to 40,000 feet and continue on course.

TUPELO

Roger.

Tupelo pulls back on the throttle and the three jets rise in formation.

Leveling off, Tupelo again searches the skies for anything usual. He checks his radarscreen. A green dot beeps at about 40 degrees.

TUPELO

Honey-Babe to Ground Control. We're getting something now on the PPI. 42 degrees tracking north-northwest at 42 degrees. Yessir. We should be gaining on her now. Am accelerating to 900.

The green dot draws closer to the center of the radarscreen. Then, suddenly, a DIM LIGHT begins to materialize ahead of the jets.

It grows in proximity and size until Tupelo recognizes the shape of a huge circular flying ship.

TUPELO

Holy shit, there it is. Honey-Babe to Ground Control. It's right ahead of us and big as a *football field*. ~~five~~ Am activating camera systems. It looks metallic and a least 100 yards across.

(to fellow pilots)

Maury? Tim? You see it?

JOHNS

Sure as hell do. What is it?

ROCCO

Me too. ~~It's~~ coming on strong. Seems to have some red light patterns across the center. Or something. I never seen anything like it.

79 CONTINUED

TUPELO

Alright, boys, let's move in and have a look-see. Accelerate to 1,000 and proceed toward object.

The jets close in on the UFO.

ROCCO

I'm losing my PPI reading.

TUPELO

Object now moving at great speed. Am losing visual and radar contact. It's gone. ...

The UFO vanishes into the night.

TUPELO

Honey-Babe to Ground Control. Do you still have a reading? Await instructions.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

Pursue at all costs.

TUPELO

Roger. Accelerating to 1,200. Approaching full throttle. Object completely gone now.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

We're losing too, Honey-Babe. It's climbing fast at 65 degrees.

TUPELO

65 degree...?

JOHNS

(interrupting)

Oh, My God! Ed! Here it is!

Tupelo swivels around and see the UFO moving toward them at great speed.

TUPELO

It's coming right at us! Take evasive action!

Even before he finishes the sentence, Tupelo sharply banks his jet to the left. Johns and Rocco follow suit.

The UFO zooms right across the position the diving jets held the moment before.

contact  
(about)  
It's gone

19 CONTINUED

ROCCO O.S.

Je-sus!

JOINS

Ed? Tim? You alright?

Tupelo pulls his F-105 out of the dive.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

It's circling--180-225-290-315 degrees--and  
slowing down. 800 knots. Pursue at all costs.

TUPELO

I'm okay. One more time, boys. Let's  
try her again.

ROCCO

What?

TUPELO

Let's go!

Ahead, the UFO seems to wait for the jets to reform and  
accelerate. They pursue.

TUPELO

Honey-Babe to Ground Control. We're coming  
on it again. 1,000 knots. 42,000 feet and  
rising. 3 degrees north.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

Commence firing.

'TUPELO

What the hell? Whose orders are those?

The UFO grows closer.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

(new voice)

Lieutenant Tupelo, this is Commander Akins.  
These orders come from the top. SAC command  
takes full responsibility. Commence firing  
immediately:

TUPELO

(checking altimeter)

42,000 feet.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

(old voice)

Fire one!

79 CONTINUED

TUPELO

44,000 feet. Alright boys, let 'em go.

The F-105s release a barrage of rockets at the object. The UFO veers upward, just evading the missiles.

TUPELO

46,000 feet and climbing. Fire two.

ROCCO

Jesus-fucking-Christ!

TUPELO

47,000 feet. Fire!

The UFO climbs again, evading the second rocket barrage.

TUPELO

48,000 feet and climbing. 1,200 knots. I'm opening it up full throttle. 49,000 feet.

ROCCO

I'm dropping out. My engine can't take it. I'm losing pressure.

TUPELO

You with me, Maury?

JOHNS

Roger.

TUPELO

50,000 feet. Fire three.

As Rocco's jet descends, the two remaining F-105s fire their third round of rockets. The saucer again evades the missiles.

The UFO climbs, circles and hovers above the jets, as if to taunt them to go higher.

TUPELO

52,000 feet. Have reached ceiling. Severe engine strain. Losing pressure.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

Discontinue pursuit. Discontinue pursuit immediately.

JOHNS

I'm still alright, Ed. I'm going up after it.

79 CONTINUED

TUPELO

Maury!

GROUND CONTROL O.S.  
Ground Control to Honey-Bear. Discontinue  
pursuit immediately.

TUPELO

Roger. Let's go back, Maury.

Tupelo's jet starts to descend but Johns' F-105 continues to  
climb.

JOHNS

54,000 feet. It's coming up on my right.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

Lieutenant Johns! Discontinue pursuit! Return  
to base immediately!

JOHNS

57,000 feet. Here she is. I'm gonna fire.

Above us there is a flash in the night skies.

GROUND CONTROL O.S.

Lieutenant Johns! Maury!

JOHNS O.S.

60,000 feet. Firing. Oh. What? My God!  
Oh, Ed... . God! Look at it! Oh, Ed...

John's jet bursts into flames and plunges downward. High above  
him the UFO vanishes from sight.

There is only static on the air waves. Tupelo watches Johns'  
plane crash toward the earth.

CUT TO:

80 INT. BARKSDALE AFB DAY

COMMANDER AKINS, Paul VanOwen (age 47) and Lou Hekman stand  
in a stark Air Force at Barksdale.

THROUGH A TWO-WAY MIRROR, we see Ed Tupelo sipping coffee and  
talking. He is being questioned by Bill Higby and an assistant.

Tupelo gestures expansively as he talks. His motions indicate  
the path and flight pattern of the UFO.

80 CONTINUED

AKINS O.S.

I just want to make it clear I acted only after specific orders from command.

VANOWEN O.S.

Don't worry, Commander. You won't be held responsible.

AKINS O.S.

Who is responsible? There's going to be a lot of questions asked.

VANOWEN O.S.

No one is responsible. Maurice Johns died chasing a weather balloon he thought was a UFO.

AKINS O.S.

(referring to Tupelo)

There's the problem. Ed Tupelo says he's going to tell the press everything. He wants to be a hero.

VANOWEN O.S.

And the other pilot?

AKINS O.S.

He accepts the cover story. He's a good career man.

VANOWEN O.S.

And the film and tapes?

AKINS O.S.

There was a malfunction in the recording system. You have the only copies.

VANOWEN

Well, let me talk to him then.

Camera closes on VanOwen's disturbed face.

CUT TO:

81 INT.

BAARKSDALE ARB

DAY

VanOwen paces in front of Tupelo, who uncomfortably watches his every move. Paul is on his best debunking behavior:

CONTINUED

VANOWEN

This would not be the first time a pilot  
 "absolutely swore" a flying saucer which  
 later turned out to be a weather balloon.

He saw:

TUPELO

(interrupting)

If you will excuse me, sir, but I have heard  
 all those explanations before. I know what I  
 saw. And I'm going to tell my story.

VanOwen thinks a moment, then changes his strategy. He through  
 trying to convince or appease Tupelo. His face flashing with  
 anger, he turns on Tupelo; ~~like an animal.~~

VANOWEN

Alright, Mr. Know-it-all, Mr. Sky King. Listen,  
 loser, I don't care what you think you saw in  
 the skies. This isn't your sixth grade science  
 glass you're talking to now, this is the Strategic  
 Air Country which has responsibility for protecting  
 this whole goddamn country, and we are not going  
 to issue a reported saying an F-105 SAC pilot got  
 zapped chasing some goofball across the sky.

(a beat)

And neither are you, small-timer. This is a Top  
 Secret matter, and it's going to stay that way.  
 This is more important than one man's life.

TUPELO

(determined)

I'll expose it all if necessary.

VANOWEN

You just kissed your wings goodbye, Lieutenant,  
 did you know that? If you don't step in line,  
 soldier, you're never going to step near a plane  
 again. Your ass is going to be court-marshalled.  
 You'll never work again in your life. The Air  
 Force will black-ball you to your grave.

TUPELO

(weakening)

I can only say what I saw.

VANOWEN

(taking him by the collar)

You just try it.

CUT TO:





3 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

Augie, this is the last time I'm going to cover-up for one of your mistakes. One man is dead, another is in the bannana ward. And what have we got to show for it? Nothing.

