

A QUATERMASS CLASSIC

QUATERMASS II

NIGEL KNEALE



QUATERMASS II

For some time, Professor Quatermass has been aware that a series of inexplicable events are the subject of a Whitehall cover-up. Reports of UFO sightings have been suppressed; no explanation has been given for the extraordinarily high incidence of meteorite strikes on the earth; and an entire village has been razed to the ground to make way for a clandestine Government project. Quatermass determines to penetrate the web of secrecy—and is soon involved in a desperate race to preserve life on earth.

In Arrow by Nigel Kneale

THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT

QUATERMASS II

QUATERMASS AND THE PIT


QUATERMASS

NIGEL KNEALE

Quatermass II



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In revising this script for publication, I have simplified both technical terms and directions to make it more easily readable. To the same end, I have also amplified descriptions, and discarded the precise breaking down of the action into those scenes performed live in the electronic studio, those pre-filmed, and special effects—though anyone technically interested could probably work this out for himself.

I should be glad, however, if the reader would still bear in mind that the whole structure of this story is primarily shaped for presentation by cameras, and the dialogue written for actors to speak.

FOREWORD

‘Let’s have another Quatermass!’ said the BBC. It was a couple of years since the first serial, which had had an uncalculated success. A film version of it had been made, with which I had nothing to do—it had turned my troubled professor into a bawling bully.

QUATERMASS II could help to put things straight. It was an uninventive title, I felt, but I could find no better. The formula has become respectable in recent films, but I felt then that I had to justify it as referring not only to the new serial but also to Quatermass’s doomed rocket-design.

There was a plot problem. In THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT he had saved the world from ecological disaster. So—‘follow that!’—another threat from outer space, to be thwarted in turn by our hero?

It was 1955, an unconfident time. There was much public concern about a new brand of bureaucracy, which manifested itself in the form of secret establishments: giant radars reputed to endanger human life and concealed in huge plastic pods; germ-warfare establishments behind barbed wire; atom-proof shelters for chosen administrators.

Imagine, then, a huge plant that looks something like an oil refinery with some inexplicable additions, set up ostensibly to produce synthetic foodstuffs, which indeed it does make but not for any human consumption . . . and the menace is firmly established on Earth before its real nature can be known, THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT had been the tale of a man-into-monster alone and pursued through London. This time the pattern would be reversed. Quatermass himself would be the lone figure, doggedly worrying his way through officialdom’s barriers and pat explanations to get at a horrifying truth.

Once again Rudolph Cartier was to produce and direct. At that time it was still possible for one man to combine both functions and there were many advantages. We planned the whole thing closely together. Before I had written a word we decided to make sure of our key location. The obvious choice was a real oil refinery if we could manage it, and we were lucky. Shell kindly provided filming facilities at their huge establishment down the Thames estuary. There was another bonus. The nearby Mucking Marshes—I felt the name went too far—would stand in for our fictional Winnerden Flats.

Backup had much improved. More film was available for the exterior scenes. The technical miseries of Alexandra Palace were bettered at Lime Grove TV studios, where the electronic cameras at least had movable lenses even if they had seen previous long service at football matches. There was now the nucleus of a special-effects unit, a couple of inventive men who could explode a pressure-dome on cue and perform a convincing rocket launch. Best of all, the show could be recorded and repeated, however roughly.

A few weeks before we were due to start we lost our leading actor. Reginald Tate suddenly died. So John Robinson took over as Quatermass, teamed with the electrifying Welshman Hugh Griffith. And as with the first serial, the story was fleshed out by a team of excellent character players like Herbert Lomas, who in an early cameo set up the essential note of strangeness for all that came after.

We were still pushing our luck the whole way. Perhaps the trickiest moments came near the end, when Robinson and Griffith had to be trussed into heavy rubber space-suits, live, in vision, by the special-effects duo disguised as launch-pad technicians—and then go on acting in them under the full heat of the studio lighting. They survived, just.

So did we.

Nigel Kneale

PART ONE

The Bolts

Fade in opening music.

Close shot of swinging radar antenna, on top of an Army truck. Pan down the truck to where a Landrover comes bouncing across the rough turf, to pull up nearby. Like the truck, it carries Royal Artillery markings, and Sergeant Grice, a tough little instructor, scrambles out. He pulls the truck door open and goes inside.

Cut—to the interior of the truck as Grice closes the door behind him. In the gloom a young National Service Trainee is seated at the scanning panel, wearing a head-and-breast telephone set.

GRICE: Now, my lad, how goes it?

TRAINEE: All right, ser'nt.

GRICE [*checking the position of the man's phones*]: Got this on properly? Control room say you keep going faint on 'em.

TRAINEE [*clearing his throat*]: It's my voice, ser'nt.

GRICE: From so-called song in the village boozier. Your mate in the next truck's not much better. [*Leaning over the Trainee's shoulder to check the controls*] Now—the next subject's due any minute.

TRAINEE: BEA plane to Glasgow. I had him yesterday.

GRICE: Oh, did you? You're going to learn all the targets off in advance? That'll be useful if war breaks out!

TRAINEE: I never meant—

GRICE: Whatever you see on this tube is important! Just get that into your head. And talk loud and clear. I'm going to make ruddy B.B.C. announcers out of you lot. [*He picks up report-pad.*]

TRAINEE: Here it comes now, ser'nt. [*Turning knob to get the bearing of the trace that has appeared on the tube*] That's funny . . .

GRICE: What?

TRAINEE: Where he showed up. Must be right off course.

GRICE: P'raps you learnt it wrong.

The trace flashes again on the tube. Grice frowns.

TRAINEE: There it is, see?

GRICE: That's not a plane. Far too weak. Ten thousand yards . . . no, less . . .

TRAINEE [*into telephone*]: TC calling control room.

GRICE: Wait a minute. [*As another trace blinks*] Eight thousand . . . and heading this way. Quick—

TRAINEE: Eh?

GRICE [*snatches at telephone*]: Control—is Captain Dillon there? [*Another flash on the tube*] Six thousand five hundred . . .

The door opens. Captain John Dillon enters—a sharp-faced young man. Grice turns to him quickly.

GRICE: Just trying to reach you, sir—I think it's another of 'em!

DILLON: What!

He peers at the tube-face as the trace flashes again.

GRICE: Five thousand yards now. It's real fast.

DILLON: Too small for a jet, though.

GRICE: Yes . . .

Cut—to a bleak, steep field where an old and smoky tractor is pulling a plough. The ploughman, Fred Large, suddenly twists round, listening. A curious, raucous sound is cutting through the air, growing rapidly in volume. Large instinctively ducks and throws up one arm.

The noise ends in a dull thump nearby. Large looks up again, and brings the tractor to a halt. He scrambles from the iron seat and stands frowning round him at the ploughed earth. Then he seems to see something and starts forward. After a few paces he halts, worried. But there is nobody to consult. Nervously he moves forward again.

Close shot as he crouches by a furrow, peering down towards something that is just out of shot.

Cut—to the radar truck. Dillon turns from the open doorway, binoculars in his hand.

DILLON: Can't see anything.

GRICE [*working it out on a map*]: On that line of approach, it should have hit about 2,500 yards from here.

DILLON: Oh. The other side of the hill.

TRAINEE: What would it be, sir?

DILLON: Something like . . . well, a jettisoned fuel tank.

He turns to where Grice is marking a circle on the map.

GRICE: Might be anywhere there. I could try and get it more exact.

DILLON [*after a quick glance at the Trainee, quietly*]: Do it on the way.

He starts towards the door. Grice picks up map, doubtfully. He turns to the Trainee.

GRICE: You carry on. Just report that plane when it shows up. Nothing else. Got it?

TRAINEE [*puzzled*]: Yes, ser'nt.

Grice follows Captain Dillon out.

Dissolve . . . to interior of Army Landrover. Dillon is driving and keeping a keen lookout to both sides. Grice, beside him, is at work with a pencil, figuring on the margin of the map. Through the back window a country road is winding away, flanked by stunted, wind-twisted trees.

GRICE: Near as I can make it, it should have struck somewhere over that way. [*He points out of his window, half ahead.*] Nice if we could find this one.

DILLON: Mm.

GRICE: Third time lucky.

DILLON: Yes, it is the third, isn't it?

GRICE: Since we've been here.

DILLON: You still think you've tracked these before?

GRICE: I'd swear. Down south, early last year—before you joined us, sir.

DILLON: Wasn't that when the big 'flying objects' scare was on?

GRICE: Yes, sir.

DILLON: All the papers full of stories. It was just one of those silly seasons. It blew over.

GRICE: Things did fall.

DILLON: They were all explained away.

GRICE [*unconvinced*]: Yes, sir.

He rises in his seat, peering, then relaxes.

DILLON: See anything?

GRICE: Just sheep.

DILLON: When they got everything quietened down, they'd want to keep it like that. I suppose that accounts for the orders. Unidentified flying objects—all reports on or public mention of, strictly forbidden. [*After a moment*] Why are we sticking our necks out? We'd better get back.

Again Grice has risen slightly in his seat.

GRICE: Seems to be something going on in this next field.

DILLON: What?

GRICE: A woman—seems sort of excited.

DILLON: Let's have a look then.

He jams the brakes on.

Cut—to where the Landrover is coming to a halt in a stony lane. Dillon and Grice scramble out. The sergeant leads the way over the bramble-grown sod hedge.

A woman is wandering, half-running, across the adjoining field. A middle-aged countrywoman who comes hurrying across as soon as she catches sight of them. Dishevelled and panting, she is clutching a tea-can. This is Mrs. Large.

MRS. LARGE: Oh, thank goodness! Thank goodness you come along! Tell him to let it alone!

DILLON: What is it? Show us—

She turns and trots back the way she came. The two men follow her.

MRS. LARGE: Over here. My husband. Make him come away from it. You're soldiers—he'll have to take heed of you—

She is squeezing through a gap in another hedge, past an ancient, broken-down gate. Close behind her, Dillon halts, staring.

A few yards away, Fred Large is crouching on the ploughed earth.

MRS. LARGE: I come with his tea just now, and there he was, staring at it . . .

Dillon moves past her. Large does not look at him as he draws near.

Here the new furrows have been cut across and flattened. On the ground in front of Large is a scatter of stony fragments. As Dillon stoops to examine them, the woman's worried voice runs on.

MRS. LARGE: He said it come out of the sky. What is it? If it's something he didn't ought to touch, tell him!

Dillon picks up a fragment, examines it carefully.

DILLON: I think it's a meteorite. [*He turns to Large.*] Did you see it fall?

MRS. LARGE: Oh, get him away from here! Fred . . . Fred!

DILLON: All right. [*To Large.*] You found it like this—all broken up?

Large looks at him slowly, vaguely.

LARGE: Broken. Stink like . . . dirty stables . . .

Dillon sniffs the fragment he is holding. He glances up at Sergeant Grice and shakes his head. Then, with another glance at Large's blank face, he gets up and speaks quietly to the sergeant.

DILLON: He's had a bit of a fright. It must have been this we tracked. Feel it—it's still warm.

Mrs. Large gives them a despairing look and pulls at her husband's shoulders.

MRS. LARGE: Fred—come away, do!

GRICE: Think it's an ordinary meteorite, sir?

DILLON: I suppose so.

GRICE: If it wasn't against orders to go any further into this, sir . . . well, would you have any ideas?

DILLON [*slowly*]: There's a man I know . . . not very well, but . . . His name's Quatermass.

GRICE: Quatermass.

DILLON: Heard of him?

GRICE: The rocket man?

Dissolve . . . to a high, long shot of a giant rocket. It is standing upright in the centre of its launching bay, which is surrounded by a massive concrete blast-wall. Close beside the rocket is a service tower of steel lattice-work, with ladderways and platforms. On one of these platforms a man is working close to the great shining hull, watched by a tiny group below in the shadow of the huge fins.

A nearer shot shows this man is wearing anti-radiation clothing of thick plastic. Helmeted and masked, he has a Geiger counter in his hand, pointing it at the rocket's casing. He lifts it, lowers it, as he moves along the platform. But no ticking comes from the counter. After a brief pause he turns back to the open lift at the edge of the platform.

Cut—to the group waiting below, a couple of overalled Technicians and a grizzled, untidy Welshman, Dr. Leo Pugh. He steps forward as the lift descends into view with the helmeted figure. One of the Technicians relieves him of the Geiger counter. The other helps to pull the helmet clear, to reveal the drawn face of a grey-haired man in his fifties . . . Bernard Quatermass.

PUGH: Well?

QUATERMASS: There's no spread of radioactivity outside the shielding.

PUGH: Does that prove anything?

QUATERMASS [*sighs*]: I suppose not.

PUGH: Nothing that helps us, anyway. Bernard, you'd better face it. All the symptoms are there—now we're able to read them.

Quatermass nods. He looks up again at the shape above them.

QUATERMASS: The whole nuclear stage . . .

PUGH: It's just like the other one. In the same condition.

A buzzer sounds. One of the Technicians unhooks a phone at the foot of the service tower.

TECHNICIAN: Firing bay. Yes, he's here . . . I'll tell him. [*He puts the phone back on its hook, turning to Quatermass.*] Your daughter, sir. She says the Australian film-record's set up and waiting.

QUATERMASS: Thank you. [*To Pugh.*] Will you go ahead? There'll just be the three of us.

PUGH: Keeping it in the family?

QUATERMASS: Till I'm absolutely sure. I'll follow as soon as I get rid of this gear.

Pugh looks at the two Technicians, who have been listening intently to every word.

TECHNICIAN [*hesitantly*]: Sir—will there be any further tests?

QUATERMASS: No. None.

PUGH: Why don't you tell them and have done? They must have guessed by now. [*He points up at the rocket.*] It's not a rocket we'd be testing here! We'd be stoking up an atomic bomb!

He marches off across the concrete launching pad.

Dissolve . . . to Quatermass's office, a plain room with severely functional furniture. The slatted blinds have been closed, and a film projector set up on the steel desk. Making the final adjustments to this is a girl in her mid-twenties. Her eyes and her quick, deft manner immediately recall Quatermass.

Pugh enters, a clip-board of papers under his arm.

PUGH: Your father's on his way, Paula.

PAULA: I suppose there's no doubt now?

PUGH [*throwing the clipboard down on the desk*]: None. Everything tallies with the telemetered data from Tarooma. If we mess with that thing out there, we follow those poor creatures.

On the desk is a stack of plastic-film folders. Pugh picks one up. Like the others, it contains a half-charred sheet of paper.

PUGH: We'd be like this, too. Scribbling our last notes for posterity. [*He reads.*] 'Nuclear motor in runaway reaction—now certain. No response to remote control. Evacuation proceeding. Seems possible that con—' Condition? In the middle of a word when it happened.

PAULA: Do you think they had any idea when they started?

PUGH: No! It was just a routine ground test. Even when the working-fluid connexion broke—well, it might have meant danger. But not complete disaster.

PAULA: It was that broken connexion, then? That began it?

PUGH: Apparently. Oh, we're full of wisdom after the event. It must have triggered off a chain of conditions—temperatures, pressures. Coupled with unsuspected instability of new fissile material and—! [*He shrugs.*]

PAULA: Unsuspected? Was it?

PUGH: Not entirely, then. There had been a remote mathematical possibility—but there were also sound reasons to discount it. [*He fingers another of the charred papers in its plastic casing.*] Until now.

Quatermass comes in, now normally dressed.

QUATERMASS: Sorry I kept you waiting. Let's see this and get it over.

He sits at the desk, facing the projection screen that has been rolled down from its socket on the opposite wall. Pugh snaps out the lights. The girl switches on the projector and the film-spools revolve.

QUATERMASS: According to the note that came with it, this will be pretty disjointed.

PUGH: What else?

Light flickers on their faces.

The screen shows heavy trucks moving up through the sandy bush-country of West Australia, laden with heavy equipment . . . the hutments and tents of the test-range camp . . . then the massive centre-section of the rocket, like the Quatermass II rocket outside on the firing bay, but bereft of the finned base and the pointed nose. It is locked into the huge lattice framework of the test stand.

On the sound-track comes a voice with an Australian accent.

AUSTRALIAN VOICE: Here it is. The duplicate nuclear-propulsion unit of the Quatermass II rocket, on the test rig waiting for its first run at full thrust . . . and it's the last film take. Now follow shots from TV cameras at the firing base, remotely recorded . . .

The quality of the film changes, is suddenly harsher, cruder. It shows technicians at work in the control room, watching the flickering dials.

QUATERMASS: There's Harris.

PUGH [*whispers*]: Yes . . .

Close shots follow, of gauges and oscillographs in the control room. The technicians take their places at the control panels.

AUSTRALIAN VOICE: These are the last records of the research team, shortly before the test began. And now . . . the nuclear motor actually firing . . .

A long shot of the test-stand shows a blast of flame and smoke spouting beneath the rocket. Gusts of blown sand roll away across the desert. More shots of the control room. Suddenly the technicians are jumping up from their seats. Dials flicker wildly.

AUSTRALIAN VOICE: The fracture in the working-fluid feed was followed very quickly by a runaway nuclear reaction. There is little record of the research team's attempted evacuation—see remote tape recordings. But here is the last shot of the test-rig, from a camera on the far perimeter of the range . . .

From the firing stand, a tiny dot on the horizon, comes a sudden blast of light, blotting out everything. It is followed an instant later by the vast blossoming of a mushroom-cloud a mile high. It thickens, goes on rising . . . and rising . . . and the film record dissolves to a squad of men, dehumanized by heavy protective clothing, dropping from a truck and advancing over blistered ground with Geiger counters. They reach the unrecognizable remains of a concrete building.

AUSTRALIAN VOICE: Next day, the wrecked firing-base was investigated. No one was found alive . . .

QUATERMASS: That'll do!

Paula switches off the projector. Pugh rises slowly as she turns to the window and draws up the blind. Quatermass remains slumped in his seat.

QUATERMASS: God . . . God!

Paula comes to his side. She is almost as shaken.

PAULA: I'm sorry. It was dreadful.

QUATERMASS: Be thankful you didn't know them all.

PAULA [*hesitantly, after a moment*]: How much of a hold-up is this going to mean?

PUGH: Years.

QUATERMASS: It would be years.

PAULA: Would be?

QUATERMASS: It's all over.

She looks quickly at Pugh. Quatermass rises and crosses the room to the projection-screen. He unhooks it at the bottom and it rolls up like a blind, disclosing a large half-tone diagram titled in bold lettering: 'QUATERMASS II MOON PROJECT'. It shows a system of hemispherical domes, linked by a maze of piping and machinery. A couple of rockets stand on their bases in the background, and beyond are the craters and the black starlit sky of the Moon.

QUATERMASS: Do either of you remember why I had this put here? It was to impress somebody or other from the Ministry—a group of them came down one day. I did impress them too. A colony on the moon . . . pressure-domes in which men could inhabit a world without air. To be the first to do that . . . 'But how?' one of them said, 'how will you move all that equipment there?' I had the answer all ready, with just the amount of confidence those chaps like to see. 'We'll use a small fleet of highly adaptable three-stage rockets,' I said, 'and make repeated journeys, hundreds of journeys carefully pre-planned. I'm certain it can be done.' That's what I said.

PUGH: It still can.

QUATERMASS: Not by us. We're out of the race.

He turns towards the window. Beyond the supply sheds and other buildings of the Rocket Group research station, the huge metal bowl of a radio-telescope is turned upwards to the sky. And the rocket juts out from its firing bay.

PAULA: There've been bad patches before.

QUATERMASS: It's a lot more than a patch. The whole project depended on this rocket.

PAULA: You'll go on working on it.

QUATERMASS: The choice isn't mine. What did the Ministry get for all their money? Two prototypes, one exploded, the other unfit even for testing. They're going to rule a neat double line.

PAULA: Finish? Of all this?

QUATERMASS: I know them. They won't stand any more.

PAULA: I'm sure you're wrong.

QUATERMASS: No. The signs have been coming for a long time. Little cuts, hold-ups on vital expenditure—and that was when things seemed to be going well! I suppose the wind's changing. They've had more persuasive claimants for their favour. New schemes. New white-headed boys. [*With an effort*] I'll go to London and tackle them again, of course—

PUGH: Remember you're not alone in this.

QUATERMASS: Sympathy, Leo? Don't, please. It makes me feel even older.

The telephone rings. Paula answers it.

PAULA [*into phone*]: Yes . . . speaking. Who? Oh, tell him I'll ring him back some other—What d'you mean? Actually here? Very well, pass him through. He should know the way. [*She puts the phone down and turns to her father.*] It's Johnny Dillon.

QUATERMASS: Who? Oh . . . that soldier of yours?

PAULA: Funny, just turning up like this. He must have got a leave he wasn't expecting.

QUATERMASS: Never mind how it's happened. Now he's here, get him to take you away from this place for a few hours. Make him take you somewhere cheerful. Tell him from me.

PAULA: I might do that.

QUATERMASS: Don't keep him waiting.

She comes close to him.

PAULA: You never could help being obvious, but . . . father, you won't really start trying to get rid of me? For my own good? Don't.

She goes, closing the door behind her.

PUGH: She must have been only a kid when you had all that . . . business over the first rocket?

QUATERMASS: Still at school. She made up her mind there and then to take a physics degree and join me here. I was selfish enough to allow it. I wish her mother had been alive—she had more sense.

Cut—to the ante-room adjoining Quatermass's office. A Secretary is at work here. She glances up as Captain Dillon comes through and is met by Paula. They kiss.

DILLON: Darling—

PAULA: This is nice. But why didn't you let me know—

He is wearing civilian clothes, clutching a cardboard shoebox tied with string.

DILLON: It's all been a bit of a rush. Is your father here?

PAULA: Yes.

DILLON: Good. I was afraid he mightn't be. Can I see him?

PAULA: You sound so—Johnny, is something wrong?

DILLON: No—no, I don't think so. Probably nothing at all. He'd know.

Doubtfully, she turns to lead the way.

PAULA: What have you got there?

DILLON [*half embarrassed*]: Just . . . a box.

Cut—to Quatermass's office. Quatermass is pacing up and down.

QUATERMASS: Retire? My sort doesn't retire, Leo, you know that. Too ridden with curiosity. When they pull the funds from under me, I'll make rockets out of piping in the back yard. After all, that's how I began—

He turns as Paula enters, followed by Dillon.

QUATERMASS: Oh. How are you, my boy? [*They shake hands.*] I don't think you've met Leo—Dr. Leo Pugh. John Dillon.

PUGH [*shaking Dillon's hand*]: How d'you do?

PAULA: I'm disappointed. He hasn't come to see me after all, father. It's to talk to you about something.

QUATERMASS: What?

PAULA: He's very mysterious.

QUATERMASS: Well—[*to Dillon*—sit down, won't you?

Dillon sits, balancing the box carefully on his knee. He accepts a cigarette.

DILLON: Thanks. I managed a forty-eight, so I thought I'd come up and—[*he hesitates*]—I've no right to bother you with this at all, sir, but—

QUATERMASS: No, no. Go on.

DILLON: Straight in, then. Don't you people make a special study of meteorites?

Quatermass gives him a hard look. This sounds like the sort of thing he has encountered too often—an amateur's delight in talking scientific

shop. He is not in the mood.

QUATERMASS [*shortly*]: We have to. They're one of the hazards a rocket can meet. You'd better talk to Dr. Pugh—he knows more about the subject than I do.

PUGH: Hey—I'm only a mathematician—

QUATERMASS: You're the expert.

He turns away from them and goes again to the window. He stands staring out, preoccupied. Dillon's embarrassment returns.

DILLON: I seem to have butted in at the wrong time—

PUGH: It's all right. What he means is—meteorites are mostly a matter of mathematics. Too small to be anything else—hardly any of them bigger than grains of grit or dust.

DILLON: You plot their orbits—trajectories—frequency throughout the year?

PUGH: You seem to know something about it.

DILLON: I'm in radar.

PUGH: Oh. Then you know as much as I do. You've seen the traces, must have done, many a time. When the bigger ones hit the atmosphere and explode.

DILLON: Yes, of course—shooting stars. But—what about the ones that don't blow up?

PUGH: They always do. All right, say one in a billion doesn't. A billion, mind.

DILLON: And the odds against three of them striking an area twenty miles across—in a single week?

Pugh stares at him. Dillon rises. He snaps the string round the shoe-box and tips the contents on to the desk. The rattle of the stony fragments brings Quatermass from the window. Pugh is already crouching over them, fingering them.

PUGH: Meteorite fragments. Where did you get these?

DILLON: Near where I'm stationed. My unit tracked the fall. Incidentally, I'm really disobeying orders in bringing them here.

QUATERMASS: What orders?

DILLON: We're forbidden to mention unidentified flying objects. To kill nonsense rumours, I suppose. But as this seemed more of a natural occurrence, I thought that . . . Well, *is* it natural? Is that normal meteoric stone?

PUGH: Seems to be. Enstatite, I think. You implying this only broke up when it hit the ground?

DILLON: I found those bits all together. Assemble them and you get a single smooth shape.

Pugh gives him a sharp look of disbelief, then starts to do so, testing and trying the pieces like a man with some solid jigsaw. Dillon moves in to help him.

PAULA: You said you tracked two others?

DILLON: Yes, but we couldn't find where they'd fallen.

The meteorite is almost assembled. The surface is rough and ablated by heat. But the thing has a symmetry, like a flattened rain-drop.

PUGH: Interesting shape.

QUATERMASS: Who else saw this?

DILLON: A sergeant-instructor. A ploughman—he was the first on the scene—and his wife.

QUATERMASS: Ah—somebody outside this odd army order. How long would it take to drive there?

DILLON: Going fast, a couple of hours.

QUATERMASS: Think you'd run into any trouble if you went back there with me, for a look round?

DILLON: I don't see why. As a matter of fact, I hoped you'd suggest that—

There is a sudden exclamation from Pugh. They turn. He is clutching the reassembled meteorite together, is peering again into the shoe-box.

PUGH: Dillon—are you sure you got all the fragments?

DILLON: Yes, I am.

QUATERMASS: Why, Leo?

PUGH [*slowly*]: In that case . . . it's hollow.

Dissolve . . . to close shot of Fred Large, huddled in a blanket, which is pulled over his head and face. Steam emerges from it. After a moment or two, he clumsily drags the blanket away. He stares stupidly down at the steaming jug in his other hand, from which he has been inhaling.

