

SALE

EXPLORERS

An original screenplay

by

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Paramount Pictures Corporation

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THIRD DRAFT

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EXPLORERS

MAIN TITLE

All is dark.

We HEAR the night sounds of a RURAL TOWN: crickets, a dog barking, a car horn in the distance.

The title "EXPLORERS" fades in, fades out.

FADE IN:

1 EXT. NIGHT SKY 1

With a low, ominous CHORD, the STARS appear, shimmering through the atmosphere.

With another CHORD, we start a quick DOLLY back, through an open window.

2 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM 2

Silhouetted against the stars, hanging SPACESHIP MODELS are revealed "flying" past us as we DOLLY back.

We move past SCIENCE FICTION POSTERS on the walls, a glow-in-the-dark FLYING SAUCER on a desk, and come to rest on BEN CRANDALL, 14, asleep in bed.

Dissonant MUSIC starts to build, with strange unearthly SOUNDS, and we see that Ben's eyes are fluttering, his lips moving as he dreams.

3 EXT. PLAIN - BEN'S DREAM 3

With a BURST of MUSIC, we are inside Ben's dream.

Dressed in pajamas, he stands on a barren, wind-swept PLAIN, with JAGGED MOUNTAINS in the distance, and DARK GREEN CLOUDS rolling overhead. The plain is featureless, except for BROAD DISCOLORATIONS that run across it.

He looks down at his feet, takes a breath, and JUMPS six feet into the air, slowly floating down again.

4 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

4

Ben breathes deeply in his sleep, enjoying the flying sensation.

5 EXT. PLAIN - BEN'S DREAM

5

He bends his legs and really jumps this time, shooting up into the air, higher and higher. We FLY up with him, and with a MUSIC CRESCENDO, the changing perspective reveals that the discolorations on the plain hundreds of feet below are actually a gigantic DRAWING, a SCHEMATIC for a CIRCUIT BOARD.

Ben turns, treading air for a moment, catching sight of the drawing below.

He frowns, looking at the details of the diagram, and SWOOPS down toward it.

6 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

6

Ben sits up in bed, half-asleep, blindly fumbles for a PENCIL and PAPER by his bedside, and knocks over a glass of water.

Eyes closed, he starts to draw the diagram in the dream.

7 EXT. PLAIN - BEN'S DREAM

7

Back in the air, he concentrates on the diagram.

Suddenly, he DROPS, falling toward the ground, tumbling out of control. He tries to yell, but can't make a sound, the wind ROARING in his ears.

MUSIC builds to a FINAL CRESCENDO as the ground rushes up to meet us and:

8 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

8

Ben's eyes fly open, wide awake. He scribbles furiously, remembering, writing numbers under certain sections, and it is finished! He sets the glass upright and wipes up the water with a sweater from the back of a chair.

Taking the paper, he gets out of bed, walks to a shelf and picks up the microphone of a HAM RADIO. He flips it on, adjusts the frequency, and presses a SIGNAL BUTTON.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

3.

8.

BEN

(excited)
Hey, wake up.

9 EXT. MILLER HOUSE

9

An old, two-story house sits under the night sky in a suburban neighborhood.

10 INT. WOLFGANG'S BEDROOM

10

A small RED LIGHT on another radio flashes, with a faint BUZZING sound. We DOLLY back to reveal a room full of old CHEMISTRY SETS, gutted RADIOS, ELECTRONIC GAMES and dismantled HOME COMPUTERS. A SOLDERING GUN sits in the center of a desk, surrounded by piles of TRANSISTORS, RESISTORS and coils of WIRE.

A small kid with short hair, WOLFGANG MILLER, also 14, sleeps in the center of a tangle of sheets and blankets. The buzzing wakes him. He has trouble extricating himself from his bed, but finally puts on a pair of glasses, and answers the radio.

WOLFGANG

It's three o'clock. This better be good.

BEN (V.O.)

I just had this weird dream.

Wolfgang sits down on the bed wearily.

WOLFGANG

So did I. What was yours?

11 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

11

Ben stands, staring at the diagram. The MUSIC starts again.

BEN

It was so real. I was flying, and I saw this huge drawing, like a circuit board or something.

12 INT. WOLFGANG'S BEDROOM

12

Wolfgang scratches his neck.

~~WOLFGANG~~ WOLFGANG
I dreamed I was at school without
any clothes on. I had to hide in
the bathroom.

13 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

13

Ben sits on his bed, excited.

BEN
Anyway, I wrote it down, as much
as I could remember, and I wanted
you to look at it tomorrow.

WOLFGANG (V.O.)
Sure. Can I go back to sleep
now?

BEN
Ten four. Over and out.

WOLFGANG (V.O.)
Over and out.

Ben hangs up the microphone and lies down again on
his bed.

He looks out the window as a warm breeze blows in.

14 INT. BEN'S KITCHEN - MORNING

14

The kitchen door SLAMS open as Ben runs in and grabs
a POP TART from a box on a counter, and his LUNCH.
His mother, MRS. CRANDALL, is loading the dishwasher
while his brother, BILL, 17, eats breakfast.

Ben runs out the back door, leaving the screen door
open.

His mother frowns.

MRS. CRANDALL
Hey, Ben!

15 EXT. BEN'S HOUSE

15

Ben jumps off the back porch and lands by his bicycle
as his mother follows him out.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CRANDALL

Please keep the screen door shut.

Ben puts his books in his bike carrier and gets on the bike.

BEN

Sure, Mom.

MRS. CRANDALL

Don't I even get a good morning any more?

Ben rides away, shouting over his shoulder.

BEN

Good morning, Mom! Bye!

He's gone. She shakes her head and goes back inside.

16 EXT. STREET - MORNING

16

Wolfgang walks slowly along the sidewalk on his way to school, having trouble with the pile of TEN BOOKS under his arm.

The morning sun is clear and bright, birds singing in the trees that line the street in this fairly nice part of town. A few OLDER PEOPLE work in their front yards, trimming hedges and mowing lawns. CHILDREN run past him or ride bikes, on their way to school, roughly brushing past Wolfgang, ignoring him.

Walking behind him are three BOYS, older and taller, led by STEVE JACKSON, a flunked 15-year-old who is very large for his age.

JACKSON

You can always tell a kid's weird when he wears his pants up to his elbows.

KID #1

Hey, Miller, waiting for a flood?

Wolfgang ignores them, looking straight ahead.

JACKSON

Miller looks like one of those guys in Devo. Hey, Miller, 'Are we not men?'

(CONTINUED)

ALL
(mechanically, like
the group Devo)
'We are Devo.'

They run past him, slapping the books out of his hand.
One kid grabs a book and sails it over a tall HEDGE
into a front yard, where a loud SPLASH is heard, and
an old man's VOICE yells.

VOICE
Goddamn kids!

The three take off as Ben rides up and sees Wolfgang
collecting his books.

BEN
You okay?

WOLFGANG
It's just that Cro-Magnon Steve
Jackson again.

An angry old man in a bathrobe, MR. PIDGELY, runs out
onto the sidewalk, waving Wolfgang's book, which is
dripping wet.

PIDGELY
You kids! My carp are dying
of shock!

WOLFGANG
But I didn't --

He recognizes Wolfgang.

PIDGELY
You!

WOLFGANG
(quiet)
Hi.

PIDGELY
I've spoken to your mother!
You foul up my TV reception one
more time with that goddamn Hamm
radio, and I'm calling the police.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PIDGELY (cont'd)

I didn't put up that expensive antenna and buy that Trinitron to have my evening ruined by poor reception.

He turns and walks back into the house with the book.

WOLFGANG

Can I have my book back?

PIDGELY

No!

He slams the front door. Wolfgang shouts after him.

WOLFGANG

Misanthrope!

They head towards school again, Ben walking his bike. He pulls the drawing out of his pocket and gives it to Wolfgang.

BEN

Here's that diagram from last night.

WOLFGANG

Please, Ben. I don't need this right now.

(looks at
it; frowns)

Hmmm. Yeah, that's possible... And that... I could use my terminal... I've got all these components at home. I didn't know you knew anything about electronics.

BEN

I don't.

WOLFGANG

And you dreamed this? I could put this together in about a day, and it would probably do something.

17 EXT. BEAUMONT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

17

They have reached the front of their school. The ancient STATUE of CHESTER BEAUMONT, the man the school is named after, stares sternly down at them.

A KID runs past and pulls at Wolfgang's "fruit loop," the small loop of material on the back of his shirt. It RIPS his shirt down the back.

KID

Fruit loop! Fruit loop!

Wolfgang stops.

WOLFGANG

You know, for some strange reason I don't feel like going to school today.

(coughs)

I'm going to stay home and have a cold.

Ben is excited.

BEN

You think you can make this?

Wolf looks up at the statue of Chester Beaumont.

WOLFGANG

I hate him.

(walking back
towards his house)

Look out for Jackson!

BEN

(shouts)

Steve Jackson's got elephantitis
of the ego!

A group of KIDS standing nearby hear Ben and laugh.

18 EXT. BEAUMONT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - YARD

18

Ben is PUNCHED in the nose, and pushed back onto the ground. It is later in the day, at lunch recess.

As a ring of KIDS shout around them, Ben is getting beat up pretty badly by Steve Jackson.

Steve sits on Ben's chest, holding his hands down.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE

I heard you called me something funny. What's so funny?

BEN

I said you had elephantitis of your ego.

STEVE

Why can't you talk like everybody else, Crandall? I don't like people calling me stuff when I don't know what it is.

A girl, LORI SWENSON, steps out of the crowd. She is pretty and blonde.

LORI

God, Steve, cut it out.

STEVE

Hi, Lori.

He slaps Ben in the face a few times. Ben shouts back, helpless.

BEN

Elephantitis is when something gets bloated and ugly, Jackson... like your butt!

Steve hits Ben in the nose again, hard.

STEVE

Shut up!

Lori turns and leaves.

LORI

God.

BEN

You'd be a lot more impressive if you picked on guys bigger than you.

STEVE

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

He starts flailing at Ben as if he really might hurt him. Suddenly a SHADOW falls across them both. Steve looks up.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED (2):

18

DARREN WOODS, 14 1/2, has stepped out of the crowd. He is a tough little kid with a torn jean jacket and hair that's too long.

DARREN
Cut it out, Jackson.

STEVE
Who's going to make me? You?

DARREN
Sure.

He pushes Steve off Ben.

STEVE
I'll cream you, too.

DARREN
You're going to have to catch me first, Elephantitis-Butt.

Steve takes off after Darren, leaving Ben to pick himself up and inspect his bleeding nose.

Darren is fast, but Steve is older. He is right behind Darren as they zig-zag across the grass toward the SCHOOL WINGS.

19 EXT. SCHOOL HALL

19

Darren rounds a corner and runs down a hall until he sees what he's looking for: a TEACHER. He runs straight past her.

TEACHER
Gentlemen! No running in the halls.

DARREN
Okay, ma'am.

He turns and walks after her, practically in her footsteps. Steve follows, making silent threats, but when she turns and looks at him, he leaves. He gives Darren one last glare. Darren copies it in return and walks off behind the teacher.

20 EXT. STREET - DAY

20

Darren is ambling home from school.

(CONTINUED)

He is heading towards a lower-income section of town.

Ben rides up on his bicycle.

BEN

Hey, Darren! I just wanted to say thanks for today, with Jackson and everything.

DARREN

That's okay. He's a jerk.

BEN

That was real embarrassing getting beat up in front of Lori Swenson. She's gorgeous.

DARREN

(shrugs)

Good bod. Not my type.

BEN

I probably should have kept my mouth shut, but I just couldn't stand to listen to him talk about himself anymore.

DARREN

Yeah, you've got that problem.

BEN

What?

DARREN

Keeping your mouth shut.

He walks on. Ben is surprised, but decides to pursue it. He rides slowly after him.

BEN

I know, my brother tells me that all the time. He's going to college next year. Hey, you want to come over to my house? I just got the cartridge for 'Planet Smashers.'

DARREN

Planet Smashers is boring.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED (2):

20

Darren is getting more uptight as they near his home, which is one of a line of run-down pink houses with overgrown front yards and battered cars in the driveways.

DARREN

(continuing)

Look, why don't you just take off, okay? I did you a favor, but I didn't know you were going to bug me about it for the rest of my life.

He stops as he sees a car in his driveway.

DARREN

(continuing)

Oh, no, my Dad's home.

There is the sound of SHOUTING and BREAKING GLASS from inside the house.

DARREN

(continuing)

I guess he didn't get that job.

BEN

What does he do?

DARREN

Bus driver.

A WOMAN'S VOICE yells back.

BEN

Is that your Mom?

DARREN

No. That's my Dad's girlfriend. She's okay.

BEN

Hey, do you want to come over to my house?

DARREN

Yeah, maybe I could call from there, and come home later.

21 EXT. STREET

21

Ben and Darren walk down a shady, tree-lined street, obviously a "nicer" part of town.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

21

The front lawns are neatly trimmed, the cars all clean and waxed.

BEN

Your folks fight a lot?

DARREN

My Mom died when I was a kid,
My Dad's okay. He just isn't
very lucky. He's always
breaking things or losing them.
Anyway, he taught me how to
run. Can't catch me anymore.

Ben is quiet, not knowing what to say.

DARREN

(continuing)

Your Mom and Dad still together?

BEN

Yeah. I guess they get along
okay. They just talk about
the stupidest junk all the
time.

22 EXT. MILLER HOUSE

22

They stop in front of a two-story, older HOUSE, with
MACHINES in different stages of repair overflowing
from the garage into the driveway: washing machines,
oscilloscopes, radios, TV's.

BEN

You want to stop here for a
second? My friend Wolfgang --

DARREN

'Wolfgang?'

BEN

It's not his fault. His parents
won't let him change it. You'll
probably think he's weird anyway.

They walk up the path to the front door.

BEN

(continuing)

He's working on something,
pretending he's sick. I want
to see how it's going.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

DARREN

All this junk they could
open a junk store.

BEN

That's his Dad's. Talk about
parents, wait 'til you meet
his. They're both research
scientists or something.
German. Weird.

DARREN

If I had a name like Wolfgang
I think I'd kill myself.

MRS. MILLER answers the door. She wears glasses and
her hair is pulled up in a tight bun.

MRS. MILLER

Benjamin! Come in. And this
is...

DARREN

Darren.

MRS. MILLER

Darren. You only have to tell
me once. I never forget
anything.

She turns away. Ben rolls his eyes at Darren and
they enter.

23 INT. MILLER HOUSE

23

The inside of the house is stacked with BOOKS. Boxes,
bags, tied bundles of books make it difficult to walk
through the rooms. FOUR CHILDREN, descending in age
from 6 to 2, run through the house, one screaming,
two laughing, and the two-year-old just sitting
and watching.

MRS. MILLER

Ludwig! Stop that right now!

She leads the boys through the KITCHEN, where the door
to the basement has a large sign: KEEP OUT:
IMPORTANT RESEARCH.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. MILLER

(continuing)

Wolfgang is down in his lab.
Just a second I'll ring him.

She presses a button on the HOMEMADE INTERCOM put together from stereo parts. Wolfgang's voice sounds, small and tinny.

WOLFGANG (V.O.)