(a beat)

I think we've been doing this all wrong. First we try to find a Rosetta Stone, but that doesn't work. Then we decide to try to shoot one down. Blast it out of the skies. Get a hold of a saucer, or at least a piece of one. Well, that didn't work either and now we have a dead pilot to account for.

KILNE

I don't like to see that any more than you do, Paul.

VANOWEN

Well look, we haven't had any success trying to communicate. We beam radio signals, math problems, tonal scales; no response. We're at the wrong end of some crazy surveillance game. We can't make them communicate, and they don't volunteer of their own. Maybe they don't think we're worthy of it--God knows if I'd blame them. Maybe it's just like if we discovered some prehistoric animals on a Mesozoic planet. Would we walk over to a brontosaur and say, "Hi. We're from Earth. What's up?" No, we've got to stop dealing with them on our terms and start dealing with them of their terms.

KILNE

How can we do that?

VanOwen and Kilne step into the corridor. By the door hangs a movie poster from The Graduate with a sign reading, "Thursday, 9:00."

VANOWEN

We'll just have to figure out their terms. Figure out how they communicate. The dolphins don't ask us to speak dolphinese, we shouldn't ask them to speak Earthian.

KILNE

Go on.

83 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

(thinking)

Well, we'll have to entice them to come to us. Stop chasing them. Lure them close enough so we can observe and decipher.

KILNE

What do we have that they want?

VANOWEN

Give me time. I'm thinking.

CUT TO:

84 INT. GRIEF KITCHEN NIGHT

VanOwen is catching an evening snack in the large Project Grief kitchen. He takes a bite from a sandwich and sips the last swallow from a glass of milk.

Empty glass in hand, he walks over to the refrigerator to a refill.

As he opens the door, the refrigerator motor activates, creating a HUM. The hum quickly dissolves to the sharp, piercing SAUCER SOUND.

Paul quickly shuts the door, killing the sound. Frightened he rests momentarily against the door.

We hear Lou Hekman's footsteps as he walks in:

HEKMAN

You alright, Paul?

VANOWEN

(straightening up)

Yeah, just these damn headaches again.

~~HEKMAN VANOWEN~~  
They were gone for a couple years, but then <sup>now</sup> they came back again. Sometimes I hear noises, sometimes I see things, sometimes I think people are other people.

How old are you Lou? <sup>(a beat)</sup> <sub>— pause.</sub>

HEKMAN

Thirty-two.

VANOWEN  
Why do you stay here?

HEKMAN  
I like it here, Paul. Hell, I was never much with people on the outside. I was always an unhappy kid. This is a godsend for me.

VANOWEN  
Well, this is the last chance for me. I've got to get to the bottom of this. I've got to know--that's the only way I'll straighten out.

(thinks)  
We're gonna start a new program, Lou. We're gonna bring 'em to us. Call it Project Entice.

CUT TO:

85 INT. GRIEF LABORATORY DAY(1968)

A large half-built flying saucer model stands in the main lab. The tables have been pushed back to make room for it.

Hekman, Niko and Carey are meticulously constructing the model. They have finished the silver-grey lower structure and are working on the rim. A 1968 Air Force calendar hangs ~~on the wall~~ behind them.

Several miniature saucer models sit on a work table and the walls are hung with complex blueprints.

VanOwen studies the model then walks up to Hekman:

VANOWEN  
Lou, you haven't got it quite right. If the reflection is to run down this section of the craft, the angle here will have to be banked up a bit more.

CAREY  
How's Kilne's work coming?

VANOWEN  
Awh, he and Tabulis are still trying to perfect that pulsar simulation pattern. Radiograms to Mars.

HEKMAN  
(picking up earlier conversation)  
Then where will we put the lights?

*...have, Paul. 90.  
(a beat)  
Hell...*

85 CONTINUED

*VANOWEN*  
*Same place. Just a little deeper.*

MIKO

How's the dome coming?

VANOWEN

OK. It's the accounting that's a headache. The AF plastics division wants to know why a \$28,000 single-construction dome falls under the category of general expenses. He told me the Air Force runs a very tight ship

CAREY

What did you tell him?

VANOWEN

I told him to stick his tight ship up his tight ass.

CUT TO:

86 EXT. ARTIC CIRCLE DAY

Wind whistles across a vast snowy wasteland. A cluster of trucks, earth-movers and trailers are huddled together against the arctic cold.

A short distance away bundled workmen are constructing a huge semi-circular "building." Its stark skeletal structure resembles a huge net designed to catch the winter wind.

Braced against the wind, Paul VanOwen, wrapped in furs and overcoats, watches the workmen climb the scaffolding. VanOwen is tied to the main trailer by a long rope.

Lou Hekman, also tethered to the trailer, plods over to VanOwen and taps him on the shoulder. Together they turn and, drawing in their ropes, pulls themselves back to the trailer.

CUT TO:

87 INT. MAIN TRAILER DAY

An architecture model and "artist's rendering" of the in-progress structure rest on a table in the trailer:

It appears to be a three-story structure, approximately twenty yards deep and one hundred yards in circumference. There are four colored horizontal panels--orange, blue, red and yellow--running across its inside surface. There are general markings on these panels, but they do not represent anything.

CONTINUED

August Kilne sits waiting in the trailer. His coat is open and he is sipping hot coffee.

Slapping themselves, VanOwen and Hekman climb into the trailer and close the door behind them.

VANOWEN  
(to Kilne)

Hello, Augie.

HEKMAN  
(to VanOwen)

Even the workmen don't stay out more than a half hour at a time, chief.

VANOWEN  
Don't worry about me.  
(to Kilne)  
What in God's name brings you up here, Augie?

KILNE  
(standing)  
I hate to have to say this, Paul, but I have orders to tell you to cease this program immediately. I'm sorry.  
(hands Paul letter)  
It comes from the Joint Chiefs. Top Secret.

VANOWEN  
But they don't even know what this project is about.

KILNE  
That's why their upset about sinking two million into it ~~already~~. The war's draining a lot of money and there's no end in sight to this boondoggle up here. Now that Nixon's been elected the Joint Chiefs are worried. They ~~say~~ they can only hide so much money.

VANOWEN  
Then they can damn well hide some more. Only one dollar in twenty ever reaches the battle front anyway.

KILNE  
But these are orders.

VANOWEN  
Stuff the orders. This project will continue. What are they going to do? Send a battalion up here to stop me? Cut off funds and risk me exposing Project Grief? The hook's in now. They've got to damn well continue.

(CONT'D)

CONTINUED

VANOWEN  
(to Hekman)

When is the saucer going to be delivered?

HEKMAN

Three weeks. They're bringing it in by C-5.

KILNE

What's going to be dumb enough to come and look at your billboard, Paul?

VanOwen's passion transcends his logic at this point. He has taken the right course and reason will not sway him from it.

VANOWEN

They will come because I say they will. The extraterrestrials will have to come. Their curiosity will bring them here. Sooner or later they'll come down and take a look. And then we'll see who'll laugh last when I get my total readings: pictures, radio waves, spectroscopy readings--we'll have the key we've been searching for. They're out there, Augie, I know that. And sooner or later they'll come here. They have to.

Kilne looks at Hekman who only shrugs as if to say, "Sure, he's crazy but what can I do about it?"

VANOWEN

I'm willing to stake my position on it, Augie. And my job.

KILNE

You may have to.

CUT TO:

88 EXT. ARTIC CIRCLE NIGHT

Banks of lights shine on the nearly completed structure. Only the panels need to be added.

A tether line leads into the interior of the structure.

INSIDE, Paul VanOwen, breathing steamy air, checks over the recently installed equipment. There are camera, recorders and monitors of all kinds.

He looks out a camera and sees the enclosed semi-circle: empty, waiting.

CUT TO:

89 EXT. ARTIC CIRCLE DAY

The winter sun shines across the snowfields. A giant C-5 stands on a makeshift runway. In the distance stands the nearly completed structure.

A snowtruck drives across the snow pulling the completed saucer model. It is a near replica of the one seen by the Barksdale pilots.

VanOwen watches and approves. His face beams with pride.

CUT TO:

90 INT. MAIN TRAILER DAY

VanOwen and Hekman are looking over an aviation chart.

VANOWEN

Does the pilot have his instructions?