Mrs. Large comes to him and takes the jug away. He is sitting with his feet in a bowl of mustard-and-water in the middle of the little cottage kitchen.

MRS. LARGE: I bet you never breathed it in like I said. Afraid it'd do you some good.

Though she is doing her best to hide the fact under familiarity, she is uneasy in his presence. She is almost glad to turn away to the window at the sound of a car coming to a halt outside.

MRS. LARGE: Now who'll that be? The breadman's been, so I don't know who. Just keep your feet in that mustard while I see . . .

She goes to the window and peeps round the edge of the curtain.

MRS. LARGE: No, it's strangers. Lost their way, p'raps.

There is a knock on the door, and she hurries to answer it. Dillon and Quatermass are outside.

DILLON: Hello, Mrs. Large. We met yesterday, remember?

MRS. LARGE [*confused*]: Oh, of course—you're the officer. I'm sorry—just that it's funny seeing you without the uniform. Come in, won't you? [*They*

follow her in]. We're a bit upset here. Fred's got a touch of—well, a sort of chill I think it is.

DILLON: I'm sorry to hear that.

MRS. LARGE: See who's here, Fred. Don't you know him? It's the feller—

DILLON: The name's Dillon. And this is Professor Quatermass.

MRS. LARGE: Oh? Professor? Fancy . . .

QUATERMASS: I just want to ask one or two questions. Mr. Large, I wonder if you'd tell me something about this—this object you found yesterday?

MRS. LARGE [*breathily excited*]: Go on, Fred!

Large stares at Quatermass. In his eyes suspicion deepens to a kind of animal hostility.

MRS. LARGE: He's not quite himself. It's the chill, you see—he'll have thrown it off by tomorrow, but just now—

QUATERMASS: You saw this thing fall? [*There is no reply from Large.*] At least you were there when it did?

MRS. LARGE: Of course he was—

QUATERMASS: Please understand, this isn't idle curiosity. It may be important. Was it in fragments when you found it—broken in pieces? [*Still no reply.*]

Perhaps we can agree on what you told Captain Dillon shortly afterwards—that there was an odd smell?

DILLON: Like dirty stables, you said.

QUATERMASS: When did you notice that? When you first examined the pieces?

MRS. LARGE: Why can't you tell them, Fred? Dear knows, p'raps they'd be able to—

She screams. Large has swung round in his chair, and struck at her with all the weight he can bring to bear. Dillon jumps forward to grab his arm.

DILLON: Large!

QUATERMASS: For heaven's sake, man, there's no need for that.

Large subsides, breathing hard. A cloudy pool is spreading across the floor from the spilt mustard bath. Quatermass turns to the trembling woman.

QUATERMASS: Have you had a doctor to him? [*She shakes her head.*] It might be a good idea.

Large quivers. Twisted veins stand out on his forehead. Quatermass turns to Dillon and indicates the door. As they start towards it, Mrs. Large follows them.

MRS. LARGE: Oh, I'm sorry—

QUATERMASS: We shouldn't have imposed ourselves.

MRS. LARGE [*whispers*]: It's not like him. It must be this chill. He must have caught it out in the field yesterday—sitting there sweaty-like—

She clicks up the latch and lets them out. Large is still glaring after them from the swathing folds of towel. She turns back to him.

MRS. LARGE: That's all it is. Just a chill. Isn't it, Fred? You'll be as right as rain in the morning . . . [*In spite of her effort to sound normal, her face is terrified.*]

Cut—to the tidy little garden in front of the cottage. Roses have been trained round the porch. Dillon and Quatermass have paused here before getting back into the car.

DILLON [*quietly*]: Sorry that was such a dead loss.

QUATERMASS: It wasn't. Pity we had to leave, but if he's given to violence, she'd only be the one to suffer.

DILLON: He's a drinker, isn't he?

QUATERMASS: Maybe.

DILLON: And of course there's always been a lot of strong superstition in country places. I mean about meteors and things. He might have resented questions.

QUATERMASS: Mm. [*After a moment.*] Didn't we pass a pub a little way back?

DILLON: Feel like a drink?

QUATERMASS: I feel like . . . talking to people.

Dissolve . . . to the public bar of a bare, unwelcoming little public-house. Two or three Labourers are watching curiously as the Landlord draws pints for Quatermass and Dillon.

LANDLORD: Fred Large? No, I hadn't heard. What's supposed to be the matter with him?

QUATERMASS: Oh, nothing very serious. A chill.

LANDLORD: You a relation of his?

QUATERMASS: No. It was just a . . . friendly visit. Passing through, we thought we'd look him up. [*Taking glasses*] Won't you have one with us?

LANDLORD: Thank you. Knew Fred from Army days, p'raps?

QUATERMASS: Something like that. [*Cautiously*] He's not a very easy chap to know. A bit touchy. Liable to fly off the handle.

LANDLORD: Fred? I wouldn't have said that. Them Larges are a steady lot, Fred more'n any. You must have said something to upset him.

QUATERMASS: I asked how he was—if he'd seen a doctor—

There is a cackle from an Old Man sitting nearby on a worn wooden settle. Quatermass turns to him . . . he looks like a typical pub comic.

LANDLORD [*humouring him*]: You behave yourself, Robert.

ROBERT [*to Quatermass*]: That might'a done it, though. Fred don't hold with doctors no more'n I do. Government men!

QUATERMASS: Who?

ROBERT: Doctors! They all work from the government, don't they?

LANDLORD [*smiling*]: So Robert's agin *them*, too.

ROBERT: When there was less government about, things was better, I know that!

The Labourers grin. The Landlord winks at Quatermass and Dillon.

DILLON: It seems this chap came across something rather odd yesterday, in a field.

LANDLORD: Odd?

QUATERMASS: A stone, or stones, that seemed to have just fallen.

LANDLORD: How fallen? Out of the sky, you mean?

A hush falls over the bar. Quatermass turns to the Labourers.

QUATERMASS: Has anybody heard of happenings like that round here? Things falling? Meteorites? Stones? Fireballs?

FIRST LABOURER: Some while back.

SECOND LABOURER: Stories.

FIRST LABOURER: Weren't just stories, mister.

Quatermass puts down his glass. There is interest in their eyes. For a moment the men seem almost eager to talk. Then the spell is rudely broken.

ROBERT [*cackles*]: It'd be the government!

There is a gust of laughter from the Labourers and the Landlord. Quatermass turns almost angrily on the culprit.

QUATERMASS: I don't think so, this time.

ROBERT [*pugnaciously*]: You reckon I'm just a silly old man, don't you?

LANDLORD: Now, now, Robert—

ROBERT: I'm not! They spoil and destroy.

QUATERMASS: Who are you talking about?

ROBERT: The government men. [*To the Landlord*], Tell 'im about Winnerden Flats.

Quatermass glances at the Landlord's grinning, stupid face, then turns again to the old man and sits beside him.

QUATERMASS: You tell me.

Dillon, too, leaves his place at the bar and joins them.

ROBERT: Well . . . it's a village. At least it was a village. Twelve . . . fifteen miles away, out on the sea. I been there many a time in my younger days. I courted a girl from Winnerden Flats. Married her . . . [*He seems to lose the thread.*]

QUATERMASS: The village?

ROBERT: Yes. Well, there was a government place there, had been for a long time. For re-search.

QUATERMASS: Research? Into what?

ROBERT: I dunno. It was a little place, just a few sheds, but it seemed to content 'em. Till last year.

QUATERMASS: What happened then?

ROBERT: All of a sudden they run mad. Tore the whole village down.

DILLON: Tore it down?

ROBERT: With them bulldozers. An' where it used to be, they're buildin' a huge, great place. Great iron things.

He demonstrates, drawing shapes in the air with his hands.

QUATERMASS: What are they?

ROBERT: It's secret. Nobody let near. Guards with guns to keep 'em away.

QUATERMASS: Guns! [*To Dillon.*] Know anything about this?

Dillon shakes his head.

ROBERT: It's a solemn fact. I knew a feller went by there one day not so long ago—they nearly set on 'im. [*He shakes his head.*] Oh, if you want funny things to happen, just leave it to the government!

QUATERMASS [*after a moment*]: Sounds like it. That was very interesting . . . very interesting indeed. By the way, what are you drinking?

ROBERT [*grins and nods at the Landlord*]: He knows.

Quatermass rises and turns to the bar. The Landlord draws Robert's pint and Quatermass pays.

QUATERMASS [*quietly*]: Is this true? About Winnerden Flats?

LANDLORD [*nodding*]: It's what they call a security area. I expect there's some good reason for it.

QUATERMASS: I expect so. [*To Dillon.*] We'd better get on our way. Good night, everyone.

Dillon follows him out. The Labourers watch them go in silence. The Landlord puts a foamy pint down in front of Robert, who is murmuring happily to himself.

ROBERT: Winnerden Flats . . . I remember goin' there fishin' sometimes when I was a young lad . . . shrimps and crabs if you'd a mind for 'em. It was nice . . . nice people . . .

Dissolve . . . to close shot of Quatermass and Dillon in the front seat of Quatermass's car. Through the rear window a bleak moorland

landscape spins by.

DILLON: D'you really think there could be any connexion?

QUATERMASS: We'll just take a look. From a distance, if you like. As I said, I don't want to run you into any trouble.

DILLON [*smiles*]: So long as I'm in civvies, they'll forgive my ignorance.

Cut—to a long shot of the car dipping into a trough in the moors, along a road bordered by ragged stone walls.

Dissolve . . . to another stretch of road, some miles further on. The going is slow here, the surface rough. Then the car comes out on to a crossing . . . on to a new, wide concrete road muddied with tyre droppings from many heavy vehicles. A large notice stands there, reading: 'Government Property, DANGER! Do Not Proceed Without Authority!' Yet a barrier of poles and barbed wire has been thrown aside as if it impeded some urgent traffic.

Cut—to the interior of the halted car.

DILLON [*studying a map*]: This seems to be a new road. It's not shown here. Well, do we take it?

QUATERMASS: We've no choice. This one seems to have faded out.

The road they have come on does not continue on the other side of the concrete surface. It has been allowed to dwindle into an overgrown track. With a glance at Dillon, Quatermass puts his foot down. The car bumps on to the new road, and swings away past the 'Government Property' sign.

Dissolve . . . to the car driving along the same concrete road, some distance further on. It comes over the crest of a low hill.

Inside it, Quatermass and Dillon are peering about the bleak landscape. As the obstructing hedge drops away on his side, Quatermass gives a sudden exclamation. He jams his foot on the brake and the car jerks to a halt. Quatermass gets out of the car, crosses to the grass verge, and stands staring down the low hill in astonishment. Dillon scrambles out to follow him, puzzled.

DILLON: Is that it, d'you suppose?

At the bottom of the hill, by the sea, is an assembly of metallic towers, machinery, and heavy piping. And looming high above all the rest, vast hemispherical domes . . . five, six, seven of them. In every respect, it exactly recalls the Moon Project.

DILLON: Surely it's just a refinery of some sort? Synthetic rubber—something like that?

QUATERMASS: I wonder.

DILLON: What else could it be?

QUATERMASS: I think I'm going mad. [*Quickly*] Let's try and get closer.

He hurries off down the hillside, with Dillon following.

DILLON: What's the matter? Won't you tell me?

QUATERMASS: It's nothing definite. A matter of . . . shapes. They remind me of something. Must be coincidence—

He comes to a halt, breathing harder. From this lower viewpoint the domes can be seen more clearly. They seem to be about two hundred feet high, but only one of them is complete. The rest are in various stages of assembly. Sections of curved steel plate hang silhouetted from tall derricks, waiting to be riveted into place.

DILLON: Hello—look at this!

Quatermass turns—and notices the ground. Bulldozed, flattened into the earth are broken bricks, laths, crumbled plaster. And smaller, more personal things show here and there as they move on—doorknobs, fragments of china ornaments, the twisted remains of a birdcage. A little way ahead, a section of broken stonework juts from the ground.

QUATERMASS: Winnerden Flats. The village.

DILLON: Completely blotted out, just as he said. But why?

QUATERMASS: Listen!

The sound is overhead . . . a curious harsh rushing in the air. They look up and about. Then it ends abruptly in a thud. Quatermass points to where a small cloud of dust is flung up from the bulldozed earth, a hundred yards or so away.

They start running towards the spot, stumbling on the uneven ground. Dillon, in the lead, comes to a puzzled halt.

DILLON: Where did it go? I've lost it—

Quatermass passes him, pointing.

QUATERMASS: Over there.

DILLON: [*following*] Stones all over the place—it's confusing—

Quatermass stoops and picks cautiously at the earth with his hands. Dillon crouches beside him.

DILLON: Is that it?

QUATERMASS: I think so.

DILLON: Perhaps you'd better let me—

QUATERMASS: I can do it!

From the direction of the plant come distant blasts on a whistle. Dillon glances round.

DILLON: Think that's meant for us?

Quatermass is not listening. He draws out a clay-caked shape, in outline almost exactly like the first . . . roughly like a flattened rain-drop.

QUATERMASS: Here it is, still warm. And in one piece! [*He picks off some of the clinging clay.*] Hold it—I want to get some measurements. They may

be valuable. Here—quick!

He pulls a notebook and a small case of instruments from his pocket. As he prepares to measure the cavity, there are raucous klaxon-blasts from inside the great plant, combined with more whistling, as if in communication.

DILLON: There's a truck coming through the gate, fast—heading this way. We'd better be ready to explain ourselves. What do we . . . ? [*He gives a sudden startled exclamation.*] Look here!

Quatermass swings round.

DILLON: It's starting to—break up!

QUATERMASS: Put it down.

Dillon does so, quickly. The surface is suddenly fissuring with small cracks, and from them come thin curls of whitish vapour. Dillon splutters.

QUATERMASS: Ammonia. That's what Large must have meant—like dirty stables.

The stone thing suddenly tumbles apart. Dillon jumps up, colliding with Quatermass. His breath whoops, choking. Quatermass catches him—and cries out.

QUATERMASS: Dillon! There's something on your face!

Fade up end music. Fade to black.

PART TWO

The Mark

Fade in . . . the approach to the Plant.

While klaxon blasts and whistles continue to sound stridently from the direction of the Plant, Quatermass supports the half-collapsed form of John Dillon.

QUATERMASS: It's gone now, but—there was something, I could swear. Like a dark bubble. [*Urgently*] Dillon, are you all right?

DILLON [*voice slurred*]: Don't know . . . don't . . .

QUATERMASS [*with a glance down at the shattered meteorite*]: At the very least, you got a lungful of ammonia gas. Take some deep breaths now—try!

Dillon shakes his head as if trying to clear it. After some strained gasps he seems to breathe more easily—then paws with a limp hand towards his face. Quatermass looks at him sharply. He swings the younger man round into the fading light—and catches his breath. In the reddened skin, there is a faint but raw-looking indentation. Curiously branched, it runs from hairline to cheekbone. Whistle blasts ring out close at hand. Quatermass turns. An Army-type multi-wheeled truck is approaching, bouncing over the battered ground. It pulls up with a screech of brakes. Men scramble out. They are clad in dark, functional uniform with glinting helmets and spreading shapes humping their backs like the wing-cases of beetles. As they come running, they swing stubby machine-carbines to the ready.

DILLON [*feebly*]: Tell them . . .

QUATERMASS: All right, Dillon.

He faces the oncoming Guards. Now the wing-cases can be made out as drably painted oxygen cylinders fastened to broad frames on their backs. Each man has a rubber mask hanging by his throat, as though ready for instant use.

QUATERMASS: I can explain why we're here, but first of all—this man's sick. He needs treatment—

But to his surprise, they pay him no attention. They look about—then the leader makes for the shattered meteorite and crouches beside it. After a moment he turns and waves. Two others, fully masked, who are manhandling a heavy cylindrical object from the truck, come to a halt and stand staring. The leader turns to Quatermass.

QUATERMASS: It broke up as we examined it. My friend's been affected in some way. That's why I need help. [*There is no response.*] Look—d'you know what these things are?

Then he sees it—curling up under the leading Guard's helmet—the same branching mark that is on Dillon's face. But on this man it is like an old wound. Quatermass looks quickly at the others. On the neck of one is the same splotched disfigurement, and across the forehead of another. Almost before he has time to react, the leader of the men has turned to Dillon, pulling him from Quatermass's supporting arms. Dillon coughs weakly. Then he is being hauled away towards the truck by two of the Guards.

QUATERMASS: Wait a minute, what do you think you're doing? Arresting him?

The Guards seem almost unaware of his existence as they turn back towards the truck. He runs after them, shouting at them.

QUATERMASS: All right—I'll go back with you and explain! I want to talk to someone in authority at that place! Listen to me—

A Guard turns and points his gun straight at Quatermass.

GUARD: You will go.

QUATERMASS: No! I'm responsible for this man, and I insist on accompanying him—

GUARD: Go back!

As Quatermass attempts to follow, he strikes at him with the gun. Quatermass gasps and staggers. The Guard slowly retreats after his companions, keeping the gun pointed at Quatermass.

QUATERMASS [*struggling for breath as he calls*]: Dillon—can you hear me? I promise you—I'll get you out of this idiotic mess—soon—

Dillon shows no sign of having heard as he is bundled into the truck. The last Guard signals to Quatermass, jerking his gun towards the upper road.

Reluctantly, shaking with anger and physical shock, Quatermass starts moving. He keeps his eyes on the truck as the last Guard climbs aboard and it turns away, back towards the Plant.

He stumbles on up the hill, breathing hard. Not far ahead his car is standing on the concrete road where they left it a few minutes before. Under his feet once again are the broken laths and rubble of the bulldozed village. A little wooden name-board catches his eye, the faded unskilled letters reading 'Ivy Cottage'. He halts. With his toe he turns up one of the stones that lie thickly over the whole area. He picks it up, looks at the pebble closely.

Then he freezes. There is a faint sound somewhere nearby. He looks about him, ready now for almost anything to happen.

A few feet away a heap of debris is moving—a mound of palings, slats and dead brushwood. A face appears. It is dirty, bewhiskered, and a battered hat is crushed down on top of it.

TRAMP: Hsst!

Quatermass stares in astonishment and mild relief for a moment, then moves across and crouches beside him.

QUATERMASS: Who are you?

TRAMP: I got no business 'ere, same as you. 'Ave they gone?

Quatermass glances round. All is silence from the direction of the Plant.

TRAMP: You was lucky they didn't pinch you too.

QUATERMASS: You were watching?

TRAMP [*nods*]: What was that thing you was after? Something that come down, wasn't it?

QUATERMASS: A . . . stone. [*As the Tramp stares blankly.*] Did you see or hear any more of them?

TRAMP: I dunno. There's lots of funny noises—

QUATERMASS: How long have you been here?

TRAMP: All day. Asleep most of it—[*He turns aside the brushwood to show the hidden nest he has made for himself.*] I come last night in the dark, woke up and seen—that! [*He nods towards the Plant.*] So I've laid low. Soon be dark again. Got a gasper?

Quatermass finds a packet of cigarettes and gives him one, glad to do the same himself.

TRAMP: I'd 'eard tales on the road about this, but I didn't believe 'em. There used to be a village 'ere, you know. Winnerden Flats—I reckoned to pass through once a year regular. There was nice people, open-'anded.

QUATERMASS [*after another wary glance down the hill*]: A year ago, the place was normal?

TRAMP: Yes. Thrivin'—a woman even give me a chicken.

QUATERMASS: There was some sort of government-run research place, wasn't there?

TRAMP: Oh—a few little huts. I didn't mind them—they didn't give me no trouble. Bit different from that! [*He nods at the Plant again.*] And it's not finished yet, you know—they got thousands of men workin' there, like an army. I seen 'em come, I seen 'em go. Bring 'em in lorries, they do.

QUATERMASS: Where from? D'you know?

TRAMP: Back along that new road. They got 'em all there in prefabs. I come through there. Wasn' no good, though. Them sort of people, they got no time for us. Workin' class! [*He spits, then stares interestedly at Quatermass.*] What you doin'?

Quatermass has picked up another small pebble, is examining it closely.

QUATERMASS: Worn and weathered by long exposure, but—

TRAMP: That's a flint.

QUATERMASS: I don't think so.

TRAMP: Course it is. They're all about the place, look. I ought to know, I been lying on 'em! [*He rubs his back, watching Quatermass as he picks up several of the pebbles and pockets them.*] You're funny about stones, aren't you? Collect 'em or something? You'll bust your nice pockets—

A long whistle-blast sounds from the Plant. Quatermass looks quickly round.

TRAMP: You better get goin'.

QUATERMASS: What about you? Want a lift?

TRAMP: I'll go my own way, guv.

Quatermass pushes the packet of cigarettes into his hand.

QUATERMASS: All right. Don't hang about here too long.

The Tramp withdraws into his nest as Quatermass hurries off up the hill.

Dissolve . . . to shot from interior of Quatermass's car, driving off the concrete road into a new-made settlement of prefabricated asbestos houses. It has an air of the strictest utility—there are no gardens or pavements, not a tree or a bush. It is dusk now, and lights show in the windows. No one is about.

Just ahead is a larger, slab-sided building with something of an official air. Reaching it, the car pulls up.

Quatermass scrambles out. The building is made, like the rest, of asbestos sheeting. A notice-board reads 'COMMUNITY CENTRE', and there is a space for announcements below. Quatermass pushes open the door and goes inside.

Cut—to the interior of the Community Centre. It is almost dark. At the far end two men are sitting at a trestle table, at work under the light of a bare bulb. Quatermass walks slowly forward. The place evidently serves for any kind of communal activity from meetings to dances. Rough wooden chairs are stacked along the walls, which themselves are covered with posters reminiscent of those used in wartime. Warning slogans read: 'TALK ABOUT YOUR JOB—LOSE IT!' 'REMEMBER—SECRET MEANS SEALED LIPS!' and 'C-H-A-T-T-E-R SPELLS CATASTROPHE!' Huge fingers on lips, and listening ears, point the message. The men by the table look up as Quatermass approaches. One of them is talking on the telephone. Thin, leather-faced, sharp-eyed, he immediately suggests the keen part-time functionary. His companion is a dull little man with his pen poised over a grubby book of figures. Quatermass addresses him.

QUATERMASS: Can you please tell me—

LITTLE MAN: Mr. Dawson won't be a moment.

He returns to his figures. Dawson nods affably to Quatermass as he goes on talking.

DAWSON [*into phone*]: Hello? . . . Not back yet? Keep a lookout for them, will you, and chase the mother along here. Tell them the kid's been wandering again and she's here. Thanks, Bob.

For the first time Quatermass notices a Small Girl sitting outside the pool of light, half hidden by a stack of chairs. Dawson puts the phone down.

DAWSON: People that can't look after their kiddies, I dunno! [*He turns to Quatermass.*] What can I do for you?

QUATERMASS: Are there any police here?

DAWSON [*blankly*]: Police?

QUATERMASS: Am I to take it by that there are none?

DAWSON [*frowning*]: You can take it what way you like, friend. We're the police in a manner of speaking. The Camp Committee.

QUATERMASS: I see. And if you run up against something you can't handle?

DAWSON: That doesn't often happen.

QUATERMASS: But surely—in a community like this? Tough construction gangs—

DAWSON: If we need it, we get police assistance from outside—

QUATERMASS: Tell me something! What is that place?

Dawson stares at him. The Little Man looks up from his figures.

DAWSON: Place?

QUATERMASS: The plant—works—factory—whatever you call it—with the steel domes! Your people are helping to build it, aren't they? What's the purpose of it?

The two men opposite him exchange glances.

DAWSON: Why d'you want to know?

QUATERMASS [*controlling his temper*]: I'm extremely worried about a friend of mine. We drove near to that place this evening—

DAWSON: Oh, did you?

QUATERMASS: He was—taken ill. Armed guards appeared and—well, he was carried away inside. They wouldn't let me go with him.

DAWSON [*tight-lipped*]: The guards, eh? It's a prohibited area. You must have known that.

QUATERMASS: But—good God, man! This is a free country in time of peace! I have certain rights and I intend to go on using them!

DAWSON: Even if they run you into trouble?

QUATERMASS [*after a moment, contempt in his voice*]: And you're supposed to represent—what? A popularly elected committee?

DAWSON: We represent people that are working on that project. And doing all right—a lot better than all right! We're asked to cooperate by keeping our traps shut, same as in the war. [*He waves a hand at the posters along the walls.*] About anything we know . . . even if that isn't much.

QUATERMASS: You seem to succeed.

DAWSON: Mister, we don't like people that make it difficult.

QUATERMASS [*exasperated*]: Very well—I admit the dreadful crime of having trodden where some bureaucrat wished me not to tread. Does that put me beyond your aid?

The direct appeal seems to soften Dawson slightly.

DAWSON: Now look here. If your friend was ill, they'd take him to the infirmary there. They've got every kind of equipment, I believe. He'd come to no harm.

QUATERMASS: Let's check that, shall we?

DAWSON: How?

QUATERMASS: Refer it to the police. I'll make a full statement to them—everything, from the very beginning, and then—[*He breaks off.*] What are you grinning at? You said you call on police help sometimes.

DAWSON: *Their* police.

QUATERMASS: What?

DAWSON: Those guards. It's a security arrangement. Well, do I ring? [*A pause.*] Mind you, I wouldn't worry. They'll send him on to another hospital if he's bad. And you'll hear all right.

QUATERMASS: Let me ring the county constabulary.

He reaches for the phone, but Dawson clamps a hand down on the receiver and shakes his head.

DAWSON: No! Honestly, they wouldn't deal.

Quatermass stares at him disbelievingly. There is a faint smile on Dawson's face, of one who is in the right and is enjoying it.

Then there is a clatter of footsteps across the bare boards and a Woman arrives at the trestle table beside Quatermass. Brightly lipsticked, turning blowzy.

WOMAN: Where is she? [*Spotting the Girl, she hurries across and pulls her from the chair.*] You bad girl! Mr. Dawson, I'm sorry—I've told her a hundred times, but it makes no difference! Where was she?

DAWSON: Heading up *there* again. Bob Rigby found her.

WOMAN: Oh, dear!

DAWSON: There'll be trouble, you know. If they catch anybody wandering round the place, particularly after dark. Nobody at all, that's the order. [*To Quatermass*] Eh, mister?