Hello?

MRS. MILLER

Benjamin is here, with his friend Derek.

Darren looks at Ben, who shrugs.

WOLFGANG (V.O.)

Great. I'll be right up.

MRS. MILLER

Have a seat, boys. Can I offer you anything: some baklava?

DARREN

What?

MRS. MILLER

It's a Greek pastry. Here, try some.

Darren looks at it suspiciously.

DARREN

Geek pastry?

BEN

No, Greek. It's pretty good.

They bite into it just as Wolfgang bursts into the room. There is a maniacal gleam in his eye.

WOLFGANG

Gentlemen! I'm glad you're here. Who're you?

BEN

This is Darren. He saved my life today. I nearly got murdered by Steve Jackson.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED (2):

23

WOLFGANG

That guy has a forehead like a
pancake. Pleased to meet you,
Darren.

Darren shakes his hand, staring at him. He's never
seen a kid like this before.

BEN

You don't look too sick.

WOLFGANG

Oh yeah, thanks.

(coughs horribly for
mother's benefit)

Come on down, you hose-head.

(whispers)

I finished it. I waited until
you got here to turn it on.

(British accent)

It is top-secret, James, I assure
you. Can this man be trusted?

BEN

(British accent)

Of course, M, of course. He
did save my life.

They both start singing the JAMES BOND theme as they
go down the stairs to the basement.

Darren looks at them and frowns. He doesn't know what
he's doing here.

24 INT. BASEMENT

24

Wolfgang's basement looks like a small-scale mad
scientist's laboratory. The room is crowded with
boxes of broken TV sets, old radio tubes, circuit
boards, soldering guns, and other tools.

Wires are strung across the room to the power lines
coming into the house through the basement.

The walls are crammed with shelves of comic books
and science fiction paperbacks.

Ben walks with Wolfgang to a workbench, and Wolfgang
starts clearing away components and tools he's been
working with.

WOLFGANG

Cokes are in the fridge, guys.

(CONTINUED)

DARREN

Hey, this is okay.

BEN

Like it? All these comics and books are mine. I read every one of them.

Darren picks a book off the shelf. It's H.G. Wells' WAR OF THE WORLDS with a brilliant cover of a Martian tri-pod.

DARREN

Weird. I never could get into this. I just couldn't believe it.

BEN

That's crap. Stuff like that could happen any time. You just have to be ready for it.

WOLFGANG

Here it is.

With Ben, we turn to look at the MACHINE for the first time. Amidst the piles of electronic clutter on the workbench, it looks clean and compact.

A small gray BOX has controls on the front of it, including a small TV screen. An ATARI HOME COMPUTER is patched into the back, with two DISK DRIVES attached.

WOLFGANG

That box houses your circuit board, which called for a terminal here, so I used my computer, which only has 64K, but that should be enough to find out what it does, if it does anything at all, which it probably doesn't.

He reaches toward the POWER SWITCH. Darren stares, puzzled.

WOLFGANG

(continuing)

No point in waiting. Ready?

BEN

Sure, I guess.

WOLFGANG

It'll probably just burn out or something.

He flips the switch. Nothing happens. The screen remains blank.

(CONTINUED)

Ben frowns, disappointed, then LOOKS UP as he hears something. Very faint at first, a high, bell-like SOUND starts to build. It has a beautiful quality, like the rim of a glass being traced by a finger.

Read-outs and displays suddenly start to FLASH across the screen. In the dim light of the basement, they illuminate the three boys' faces with a glowing, magical quality.

Wolfgang glances over at the disk drives as they start HUMMING and CLICKING.

BEN
What's happening?

WOLFGANG
(disbelieving)
It's, um... it's programming itself.

As dramatic MUSIC builds, the displays continue to flash across the screen, faster and faster, until they suddenly STOP. A single line of figures remains, the cursor blinking beneath them.

Wolfgang reads the figures, mouth open in disbelief.

WOLFGANG
(continuing)
I don't believe this. It's asking
for coordinates on X, Y, and Z
axes, to locate a point in space
relative to the terminal.
(looks at
Ben strangely)
How did you ever dream this?

Frowning, Wolfgang types in figures on the terminal.

WOLFGANG
(continuing)
That should put the point right
on that shelf over there.

He points to a bookcase across the room.

Accompanied by eerie MUSIC, there is a small MOVEMENT in the books on one of the shelves.

WOLFGANG
(continuing;
spellbound)
I'll move it to the right.

(CONTINUED)

He types in more instructions, and all the books are slowly pushed to one end of the shelf, until they are squeezed together. Curiously, he taps one key more.

There is a loud BANG! from the machine as it SHORTS OUT! All the books fly off the shelf as the bookcase is SLAMMED SIDEWAYS against the wall!

Smoke rises from the BUZZING machine as it quiets down and all is silent.

BEN

What was that?!

He goes to inspect the books. There is a HOLE the size of a quarter neatly punched through the center of each one.

WOLFGANG

(slowly, amazed)

I have no idea.

DARREN

What was that, some kind of trick?

Ben looks at the shelf. The same hole is punched through the side of it. He pulls it away from the wall.

The hole is punched into the cement retaining wall of the basement. He sticks his finger into it and can't feel the end. A crazy smile starts to spread across his face.

BEN

(getting excited)

This was from my dream?

WOLFGANG

(trying to

keep calm)

Listen, we have to swear to secrecy. I don't know what this is, but I don't want anybody to take it away, or tell us what to do with it, because you dreamed it, I built it, and it's our secret.

DARREN

What are you guys talking about?
That was a trick, right?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

No! No. We need to swear:
cut our fingers and mix the
blood.

WOLFGANG

(nervous about
the blood)

That blood stuff's for kids.
How about just a handshake?
We cross the middle fingers,
point the thumb straight up
and say 'Blood.'

Darren backs away. He picks up a book with a hole in it.

DARREN

You pull this on every sucker
that comes over here.

BEN

No, Darren, come on, you've
got to believe me. Shake on
it!

Mrs. Miller's voice sounds over the intercom.

MRS. MILLER (V.O.)

Benjamin, that was your Mother.
She's angry with you for not
calling, and she wants you
home right now.

BEN

Come on, Darren, shake!

DARREN

Forget you.

He turns and goes up the stairs. Ben and Wolfgang look
at each other. They shake with the secret oath.

BOTH

Blood.

Wolfgang gestures toward the smoking machine.

WOLFGANG

I have to get it running again
anyway. I'll call you tonight.

Ben runs upstairs after Darren.

25 EXT. MILLER HOUSE - AFTERNOON

25

Ben looks both ways down the street, but Darren is gone. He hears his DINNER BELL ringing in the distance, and rides away.

26 EXT. BEN'S HOUSE

26

Ben runs up to his back door as his mother finishes RINGING the bell a second time.

MRS. CRANDALL

You just made it kid.

BEN

I heard the first one over at Wolfgang's.

MRS. CRANDALL

Inside and wash up.

27 INT. BEN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

27

Ben's family sits around the dinner table. His FATHER is preoccupied, thinking about work, while his mother serves a bowl of peas and carrots. His brother BILL is deep in thought, looking at his plate.

BILL

I think I'm getting zits from the carrots.

MRS. CRANDALL

Bill, please.

BILL

It's got to be carrots. I gave up everything else.

He picks up a forkfull and looks at it as if it were a dead animal.

Ben's father looks up from his plate at Mrs. Crandall.

MR. CRANDALL

George Hoskins was right on the money today about the Springfield Account. I think if things keep going like this we've got them beat.

Mr. Crandall chuckles. Seeing that he's in a good mood, Ben prepares to launch into something.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Hey, Dad?

MR. CRANDALL
Yeah?

BEN
Did you get a chance to look
at that brochure I gave you
this morning?

MR. CRANDALL
No I didn't. I was very
busy today.

BEN
Well, could I talk to you
about it now?

MR. CRANDALL
Okay, shoot.

BEN
Well, I could earn half of
the money myself, and I'd wear
a helmet all the time, which
statistically cuts back accidents
to almost nothing, and I could
get to school so fast, I figure
that would leave more time for
studying --

Mr. Crandall holds up a hand to stop him.

MR. CRANDALL
Ben --

BEN
I saw this guy at school with
one, and you don't need a
license, it's so safe, it
doesn't go that fast, and I'd
learn a lot about the
combustion engine --

MR. CRANDALL
Ben! Just what are we
talking about here?

BEN
Well... It's a motorcycle.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED (2):

27

Mrs. Crandall looks up sharply.

MRS. CRANDALL

No!

BEN

But Mom, technically it's not even a real motorcycle. It's more like a bicycle that happens to have a two-piston engine. And it's so cheap!

MR. CRANDALL

Money isn't really the issue here, Ben. It's safety, responsibility. Your mother and I just think that something like this is too dangerous for someone your age.

BEN

My age? I'm fourteen!

MR. CRANDALL

Exactly.

BEN

But practically everyone I know has one!

MR. CRANDALL

I really doubt that.

BEN

I don't know why I hang around here; I get treated like a kid all the time --

MR. CRANDALL

Sorry, Ben. End of discussion.

Ben looks down at his plate. Everyone is silent, tense.

Bill, still thinking about his face, picks up a PEA on his fork.

BILL

Maybe it's the peas.

MRS. CRANDALL

Bill...

She glances at Ben who is obviously hurt.

28 INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

28

Ben lies on his bed, the lights out.

He stares at the Science Fiction posters on the walls, the spaceship models hanging from the ceiling.

A KNOCK comes at the door.

MRS. CRANDALL

Ben?

BEN

Yeah, Mom.

The door opens and Mrs. Crandall looks in. The MOON-LIGHT is bright enough that she doesn't turn on the light. She sits on the bed next to Ben, who is facing away.

MRS. CRANDALL

I hope you understand.

Ben doesn't answer. Mrs. Crandall pulls the covers up over his shoulders.

MRS. CRANDALL

(continuing)

It's just that those machines are so risky. I wouldn't want to come home one day and get a call from the hospital...

BEN

I know.

She sighs and looks at him.

MRS. CRANDALL

Ben, it's great that you want to learn more about the combustion engine. You're interested in things and you want to find out about them, and we're proud of you.

Ben rolls over and looks at her.

BEN

Thanks, Mom.

(pause)

I still can't get it, huh?

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

MRS. CRANDALL
Not right now. Maybe when
you're older.

BEN
(still disappointed)
Okay.

Mrs. Crandall gets up and goes to the door.

MRS. CRANDALL
Good night, Ben.
(pause)
Don't be in too much of a
hurry to grow up. You'll be
there before you know it
anyway.

BEN
Okay, Mom. Good night.

MRS. CRANDALL
(softly)
Good night.

She leaves.

Ben lies in bed and looks out the window. We move
over and look out with him at the stars.

29

29 INT. DARREN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Darren lies in bed, the blankets half off. It is
hot. The sound of loud SNORING comes from the other
room, keeping him awake.

He gets out of bed and walks to his closet. The room
is spare, with one chair and a table. The only
thing on the walls is a large poster of Bruce Springsteen.

He pulls out his SLEEPING BAG and goes to the window.
He crawls out.

30 EXT. DARREN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

30

Darren climbs a ladder at the side of the house,
up to the ROOF.

He unrolls his sleeping bag and crawls in, lying on
a slant. He too looks up at the night sky.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

A PLANE flies high above, lights blinking. A SHOOTING STAR streaks over. We can see the starry cloud of the MILKY WAY.

MUSIC builds as we feel the wonder of staring up at the STARS.

31 INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

The Hamm radio on Ben's shelf starts to flash a red light, making the small, buzzing noise.

Ben wakes up. He checks his clock. It is 4 A.M.

He jumps to the radio, turning the volume way down.

BEN

Yeah?

WOLFGANG (V.O.)

She's working again. Please get your butt over here as soon as possible.

BEN

I'm on my way.

He runs to his dresser and starts to pull on his clothes.

32 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Ben takes a secret way to Wolfgang's house. A wind blows through the neighborhood, exhilarating him as he runs.

He sprints down an alley, jumps into someone's back yard, slides down a rope to a cement creek, skims on his stomach on a piece of plywood along the shallow stream of water for a hundred yards, finds a hidden rope that is attached to a pulley, pulls a lever that releases a counter-weight, is pulled up into the air, and jumps over into Wolfgang's back yard..

Out of breath, he knocks quietly at the back door.

33 INT. WOLFGANG'S LAB

Ben and Wolfgang sit in the dark, their faces illuminated by the instruments in front of them. They drink cokes.

Wolfgang taps Ben's head with a pencil.

WOLFGANG

I don't know what you've got inside there that made you dream this, but it's certainly not normal. We've stumbled on something really incredible.

(starts to giggle)

BEN

Tell me what's going on here or I'll punch your lights out.

WOLFGANG

Very well, you have pressured me into it.

He walks around the basement, lecturing.

WOLFGANG

(continuing)

What we have here is, as near as I can tell, an electrically generated force field that effectively counteracts the mass of anything placed inside it.

He starts giggling and jumping around the room.

BEN

What?

WOLFGANG

Yes! I can make it expand and contract, and by typing in coordinates I can make it move anywhere in three dimensions, even as far as slamming it through a few books and a cement retaining wall.

BEN

(slowly realizing what they've got here)

No! What does it look like?

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

Wolfgang stops, puzzled.

WOLFGANG

I don't know. It's got some weird properties, but it's basically an electro-magnetic field, so it's invisible. If we threw some kind of power in the air, it might collect on the field when it moved.

34 INT. MILLER KITCHEN - NIGHT

34

Ben shines a flashlight into the Miller's kitchen cupboard and pulls out a bag of FLOUR.

35 INT. MILLER BATHROOM

35

Wolfgang opens a bathroom cabinet and grabs at the TALCUM POWDER.

36 INT. BASEMENT

36

Wolfgang and Ben excitedly throw handfuls of flour and powder into the air, covering themselves, but leaving a WHITE MIST hanging in the air all over the basement.

Wolfgang switches on the machine, which makes it SOUND again, and types in a few instructions.

With a sting of EERIE MUSIC, the outline of a tiny BUBBLE appears in the mist, hanging stationary.

Wolfgang types, and the bubble zips back and forth to different points in the air.

It takes no time to speed up or slow down, but moves directly, quickly from point to point. Ben throws more flour, unable to take his eyes off it.

Wolfgang presses a key, and the bubble expands to the size of a basketball, powder falling from it as it grows.

Wolfgang hands Ben a SLEDGEHAMMER.

(CONTINUED)

WOLFGANG

Hit it with this. You're stronger than I am.

Ben tries.

It is like hitting a brick wall. He hurts his finger and the ball emits a small SPARK of energy. It doesn't move.

BEN

This is fantastic.

He throws flour at Wolfgang, who throws powder back. They are both solid white from head to toe.

WOLFGANG

You ain't seen nothing yet.
Sit on the floor.

Ben sits.

WOLFGANG

(continuing)

Prepare to experience the
feeling of having NO MASS!

Wolfgang types a series of complicated instructions.

The ball disappears.

It reappears around Ben, grown to accommodate his size. Ben reaches out and touches it, his fingers pressing against thin air.

Then, slowly, it LIFTS off the ground, taking a little of the cement floor, and Ben with it. Ben sits cross-legged, floating three feet in the air. He is laughing, but we can't hear him.