HEKMAN

Yes. He's going to take the saucer model up every sidereal month starting the 5th. Air space has been cleared. Then he'll bring it back into position. He's part of the DEW line, there's no security problems.

VANOWEN

What does he think?

HEKMAN

Well...

VANOWEN

VanOwen's Folly? Let them think what they want. How are the panels coming?

HEKMAN

They should be here any day now.

VANOWEN

Are they...ahh...?

HEKMAN

(reassuring)

They're just as you designed them, Paul.

VanOwen smiles.

CUT TO:



91 EXT. ARTIC CIRCLE NIGHT

VanOwen and Hekman stand by the trailer watching a jet idling on the runway. Behind the jet sits the saucer model.

The jet moves down the runway, pulling the saucer behind it. As the jet picks up speed, it cuts its lights and activates the lights mounted in the saucer model.

VanOwen and Hekman follow the jet's course by eye, then by binoculars, as it zooms into the arctic night.

Far away in the sky, we see a mysterious UFO moving seemingly under its own power. It's soft red and blue lights blink systematically. As it flies we hear the ~~ever increasing~~ soft SAUCER SOUND.

CUT TO:

92 EXT. HISTORY WALL NIGHT

Paul VanOwen stands in front of the multi-colored history wall. The saucer model has been placed in the semi-circle in front of him.

The camera slowly ZOOMS past VanOwen; past the glowing saucer and approaches the history wall.

Banks of floodlights shine down upon the wall, illuminating it as bright as a billboard.

As we draw closer, we realize the semi-circular structure is actually a giant exhibit. Each of its four colored horizontal panels displays a different phase of man's development. Only pictograms and elemental symbols are used to trace the planet's history.

The camera slowly PANS across each of the panels:

The orange panel shows the earth's relationship to the sun, the sun to galaxy's, and the galaxy to the know universe. The blue panel traces the geological history of the earth from prehistory to the present. The red panel delineates the course of terrestrial life from anomia to modern man. The yellow panel shows the progress of science from primitive man to the present.

As the camera pans, the saucer sound grows into the OUTER SPACE SOUND and finally expands into the CELESTIAL SOUND.

It is an impressive sight: the history of man and his planet capsulized on a gigantic billboard in the midst of the arctic night.

CUT TO:

93 INT. GRIEF LABORATORY NIGHT

A long bank of monitors silently wait in the main Project Grief lab. They are registering every activity within the semi-circular arctic history wall.

A video monitor shows the saucer model resting in its proper place. All the monitors are dormant.

The screen FADES TO WHITE.

CUT TO:  
~~START NEW PAGE~~

94 INT. GRIEF LABORATORY DAY (1975)

A red dot appears in the center of the white field. A mass of green slowly encroaches from the edges of the screen until it surrounds the white circle containing the red dot.

The screen comes into focus and pulls back and we recognize the right side of Paul VanOwen's head.

VanOwen, anesthetized, lies on a table in the lab. A green sheet has been pulled up to his neck; belts hold him rigidly to the table under the sheet.

A white circle has been shaved above his right temple. A green surgical cloth covers the unshaved hair.

Hekman and Miko, wearing masks and gowns, stand over VanOwen.

Using a high-speed surgical drill Miko drills a pin-point hole into VanOwen's cranium.

After the wound has been cleaned, Hekman inserts a miniature thin electrode into the hole with a surgical clamp. It is an exact fit.

They prepare to drill another hole.

CUT TO:

95 INT. PROJECT GRIEF--GROUND LEVEL DAY

VanOwen steps out of the elevator at ground level. Smiling and confident, he appears in the best of health. He is wearing his natty three-piece conservative suit.

His hair has been brushed over the shaved area on his right temple. He touches the spot gingerly to make sure the hair is in place, nods to the Guard and walks down the corridor toward the center of the AF complex.

CUT TO..

96 INT. AF RECEPTION DESK DAY

Paul strides into the reception room and finds Judy Nicholas waiting for him. She is thirteen years older than when he (and we) saw her last, but remains a very good-looking woman.

VanOwen seems genuinely delighted to see her:

VANOWEN  
(embracing her)  
Judy. Nice to see you again.

JUDY  
(a little taken back)  
You too, Paul.

VANOWEN  
Please forgive the delay. It takes a long time for word to pass from "up here" to "down there"--but you know about the security system.

JUDY  
I'd almost repressed it. How is everyone?

VANOWEN  
Let's go outside. It's such a nice day.

VanOwen escorts Judy out of the building.

CUT TO:

97 EXT. GRIEF AFB LOCATION DAY

VanOwen and Judy walk along the sidewalk toward an outdoor garden and lunch wagon. Uniformed Air Force personnel filter past them as they walk. The planetarium is visible in the distance.

VANOWEN  
(continuing)  
Otis, Miko and Lou are still here. Like the poor, they'll always be with us. Tabulis left a couple years after you did. A couple new people have joined us, but, all in all, it's pretty much the same old family. How are you?

JUDY  
To be honest, getting out of the "black hole" was the best thing that ever happened to me. I got married--had a couple affairs?--got divorced and landed a nice cushy job in research at the U of M.

7 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

So much for the black hole theory. So what brings you back?

JUDY  
(serious)

I wouldn't have come back normally. Project Grief is a closed chapter in my life. But something is happening I think you ought to know about.

They sit in the garden.

VANOWEN

Which is?

JUDY

A couple reporters came to my apartment asking about you. They wanted to know everything.

VANOWEN

And you told them?

JUDY

You know I wouldn't say anything, Paul. But they said you were in some sort of danger. That you had gone to your bank and closed your account...

VANOWEN

Who were they?

JUDY

They were from the Trib. Claude Ames and a Leo Ross.

VANOWEN

Thanks. I try to handle it.

JUDY

You don't understand. They're out to blacken your name. They've got you pegged as a big wheel in the military-industrial complex. They're going to twist and turn everything you've done and make it look like dirt. How can they do this to you?

(a beat)

Has something serious happened, Paul?

CONTINUED

VANOWEN. *(thoughtful)*

Well, I have been going around and seeing some people I haven't seen in a long time. Straightening out some legal matters--and some personal matters. In fact, I was thinking of paying a visit to you. I'm very glad you came.

JUDY

That's very kind.

Judy runs her hand across Paul's cheek and across his upper chest. Her fingers touch something which stops her hand cold. She feels again, her fingers rubbing across an implanted sensor.

JUDY *(secret)*

Something is happening, isn't it Paul? And it has to do with the Project.

VANOWEN

I thought that was a closed chapter in your life?

Judy notices the shaved area on his right temple. She brushes aside the hair to reveal several implanted electrodes.

JUDY

What are you doing? What's going on?

VANOWEN

Judy, you know I can't tell you. You're on the outside now.

JUDY

I can keep a secret.

VANOWEN

But I can't tell you.

JUDY

But I spent four years in the Project. It was a very big part of my life. I have to know if something's happened.

Paul stands and gently takes her by the arm:

VANOWEN

Come on, let's have lunch and talk about other things. Let's enjoy the sunshine.

CUT TO:

98 EXT.

EVANS IDAHO

DAY

The main street of Evans is alive with commotion. Several large National Guard trucks are rolling down the street and soldiers line the sidewalks. Everyone seems to be confused.

The UFO curiosity-seekers only add to the confusion. The town is still experiencing its UFO flap. A banner headline of the local paper proclaims, "Sightings Continue." A large sign advertises a forthcoming lecture titled, "Do Flying Saucers Bring Healing?" by "Rev. Dr." Armand Jones.

The trucks come to a halt and the National Guardsmen help people with suitcases onto the trucks. A group of the sick and the infirm (come to hear the answer to Rev. Dr. Jones' question) requires special assistance.

All up and down the street citizens and visitors are packing suitcases and belongings into their cars and driving away.

Bill Higby and a POLICEMAN are answering the questions of anxious citizens:

1ST CITIZEN

Is there any danger?

HIGBY

Not at the moment. Everyone must be evacuated by morning. There is no danger to Evans now. The Army is afraid the winds might shift south.

2ND CITIZEN

It doesn't have anything to do with the flying saucers does it?

HIGBY

(Higby) Nothing at all, mam, a plain ordinary train overturned near Black Mountain. A car of pressurized fertilizer overturned and the Army would like the area evacuated.