Quatermass turns away towards the door. Behind him, the Woman goes on excusing herself to Dawson.

WOMAN: I'd tan her hide for her, Mr. Dawson, only since she was sick that time—well, she's not quite the same—

Quatermass halts. The Woman is taking her leave of Dawson, towing the child towards the door. He intercepts her.

QUATERMASS: One moment, please. You said she was sick?

WOMAN [*doubtfully*]: Yes.

QUATERMASS: Tell me about it. What was the sickness?

WOMAN: You a doctor or something? It wasn't nothing much—she was out playing and she was taken queer.

QUATERMASS: When was this?

WOMAN: Oh, I dunno, a few months ago. Just after we come here. She got over it all right, didn't you, love? It's only that since then . . . well, she's a bit

sort of quiet. And she wanders. I suppose I spoiled her—

QUATERMASS: Wanders where?

WOMAN: Well, that's the funny thing. Only up there—towards the works. Isn't it, Mr. Dawson?

Dawson, watching them from his place at the trestle-table, says nothing.

QUATERMASS: Let me see her.

He kneels by the Little Girl and studies her face. The child's eyes meet his drowsily.

QUATERMASS: When she was sick, did you notice any mark on her skin?

WOMAN: You mean spots or something? Oh, no. Now look, I've got to get her home to bed—

QUATERMASS: Not spots. More like a scratch?

WOMAN: Eh? Well . . . there was a place . . . she must have caught it falling down somewhere, I reckon. You know what kids are. Show the man, love—

She pulls up the Little Girl's grubby sleeve. An inch or two above the wrist is a puckered indentation.

QUATERMASS: Yes . . .!

WOMAN [*unsure where this is leading*]: Maybe we should have put something on it, but it seemed to heal up. Never septic or anything.

QUATERMASS: D'you know of anybody else who was sick in the same way?

WOMAN: No. [*With growing suspicion.*] Look here—who are you? Are you trying to make out I'm neglecting her? [*Turns.*] Mr. Dawson—is he some kind of inspector—?

Dawson's chair scrapes back as he gets up. Quatermass speaks quickly to the child.

QUATERMASS: When you were playing, did you find something—a stone that broke up?

The drowsy eyes seem to clear into troubled recognition.

QUATERMASS: And made you cough—

Dawson comes noisily across to them.

DAWSON: Now, I'm putting a stop to this! You come in here all in a sweat to find your pal the trespasser—but you've got time to spare to go nosing into other folk's business! I think you've got a screw loose, mate. But I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Just get on your way, that's all—

QUATERMASS: Don't be a fool, man!

DAWSON [*heatedly*]: Who are you calling a fool? Now—you want to meet those guards again? I'll give you a count of three.

Impelled by outraged officiousness, he means it. Quatermass decides against further argument. He turns and goes. Dawson glowers in small triumph as the door bangs.

DAWSON: That got rid of him.

WOMAN: I reckon you were right, Mr. Dawson. He did have a screw loose . . .

Track in on the face of the Little Girl, blank, dead, staring.

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to a laboratory at the Rocket Group.

The meteorite fragments brought here by Dillon are scattered over the bench where a Laboratory Assistant is working. He has a thin section cut from one of the fragments, deftly touching it to the polishing wheel mounted on a small electric motor. Also in front of him are bottles of chemicals, and porcelain dishes. A few feet away along the bench, Pugh is examining what appears to be a plaster cast of the whole meteorite.

LAB. ASSISTANT: Dr. Pugh—ready for the test.

PUGH: Oh, good. [*He pulls a protective sheet of heavy plastic over his casts, and joins the Assistant.*] Not a bad section you've got there.

LAB. ASSISTANT [*pouring contents of a bottle into a flat dish*]: It's the biggest I could manage. Hope it'll do.

He places the section in the dish, working the liquid over it with a soft brush. Behind them, Paula comes into the room with a folder in her hand.

PAULA: Leo, I've gone back over the . . . oh, sorry.

PUGH: All right, we're just testing for Widmanstatten shapes. If we get the right pattern etching out on this, we'll know it's genuine meteorite. No word from your father yet?

PAULA: No.

PUGH: I wonder what he's up to. They've been gone a long time . . .

The Laboratory Assistant lifts the section from the liquid. He shows it to Pugh.

LAB. ASSISTANT: Nothing.

PAULA: Then it isn't a real one?

PUGH: It *may* not be. Same with the fact that it's hollow—that *can* happen in nature. You see, it's all pretty negative. Did you get anything from the records?

He crosses to another bench, where she opens the folder and takes out long strips of computer-card, folded concertina-wise.

PAULA: I did as you said—went through all our range-time cards of meteor falls.

PUGH: The whole of the last two years?

PAULA: Three.

PUGH: Ah . . . even better. And?

She passes him a strip of folded card.

PAULA: Here's the master-strip. All oscillograph traces compared and collated. The translations marked up.

PUGH: Admirable . . .

PAULA: It shows nothing but the normal, seasonal meteor showers.

PUGH: Oh.

He frowns at the strip.

PAULA: So then . . . I wondered if it was worth making a recheck. It struck me it might be an idea to put it all through again, to see if there was any pattern in the rejects.

PUGH [*absently*]: The rejects . . .

PAULA: The very faintest echoes.

PUGH: Oh dear—that's getting wild. They're rejected for a good reason. They may be nothing at all, just fluctuations in background interference—

PAULA: Anyway, I did it.

PUGH: Eh?

PAULA: Look at this.

She passes him a second folded strip. Pugh studies it. He sits down slowly on a stool. As he unfolds the length, she points out something on it. He peers in concentration. Then he nods slowly.

PUGH [*impressed*]: It might be.

The door opens. Quatermass comes in. He is unbuttoning his raincoat, and looks dishevelled and tired. They stare at him.

PAULA: Father! Did you find out anything?

QUATERMASS: Some.

PAULA [*after a moment*]: Where's Johnny?

He says nothing. She comes towards him, her alarm rising.

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to the same, a short time later. Quatermass is pacing up and down. His daughter and Leo Pugh sit listening.

QUATERMASS: I didn't leave it at that, of course. I went to the county police, got hold of the Chief Constable. He was very polite—told me he'd no power to deal with the case.

PUGH: So your little man at the community centre was right? It's fantastic!

QUATERMASS: Strict instructions from London, apparently. Oh, the police were decent enough—promised to find out what they could. Through normal channels! Paula, do you think I left him in the lurch?

PAULA: No. There was nothing more you could have done.

PUGH: Whatever happens, that boy's in a spot. When they find out he went against orders to come here and—

PAULA: That doesn't matter! What's important is . . . [*to Quatermass*] . . . what do you think is wrong with him?

QUATERMASS [*trying not to sound evasive*]: I told you—he was affected by this—gas. Paula, why don't you try phoning his unit? They may have heard something.

PAULA: He was at a temporary training post. Still, there may be some way . . . I'll see.

She goes out. As soon as the door closes behind her, Quatermass turns to Pugh.

QUATERMASS: It wasn't just gas, Leo, that came out of that thing.

PUGH: What?

QUATERMASS: I'm certain there was something . . . else. For a moment I saw it clinging to his face. Then it had gone, like a soap bubble bursting. It wasn't unlike a bubble . . . and it left a mark. [*After a moment*] D'you think I imagined it?

PUGH: No. No, I don't.

He gets up and turns to the computer cards.

PUGH: We've been busy here, you know. Scratching round for anything to give us a lead . . . but we got nothing till your daughter went a bit crazy and tried the rejected meteor-traces. Look here. [*He shows Quatermass the second strip.*] Whatever made those moved far too *slowly* to be meteorites.

QUATERMASS: What's the date?

PUGH: It lasted several weeks . . . [*pointing along the strip*] . . . between thirteen and fourteen months ago.

QUATERMASS: Dillon said his sergeant swore to something like this. Weak radar signals.

PUGH: At this time?

QUATERMASS: Yes. And to complete the coincidence, that was when the big scare was on, about flying objects.

PUGH: Mind you, it stopped then. See? After those weeks, there's nothing more.

QUATERMASS: As a widespread phenomenon, it stopped. But suppose that in one particular area . . . Well, here's something else for testing.

He starts unloading his pockets, placing the battered pebbles on the bench in front of Pugh.

PUGH: Where did you get these?

QUATERMASS: The same place. They pretty well covered the ground there.

PUGH: Considerably weathered but . . . I think it's the same stuff. [*He turns and calls to the Laboratory Assistant, who is working at the other end of the room.*] Will! Another job for you! [*To Quatermass.*] These must have been lying in the open a long time, through a lot of sun and rain.

QUATERMASS: How long?

Pugh looks at him and nods.

PUGH: And through frost, [*As the Laboratory Assistant comes up, he turns to him.*] Test these—see if they're the same material as the first one.

LAB. ASSISTANT: Right, sir.

PUGH: Oh, before you start, what about another look at that toy of yours? D'you mind?

LAB. ASSISTANT [*embarrassed*]: It wasn't meant to be taken very seriously.

PUGH: All the same, I think that now we might pay it a little more regard.

The Laboratory Assistant grins and goes to uncover the plaster casts. Pugh follows with Quatermass.

PUGH: I had a cast made of the one Dillon brought. Then we wondered—suppose it had got bashed about, melted, generally damaged when it slammed into our atmosphere? So Will worked out a little reconstruction . . .

The Laboratory Assistant holds up a plaster model. The flattened raindrop shape of the original has been extended into thick stub wings. Its whole appearance has been cleaned up.

LAB. ASSISTANT: It goes a bit far, I expect, but it's not just a guess. It's based on the mineral stresses.

QUATERMASS: If something like this approached at the right angle, and not too fast—

PUGH: Exactly! It might skim through the Earth's atmosphere instead of breaking up—lose speed gradually in braking ellipses—

QUATERMASS: The same principle as rocket descent. But that's the result of knowledge, mathematics . . . precise planning . . .

He looks at Pugh.

PUGH: Sum it up. Say the frightening word. Say—intelligence.

Fade in music. The Laboratory Assistant looks from one to the other, uneasily. Then the door opens. It is Paula.

QUATERMASS: Any news?

PAULA [*shakes her head*]: All I found out was—he couldn't have gone back to that training unit, anyway. It's just been transferred.

QUATERMASS [*sharply*]: The radar post? Taken from that position?

PAULA: You think that means anything?

QUATERMASS: Probably not. I . . . I'm going to London in the morning, to see what I can find out. [*He notices her eyes are on the cast.*] Don't pay any attention to that—it's just a bit of idle speculation, isn't it, Leo?

She picks up the Reconstruction. As its significance strikes her, her face pales.

PAULA: Tell me. What really happened there?

Fade up music to full . . .

Dissolve . . . to Trafalgar Square, London. Pan from one of the Landseer lions, with its air of solid normality, to where Quatermass's car is turning down into Whitehall.

Cut—to the archway leading to New Scotland Yard. Quatermass's car turns in and enters.

Dissolve . . . to Scotland Yard office. With ill-concealed impatience, Quatermass is facing an affable, white-haired Chief Detective Inspector.

INSPECTOR: Had you particularly wanted to see Inspector Lomax?

QUATERMASS: I happen to know him. But they tell me he's no longer with the Yard?

INSPECTOR: Oh, there are always changes. Many changes. Look at me—past what used to be retiring age, recalled from pasture. When I tell my little grandson I've met you, Professor, I'll go up several points in his estimation. Anything to do with rockets, he's mad about—

QUATERMASS: I hope I'm not going to embarrass you with this query.

INSPECTOR: Not easy, sir. Try me, eh? [*Genially.*] I must say, you make me wonder what it's going to be!

Quatermass gives him a doubtful look. The man is obviously a decent old dugout who has rusted in retirement and lost all sense of urgency, and would be happier pottering in his garden at home.

QUATERMASS: Yesterday evening I'm afraid I drove into what turned out to be a prohibited area.

INSPECTOR [*mildly interested*]: Oh yes? What was it—one of these Army ranges? [*The phone rings on his desk.*] Excuse me. [*Into phone*] Danvers speaking . . . Who? What's it about? . . . [*He frowns, evidently struggling with his memory.*] Oh, that embezzlement—of course. Take a statement from him, sergeant. I won't be long. [*He puts the phone down and turns to Quatermass.*] Sorry about that. Go on.

QUATERMASS: I admit I may have been technically in the wrong.

INSPECTOR [*smiling*]: Who isn't, these days, half the time? We'll assume you didn't go there as an enemy agent, Professor Quatermass.

QUATERMASS: When we got near the plant, my companion and I got out of the car and—

INSPECTOR: One moment . . . just jot the facts down. The plant, you said. Where exactly was this?

QUATERMASS: A place called Winnerden Flats.

The Inspector frowns again. Slowly, the geniality is replaced by a troubled expression. He clears his throat.

INSPECTOR: I'm sorry, sir. I can't help you.

QUATERMASS: You don't understand—I believe there's need for investigation—

INSPECTOR [*rising*]: I can't do anything. It comes under a special authority—you know how these things are.

QUATERMASS: But what is it?

INSPECTOR: I don't know. And even if I did—[*He is uneasy and embarrassed.*] Look, sir—you must have your own contacts up and down Whitehall? Why don't you use them—they might help you.

He is suddenly in a hurry to get rid of his visitor. He picks up Quatermass's brief-case and conducts him to the door.

QUATERMASS: Very well, I'll try that.

INSPECTOR: Yes. The best way, I'm sure . . .

In the doorway, Quatermass sees the ageing face is pale. Whatever the man has heard about the place, it is nothing good.

Dissolve . . . to a close shot of 'in' and 'out' trays on a massive desk. Pan across, past a small tea-tray with used cups, to where the original meteorite fragments lie on a leather-trimmed blotting pad. Quatermass's brief-case is beside them, flap open.

The office is that of a senior civil servant, Fowler, who is now pacing worriedly up and down his grade-matched carpet. He is a man who conducts himself with vigorous formality, but genuine warmth of personality keeps breaking through.

Quatermass sits watching. Fowler pauses in his pacing to take another look at what lies on his desk.

QUATERMASS: Well? Haven't you any reaction, man?

Fowler gnaws his lip for a moment. Then he turns abruptly and snaps down the switch on his inter-office speaker.

FOWLER [*into speaker*]: I want you to get into touch with Mr. Vincent Broadhead. He should be in the lower conference room, I think . . . 443, isn't it? Find out if they're having a recess and ask him to come up here as soon as he can. [*He turns to Quatermass.*] Was that a sufficiently dramatic response?

QUATERMASS: Sufficiently dramatic . . . ? Fowler, I hope you're not taking this lightly.

FOWLER: On the contrary, I'm going rather beyond the limits.

QUATERMASS: Who's this man you're calling in?

FOWLER: You'll see. Meanwhile . . . there's something I'd just like to get clear in my mind.

QUATERMASS: Go ahead.

FOWLER [*hesitates*]: Quatermass . . . we've had dealings for quite a few years. You the irresistible driving force of a great enterprise of the future . . . bearing down on the immovable object, me. Well, not quite immovable, though the sedentary years take their toll . . . but I'll take a bet that you've often cursed me for typical civil-servantism? Too busy looking after the pennies to get the good of the pounds?

QUATERMASS [*uncomfortably*]: My dear Fowler—

FOWLER: You must have done. By the way, how is everything at the Rocket Group?

QUATERMASS: I deliberately haven't referred to that.

FOWLER: I wish you would. How's it going?

QUATERMASS: Badly, since that disaster on test.

FOWLER: You'll be coming to us for extra funds?

QUATERMASS: And you'll refuse them.

FOWLER: We've been cutting you down, I don't deny. Not of our choice, of course—the decision lies elsewhere.

QUATERMASS: It always does.

FOWLER: It's policy to support a number of projects. [*A pause.*] That makes them, in a sense, your rivals.

QUATERMASS: What are you driving at?

FOWLER [*diffidently*]: It could be said that . . . to come with such a curious account about a rival project . . .

QUATERMASS: Are you serious!

FOWLER: For your own sake, Quatermass, I must put it to you.

QUATERMASS: I'd no idea that place came under this Ministry till you told me a quarter of an hour ago! Want me to swear it?

FOWLER: I'm sorry. Of course I accept that.

The genuine apology in his tone softens Quatermass's annoyance.

QUATERMASS: And now . . . what is it?

FOWLER: Strictly between these walls?

QUATERMASS: Of course.

FOWLER: The plant at Winnerden Flats is to make synthetic food.

QUATERMASS [*staggered*]: Synthetic food!

FOWLER: So you see, it should be harmless enough.

QUATERMASS: But those guards and guns . . . ?

FOWLER: I've no personal knowledge of it. It's the responsibility of an entirely different section of the Ministry. A new, special section.

QUATERMASS [*noticing his tone*]: You don't like it either?

FOWLER: Like it? I expect I'm too set in my ways . . . [*Suddenly*] But there's nothing you can pin down! Just . . . oh, a face in the corridor, someone who seems not to know you any more . . . some odd, overheard phrase . . . unexplained transfers . . . petty mysteries that never get cleared up . . .

A buzzer sounds on his desk. He presses down a switch and the voice of his secretary comes through the speaker.

FOWLER: Thank you. [*To Quatermass*] Broadhead's on his way up.

QUATERMASS: Now perhaps you'll tell me who he is.

FOWLER: An M.P. Prominent back-bencher. Don't you read your newspapers?

QUATERMASS: Not intensively.

FOWLER: He's usually in them—a rugged individualist or a damned irresponsible, according to which. I've known him for years. He's a talker. Just now

he's engaged in a sort of one-man inquiry that he's managed to force.

QUATERMASS: Inquiry?

FOWLER: He's ahead of you. It's into Winnerden Flats!

Cut—to the adjoining office, where Fowler's Secretary looks up as a heavily-built man with a pugnacious eye pushes into the room. He carries a zip-case under his arm.

BROADHEAD [*he is a Northerner*]: Mr. Fowler's expecting me.

SECRETARY: Oh, yes, sir. [*She rises quickly and turns to the inner door, opens it.*] Mr. Broadhead's here.

Broadhead is wiping his face and neck with a handkerchief as Fowler appears in the doorway.

BROADHEAD: What's this about, Fowler? Something worth-while? I hope you realize how little time I've got—

FOWLER [*steering him in*]: Here's someone I think you ought to meet . . .

The Secretary closes the door behind them.

Dissolve . . . to Fowler's office, a few minutes later. Broadhead has one of the stony fragments in his hand, turning it over and over.

BROADHEAD: And all this happened last night?

QUATERMASS: All that I was personally concerned with—yes.

BROADHEAD: I don't know what to make of it. I thought I was dealing with oddness enough already.

QUATERMASS: You mean at the inquiry?

BROADHEAD [*nods, glancing at his watch*]: Resuming in five minutes.

QUATERMASS: What sort of oddness?

Instead of answering, Broadhead gives him a long, doubtful look. The hovering Fowler glances uncomfortably from one to the other.

BROADHEAD [*sighs*]: All this stuff about . . . No, it's too much to take.

QUATERMASS: Give me credit for some expert knowledge.

BROADHEAD: That's what I mean. A specialist tends to see everything in his own light. Still, if a sick man was arrested—I'll try to use that.

QUATERMASS: Who are at this inquiry?

FOWLER [*moved to intervene*]: Quatermass, I think that has to be a matter of—

BROADHEAD: Let him ask it. I've been sickened of secrecy this morning. [*He swings, bear-like, round to Quatermass.*] Just members of the controlling commission—and me! It's to be a strictly confidential report—and the fight I had to get even that, you wouldn't believe. Through a technical loophole in the end.

QUATERMASS: And you're finding out what you want?

BROADHEAD: Am I hell! I've never struck anything like it. Sheer cold evasiveness. Not a single direct answer—nothing that makes sense, anyway. I thought I knew the form on official stonewalling, but this—! [*There is more than exasperation in his voice. He brings out his handkerchief and mops his face again.*] D'you know what Winnerden Flats is?

Quatermass glances at the uneasy Fowler.

QUATERMASS: Rumour says synthetic food.

BROADHEAD: Ay. Supposed to be a revolutionary process. They've been picking away at it for years, you know, on a small scale. And now all of a sudden—bingo! They've got it!

QUATERMASS: When?

BROADHEAD: About a year ago.

Quatermass stiffens in his chair.

BROADHEAD: Then it was a headlong rush to get a factory built. Tremendous, mad costs. Now they're nearly ready to start production—any day, apparently. But this is the point! There's not a sign of any distribution set-up—no sales organization—nothing! Trust scientists for that! They're still trapped in their own damned secrecy, only I can't make them see it. [*He gives a snort of disgust.*] Secrecy! Look at this . . .

He opens his zip-case and pulls out a handful of papers, fumbles among them for a moment, then throws a large photographic print down on the desk. Quatermass and Fowler move in.

QUATERMASS: Surely it's . . . the plant?

BROADHEAD: That's right—an aerial photograph. Now how about this one?

He places another print in front of them.

QUATERMASS: The same . . . at a much earlier stage, I'd say. It's a rather bad print.

BROADHEAD: It needed a lot of enlarging. It was taken a couple of weeks ago from a plane over central Brazil.

Quatermass stares at him.

FOWLER: Are you sure?

He studies the prints again, comparing them. Then Broadhead drops a third photograph on top.

BROADHEAD: And this.

QUATERMASS [*quickly*]: Where?

BROADHEAD: That one's in Sweden. Not much doubt about it, is there? Others are in on this so-called revolutionary process. They've got competitors before they've even started.

Fowler nods, turns to Quatermass for his reaction—and sees the fear in his face.

QUATERMASS: No—that's not it. [*He catches the big man by the arm.*] Broadhead, take me with you! I must get into that inquiry!

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to the conference room. It is a large, gloomy chamber, panelled in dark wood. Just as a sick-room seems to produce an emanation of its own, above and separate from the odours of disease . . . so, in its way, does this dim place.

Down its centre is a long table. On it are a scatter of scribbling pads, and drinking water. The Commission Members are resuming their seats. There are five or six of them. As they sit, their faces are half in shadow. The low, weak lighting is directed down the centre of the table.

Heads turn as Broadhead enters, followed by Quatermass. He goes to his seat at the end of the table.

BROADHEAD: All present, gentlemen? Before we go on . . . this is Professor Quatermass. I've—er—I've asked him to attend. He has certain information I wish to bring forward.

There is no objection, no reaction at all from the impassive faces before him. Quatermass pulls a chair forward and takes his place beside Broadhead. He studies the faces as Broadhead opens his zip-case and sorts his papers. Experience of difficult committees has taught him the signs of indifference and apathy. This is something more positive.

BROADHEAD: Now—have you considered what I put to you before the recess? A leakage of information? In spite of all precautions . . . in spite of what seem quite *excessive* precautions? [*He picks up the prints.*] Will you please look at these aerial photographs once again?

He tosses the photographs along the table. Eyes turn to them, but there is no move to pick them up.

BROADHEAD [*his temper rising*]: Would you mind passing them round? You, sir—

He is addressing the man before whom the prints have come to rest . . . a small, lean figure hunched over a notepad on which he is doodling an endless, compulsive pattern. The Doodling Man's pencil comes to a stop. He looks slowly up and the light strikes his face. Running from beneath his jaw up over his chin . . . is the branched mark. Huge and unmistakable.

Track in on him fast.

Fade in end music. Fade to black.

PART THREE

The Food

Fade in . . . the conference room.

His eyes fixed on the Doodling Man, Quatermass nudges Broadhead.

QUATERMASS [*quietly*]: Can I speak to you for a moment—it's urgent.

BROADHEAD: Oh? Well . . . excuse me, gentlemen.

He rises and moves aside with Quatermass to a corner of the room. Quatermass keeps his voice down to a whisper, conscious of the watchers round the table.

QUATERMASS: Do you know that man?

BROADHEAD: Only met him this morning.

QUATERMASS: That mark on his face—it's what I was telling you about. I've seen it before, several times. On young Dillon, on a child, and I believe on some of the guards—

BROADHEAD: But this man? Here in the room now?

QUATERMASS: I'd swear it. He at least . . .

After a moment, Broadhead nods towards the table and they return to their places. Broadhead glances at the watching men uncomfortably.

BROADHEAD [*as if feeling the need to explain their consultation*]: Er—Professor Quatermass was concerned about the propriety of his presence here while I was putting questions on other matters. I've reassured him. [*He sits.*] Now . . . the second point I want to take up is . . . what does anyone here know about—er—external dangers to the Plant? Perhaps even missiles directed at it?

Heads stir. Even Quatermass turns quickly, suddenly wondering whether the man has misunderstood.

QUATERMASS [*quietly, in his ear*]: Broadhead—that isn't what I meant—

BROADHEAD [*mutters*]: Just get that stuff out that you brought! [*He taps the table.*] Right here.

Quatermass picks up his brief-case.

BROADHEAD: What is about to be produced is the remains of something that fell two days ago within a short distance of the Plant at Winnerden Flats!

Quatermass lays the meteorite fragments one by one on the table. The members of the controlling commission peer at them.

QUATERMASS: There is reason to believe that things of this nature can be directed through the atmosphere—to a specific point—

BROADHEAD: In this case—to, or at, the Plant!

There is a slight movement among the listeners round the table. The Doodling Man's pencil again comes to a stop.

QUATERMASS [*cautiously*]: They may constitute some form of . . . of carrier. Containing poisonous gases and also possibly . . . infection.

The ripple of interest grows stronger. The Doodling Man's marked face trembles. Troubled eyes turn to Quatermass. But then Broadhead blunders loudly in.

BROADHEAD: Hear that? Infection! From what I can gather about the manufacture of synthetic foodstuffs, you're dealing with delicate organic gels and cultures. Can't those be infected?

QUATERMASS [*quickly*]: Broadhead, it isn't that—

BROADHEAD [*sharply*]: Leave this to me!

QUATERMASS: But the whole point—

BROADHEAD [*through his teeth*]: I think I've got the point of this! I doubt if you have. [*He turns to the Doodling Man.*] You sir—as chief biochemist to the Commission, will you honour us with an opinion?

Quatermass can only sit helplessly, dismayed by this turn.

Broadhead has obviously settled for a simpler interpretation. Getting no response from the Doodling Man, he goes plunging on.