Wolfgang presses more keys, and Ben begins to float in a circle around the room. He is having the time of his life.

Exciting, dizzying MUSIC builds to a CRESCENDO as Wolfgang speeds him up, and jumps to the center of the room, dancing in circles as Ben whirls around him.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED (2):

36

Suddenly there is a SNAP! the machine shorts out, and Ben is cascaded onto the sofa with bits of the cement floor he was sitting on. Wolfgang runs over to him.

WOLFGANG

(continuing)

It keeps doing that. I can't figure it out.

BEN

Wow. Wow. How fast can you make that go?

WOLFGANG

It's all a function of how much power I supply to it. This is how much I'm putting in now.

He pulls at some wires and holds up the power source.

It is a PENLIGHT BATTERY.

Ben smiles slowly as he realizes how fast the bubble might be able to travel.

There is a creak from upstairs.

WOLFGANG

(continuing)

Oh great, that's my Mom. God, I never get to have any fun!

WOLFGANG'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Wolfgang, are you down there?

WOLFGANG

I'll be up right away!

(whispers)

Wait till I'm gone and sneak out the back. See you tomorrow!

Wolfgang leaves. Ben taps the machine thoughtfully. Wolfgang's mother yells from upstairs.

WOLFGANG'S MOTHER (O.S.)

What in God's name is this stuff all over you?

37 INT. SCHOOL - DAY

37

In a classroom, a TEACHER lectures. She is interrupted by SNORING. In different parts of the room, Ben and Wolfgang are both asleep, their heads down on their desks. There are traces of flour in their hair.

The Teacher addresses the class.

TEACHER
Everyone who failed the test
please stand.

Three KIDS stand up. One of them is Darren. The teacher looks at him and sighs.

TEACHER
(continuing)
That's three in a row, Darren.
Same with your English.
What's the problem here?

Darren stares back angrily.

DARREN
Just stupid, I guess.

38 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

38

At recess, Darren sits next to the fence. He watches the rest of the kids on the playground: screaming, playing on the monkey bars, chasing each other.

He sighs and leans back against the fence, closing his eyes.

VOICE
You are pretty stupid.

He is GRABBED and pulled to his feet by somebody bigger. It is Steve Jackson, who pushes him against the fence and holds him there.

STEVE
(continuing)
Hey, Darren, want to see a
kid who looks real messed up?
Look in the mirror next time
you get a chance.

DARREN
I can take you easy, Jackson.

He starts to fight back, but Steve throws him down and jumps on top of him.

39 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - BIKE RACKS

39

Ben and Wolfgang are standing by the bike racks, speaking in hushed tones.

WOLFGANG

The question is, there are so many possibilities. Which do we explore first?

Ben sees something across the playground.

BEN

Hold it. What's that?

A small crowd of kids are collecting around the fight.

BEN

(continuing)

Let's go see.

Wolfgang hangs back reluctantly, but follows.

WOLFGANG

Your taste for blood will get us both into trouble.

They run across the playground.

40 EXT. PLAYGROUND - FENCE

40

Darren is getting his face pushed into the grass, no matter how hard he fights back.

STEVE

Eat it!

Darren screams in rage and frustration, a horrible sound. It makes Steve back off a little, surprised by the intensity of Darren's emotions, but then he redoubles his efforts.

Ben and Wolfgang push through the crowd. Ben takes one look and jumps at Steve.

BEN

Help me! Come on!

Wolfgang is petrified. He can't believe what Ben is doing.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

WOLFGANG

"You're insane.

BEN

Help!

In a daze, Wolfgang runs into the fight.

WOLFGANG

This isn't happening to me.

Wolfgang's glasses fall off as he hugs Steve's neck, who stands up, lifting Wolfgang off the ground.

Steve knocks Ben down, and it becomes apparent that all three of them are going to be massacred by Steve.

41 EXT. STREET

41

Ben, Darren, and Wolfgang walk home after school, their arms over each other's necks. They are bruised and battered. Wolfgang's glasses are bent out of shape. Darren's shirt is almost ripped in half.

BEN

This is the first time I ever felt so good about losing a fight.

WOLFGANG

(excited)

This is the first time I was ever in a fight.

DARREN

At least we all lost it together. It's like a club or something.

BEN

Which reminds me.

He extends his hand in the secret handshake. Wolfgang offers his too. Darren looks at the two of them for a second; these guys are nuts, but he likes them anyway. The three shake hands, thumbs pointing up.

ALL

Blood.

(CONTINUED)

WOLFGANG

I keep telling you guys that getting beat up is so unimportant compared to what's going to happen.

DARREN

So that stuff with the books was all real, huh? It wasn't a trick?

BEN

No! No! No!

DARREN

But I don't understand why you discovered this when scientists all over the world haven't.

BEN

It started with this dream I had, but this weirdo put it together just from some scribbles I made.

DARREN

How?

WOLFGANG

Try having your hair cut too short, wearing funny glasses, and having to grow up with a name like Wolfgang. It does weird things to you.

BEN

It drives you mad! Mad!

WOLFGANG

But that's all going to change! From this moment on, I don't want to be called Wolfgang any more. I will be known by another name entirely.

DARREN

What's it going to be?

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED (2):

41

Wolfgang whips off his glasses and strikes a tough pose.

WOLFGANG

"Wolf."

42 INT. WOLFGANG'S BASEMENT

42

Ben and Darren sit at the workbench, looking at the machine as Wolf rigs something up on the floor. They eat baklava and drink Coke.

BEN

Hey, Wolf, what's the name of this thing anyway?

WOLF

I call it the TRAGLOSIGKEIT DRIVE.

DARREN

Troglodyte?

WOLF

No. "Trag-low-zich-kite."
That's German for "No inertia."

Ben is speechless.

BEN

"No..."

WOLF

...Inertia. I told you you didn't realize the full implications.

(to Darren)

You know what inertia is?

Darren looks up defensively, as if accused of being stupid.

DARREN

So what if I don't?

Wolf is startled by his reaction. He frowns, stands up and reveals a model he's been working on. Three G.I. JOES rest on a small platform made of popsicle sticks.

(CONTINUED)

WOLF

Please observe.

He places the model on a table and turns on the Traglosigkeit Drive. The model lifts into the air.

WOLF

(continuing)

As you may or may not know, mass is the measure of a body's resistance to acceleration. No mass means no inertia.

DARREN

Which means...

Wolf speeds up the flying model.

WOLF

Imagine being in a car, and accelerating from zero to ninety in less than a second. Dead meat. From broken neck or spine or just plain being squished. Inside this field you have no mass, so you have no inertia. You can start and stop without speeding up or slowing down, and basically you won't get squished.

He demonstrates, the model zipping back and forth across the room.

WOLF

(continuing)

If these three men are supplied with enough air, because the field is airtight, and a platform that they can sit on comfortably within the field, they can fly virtually anywhere on Earth.

BEN

Earth! You've got to be kidding! With this thing we could go to other planets.

They stare at each other in awe, realizing it's true. Darren sinks onto the couch.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED (2):

42

DARREN

Wow.

Wolf looks at Ben, startled. We can see the wheels spinning inside his head. He shakes himself out of it.

WOLF

No. Absolutely not.

BEN

Why?

WOLF

Too dangerous. One little mistake in space and phht!

He turns off the field and the G.I. Joes crash to the floor.

WOLF

(continuing)

We'd boil on one side, freeze on the other, and blow up like fish when they're brought up from deep water.

BEN

(untroubled)

Hey, no problem.

WOLF

And no air. There's no way we'd have enough air, water, or food to make it to another planet and back.

BEN

My Dad's got some old compressed air tanks for scuba diving. They're full.

WOLF

That's one hour air at most! I'm sorry, Ben. Other planets are out of the question.

Ben flops down on the couch.

BEN

You're just chicken.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED (3):

42

Darren picks up the G.I. Joes on their platform.

DARREN

We're going to need a lot
of junk to build this thing.

WOLF

We've got a garage full of it.

43 INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

43

It is dark outside as Wolf opens the garage door and shines a flashlight in. It is crammed from floor to ceiling with old machines, furniture, sheet metal, wood, shopping carts, etc.

The boys enter and start to explore, Wolf shining his flashlight on each new object.

DARREN

Here's an old car seat over
here. And some rowboat keels.

WOLF

I'll need something to mount
the Traglosigkeit on, for
a control panel.

BEN

Hey, here are some old washing
machine doors: portholes!

Wolf shakes his head at this frivolity.

DARREN

There's nothing here that's
big enough. Next to my house
there's a wrecking yard with
a bunch of old cars and junk.

Wolf calls them to order.

WOLF

We have a long night ahead
of us. I suggest we get some
supper, call your folks to stay
overnight, and draw up some
plans right now.

DARREN

I don't have to call.

They walk out into the street.

44 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

44

Ben stops and looks up at the night sky. He takes a deep breath.

They look at each other and run inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

45 EXT. WOLF'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

45

Ben is dragging sheet metal into the backyard as Darren starts to hammer two-by-fours together. Wolf runs out to quiet them.

WOLF

That's too loud. My parents will be all over us. Let's do it down in the creek. It'll be quieter.

46 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

46

Sheet metal, boards, and boxes of junk come flying over the back fence and fall twenty feet to the cement-lined creek, where they hit with resounding CRASHES!

The creek is overgrown with IVY and FERNS from backyards, giving it a jungle-like feeling.

47 EXT. WOLF'S BACKYARD

47

Wolf's FATHER pokes his head out the back door. He has a slight German accent.

FATHER

Wolfgang! What are you doing out there?

WOLF

Building a spaceship, Father.

FATHER

Okay, just don't burn up the azaleas when you take off!

He goes back inside, chuckling.

The three climb over the back fence.

DISSOLVE TO:

48 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

48

Later that night, the ship is taking shape. Wolf directs as Ben and Darren lay out the GROUND SUPPORTS, and start building the CENTRAL PLATFORM that they will sit on later. Darren has taken the construction to heart and is really throwing his back into it.

DISSOLVE TO:

49 EXT. WOLF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

49

Through Wolf's bedroom window, we see his Mother say good night to the boys and close the door. They jump out of their sleeping bags, fully clothed, and climb out the back window, run across the yard and climb over the back fence.

50 EXT. CREEK

50

We DOLLY forward and look down over the back fence.

The ship is farther along, but it is lopsided, the two-by-fours nailed together at odd angles, braced in the wrong places.

WOLF

This doesn't look right.

BEN

It just needs one more brace, up here.

He nails a brace in, and the whole thing collapses, falling to the ground in a heap.

DARREN

There's always that junkyard near my house.

51 EXT. JUNKYARD ENTRANCE - NIGHT

51

Wolf plays his flashlight over a sign that reads: "DAVE'S JUNKYARD - If You Can Find It, I'll Sell It To You." Beyond a chain link fence lies a fantastic mass of shadows and silhouettes of old machines.

WOLF

Who's Dave?

(CONTINUED)

DARREN

He's this old guy. I don't think he'll notice if we borrow something.

A ferocious-looking GUARD DOG runs up and LEAPS against the fence, snarling. Ben and Wolf trip backwards, falling over in surprise.

DARREN

(continuing)

That's Bozo. I always come over here at night, so I kept bringing things to make friends with him: bones, meat. Nothing worked. I finally found out what he likes. Hey, Bozo.

Darren takes a stick of GUM out of his pocket and gives it to the dog, who takes it and sits, staring at them, chewing stupidly.

BEN

Doesn't he swallow it?

DARREN

Nah, Bozo's pretty weird.

Darren undoes a combination lock and swings open a gate.

DARREN

(continuing)

I saw Dave unlock it once. I hang out around here at night when I can't sleep.

The three walk through the junkyard, Darren showing it off like a private kingdom.

DARREN

All the old cars are over there, but there's a bunch of rats that live in them.

WOLF

Let's skip those.

DARREN

Here's the stuff I thought we could use.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

With portentous MUSIC, we DOLLY through the junk to reveal, sitting on top of a metal scrapheap, silhouetted against the sky: a spherical compartment from an old "Tilt and Turn" type ride. It is rust-eaten and black with dirt.

Ben is speechless.

BEN
It's... beautiful.

53 EXT. SHIP - NIGHT

53

A door bangs open and the three look inside the compartment. It is in worse shape than the outside, the seats torn, the walls ripped up, but it is six feet in diameter, a perfect size for them, and the structure looks solid.

BEN
This is perfect.

WOLF
It stinks in here. How do we get it home?

DARREN
Roll it.

54 EXT. JUNKYARD ENTRANCE - NIGHT

54

The ship rolls out of the junk piles and smashes into the front fence, the boys running behind it.

The dog sits watching them, chewing its gum. Darren swings open the front gate.

WOLF
This is going to be tricky.
We'll just have to be real quiet.

55 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

55

The ship rolls down the street, CRASHING and BANGING against the pavement as they run behind it, pushing it.

Light after light blinks on in the darkened houses as they pass.

Ben points to the houses, but Darren shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

DARREN

I just hope nobody calls the police.

WOLF

Watch out!

The street slopes downward, and the ship rolls ahead of them, out of control.

56 EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

56

A PATROL CAR drives slowly through an empty intersection.

57 INT. PATROL CAR - TRAVELING

57

Two COPS drink coffee.

Behind them, the ship rolls across the intersection, followed by the three boys running.

One cop sees it out of the corner of his eye in the rear view mirror.

COP #2

What the hell was that?

58 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

58

Wolf yells to Darren, panicking.

WOLF

That was the police, wasn't it?

DARREN

Yep.

WOLF

Oh great! I'm going to Juvy before I can even drive.

BEN

There's the creek!

The same CREEK that runs behind Wolf's house crosses underneath the street.

Ben and Darren catch up with the ship, and change its course so that it crashes over a waist-high cement wall, flies through the air, and smashes into the creek below.

The boys dive into a hedge of ivy, just as the patrol car turns the corner and drives up the street. It slows as it nears them.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

They look at each other. They are in big trouble.
As the car passes, we hear the cops talking.

COP #2

I swear to God, Ernie, it was
kind of cigar-shaped, and it
was rolling --

In the ivy, the boys breathe a sigh of relief.

59 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

59

Later that night, back in the creek behind Wolf's house, the boys are adding ground supports, washing machine window portholes, and other modifications to the outside of the ship.

Wolf crawls inside.

60 INT. SHIP

60

The ship is a little cramped, but good use has been made of the space. Wolf has built a support for his Traglosig-keit control panel. Mattresses have been nailed to the inside in places, with various other pieces of debris used ingeniously for handholds, seats, and headrests.

Darren points out some loose bolts and the three go to work with crescent wrenches and screwdrivers.

61 EXT. CREEK

61

Wolf blinks on the RED and BLUE LIGHTS from the amusement park ride on the exterior of the ship, and tries two brilliant white car HEADLIGHTS mounted on poles that can be aimed from inside the ship.

62 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

62

Ben and Darren are dog-tired, sitting together on the cement. Wolf crawls down the side of the creek with more baklava and Coke.

DISSOLVE TO:

63 EXT. CREEK - DAWN

63

As the sun rises over the houses, the trio steps back to admire its work. Darren tightens a last bolt and slaps the side of the ship affectionately.