AN ARMY MAJOR walks up to Higby and pulls him aside:

MAJOR

Lieutenant?

HIGBY

Yes, Major.

MAJOR

Is everything under control?

98 CONTINUED

HIGBY

I think so, sir. We should have everyone evacuated by nightfall.

MAJOR

Good work.

The Major turns and walks up the block. Higby, remembering a question, calls after him:

HIGBY

Major? Major?

Higby starts to follow the Major when he sees him stop and speak to someone sitting in a black Cadillac Limousine parked at the curb.

The Major exchanges several comments with the man in the limousine and continues on.

Walking closer, Higby recognizes the man in the back seat: Paul VanOwen.

Higby walks up to the limousine and knocks on the window:

HIGBY

VanOwen? Paul VanOwen?

VanOwen buzzes down the automatic window.

VANOWEN  
(cold)

Yes?

HIGBY

What are you doing here?

VanOwen is not pleased that Higby has recognized him, but he can't resist getting back at the man who once usurped his job.

VANOWEN

You ask too many questions, Higby. Did I ever tell you that?

HIGBY

But, sir...

99 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

I'm just following orders. If you had any sense, you'd stop gawking and start doing the same. Get to work.

VanOwen buzzes up the window and motions for the driver to pull away.

VanOwen's limousine drives away and Higby resumes his task of ordering confused people around.

CUT TO:

100 INT. LIMOUSINE DAY

VanOwen and Hekman sit in the back of the limousine. Paul is going through a sheath of blueprints.

Out the window, a line of evacuated cars streams past the Idaho countryside.

CUT TO:

101 EXT. IDAHO DAY

VanOwen's limousine slows down and pulls off on a small dirt side road.

Coming out of a clump of trees, the limo pulls up beside several covered Air Force trucks parked in a clearing.

VanOwen and Hekman get out and walk over to trucks. Otis Carey and August Kilne walk over and greet them with glad handshakes. There is a sense of anticipation in the air.

CUT TO:

102 EXT. GRIEF AFB LOCATION AFTERNOON

An exterior shot of the planetarium and the Air Force complex.

It is seen from the <sup>P.O.V.</sup> ~~point of view~~ of: Claude Ames and Leo Ross, who are seated in remodeled Checker across the street.

Ames stares intently at the Air Force base. Ross rests his head against the back of the seat.

Ames finally tires of his stake-out, and turns the ~~Checker's~~ ignition. The engine turns over but won't start. Leo Ross sits up:

Key.



102 CONTINUED

ROSS

I knew there was something wrong when you said we should take your car.

AMES

What's wrong with this car?

ROSS

Nothing, if you want to haul scrap metal.

AMES

(struggling with the ignition)

That and a lot else. Let me tell you this car has carried in its day a deceased human body, eight shivering lost boy scouts, five hundred pounds of confiscated explosives, two Chinese diplomats and a thousand leaflets promoting the supremacy of the white race. That's what I call an all-purpose vehicle.

(a beat)

What kind of car do you have?

ROSS

A Datsun 1260Z.

AMES

What's that? A compact car?

ROSS

A sports car.

Ames finally turns over the engine. He pumps gas into the sputtering motor and pulls off.

AMES

Big deal.

ROSS

Why are we leaving?

AMES

We ain't going to find out anything here.

ROSS

But this is where VanOwen works.

AMES

Yeah, but it's tighter than a toad's ass. We could hang around till doomsday and not learn anything.

ROSS

But something's is happening there.

102 CONTINUED

AMES

You'd better believe it. VanOwen visits his wife, daughter, banker. Makes his farewell each time. We visit Judy Nicholas; she visits VanOwen here. And now I know for sure something's going on.

ROSS

How?

AMES

The Editor said the Air Force suggested we not waste our time on this story.

ROSS

What does that mean?

AMES

That means there's a story for sure.

ROSS

Can they kill it?

AMES

Heck no. The Air Force still thinks it's 1958. Thinks they can call the line on any story they want. It's just the opposite today. The AF couldn't get a reporter to believe them if they told him water runs downhill.

ROSS

What did they say?

AMES

The usual. VanOwen is supposedly working on some top secret matters involving "national security." He's in something alright. And whatever it is, we'll find out sooner or later.

ROSS

It'd better be sooner.

AMES

Whatever's happening, it's happening right now. I can feel it straight through my bones. Something big is going down, and it's happening right now-- somewhere.

CUT TO:

103 EXT.

IDAHO

NIGHT

A large spotlight illuminates a circular area near VanOwen's limousine and the Air Force trucks.

Inside one of the trucks we can see rows of bulky <sup>white</sup>~~stainless steel~~ monitoring devices.

Two workmen stake out a long rectangle. This marks the area to be excavated.

After the workmen complete stringing the stakes, they call in a backhoe. The backhoe begins digging the long trench.

VanOwen and Hekman watch on:

HEKMAN <sup>concentration</sup>  
It's too bad about that nerve gas business.  
It makes everything more difficult.

VANOWEN  
I know. But we had no choice.

HEKMAN  
Why did we have all those early sightings?  
There were six of them.

VANOWEN  
If I knew the answer to that, Lou, I'd be fifteen years younger today. I think we should be thankful there have been any sightings at all.

HEKMAN  
Yeah, Halitosis is better than no breath at all.

VANOWEN  
(smiles)  
Yep. Two more days and we'll find out.

HEKMAN  
(looks at watch)  
We've got to be headed back to the motel. I'll pick up my briefcase first.

Hekman turns and walks back toward a small lighted trailer. VanOwen's eye follow him.

Camera closes on VanOwen and screen FADES to DARK BLUE.

CUT TO:

START NEW TAKE

105 INT. GRIEF PLANETARIUM & OBSERVATORY DAY (1971)

A wavy yellow line fistails its way across the blue field.

The image comes into focus to reveal the yellow path of an oscilloscope reading. Camera pulls back through the Project Grief planetarium and observatory. A 48-inch telescope rest on railway tracks which run through the room. The telescope has been wheeled to the side of the room and the observatory window closed so that the room can serve in its secondary function as a planetarium.

Paul VanOwen (age 51) and Lou Hekman are slouching in two comfortable chairs talking and sipping drinks. A 1971 AF calender hangs to their rear.

VANOWEN

You want another drink, Lou?

HEKMAN

No.

VANOWEN

What shall we see now?

HEKMAN  
(thinks)

Let's take a look at Cassiopeia.

VANOWEN

Okay.

VanOwen flips a switch cutting off the lights and filling the planetarium with stary dots.

CUT TO:

106 INT. GRIEF MONTAGE DAY

Life moves at a leisurely pace in the Grief complex:

--The long CORRIDOR leading to the lab is quiet. The long Ellsworth Kelley painting and a darkened red emergency flasher watch over the scene.

--Kilne lounges in the GAME ROOM. Carey lethargically shoots pool with himself.

--The poster outside the SCREENING ROOM advertises French Connection. Sounds come from inside the room.

006 CONTINUED

SUDDENLY, a honking alarm goes off and the red emergency light begins flashing in the ~~corridor~~ CORRIDOR.

--Kilne and Carey bolt into the corridor and dash toward the lab.

--Miko and others scramble out of the SCREENING ROOM.

--VanOwen and Hekman run out of the <sup>PLANETARIUM.</sup> planetarium. Hekman barely has time to set down his drink as they head for the elevator.

CUT TO:

107 INT. LAB DAY

The bank of monitors in the lab is alive with activity. Something has entered in Project Entice artice semi-circle. (The Entice monitors have been moved to a less conspicuous part of the lab.)

Kilne and Carey are the first to reach the monitors. They are soon followed by Miko and the others.

CAREY

Something is coming into the field!

VanOwen and Hekman, huffing and puffing, arrive last. Every monitor is registering foreign activity in the Entice field. There is, as yet, no video image.

HEKMAN

What are the readings?

MIKO

Could it be an animal?

CAREY

This is no animal! Look at the spectroscope readings!

KILNE

What is it?

HEKMAN

What's wrong with the video?

CAREY

All the readings are moving in sync now. Look at them!

MIKO

My God.

107 CONTINUED

HEKMAN

This is it.