BROADHEAD: No? Nothing? What I'm trying to establish, gentlemen, is the clear possibility of a threat to your process. Only by stripping away this excessive and ridiculous secrecy can we find out how serious it is. [*He points to the fragments on the table.*] Has anything like this been found inside the Plant? [*He gives a sigh of impatience.*] I know this inquiry's been strenuously resisted, and you may resent being here, but . . . I must ask for your cooperation. A picture is beginning to form, however sketchily, of a unique process which is no longer unique and—to take in all the implications—may even be in danger. If this should prove to be—

He breaks off. His audience is no longer paying any attention. All eyes are on Quatermass, who has brought something else from his brief-case . . . what appears to be a complete, unbroken meteorite. There is sudden awe in the watching faces, like the revival of some forgotten terror.

BROADHEAD: What's going on?

The Doodling Man half-rises in his place. His fingers go to the indented mark on his jaw. There are murmurs, a small stifled moan somewhere further along the table. The Doodling Man's shaking fingers go out towards the thing . . . then draw back doubtfully.

QUATERMASS: Yes, this is a model. A plaster facsimile, coloured and surfaced. Nothing more. [*He studies the Doodling Man.*] When did you encounter a thing like this?

The Doodling Man draws a deep, shuddering breath and holds it, like an asthmatic. His eyes are bright now, and full on Quatermass.

QUATERMASS: When . . . did they come?

The Doodling Man is struggling. A trickle of moisture runs from his lips as he tries to speak. His eyes are like a prisoner's.

DOODLING MAN [*whispers*]: If I could—could tell you—!

He shudders. It is as if his strength has suddenly gone. Something like an angry murmur runs round the table, but there are no words in it. Heads come forward into the light. The Doodling Man sinks weakly down in his seat. The moment is over. Broadhead turns to Quatermass.

BROADHEAD: You'd better go.

QUATERMASS: Another word with you alone—

BROADHEAD: No. Leave this to me. I can handle it. Please go.

Quatermass pushes the plaster cast and the fragments back into his brief-case. He gets up and goes to the door. A last glance round shows they are all staring at him. The Doodling Man's expression is lost, hopeless. And his pencil, almost of its own volition, is at work again on the pad in front of him, tracing an endless pattern . . .

Dissolve . . . to Fowler's office. Fowler is sitting at his desk, smoking a pipe. Quatermass is nearby.

FOWLER: Mm . . . you certainly stuck your neck out. Frankly, I'm not surprised Broadhead asked you to leave—you might have folded the whole inquiry up on him. I mean, you'd no right to ask questions.

QUATERMASS: None at all.

FOWLER: And you must admit the response you got was pretty indefinite.

QUATERMASS: Very well, on the level of simple fact—

FOWLER: For a scientist, isn't that the only level?

Quatermass does not answer. After a moment he glances at his watch.

QUATERMASS: It's twenty minutes since I came up here. Can we ring the conference room?

FOWLER: Well—

QUATERMASS [*urgently*]: Please try.

FOWLER [*snapping down the switch of the inner-office speaker*]: Get on to room 443, please . . . Mr. Broadhead. [*Turns to Quatermass.*] You've thought of something else to tell him?

QUATERMASS: No. It was those last few minutes I was there. Few seconds, really.

FOWLER: What happened?

QUATERMASS: I was afraid, Fowler.

FOWLER: Afraid? Why on earth—

QUATERMASS [*a ghost of a smile*]: Why on earth . . . Perhaps I was discovering new depths in myself—or streaks. At any rate, I was suddenly and sharply aware—of menace.

Fowler studies him in silence. The buzzer sounds. He presses the switch.

FOWLER: Yes? [*The speaker quacks.*] No reply?

He glances up—and sees Quatermass already making for the door. He quickly follows.

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to the conference room. Pan across empty, displaced chairs . . . to where Broadhead is slumped in his chair, eyes half-closed.

The door opens and Quatermass hurries in with Fowler at his heels. He makes straight for the collapsed man.

QUATERMASS: Broadhead!

FOWLER: What's wrong with him?

He pulls Broadhead's lolling weight round. Then he pauses, sniffing the air.

QUATERMASS: It's dispersed now, but—

FOWLER: Yes. Ammonia gas.

QUATERMASS [*shaking the man gently*]: Broadhead . . . what happened? [*He catches sight of something, and pulls the collar aside from the thick neck.*] Look at this!

Fowler peers. Like a complex weal, the mark runs down towards the collar-bone.

FOWLER: That's it—you're sure? [*As Quatermass nods.*] But how could it possibly—?

QUATERMASS: I've no idea. Except that whatever did it was probably in here with them—the whole time.

FOWLER: Something—alive?

QUATERMASS: In a kind of container, perhaps—

FOWLER: Think he can tell us?

Quatermass pours water into a glass.

FOWLER [*taking it*]: Let me. He knows me—that may help. [*He puts the glass to the man's lips.*] Broadhead.

The big man splutters. Water trickles down his chest.

FOWLER: It's Fowler, old man. Now listen—are you able to say what happened? At the inquiry? You're going to make a report, you know that. What did you find out?

The blurred eyes look vaguely up. Then Broadhead is seized with a fit of coughing.

QUATERMASS: It's no good. Better get hold of a doctor.

FOWLER: Yes—

He hurries to the telephone on a table at the side of the room. While he impatiently rattles the receiver rest up and down, Quatermass attends to the sick man.

FOWLER [*into the phone*]: Hello! Hello . . . !

At a slight sound, Quatermass turns his head. A man is standing in the open doorway. Even without the leather case he holds, something about him would immediately suggest a doctor. Behind him in the corridor are two men in uniform . . . Ambulance Attendants.

QUATERMASS [*quietly*]: All right, Fowler . . . they're here.

Fowler looks round in surprise. He puts the receiver back on the rest as the Doctor comes forward into the room, and the Ambulance Attendants follow.

FOWLER: Someone sent for you?

DOCTOR: A few minutes ago.

Quatermass sees the questions forming up in Fowler's mind. Before he can ask them, he speaks quickly himself.

QUATERMASS: We didn't realize—we just happened to be passing, looked in and found this chap. I hope it's nothing serious . . . we'll leave you.

He steers Fowler out past the watching eyes . . . and closes the door.

The Doctor turns to Broadhead and loosens his collar. If he sees the mark, he does not react . . .

Cut—to the corridor outside. Fowler is staring at Quatermass in complete astonishment.

FOWLER: Surely you're not implying that they too—

QUATERMASS: No questions. I want your help, Fowler. To get to the Plant—inside it. Right away.

Fowler blinks. Then he nods.

FOWLER: I'll do my best . . . give me an hour. In the meantime you'd better get out of here.

QUATERMASS: Where can we meet?

FOWLER: There's a dreary little tea-shop . . . hardly a creature seems to set foot in it nowadays . . .

Dissolve . . . to interior of tea-shop. In a backwater not far from Whitehall, its genteel poverty is more suggestive of a small provincial town. Dead flies lie among hardening home-made cakes on paper doilies. The age of plastics has passed it by.

A single sad Waitress appears, with a pot of tea on a tray. She shuffles across to where Quatermass is sitting alone, with used tea-things already in front of him. He is the only customer in the place.

WAITRESS: Here we are, sir.

QUATERMASS: Thank you.

WAITRESS [*changing the tea-things*]: I like to see somebody that enjoys a good drink of tea. Of course, it's thirsty weather, isn't it? Oh, you've still got some milk left—will it do you?

QUATERMASS: Yes, yes. [*He glances at his watch.*]

WAITRESS: Things are very quiet today.

QUATERMASS: Yes.

WAITRESS: Not that we're ever very lively. It's the coffee bars, you know—they did a lot of harm. Mind you, it's just a fashion, people'll realize that in the end—

The door opens. It is Fowler, who is followed by another, younger man of slight build.

QUATERMASS [*relieved*]: I'm glad to see you. [*To the Waitress*] Will you bring some more, please?

WAITRESS: Pot for two. Anything to eat?

FOWLER: No—no thanks. [*As she goes, he turns to Quatermass.*] Sorry to keep you waiting—we just couldn't get here any sooner. This is Rupert Ward . . . Professor Quatermass.

WARD: How d'you do, sir.

Quatermass shakes his hand. He is a fair, fresh-faced youth.

FOWLER: Ward is in public relations. [*After a moment*] He's been to the Plant.

QUATERMASS: What—inside it?

FOWLER: Several times.

Quatermass studies Ward, who gives an embarrassed grin. Keeping his eyes on the young man, he picks up his brief-case.

WARD [*to Fowler*]: It's top secret—how much am I supposed to say?

FOWLER: I'll answer for Quatermass.

WARD [*to Quatermass*]: I gather from Mr. Fowler that you've some rather odd notions about the place?

FOWLER [*quickly*]: I'd no time to go into details—

Quatermass opens the brief-case and takes out the facsimile meteorite. He puts it on the table in front of Ward.

QUATERMASS: Does that mean anything to you?

WARD [*evidently puzzled*]: No. Should it? [*He picks the cast up without ceremony.*] Made of plaster, isn't it?

QUATERMASS [*relaxing*]: Yes, that's all. Forget it. Now—tell me some more.

FOWLER: Ward was attached to the special section—for temporary duties.

QUATERMASS: How many visits did you make?

WARD: Half a dozen or so.

QUATERMASS: Alone?

WARD [*after a glance at Fowler*]: No. I took parties down there.

QUATERMASS: Parties?

FOWLER: It seems to have been quite a regular procedure.

WARD: They were mostly politicians. A few outside people—journalists and so on. Some of them pretty well-known. [*To Fowler*] Do I give names?

QUATERMASS: No matter. They were shown the Plant?

WARD: Not by me. I'm no scientist—I can't tell one of those places from another. I just handed my charges over.

QUATERMASS: You left them there?

WARD: That was the arrangement. I suppose they came back with somebody else.

Quatermass looks at Fowler. The Waitress arrives with more tea-things.

WAITRESS: Here you are, gentlemen. Sure you wouldn't fancy any cakes or anything? Toast?

Quatermass shakes his head. She puts down the tray and goes. A look of half-amused incredulity is growing on Ward's face.

WARD: Look here—you don't imagine anything happened to those people? Good lord, they've all turned up again. [*He looks from one to the other.*] I mean . . . there's no doubt about it. You read and hear of them every day—

QUATERMASS: What were they to be shown? D'you know?

WARD: I don't think there was much operating at that time, apart from a sort of pilot plant.

QUATERMASS: They were taken there?

WARD: I suppose so. I never went into it myself—

QUATERMASS: Perhaps . . . you were lucky. [*As Ward's smile fades*] Didn't anything about this strike you as being at all odd?

WARD: P. R. routines can be pretty odd. I don't make the decisions—

QUATERMASS: No. You're just a pleasant, sensible chap. No nonsense. You'd arouse no suspicions.

WARD [*to Fowler*]: What's he talking about? [*As Fowler does not reply*] As if I were guilty of something! Good heavens, there were others doing the same job—

QUATERMASS: Have you still got your pass?

WARD [*hesitates*]: Yes.

QUATERMASS: You're going to use it again. Today.

WARD: I don't understand, quite—

QUATERMASS: You're taking another party to the Plant. Me. And Fowler. [*Fowler nods.*] He'll back you up if necessary.

WARD [*shaken*]: This is absolutely against all—

FOWLER: Better explain some of it.

Quatermass glances round the tea-shop. It is still empty. The Waitress is sitting at the back, absorbed in knitting.

QUATERMASS: All right. The object I showed you just now is a model of something that's been falling near the Plant. I'm having them investigated by my own people . . .

Dissolve . . . to the Rocket Group observatory.

Very different from the older conception of the word, this observatory is a windowless chamber filled with electronic apparatus in neat steel casings. There are computers, control panels . . . and the scanning tubes fed by the radio-telescope outside on the hill.

Leo Pugh is sitting at a desk beside one of the computer-units. A scatter of papers lies in front of him. He turns to snatch a card as it is discharged from the computer, and makes a quick comparison. He swears under his breath, scrabbles the card and other papers into a ball.

Paula comes into shot.

PAULA: Another blind alley?

PUGH: Yes! [*He wipes a hand across his face.*] We're in a kind of mathematical no-man's-land. We're letting the figures lead us by the nose until we get to where they don't make sense any longer! [*He snatches up papers covered with graphs and calculations.*] Half a dozen theories and not one of them works!

PAULA: But why? I thought you were sure—

PUGH: What am I sure about? Tell me. I'd like to know.

PAULA [*hesitantly*]: That these things must have come from outside the earth's atmosphere . . .

PUGH: Go on! And have been coming continuously for well over a year, if our evidence is correct. That's a long time to stay unobserved, isn't it?

PAULA: Unobserved? But they weren't. We know there were all those reports early last year—and the radar unit tracked them a couple of days ago and

She breaks off. Pugh is shaking his head wearily.

PUGH: I don't mean the meteorites.

PAULA: What then?

PUGH: Their point of origin, of course . . . whatever it is that they're coming from! In that time, why hasn't it been spotted by every amateur with a six-inch telescope?

She looks blankly at him. He sighs.

PUGH: Oh my dear . . . I was giving you credit for having grasped that much. It must be near the earth! [*He ruffles the papers again.*] That's the one fact

that does emerge clearly and finally out of this lot. Simple, isn't it? All we have to find is a large earth satellite, perhaps very large . . . but quite invisible!

He buries his face in his hands . . . a face hoary with unshaven beard.

PAULA: Leo . . .

PUGH [*mutters wearily*]: What . . . ?

PAULA: Ten-minute break. [*She picks up a telephone and presses a house-connexion button.*] Hello, Reg . . . get them to run some more coffee up to Observatory Two, will you? About a gallon. [*She replaces the phone and turns again to Pugh.*] How much sleep did you get last night?

Pugh shrugs, holding his head.

PUGH: Too many machines, that's what we've got here. [*He sits up and stretches.*] Once I was a mathematical genius, you know that? Oh, it's a fact, I'm not boasting. When I was little I was a Calculating Boy—they used to put me on stages. Even when I joined your father I was still able to make a stab at mentally plotting a rocket trajectory—

PAULA: I know. He says you're the only man he ever met who could.

PUGH: But now . . . I've learned to press these little buttons. And my brain won't give me a clear concept!

He strikes his forehead, hard.

PAULA: Leo.

PUGH: Without concepts, you're no better than this damned tin thing—you've come down to its level! An adding machine. The concept . . . *gestalt* . . . that's all the kind of beauty I've ever looked for, you know. What brought me here. The idea of making roads in space for rockets to travel . . . four dimensional roads, curving with relativity . . . metallated with best quality Welsh continuum . . .

PAULA: Tell me about the Calculating Boy.

PUGH: Oh, that . . . it started at my village school. Back in Merioneth. The schoolmistress . . . she was a weird old tabby . . . used to set me vast sums to do, just to watch me getting the answers like that! [*He snaps his fingers.*] She loved to astonish herself. 'Oh Leo, bach, you will go far. In you is a power to benefit mankind.' Ach y fi! What sort of a child were you?

PAULA: I was frightened of the dark.

PUGH: Good. Nice and normal.

PAULA: Oh, not really. As a matter of fact, it was rather scientific.

PUGH: Oh?

PAULA: It started with one of those recurring nightmares kids get. Rather a good one. That I was in a rocket father had made . . . I think it tended to look rather like a very old car we had about that time . . . going far away and getting on the wrong side of the world. In the dark for ever and ever. I used to wet the bed.

She smiles. Then she notices his expression.

PAULA: Leo, what's the matter?

PUGH [*faintly*]: That might be it . . .

PAULA: What are you talking about?

PUGH: The . . . what the devil was the man's name? Some American . . . the Bieber Variation! That's it!

PAULA: I don't think I—

PUGH: It was never proved, couldn't be. It postulated a fault in the laws. Let me see . . . [*with growing excitement*] . . . it related to the positions of the sun and the earth . . . theoretical points of equilibrium, like eddies in space. If one existed on the dark side of the Earth, a body of a certain size might remain there fairly close—in perpetual eclipse!

Fade in music.

Pugh snatches up the telephone, presses down a house communication button.

PUGH: Hello—hello, Stewart? Pugh here. I want the radio telescope to a completely new setting. Come along right away, will you? And bring Michaels if you can find him.

He slams the phone down. A Canteen Assistant comes in with a tray of coffee. He waves her away.

PUGH: Take it away—out of the road! [*To Paula*] The Bieber Variation. It took a pretty subtle brain to think that one up. But to go further and actually employ it—make some kind of physical use of it—could you imagine something able to do that?

She stares at him as he turns quickly and busies himself at the computer.

Fade up music and hold through link.

Dissolve . . . to gently rippling water. After a moment something splashes heavily into it. While the wave-rings are still spreading, a second follows.

Pan to the edge of the water. A pair of grotesque, inhuman feet come into view, standing on the shingle . . . but they are joined to the quite human legs of a small boy. They are, in fact, rubber flippers . . . part of the cheap underwater kit Frankie is wearing. His face is hidden behind a pair of goggles. He turns as his mother's voice calls.

MOTHER: Frankie!

She is a large comfortable woman, busy unloading a basket full of picnic things. The beach is tiny and dismal, with a bank of earth rising steeply behind. Up there is an ancient Austin Seven, where Father, a short, wiry man, is unloading bottles.

Frankie picks up another stone and prepares to throw it into the water.

MOTHER: Frankie! Wasting your time throwing stones in the water—why don't you give your father a hand? Look at him—left to carry all them bottles

down. [Calls] Can you manage, dear?

Cut—to where Father is emerging from the little car with his arms full of beer and lemonade bottles. As he stands up and prepares to make the perilous descent down the earth bank, it can be seen that in the background, a few hundred yards away . . . is the Plant.

There are distant whistle-blasts. Father glances round towards the Plant, then starts down the incline, balancing himself carefully.

Mother comes forward to relieve him of some of the bottles as he reaches the bottom.

MOTHER: Was that somebody blowing a whistle?

FATHER: Yes.

MOTHER: Over in that new works, it sounded like.

FATHER: Yes.

MOTHER: P'raps it's their tea-break or something.

FATHER: Yes, I expect so.

MOTHER [cosily]: Just the same as us.

At the water's edge, Frankie dips a rubber-finned foot in the water. Laying a tablecloth out on the sand, his Mother shouts at him.

MOTHER: Frankie—don't you go in the water! [She turns to Father, busy sorting out packets of sandwiches and cake.] It was wicked of Uncle Tom to give him all them silly rubber things, knowing full well he can't swim!

Frankie comes glumly from the water. Father passes him an opened bottle of lemonade.

FATHER: Here.

MOTHER: Aren't you going to take that thing off your head?

FRANKIE: No.

For the sake of perverseness, he pokes the bottle under his mask, sucks at it, gasps, then tries to eat a sandwich the same way.

MOTHER: I can't get over what's happened to the village, though. [She pours tea from a vacuum flask.] All the houses gone—I thought we'd come to the wrong place. Didn't I say in the car?

FATHER: Yes, you did.

MOTHER: Fancy them pulling it all down like that! And all so pretty and old, just like a picture. Have you got sugar? And those people that used to do fish teas sometimes, I wonder what's—

A whistle blast rings out close at hand.

MOTHER: Oh, whatever's that!

They look round. Mother gives a startled gasp.

At the top of the bank, by the old Austin Seven, a Guard comes into view, and then a second. They stand peering down.

Father gets to his feet. Mother scrambles up too. Sensing the alarm in his parents, Frankie wails, egg from his sandwich trickling down his face. Mother puts a protective arm round him.

FATHER [calls]: You blowing that whistle at us?

MOTHER: They've got guns! Oh, Frankie—

One of the Guards advances down the bank.

MOTHER: I told you there'd be trouble! I said when I saw them notices—

FATHER: Sit down! Just carry on having your tea!

Surprised by this sudden firmness, she sinks down beside Frankie. As the Guard approaches them, Father's voice achieves a shaky obstinacy towards him too.

FATHER: Now look, mate—we've come here every summer, and I don't see that anybody's got a right to try and—

GUARD: Go! Go now—all of you!

He swings his gun up. Mother gives a tiny scream.

FATHER [hotly]: Here! Don't you go pointing that thing at my wife and kid! We come here peaceable for a picnic—we're doing no harm to anybody—

MOTHER: Mind, father! [She half-rises from where she sits on the sand clutching Frankie.] Perhaps we'd better do what he says—

FATHER [worked up now]: No! [To the Guard] You leave us alone or there'll be trouble. I'll write to the papers, you hear that? If you come here to shove us around when we're just behaving quiet and decent, not even making litter about the place—

Cut—to the top of the bank as the Second Guard starts down to join the other.

Pan . . . across the Austin Seven . . . to the concrete road nearby as Quatermass's car comes driving along this at speed . . . and past.

Cut—to the interior of the car. Quatermass is at the wheel. Ward is beside him, and Fowler in the seat behind, peering worriedly through the rear window.

QUATERMASS: See anything now?

FOWLER: No . . . just the little car.

QUATERMASS: I'm sure that was one of the guards. Somebody's in trouble.

FOWLER: Shouldn't we stop?

QUATERMASS: No.

FOWLER: But surely, if you think they may be in need of—

QUATERMASS [brutally]: It may help us. There's the gate ahead—are you set? Ward, got your pass ready?

WARD [his face tense]: Yes.

Cut—the main gate of the Plant as Quatermass's car drives towards it.

It is a double gate of heavy mesh on a steel frame. Beside it is a concrete blockhouse with gun-slits overlooking the road. An armed Guard emerges from this and comes forward as the car pulls up. Ward leans out and proffers the pass—a dark card on which metallic insignia shine. The Guard's eyes fix on it.

The three men in the car wait anxiously.

Then the Guard steps back and lowers his gun. The gate swings slowly open, evidently actuated by mechanism inside the blockhouse. The car drives on . . . into the Plant. Behind it the steel gate closes again. Ahead lie the vast domes and towers. But Ward is pointing to one side, and Quatermass steers the car in that direction, along a secondary track. A short distance along this is a squat prefabricated building with a sign above its door that reads 'Medical Unit'. The car pulls up here and the three men get out.

They look round.

QUATERMASS: Nobody in sight.

WARD: Not even workmen. The place obviously isn't completed, though. Look at the domes.

FOWLER [*glances round, awed*]: The domes . . . !

WARD: Only one of them finished.

QUATERMASS: First things first—let's take a look in here. Ward—

Ward leads the way into the building beside them.

Cut—to the interior of the Medical Unit. It is a rough temporary structure, poorly lit. In the small outer room a white-coated Attendant looks up from the desk where he sits with a few papers. There is little else in the room but a battered couch along one wall.

WARD [*showing his pass*]: Official. [*He gives a quick nervous glance round at Quatermass and Fowler, then goes on.*] Is there anyone in here at present—receiving treatment?

The Attendant, a grizzled, heavy-eyed man, watches them for a long moment before attempting to answer. Quatermass looks hard at the man, searching for the signs he is beginning to know.

ATTENDANT: No.

WARD: Perhaps—from yesterday?

The Attendant shakes his head slowly.

QUATERMASS: We—we understood there was one man. A young man who had to be brought in by the guards.

ATTENDANT [*after a moment*]: He has gone now.

QUATERMASS: Gone? Where?

ATTENDANT: He was recovered . . . he was well . . . he was . . .

His voice dies away, as if the will to utter has left him. Fowler shoots an uncomfortable look at Quatermass. But Quatermass is already making for the inner door.

QUATERMASS: Just make sure—

He throws it open and looks into the room beyond. After a moment he turns back. He shakes his head . . . then leads the way out. Passing the Attendant, Ward nods and gives him a word of acknowledgement, but there is no response. It is like speaking to someone no longer there.

Cut—to the exterior of the Medical Unit, as the three men come out.

FOWLER: What was in that other room?

QUATERMASS: Beds. Empty.

WARD: It's awfully odd. D'you think that chap in there—

QUATERMASS: Yes.

WARD: My God!

FOWLER: What now? [*Nervously*] Have we seen enough for the present?

QUATERMASS: Now we're in, we'd better find out all we can. Back to the car, quickly!

Dissolve . . . to the interior part of the Plant.

Shot from the car as it noses slowly forward. High towers loom overhead, monstrous process-units connected by ladderways on which occasional armed watchers can be seen.

Pipes as thick as tree trunks run alongside the concrete track. Others sweep along twenty or thirty feet above, sustained on pylons. And all of them, at their different levels, lead to or from the domes . . .

In the car, Quatermass turns to the man beside him.

QUATERMASS: Ward—how were the domes explained?

WARD: For storage. And maturing, I think. Of the synthetic food.

QUATERMASS: Still think that's likely? Look at the size of them. They must be a couple of hundred feet high. Work out the volume of that!

WARD [*lamely*]: I'd never been as close as we are now. I didn't realize—

They pass an array of shining spheres, far smaller than the domes, though still the height of a small house.

QUATERMASS: Now those things *are* for storage. I've used them myself, for volatile fluids—[*He frowns at the formula-symbols stencilled on the shining surfaces.*] Methane. And—that's interesting, Fowler—

FOWLER: What?

QUATERMASS: Ammonia.

As the car moves on, a deep throbbing makes itself felt above the sound of the engine. A rhythmic vibration. Quatermass halts the car and peers at the track ahead. Still nothing moves there apart from little swirls of blown dust. But thin vapour is pulsing at a number of points from a massive bunker-like building not far away.

QUATERMASS: I wonder. Broadhead thought he'd found out something—that production was due to begin any day now. Perhaps for once he got close to the facts. Perhaps they've started . . .

He opens the car door. He looks up. There are no Guards in sight on the ladderways. He gets out and starts walking quickly towards the bunker-like building.

FOWLER: Quatermass—

Then, nervously, he gets out too. Ward follows, and they hurry after Quatermass. As Quatermass reaches the low, open entrance, rhythmic blasts of light, brighter than the sunlight outside, outline his shape. The din is shattering. He goes in.

Cut—to the interior of the bunker.

The three men stand helplessly dazzled by the glare which blazes out. It comes at them with the same regular beat as the sound which tears at their ears, alternating with near-darkness in which they can see nothing. Fowler turns his head away. Quatermass covers his eyes. Peering between his fingers during the dark intervals, he moves forward.

The light is coming from the glazed ports of half a dozen huge machine-shapes.