The ship isn't finished, but with the sun shining off it, it is very impressive.

TRIUMPHANT MUSIC sounds.

64 INT. SCIENCE CLASS - DAY

64

Ben tries to keep his eyes open in Science Class, as MRS. CARLSON lectures about astronomy. She is a good teacher, the kind some kids think is an oddball, but others hang around after class for.

Ben sits up at the word "Mars."

MRS. CARLSON

Last month Mars was at its closest point to the Earth, what we call being 'in opposition.' It is in opposition once every twenty-five months or so.

Ben leans over and whispers to Wolf.

BEN

She'd know if we could make it to other planets.

WOLF

What are you going to do, walk up and ask her?

BEN

Why not? She'll think we're just asking some kind of stupid question.

Mrs. Carlson sees them talking.

MRS. CARLSON

Boys. To the fence.

65 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - TRAVELLING - DAY

65

Ben and Wolf run to the fence across the empty schoolyard. Ben shouts, excited.

BEN

At least she could tell us how fast we'd have to go to get there with enough air!

WOLF

You're crazy!

BEN

You're chicken.

66 INT. SCIENCE CLASS - DAY

66

Science Class is letting out. Ben and Wolf approach Mrs. Carlson.

BEN

Mrs. Carlson? How fast would you have to go to get to Mars in about an hour?

MRS. CARLSON

Well, let's see. Mars right now is about forty million miles away. You figure it out.

WOLF

Forty million miles an hour. I told you.

BEN

But is it possible for something, um, anything to go that fast?

MRS. CARLSON

You're nowhere near the speed of light, where all sorts of strange things start to happen, so physically, if you've got enough propulsion it's possible, but you'd have all kinds of trouble accelerating to that speed fast enough, and decelerating when you got there.

BEN

Oh that's no problem. What's Mars like?

MRS. CARLSON

Well, temperature averages minus fifty degrees centigrade. The atmosphere is about one one-hundredth of Earth's, mostly carbon dioxide, and there are dust storms that last for months. Why, planning a trip?

The boys look at each other.

BEN

You guessed it, Mrs. Carlson.

They exit quickly. Mrs. Carlson smiles, puzzled, then dismisses it.

67 EXT. LIBRARY

67

Darren runs up in front of the large, SCHOOL LIBRARY.

He walks up the steps and goes inside.

68 INT. LIBRARY - DESK

68

He meanders up to the LIBRARIAN at the front desk, and stands, not knowing what to say. He doesn't look like the kind of kid who goes into libraries.

LIBRARIAN

(suspicious)

Can I help you?

DARREN

(too loud)

I've never been in here, so I don't know where anything is.

The librarian shushes him, but is pleased that he's here for books.

LIBRARIAN

Well, that's different. What subject are you interested in?

Darren points to a map of the SOLAR SYSTEM on the wall.

DARREN

Space.

LIBRARIAN

Hmmm. The exploration of? As in the various National Aeronautics and Space Administration ventures? The fictional treatment of, as by H.G. Wells or numerous other authors?

DARREN

Uh, just space.

69 INT. LIBRARY - STACKS

69

Back in the stacks, Darren looks at a slip of paper and walks down an aisle until he finds the right section.

He picks three books off the shelf and walks to a small table, illuminated by a reading light, surrounded by tall shelves.

He opens a book and starts to flip through it.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

Darren is a poor reader, moving his lips with the words, but totally absorbed.

As mysterious MUSIC builds, we look down with him at the large pictures of colorful NEBULAS, distant STARS, RED GIANTS, spectacular GAS CLOUDS.

70 EXT. SCHOOLYARD

70

As school lets out, Ben, Darren, and Wolf walk down a hall through a crowd of kids. They look wiped out.

Steve Jackson turns the corner in front of them, with a few FRIENDS.

As one, the trio wearily turns and walks away from him.

JACKSON

Aah, look at 'em run. Wimps!
Weirdos!

They keep walking. Jackson leaves, laughing.

BEN

One day I'm going to get him.

DARREN

There's nothing you can do.
He's got it all sewed up; he
can pound anybody.

Wolf changes the subject.

WOLF

Forget him. I think we should
get a new power source. Something
bigger than that penlight.

DARREN

(chuckles)

I can get one.

WOLF

What is it?

DARREN

Never mind. Catch you dudes later.

He runs away. Wolf looks after him.

WOLF

He's strange, but he's okay.

71 EXT. JUNIOR HIGH

71

Lori Swenson approaches, looking gorgeous, with two GIRLFRIENDS.

LORI
Do you guys always hang around together?

BEN
(self-conscious)
Hi, Lori.

She takes Ben aside. Wolf looks on curiously.

LORI
I'm having a party tomorrow night, and you're invited, okay?
He looks at Wolf.

BEN
Well, I... I don't know, I might be doing --

LORI
My house at seven. Don't be late.

She walks off with her girlfriends. She says something and they all laugh.

Wolf joins him as they continue across the schoolyard.

WOLF
What was that all about?

BEN
I can't believe it. I just got invited to a party by Lori Swenson.

WOLF
And what do they do at these parties?

BEN
I don't know. I've never been to one.

WOLF
Then I don't see why you're so excited.

Ben looks at Wolf, realizing he's hurt.

BEN
Don't worry about it. Maybe you'll get invited to the next one.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

WOLF

Me? Are you kidding? This kind of junk's happened to me my whole life. I don't want to go to that party at all, but why doesn't anyone ever invite me? Someday I'll win the Nobel Prize. Then they'll invite me to some parties.

Ben punches his shoulder.

BEN

Tag, you're it.

Ben runs away.

WOLF

Childish games.

Wolf runs after Ben anyway.

72 EXT. CITY - CREEK - SUNSET

72

The large, orange sun goes down over the city.

Small in the foreground, the ship sits in the creek, unnoticed by the people in the backyards around it.

73 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

73

That night, Ben and Darren crawl over the back fence and down into the creek.

They have knapsacks, Darren grunting under the weight of his. Ben checks a compass, flashlight, and binoculars in his as he walks.

Wolf pokes his head out of the ship.

WOLF

Everything's ready in here. Air tanks, harnesses, did you bring the helmets?

BEN

These were all I could find.

He holds up a MOTORCYCLE HELMET, a BICYCLE HEAD PROTECTOR, and a green U.S. Army HELMET.

(CONTINUED)

WOLF

(rolling his eyes)
Come on! You expect me to make history wearing something like that? Darren, did you bring the power source, a dry cell or something?

Darren puts down his knapsack and lifts out a CAR BATTERY.

DARREN

My Dad won't need it until tomorrow morning.

WOLF

Just a small one would have done. I don't know what the Traglosigkeit would do with this much voltage.

BEN

Let's find out!

DARREN

Calm down. Here, I swiped some beer so we can name it something.

BEN

Good idea.

Darren twists the top off a BOTTLE of BEER and takes a swig, a little too nonchalantly. He hands it to Ben, who tries to act equally cool, even though it's obviously his first drink; he takes a gulp and passes it on to Wolf. Wolf looks around as if he's afraid of getting caught, then upends the bottle for a second. They grin at each other, partners in crime.

Ben climbs up the side of the ship with the bottle and holds it poised over the nose.

BEN

Let's call her the Space Pirate!

WOLF

No, no! The Einstein! The Einstein!

DARREN

How about the Thunder Road?

They look at him.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED (2):

73

DARREN
(continuing;
embarrassed)
It's from a Bruce Springsteen
song.

BEN
That's a great name. I
christen thee the Thunder Road.

He breaks the bottle over the nose. Wolf ducks inside
to avoid getting covered with beer.

74 INT. SHIP

74

Ben and Darren crawl in after Wolf, shut the hatch,
and strap themselves to their seats.

Three yellow COMPRESSED AIR TANKS are bolted to the
inside wall, with air hoses attached to mouth pieces
dangling over the seats.

Wolf hooks up the Traglosigkeit to the car battery.

WOLF
I'm going to take it very easy
at first. Something might go
wrong and we could all get killed.

BEN
Stop talking about getting killed
all the time. The Troglodyte
is working, isn't it?

WOLF
But what if we get marooned in
Siberia or somewhere?

BEN
I brought some bologha sandwiches.

WOLF
What if the ship falls to pieces?

DARREN
She'll hold. She's a good ship.

BEN
You never get anything done if
you don't try.

WOLF
(sarcastic)
Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

Wolf takes a deep breath, sits back, and braces himself.

WOLF

(continuing)

We'll be able to talk briefly after the field is on, but breathe through those air hoses most of the time. We'll use up the oxygen in here pretty fast.

The three look at each other. Once again, they shake hands.

ALL

Blood.

They put on the scuba breathers and helmets, and sit back.

Wolf turns on the machine. The screen illuminates the cabin with an eerie, blue GLOW.

WOLF

Field on.

He flips a switch on the console in front of them.

75 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

75

With a CRACK!, the tips are snapped off the ship's fins as the invisible, spherical field blinks on around it, a little too close.

76 INT. SHIP

76

WOLF

Oops. Miscalculated. Field should be a little bigger.

He adjusts it. Ben looks at Darren and rolls his eyes skyward.

DARREN

My stomach feels weird. Like I'm underwater or something.

WOLF

That is because you have no mass. You're not being attracted by the Earth, or anything else.

Ben takes a QUARTER out of his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

It floats in the air. He begins tapping it back and forth between his hands.

BEN

Look at this.

WOLF

Please, Ben. We have more important things to do.

Ben stops the quarter and turns to look out the nearest porthole. The creek stretches away into the night.

WOLF

(continuing)

Here we go.

He types in some instructions.

77 EXT. CREEK

77

As portentous MUSIC begins to build, the ship slowly, quietly, lifts off the ground and floats upwards.

78 INT. SHIP

78

Ben looks out the window at the changing perspective.

Darren notices a loose bolt, reaches over and hand-tightens it.

Wolf's eyes are wide in fright, but he is obviously charged with excitement too.

79 EXT. CITY

79

The ship rises over the backyards and slows to a halt, hanging incongruously, thirty feet off the ground, silhouetted against the starry sky.

80 EXT. NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD

80

A DOG on a neighboring back porch looks up at the ship.

With a halo of moonlight, and the glow of the instruments inside, it looks a lot like a UFO.

The dog starts to whine.

(CONTINUED)

55.
80 CONTINUED: 80
It gets up, runs, and jumps against the yard fence,
barking at the ship in the air.

81 EXT. BACKYARD 81
In another yard, a smaller DOG wakes up, sees the
ship, and starts to howl.

82 EXT. THREE BACKYARDS - AERIAL VIEW 82
From the air we see three more backyards, all with
DOGS running in circles, going crazy, barking at
the ship. It's getting very noisy.

83 INT. SHIP 83
Inside the ship, the force field blocks all outside
sound. Darren looks out at the ground.
DARREN
Hey, look at all those dogs.

84 EXT. SHIP 84
We look down past the ship to see that all the back-
yards visible have barking dogs in them.
House lights start to blink on.

85 INT. SHIP 85
Darren turns to Wolf.
DARREN
People are coming out. Get
us out of here.
Wolf is typing furiously.
WOLF
I'm trying!
He punches a final button.

86 EXT. NEIGHBOR'S BACKYARD 86
The ship moves off sideways, floating across the
neighborhood.

(CONTINUED)

56.
86 CONTINUED: 86
A back door opens, and a MAN gives the first dog a whack with a newspaper for his trouble.

87 EXT. STREET 87
The ship floats slowly over the tops of houses and through the trees that line the street. We see down into backyards and through windows.

88 INT. PIDGELY'S HOUSE 88
Mr. Pidgely, the old man with Wolf's book, sits in his very neat living room, watching his color TV set.
The transmission is suddenly garbled, the picture skipping and colors flaring.

PIDGELY
Goddamn kids.
He gets up to adjust it.

89 EXT. HOUSE 89
The Thunder Road passes directly over the top of his house.

90 INT. SHIP (0
BEN
Watch out!
WOLF
What?

91 EXT. HOUSE 91
The ship snaps off the expensive TV ANTENNA and comes to a halt.

92 EXT. HOUSE 92
The TV POPS to blank with static as there is a CLATTER on the roof. Mr. Pidgely looks out his window.
He sees his antenna CRASH to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

PIDGELY
What in the name of --

He runs to the front door.

93 EXT. HOUSE

93

Mr. Pidgely runs out into his yard and looks up.
The large, black SHADOW floats above his house.

PIDGELY
Holy cow.

94 INT. SHIP

94

BEN
It's that guy! He sees us!

WOLF
Turn on the lights! Blind him!

Darren flips a switch, and reaches for the controls
to the exterior headlights.

95 EXT. HOUSE

95

The red and blue lights switch on, making them look
even more like a UFO.

Then the headlights FLARE, blasting a BLINDING LIGHT
on Mr. Pidgely, who stumbles backwards in surprise
and sits down directly in his FISH POND with a SPLASH.

96 INT. SHIP

96

BEN
Time to go.

Wolf is typing.

WOLF
Okay, okay.

He punches a control.

97 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD

97

The ship takes off, shooting across the city towards the DOWNTOWN SECTION, leaving Pidgely stunned, still sitting in his pond, watching the ship go.

98 INT. SHIP

98

WOLF

I think I'm getting the hang of this.

Ben is looking ahead.

BEN

Watch it.

99 EXT. CITY

99

Directly in their path lies a 15-story OFFICE BUILDING. We approach it with them quickly.

100 INT. SHIP

100

BEN

Stop! Stop it!

WOLF

I'm no good under pressure!

Darren lets out an excited rebel YELL that builds to:

101 EXT. BUILDING

101

The Thunder Road CRASHES directly through the side of the building, metal and glass SPLINTERING in all directions.

102 INT. OFFICE

102

A YOUNG EXECUTIVE who's been working late looks up from his desk. There is a large hole in his wall, and a spaceship with three figures visible through the portholes hovering above the plush carpet of his office.

EXECUTIVE

My God.

103 INT. SHIP

103

Wolf looks up from the controls.

WOLF

Did I stop in time?

Ben and Darren watch the executive.

BEN

What's he doing?

DARREN

Better get out of here.

104 INT. OFFICE

104

The Thunder Road backs out through the hole.

The executive picks up his PHONE.

EXECUTIVE

Get me the police.

105 INT. POLICE CAR

105

The same two POLICE from the previous night wait at a red light.

COP #1

Want to stop for coffee?

COP #2

No. I feel a little jumpy.

COP #3

(laughs)

You're afraid you're going to start seeing things again.

The Thunder Road ZIPS across the sky directly in their field of vision.

They look at each other.

COP #2

(triumphant)

How was that?

The first cop picks up the microphone.

(CCONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

COP #1
Hello, hello. This is Car
31. George, are you there?

106 EXT. CITY

106

The Thunder Road cruises over the city.

107 INT. SHIP

107

Wolf is typing at the console.

BEN
Let's get going.

DARREN
Yeah, let's see what she can
do.

WOLF
Calm down. I have to be able
to think straight to fly
this thing.

A blinding, white LIGHT suddenly shines in through
the side of the ship, startling them.

108 EXT. CITY

108

A POLICE HELICOPTER keeps pace alongside, shining a
spotlight at them.