CAREY  
(impatient)

Where's the video?

KILNE

Don't get your hopes up.

VanOwen turns to Kilne.

VANOWEN

This is it, Augie. I was right. Project Entice has worked. Now you're the one who has to get out.

Excited voices continue in the background as they talk.

KILNE

What do you mean?

VANOWEN

(forcibly taking Kilne's arm)  
Let's go, Augie. You always tried to block this program.

KILNE

But...

HEKMAN

Here comes the video!

VanOwen and Kilne both stop in their tracks and watch the monitor.

Camera closes in on TV MONITOR. The image gradually comes in: Two bulky white humanoid shapes stand by the saucer model. They are looking up at the camera (mounted behind the lighted history wall). A mechanical contraption can be seen behind them.

The creatures inch forward with great difficulty. Their shapes become clearer. *Carey calls out:*

CAREY O.S.

It's eskimos! It's two goddman eskimos!

HEKMAN O.S.

Shit.

7 CONTINUED

CAREY O.S.

Two eskimos and a goddamn snowmobile. What in the hell are they doing up there anyway?

The staff members turn dejectedly to each other.

HEKMAN

Another false alarm.

Carey opens a log by the monitors. He speaks as he makes a notation in it.

CAREY

That makes 52 reindeer, 29 caribou, one meteorite, two eskimos and a snowmobile.

VanOwen has released his grip on Kilne:

VANOWEN

Damn it.

CAREY

At least it's more interesting than pool solitaire.

STAFF MEMBER

I wonder if anybody shut off the projector.

MIKO

(referring to movie)

We'll have to start the chase scene all over again.

VANOWEN  
(to Kilne)

Sorry, Augie.

KILNE *before*

I didn't know how to tell you, but my new pulsar program *False* all but fell through this morning.

VANOWEN

I struck out too. I give up. It's time to have Entice dismantled.

(gestures to monitors)

They look at each other as the other staff members begin to file out.

KILNE

What do you say?

107 CONTINUED

VanOwen smiles and extends his hand:

VANOWEN

I say we scrap these programs and start over again.

Kilne smiles and warmly takes his hand.

KILNE

It's a deal.

VanOwen puts his arm around Kilne and they walk out.

Camera closes on TV MONITOR: the two eskimos finally get fed up with the history wall, climb into their snowmobile and drive off.

CUT TO:

108 INT. GAME ROOM DAY (1972)

Another day, another year. Hekman is playing chess with Carey in the game room. Miko reads a book and watches TV: Nixon and McGovern are campaigning.

VanOwen walks over to Hekman carrying a letter:

VANOWEN

Somebody wants to talk to me, Lou.

HEKMAN

What do you mean?

VANOWEN

A guy named Ruchen Ravanski. He says the space creatures told him to get in touch with me?

HEKMAN

Huh?

VANOWEN

Just what I said.

HEKMAN

How did he know who you were?

VANOWEN

I don't know. The letter was just addressed: "Paul VanOwen, United States Air Force, Earth." It took about two months to find me.



108 CONTINUED

HEKMAN

I wonder how he got your name.

VANOWEN

(checking letter)

He lives in a place called Bellevue Gardens in Tampa.

HEKMAN

You're not thinking of going, are you?

VANOWEN

Thinking of it. You want to come along? Tampa's nice. We can get a place on the beach.

HEKMAN

Now you're talking.

Hekman finally makes the move he has been studying.

HEKMAN

You know, Otis, we have played what--maybe five, six thousand games together?--and I don't think your chess playing has improved one iota in all those times.

CAREY

I'm trying to hustle you.

CUT TO:

109 EXT. BELLEVUE GARDENS DAY

VanOwen's long black limo drives through an upper class residential section in Tampa.

Paul is at the wheel. Both he and Hekman are wearing brightly Hawaiian shirts. A rolled-up beach towel lies on the seat between them. They seem to be having a good time; they exude the outgoing air of men on vacation.

VanOwen checks the street numbers as they past. He rechecks Ravanski's letter and slows down.

The car stops in front of a large institutional building with sweeping green lawns. The sign reads "Bellevue Gardens Hospital." Mr. Ravanski lives at the funny farm.

109 CONTINUED

VanOwen looks at Lou as if to say, "I shouda know," and pulls into the hospital parking lot.

CUT TO:

110 INT. BELLEVUE GARDENS DAY

A NURSE leads VanOwen and Hekman down the plushly carpeted hospital corridor. Bellevue is strictly a rich man's nuthouse.

She opens a door marked "Rueben Ravanski" and ushers them in.

Ravanski's suite is a wonder to behold: a UFO museum in miniature:

The walls are hung with large photo blow-ups of "space crafts" and "space creatures." The bookshelf is crammed with UFO and ET literature; back issues of Flying Saucer Review and The UFO Investigator are stacked everywhere. A large telescope sits poised by the window. Flying saucer "artifacts" litter the room and several hand-made UFO models hang from the ceiling.

RUEBEN RAVANSKI, a small, worn, friendly old man, sits in a battered easy chair by the window.

NURSE

Mr. Ravanski, Mr. VanOwen and Mr. Hekman are here to see you.

His eyes light up:

RAVANSKI

Wonderful, wonderful. I knew you would come. Please, please sit down.

VanOwen and Hekman find seats amid the clutter. The nurse excuses herself and exits. She steps out into the hall, closing the door softly behind her.

CUT TO:

111 INT. RAVANSKI'S ROOM DAY

Ravanski has already begun his extraordinary tale.

111 CONTINUED

Ravanski, like a wind-up doll, becomes animated as he speaks: his tired legs gain strength, his sagging arms gesture expansively, his eyes glow like a cat's. Becoming increasingly absorbed in his own story, Ravanski crouches by his old chair. Soon he is adrift in a world of his own.

Ravanski speaks--with a East European accent--in lush Victorian prose. His vocabulary, syntax and sensibility are all relics of ~~from~~ an earlier age.

RAVANSKI

(continuing)

As was my custom, I went to a certain downtown hotel where I always stay and registered. I tipped the bellboy and stood alone in my simple room. What reason had brought me there I did not know. What unseen force pulled me so? Suddenly, coming to a decision, I went downstairs, crossed the elegant lobby and wandered into the cocktail lounge. I remembered Miss S--a former student of mine who must remain nameless--and went into the phone booth and called her. She was delighted to hear from me and said she would come over immediately. She, not owning an automobile, said it would take her an hour to arrive by bus. Then I knew it was not Miss S I was speaking with at all. The telepathic message the Venusians had been trying to send me had finally gotten through.

This was not to be, of course, the first trip I had made to Venus. My first voyage was in 1956, but you undoubtedly know all about that from my book. I'll autograph a copy if you like.

(gestures to shelf)

When the car came to pick me up, the driver, of course, was not Miss S at all, but Rakon, the Venusian I had met in my earlier voyage. We rode in his ~~black~~ 4-door Pontiac--some forty-five minutes through the dark outskirts of town. ~~Coming across~~ the desert, I saw it, the "scout ship." ~~At precisely~~

(gestures to photo on the wall)

Rakon said that Daru, my Martian friend, had reported favorably on our meeting. He said they were all awaiting my next book.

(CON'T)

Lou Hekman has been getting increasingly fed-up with this ~~time~~ of claptrap. He leans over to VanOwen, who has been listening tolerantly, and whispers in his ear:

HEKMAN

(to VanOwen)

I can stand any more of this. I'm going out to the car. Meet me there.

111 CONTINUED

Hekman excuses himself, stands up and leaves. Ravanski hardly notices his departure.

RAVANSKI  
(con't)

Uranantha was my guide. On our planet she would be called Rakon's sister, but they have no families there. Uranantha looked very much like an earth woman, except she had silver eyes and long silver hair. She wore a ski-type brown jump suit and round her waist was wound a orange belt. We made love in front of a great bay window as our ship journeyed the seemingly short distance to Venus. Meteors drifted erially by and she told me all the secrets of life on her planet. Venus came up rapidly on our right and Uranantha suggested that we go on to Saturn since I had never been there. I gladly agreed.