Level with one of them, he waits for the blink of darkness—and for a moment, beyond the armoured glass, he glimpses swirling liquid. Then comes the next flash, another rending, tearing electrical discharge of enormous power. He staggers back, colliding with the almost blinded Fowler.

FOWLER [yelling above the din]: Quatermass—that you? For God's sake let's get out of here!

QUATERMASS: Just a second more—

FOWLER: We'll be killed—electrocuted! It's like lightning—

QUATERMASS: It's acting on the fluid in there! It could be to form amino acids—basic protein—

Fowler, his face turned from the machines, clutches Quatermass's arm. Two Men are moving forward towards them, along a low inspection parapet. They are dark-clad, and the masks that cover their faces are shining black, as if to protect their eyes against the glare. They move slowly, then move in to make adjustments at the foot of one of the giant machines.

Fowler stumbles along, pulling Quatermass with him.

Cut—to the concrete track outside as they stagger from the bunker entrance, shaken by the sheer battering of noise and light.

FOWLER [hoarsely]: I don't think they saw us—

QUATERMASS: If that stuff's to be pumped into the domes—

FOWLER: Let's get going!

They have only taken a step or two when Quatermass halts.

QUATERMASS: Where's Ward?

He starts back towards the bunker, but Fowler grabs him.

FOWLER: Not in there! He was behind me all the time—he must have come out first—

QUATERMASS: Then where is he?

As they move back to the car, followed by the vibrating din from the bunker, their eyes search in every direction. Nothing moves, anywhere in sight. The derricks still hang immobile over the unfinished domes. The trackways are bare. Only the vaporous discharge from the bunker thins and whips away in the breeze.

Then, in the distance, there is a percussive roar.

QUATERMASS: A machine gun!

FOWLER [horrified]: Ward—

QUATERMASS [after a moment]: I don't think so. It was too far away—outside the Plant. He couldn't have got that far.

FOWLER: But shooting—they were shooting—!

QUATERMASS: We've got to get out of here quickly—while we can.

FOWLER: D'you think he could have gone ahead towards the gate?

QUATERMASS: Alone?

FOWLER: He's got that pass . . .

Both gripped by the same alarm, they run to the car and scramble in. Quatermass starts the engine, reverses quickly, and they shoot along the way that they have come.

As they turn at speed past the cluster of shining spheres, Quatermass jams his foot on the brake. Ahead of them is the gate . . . shut. And there is no sign of Ward.

He is suddenly undecided. He glances back towards the heart of the Plant. Fowler nods. It seems the only thing to try . . . another quick circuit, just in case . . .

Quatermass turns back into the Plant, back towards the domes, to the place where they last saw Ward.

Dissolve . . . to the track near the Domes, as the car appears round the base of a towering process unit. They are travelling fast and their faces are desperate. Then, as Quatermass slows down momentarily to peer between the pipes and machinery, an appalling scream rings out. It is somewhere ahead and above.

Fowler points up through the windscreen.

Cut—to where a spindly ladderway runs down the dully gleaming side of the completed dome. A figure is clinging to this—a human figure, but wetly black, and to judge by its motion, blind. It is this that screams. Then it twists sharply and comes tumbling, thudding down the ladderway. The car skids to a halt, and Quatermass and Fowler scramble out. They go running to the foot of the ladder, where the glistening figure lies. It squirms and thrashes.

FOWLER: Ward—

Quatermass stoops over him—and is instantly choked by acrid fumes. They are rising from the black slime with which the agonized body is coated. As far as can be made out, Ward seems to be jacketless, and slung round his neck is a rubber mask like those used by the guards. Fowler, spluttering painfully in the ammoniac reek, makes to raise him, but he shrinks back with a shudder.

WARD [gasping]: Don't—don't touch—

He collapses into unconsciousness. Fowler looks round helplessly. There is black slime on his hand, and he wipes it hastily on the ground.

FOWLER: My God, it burns—and it's all over him! Can we get help—

QUATERMASS: Here?

He pulls off his raincoat and throws it over Ward. He glances about. They are close to a low concrete structure with steel doors open. It suggests an air lock leading into the base of the dome.

QUATERMASS: Must be where he found the oxygen set—

Ward stirs. His eyes open, and his face immediately contorts with pain.

QUATERMASS: Ward! You were inside the dome?

WARD: I had to know—[*He gives a rending cough.*] Full of this stuff! I slipped—slipped and fell—

QUATERMASS: All right, we're going to get you out of here. Just let me—

WARD [cries out]: No—no!

A klaxon blares in another part of the Plant.

FOWLER: Quatermass—quick! They're coming!

Quatermass tightens the raincoat round Ward and lifts him. Ward screams. He twists from Quatermass's grip, leaving the coat in his hands. Ward squirms for a yard or so along the ground under their horrified eyes—and stiffens.

FOWLER: He's dead!

He tugs at Quatermass's arm. Quatermass turns and follows him. After running a few yards he realizes he is still trailing the slime-covered coat. He makes to throw it away, then has a second thought.

He is trying to roll it up as he runs after Fowler towards the car. The distant klaxon keeps up its intermittent howl . . . fading into link music.

Cut—to the main gate of the Plant.

It is open, to admit a huge Army-type tow truck. From the jib at the back the ancient Austin Seven is dangling like a toy. And hanging out of one window is a limp, bare arm.

The Guards stand watching as it passes through. Just as the gate is starting to close behind it, Quatermass's car shoots past in the opposite direction, at full speed. Guards stumble aside. One of them brings up his gun and looses off a burst after it.

Cut—to the concrete road where it sweeps past the tiny beach. The car comes past at speed, with Quatermass and Fowler grim-faced in front. As it speeds away up the hill, another Guard scrambles up the bank and fires. Pan from him down to where the remains of the picnic are scattered. On the torn tablecloth lie broken cups and one of Frankie's rubber flippers. The cloth is spattered with blood . . .

Music to full volume.

Slow Dissolve . . . to the Rocket Group laboratory.

A tangled mass of rotted fabric which may or may not be recognizable as Quatermass's raincoat is lying on an enamelled tray on the bench. Nearby, the implements of a recently-conducted analysis are set out . . . flasks, measuring cylinders and burners.

The Laboratory Assistant is transferring, in a gloved hand, a quantity of washed-out, bleached cloth fibre to a waste bin. His senior colleague is just completing his notes, and now reaches for the telephone.

ANALYST [into phone]: Get me the chief, will you? Er—Observatory Two, I think . . . Hello . . . lab here, sir. Just through with that analysis . . . Well, there are some neutral constituents, but I'd say there's absolutely no doubt about it. Not in that concentration . . .

Cut—to the observatory, where Quatermass is at the other end of the line. He nods, listening.

QUATERMASS [into phone]: I see . . . yes, make a full report. Send it through to my office. Thank you. [*He puts the phone down, turns to where his daughter and Fowler are listening.*] A corrosive poison. Deadly to almost any living thing . . . on this earth.

FOWLER: Then it could never have made synthetic food?

QUATERMASS: Food . . . on the contrary, I think it may be.

FOWLER: But for what—?

Without answering, Quatermass turns away through the darkened observatory. Tiny signal lamps are glowing on the control panels. Two Assistants have removed part of the steel casings and are at work on the complex circuits within.

Pugh is scowling into a heavily hooded screen.

PUGH [*to the nearer Assistant*]: Stewart—be careful! Working to these limits, it won't take much to throw the lot clean out! Go on . . . easy now . . . a bit more . . . oh, let's give it a rest for a moment. I'm getting spots before the eyes! [*Rubbing at them, he swings round in his seat.*] Quatermass, I swear to you I'm not making a mistake—I had it there! Just a few minutes ago! I saw it!

QUATERMASS: All right, Leo—

PUGH: The trouble is the damned thing's so close!

Fowler comes to Quatermass's elbow. His neat black clothes are still smeared with dried mud, and one sleeve is badly torn.

FOWLER: Something wrong here?

PUGH: Oh, Lord have mercy!

QUATERMASS [*to Fowler, quietly*]: Part of the difficulty is that the excellent radio telescope your department provided—well, it's more at home among the stars of the Crab Nebula than peering into a neighbour's garden. You've got to bring it to bear. That takes a little time.

FOWLER: Neighbour's garden?

QUATERMASS: Astronomically, that's all it is. What did you estimate, Leo?

PUGH: About 63,000 miles. But the real snag is—the thing's so bloody dim! [*To Quatermass*] You see the beauty of it—the Bieber Variation? The horror of it? Out there in our own shadow, with nothing to reflect or radiate but a glimmer of earth-shine that's almost too weak to pick up!

FOWLER: Any idea what you're tracking?

PUGH: An asteroid, or something like it. Not more than half a mile across, probably. Anybody got a cigarette? I don't normally smoke, but I feel just at the moment—

Quatermass is passing him a packet when there is an exclamation from one of the Assistants.

ASSISTANT: Dr. Pugh—

Pugh turns back to the hooded screen—and gives a cry.

PUGH: I knew it! I knew it!

He sits back to let Quatermass look. On the screen a blip of light is showing—feeble but steady.

QUATERMASS: Yes, there's no doubt now. That's what they must be coming from.

Paula pushes forward to see. So does Fowler. Track in on the little group with the faint trace-light flickering across their faces.

Fade in end music. Fade to black.

PART FOUR

The Coming

Fade in . . . the Rocket Group observatory.

Close shot of the group gathered round the hooded scanning screen.

QUATERMASS: Think you can hold it now?

PUGH [*nods and turns to one of the Assistants*]: Stewart, lock everything off at these settings. Yes—we should be able to pick it up any night—as long as it's there.

The two Assistants get busy. Paula turns away. Her face is white, and rigidly calm. Quatermass comes after her and puts his hands on her shoulders.

PAULA [*tense*]: What are we dealing with?

QUATERMASS: I—I've got to find out a lot more—

She turns quickly to face him.

PAULA: You don't need to be evasive.

QUATERMASS: My dear—

PAULA: I had to drag the facts out of you about what happened to John Dillon, and I don't know yet if I got them all, but it was better than—than a lot of wild wondering. I shan't crack up on you. So go ahead.

QUATERMASS: All right. [*Slowly*] Try imagining a kind of reversal—an organism to which oxygen isn't the essential of life but a destroyer. They come sealed inside those stone cases—the things we've called meteorites. Kept alive by a compressed mixture of gases—methane, ammonia, and probably hydrogen. Their own atmosphere.

PAULA: And when one reaches the earth—

QUATERMASS: When it emerges, it can't survive in the air we breathe for more than a minute or two—perhaps only a few seconds. It probably drifts briefly like a bubble—[*remembering*]—a dark bubble. If it encounters an object—a target—

PAULA: A human being? [*As he nods*] Go on—if it does, what do you think happens to the person?

Quatermass looks at her hard. Her face is steady, controlled. Fowler has come up, and stands listening.

QUATERMASS: An instant invasion of the whole nervous system, from the point of contact. It may extend to . . . comprehension of the victim's faculties . . . his awareness . . . even his subconscious knowledge.

PAULA [*puzzled*]: But after that—it simply dies?

QUATERMASS: That may not matter.

FOWLER: Death . . . not matter?

Quatermass pulls out a cigarette packet and lights one with a hand that is not quite steady.

QUATERMASS: In the past few hours I've gone over this again and again. There's only one possible explanation . . . a multiple organism. A group-creature . . . a countless host, a thousand billion individuals if you like . . . with one single consciousness. You see what that means? The experience of any one of them is transmitted to all the rest . . . shared by all of them, simultaneously, wherever they may be!

PAULA: Experience . . . ! My God!

She turns away, sickened.

FOWLER: And what about the human being?

QUATERMASS: Well, there's this violent shock to the brain—

FOWLER: A sort of mental sting?

QUATERMASS [*nods*]: And afterwards—something's left implanted. You might call it a new instinct. A blind compulsion to act only—for them.

There is silence. The two Assistants are staring across from their work on the control bank. One of them takes a step forward.

ASSISTANT: Just a minute, sir. These things are supposed to be coming from the—the asteroid we're tracking now?

PUGH: That's right.

ASSISTANT [*to Quatermass*]: But you said an atmosphere. An asteroid as small as this couldn't hold an atmosphere!

In the man's argumentative tone is a high note of fear, of seeking for reassurance.

QUATERMASS: Agreed, if it were a natural one.

ASSISTANT: You mean it's—

QUATERMASS: A made thing. From where that atmosphere and those conditions . . . *do* exist.

FOWLER: In heaven's name, where?

QUATERMASS: There's a wide choice. You'd find them throughout the whole universe, even the outer planets of our own solar system. Frozen worlds with atmospheres of poison gas. To us, that is. There's been an increasing belief that there might be life there, of some very different kind.

The Assistant looks from him to Pugh. The man's thin face is ghastly.

PUGH: Finished? [*The Assistant nods.*] All right, call it a day, thanks. Oh, and—Stewart—don't say too much, about any of this. Not yet.

The two Assistants leave. Fowler is staring at the ground, turning his pipe over and over in his hands without seeming to realize what he is

doing. He turns to Pugh.

FOWLER: Dr. Pugh—are your views the same?

PUGH: Yes, on everything that's come my way. For the rest—[*he nods at Quatermass*]—I trust his judgement.

FOWLER: Supposing you're both right . . . it's difficult to . . . well, to sort out the implications of what may be expected to happen—

QUATERMASS: The main point is—most of it *has* happened!

FOWLER: Yes—I suppose—

PUGH: They must have started coming about seventeen months ago. In fact, that last big 'flying objects' scare wasn't just a scare. They probably came at random, scattered all over the world. I think that's most likely—[*to Quatermass*]—don't you?

QUATERMASS [*nods*]: Expending themselves, but for a purpose. You might call it a reconnaissance in force. And then, something over a year ago—phase two. The concentrated attack. How many of those occurred in the world—[*He shrugs*.]

FOWLER: Brazil . . . Sweden . . .

QUATERMASS: Let's stick to the one we know about. Winnerden Flats. An out of the way village that happened to have a small government research station attached to it One night that area was—taken over. With all its inhabitants, including trained personnel. It became a plague-spot, protected by the victims themselves. When the things came again, they would be—harboured. On a small scale, just enough to keep the infection spreading. People were taken there.

FOWLER: You believe they all became—? [*He sits down*.] Yes, I suppose they must.

QUATERMASS: And now the Plant is almost completed. The first dome being prepared with food-slime and gases—you saw it yourself. Waiting.

PAULA: To be . . . occupied?

QUATERMASS: I don't think there's anything . . . alive in there yet. Or I've an idea we wouldn't have seen poor Ward again. Once they're in their own environment, they may change—in shape, in volume. Those domes are about two hundred feet high.

A silence. Fowler looks up at them, a man at the end of his tether.

FOWLER: What do we do?

QUATERMASS: Whatever line we take, we can be fairly sure of one thing—there'll be no second chance. We've got to try and break this—this conspiracy of silence, secret orders, decisions.

FOWLER: Making the facts known—surely that's more or less straightforward?

QUATERMASS: No. There'll be denials, even proofs.

FOWLER: Of course. [*Apologetically*] You see, I still haven't caught up with the—with the—

QUATERMASS: Fowler, the most valuable thing you can do is to go back to London. Be careful. Try to check your position at the Ministry—your safety—but I doubt if you'll be connected with what happened this afternoon at the Plant. Find out all you can. Act quickly. Keep in touch with me here—again, carefully.

Fowler rises, nodding. But he is still plainly confused by everything.

FOWLER: There *must* be some other way—the police or—some official way?

QUATERMASS: The time for that was a year ago. Those means are a risk now—one we can't take.

Fowler nods.

FOWLER: Then I think the sooner I get back there, the better. Can you help me?

QUATERMASS: Of course. [*He picks up the phone*.] Try and raise the transport section, will you? A car to Observatory Two, right away.

FOWLER: Thanks.

QUATERMASS [*putting the phone down*]: Now in the meantime, I've got a couple of alternative plans to work on—to *have* some alternatives is our best bet. The first's quite simple. Just to try to—

Fowler holds up his hand quickly.

FOWLER: Don't tell me.

QUATERMASS: Why?

FOWLER: Better not, don't you think? In case anything—happens to me. I mean, according to what you said just now, whatever I know may be—may be dangerous—

QUATERMASS [*slowly*]: Yes.

FOWLER: Just in case.

The phone buzzes. Paula answers it.

PAULA: Observatory Two . . . Oh, good . . . thank you. [*She puts the phone down*.] A car's on the way over.

QUATERMASS: I'll see you down, Fowler.

Fowler shakes hands with Pugh and Paula. He follows Quatermass out.

PUGH: You know, it must be harder for him than any of us. He took so much more for granted . . .

Dissolve . . . to the Rocket Group firing bay.

It is a short time later. The great rocket stands gleaming in the moonlight. One or two permanent inspection lamps glow at the foot of the service tower, but there is nobody to be seen. Suddenly a loudspeaker booms, echoing round the blast walls. It is Quatermass's voice:

'Attention, everyone. Your attention, please . . .'

Cut—to a corridor in the living quarters. It is dark and deserted. On the wall in the foreground is a loudspeaker, and from this Quatermass's voice continues:

'Sorry to disturb everyone at this hour, but it's urgent . . .'

Doors are opening. Sleepy, rumpled faces look out into the corridor. The voice goes on:

'This is Quatermass. I want you all to hear what I have to say. Please call those who are not awake . . .'

Lights are being switched on along the corridor. Men in pyjamas come forward, stopping to knock on unopened doors, all listening to the loudspeaker:

'Until further notice, no one is to leave the area of the research station. The finding of any strange objects should be reported immediately, particularly any large stones. Do not touch them . . .'

The listeners are wide awake now. The corridor is rapidly filling. Two of the latest arrivals are the Assistants from the observatory, still in their working clothes. They are instantly the centre of an excited group. The loudspeaker goes on:

'There'll be more details posted in the morning. Meanwhile, the radar team—not radio-telescope, but radar—are to go to their posts right away . . .'

Two or three pyjama-clad figures start moving quickly back to their rooms to dress.

Cut—to Quatermass's office.

Quatermass is standing by his desk with a small microphone in his hand as he finishes the message.

QUATERMASS [*into microphone*]: . . . And I want the heads of all departments to come to my office in half an hour for an emergency conference. Please be prompt. Thank you.

He disconnects the microphone and turns to where Pugh is slumped, almost asleep, in an armchair.

QUATERMASS: We'll maintain a low-level radar watch to be on the safe side. But—I feel that any danger's liable to be more—insidious.

PUGH [*stirring himself*]: How d'you mean?

QUATERMASS: By now some subtler means must have developed, something less wasteful. Probably man-made. Pressurized containers of some kind. Because I'm sure that what happened to Broadhead at the Ministry—[*he breaks off*—my God, the Ministry!

PUGH: Eh?

QUATERMASS: I should have warned Fowler.

PUGH: You did, man.

QUATERMASS: Yes, but more clearly. [*He sinks into a chair.*] Leo, perhaps that's how the infection's mostly used now. More to—make safe, than to gain control. [*He turns to Pugh urgently.*] I think I can see why! When human beings succumb to it, they're dominated—but they become sluggish, apathetic, half-alive. That must be why the construction workers weren't infected—the only reason! They were required at their full efficiency and strength—

PUGH: Are you sure about them?

QUATERMASS: I saw some at that prefab town yesterday. It was before I was familiar with the symptoms, but thinking about it now—I'm sure they were normal people!

Pugh is wide awake again now.

PUGH: That might be worth following up.

QUATERMASS: Yes—it might. I wonder. If only there were more time—

PUGH: How long d'you think we've got?

QUATERMASS: From what I saw today, we'd better not count on having any leeway at all.

PUGH: Anything I can do?

QUATERMASS: No—you'll be needed here. Leo, I should have sent you off to get some sleep an hour ago, but I want you to hang on for this briefing session.

PUGH: Of course. What is it—a general alert?

QUATERMASS: Not quite. I'm having basic preparation of the rocket started as soon as it's light.

PUGH: The rocket!

He stares at Quatermass in astonishment.

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to the Rocket Group firing bay. It is daylight, and the area round the rocket is busier than it has been so far. Trucks have been driven in. Power cables have been connected, and electric pumps are droning steadily. Overalled Technicians are at work both on the ground and on the platforms of the service tower.

Pugh stands watching gloomily, buried in his overcoat with collar turned up. Quatermass approaches with a senior Technician, who has been checking off items on a clipboard.

QUATERMASS: Keep them testing every inch of the radiation shielding. Any danger signs—damp everything down. Right—I think that's it for the moment. [*As the Technician goes, he turns to Pugh.*] Things moving steadily but quietly. We don't want any external signs of a sudden flap—

Pugh bursts out in an exasperated cry.

PUGH: Quatermass, d'you know what you're doing! You can't possibly try to operate this thing—

QUATERMASS [*moving away*]: All right, Leo—

Pugh catches him by the arm.

PUGH: There'd only be a limited chance of making contact, you must realize that—

QUATERMASS: Of course I do—

PUGH: Even with a rocket of proved performance. But this! We both know its potentialities—it'll turn to a death trap as soon as it's off the ground! A nuclear bomb! [*His voice falters.*] Quatermass—is that what you intend?

QUATERMASS [*sharply*]: I've no intention of using it.

PUGH: Then why—?

QUATERMASS: Unless everything else fails. But it's got to be ready. Now you can guess what I want from you—

PUGH: Interception orbits.

QUATERMASS: And optimum times for launching.

As he moves away, a Technician comes quickly forward from the foot of the service tower, where he has just answered the buzzing phone.

TECHNICIAN: There's a call for you, sir. A bit odd. It's a journalist. He won't be put off, though—making out that you want to speak to him—

QUATERMASS: Is his name Conrad?

TECHNICIAN: Yes—

QUATERMASS: Then I do. I've been trying to get him for hours. Get him to hang on. I'll take it outside.

He hurries off. The Technician returns to the service tower, to pick up the phone again.

Pugh stands looking unhappily at the rocket. He shrinks deeper into his coat-collar.

Dissolve . . . to an acoustically-shielded telephone position. The backing of raw concrete stencilled with directions shows it is on the far side of the blast wall. It is quiet here, and Quatermass is able to concentrate.

He listens intently to the answers, as if he is trying to draw meaning from the tone of the voice at the other end, to satisfy himself that this is an uninfected intelligence.

QUATERMASS: No, it isn't about the Rocket Group. Something much more important . . . No, I mean that. Mr. Conrad, since we last met, a lot of things have changed . . . Now listen to me. Have you ever been to a place called . . . Winnerden Flats? . . . Never? Know anything about it?

Cut—to a window overlooking Fleet Street. Hugh Conrad is sitting at his section of a long communal desk, which is empty at this early hour in the day of the newsroom, which extends beyond. He is a small man with an alert, brown face and brilliant eyes. He is fiddling with the keys of his typewriter as he talks, half-interested, half-amused by this conversation.

CONRAD: Well, I fancy I've heard of it—something top secret, isn't it? I mean, anything scientific—it's hardly my line of country. I'm strictly show biz these days . . . I'll bet you never see my frivolous column . . . [*Doubtfully*] Of course, if I'm the man you want . . . I'd be delighted, anyway, to meet for a chat some time. When are you up in town next? . . . [*He frowns.*] What? Oh, I'm not sure that I could, things are pretty busy at the moment . . . Which scare? You mean all that 'flying objects' business last year? . . . Of course I remember. Very fashionable. Quite *de rigueur* in Chelsea for a bit, to have a nodding acquaintance with a few little green men . . . I'm sure we've got a lot on the file . . .

He clicks his fingers, signalling, then scribbles on a sheet of paper. A Junior comes up and Conrad pushes the sheet into his hand.

CONRAD: Life and death! [*The Boy hurries away. He goes on into the phone.*] Hello . . . yes, I'm just doing that . . . Meet when? . . . This afternoon? But as I said, I . . . What? [*His face grows serious.*] Very well, I'll do my best. When and where? [*He jots down notes.*] Yes . . . yes, I'll come alone. Yes, I promise. But can't you tell me—

A click on the line. He puts the phone down, deeply puzzled now. The Boy comes up and puts a thin cardboard folder in front of him.

CONRAD: That was quick.

BOY: I am quick.

CONRAD: Too quick. Where's the rest of it?

BOY: What d'you mean?

CONRAD: Don't tell me this is all there was.

BOY: It is. Honest, Mr. Conrad—go and look for yourself.

CONRAD: No cheek. [*As the Boy goes, he opens the folder and takes out the meagre contents—a few cuttings.*] Funny . . .

Dissolve . . . to close shot of a fat double folder. It carries two prominent labels on the cover, separated by an embossed crown. One reads 'TOP SECRET' and the other 'WINNERDEN FLATS NO. 12'. Another equally fat file, identical save that it is numbered 13, is laid on top of it and opened.

Track back to take in Fowler. He is crouching over a section of suspension-filing, from which he has removed several of the thick folders. He is cautious, fearful. After a moment of rapidly turning over papers, he tenses and glances round. He is in a small cell-like room, lined with rows of filing-frames that reach almost to the ceiling. The door is a heavy metal one, like that of a strong-room. He has pulled it almost shut behind him, but through it comes the sound of distant footsteps echoing along a corridor. Fowler freezes, closing the folder. He turns stiffly, like an animal trying to limit its movements to avoid detection. Then the footsteps die away without coming any closer, as if whoever made them has turned down an adjoining corridor. Fowler relaxes. Still breathing quickly, he leans clutching the filing frame—then grows conscious of what he is doing. He pulls out a handkerchief and rubs at the place where his hand rested. He wipes the handkerchief over his moist face and pushes it back into his breast pocket—seems suddenly struck by the fear that it might fall out, and crams it down out of sight. He tackles the folders again, pulls another one out. His eyes widen.

It is labelled in the same way as the others, but reads 'INDIAN PLANT—INFORMATION'. He pulls out another folder, then another. The impact of their labels can be seen in his face.

Somewhere nearby there is a tiny metallic sound.

When it is repeated, Fowler notices. He peers round among the frames and files. The sound comes again, close at hand. Unable to locate the source of it, but thoroughly alarmed, Fowler starts pushing the folders he has removed back into their places, desperately trying to sort them into the proper order.

There is a loud clang—and a hiss of gas. Fowler's face fills with horror. One hand goes up across his face, protectively, as he shrinks back. He coughs violently. He clutches at the filing frame with agonized fingers . . . Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to a moorland road, along which is coming a small white sports car. As it draws near a man steps forward from the hedge and waves it to a stop. The man is Quatermass.