109 INT. HELICOPTER

109

Two PILOTS look at the ship in wonder.

PILOT #1
What do we do now?

Their spotlight suddenly illuminates the interior
of the ship, revealing the three helmeted boys.

PILOT #2
What the hell? Those are
kids in there.

He picks up his MIKE, switches on the P.A. SYSTEM.

61.

110 EXT. CITY

110

The helicopter jockeys for position, the SPEAKER blaring.

PILOT #2 (O.S.)

You kids come out of there right now. You're in big trouble.

111 INT. SHIP

111

In the ship, everything is silent.

BEN

I think they're saying something.

WOLF

We'd better leave.

112 EXT. CITY

112

The spaceship pulls away, gaining speed.

PILOT #2

(over speaker)

Hey, come back here.

113 INT. SHIP

113

Wolf looks at the helicopter.

WOLF

Here's what it means to have no inertia.

114 EXT. CITY

114

With a triumphant BLAST of MUSIC, the Thunder Road executes three ninety-degree turns, shooting off toward the horizon, leaving the helicopter floundering.

115 INT. SHIP

115

WOLF

You'll notice we're not even cold. The Troglodyte insulates against everything.

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

He reads the figures on his video screen.

The landscape visible out the portholes is whipping by beneath them.

WOLF

(continuing)

This is ridiculous. We're traveling at ninety miles an hour and I'm not even using one hundredth of our possible power yet.

The figures on the screen verify this.

BEN

Shut up and go!

Peeved, Wolf presses a few console keys a little too fast.

116 EXT. SKY

116

MUSIC hits a CRESCENDO as the ship takes off like a bullet, shooting way over the horizon and out over the sea.

117 INT. SHIP

117

The three are staring out the window, speechless at how fast they are going.

BEN

Thanks.

DARREN

I couldn't even feel us speed up.

WOLF

No inertia. Now I'll gradually increase our speed from here on.

DARREN

How fast are we going?

WOLF

You don't want to know.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

A quick glance at the video screen shows astronomical figures in the VELOCITY readout column. The numbers in the POWER column still haven't reached the hundredths place to the right of the decimal point.

118 EXT. SKY

118

Two Air Force JETS cruise in the night sky.

119 INT. COCKPIT

119

The PILOT of one speaks to the other jet by radio, trading technical data. Their transmission starts to break up.

PILOT #1

I seem to be getting some interference.

The Thunder Road FLASHES by overhead. The other PILOT has seen it too.

PILOT #2 (O.S.)

What was that?

PILOT #1

I finally got me one! I'm going after it.

120 EXT. SKY

120

One jet takes off after the Thunder Road, rocketing away over the moonlit clouds.

121 INT. COCKPIT

121

The cockpit readouts show that the jet is approaching maximum speed.

Through the canopy we can see that he is slowly gaining on the spaceship.

PILOT #1

Come on. Come on.

122 INT. SHIP

122

Ben notices the jet out of the corner of his eye.

BEN

Hey, he wants to race.

WOLF

Poor guy.

DARREN

Slow down for a sec.

123 EXT. SKY

123

The Thunder Road drops back alongside the jet.

Darren salutes the pilot.

The spaceship blasts forward out of sight.

124 INT. SHIP

124

Wolf chuckles. He is becoming more adventurous,
proud of the invention.

125 EXT. SKY

125

The ship continues over the ocean, gaining speed.
A dot on LAND whips by beneath them and is gone.

126 INT. SHIP

126

BEN

What was that?

WOLF

Hawaii.

127 EXT. U.S. TRACKING BASE - HAWAII - NIGHT

127

The United States Aerospace Tracking Base on Kauai
sits among palms and sugar cane, the sound of the
OCEAN nearby.

128 INT. TRACKING BASE

128

A bored TECHNICIAN looks up as a red light blinks on
a radar console.

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

He watches the screen as a tiny BLIP skims across it in three seconds. He calls across the room to a SUPERIOR.

TECHNICIAN

Uh... Sir?

SUPERIOR

Yes, what is it?

The technician reconsiders. Nothing could be that fast.

TECHNICIAN

Nothing, Sir. Equipment malfunction.

129 INT. SHIP

129

Darren stares out the portholes.

DARREN

God, look at all the stars you can see from up here.

Wolf checks his watch.

WOLF

I think we run this risk of hitting an airplane down here. Maybe we can try going a little farther up.

130 EXT. SKY

130

Suddenly, the Thunder Road takes an unexpected ninety-degree turn and shoots UPWARD towards the SKY.

131 INT. SHIP

131

The Troglodyte is making a strange, TRILLING NOISE, one we've never heard before.

BEN

This is more than a little, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

WOLF

(shocked)
I didn't do that.

The computer readout is filling up with screen after screen of NUMBERS and FIGURES. Wolf's fingers aren't touching the keys.

BEN

What is it?

WOLF

(sweating)
I don't know.
(tries to type
in something;
panicking)
It won't respond to my
instructions.

132 EXT. SKY

132

The Thunder Road continues to blast upwards, through clouds.

133 INT. SHIP

133

BEN

(shouting)
What's it doing?

WOLF

(shouting)
I don't know, okay? It's
getting commands from somewhere
else!

BEN

(shouting)
From Earth? Where?!

WOLF

(screaming)
I don't know!

He starts to type frantically, entering commands.
His hands are trembling.

134 EXT. SKY

134

The ship clears the clouds and is shooting straight for the STARS.

135 INT. SHIP

135

All Wolf's commands are being answered by the words: "NO ACCESS".

BEN

(shouting)

Where are we going?

WOLF

(crazy)

Shut up! Let me concentrate!

He types in command after command, to which the computer always prints out: "NO ACCESS". Wolf punches the keyboard with his fist.

WOLF

(continuing)

Come on! Listen to me!

136 EXT. SKY

136

Looking back from the nose of the ship, we see the ground slipping farther and farther away, land masses, then continents becoming apparent as the ship gathers speed.

137 INT. SHIP

137

Darren looks at the other two in panic, realizing.

DARREN

We're going to die, aren't we?

Wolf yells in frustration, sweat pouring down his face.

138 EXT. SPACE

138

The ship rockets past us, out past the curvature of the Earth, into SPACE.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

The tip of the SUN peeks over the edge of the Earth, lighting the ship a brilliant white. The Earth is getting smaller.

139 INT. SHIP

139

DARREN

We're going to run out of air and die.

WOLF

Shut up! Both of you! What can I tell it? What can I tell it?

BEN

Tell it to go backwards!

WOLF

I already tried that!

BEN

Try it again!

WOLF

Okay, how about this!

He types: "REVERSE DIRECTIONAL ORIENTATION CONTROL."

The Troglodyte finally BEEPS.

140 EXT. SPACE

140

The Thunder Road REVERSES DIRECTION in mid-flight, plummeting towards the Earth, as fast as it was leaving it.

141 INT. SHIP

141

Wolf collapses against his straps, worn out.

WOLF

Ha! Ha! I tricked it. It thinks it's going in exactly the opposite direction it actually is.

BEN

What about the Earth?

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

Wolf realizes.

WOLF

Uh-oh.

142 EXT. SHIP

142

With the ship, we plummet down through the atmosphere, WHIP through the clouds, ROARING straight down to the surface, where we BLAST into the ocean.

143 EXT. OCEAN

143

The surface of the sea ERUPTS in a gigantic EXPLOSION of water.

144 EXT. OCEAN - UNDERWATER

144

The Thunder Road comes to a halt underwater.

145 INT. SHIP

145

The three sit, stunned, catching their breath. Wolf fumbles for the keyboard.

WOLF

(shakily)

Looks like we're under control again.

DARREN

(shakily)

Where are we?

He turns on the exterior floodlights, revealing the spooky world of the OCEAN FLOOR.

Suddenly a large SHARK shoots out of the darkness and swims directly into their faces.

ALL

Aaaaaaah!

146 EXT. OCEAN

146

The ship JUMPS out of the ocean, and speeds off over the horizon.

DISSOLVE TO:

147 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT

147

It is still night as the ship swoops down out of the sky, slows to a halt over the creek and settles down on its fins, on solid earth again.

The hatch SLAMS open and the three tumble out. They collapse on the ground, totally worn out. A cool breeze blows over them as they gradually simmer down.

Ben starts to chuckle, then laugh.

WOLF

What's so funny?

BEN

That was great! That was incredible! Next time --

WOLF

Listen, Ben. We need to be more scientific about this. I'm not getting in that thing again until we find out where it was getting those numbers, and run tests, hundreds and hundreds of tests --

BEN

You're chicken.

Wolf stands up shakily and walks away.

WOLF

I am not! It's just that using a scientific method is a lot smarter than suffocating to death or getting needlessly squished.

Ben looks back at the ship, then at Darren.

BEN

What about you? Do you want to go up again?

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

147

DARREN

Uh, not right away. That was
real dangerous up there.

Ben turns on both of them in frustration.

BEN

But we have our own spaceship!
Are you just going to let
it sit around and rust?

WOLF

Yes! Until we find out
exactly what happened up
there!

Wolf walks away. Darren walks away too, but turns
back to Ben.

DARREN

Sorry, man. I want to live.

He leaves.

Ben walks back to the Thunder Road, and stands a
second. He KICKS it, and hurts his toe.

DISSOLVE TO:

148 INT. WOLF'S KITCHEN - MORNING

148

Wolf tramps downstairs wearily to his family's break-
fast. The other four kids and his father are already
sitting around the table as his mother serves them.

One kid shoots a grapefruit seed at a smaller one
with his spoon.

MRS. MILLER

Johann! Keep your projectiles
to yourself.

Wolf sits. His father is reading the newspaper,
his glasses pushed up onto his forehead.

MR. MILLER

There was quite a lot of
activity in this town last
night.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED:

148

MR. MILLER (cont'd)

A businessman claims a meteor struck his office building and then dissolved into thin air. There were numerous reports of UFO sightings, confirmed by a report from a police helicopter.

A thought occurs to him.

MR. MILLER

(continuing;
joking)

Wolfgang, you have had nothing to do with this, have you?

Wolf chokes on his orange juice.

WOLF

No, Father.

MR. MILLER

(absent-mindedly)

Good.

Mrs. Miller checks Wolf's face, pinching his cheek.

MRS. MILLER

Your color is not good. You should try to get more sleep.

149 EXT. STREET

149

Ben and Wolf walk along the sidewalk on their way to school, looking very zombie-ish from lack of sleep.

Older, high school KIDS around them are all talking about the UFO last night. Snatches of conversation are heard as they walk past.

HIGH SCHOOL KID #1

...Everybody saw it. I was talking to Pete last night on the phone and we both looked out our windows...

(CONTINUED)

149 CONTINUED:

149

GIRL #1

... That UFO? It blew up
a building downtown...

HIGH SCHOOL KID #2

... right over our backyard.
I tried to signal it with
my flashlight, but I guess
it didn't see me....

Steve Jackson strides past with his friends.

STEVE

It was huge, man, fifty feet
across, with lights flashing
all over it, must have been
doing a hundred and twenty
easy.

Ben and Wolf look at each other and share a secret
smile. These high school kids aren't so hot.

Wolf's attention is drawn to a front yard and Ben
turns to look. Mr. Pidgely is fishing several
dead CARP out of his pond, and mumbling to himself.
He shades his eyes and checks the sky nervously.

Ben and Wolf exchange a look of regret. Wolf shrugs.

150 EXT. SCHOOLYARD

150

Walking through the schoolyard, Ben looks around at
the kids running across the grass to the school
wings.

BEN

But this is so boring!
How can you not want to go
back up again?

WOLF

I told you, not until it's
been scientifically proven
safe!

Ben has had enough of this. He grabs Wolf by the
front of his shirt and pulls him close.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

BEN

(impassioned)

Listen. Don't you realize what's going on here? There's something out there that we don't know anything about, and we can't just sit here on Earth in... in...

(with revulsion)

school and let it go unexplained. We can't!

Wolf shakes his hand off and frowns at him.

BEN

(continuing)

I mean, maybe this is it! Maybe this is something that will last us the rest of our lives! Don't you see? If we grow up knowing that we could have gone up there and done something and we didn't...

(sudden resolve)

We have to! Who cares if we get killed!

WOLF

(changing the subject)

I don't see why you're so bored. You've got that party to go to tonight.

(does an imitation of lovesick Ben)

Lori Swenson! Lori Swenson! She's the ^{most} gorgeous thing I've seen in my entire life.

Ben looks at him a second, realizing how much Wolf wants to go.

BEN

You want to come along?

Wolf glances up, surprised.

WOLF

No. Definitely not.

151 INT. LORI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

151

Ben and Wolf sit on a couch at Lori's party. They have never been more out of place. The boys around them wear designer jeans and shirts, some with silver chains around their necks. The girls are expertly coiffured and made up, much too mature before their time. The lights are dim and intimate. Six kids are sitting on the floor playing Spin the Bottle, the couples going into a dark hallway off the living room.

The dance music of "Missing Persons" plays on the stereo.

Ben and Wolf sit silently, awkwardly, watching the kids talk around them. Lori enters with a tray of hors d'oeuvres.

She looks over the party until she sees a good-looking, mature boy, JERRY. She makes sure to walk past him and give him a cold shoulder.

LORI

Oh, hi, Jerry.

JERRY

Lori, I have to talk to you.

She brushes past him and sits on the couch next to Ben.

LORI

Hi Ben! God I'm glad you made it. I'm really glad to see you.

BEN

Really? But I saw you in school today --

LORI

I know, but you can't really talk at school, can you?

She glances back over at Jerry to see if he's watching. He is.

She takes Ben's hand.

LORI

(continuing)

Hey, you want to play that bottle game? My Mom told me she used to play it and I knew I had to have it at my party. You want to try?

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

Ben looks at Wolf. Wolf looks up at the ceiling in disgust.

BEN
Okay.

LORI
Come on.

Lori pulls him up off the couch and they join the circle of kids on the floor.

Two boys and a girl sit next to Wolf on the couch.

BOY #1
Hey, Andrea, did you hear
about the guy who had a dog
without any legs?

GIRL
What?

BOY #1
Every Sunday he'd take it out
for a drag.

GIRL
That's the stupidest joke.

WOLF
I know a joke.

They all look at him.

WOLF
(continuing)
Um. I forget the details,
but the gist of it is, there's
this guy who has some sort
of sexual problem --

GIRL
Oh gross.

The kids turn to each other and leave.

BOY
(under his breath)
Who invited him?

Wolf hears him. He looks around, and starts playing
a game on his DIGITAL WATCH.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED (2):

151

ANGLE ON FLOOR

It is Lori's turn to spin the bottle.

LORI
My turn, my turn.

She spins it, bumping it so it lands on Ben.

LORI
(continuing)
Okay, Ben, come on.

She grabs his hand and pulls him into the darkened hallway. She makes sure that they can both be seen by Jerry, who is getting upset across the living room.

LORI
(continuing)
All right.

She closes her eyes and opens her mouth slightly, ready to be kissed. Ben looks around, embarrassed.

BEN
Uh, wait a minute, Lori.

LORI
What?

BEN
I don't feel right.

LORI
You feel sick?

BEN
No, I just can't.

LORI
Come on.