Venus passed quickly by. I could see the yellow clouds that had so entranced me on my first visit. Suddenly, we were hit by a shower of meteorites and the ship shook violently from side to side. Uranantha grabbed my sleeve. Then she said there was another man on my planet--they do not call it Earth, but Kelos--that I must meet and she mentioned your name. She said you were a friend of space people everywhere. Then she sang me the song I was to sing to you. It had a light melody but no rhyme--Venusian songs do not rhyme. She sang like this:

(sings in a lilting voice)  
Melodically we coursed our way,  
From distant star our path was warped,  
Everyone danced like leaves in the storm,  
They hit a plate and made a song...

VanOwen suddenly becomes absorbed in Ravanski's song. His face goes pale, his jaw drops. He hears the low piercing SAUCER SOUND.

Before Ravanski can finish his song, VanOwen completes the lyrics for him. The words come from VanOwen spontaneously and without warning. It is almost as if someone else is speaking through his mouth.

VANOWEN  
...and made a song,  
By music alone some were propelled,  
Weary pilgrim, welcome home.

Ravanski is delighted. He hops on his feet.

111 CONTINUED

## RAVANSKI

"By music alone some were propelled. Weary pilgrim, welcome home." She said you would know the song! She said you would know the words!

VanOwen seems in shock. He stares blankly forward, his lips trembling in fear and trepidation.

The saucer sound grows louder and becomes the OUTER SPACE SOUND.

Ravanski begins to sing to the tune of the outer space sound:

## RAVANSKI

By music alone some were propelled. Ka-fa-roo-pho-lie-ka-fa-roo-pho-lie-ka-fa-roo-pho-lie-ka-fa-roo-pho-lie...

A misty view of THE SITE superimposes over VanOwen's pale face. The orange glow reflects against his cheeks.

We drift through OUTER SPACE. Ravanski's song merges with the music of the spheres: the CELESTIAL SOUND.

We pass the planets, the stars and wind our way toward the TIFID NEBULA. ~~We plunge in~~

CUT TO:

111 INT. BELLEVUE GARDENS DAY

Paul VanOwen, his face still livid, walks mechanically down the carpeted corridor. The celestial sound fades away.

He looks grotesquely comical in his Hawaiian shirt.

CUT TO:

112 EXT. BELLEVUE GARDENS DAY

Paul meets Hekman by the side of the limousine.

## HEKMAN

That guy is one of the original looney tunes. Boy, he is crazy.

112 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

Yes. He is crazy. I never realized that before.

HEKMAN

Huh?

VANOWEN

I said I never realized that before.  
(slaps Hekman on shoulder)  
Let's go back.

Paul walks around the car and gets in.

CUT TO:

113 INT. GRIEF KITCHEN DAY

VanOwen and Hekman are having a snack in the kitchen.

Paul studies the half cantalope and glass of milk in front of him. Several time he prepares to cut ~~it~~ with a long sharp knife, then decides against it. into the Cantalope

Finally, he sets the knife down and speaks to Hekman:

VANOWEN

Lou, I have spent thirteen years doing the wrong thing. Think of that. It's staggering. Thirteen years running away from what I should have been running toward.

Remember when years ago Augie used to talk about the Rosetta Stone? Then we went through all those projects? Observation and research, field studies, trying to shoot them down, the radiowave program, Project Entice. What a waste of time. All those years I could not see one simple fact:

I am the Rosetta Stone.

HEKMAN

Come again?

VanOwen turns his cantalope upside down on his plate and runs his hand over its curved surface.

VANOWEN

How stupid we were. You cannot "catch" a <sup>a</sup> "flying saucer." Extraterrestrials are not "them," they are "us." They are a higher form of <sup>a</sup> (CON'T)

113 CONTINUED

VANOWEN  
(con't)

intelligence, and one can only communicate with a higher form of intelligence by likewise becoming a higher form of intelligence. Extraterrestrials are not "out there"...

(gestures broadly)

they are "in here."

(holds his skull)

The ability to communicate with them is part of our inherent racial memory. We are all Rosetta Stones. We all contain somewhere within ourselves the secret to communication with ~~higher~~ beings. */hese*

I am only special because thirteen years ago this racial memory was thrust into my ~~unconscious~~ and conscious mind.

(CON'T)

He runs his fingers across the brain-like skin of the cantalope.

VANOWEN  
(con't)

Instead of pursuing this memory, I ran away from it. I thought it was headaches, nightmares, hallucinations, craziness. I thought I could rid myself of the nightmare by capturing physical evidence. But it is through craziness I must go. I must try to recapture that memory which was put in my mind thirteen years ago.

Is anybody in the Project experienced in altered and higher states of consciousness? In hypnosis?

HEKMAN

Miko's done a little work in that area.

VANOWEN

We'll bring in somebody from the outside if we have to.

(a beat)

We're going to start a new program. I'm going back, Lou. I'm going back to the moment thirteen years ago and find out what happened.

(looks at cantalope)

I'm going back inside my mind.

VanOwen picks up the long knife and plunges it into the top of the cantalope, cutting it open every which way as if it were his brain itself.

*cutting*

CUT TO:

114 INT. GRIEF MONTAGE SEQUENCE DAY

VanOwen, Hekman, Miko and others prepare for VanOwen's new program:

- VanOwen and Hekman play a strip of tape over and over again, listening to it closely. VanOwen indicates he wants a slight change made.
- VanOwen and Miko work out a visual program for the PLANETARIUM. Miko shoots various stellar images on the ceiling and Paul comments on them.
- VanOwen and a DOCTOR JONES are sitting in the GAME ROOM. Dr. Jones has several complex charts depicting various states of consciousness and he discuss them with Paul.

CUT TO:

115 INT. CORRIDOR DAY

VanOwen and Miko step out of the Game Room and walk toward the elevator.

MIKO

Are you ready?

VANOWEN

I hope we have better luck than last time.

MIKO

(joking)

It usually takes a good scientist longer to figure out what everybody else already knows.

CUT TO:

116 INT. PLANETARIUM DAY

Hekman and Dr. Jones are waiting for VanOwen and Miko. Paul smiles and taps Hekman on the back:

VANOWEN

Ready to go for number two?

HEKMAN

When you are, chief.

VANOWEN

Doctor?



116 CONTINUED

DR. JONES

Yes.

VANOWEN

Well, let's get started.

VanOwen takes off his shirt and lies on a chaise lounge in the center of the planetarium.

Dr. Jones prepares a hypdermic needle and gives Paul an injection in the arm.

Jones pulls up a chair beside the chaise and sits down. Miko lowers the lights.

Hekman flips on the tape recorder containing the PHONETIC LOOP SOUND: ka-fa-roo-pho-lie-ka-fa... . (Scientific aside: when a loop of phonetic sounds is played continuously, the listener, after a while, begins to hear new combinations of sounds, new "words." One scientist reported when he played the word "co-gi-tate" in a continuous loop for many listeners, he received over 3,000 different interpretations of the sound pattern. Phonetic loops have been used to induce hypnotic states.)

We listen to the phonetic loop until the sounds begin to blur and form new combinations.

Miko flips on the planetarium lights. The ceiling is a erie "night" blue. Small lights move from place to place.

Dr. Jones bends over Paul, speaking softly:

DR. JONES

It is September 19, 1960. You are a Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. You have been in Clarenceville, Indiana, making a sighting report. You receive a phone call in your motel room. The Police Captain asks you to drive to Clarenceville and visit several suspects. You get into your station wagon and drive along the dark country road toward Clarenceville. The night is black and the road is lonely. There is an erie feeling in the air...

VanOwen speaks from his hypnotic sleep:

VANOWEN

It's seems warm in here. It's not that warm out. There's heat on the back of my neck. I rub my neck. I can feel the sweat dripping down my cheeks. It is warm. Something is wrong. The engine is overheating. I should be able to make it into town. Is the car slowing down? How can that be? There seems to be something behind me. I look but there is nothing there. This is very strange. I'm losing oil pressure. The car is slowing down. I'll have to pull over.

(CON'T)

We hear the SAUCER SOUND creepily softly onto the soundtrack.

But this time, instead of cutting to the symbols of memory, the camera stays on VanOwen's face. As he speaks we intermittently hear the OUTER SPACE SOUND, PHONETIC LOOP and CELESTIAL SOUND, but we see only his agonized and sweating face.

VANOWEN

(con't)

What this? Oh my God. It can't be. This can't happen to me. What's that? Are they speaking to me? Are those words? No, no.