Hugh Conrad looks up from the driver's seat. Quatermass gives him a searching glance—and has no further doubts.

CONRAD: Sorry I'm late.

QUATERMASS: I was just beginning to be afraid—

CONRAD: I've never been that hot on map-references. How did you get here—walk?

QUATERMASS: I left my car a little way off. In case it should be—seen and recognized.

CONRAD: Very mysterious. Hop in. [*As Quatermass opens the door and gets in.*] Well, what's the programme? Find a little pub and have a drink?

QUATERMASS [*shakes his head*]: If you don't mind, I'll just talk. It'll take some time, and you're bound to have questions.

CONRAD: A story I can use?

QUATERMASS: You've got to use it. It'll be the most important story you'll ever write.

CONRAD: This sounds good . . .

QUATERMASS: And afterwards—there are some people I think you ought to meet.

Dissolve . . . to the Community Centre at the prefab settlement.

It is dark now. The windows of the building are brightly lit, and dance music blares from within as the door opens and people enter in twos and threes.

Cut—to the interior of the Community Centre. The howling juke box is just inside the door, and the place is crowded. Trestle tables have been laid out to form a rough bar, and there is a steady clatter of glasses. The chairs have been unstacked, many of them occupied by parties of card-players. Most of those present are big men, muscled for the heaviest work and now drinking hard. There are only a few women. A few younger couples are dancing. This is evidently the use to which the Community Centre is regularly put, a combination of club, pub, and dance-hall. The only gloomy note comes from the warning 'sealed-lips' posters along the walls.

A group near the bar breaks into a burst of laughter. A tall heavily-built young Irishman in his early thirties explodes helplessly.

PADDY: 'Are there whiskers on it'—!

MCLEOD [*a stocky, older man, grinning*]: That's what she said.

PADDY [*delightedly*]: Oh, you're the man—you're the man for them, Mac—you foul-minded old—[*He swings round to the heavily painted girl behind the bar.*] Did you hear it? Are you too shocked to give us another round? Five extra strong. [*As she starts serving*] No, she's not shocked—she could better it herself. 'Whiskers!'—[*Another paroxysm. He pulls a pint across the counter and claps McLeod on the shoulder.*] Here, Mac! [*To the girl*] It's this decent man's silver wedding tomorrow—but the way it's taking him, you'd think he was just gettin' married itself!

The door opens again. Quatermass enters and stands by the juke-box looking about. Conrad follows. They move towards the bar, where another roar of laughter is bursting from Paddy's group.

QUATERMASS: What's it to be?

CONRAD: After that little session—a double Scotch, at least.

QUATERMASS [*to the girl*]: Whisky? Two doubles.

She gives him a mildly curious look as she proceeds to serve him.

CONRAD: Everybody here looks normal enough.

The group next to them are raising their glasses.

MCLEOD: Well—cheers.

PADDY: Wait a minute! This isn't a night for just sayin' cheers and lettin' it go at that. Where's Mrs. Mac?

MCLEOD: She's far gone in gossip. [*He nods towards a small woman sitting nearby with a friend.*]

PADDY: Has she a drink at her? [*He calls.*] Mrs. Mac!

MCLEOD: Oh, let her be, Paddy—

He goes after the Irishman, and in a moment the whole group are drifting past Quatermass and Conrad, and settling down at a couple of tables with Mrs. McLeod and her woman friend.

PADDY: That's more like it—keep the party together. Now, Mrs. Mac, what was it? [*He picks up her glass and sniff's it.*] Oh, that's a sensible drink.

MRS. MCLEOD [*as he turns back to the bar*]: Paddy—you'll have me under the table!

MCLEOD: Get her a drink of water.

PADDY [*to the girl behind the bar*]: One water for Mother McLeod. Black, with a head on it!

As the girl opens a bottle of stout, McLeod comes up and puts a hand on Paddy's shoulder.

MCLEOD: Don't press too much of that on her. She's not a drinking woman, and she'd be a weight to carry home. [*He grins, and Paddy laughs. He turns to Quatermass.*] It's our silver wedding tomorrow, the wife and me. Er—will you have one with us? And your friend?

QUATERMASS: That's—very kind of you.

MCLEOD [*to the girl*]: Same again for these two.

QUATERMASS: I'd certainly be glad to drink your health. A silver wedding's something I didn't have the good fortune to reach. [*Picking up his refilled glass.*] So, Mr. and Mrs.—McLeod, is it? [*They nod.*]—I'd like to celebrate yours.

PADDY: That's a decent thing to say.

MRS. MCLEOD: Your poor wife! I said when I came in, you had a sad face. [*To her friend*] Didn't I?

MCLEOD: Come and join us, won't you?

Quatermass and Conrad move over to join the group round the two tables. Paddy hands Mrs. McLeod her stout.

MRS. MCLEOD: Oh, Paddy—you'll be the death of me. [*Confidentially, to Quatermass*] I shouldn't really take it, you know. It just rises up here! [*She gestures towards her head.*] Still, tonight's something special—the eve of our wedding. I mean, twenty-five years ago, it was. [*She beams across at her husband.*]

QUATERMASS: Here's to you both, then. And the *golden* wedding.

Glasses are raised, including Mrs. McLeod's.

MCLEOD: Here—you can't drink to yourself.

MRS. MCLEOD [*giggles*]: Oh dear—it must have risen already.

MCLEOD [*to Quatermass*]: I haven't seen you here before?

QUATERMASS: No.

MCLEOD: We don't often get visitors in this place.

MRS. MCLEOD: That's what I always say—

MCLEOD: Now, mother!

MRS. MCLEOD: We're right away from the world—just the Plant and the marshes—and what else? Sometimes I wish Ted had never taken this job—

MCLEOD [*moving her glass*]: You *have* had enough.

QUATERMASS: But living conditions are pretty good? And working conditions? [*They are staring at him.*] In a sense, I'm here to study those things.

MRS. MCLEOD: Fancy.

MCLEOD: To write about them?

QUATERMASS: No. Mr. Conrad does that—my friend here. Hugh Conrad—you may know his name.

MRS. MCLEOD [*recognition dawning*]: You're not the feller that writes in our paper? [*To McLeod*] Ted, you hear that!

MCLEOD: Oh, ay?

PADDY [*to a neighbour*]: Hey, Ernie—see who this is?

There is a general murmur.

CONRAD: I'm planning a new series of articles—on what it's like working in big modern industrial plants.

MCLEOD [*guardedly*]: You want us to tell you about it?

Paddy's neighbour leans forward—a small man with a slight impediment in his speech.

ERNIE: It's terrific, that's—what it is. The best jobs m-men could ask for. D'you know what they p-pay here—to unskilled men?

MCLEOD [*sharply*]: Ernie! [*He points to the posters on the wall behind Quatermass and Conrad as he speaks to them.*] Haven't you noticed those?

ERNIE: It's the only one in the w-world.

QUATERMASS: Is that so? [*He catches Conrad's eye.*]

MCLEOD: We're not supposed to talk about it.

QUATERMASS: Oh? You're all on secret work?

PADDY: Secret work? We none of us are!

There is a murmur of agreement. Other customers are crowding round the group.

MCLEOD: Paddy, have some sense—

PADDY [*planting his fists on the table*]: Far too much secrecy there's been, just for the love of it. And as a shop steward, you shouldn't be any party to it, Mac! Playin' the bosses' game!

MCLEOD: You've no right to say that!

He rises in his seat angrily. His wife catches at his jacket.

MRS. MCLEOD: He doesn't mean it, Ted—

PADDY [*to Quatermass*]: I'll not deny there's good money paid here—exceptional rates—

ERNIE [*excitedly*]: For unskilled m-men, d'you know what—

PADDY: The best money in the country, maybe. But how long's it going to last? We've just been laid off for three days—

MCLEOD: On full pay.

PADDY: All right, on full pay—

MCLEOD: And it's purely temporary.

PADDY: Aw, they can say that! Talk's easy. It'll be redundancy next, Mac—you see. The old story!

He and McLeod stand glaring at each other. Conrad cuts in smoothly.

CONRAD: Let's all stay friends, and have another drink. [*He calls across to the girl behind the bar.*] Same again' all round.

PADDY [*to Quatermass*]: Look, mister, we're construction workers. We're buildin' that place out there, but we've little enough idea how it functions.

ERNIE: That's l-left to the Zombies.

Quatermass looks quickly at him.

Creep in music . . .

QUATERMASS: The—Zombies?

MCLEOD: Just a foolish nickname. They're what you call special personnel.

PADDY [*loudly*]: They get special treatment all right! Free livin' quarters inside the Plant—free board—free uniforms—

MCLEOD: Why not? They're maintenance men—permanent. Nothing to do with us.

PADDY: We hate their guts.

ERNIE: It's the way they act—as if they're s-sending us to C-Coventry all the time.

QUATERMASS: They don't speak to you?

ERNIE: Never.

CONRAD: And these security guards?

PADDY: They're the same—special personnel! Special! By God, you'd run a long way to find a more dirty, diseased-lookin' lot—

There are cries of agreement. The girl is passing drinks over the trestle bar, and they are circulating among the group. Noisy talk and argument has broken out on every side.

Conrad glances at Quatermass, then turns to Paddy.

CONRAD: Now I believe there's always been a small pilot-plant there—run by these chaps you call Zombies?

PADDY: That's right. How did you know?

QUATERMASS [*quickly*]: He's a good guesser—

CONRAD: And parties of people were sometimes taken there? Have you ever seen that happen? [*As faces stare, and silence gradually falls over the group.*] Never mind if you haven't—tell me about the domes instead. One of them's finished now, isn't it? D'you know what's inside it? Anybody?

There is dead silence now. Glances are exchanged. Quatermass glares at Conrad, wondering desperately how to retrieve the situation.

PADDY: All of a sudden, you know too much!

MCLEOD [*with resentment and contempt in his voice*]: Would you put our names in your paper—how we gave away secrets for the price of a drink! Come on, love—

He takes his wife's arm. The whole group melts away from Quatermass and Conrad.

QUATERMASS [*protesting*]: Don't go—please don't go—

PADDY: You were tryin' to pump me! [*He goes after the others.*]

QUATERMASS [*to Conrad*]: You fool—

CONRAD: Sorry. I misjudged that. Too many starlet interviews at London Airport—

QUATERMASS [*ignoring him*]: Listen, everybody, please! I've got something to explain—something vitally important. I'm not asking for information now—I'm giving it! But I must have your full attention! Please!

Paddy turns from putting a coin in the juke-box. He and the McLeods are near the door, about to go. The deafening music drowns Quatermass's words.

PADDY [*shouting above the din*]: Ah—don't mind him! Tomorrow's the big night, Mrs. Mac—we'll have youse both dancin' a jig!

MRS. MCLEOD: Oh, Paddy—

MCLEOD: Let's go.

MRS. MCLEOD: My broolly—I left it over there—

She moves back past Quatermass and Conrad, to search in the corner of the room.

PADDY [*singing loudly, regardless of the fact that the juke-box is playing something else*]: 'Oh, I love the dear silver that shines in her hair—'

There is a rending crash. The bar is suddenly full of dust. A woman's scream rings out sharply.

MCLEOD: Maggie—!

In the corner of the hall, Mrs. McLeod is reeling back in a cloud of dust and splinters. A table lies overturned. As McLeod comes scrambling across, followed by Paddy, she collapses into his arms with a series of short wails, close to hysteria. Behind, somebody turns off the jukebox.

MCLEOD: Are you hurt, love? What happened, for God's sake?

QUATERMASS: Everybody keep back now!

ERNIE [*pointing upwards*]: It c-came in through the r-roof!

Conrad joins Quatermass, who is looking cautiously down at a gaping hole in the floorboards.

QUATERMASS: It's one of them. Careful—it's under there now. [*Quickly, to Paddy*] Keep back, man!

PADDY: Who are you giving orders to? [*He drops on his knees and peers through the hole.*] It's an overshot, that's all.

QUATERMASS: A—what?

PADDY [*heavy with patience*]: Things that fall outside the Plant from time to time. Something to do with the process, but don't ask me what! They call them overshots.

QUATERMASS: No—that isn't true. If you'll let me explain, I can—

PADDY: Listen, we've *had* it explained to us, mister.

QUATERMASS: Explained?

PADDY: That these is just overshots. Stones. They mean nothin' at all—this is the first time one's done damage here. [*He turns to the McLeods.*] Are ye okay, Mrs. Mac?

MCLEOD: Just a shock. She'll get over it.

Quatermass moves quickly after them, determined to make them understand.

QUATERMASS: Please listen! My name is Quatermass—I'm a scientist. Whatever you've been told about these things, they are not harmless! They're hollow! Inside them is something—dangerous!

PADDY: Who told you?

Quatermass moves into the centre of the crowd, shouting above the mutter that rises all round him.

QUATERMASS: I've examined some. What's more, the Plant isn't what you believe. The product of it isn't a food—it's a poison! [*The mutter is rising to uproar.*] A deadly poison to any living creature!

PADDY: What's this you're sayin'!

QUATERMASS: I can prove it—

PADDY: You'd better! We're makin' poison, he says!—d'you hear that!

Quatermass finds himself being pummelled, pushed, dragged about. Angry voices are shouting:

'The liar!' 'What's he talking about?' 'Chuck him outside!' 'Trade-spy!' 'Sock him on the jaw—'

A series of sharp, short whistle-blasts cut through the babel. They come from outside. The crowd falls quiet. Faces turn towards the door as it is thrown open. A troubled voice cries out:

'Zombies!'

Three figures enter. They are dressed in protective clothing, their heads helmeted and their faces completely covered by goggled masks that gives them an insect-like appearance. The first of them holds a structure of metal tubes which he directs from side to side like a mine-detector. The crowd parts to let them through.

One of the Zombies pushes Conrad aside—he is half-crouching near the cavity in the floorboards, clutching an empty beer-mug in his hands. The detector is swung across the hole, evidently without its dials recording any response. The leader of the three drops on his knees, thrusts a gauntleted hand through the splintered wood. He brings up a stony fragment, then another. He throws these away and rises.

The three turn away towards the door. Again the crowd draws back. There is a general awe of the Zombies.

PADDY: Look here—this lady was nearly killed—

MCLEOD: At any rate, she had a terrible shock—

The three go on without a word or look, and out of the door. A general hubbub springs up as soon as it closes behind them.

PADDY: Well, how d'you like that—

QUATERMASS: Conrad! [*He pushes his way through to where the journalist is standing.*] Didn't you understand? That one was dead when they found it—probably smashed up in the fall. But the very fact that they were here so quickly—[*He grabs Conrad's arm.*] There's something on! Come—quickly—

Cut—to the exterior of the Community Centre. The sound of a multi-wheeled truck is dying rapidly away as Quatermass appears in the doorway with Conrad.

QUATERMASS: Listen! I don't mean the truck . . .

The sky is alive with faint sounds . . . a chorus of broken whistling.

QUATERMASS: Can you hear them? They must be coming in thousands! This is it, Conrad—this is the night!

The door has swung shut behind them. For a moment Quatermass seems to consider returning to try and raise the alarm—but decides that after the way things have gone, it would be useless.

QUATERMASS: Well? If you want be to finally convinced, we can try to get nearer—

Conrad's car is a few yards away. He starts towards it, but the journalist does not attempt to follow. He stands quite still with the beer-mug in his hand, his face shining with sweat. Quatermass turns to him in exasperation.

QUATERMASS: For heaven's sake, man, don't go to pieces now. If you're not up to it, I'll drive—

CONRAD: I'm trying—

QUATERMASS [*grasping him by the shoulders and shaking him*]: Get a grip on yourself! You've got to take this story back to London tonight—make them listen before it's too late! Conrad!

Conrad coughs. For a long moment Quatermass stares.

QUATERMASS [*shocked*]: No . . . not you!

The beer-mug falls from Conrad's grasp and shatters on the road. The journalist staggers. He collides blindly with the Community Centre notice-board, and clings to one of the uprights.

Quatermass comes quickly to him and examines his face and hands in the light from the hall. What he sees on Conrad's wrist satisfies him.

QUATERMASS [*incredulously*]: You tried—to capture it in that? Oh, you bloody fool—!

The light glints on the broken glass at their feet.

CONRAD [*a whisper*]: Quatermass—

Quatermass turns quickly. For a moment there is only hopelessness in his face. Then it clears into sudden decision. He hurries off towards the car.

Conrad, still clinging to the post, manages to raise his head and look after the car as it starts up and moves rapidly away . . .

Dissolve . . . to the concrete road leading to the Plant, shining faintly in the moonlight. Conrad's sports car comes along it, driven fast and without lights. It passes the 'GOVERNMENT PROPERTY' warning sign and speeds on in the direction of the Plant.

A close shot shows Quatermass at the wheel, his face grim. He glances out through the side window—and his attention is completely engaged by what he sees. After a moment or two he turns to the front again—and starts violently.

Shot from inside the car. There are vehicles ahead at the side of the concrete road. And a black figure is outlined there, waving a gun in a signal to stop.

Quatermass rams his foot down and grips the wheel hard. There is a violent bump—then he pulls the car to a halt with a squeal of brakes. He scrambles out.

The road is quiet, the vehicles deserted. But from above comes a continuous rushing in the air, and in the darkness where the ground slopes away downhill there are distant signal-whistles. Quatermass picks his way back to where the still figure lies on the concrete. He stoops and touches it . . . and there is blood on his hand. He gets up and runs to the nearest of the multi-wheeled trucks at the side of the road. The shapes of metal cylinders can be dimly made out, each with its pressure gauges. And there are spaces on the racks where others have been removed . . . He looks hard down the dark hillside. Nothing can be made out there, but the whistled signals persist. And now a steady, distant klaxon-blast joins in.

Quatermass steps back. He looks down at the crumpled figure of the dead Zombie. In a moment his mind is made up. He stoops beside it, jerks at the bloody insect-mask. It comes away from the crushed head. He wipes his hands on the road, then tackles the protective clothing, ripping it open . . .

Dissolve . . . back to the Community Centre.

Mrs. McLeod is in a chair near the bar, looking white and shaken. In her hand is a glass of water. Her husband moves forward to take it from her. The customers have evidently been engaged in rancorous argument since the departure of the Zombies.

PADDY: Well, it's just not good enough, that's all. Treating us like dirt—something ought to be done about it!

The argument has run its course. Nobody has anything to add.

MCLEOD: How now, girl?

MRS. MCLEOD: I'm all right, Ted . . .

MCLEOD: Fit for the road? Come, take my arm—

She rises and they move to the door. As they reach it, it flies open. A man staggers through, limbs moving convulsively, as if out of control. He fetches up against the silent juke-box, clawing at it for support. It is Conrad.

PADDY: It's that feller—

He pulls Conrad to his feet. The journalist's eyes are wide, twitching about the hall and the staring customers.

MCLEOD: What's the matter with him? [*To Conrad*] You had an accident?

PADDY: Where's your pal? Ernie, have a look outside—

CONRAD [*desperately*]: Telephone!

There is a moment of puzzled doubt.

PADDY: You want us to telephone? A hospital or something? Okay—just you sit down there—

He tried to unload Conrad into a chair, but the journalist clings to him. Paddy supports him across to where the phone stands at the back of the room. Meanwhile Ernie has opened the door and is looking out into the darkness. McLeod joins him there.

MCLEOD: Any sign of the other feller?

ERNIE: No. I seen them come in a c-car, but it's gone—[*He puts a hand on McLeod's arm.*] Mac—listen!

The air is filled with the distant susurrations.

MCLEOD: Overshots? . . . but there'd have to be thousands of them.

ERNIE: I can hear the old hooter at the Plant, too. What d'you make of it?

MCLEOD: I don't know at all.

They turn back into the hall. The customers are crowding round the pair by the telephone. Conrad is slumped against the wall, coughing weakly. Paddy has the receiver in his hand.

PADDY: All right—they're gettin' it. [*He looks doubtfully round at the others.*] A London number, whatever use that'll be to him—

McLeod pushes his way through.

MCLEOD: Paddy, there's something queer going on out there—

PADDY: What sort of thing?

A voice squeaks in the receiver. Before Paddy can raise it to answer, Conrad's hand shoots out and twists it from him. He pulls himself upright. It is as if he is putting forth some tremendous last effort.

CONRAD: Hello . . . gimme night news desk! Quick! Quick! [*A little whimper escapes him at the agony of waiting. The hand that clutches the receiver carries a fiery indented mark. A customer points to this. Others crowd in to look.*] Frank? Hugh . . . Hugh Conrad! Get this now, don't miss a word. [*Desperately*] No questions—take it! For a year and a half this country—and probably others—been coming under influence of—sub this, Frank, to make it sound right—of something from outside the Earth—

The customers react.

CONRAD [*a howl*]: It's true! They fall in kind of meteorites—if you touch them you get infected! I know! I know because it just happened to me—

The customers draw back. Conrad runs a hand across his streaming face, struggling to retain his rapidly slipping control.

CONRAD: Frank, I can't—are you getting this? Listen, there's a place made for them—Winnerden Flats! They know everything . . . there is . . . print the story, Frank . . . [*The receiver slips from his hand and dangles free. He slews round, clutching the trestle bar, his eyes no longer seeing anything.*] We're coming . . . coming now . . . in thousands we're coming . . .

The customers have crowded back towards the door. There is an excited, apprehensive buzz.

PADDY: What d'you make of it?

MCLEOD: I know what we're going to do. [*To his wife, quietly*] Get home on your own, mother—and try not to fret. [*He turns and shouts.*] Foster—Jack—go round the houses—get all the lads! We're going up to the Plant!

He leads the way. Pan from the crowd streaming quickly out of the doorway, to where Conrad lies prone beside the trestle bar . . .

Dissolve . . . to the outer chamber of the Dome.

This is a huge rectangular place with a low roof. Half below ground, it is built on to the Dome's base. A multi-wheeled truck stands on a ramp in the foreground, being unloaded—its cylindrical containers transferred to flat trolleys by some of the Zombies in protective clothing and masks. The whole floor beyond is alive with them. Flat trolleys are being driven rapidly across to the curved opposite wall—the face of the Dome itself. Behind the drone and clatter of machinery there is a deep, reverberating noise, like the bubbling of lava.

In the face of the dome are set, low down, a series of large hooked sockets. A flat trolley drives up to one of these, loaded with containers. Its Zombie crew leap down. A container is swung towards the socket. It connects—a sharp hiss—and the container is swung clear with a thin wisp of vapour trickling from its now open end. What is beyond the socket cannot be seen, since it remains sealed except during the moment of contact. Now the discharged container is being thrown aside, and another swung forward.

One of the uniformed figures moves aside, adjusting his mask. As he re-settles it, his face shows for a moment beneath it. It is Quatermass.

Loudspeakers echo a hard mechanical voice round the chamber:

'Hurry—hurry—hurry! Hurry—hurry—'

Quatermass glances about, clumsily turning his masked head. Along the Dome face are occasional heavy steel covers, locked shut. He moves cautiously towards one of these. The whole floor is in such a commotion behind him that he is unobserved. The urgent clamour of the loudspeaker goes on:

'Hurry—hurry—hurry—'

Quatermass steps up to the massive cover. He spins a locking wheel . . . pulls. The cover creaks open, revealing an armoured glass inspection window. He moves close—and stiffens with horror.

Through the glass can be seen the whole of the interior of the dome. In shimmering light, muddy slime is surging and bubbling, violently agitated. Its surface boils just a few feet below the inspection window . . . and in it are shapes. Shapes that in the same instant have no shape . . . but which, to judge by the size of the lamps in the dome, and a steel ladder descending into the sludge, are colossal. Something slithers like a mudfish, puffs to a dripping grey protuberance as high as a man—shoots upwards in a series of vast bud-shapes that spring neck from neck, ever wider, towards the very roof of the dome far above. Then it withdraws—in an instant. Wreaths of vapour curl and hang. A bobbing bladder distends itself into a vast glistening cloud, expanding at one point, shrinking at another—twists abruptly into a spiral of thick strands—and foams away under the slime. Shapes—or a single vastly complex shape? A monstrous, swaying column of glistening living matter rises past the inspection window, swoops downwards to link with another group—and plunges, sending the black ooze spattering against the glass . . .

Fade in end music. Fade to black.

PART FIVE

The Frenzy

Fade in . . . the outer chamber of the Dome.

Quatermass slams the steel door shut over the inspection window. He spins the lock. Inside his mask he is breathing hard.

After a moment he glances round—and sees that the nearest group of Zombie workers have halted their work of unloading an electric trolley. Their concealed faces are watching him. One of them comes forward as if curious. Quatermass stands his ground, suddenly wondering whether his identical garb is enough, after all, to render him like them. He twists round. Another crew have stopped. More masked faces are approaching . . .

Suddenly from the multiple loudspeakers comes a harsh, urgent bark:

‘Attention! Attention! Emergency at main gate! Special personnel proceed at once with arms to main gate! Emergency! Emergency—’

There is a moment’s stillness among the squads. Then masked figures are running.

Quatermass stands bewildered. The electric trolleys are being abandoned for the present, even those loaded with undischarged cylinders. Curiosity about him seems to have been forgotten—but finding himself standing out against the tide of running figures, he seeks safety in their numbers. He runs with them.

The chamber echoes with the clatter of heavy boots. But there are no shouts, no human outcry, only the distorted clamour of the loudspeakers:

‘Special personnel to main gate! Emergency! Emergency—’

Like all those about him, Quatermass snatches one of the machine-carbines that are clipped into racks along the walls. Then they are hurrying up the ramp . . .

Dissolve . . . to the main gate of the Plant.

Here there is uproar. From the blockhouse and steel towers nearby, searchlights slash through the darkness, picking out an angry mob of men approaching the gate. They are waving crowbars and spanners, and are yelling loudly. The steel gate slams shut as they swarm forward towards it, and Zombie Guards rush forward to take up positions behind it, with levelled guns. The klaxon wails. Whistles blast as more Zombies come running.

Cut—to the gate as the Workers rush at it, beating vainly on the heavy steel mesh. McLeod is there, and Paddy, and Ernie and most of those who were in the Community Centre. And now there are many others with them—perhaps two hundred men in all. Paddy pulls himself up on the mesh and yells.