She leans forward to kiss him, but he turns his head.

BEN
This is too weird.

LORI
Well how do you think that makes me feel?

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED (3):

151

She backs away, crossing her arms.

LORI

(continuing)

God, how embarrassing. I've never been so humiliated.

She walks angrily across the living room, past Jerry, and out the door. Jerry follows her.

JERRY

Hey, Lori, wait up.

152 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

152

Ben and Wolf walk home in the dark, moving in and out of pools of light created by the streetlights.

BEN

I'm going to kill myself.

WOLF

Oh, take it easy. She was looking at that other guy all night.

BEN

What's the matter with me? I haven't grown at all in the last three months. My hormones are broken. I'm going to be a wimp all my life.

WOLF

What are you complaining about? No one would even talk to me. I hit 500 on my Martian Wars Watch.

BEN

Not only am I a total wimp, but I'm trapped on this stupid planet, all because you're too chicken to fly again.

WOLF

(angry)

Chicken? You're suicidal!

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED:

152

Ben walks away toward his house.

BEN

(shouting)

See if I ever invite you to
a party again!

WOLF

(shouting)

See if I ever talk to you again!

DISSOLVE TO:

153 INT. WOLF'S LAB

153

Ben, Darren and Wolf are sprawled around Wolf's lab,
reading comic books. The Traglosigkeit sits on the
table, silent.

Ben looks up at Wolf, frustrated.

BEN

Couldn't we at least turn
it on?

Wolf glances at him, pointedly not talking. Ben gets
up and walks to the table.

BEN

(continuing)

Okay, if you won't --

WOLF

Don't touch it!

Ben flips the power switch ON.

Wolf jumps up and runs to the table. The readout
screen is blank.

WOLF

(continuing)

If you've broken it, I'll
kill you.

BEN

It's not doing anything.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

153

Wolf tries to type in an instruction. The screen remains blank. A strange HUMMING becomes audible.

WOLF

You broke it. You broke it.

BEN

It's still making noise,
isn't it?

As the three boys stare at the blank screen, we DOLLY down to the floor under the table. Accompanied by faint, threatening MUSIC, a thin CRACK starts to form in the cement.

A small CREAK issues from the floor.

Ben hears it and looks down.

BEN

(continuing)

Oh my God.

Darren and Wolf turn and look.

The crack is three inches wide and growing. The floor is covered with hairline cracks extending from the first one.

With a CRASH, a large chunk of the floor FALLS AWAY, into darkness below.

WOLF

(speechless)

What... what is this?

DARREN

Look out!

Darren grabs the Traglosigkeit in his arms as the table slants suddenly. A section of the floor gives way, and the table DROPS out of sight!

BEN

Let's get out of here!

They start for the stairs. With a BURST OF MUSIC, the floor in front of them COLLAPSES, leaving nothing but a black abyss below.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED (2):

153

The COUCH and the REFRIGERATOR CRASH down through the crumbling cement,--and are gone.--Wolf calls upstairs.

WOLF

Help!

The boys leap against the walls, Darren dropping the Traglosigkeit. They hang from the bookshelves as the last of the floor falls away.

BEN

Look!

Below their dangling feet, the tumbling couch, refrigerator, and Traglosigkeit can be seen disappearing down into the vast reaches of SPACE, filled with brilliant CONSTELLATIONS and NEBULAS, flaring STARS, a COMET SHOWER shooting across.

Hanging large below them lies the MOON.

The shelf cracks!

WOLF

Aah!

It gives way, and the boys fall.

154 EXT. SPACE

154

As MUSIC CRESCENDOS, the three boys fall through space, past comets and stars, towards the moon.

Within seconds we have reached the moon's surface, plummeting towards it.

We RUSH downwards, faster and faster, a ROARING SOUND building until:

155 INT. DARREN'S BEDROOM

155

Darren wakes up with a JOLT!

156 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

156

Ben SHOUTS as he wakes up!

157 INT. WOLF'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

157

Wolf sits up in bed, breathing heavily. He looks around, realizing where he is.

WOLF
(shakily)
Thank God.

He runs to the radio, but the signal light is already flashing. Wolf switches on the radio.

158 INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

158

Ben is already out of bed. He whispers excitedly into the microphone.

BEN
We have to go to the moon!

159 INT. WOLF'S BEDROOM

159

Wolf sits down on his bed, bewildered; they've both had the same dream.

WOLF
I know. I know.

160 INT. DARREN'S BEDROOM

160

Darren gets out of bed, walks to the window, and looks out.

The full moon shines above, beautiful and mysterious.

- 161 INT. BEN'S ROOM - NIGHT 161
- With a RUSH of MUSIC, Ben runs around his room, stuffing things into a knapsack.
- He takes a DICTIONARY, a DESK ENCYCLOPEDIA, some LEATHER GLOVES, a COLLAPSIBLE CUP, and a HARMONICA.
- 162 INT. WOLF'S HALLWAY 162
- As the MUSIC builds, Wolf crawls on his stomach, commando-style, past his parents open bedroom door.
- 163 INT. DARREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 163
- Darren puts a Sagittarius medallion on a silver chain around his neck. He looks in the mirror, and rubs a BRUISE on his cheek. He turns out the light.
- 164 INT. BEN'S KITCHEN 164
- In the moonlight, Ben puts a note on the kitchen table.
- It reads: "Dear Mom and Dad, I left for school early. Goodbye, Ben"
- He practically runs out the door.
- 165 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 165
- MUSIC continues to build as Darren speeds down the moonlit street on a SKATEBOARD, jumping it up over curbs with excitement.
- 166 EXT. WOLF'S BACKYARD - NIGHT 166
- Wolf slips on the wet grass in his backyard in his mad rush to get down to the ship without his parents waking up.
- 167 EXT. CREEK - NIGHT 167
- Ben rides down into the creek on his bike, throwing back his head in the wind as he approaches the launch site.

168 EXT. CREEK

168

The MUSIC climaxes as the boys' silhouettes meet next to the ship under a gigantic, brilliant moon; Darren crawls down into the creek to join Ben and Wolf, who are standing by the Thunder Road, helmets in hand.

DARREN

Ready to go?

BEN

Yep. I brought new air tanks out of our garage. Hey, what happened to your face?

Darren has a bruise on one cheek.

DARREN

Ah, my Dad got mad about the battery and the beer and stuff.

BEN

He hit you?

DARREN

He doesn't mean to. He just flies off the handle once in awhile. I think I look a lot like my Mom, which doesn't help things.

Darren sits on a pile of rope.

DARREN

(continuing)

Sometimes I hate him. I just can't stand him, and he's taking all this stuff out on me that I never have anything to do with anyway. He tells me I'm stupid all the time, and those dumb teachers want to know what my problem is.

He stands, walks to the Thunder Road, and rests his hand on it.

DARREN

(continuing)

Let's get out of here. Let's not come back.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED:

168

BEN

I'm with you. I'm bored when I'm home, and at school Lori Swenson's going to tell everyone I'm a wimp. Let's go.

Darren leads the way up into the ship. Ben follows. Wolf hangs back.

WOLF

I still think we should talk about this. We don't know what we're doing.

BEN

What is it with you? We all have the same dream. We're obviously supposed to go to the moon, and you still don't want to go?

WOLF

Maybe it's all coincidence.

BEN

You know, for a mentally gifted minor sometimes you're a real doofus.

Wolf shrugs and joins them.

WOLF

I'm just thinking of all the possibilities. What if they want to eat us --

(gets disgusted
look on face)

or...inject us with larvae that'll digest us from the inside. We don't even know who they are, or what they look like.

Darren opens the hatch. Considering what Wolf's just said, he turns to look into the darkened ship. A thin shaft of moonlight illuminates the interior with an unearthly light. Shivering, he starts to climb in.

Suddenly, a tiny FIGURE with a GROTESQUE face JUMPS onto his back, grabbing at him with large CLAWS.

(CONTINUED)

FIGURE

Aaaaaaah!

DARREN

Shit!

Darren wrestles it away, and stops as the figure starts to giggle. It pulls off its mask with its rubber claws. It is LUDWIG MILLER, Wolf's six-year-old brother.

WOLF

Ludwig, I'm going to kill you.
You go back to bed right now.

LUDWIG

What are you playing? This
spaceship's bitchen'.

WOLF

Yeah, we made it and it's ours,
so go inside.

LUDWIG

I want to play too. I'll wake
up Mom. You're not supposed
to be in the creek.

Wolf looks at the others, worried.

WOLF

I'll let you play with my Martian
Mars Watch.

LUDWIG

No, I want to play with you
guys.

Darren takes Ludwig aside.

DARREN

I'll give you an Indian burn.

LUDWIG

I'll scream and Mom will come
out anyway.

BEN

Ludwig, can you keep a secret?

LUDWIG

Sure.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED (3):

168

BEN

Well, that's a real spaceship,
and we're really going up there
tonight, and nobody's supposed
to know, 'cause if they did,
they'd try to stop us.

Ludwig looks around at the three earnest faces.

LUDWIG

I want to go too.

The three look at each other, at a loss, when suddenly
a light comes on in the house and Wolf's mother calls.

WOLF'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Wolfgang! Are you out there?

WOLF

Quick, hide!

They jump into the ivy at the side of the creek,
Ludwig playing along.

WOLF

(continuing)

Ludwig, you want to do us the
biggest favor you've ever done
anyone in your whole life?

LUDWIG

What is it?

WOLF

Go up there and tell Mom that
you saw me, and I'm coming in,
just to give us time to blast
off. It'll be your secret
mission.

Ludwig likes it.

LUDWIG

Okay, if I can play Martian
Wars.

WOLF

(gives him the watch)

Sure. And remember, if you tell
her what's really going on,
they'll probably spank you for
lying anyway. Danke schon.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED (4):

168

LUDWIG

Bitte.

He climbs up the rope to the fence and disappears.

BEN

Whew! Let's go!

They board the ship.

169 INT. SHIP - NIGHT

169

Ben pulls the hatch shut behind him.

They strap into their seats, put on their helmets, and sit back, ready.

Things are much more serious this time than they were the first trip.

Wolf looks back at the others.

WOLF

Here we go.

He turns on the Traglosigkeit.

170 EXT. CREEK

170

The high, keening NOISE fills the air. The ship stands, a shadow in the moonlight.

Slowly, the tips of the fins leave the ground.

171 EXT. CITY

171

With adventurous MUSIC, the city falls away as the ship ZOOMS PAST US, a blur of speed.

172 INT. WOLF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

172

Ludwig looks out his window at the retreating ship in the sky.

LUDWIG

Mom! Mom!

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

172

Mrs. Miller opens the door. She looks tired.

MRS. MILLER
What is it?

LUDWIG
Uh, they... the... um. Can I
have a glass of water?

173 EXT. SPACE

173

The STARS of the galaxy open up before us, as the
Thunder Road roars toward them, blasting into a point
of light.

174 INT. SHIP

174

The velocity figures on the TV screen keep increasing.

WOLF
Don't look directly at the sun.
We should have thought to bring
protective glasses.

DARREN
You know it takes the light from
the sun eight seconds to reach
Earth?

WOLF
(laughs)
Eight seconds? Try eight
minutes.

DARREN
That's what I meant. Eight
minutes.

He looks out the window, feeling dumb again. Ben sees
this, and tries to change the subject. He stares out
at the stars.

BEN
What's up there? Who's waiting
for us?

175 EXT. SPACE

175

The ship continues toward the moon, which grows steadily bigger in its path.

176 INT. SHIP

176

The three look out their windows at it.

WOLF

Normally, of course, NASA has to plot their trajectories to hit the moon in its orbit precisely, but we're travelling so fast I can just sort of aim for it.

DARREN

How much time do we have left on those air tanks?

BEN

How about it, Wolf?

WOLF

We are travelling at six hundred thousand miles per hour.

BEN

The moon is what... two hundred forty thousand miles from Earth?

(checks his watch,
nonchalantly)

We'll make it.

177 EXT. SPACE

177

The moon looms very large in their path, its scarred surface coming into crystal-clear focus.

DISSOLVE TO:

The Thunder Road starts as a tiny point in the lunar sky and swoops down, shooting across the horizon as it goes into orbit.

It barely misses a mountain top.

178 INT. SHIP

178

The trio is recovering from the near miss.

BEN

Could you go easy on those turns?

WOLF

Sorry. I was trying for that part of the Moon we were aimed at in the dream.

He checks his readout.

WOLF

(continuing)

I didn't even get to test our maximum speed.

DARREN

(looking out window)

Wow!

The MOUNTAINS of the moon swing by below.

179 EXT. MOON

179

The ship flies down into a large flat area, ringed by craggy lunar MOUNTAINS.

180 INT. SHIP

180

The three stare out the window in awe.

WOLF

Here it is. "Oceanus Procellarum."
They used to think this was an ocean.

181 EXT. MOON

181

The ship skims over the cracked surface, the stark mountains rising into the pitch-black sky on all sides.

The ship slows to a halt.

182 INT. SHIP

182

Ben looks out through the windows, excited.

BEN

Okay, we're here. What happens now?

Wolf shakes his head. Suddenly, the Troglodyte starts to make the strange TRILLING NOISE it made during the first flight.

WOLF

Oh boy. Look at this.

Figures and numbers are flashing across the screen at an incredible rate.

The ship starts to move by itself.

WOLF

(continuing)

Here we go again!

183 EXT. MOON

183

With an ominous CHORD, the Thunder Road floats up, away from the moon's surface.

184 EXT. SPACE

184

The ship slows to a halt, pointed out away from Earth.

185 INT. SHIP

185

An eerie HUM is building in pitch and volume inside the Thunder Road, as the force field begins to VIBRATE.

Darren puts his hand on the hull. He re-tightens the loose bolt, which is unwinding with the vibrations that are making the ship BUZZ.

Wolf is looking at a COLUMN of NUMBERS that are rapidly counting down to zero.

BEN

What is it? What's happening?

WOLF

(excited)

I think I know. Here it comes.

(CONTINUED)

185 CONTINUED:

185

The HUM builds to a deafening ROAR.

The numbers reach ZERO.

186 EXT. SPACE

186

The ship explodes into a bullet of LIGHT, and blasts forward, disappearing into the stars of the universe.

187 EXT. HYPERSPACE

187

The tiny ship leaves a trail of light as it plunges through the fantastic, elongated, almost two-dimensional universe of HYPERSPACE.

188 INT. SHIP

188

The three sit, dazed.

DARREN

(quietly)

What... is going on?

BEN

(too excited)

It's a warp! That's what it is, isn't it? It's warp, isn't it? A warp?

WOLF

I think so, yes.

BEN

I knew it was a warp.

WOLF

I think they had to get us up here away from the Earth to use it.

DARREN

So where are we going now?

Wolf looks at him. He has nothing to say.

189 EXT. HYPERSPACE

189

The boys are staring out their windows at the SPECTRAL COLORS and NEBULAS of LIGHT around them.

(CONTINUED)

189 CONTINUED:

189

Suddenly, the whole hyperspace universe seems to TILT on its edge, and the ship passes through it, like a barrier.

190 EXT. SPACE

190

The streak of light FLASHES out of nowhere and comes to a halt; the ship is back in normal space.