TIMECUT: Dr. Jones is thrusting VanOwen deeper into the memory.

DR. JONES

Go on, Paul. What do you see? What is happening? Look closer.

VANOWEN

They're putting something through my body. What are they doing? I can't stop. Let me go. Where am I now?

(OUTER SPACE SOUND)

Oh, here I go. This is wonderful. I'm flying out past the planets now. I can recognize Venus. It's much different than they say. I keep going faster and faster. I can't stop. What's this? Someone is trying to speak to me? What do you want to say? Louder, louder. Oh, where am I going now? I'm far, far away. The Earth is disappearing like a tiny blue dot. The Earth is gone now. I will never see it again. I'm just another rock in the stars. Ka-roo-ka-roo, this is so much fun.

(CELESTIAL SOUND)

What's this? Where am I going? No, not there. I don't want to go in there. Mother don't make me. I'm inside now. Where am I? It is dark in here.

(CON'T)

116 CONTINUED

VANOWEN  
(con't)

Let me see your faces. Don't stop me now.  
Don't! I must go on! Let me through! Don't  
stop me, please, please, please. I've got to  
keep going! Let me go!

CUT TO:

117 INT. GRIEF GAME ROOM DAY

Otis Carcy and Dr. Jones are shooting pool. Miko is  
watching television: the Watergate Hearings are in progress.

VanOwen, Hekman and Kilne are sitting in another part of the  
room. Paul seems exhausted but placid. He speaks calmly:

VANOWEN

I know where we are going to meet now. I  
mean I have seen the place. It is the same  
place I've seen for fourteen years. I just  
don't know where it is, or when I'm supposed  
to be there. I've got to go deeper.

HEKMAN

How can we?

VANOWEN

We'll just keep at it. Push. Expand. Try  
new techniques. I'm being blocked, but I know  
it's there. It's only a matter of time.

(a beat)

I know one thing, Lou, before I can have the  
rendezvous I'm going to have to go back and  
straighten out things with people in my life.  
My wife, my daughter. I've done a lotta crap  
in my life, and it keeps getting in the way.

VanOwen sets his foot resolutely against the carpet.

Screen FADES to WHITE.

CUT TO:

~~SINGLET NEW PAGE~~

118 EXT. IDAHO DAY (1975)

A regular pattern of six color dots appears on the white  
field.

Screen comes into focus and we see the control panel of a  
large rectangular white monitoring device.

118 CONTINUED

Camera pulls back to reveal Carey and another technician testing the machine in the back of one of the trucks near the Idaho site.

A little ways away, the earth-moving crews have finished constructing the long 6 foot deep trench. VanOwen and Kilne look with approval at the work.

VanOwen lifts up his eyes and gazes across the long knoll before him. We realize then that the Idaho site is THE SITE, the mysterious mist-enshrouded image that haunted VanOwen for so many years.

The mist has now been replaced by sunshine <sup>but</sup> by the site still seems wrapped in an other-worldly aura--or perhaps it is just the realization that so many years, so much money and <sup>so much</sup> effort and anguish have gone into the search for this place. The familiar orangish glow which hovered on the horizon in previous views of the site is now gone.

The WORKMEN start wheeling the electronic machinery down a ramp into the ditch. Cloths are draped across the dirt walls and a walkway is cleared through the trench.

Its purpose becomes clear: men will be able to sit underground and study the monitors.

Kilne and VanOwen turn and walk back toward the trucks. As they go they walk along a narrow ditch where workmen are laying the heavy power cables which lead to the large trench.

, KILNE

I just want to say again that I didn't approve of this.

(he gestures to his chest and head, indicating where VanOwen has had the sensors implanted)

I didn't see any need for you to go through that. But then it wasn't my decision. Or my body.

VANOWEN

I thought it was the least I could do. Dozens of people have spent years on this Project. The government has spent millions. If something were to happen to me, if I were unable to report back, all the information we have striven ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~long~~ for would be lost. I have to insure there <sup>tha</sup> is a thorough scientific record left behind should something happen to me.

118 CONTINUED

KILNE

What possibly could happen?

VANOWEN  
(offhand)

Oh, just about anything I guess.  
(changing the subject)  
Is everything on schedule here?

KILNE

Ahead of schedule. We'll be finished by tomorrow morning. Police up the area in the afternoon. Everything's quiet in Evans. The town's deserted. Just a few National Guardsmen.

VANOWEN

Lou are I are flying back now for the final preparations.

KILNE

I'll see you tomorrow then.

VANOWEN

Yeah.

They shake hands.

CUT TO:

119 INT.

GRIEF LABORATORY

DAY

A long TRACKING SHOT down the CORRIDOR into the lab: this is the final preparation scene.

The door to the lab is open and we can see Paul standing in the distance.

Paul stands upright. He wears only tight blue jockey shorts.

As we draw closer we can that his naked body is a maze of implanted wires and sensors. Wires run up his legs and along his arms. Sensors are imbedded in his chest, his legs and skull.

Lou Hekman is giving each electrode a quick charge of electricity ~~with~~ a long thin probe. VanOwen's body twitches which each jolt.

After this is completed, Hekman dresses VanOwen in a skin-tight green rubber suit. Afterward, ~~the~~ <sup>he</sup> combs Paul's hair back into place.

-119 CONTINUED

This completed, Hekman takes VanOwen's three-piece grey pin-striped suit off a rack and helps Paul into it.

Lou buttons up the vest ~~ties~~ and straightens the red-and-black striped tie. A Gentleman's Gentleman could do no better.

VanOwen is ready.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. WRIGHT-PATTERSON DAY

Claude's Ames all-purpose Checker pulls into the parking lot at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

He and Leo Ross get out and walk toward the administration building.

CUT TO:

121 INT. WRIGHT-PATTERSON DAY

Ames and Ross are sitting in LT. BILL HIGBY'S OFFICE.

Higby swivels in his high-backed desk chair. The decor of his office is depressingly institutional.

AMES

We came to you because you used to work with Paul VanOwen. We're interested in anything you might know or remember.

HIGBY

(to Ross)

You were the fellow I just met, in Evans, right?

ROSS

Yeah, before they had that nerve gas train wreck. I wish I had stuck around to cover that story. More interesting than the sightings.

HIGBY

Well, of course I can't tell you anything about Paul VanOwen--even if I knew anything. That's all Top Secret government information. I couldn't find out myself if I wanted to know--which I don't.

(CON'T)

121 CONTINUED

HIGBY  
(con't)

But it's funny you should mention VanOwen.  
I just saw him a couple days ago. For the  
first time in five years.

AMES

Where?

HIGBY

That's what was funny. He was in Evans, of  
all places.

AMES

VanOwen was in Evans?

HIGBY

Yeah, he was there when they were evacuating  
the town.

Ames takes Ross by the arm and pulls him to his feet.

AMES

(to Higby)

I'm sorry, Lieutenant. Excuse us just a  
moment.

Ames takes Ross OUTSIDE HIGBY'S OFFICE.

ROSS

What's up?

AMES

Let's go.

ROSS

To Evans. I don't know what's happening  
but whatever it is, it's happening there.  
And it's happening now. It all fits. Let's  
get over to the airport.

AMES

What about him?

(referring to Higby)

HIGBY

That twirp will be waiting if we don't come  
back for a week.

121 CONTINUED

Ames and Ross walk out of the offices.

CUT TO:

122 EXT. IDAHO SITE LATE AFTERNOON

The dying rays of sun fall across THE SITE.

There is no activity to be seen anywhere. The trucks are gone, the trailer pulled away. The cable ditch and large equipment trench have been covered over by new sod. All appears virgin--and ready.

CUT TO:

123 INT. TRENCH LATE AFTERNOON

Soft multi-colored lights glow along the long row of white machinery.

Carcy, Mike and Kiine are seated at various positions in front of the machinery.

All the monitors are alive and activated; they record every impulse sent out from the sensors in VanOwen's body. One bank of dials records chemical compositions, another all forms of radio waves. Still another monitors all of VanOwen's life functions: his heart beat, blood sugar, temperature, brain waves and so forth. All at the moment are normal.

VanOwen and Hekman stand at the end of the trench. For the first time in all his preparations, Paul seems apprehensive and anxious.