PADDY: Let us in! We want to talk to the management!

There is a roar of agreement from the others. A loudspeaker on the blockhouse cuts through it.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Silence! Silence! This disturbance must end!

PADDY: It’ll end when this gate’s open and not before! Tell them they’ve got to listen to us!

He is backed by a continuing roar of support. Now McLeod bellows at the top of his voice, too.

MCLEOD: We want to know what’s going on! Is there something wrong with the process? [*He waves his arms.*] Quiet a minute, boys—

As the shouts die down, the rushing of meteorites can be heard—only sporadically now—and the soft thuds of their arrival, out on the dark hillside and on the mud flats below.

MCLEOD: What are they—those things falling out there? We demand to know! Give us an answer!

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: They are harmless. They are being collected by our special squads.

PADDY: Where do they come from?

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Work is being obstructed by this disturbance. Clear the gate! Clear the gate at once! Special personnel, clear the gate!

A multi-wheeled truck, loaded with containers, is approaching the gate along the concrete road.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Clear the gate! Admit the truck!

Inside, Guards move forward with guns at the ready as the gate starts to swing open. The Workers mill about in some confusion, yelling abuse at the Guards, jeering and taunting, yet not daring to attack in face of the guns. Whistles blast.

The truck noses through as the angry Crowd parts. Zombie Guards are clinging to it, pointing their guns.

PADDY [*howls*]: Look at them! Are they goin’ to murder us! Go on, you dirty swine—why don’t you shoot!

The Workers crowd round the moving truck like a human eddy. For a moment they and the foremost Guards are intermingled.

Suddenly Paddy tackles a Guard, wrests his gun from him. Another Guard panics and fires a burst straight into the crowd. There are screams of pain. Then the Guard is down, and Workers are streaming forward round the truck. Paddy is in the lead, swinging the captured gun to his hip and firing as he runs. A sweeping burst cuts down the Guards at the gate. Workers stream into the Plant . . .

Cut—to the interior of the Plant. The klaxon is hooting repeatedly, and loudspeakers at a dozen points are screaming:

‘Special personnel—shoot to kill! Go to emergency stations and shoot to kill! Special personnel—to emergency stations!’

Guards come running through a maze of piping. Ahead, searchlight beams pick out running men—normal men, bareheaded or cloth-capped, with flapping jackets. A little group of them stand, dazzled. The Guards fire—and Workers fall. Others scatter into the darkness, and gunfire

flashes back at the Guards. Helmeted figures stumble and fall in their turn.

A high shot from one of the steel ladderways as another group of Workers runs into sight below. A Guard comes along the ladderway and fires a burst down. Two men fall, twitching on the concrete runway. Their companions fling themselves under cover.

A group of running Guards are cut down by a burst of fire. Then Paddy runs through a patch of light, gun smoking, turning only for a moment to wave on a group of Workers who follow close behind.

Cut—to a square, low-fronted building from which gleaming pipes lead off in several directions. A large entrance gapes, with a single Guard on watch, his gun held at the ready. At the sound of running feet, he blazes away at the darkness, then crumples. Paddy comes running into view. He grabs the fallen Guard's gun and throws it to the man behind him. A steel door has begun to descend across the entrance. Paddy and others scramble under it.

Cut—to the interior of the building.

As the Workers fling themselves through the gap of the steadily-closing door, two figures rise up behind a heavy steel casing—Guards. But in the same moment that they bring their guns to bear on the panting men in front of them, a burst of fire crashes out deafeningly in their rear.

The Guards fall dead across the casing.

Paddy and the others look quickly about, puzzled. Another helmeted figure is moving there with a gun in his hands—but he is tearing at the mask on his face.

QUATERMASS: Hold your fire!

He throws his gun down. He makes his way towards them, the insect-mask dangling at his throat. Recognition dawns in Paddy's eyes.

PADDY: By God, look who—[*He lowers his gun, then points it at the dead Zombie Guards.*] It was you done that?

QUATERMASS: Yes.

PADDY [*still suspicious*]: Where'd you get that outfit?

QUATERMASS: I took it. To get into the Plant.

He joins them—a little group of panting, exhausted men. The steel door has closed down completely now.

PADDY: Just made it in time. Where the hell are the light switches? Get them off, somebody—

A man goes running. Paddy looks over his followers. There are about a dozen of them. One or two are clutching bloody stains. Another slumps to the floor, caught by McLeod and Ernie.

PADDY: Is he bad?

MCLEOD: Can't tell—

PADDY: Did you see back there—they got a whole bunch of our fellers—lit 'em up an' blasted 'em! Filthy murderers—

QUATERMASS: What happened? What started all this?

PADDY: Tell you in a minute—

The lights are snapped off. Only moonlight strikes through the windows on to pipes and casings. There is a faint glow from gauges and dials on control panels.

ERNIE: Why did you bring us here?

PADDY: It's the safest spot. They'll think twice before they attack us—for the sake of the apparatus. But we'll make sure. How many of youse got guns, now? Get 'em off them two Zombies—quick!

Ernie scrambles across to the bodies. Quatermass catches Paddy's arm and points. Just inside the entrance is a low steel cupboard built into the wall. It is stencilled 'EMERGENCY ONLY' and has been opened.

QUATERMASS: One of them took a gun from there—

Paddy bounds across and flings the door wide. He gives a yell. Inside are a full rack of machine-carbines and boxes of ammunition. Along the floor of it is a grotesque pipelike weapon.

PADDY: Look at this lot—just look at it! Even a bloody bazooka! They were ready to face anything, weren't they? Even tanks. All right, boys, come and get 'em—[*He pushes guns and magazines into their hands.*] We've got to keep a lookout now. Rogers—over to the back windows. And you with him—

Two men hurry off. Paddy and another manhandle the bazooka out and carry it across to the parapet that runs below the main window. Paddy swings up the gun slung from his shoulder, and with the butt smashes the glass out of the frame. Then he lifts the bazooka and steadies it across the window ledge.

PADDY: We'll have this beauty here in case they get up to any tricks with armoured stuff. Hey, Jack—grab some charges for it and sling 'em over.

Quatermass pulls himself up on to the parapet beside him. There is no more gunfire now . . . no klaxon hooting . . . no sound or movement.

PADDY: Aye, they were all set for trouble, weren't they? Well, they got it.

QUATERMASS: How did this start?

PADDY: They shut the gate on us, but we bust through an' in among them. They used their guns on us—bloody butchers—

QUATERMASS: But what brought you up here?

PADDY: Well—you did! You and your pal—

QUATERMASS: Conrad? You found him?

PADDY: We did. Nearly makin' the last of it, by the look of him—but he tried to talk on the telephone to some newspaper office or somethin'—

QUATERMASS [*incredulously*]: He phoned? But he'd been—infected—

PADDY: Ay, that's what he said.

QUATERMASS: It must be possible to resist it after all—

PADDY: He passed clean out. Now what is this about infection? What are these things they're droppin'? That's what we came here to find out.

QUATERMASS: I tried to tell you—

PADDY: Well, tell us now! Yell it out so we can all hear—go on!

Quatermass turns. The other Workers are watching him intently from the shadows.

QUATERMASS: I've seen what is in the Dome.

Paddy glances round instinctively. Through the window the great Dome can be seen gleaming dully in the moonlight. Other uncompleted ones stand out nearby with derricks rearing above their open tops. This building is evidently in the middle of the group.

MCLEOD: Well, what is it?

QUATERMASS: Something that comes from those stone cases that are being brought in. Living substance.

PADDY: Living—

QUATERMASS: Breathing—if they breathe—a mixture of gases that would kill us in a moment. And absorbing ammoniac slime. Those must be the conditions of the world they come from, wherever it is—and frankly I've no idea where. Certainly millions of miles away.

The Workers are crowding closer, their faces incredulous.

ERNIE: Millions of miles . . . !

A YOUNGER MAN: You can't be right! I won't believe it—

QUATERMASS: I've seen them! In there they've recovered their original nature. They've—grown—formed a complex, multiple creature. It won't be long till they fill that dome!

He points to the huge shape outside. Awe strikes the little group.

MCLEOD: Feeding on—slime?

QUATERMASS: That's it, McLeod—that's the only synthetic food this Plant produces. And you've all helped to develop it.

MCLEOD [to the others]: How much of this do we believe?

QUATERMASS: You want evidence, man?—it's all round you. [*He points to the bodies.*] Look at those poor creatures you've called Zombies—they've been infected by contact with the things. Go ahead, take a look—they can't hurt you now. There's no contagion. But you'll find marks on them somewhere—a kind of branched scar—

ERNIE: Marks—

McLeod turns one of the bodies over.

YOUNG MAN: There—behind the ear! I've seen that on people before. On *them*—that's right, only on them—

QUATERMASS: Once that's on them, they don't think as men any more. They're driven—

MCLEOD: This might have happened to us too?

QUATERMASS: It wasn't necessary.

MCLEOD: What d'you mean?

QUATERMASS: You were doing what was wanted.

MCLEOD: And if we hadn't—[*He glances down at the body.*]

QUATERMASS: Either way, this Plant would have been built. And the other plants like it, in different countries—

PADDY: There are none!

QUATERMASS: Oh yes, there are. They're under construction at this moment—I've seen proof of that. These creatures mean to colonize the Earth. [*He nods at the dead figure on the ground.*] That's the human being of the future. Ready to die—for them.

There is a long silence. The men look at each other. One comes forward to inspect the mark on the dead Zombie. He stirs the body with his toe. There is a reluctance to touch them.

PADDY [*slowly*]: If it wasn't that it all fits . . . but when you think back over everything . . . by God!

He looks out along the deserted tracks.

PADDY: Still leavin' us alone. Why? In the hope that we don't know how to do it?

QUATERMASS: Do what?

Paddy slithers down from the parapet.

PADDY: Cut off the gas supply to the Dome. Sure, isn't this place the pressure control!

QUATERMASS: You mean that—

PADDY: All these pipes lead out to the Domes. I know because we worked on it—Mac and three or four of the boys there. So we ought to be able to figure out—

He looks round the tangle of piping that covers walls and ceiling, in heavy and narrow gauges. He points to a massive pipe running overhead.

PADDY: That's the main going out to Number One—which would take us to—

He leads the way to a junction. The heavy pipe evidently takes the supply of three narrower ones at this point. And these lead in their turn to a control panel. Quatermass quickly inspects the dials and their markings.

PADDY: You understand this?

QUATERMASS: 'Combined pressure'—combined from what? . . . Yes . . . there they are! Methane, ammonia, hydrogen. And the pressures add up . . . Set these to zero?

He turns the control knobs. Somewhere behind the bank of apparatus electric motors hum a response. The pointers on the dials start to fall slowly back.

PADDY: There's manual locks on the pipes, too. In case a section needed replacing. Them'd make double sure of it.

QUATERMASS: Yes—use them.

PADDY: Mac—Ernie! Give us a hand here—get these turned off quick.

The three men hurry to spin the wheel-cocks further along the pipes. Quatermass is watching the dials.

PADDY [calls]: How is it now?

QUATERMASS: Dropping nicely.

MCLEOD: Have you got any idea how long this is going to take? I mean, to really work?

QUATERMASS: No.

MCLEOD: Think we can hold out long enough?

Quatermass does not answer. In his face is the same thought. Then he turns.

QUATERMASS: This—this hydrogen supply. Any idea how it's produced?

PADDY: That place yonder, by the sea's edge. Eh, Mac?

MCLEOD [nodding]: The electrolytic unit.

PADDY: The biggest in the world, they said—it was supposed to be—

QUATERMASS: Electrolysis of water—then there's oxygen. What happens to that?

MCLEOD: I believe it goes to the power sections. Burnt up.

PADDY: That's right—

QUATERMASS: Of course! It would be. [Hardly daring to ask the question] It's not—piped through here?

They look at each other. It is Ernie who answers.

ERNIE [pointing]: Over there—I think I s-seen—

Quatermass hurries to the spot. The others follow, mystified. Well away from the other apparatus is a small unlit control panel covered by a locked grid. Beside it are warning notices—'DANGER . . . CONTAMINATION BY OXYGEN . . .' There is a pipe adjoining, also with wheel-cocks. Quatermass draws an excited breath.

QUATERMASS: Look—can you open up the main feed-pipe and pass oxygen into it? You've got to try! It's our only real hope!

MCLEOD: But—oxygen?

QUATERMASS: To what's in the Dome, it's a deadly poison!

With a quick blow and twist from a heavy spanner, Paddy deals with the grid. He wrenches it aside, exposing the simple controls.

PADDY: Will there be pressure enough?

QUATERMASS [examining the gauge]: There should be.

Paddy jumps up. The Workers on guard at the windows look round as he hurries to the junction of the pipes. Metallic rattings ring out as he tests the joints. Quatermass comes to his side.

PADDY: I reckon we can do it. There's lengths of armoured hose back there—if we get some slung and connect her up—

QUATERMASS: How long will it take?

PADDY: Maybe an hour—

They start at the sudden booming of a mechanical voice, somewhere above their heads.

It comes from a loudspeaker.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Attention! Attention, all unauthorized personnel now in occupation of the pressure control block . . .

The Workers on guard at the windows turn to listen.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Lay down your weapons. Cease resistance. You will then be permitted to go to your homes, pending further action.

Paddy picks up his gun and goes quickly to the parapet under the main window. The man on guard there is beckoning.

Paddy raises his gun.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Cease resistance now. You will be fairly treated. Abandon all weapons and come out. Come out—

Paddy fires a burst, then another. He peers out through the wreathed smoke and bawls into the darkness.

PADDY: Come out and be shot to bits, is it? [He turns to Quatermass as he comes running forward.] They were movin' in to take us!

QUATERMASS: Have they gone?

PADDY [renewing the magazine of his gun]: I think one got clear. An odd thing—they never tried for cover—

QUATERMASS: They couldn't.

PADDY: Ah . . . poor bastards . . . [He calls.] All youse on the lookout, don't let 'em get near again. Yell out if you see any movement at all! [Jumping down] Now—there's work to do. The rest of you—over here—

He leads the way to the pipe junction, pointing and directing. A moment later a clatter starts up . . . a rattling of chain.

Quatermass looks on. He notices a telephone receiver hooked on the wall a yard or two away. Without thinking he goes to it and picks it up. He listens—and slams it back on the hook. Ernie is watching him.

ERNIE: That's j-just an internal line. It's no good.

Quatermass nods. After a moment he moves away, towards the others.

Dissolve . . . to the Rocket Group control room.

This is part of the launch complex. It is a reinforced shelter-like chamber on the edge of the firing bay. Through a horizontal slit of a window, part of the great rocket itself can be seen standing ready on its pad. Lights are burning out there on the service tower.

The control room is brightly lit—filled to capacity with banks of computing apparatus and control panels. Technicians are completing checks on these, while nearby Paula is answering a telephone call. Her face is weary, apprehensive.

PAULA [*into phone*]: No—I haven't heard from him . . . Hello? You still there? . . . Have you heard from Mr. Conrad? . . . Mr. Hugh Conrad—one of your staff writers, isn't he? . . . [*relieved*] Oh, you have! Yes, that's right—they were to meet earlier this evening, and evidently . . . [*A pause*] Hello? Hello? D'you know where they are now? . . . I say, d'you know where my father is now? [*Another pause. When she speaks again, her tone is different—more wary.*] Preparations? Here? [*She glances at the busy Technicians.*] No. None. Why d'you want to know? Hello? . . .

The line evidently goes dead. White-faced, she presses an extension-button.

PAULA: Launching bay? Is Dr. Pugh—oh, it's you, Leo. There's something I want to tell you. I'm worried. Look—stay there and I'll come out. *She puts the phone down and hurries out.*

Cut—to the rocket launching bay.

Close shot of Pugh replacing phone at base of the service tower. Deep in his overcoat, he shivers.

There is the sound of the electric lift reaching the bottom of its shaft nearby. An overalled Technician comes from it.

TECHNICIAN: Dr. Pugh, I checked those contacts—all in order.

PUGH: Oh—thanks. Go and get some sleep now, in case there's an early alert.

TECHNICIAN: D'you really think—

PUGH: There's no decision yet. That's all I can say.

TECHNICIAN: Of course. Good night.

PUGH: 'Night.

The Technician goes off across the launching pad. Pugh pulls a torch from his pocket and flashes it about. He calls.

PUGH: Hello, there—you!

The voice of an unseen security man answers.

SECURITY MAN'S VOICE: What is it, sir?

PUGH: All right—I was just making sure.

He turns away and pushes the torch back into his pocket. He rubs his chilled hands together. A moment later there is a challenge in the darkness.

VOICE OF SECURITY MAN: Who's that? [*A pause*] Oh—right you are, miss.

Paula comes into the patch of light round the rocket's fins. She crosses quickly to Pugh.

PUGH: What was it? What's wrong?

PAULA: Oh, Leo—

Her nerves are taut. He takes her hand.

PUGH: What?

PAULA: They rang up just now—from that paper. Asking questions. As if they'd been told nothing. Yet they knew what it was all about!

PUGH: Who spoke to you?

PAULA: I don't know—it seemed to be two or three people, as if they were on extension lines. They asked about father and then—the rocket.

PUGH [*perturbed*]: The rocket?

A pause.

PAULA: I was afraid then.

PUGH: Did you tell them anything?

PAULA: No. [*After a moment*] It's cold out here.

PUGH: Seven hours till dawn, it'll get colder. What else?

PAULA [*unwillingly*]: They knew where my father was. They denied it but—I could tell.

PUGH: How?

PAULA: I don't know—the way things were put. Leo, he's inside the Plant, I'm sure of it.

A pause.

PUGH: I'll go.

PAULA: You're needed here—

PUGH: What for, if he doesn't come back? What to do? [*He nods up at the rocket.*] I won't be responsible for this. I'll just give a few holding instructions, and—he described the way there pretty clearly.

PAULA: Let me come with you—

PUGH: Just one of us.

PAULA: Leo—

PUGH: No.

He moves off across the launching pad into the shadow beyond the fins.

Dissolve . . . to the pressure control block at the Plant. Close shot of the feed-pipe junction. It has been drastically changed. The three smaller pipes which joined the main have been disconnected and twisted aside. In their place is a single flexible pipe which leads away in the direction of the oxygen supply. Paddy and Ernie are working on the joint—caulking, tightening nuts.

The loudspeaker barks above.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Attention! Attention! There have been allegations concerning the nature of the process. These allegations are without foundation in fact. It is known that the man Quatermass is among you . . .

Quatermass looks quickly up, startled. Paddy turns to him.

PADDY: They're on to you, prof.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Pay no attention to this man. He is a spy. His purpose is to mislead you and to destroy the process . . .

For a moment a slight smile comes to Quatermass's face. Then he notices the men watching him—to see how he is taking this. He jerks his head at the loudspeaker, a nod of dismissal, and moves quickly across to where Paddy has risen, wiping his hands.

QUATERMASS: How is it?

PADDY: It ought to hold. See if Mac's through—

They follow the course of the flexible piping. McLeod and two of the others have completed the new connexion to the oxygen supply.

PADDY: Okay, Mac?

MCLEOD: Just about—

He grunts, straining at his spanner.

The Loudspeaker Voice comes again, just as dehumanized but quieter now, almost cajoling.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: There has been violence. Also an interference with gas supplies by unauthorized personnel. All this must now cease—

QUATERMASS [*to McLeod*]: Hurry it up.

MCLEOD [*panting*]: What d'you—think I'm doing—

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: The normal working of the Plant must be allowed to proceed. The usual amenities are being provided. Please cooperate.

QUATERMASS: Amenities?

Music tinkles from the loudspeaker. A jiggling, twangling little dance tune. It is echoing everywhere, outside among the Domes, from every loudspeaker in the colony.

QUATERMASS [*incredulously*]: Music while you work?

PADDY: They shove it on during night-shifts. But now after all that's happened—are they mad or what?

Quatermass looks round. The lunatic normality of the music has made an impact already—one or two of the men are looking at him with a hard scrutiny in which are elements of doubt.

QUATERMASS: They're trying to persuade you.

PADDY: Persuade—

QUATERMASS: That this is somehow just a routine night, and that all this is a mad blunder that you've been led into—

The music tinkles on.

PADDY: Listen to it! And there's men lyin' dead out there—[*He turns to McLeod.*] Right, Mac? Let 'em set this to music!

He spins the wheel-cock that has locked off the oxygen supply. Then he scrambles across to the junction with the main feed-pipe. He spins a second wheel-cock.

Quatermass watches anxiously as a needle on the adjoining control panel wavers and drops—then rises again.

PADDY: Full on now—

QUATERMASS: It's going in!

PADDY: Sure this'll work?

QUATERMASS: It must.

He becomes conscious of McLeod and two or three of the others watching a yard or two away.

PADDY [*to them*]: Let's hope he's right, eh?

MCLEOD: Ay. Let's hope he knows.

PADDY: Hey, prof—maybe there's a quicker way. You said there's hydrogen in that Dome. Now we're passin' oxygen in too. Isn't that what they call an explosive mixture? We might have a try at settin' it off—

QUATERMASS: No. Even if we had the means we couldn't time it properly. This way's best—it's under our control. Now—[*he takes Paddy by the arm, turns him towards the window and points*]—the pipe must be kept clear out there. At all costs.

PADDY: It's good and high. They'd have a job to get at it—

QUATERMASS: Up the support columns?

PADDY: Ay. [*Calls*] Watch out for the pipe, boys—keep them off it.

He picks up his gun and clambers up on to the parapet to take a look himself.

The music tinkles steadily on, from all the loudspeakers.

The men are ill-at-ease. Glances are exchanged between them. Those on watch shift their positions, waiting. Paddy sighs. He looks round and calls to McLeod.

PADDY: Hey, Mac—how long is it? Since we were back there celebratin'? Is it months or years?

MCLEOD [*his face expressionless, glances at his watch*]: It's the day now. I'm twenty-five years married.

PADDY [*limply*]: Good oul' Mac—

The music suddenly cuts off. The Voice yells with an unmistakable, gabbling urgency.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Attention! This disruption must cease! The management are anxious to cooperate! Anyone injured in recent violence will be treated immediately!

The men turn to listen.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Unauthorized personnel now in the pressure control block—report to the canteen. All questions can be settled there. Please go to the canteen! Leave any weapons and go to the canteen! Go now! Go! Hurry—hurry! Hurry!

Close shot of Quatermass, tense excitement in his face.

QUATERMASS [*shouts*]: Hear that? They're getting desperate! It's working! The oxygen's taking effect!

He hurries to watch over the control panel . . .

Dissolve . . . to a main road through open country, as headlamps of an approaching vehicle cut through the darkness. It is travelling fast.

Cut—the interior of the vehicle, a large estate car. The driver is Pugh. He peers ahead and to the sides as if looking for landmarks. From the shelf under the instrument board he pulls a map in a transparent case. He glances at this and evidently decides he has driven off it. Without slackening speed he gets rid of the case with a sharp shake, holding on to the map. He opens it across his knees.

Cut . . . to the station wagon speeding away into the dark, tail light glinting. There are no trees outlined against the almost black sky. This is open moorland . . .

Dissolve . . . to the pressure control block at the Plant.

Close shot of a Worker firing a deafening burst from his gun through the main window. He draws back into cover. Paddy comes scrambling to his side. The man points. Paddy nods. He turns to Quatermass as he comes quickly across the floor below.

PADDY: A Zombie up on the pipe. It's all right.

Music is trickling from the loudspeakers once more, but it is slow and quiet now. Quatermass glances at his watch. McLeod and Ernie come forward.

MCLEOD: D'you think they'll rush us?

PADDY: Not here.

QUATERMASS: Not till the last.

The music fades. The Voice comes again. It is urgent as before, but also disjointed.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Attention! Here is a last appeal. You are destroying the process that you—that you and your comrades have helped to create. Oxygen gas now being forced into the Dome is damaging a priceless food substance—

Quatermass turns quickly to the others.

QUATERMASS: They're admitting it! They're twisting the facts right round but—

MCLEOD: Quiet!

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: You have been misled. You are betraying your comrades. They will be the sufferers from your criminal folly—

Quatermass snatches up a heavy spanner and swings it at the loudspeaker—but his arm is caught and held fast, by McLeod.

MCLEOD [*tearing the spanner from him*]: We want to hear what it says—

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Here is an offer! The entire Plant is open to your inspection, as from now. Whatever you wish to see, it will be shown to you. This offer is made in good faith—

MCLEOD [*to the others*]: Hear that?

PADDY: It's all a bluff, Mac—[*to Quatermass*]—isn't it?

MCLEOD: It's what we asked for when we came up tonight.

QUATERMASS: They're trying to get us out of here, that's all—

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: This is a last appeal to you as reasonable men. Do not destroy your work and your comrades. You are chosen workers in a new and revolutionary process—

MCLEOD: Where's that phone?

QUATERMASS: McLeod! Don't be a fool—

MCLEOD: We've listened to you too long!

QUATERMASS: I've told you what's in the Dome—

MCLEOD: Ay—what you *said* you saw!

He strides across to the phone and pulls the receiver off its hook.

QUATERMASS: McLeod—

PADDY: Mac—

Quatermass tries to snatch the receiver from McLeod's hand, but is thrown aside.

MCLEOD [*into phone*]: Hello—hello! I'm speaking from the pressure control—put me through—

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Who is speaking?

MCLEOD [*momentarily confused by the response coming through both telephone and loudspeaker*]: Oh—this is E. J. McLeod, welding section. I'm accepting your offer. We've been told there's something alive in that Dome.

A momentary pause.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: That is not true. You have been misled.

MCLEOD: I want to see for myself.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Hurry, then. Bring your companions or come alone. But hurry! You will meet us outside the Dome in one minute from now. Confirm this.

MCLEOD: I'll be there.

He puts the phone on its hook.

QUATERMASS: This is mad and useless! Don't you understand—you'll be infected—

MCLEOD: They said good faith. If they break that—well, Paddy, it'll be up to you—

PADDY: I'm comin' with you—

MCLEOD: You're in charge here, you've got to be. But the rest of you—Rogers? Anybody?

A doubtful pause. Then a man steps forward.

MAN: I'll come with you, Mac.

MCLEOD: Les . . . ay, we've stuck together before. And you Frank? [*Another man joins them.*] Let's have that door open, then.

Somebody throws a switch. The steel door rises.