With an OMINOUS CHORD, we slowly fly up and over it, leaving it very small compared to a monstrous PLANET. Mysterious CLOUD FORMATIONS cover most of it, with hints of BLUE and DARK GREEN showing through.

191 INT. SHIP

191

The boys look down.

DARREN

Where are we? What planet is that?

WOLF

I think we're about to find out.

192 EXT. SPACE

192

The ship drops from orbit and falls toward the planet's surface.

We follow it down into thick CLOUDS, until everything is dark and mysterious. As we begin to pass through fantastic glowing cloud formations, falling down and down, beautiful, shimmering MUSIC starts to build, as if we are entering into a dream.

193 INT. SHIP

193

Ben presses his face against the porthole.

BEN

I can't see anything!

WOLF

Will you calm down? You're making me nervous.

194 EXT. PLANET

194

Out of the clouds, the ship falls and falls. Suddenly, with a bump, it comes to rest on solid ground.

The terrain is completely obscured by fog. The sun appears to be setting.

195 INT. SHIP

195

The three look at each other.

DARREN

Now what?

BEN

Get out! Let's get out and explore!

WOLF

No way. I'm not turning off this field.

The field turns off by itself.

Wolf looks up, a little panicky. A slight WIND ruffles their hair.

Darren starts to take off his mask. Wolf stops him.

WOLF

(continuing)

Wait. Let me.

He takes a quick breath of the strange air.

WOLF

(continuing)

Pretty good. Plenty of oxygen. Stinks a little.

They take off their breather masks and unstrap themselves.

Ben reaches for the hatch. They look at each other, and extend their hands in the secret handshake.

ALL

Blood.

WOLF

I wish we hadn't chosen that word.

(CONTINUED)

195 CONTINUED:

195

Ben opens the hatch. All they can see is the fog.

Accompanied by portentous MUSIC, we move out the door with them as they climb down to the foreign ground.

196 EXT. PLANET

196

Ben, the first out, looks down at his tennis shoe as it touches unearthly soil for the first time.

BEN
(reverent)

Wow!

The terrain is rough and hilly, a tangle of WEIRD FOLIAGE. Bizarre PLANTS grow out of cracks in ROCKS, some as tall as twenty feet high, making an eerie MOANING sound in the light breeze. Small RUSTLINGS and TICKINGS in the underbrush hint at mysterious ANIMALS scuttling away.

It is almost SUNSET, and the clouds visible through the low-flying ground fog GLOW with the final RAYS of the sun.

Ben is in heaven.

BEN
(continuing; hushed tones)

Perfect.

A glint of METAL on the ground catches his eye, and he runs over to investigate. It is a strange, crumpled CONTAINER, old and cracked.

BEN
(continuing)
An artifact!

WOLF
Uh, Ben.

Wolf is standing by a huge pile of the containers, all used and empty.

WOLF
(continuing)
Look there! And there!

(CONTINUED)

196 CONTINUED:

196

He runs a short way, pointing at large pieces of BROKEN MACHINERY that litter the landscape. What we took to be hills upon landing, are actually large piles of twisted, rusted METAL OBJECTS.

WOLF
(continuing)

Here, help me with this.

He tries to turn over a large piece of SHEET METAL, and Ben helps him.

ANGLE ON SHIP.

Darren has stayed by the ship, and stares out into the mist suspiciously. He realizes that he can't see or hear Ben or Wolf.

DARREN
(whispers)
Hey you guys!

There is no answer. He squints into the fog.

DARREN
(continuing;
whispers)
Ben?

Everything is quiet.

Suddenly a large stand of plants near him is FLATTENED with a CRASH! He dives for cover as a MONSTROUS SHAPE strides past, a huge shadow in the darkening fog.

It BELLOWS, and Darren covers his ears at the volume.

ANGLE ON BEN AND WOLF

The piece of sheet metal lifts up, and Wolf and Ben peer out, scared. They've obviously heard it too.

They crawl out and race back toward the ship.

ANGLE ON SHIP

They arrive at the ship. Darren is nowhere in sight.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

(whispers)

Darren? Darren?

A hand clamps onto his shoulder.

DARREN

Yeah?

Ben jumps, scared.

DARREN

(continuing)

We've got to get out of here.
That thing is huge.

WOLF

Let's go. I don't want to be
stuck here for the rest of my
life.

BEN

Are you kidding? We don't know
anything yet.

Suddenly, out of the mist comes a faint high-pitched
WHISTLE, beautiful and clear, as if calling them.

Ben freezes and looks up.

Darren and Wolf have heard it too.

WOLF

Where did that come from?

DARREN

Out there.

He points.

We look out over the fog-shrouded hillocks. There is
a faint, fast "tip-tap" of something approaching.

BEN

Something's coming.

WOLF

(whispers)

Let's hide.

BEN

No, we should meet them --

(CONTINUED)

DARREN

(whispers)

Let's see what it is first.

Wolf and Darren drag Ben down into the bushes.

The running SOUNDS come nearer.

The kids peer through the weeds.

With a BURST of MUSIC, a FIGURE runs into the clearing next to the ships. It is as tall as the boys, but more delicate. Its face has sharp features, with two bright little eyes. All its movements are very quick, suggesting great intelligence.

Ben gasps in astonishment.

The BEING stops in front of the spaceship, staring up at it in surprise and curiosity.

Before Darren or Wolf can ^{stop} him, Ben stands up.

BEN

Hi.

The Being turns quickly, and stares at him. Slowly, it walks forwards, a curious, unreadable expression on its face. It stops close. Ben stands, eyes wide in wonder.

Suddenly, the Being lets out a high-pitched, CHUCKLING SOUND, and makes small STAMPING movements on the ground with its feet: a victory dance.

BEN

(continuing;
whispers)

Wow... wow.

It reaches out a slender HAND and tentatively lays it on Ben's cheek. A high, HUMMING SOUND fills Ben's ears, and a faint ECHO, as if someone far away were calling him. The Being's mouth does not move.

Ben closes his ^{eyes} and concentrates. The humming becomes louder. ^{the}

BEING (V.O.)

(echoing; distant)

Hhh11111mmmmmmmmhhhhmmmmmmmm.

Ben jerks away, surprised.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

It's trying to talk to me, in
my mind!

He closes his eyes, concentrating harder, and a WORD
becomes instantly clear.

BEING (V.O.)

Hello.

Ben's eyes spring open, and he moves his face closer
to the Being, staring.

BEN

(whispers)

I don't know if you can understand
me, but this is the most important
moment in my whole life.

Wolf and Darren stand up, and the Being looks around,
surprised. The words begin again.

BEING (V.O.)

We're glad you came.

They gather closer.

BEN

You sent the dreams!

WOLF

How? How did he do it?

BEN

(to Being)

How?

The Being looks at Wolf.

BEING (V.O.)

Simple. We --

Suddenly, the huge creature's haunting, echoing BELLOW
SOUNDS from the distance.

BEING (V.O.)

(continuing)

There's no time. Follow me!

(CONTINUED)

196 CONTINUED (5):

196

It runs a few steps, beckons to them, and scurries off into the underbrush. Surprised, they follow it, running to keep up with its long-legged bird-like gait. A MUFFLED POUNDING reaches their ears, along with the SOUNDS of the immense plants being crushed.

Darren looks back over his shoulder. His gaze goes up, and up, and up.

DARREN

Oh my God.

ANGLE ON SKY

Silhouetted against the glowing clouds is the towering, monstrous CREATURE. Fifteen feet high, its shadowy shape is obscured by the mist, its gigantic limbs trampling foliage as it moves over the landscape. It turns its head, as if searching, and lets loose the hideous BELLOW again.

ANGLE ON KIDS

Darren runs like hell, passing Wolf and Ben.

They look back.

They speed up too.

197 EXT. CLEARING

197

The Being leads them into a small clearing, surrounded by tree-like plants that hang low. A STREAM runs through the center of it. A CLOUD blows away, revealing the last colors of sunset in the sky, illuminating the clearing with an unearthly beauty.

A disturbed FLYING CREATURE swoops off a branch and flaps away through the plants, CROAKING. A small SWIMMING CREATURE jumps out of the creek and SPLASHES back into the water.

At the side of the clearing, propped up in a cleft in a sunken hollow, is a small intelligently designed STRUCTURE, that blends in with its surroundings. Odd GLOWING and FLASHING lights shine out of a portal in its front wall, lighting up the surrounding foliage.

The Being runs up and grabs Ben's hand.

(CONTINUED)

197 CONTINUED:

197

BEING (V.O.)
In there. Hide!

BEN
(to the others)
Come on.

Ben runs in and the rest follow.

The portal shuts, cutting off the light.

198 INT. STRUCTURE

198

It is a small room. Tons of glowing bizarre MACHINES, and POWER SOURCES are patched together, the room alive with their LIGHTS, everything in a strange, unearthly technology.

Wolf is in heaven, mouth open.

A chair turns around, and reveals a SMALL BEING who is obviously responsible for all this.

WOLF
I think I'm going to like this
guy.

Out of the shadows steps a third BEING, a female. Ben stares at her, until she looks at him and he looks away, embarrassed.

The first Being hits a control that turns off the lights, motions for them all to crouch on the floor, and vocally SPEAKS to the other Beings in a strange LANGUAGE.

As they listen for the huge creature outside, Ben looks at the female Being kneeling next to him. She is beautiful in an exotic, feline way. Her large eyes are fascinating, dilating in the darkened room.

She looks at him, and curiously reaches out to touch his clothes.

FEMALE BEING (V.O.)
Hi.

Ben starts to answer, when she puts a finger to his lips and looks up at the window.

(CONTINUED)

The RUMBLING of the huge creature nears the structure, and stops outside the door. The boys and the Beings crouch against the walls, as the SILHOUETTE of the creature's head blocks out the light at the window.

There is the SOUND of deep BREATHING as the large head moves from side to side, trying to see in.

With a SNORT, it leaves.

ANGLE ON SMALL BEING

The small Being runs over and looks at Wolf. The words form in Wolf's mind.

SMALL BEING (V.O.)

Hi. We're safe now.

Wolf stares at it, and points out the window.

WOLF

What was that?

SMALL BEING (V.O.)

Trouble. It's gone now. Don't worry.

Wolf points to the equipment.

WOLF

You sent the dreams with this?

The Being smiles, proud. It points to a particular INSTRUMENT.

SMALL BEING (V.O.)

Yes.

Wolf looks at the others.

WOLF

This guy's smart.

BEN

Who are you?

BEING (V.O.)

I am Pinn. And this is Wak.

(CONTINUED)

SMALL BEING ("Wak") (V.O.)

Hi.

PINN (V.O.)

This is my sister... Neek.

She stares at Ben, and gives him a little smile.

BEN

(nervous)

Hi.

Wak notices the exchanged look, and SPEAKS to Neek in their language, obviously making fun of her by his inflection. She responds with a short, sharp sentence telling him to mind his own business.

WOLF

What is the name of your people,
your race?

PINN (V.O.)

We are --

He makes an unintelligible SPOKEN SOUND.

WOLF

What?

He repeats it.

DARREN

Sounds like "stringbeans." Why
didn't you stringbeans come to
Earth?

PINN (V.O.)

Too dangerous.

Darren mulls this over.

DARREN

Hey... what about us?

ANGLE ON WOLF

Wolf has been eyeing the banks of equipment. He takes Wak's arm and pulls him over.

WOLF

What's this here?

(CONTINUED)

WAK (V.O.)

Power booster.

WOLF

And this?

WAK (V.O.)

Wave modification.

WOLF

How about these?

WAK (V.O.)

Food.

He eats one of the indicated objects and offers one to Wolf, who gets a slight shock from it, like static electricity. They continue around the room.

Pinn turns to Darren.

PINN (V.O.)

Try this.

He puts a small CAP on Darren's head, and presses a switch on it. Two small SPHERES detach from the cap and start to float around Darren's head faster and faster, producing eerie, rhythmic SOUNDS, and GLOWING different colors.

DARREN

What... what is it?

PINN (V.O.)

Music.

DARREN

(not convinced)

Oh.

Ben has been watching all this, when he becomes aware that Neek is standing beside him.

He points to a large pile of MACHINES and DEVICES in a corner.

BEN

What are all these?

She glances out the window.

(CONTINUED)

198 CONTINUED (4):

198

NEEK (V.O.)

It is safe outside now.

~~It is~~ (to everyone)

Come... we show you.

She goes to the pile and grabs an armload, and they all exit.

199 EXT. PLANET

199

As strange, magical MUSIC begins, the Beings start to show off their machines to the Earth kids, on the weird landscape lit by the soft light of MULTIPLE MOONS.

They all reach a large, flat area surrounded by plants. Pinn sits down and straps a pair of flat, circular OBJECTS to the bottoms of his feet. He motions for Darren to do the same, reaches over and adjusts a CONTROL on each device.

PINN (V.O.)

Watch.

Pinn stands, and jumps. Each time he hits the ground, he BOUNCES a little higher. Soon he is bouncing TEN FEET in the air.

Darren tries it. In seconds he is bouncing as high as Pinn.

PINN (V.O.)

(continuing)

Be careful. This is dangerous.

He bounces across the field, and Darren follows him, as the rest of the kids watch.

Pinn takes out a small SPHERE, and bounces it to Darren.

PINN (V.O.)

(continuing)

Rules. Must catch on the first bounce.

They bounce the ball back and forth, leaping higher and higher into the air.

(CONTINUED)

199 CONTINUED:

199

Wak presses a small REMOTE CONTROL, and a small, 12-inch long FLYING MACHINE comes screaming out of the darkness, passing directly over his head. He grabs for a handle on the underside of it, is YANKED off his feet, and PULLED UP into the air, SOARING along ten feet above the ground.

He laughs excitedly, and throws a handful of strange FIRECRACKERS down at the ground, where they EXPLODE silently on impact, producing a RAINBOW of COLORED LIGHTS.

200 EXT. CLEARING

200

Neek pulls Ben by the hand, away from the others, down to the pool in the clearing.

They kneel by the edge of the water, and she hands him a small DEVICE.

NEEK (V.O.)

Here... Put in mouth. Breathe.

She demonstrates, and Ben does the same, although his mouth is shaped a little differently than hers.

NEEK (V.O.)

(continuing)

You can breathe... down there.

She ducks her head under the water.

Ben hesitates, then puts his head down next to hers.

201 EXT. UNDERWATER

201

The moonlight filters down to illuminate the small underwater world.

Beautiful, strange WATER CREATURES flit back and forth between bizarre PLANTS and ROCKS..

A particularly bizarre CREATURE swims up to Ben and stares at him in the face. It blows a BURST of BUBBLES at him in fright.

Ben and Neek are walking away from the pool, drying off their heads.

BEN
I can't believe I'm here.
(looks at her)
What do I look like to you?

NEEK (V.O.)
You look funny.

BEN
So do you. But you look neat too.

He is interrupted as a large PLANT they are walking past suddenly wraps tendrils around his leg with a vicious NOISE.

BEN
(continuing)
Aah!

NEEK (V.O.)
Remain calm.

She lets out a karate-type SHOUT and delivers a swift PUNCH to the plant's stem. It makes a YELPING SOUND, lets go of Ben, and curls into a ball.

Ben looks at her with new respect.