Hekman seems equally unsettled. He hardly knows how to part with the man he has served for so many years.

Paul looks at his watch and turns to say something to Hekman. He moves his mouth but nothing quite comes out.

HEKMAN

Maybe it won't come off, Paul. Maybe it'll be just another disappointment.

VanOwen looks at Lou as if to say, "We both know better."

HEKMAN

You don't have to go. Nobody will blame you if you don't.



123 CONTINUED

VANOWEN

I'm ready to go, Lou. I don't know what's going to happen. All I know is that I'm supposed to be in this place at this time. I may die immediately. I may end up a ginea pig on an operating table, I may become a specimen in a foreign zoo. Whatever happens, I'm ready.

(a beat)

Look, Lou, there's something I haven't told anybody because I didn't know how they would react. When I had my final session, when I knew that this was the time and place I had to be, when I knew that the communication I sought would occur here, I also knew I would never come back. I can't say how or why it came to me--maybe I am crazy--but this is the thing my whole life has aimed for and it is the end. I hope they take me away someplace else. I'm ready for another world.

Otis Carey looks up from the monitors and calls out:

CAREY

The sun's down, Paul. Everything's ready.

VANOWEN

(to Hekman)

Then I guess it's goodbye.

Hekman is hesitant, but there is something he too has to say:

HEKMAN

Paul, there's something I've wanted to say too.

(emotional)

Paul, you've been like a father to me all these years.. I love you and I'm going to miss you.

*And...*

VANOWEN

(his voice breaking)

Me too, Lou.

They embrace and Paul steps over to August Kilne.

KILNE

It's been a long road, Paul.

123 CONTINUED

VANOWEN  
Yeah, it has, ~~Augie~~

They embrace and Paul moves down the line to Miko and Carey. VanOwen says goodbye and warmly embraces each of them in turn.

Then, without looking back, he turns toward the stairway leading to the surface. His shaky legs climb the steps.

CUT TO:

124 EXT. IDAHO SITE DUSK

VanOwen stands alone on the barren stretch of ground.

Slowly he turns and heads up the knoll.

CUT TO:

125 INT. TRENCH DUSK

Hekman joins the others at their places in front of the monitors.

All the monitors are activated. Carey watches the dials monitoring VanOwen's vital functions. VanOwen's heart is beating rapidly.

~~And~~ **All** we hear below ground is the silence of anticipation and the clicking of dials.

CUT TO:

126 EXT. IDAHO SITE DUSK

The clicking of the monitors fades as VanOwen turns and proceeds up the knoll.

There is only silence, then, almost imperceptibly, we begin to hear it: the increased volume of clicking from underground and the distant strains of the SAUCER SOUND.

An orange glow comes up from beneath the knoll and hovers on the horizon. The site now duplicates the view of it we saw in the pre-credits, and that Paul first saw in his encounter on the road to Clarenceville.

The orange glow reflects against his cheeks.

6 CONTINUED

The saucer sound increases.

Then we see it: a HUGE RED SUN rises from beneath the horizon. The saucer is rising from below the knoll.

VanOwen pauses, then walks slowly toward the red semi-circle. He stops and raises his hand in the universal sign of greeting.

There is a pause, then, slowly, the saucer begins to rise. A thin row of blue lights appears below the red semi-circle. What we had previously seen was only the dome of a much larger ship.

It continues to rise. Finally, its entire structure appears above the knoll. It is huge. Its base, hundreds of yards across, stretches from one end of the screen to the other.

VanOwen walks toward it.

CUT TO:

37 INT. TRENCH DUSK

The camera pans across the monitors: all the meters are alive and registering.

VanOwen's life functions remain stable.

CUT TO:

128 EXT. IDAHO SITE DUSK

VanOwen approaches the saucer. His hand is raised in greeting.

We hear the ORGAN SOUND.

A door in the saucer appears to open. Paul walks in.

CUT TO:

129 INT. SAUCER ETERNITY

VanOwen is inside the saucer.

He receives, in rapid succession, all the sensations he had in his first encounter, in his nightmares, in his hypnotic trance, but then he goes beyond them, exploring entirely new worlds of knowledge and awareness.

*He sees beings. Their shapes and forms are unclear.*

## 130 CONTINUED

VanOwen receives, now in seconds, his in-depth X-ray. The ray cuts immediately through his skin, blood, nerves and bones, leaving only the pale glow of his soul.

The saucer sound dissolves into the OUTER SPACE SOUND. He hears worlds collide and he zooms through OUTER SPACE.

Planets, stars, nebulae pass him by in a flash. The music collasces into the CELESTIAL SOUND. Amid the music of the spheres, we hear the musical PHONETIC LOOP SOUND. Somewhere in the distance Uranantha is singing about weary pilgrims propelled by music alone.

VanOwen moves inevitably, rapidly, toward the TIFID NEBULA. We plunge in and are welcomed by the darkness.

In the darkness we hear the haunting phonetic loop sound. Then faces appear. They are moving very fast now. They twist, distort, dissolve and blitz past us. We recognize a few as they pass: VanOwen's mother, Sharon, Becky, Judy Nicholas, Jack Estes, Ed Tupelo, Rueben Ravenski. We speed past the forbidding hand which once held VanOwen back.

Paul has now plunged past the memory and the dream. He is exploring new worlds, achieving new knowledge, receiving sensations never before experienced by man.

The Doors of <sup>thought</sup> Perception swing wide open: through his natural senses and every electrode planted in his body, VanOwen is receiving emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual information. The knowledge his mother once <sup>dreamed</sup> spoke of draws near.

The faces keep spinning and dissolving. Then we realize the faces are not random, but regressive. Each face is the parent of the one preceding it. The son yields to the father yields to the grandfather. Generations flow past in fleeting seconds.

We recognize momentarily an ancient Roman or Near Eastern face. Suddenly, the mirror before of our eyes presents a Cro-Magnon visage, then a Neanderthal, then an Eolithic man--then the fierce face of a saber-toothed tiger. Yet, in a flash, we go further back ~~with~~: through reptiles, fish, plants and finally to the <sup>amino</sup> molecule itself. <sup>A</sup> fast-motion pan back across VanOwen's arctic history wall.

It is like a

130 CONTINUED

Then the earth is void and without form. A darkness moves upon the face of the deep.

We pull rapidly back from the stark and desolate planet, ~~SEEZ~~ <sup>COMING</sup> quickly into the reaches of space. A rock becomes a boulder becomes a mountain because a ridge becomes a continent becomes a planet and then, with a faint blue glow, slowly vanishes from view.

We are back at the beginning of time: the universe is in the throes of creation.

A supernova explodes; light fills the screen. Hot molten planets spew randomly from the star, casting themselves every which direction through space.

The planets cool, coalesce and fall into orbit. Each planet, each moon, each star has a brilliant color of its own. The universe is ablaze with red, yellows, greens and violets.

The celestial sound, backed by choruses of disembodied voices, fills the air.

Is this what men dream of when they die? Is this the knowledge we pursue? Is this the heaven we seek?

CUT TO:

131 EXT. IDAHO SITE DUSK

The saucer slowly rises.

CUT TO:

132 INT. TRENCH DUSK

The monitor indicates that VanOwen's bodily vital functions-- heart beat, temperature, blood sugar, etc.--have fallen to the threshold of existence, yet his brain waves continue to throb wildly.

Carey's voice calls out:

CAREY O. S.

He's still alive.

Screen **FADES to BLACK.**

CUT TO:

133 EXT. EVANS, IDAHO DAY

A day later. Groups of local citizens are filtering back into the deserted town. The evacuation has been lifted. The National Guard is assisting where possible.

Claude Ames and Leo Ross look disconsolately down the street.

CUT TO:

134 EXT. IDAHO SITE DAY

Ames and Ross walk from their car toward the site area.

The last workmen are smoothing dirt over what once was the trench. Ames approaches one of them:

AMES  
What are you doing?

The workman shrugs.

ROSS  
What happened here?

The workmen shrug and continue with their work. They're just doing a job.

Ames turns his head and looks up at the skies.

CUT TO:

135 EXT. ENDLESS SPACE ETERNITY

A distant light makes its way through the stary skies. The celestial sound plays softly.

Weary pilgrim, welcome home.

THE END