BEN
Wow.

NEEK (V.O.)
It is not so special. The most important is the shout. It frightens them. You try.

Neek repeats her move, and Ben copies her with a SHOUT.

NEEK (V.O.)
(continuing)
Good. Now be careful of plants. Some are bad. Some are good. Treat the bad ones bad. And treat the good ones... good.

She sits down on a small, circular PLATFORM and motions Ben to sit next to her.

She touches a CONTROL. The platform rises up through a large TREE, past beautifully shaped branches and thick leaves that RUSTLE faintly as they float past.

203 EXT. TREE TOP

203

The floating platform stops in the topmost branches. Neek reaches into a hollow in one of the branches and pulls out two HARNESSES with odd DEVICES attached to them. She slips one over her shoulders and hands the other to Ben.

NEEK (V.O.)

Like this.

She touches a control and RISES into the air. Ben experiments with his and SWOOPS up after her.

He gasps as a breathtaking VISTA meets his eyes.

As MUSIC soars, it is revealed that they are actually in a vacant lot in the middle of a shining, futuristic CITY, sparkling in the night.

The moons shine above, and nearby they can see their friends playing with the machines: Wolf and Pinn tossing a SPHERE back and forth that leaves a glowing, multi-colored trail of LIGHT behind it in the air that flares and fades, Darren and Wak bouncing on the anti-gravity discs.

NEEK (V.O.)

(pointing to city)

We live over there.

Ben looks at the landscape, the stars, his friends, this strange world around him. The MUSIC hits a high, beautiful note, and he takes a deep breath as the wonder of it all hits him; this is a moment that he will carry with him for the rest of his life. Even if he forgets everything else about his childhood, he will always have this.

BEN

(to himself)

Wow...

Neek banks and flies in a tight circle around him, their two forms silhouetted against the twinkling lights of the city.

In the distance, Wak throws another handful of fireworks into the air, and they continue to FLASH with BRILLIANT COLORS.

Ben looks at Neek suddenly.

(CONTINUED)

203 CONTINUED:

203

BEN

(continuing)

You can talk to me in my mind.
Can you see in there?

NEEK (V.O.)

A little.

BEN

What do you see?

They stare at each other, hovering face to face.

NEEK (V.O.)

I see... oh.

As Ben stares, Neek slowly turns a deep, beautiful
shade of RED all over.

BEN

What is it? What's wrong?

NEEK (V.O.)

This happens when we feel...
strong emotions.

Ben looks into her eyes. They float closer to each
other, and he reaches to take her hand.

Their fingertips touch.

Suddenly, a weird ALARM SOUNDS over the landscape.

Neek looks up, startled.

NEEK (V.O.)

(continuing)

Oh, no.

204 EXT. FLAT AREA

204

The Beings drop their machines, and grab Wolf and
Darren.

WAK (V.O.)

Quick! You must go!

DARREN

Why?

(CONTINUED)

204 CONTINUED:

204

PINN (V.O.)

Hurry! Back to your ship!

The boys run off behind the Beings, who are running as fast as they can.

205 EXT. CLEARING

205

Neek swoops down out of the sky and hits the ground running. Ben trips when he hits the ground and falls. She pulls at his arm.

A second ALARM sounds.

NEEK (V.O.)

Come! You have stayed too long!
We are late!

She runs ahead.

BEN

Late for what?!

He runs after her. She stops suddenly, hearing a low RUMBLE.

206 EXT. TERRAIN

206

The huge creature's feet trample strands of weeds as it POUNDS inexorably across the ground.

It BELLOWS!

207 EXT. SHIP

207

Ben and Neek meet the others in front of the ship. They all hear the RUMBLING of the approaching creature.

PINN (V.O.)

You must leave now!

He raises a hand to silence their questions.

PINN (V.O.)

(continuing)

Goodbye. It is good to know...
you are the same as us.

(CONTINUED)

207 CONTINUED:

207

Darren looks at Pinn a second, then fumbles out his Sagittarius medallion and gives it to him.

DARREN

Here, take this. It was the first thing I ever bought with my own money.

Pinn takes it and examines the insignia, puzzled. He looks at Darren.

He reaches up, touches the side of Darren's head, and concentrates. He frowns.

PINN (V.O.)

I don't know why you think that. It's not just reading books that makes someone smart, you know.

Darren jerks back, shocked that Pinn would know something this intimate about him.

DARREN

Well --

His defensive look slowly dissolves into a smile.

DARREN

(continuing)

I guess you're right.

Wolf and Wak have been talking in serious, scientist tones.

WOLF

What's going on here? Why do we have to leave?

WAK (V.O.)

(points in creature's direction)

You must not be seen!

Wolf frowns, and starts to climb into the ship, but turns back for a moment, speaking quickly.

WOLF

(continuing; emotional)

It's not going to matter if I don't get invited to another party in my whole life, just knowing that I got invited up here, and I met you.

(CONTINUED)

207 CONTINUED (2):

207

WAK (V.O.)
 (like a professional
 scientist)
 I hope we can work together some
 day, my friend. Now go!

Wolf and Darren climb up into the ship. They turn
 back for Ben, who is standing with Neek. She looks
 more beautiful than ever.

DARREN
 Ben! Let's go!

BEN
 (quickly)
 I'll miss you. I've never
 met anyone like you.

Neek's entrancing eyes widen, the tips of her
 eyelashes SPARKLING with an unearthly glow.

NEEK (V.O.)
 (coy)
 Really?

She almost blushes through the red. She takes a small
 CRYSTAL PENDANT from her neck, and gives it to him.

NEEK (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 This is for you.

Ben reaches in his back pocket and finds the harmonica
 from home.

BEN
 You blow through this and notes
 come out.

He demonstrates and gives it to her.

The creature BELLOWS, very close by.

Wolf calls.

WOLF
 Ben, come on!

BEN
 I don't know if they do this
 here, but --

He leans forward and kisses her on the cheek. She is
 startled, but smiles.

(CONTINUED)

207 CONTINUED (3):

207

BEN
(continuing)
Goodbye!

NEEK (V.O.)
Now please go!
(points toward
approaching creature)
Our Father is already very angry.

Ben runs to the ship, and suddenly stops.

BEN
Father?! You're... kids!
Just like us!

WAK (V.O.)
If he finds out we brought you
here, we are in big trouble.

NEEK (V.O.)
We are already late for our meal.

PINN (V.O.)
When our father is mad... anything
could happen.

The creature becomes visible over the junk, but doesn't
see them yet.

NEEK (V.O.)
He is here! Go!

Ben sees the creature, gasps in fright, and shuts the
hatch.

208 INT. THUNDER ROAD

208

The Thunder Road seems small as they strap in and put
on their breather masks. Wolf activates the Troglodyte.

BEN
(disbelieving)
They're kids! They're just
kids!

209 EXT. TERRAIN

209

The ship rises into the air, lit from below. The Beings stand, looking very small as their Father approaches. Wak steps forward, starting to make an excuse, when the Father ROARS, silencing him. He looks after the departing spaceship, grabs all three Beings by the scruffs of their necks, and walks off into the night.

They are in big trouble.

210 INT. THUNDER ROAD

210

The three sit in their seats, silent as the ground pulls away. Wolf looks at Ben, who is staring out at the stars.

WOLF

Ben's got a girlfriend.

BEN

Shut up.

The Troglodyte starts TRILLING, switching to automatic control again.

Darren grabs the other two by the shoulders and the three look at each other.

DARREN

We did it!

Out of triumph and excitement, they start to YELL, building in pitch and volume until:

211 EXT. SPACE

211

The Thunder Road BLASTS into HYPERSPACE.

DISSOLVE TO:

212 EXT. EARTH

212

The curvature of the Earth hangs blue and beautiful in space. The Thunder Road drops toward the United States.

213 EXT. CITY - DAY

213

The ship swoops down out of the sky and flies over their own town, cars and people visible now.

214 INT. SHIP

214

The boys look out the portholes, pointing.

BEN
There's Safeway!

DARREN
There's my house. My Dad's home.

Wolf checks his readouts.

WOLF
It's returning to its point of
origin, so we'll --

All the power cuts out.

215 EXT. SKY

215

We drop with the ship as it tumbles toward the ground.

216 INT. SHIP

216

The boys yell as they fall.

Wolf clicks the POWER SWITCH back and forth.

The power blinks back on.

217 EXT. SHIP

217

The ship comes to a halt as the field takes over.

218 INT. SHIP

218

WOLF
We're almost out of power. It'll
cut out again.

DARREN
Let's land! Get us down!

WOLF
Where?

BEN
There's school! The grass!

219 EXT. SCHOOLYARD

219

KIDS mill around in the schoolyard at recess.

A GIRL suddenly points up in the air and shouts. Other kids look up and start to run.

With a SCREAMING SOUND, the ship skims down from the sky.

220 INT. SHIP

220

The approaching schoolyard is visible through the portholes.

The power cuts out completely.

WOLF

That was it. Here we go!

Darren lets out one of his rebel YELLS that builds to:

221 EXT. SCHOOLYARD

221

The ship PLOWS into the grass, TUMBLES end over end, and SMASHES into the ancient statue of CHESTER BEAUMONT, destroying it completely, and leaving the ship itself unrecognizable.

The crowd of kids runs towards it, then slow down as they near it. Steve Jackson is in the front row.

STEVE

It's the UFO! It crash landed!

MURMURS spread through the crowd. It is the UFO.

A piece of metal moves, and they all jump back with a scream.

222 INT. SHIP

222

The three dig themselves out of the debris inside the ship. Everything is smashed. Ben checks his pocket and finds Neek's crystal crushed into a fine powder.

Wolf is holding a broken COMPONENT from the controls.

WOLF

The Troglodyte's gone.

(CONTINUED)

222 CONTINUED:

222

Ben and Darren pull him out.

223 EXT. SCHOOLYARD

223

Out of the wreckage crawl a torn, dirty Wolf, Ben and Darren. They look tough-bitten, like Explorers.

All the kids stare at them, awe-struck.

JACKSON

(totally surprised)

What is this?

BEN

(as if waking from
a dream)

Steve. Steve Jackson.

JACKSON

What is this junk, Crandall? I'm
going to pound you.

BEN

Steve. You're... you're like a
plant. Some are good. Some
are bad. You treat the bad ones
bad.

JACKSON

You're nuts!

Steve runs at him to beat him up.

Ben lets out the Karate YELL!

Steve stops, confused.

Ben punches him in the solar plexus, and Steve doubles
over, the wind knocked out of him.

The crowd of kids, under Steve's reign of terror for
so long, CHEERS!

A TEACHER approaches through the crowd.

TEACHER

Clear the way here. Let me
through.

Darren and Ben start to run away. Wolf stays, standing
on top of the wreck.

(CONTINUED)

223 CONTINUED:

223

BEN

Wolf, come on!

WOLF

(noble)

No Ben. You go. I'll see you later.

Ben runs, as the Teacher arrives and surveys the demolished statue.

TEACHER

Who's responsible for this?

Wolf steps forward.

WOLF

I am. It's my fault.

The Teacher stares at him.

TEACHER

You're coming to the Principal's office immediately.

WOLF

So be it.

She leads him away.

He walks through the crowd of kids like a prisoner being led away for execution for a noble cause.

They all stare after him, talking to each other, impressed. He has finally earned their respect.

Lori Swenson turns to the girl next to her, and brags.

LORI

I know that guy. He was at my party.

224 EXT. BEN'S HOUSE - DAY

224

After school, Ben bicycles up in front of his house. He looks at it a moment, glad to be home.

His father is working on the family car in the driveway. Ben calls to him on his way into the house.

(CONTINUED)

224 CONTINUED:

224

BEN

Hi, Dad!

MR. CRANDALL

Hm? Oh, hi Ben.

He puts down his work and walks toward the house.

225 INT. BEN'S KITCHEN

225

Ben runs in and hugs his mom.

BEN

Hi, Mom.

MRS. CRANDALL

Well hello. What's all the excitement about?

BEN

Nothing.

Ben's father comes into the kitchen in back of him.

MR. CRANDALL

Ben, we have something to tell you.

BEN

What?

His father sits down at the table, and exchanges a glance with Mrs. Crandall. She's done some lobbying for Ben.

MR. CRANDALL

I had a look at the safety records on those motorbikes, and if you promise to wear a helmet, and you can earn half the money, I think we can allow you to have one by next year.

Ben looks from one to the other.

BEN

Oh that. That's fine, don't worry about it. I don't need one of those.

(CONTINUED)

225 CONTINUED:

225

His parents look at each other, perplexed. Ben stops, realizing what they've done for him.

BEN
(continuing)
It's just that... I... Mom,
Dad... You're great!

He runs out of the room. His mother shrugs and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

226. EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

226

Wolf and Ben walk along their street. It is a little later in the year, and as the season begins to change, leaves fall from the trees around them, and they wear warmer clothes.

The boys walk in a way that is subtly older, more mature than the way they ran to school before. Ever so slightly, they have grown up.

BEN
It's weird. I feel sad.

WOLF
You too? It's like it never happened.

BEN
We don't have anything. No proof.
(quiet)
It's not like I can call her up on the phone.

WOLF
It's frustrating too! I mean, is that it? Nothing in my life will ever top that.

Darren's voice suddenly calls to them, echoing down the street. It sounds a little distant and strange.

DARREN (O.S.)
Hey, you guys!

They look around, but can't see him.

(CONTINUED)

WOLF

Where is he?

BEN

I don't... what?

Ben points up in the air.

With a TRIUMPHANT FANFARE we see that Darren is flying overhead, unassisted, his arms spread out as he soars through the air. He dive-bombs them, and shouts as he swoops past.

DARREN

We're dreaming again!

Ben and Wolf look at each other.

WOLF

(slowly)

Oh.

Ben shouts with excitement, they run three steps, and with another FANFARE, they LEAP into the air, flying up after Darren.

DARREN

I must have fallen asleep reading.
Can you believe that? Me, reading
a book.

WOLF

He's sending again. That kid's
a disciplinary problem.

BEN

Let's go!

227 EXT. AERIAL VIEW

227

They leave their street behind, and fly out over the unearthly plain from Ben's first dream. There is another DIAGRAM on it, much more complicated than the first one.

Wolf points to different areas of the drawing.

WOLF

Darren, you take that third.
Ben, over there.

(CONTINUED)

227 CONTINUED:

227

BEN

Call me when you wake up.

DARREN

Let's meet at my place, on the roof!

He SWOOPS away, doing LOOPS and SOMERSAULTS in the air.

Ben studies his part of the drawing, concentrating, then starts to fall toward it.

BEN

I'm waking up! I'm waking up!

We fall with him, down to the plain, MUSIC building, the diagram growing larger and larger until:

228 EXT. DARREN'S ROOF - NIGHT

228

With a THUNDEROUS CHORD, we CUT to a rough copy of the same drawing, composed of three different papers taped together.

As MUSIC builds, we start to CRANE UP, revealing that the three boys are studying it on Darren's rooftop.

BEN

What is it?

Wolf glances at the other two.

He smiles.

MUSIC builds to a final CRESCENDO, as we CRANE farther up and back, leaving the boys small on the rooftop, under the galaxy of stars.

FADE OUT.

THE END