QUATERMASS: For the last time—won't you believe me?

MCLEOD: I'll believe my eyes.

He and his companions go out through the door. Immediately it is dropped again. Paddy runs to the parapet, bringing up his gun. He shouts to the others.

PADDY: Keep 'em covered now, all of you!

Guns are pointed through the windows.

Cut—to McLeod and the two other Workers walking forward along the trackway to the Dome. They are picked out by low searchlight beams that cut through the darkness.

Ahead, just by the entrance to the Dome's outer chamber, a little group of dimly-seen figures are waiting. They do not move as McLeod's little party approach. Then hands are pointed towards the nearby entrance. Both groups move off there together.

Cut—to the pressure control block.

The tense row of faces along the window are watching every move out there.

PADDY: They're all inside now . . . [*He sits back.*] Did you see—there was no guns at any of their men? Maybe they mean it. Anyway, we'll soon know, one way or the other—

QUATERMASS [*sharply*]: We shan't!

Heads turn—but interest in him and what he has to say has fallen off.

QUATERMASS: Listen to me—in a few minutes you'll probably hear McLeod or one of the others talking to you—[*he points to the loudspeaker above them*]—through that. Telling you it's all right. It won't be true but he won't be able to help himself, because—

PADDY [*urgently*]: Shut up!

The place is ringing with a thin metallic sound. They look about for the source of it. Ernie points to the main feed-pipe. He scrambles down from the parapet and across to the junction. He puts his hands on the pipe itself, his ear close to it. After a moment he looks up in alarm.

ERNIE: I think I can hear—

He listens again. Quatermass joins him. Paddy comes hurrying across too.

QUATERMASS: What was it?

ERNIE: Like m-men—

QUATERMASS: What do you mean?

ERNIE: A long way off. Sort of—yelling.

Quatermass has his ear to the pipe now. He looks at Paddy and shakes his head.

ERNIE: It was just for a m-minute—I mean, a few seconds—

Quatermass checks him with a gesture.

QUATERMASS: There's something now—

ERNIE [*listening too*]: It's different.

They no longer need to listen closely to the sounds along the pipe. Everyone in the block can hear—a deep, booming throb.

Faces turn to Quatermass for an explanation. He shakes his head.

From the loudspeaker comes a sudden confused burst of speech and noise.

VOICE FROM LOUDSPEAKER: Attention! Atten—[*A crackle of static*] Emergency—

A buzzing, then the loudspeaker clicks back into silence. Quatermass snatches the phone from its hook.

QUATERMASS: Hello—hello? Anyone there?

There is no reply.

MAN AT WINDOW: I can see somebody running! Away from the Dome—he just came out—

PADDY: One of our boys?

MAN: No—a Zombie, I think. [*After a moment*] I've lost him now—

The group by the pipe junction are mystified, Quatermass as much as any of them. The reverberation has died away. Paddy's face is jerking with a kind of blind anger. There is a faint hiss.

It grows rapidly louder. Ernie, who is standing with his back to the pipe junction, spins round.

ERNIE: It's burst!

PADDY: All right—just the caulking gone—

QUATERMASS: Look at the pressure! [*His eyes are on the control panel.*] Cut the oxygen off—

While Paddy runs to do so, he quickly inspects the junction. Caulking has been forced out of the rough joint, and there is a strong steady hiss of escaping oxygen. This dies away as Paddy spins the wheel-cock.

PADDY: Off now. [*He returns.*] You know what this means?

QUATERMASS [*nods*]: The pipe's blocked.

PADDY [*after a moment*]: What do we do? Open it up? Maybe we ought to.

Ernie is fingering the blown caulking. He draws his hand away—and turns to them with a contorted face. For a moment he cannot speak.

ERNIE [*with an effort*]: Blood!

Crash in music.

Track in to pipe junction. Dark liquid is oozing from the split. It drips, then trickles in a thin stream.

PADDY [*a whisper of horror*]: They're—they're in the pipe—

A moment's silence. The trickling goes on.

QUATERMASS [*shakily*]: The things must have turned on them.

ERNIE: God!

PADDY: Mac—all of them.

QUATERMASS: Their own men, too. That pipe's blocked with—a human pulp—

Paddy gives a long, terrible howl. Cursing and stumbling, he makes for the parapet. He swings up the bazooka. Behind, Quatermass is shouting out an ineffectual warning. Men are running to Paddy's side, their faces wild. There is a crash—a bolt of flame and smoke—as Paddy fires.

Cut—to a long shot of the moonlit Dome as the missile strikes. There is a small flash on its surface, followed immediately by a major explosion inside. The whole top rises shattered. Steel plates go flying. Dense clouds of whitish vapour come pouring out, lit by flames within.

Cut—a high shot of the entire Plant. The poisonous vapour is spreading rapidly, whirling about the cluster of Domes . . . smothering the lower buildings and rising like a sea round the giant process towers. Somewhere in it the klaxon wails.

Thinning, the vapour rolls on through the outer buildings of the Plant.

The principal Dome has been blown asunder like a great flattened flower, with petals of twisted steel plate. Nothing moves there but the wreathing gas.

Dissolve . . . to the main gate of the Plant. The smoke-like vapour is swirling round the blockhouse, past an abandoned truck and the bodies of both Workers and Guards where they were shot down earlier. A figure appears, walking steadily through the boiling haze, wearing protective clothing and the insect-like mask. He has a torch in his hand. For a moment he pauses by one of the bodies, but bullets and gas together have left no life here. He rises and hurries on through the open gate. Behind, the jammed klaxon chokes and dies away.

Dissolve . . . to the concrete road near the Plant.

The vapour has almost cleared here, swept away by the wind from the sea. The bobbing torch shows where the masked man is hurrying along the moonlit track. He comes to a halt.

A close shot of him as he cautiously tests, then rips off his mask, shows it is Quatermass. He takes long, gasping breaths of the pure air.

He frowns. He flashes the torch at something on the road ahead of him and starts forward again, steps quickening. Half off the road, headlamps blazing into the marshy ground, a vehicle is stopped at a crazy angle.

Quatermass's torch plays over it as he comes running. It is an estate car, and on its side are the small painted words: 'BRITISH EXPERIMENTAL ROCKET GROUP'. He pulls the door open—and sees Leo Pugh slumped in the driver's seat. As Quatermass lifts him upright, he stirs and coughs.

QUATERMASS: Leo! What are you doing here?

For a moment Pugh stares at him blankly.

PUGH: Quatermass. I was—coming to find you—and then the explosion—[*he coughs again, hoarsely.*]

QUATERMASS: The gas got you? [*Pugh nods weakly, wheezing.*] Thank heaven you had the windows shut, or you'd have had no chance—like those others—

He glances back towards the Plant.

PUGH: The Dome—?

QUATERMASS: It was full of the things. But they're gone, destroyed—all of them. Finished.

PUGH: No—

QUATERMASS: I went to look. I made sure. Now—we'd better get help. There's just a chance there are men back there still alive—

He breaks off, listening. Somewhere above them in the darkness is the sound of motors.

QUATERMASS: Sounds like helicopters. Heading this way—

PUGH: Leave it to them! Got to go back—the rocket—quickly!

QUATERMASS: What's happened?

There is desperation in Pugh's face—he is like a fearful, cornered animal.

PUGH: You—drive! Quatermass—go back to the rocket!

He seems almost frozen with fear. Quatermass does not hesitate. He slams the door and hurries to the driver's side of the car . . .

Slow dissolve . . . to the Rocket Group control room.

Close shot of two pressure suits as they are given their final inspection by a Technician. Ribbed and reinforced in plastic and spring steel, they are like streamlined armour. The Technician takes one of the helmets away for a further check. As he moves off, pan to Quatermass. He has got rid of the protective clothing and all its fittings, and has pulled on some of his own things, evidently in a hurry. Now he is staring down at the desk in front of him, wearily trying to concentrate.

Paula is beside him. There is a look of incredulous relief in her eyes. The strain of the past few hours is bursting out in a rapid stream of words.

PAULA: I'd given up—I'd completely given up! I made up my mind there was no hope of seeing you again—it had gone on so long, you see—on and on, and getting worse all the time. First there were all these phone calls—I had them routed through to me—asking for you and then cutting off. Always different voices. And it was always as if they knew more than I did—and knew you were dead—[*She clutches his arm.*] And then a couple of hours ago there was another that made me quite certain. I imagined it came from the newspaper again but I was probably wrong—

QUATERMASS: What made you think so?

PAULA: Something about the voices reminded me—oh, God, those voices! They said—there'd been a riot and the Plant was destroyed and a search was going on for survivors. I thought I knew what that meant—[*She buries her face in his shoulder.*]

QUATERMASS [*after a moment*]: You say that was—about two hours ago? [*She nods.*] It had hardly happened then.

She looks up at him.

QUATERMASS: I think that's one story that won't appear in tomorrow's papers.

A throbbing in the air comes faintly, fades, then roars into the full-throated sound of a low-flying aircraft.

QUATERMASS: Have they been over here before? Planes?

PAULA: I don't think so.

She looks for confirmation to the Technicians working nearby, who have also broken off to listen. They confirm with shakes of the head. Gradually the sound of aero-engines dies away.

QUATERMASS: Gone—for the moment. [*He picks up the paper he has been studying.*] How sure are you that this was Fowler?

PAULA: I thought I recognized—[*uncertainly*—] I don't know. I'm not sure of anything. He must have been under stress, of course. He just repeated those words—spelt the names out quickly—

QUATERMASS: All these!

PAULA: If there had been anything—wrong—would he have been able to give that information?

QUATERMASS: That's true.

PAULA: I tried to question him, but he rang off—

QUATERMASS: Started in a dozen parts of the world! We've only wiped out a single nest.

PAULA: If one's destroyed, the others will be—

QUATERMASS: Who'll do it? Who knows?

PAULA: We can't be the only people—

QUATERMASS: But if we are?

The roar of aero-engines comes again overhead.

Quatermass turns to a desk at the side of the room, where Leo Pugh has been feverishly working.

QUATERMASS: Leo—

Pugh looks round, his mind still half on his calculations.

PUGH: Have you decided?

QUATERMASS: You've got the interception orbit?

PUGH: Optimum time for lift-off—ninety-seven minutes from now. Miss that and you wait another twenty-two hours.

QUATERMASS: Right. We'll start the count-down.

As he crosses to the microphone on the main control desk, Paula catches his arm.

PAULA: You—you really mean to try it, then?

QUATERMASS: Prepare, anyway. That may be as far as we'll get. I wonder how long we could hold out here—

There is a sharp, echoing crack somewhere outside.

PAULA: Was that—a shot?

QUATERMASS: The launching bay—[*He crosses quickly to the slit-like window and peers into the darkness.*] Can't see anything. Some idiot taking fright—Who's supposed to be out there?

Paula picks up the phone.

PAULA: Hello—hello! Put me on to the launching bay . . .

QUATERMASS [*at the window*]: Now I can see somebody. Figures moving down there—

PAULA [*into phone*]: Hello? Is that the launching bay? Who is that speaking? Who . . . ?

Her face chills. She turns slowly to the others.

Cut—to the launching bay.

The phone at the foot of the service tower is being replaced on its hook—by a figure in Army parachutist's uniform: steel helmet and full battle kit. As he turns into the light, his face can be seen. It is John Dillon. Across his cheek is a deep, indented scar.

Now other Paratroops appear, running through to shadows to take up positions round the base of the rocket, in the shadow of the fin, a heavy machine-gun is being set up . . .

Crash in end music. Fade to black.

PART SIX

The Destroyers

Fade in . . . the Rocket Group control room.

Close shot of Quatermass looking out through the slit window towards the launching bay. White-faced, Paula is at his side.

PAULA: There he is! At the foot of the tower—

QUATERMASS: Yes, it is Dillon.

He turns quickly past the staring Technicians to where Pugh is standing by the main control panel.

QUATERMASS: They must have dealt with our security people.

PAULA [*at the window*]: He's coming this way. Two men with him—

QUATERMASS [*depresses a key and speaks into a built-in microphone*]: Quatermass calling all sections. The men out there on the launching bay are British paratroops. We'll try and get this sorted out—meanwhile, please stay where you are, everyone, and keep calm. [*He flicks the key back.*] I don't want a massacre.

He turns to the girl.

QUATERMASS: Paula—get out of here! Go to the radiation bunker—anywhere—away. You're not to be here when they come!

PAULA: I won't leave. You know that.

QUATERMASS: They may be carrying more than guns. [*He takes her by the arm.*] Don't you understand? This won't be the man you knew three days ago.

PAULA: I'm prepared for that—

A door crashes. There are shouts. Then heavily booted feet come running.

The door of the control room is flung open. Dillon enters, pistol in hand. Two Paratroopers follow with machine-carbines held at the ready.

For a long moment the two groups confront one another. Paula's eyes are fixed on Dillon's dead, scarred face. He shows no reaction to her as a person, or to anyone present. They might be strangers or enemies.

PAULA: John—

She takes a step towards him. Quatermass catches her by the arm.

QUATERMASS: It's no use. [*To Dillon*] What have you come to do?

The blank eyes under the helmet are taking them in . . . the Technicians, Pugh, the winking lamps on the panels.

DILLON: This establishment is under our control.

He crosses to the slit window and gazes out at the launching bay.

PAULA [*a whisper*]: He led them here—

Quatermass looks round the room. The two Paratroopers have remained just inside the doorway with guns tucked against their sides. In their eyes, too, is the unmistakable expression of the Zombie.

QUATERMASS [*to the girl, quietly*]: Now keep quite still—

He goes quickly to Dillon, puts a hand on his shoulder. The Paratroopers swing up their guns. Paula chokes back a cry.

Dillon shakes Quatermass's hand away.

QUATERMASS: Dillon—[*Deliberately*] Captain John Dillon, you came here three days ago. You brought something you had found. Do you remember?

Dillon's eyes are fixed on him now, chill and unblinking.

PAULA: Oh God, be careful!

QUATERMASS [*continues slowly, stressing each word*]: You thought it might mean some kind of danger. It did—terrible danger. It was another such thing that infected you!

Dillon reacts. He draws a short, painful breath.

QUATERMASS: You know this—try to resist it. [*Close to him*] Now listen to me. There is a possibility of reaching the body in space from which these creatures come. If I don't make the attempt, one thing is certain. They will come again—in their thousands. To the new colonies that are being built. [*Driving it at him*] There they can develop and multiply, protected by their victims—men like you—guarding them and nourishing them till they spread themselves across the earth. Then your condition will be the condition of all humanity—a subject race. For ever—or until we've served our purpose and are brought to an end—perhaps choked to death in a changing atmosphere. [*A pause*] Do you understand? They have no pity for those they use. They will kill your kind with the rest of us—

DILLON [*backing away*]: No—no—

QUATERMASS: I've seen them do it!

Dillon's whole body shudders. His breathing seems to suspend itself—as if a fierce struggle within him has been brought to deadlock. His face twists with pain. From the back of the eyes something is looking out in hopeless appeal.

Pugh comes forward to stand beside Quatermass, staring intently at the tortured man.

PUGH: He's not going to stop us.

QUATERMASS [*whispers*]: If the effect's weakened—even temporarily—

PUGH [*to Dillon, slowly*]: The rocket must go.

For a moment Dillon is rigid, cataleptic. He trembles slightly, then gives a long sigh of exhaustion. He nods.

At the door, the guns of the two Paratroopers are dropping floorwards.

PUGH: Look outside there.

Quatermass glances round, through the slit window.

QUATERMASS: They're dispersing! Clearing the site—

PUGH: We've got to act now!

QUATERMASS: Yes—

He turns to the control panel and snaps down the microphone key.

QUATERMASS [*into microphone*]: Quatermass to all sections. We are going ahead as planned. Stand by for count-down . . .

Cut—to the launching bay outside.

Paratroopers are starting to dismantle the heavy machine-gun set up beneath the rocket's fins. Others are moving slowly away, their guns slung on their shoulders. Quatermass's voice booms from loudspeakers, echoing through the darkness:

' . . . Stand by for count-down. Lift-off will take place at 0337 hours.'

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to the Control Room, some time later.

Dillon and the two Paratroopers are standing near the door, immobile and expressionless, their blank eyes showing no interest in the concentrated activity that grips all the others in the room. But their silent presence affects everyone. Voices are subdued, nerves fraying, as final preparations for the launching of the rocket proceed.

Quatermass is being strapped into the components of a pressure suit by two Technicians. The lower half of his body is already encased in the heavy ribbed leg-pieces, over undergarments of shiny grey material which fits tightly at throat and wrists. At the other end of the room Pugh is undergoing the same preparation.

While this goes on, Quatermass is consulting with the Ground Controller, a small keen-eyed man who is sitting in a swivel chair in front of the main panel, checking instruments.

GROUND CONTROLLER: Now—you take over manual command only for final homing on the objective. Right? [*As Quatermass nods*] That's going to call for some delicate adjustments of the retro system.

QUATERMASS: Query—will I be up to making them? Well, the man on the spot, even if his hand's a bit shaky, may be a better bet than—[*he nods at the control panel*]—trying it from here.

GROUND CONTROLLER: You'll try for actual contact?

QUATERMASS: Yes. If the nature of the thing offers, I'm going to use the hydraulic grapple.

GROUND CONTROLLER [*surprised*]: The grapple? It's not very powerful—

QUATERMASS: It may be enough. If it'll hold us there till we get rid of the working fluid and set the nuclear motor into—into what we hope is its explosive phase—

He glances up. Paula is listening close by.

PAULA: On the Australian test that lasted two minutes forty-five seconds. So you've got plenty of time to separate the crew stage and get clear.

QUATERMASS: Yes. If all the conditions are right—

PAULA: And if they're not?

Her voice has risen. Quatermass glances quickly at the three silent figures by the door.

PAULA [*a tense whisper*]: Why you? Why must it be?

QUATERMASS [*also quietly*]: Because I know the rocket best. It's as simple as that. I'm tired and I'm too old. We both are. But there's something we're able to do about that.

He nods towards the other end of the room, towards Pugh, as he starts rolling up the grey flexible sleeve to expose his arm.

Pugh is being given an injection in the arm by a Rocket Group Doctor.

DOCTOR: This should keep you at maximum alertness for several hours—the whole of the critical time.

Pugh nods, rolling his undersleeve down. Turning again to the Technicians, who are waiting with the upper parts of the pressure suit, he coughs. The Doctor gives him a sharp look.

DOCTOR: How long were you exposed to those gases?

PUGH: A few minutes.

DOCTOR: I wish I'd known earlier. I've have insisted on making a full check—

PUGH: What does it matter? There's no one else to do—what I have to do—

He holds out his arms to the Technicians, who busy themselves pulling on the next segments of the clumsy outer casing.

The Doctor moves quickly across to Quatermass and speaks to him urgently, confidentially.

DOCTOR [*indicating Pugh*]: Must it be him? Is he really indispensable?

QUATERMASS: Yes. We may have to have some lightning calculations, particularly at the last moment. He's the only one for that. [*Bending his arm up*] Let's get on.

DOCTOR [*as he prepares the injection*]: I refuse to take any responsibility for him. Frankly, I doubt if he's in a fit state, but he refuses to submit to a proper examination—

QUATERMASS [*irritably*]: Of course he does, at this stage!

DOCTOR: If we'd kept more detailed records of him—but in his case this sort of eventuality was just never considered—

He slides the hypodermic needle into Quatermass's arm.

QUATERMASS: Nor in mine.

DOCTOR: No. In normal circumstances I wouldn't pass either of you. [*He dabs the spot.*] Hope this sees you through.

QUATERMASS: Thanks.

He rolls his sleeve down and turns to the Technicians, who move in with the upper components of the pressure suit.

DOCTOR: You insist on wearing that during the whole flight?

QUATERMASS: Yes.

DOCTOR: It's bound to increase the strain—on both of you. Is it really essential?

Quatermass nods. He glances at Paula, who is close by, her eyes fixed on him.

PAULA: Why?

QUATERMASS [*slowly*]: It's possible—there may be damage to the rocket. At any time after lift-off.

PAULA: You mean—retaliation?

QUATERMASS: We're not going to be unexpected.

As the Technicians continue strapping and zipping the sections of the massive chest-piece, he looks towards the three figures at the door. They have not moved. He frowns.

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to the launching bay, a short time later. Gusts of vapour are billowing about the fins, boiling off the liquid oxygen which has been pumped into the lowest stage of the rocket, the chemical booster. Hoar-frosted by the icy gusts, Technicians are hurrying about on last-minute checks. In the background the Paratroopers stand watching, without seeming to show interest or attention, but always watching. Dillon and his two companions appear, looking on as listlessly as the rest.

Into the light of the lamps at the foot of the service tower come the now grotesque shapes of Quatermass and Pugh, covered up to the neck by their pressurized clothing. Paula is with them.

QUATERMASS [*turning to her*]: You'd better go back now. Stay on the control panel—

PAULA: Of course I will.

QUATERMASS: As long as is possible—

He looks across at the Paratroopers. She follows his eyes. He calls.

QUATERMASS: Dillon—get your men away now! Off the site!

Dillon turns, slowly waving the soldiers back. They move away towards the gap in the blast wall.

The Ground Controller's voice sounds flatly through the loudspeakers:

'Ten minutes to lift-off. Please clear the launching bay. Clear the launching bay now . . .'

Paula kisses her father quickly and goes back into the darkness. After a moment he follows Pugh on to the electric hoist at the foot of the service tower. The motor drums.

Everything is smothered by a cloud of steam-like vapour as the last fuel pipe is dragged away . . .

Dissolve . . . to the Control Room.

Technicians are settling down at their places. The Ground Controller is at the main panel, clicking down the microphone key.

GROUND CONTROLLER: Four minutes to lift-off. All positions please confirm you are in contact.

He flips the key up. A row of small signal lights flash on and flicker in answer.

GROUND CONTROLLER: Radar Three? [*as the last light confirms.*] Thank you.

Paula takes her place beside the Ground Controller as he slips on a pair of headphones. He glances round at the slit-window, presses a button. An armoured shutter slides across the window.

GROUND CONTROLLER [*to Paula*]: All right?

She nods. Again he leans forward to speak into the built-in microphone.

GROUND CONTROLLER: Three minutes to lift-off. [*Now he pulls forward a separate hand-microphone, evidently for a single line.*] Control to Quatermass. Two minutes forty-five seconds to lift-off. Are you set?

Cut—to the interior of the rocket.

This is a tiny, hemispherical cabin, lined with compact apparatus, including a control panel with hooded vision screens. A miniaturized duplicate set of these screens and dials is arranged to face down on to the two moulded supports where Quatermass and Pugh are now prone. They are wearing the pressurized helmets now, too, their faces visible through the curved visor of clear plastic.

Their limbs are held in position by metal clamps, rubber-lined. A Technician is just finishing his testing of these. Now he gives Quatermass a thumbs-up sign and goes quickly to the small circular entry-port. He makes a quick adjustment of the controls beside it and scrambles out. A moment later the port closes, with the thudding snugness of a safe-door.

The Ground Controller's voice comes again—it is flat and distorted as if through miniaturized equipment, and Quatermass's answer through the microphone inside his helmet, has the same quality.

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Control to Quatermass—repeat, are you set?

QUATERMASS: Quatermass here—we're ready now. Standing by. [*He twists his head round to look at the man on the other bunk.*] Leo?

Pugh nods. Quatermass checks the position of the fingertip controls that lie under his hand beside the G-bunk.

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: One minute thirty seconds to lift-off . . .

Cut—to the launching bay.

A high shot of the rocket, ready on the concrete pad. The high latticed service tower is withdrawing along its railed tracks, and a small truck is shooting up the shallow ramp that leads outside the blast walls. As the service tower disappears into the shadows, the Ground Controller's voice echoes through the loudspeakers:

' . . . Thirty seconds . . . twenty-five . . .'

Cut—to the Control Room. Paula and the Ground Controller have their eyes fixed on the clock in the centre of the panel. The Ground Controller is speaking into both microphones.

GROUND CONTROLLER: Twenty seconds . . . [*He flexes his hand and rests it close to the firing switch.*] . . . fifteen seconds . . . [*He grips the switch.*]

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

Track in on the prone forms of Quatermass and Pugh. Quatermass's eyes are wide, staring at the screens and gauges just above. Pugh has his pressed tightly shut. The Ground Controller's voice goes on:

'Ten seconds—nine—eight—seven—six—'

Cut—to the Control Room.

Close shot of the Ground Controller as he counts on.

GROUND CONTROLLER: Five—four—three—two—one—zero!

He presses the firing switch.

Cut—to the launching bay.

Smoke and flame suddenly blossom from the base of the rocket. The noise is shattering. After a moment the whole towering, finned shape starts to rise—very slowly at first, then gaining speed.

It rises through the trained searchlights, and beyond them, until it is only a roaring flame in the night sky.

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

Close shot of the two pressure-suited figures. Their faces are being drawn and twisted by the acceleration. Everything vibrates. The roar of the huge rocket-engine far below is deafening.

Cut—to a shot of the landscape below, rapidly receding. The launching site is a lighted point in the centre of a maplike expanse of country lit by the first glow of dawn, and spinning round always faster.

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

Pugh is twisting slowly, as if in agony. The vibration is at its peak when—the motor cuts out.

There is silence apart from the thin humming of the air-conditioning equipment. After a moment Quatermass stirs and with obvious effort focuses his eyes on the duplicate panel above him. The flat voice comes through again.

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Control to Quatermass. Burn-out of chemical booster has just occurred at pre-set height, twenty-one miles.

QUATERMASS [*thickly*]: Yes, right . . .

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: When it breaks away, stand by for firing of nuclear motor. It should break away . . . now!

Cut—to a shot of the rocket in flight through the black sky. The whole rear section of it, carrying the huge fins, slowly separates from the forepart. It drops imperceptibly behind.

Then smoke and flame blast from the now exposed jet-orifices of the forepart. A smaller but even faster rocket now, it shoots away into the blackness.

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

The din is more terrible than before. A rack into which food and drink containers are clipped vibrates violently. Metal fairings shudder.

Track in on Quatermass. Inside the helmet, his eyes are rolled upwards, his lips drawn rigidly back. Pan across to Pugh. He is in the same condition.

Slow dissolve . . . to the Control Room on the ground. It is minutes later.

Pan along the tense faces of the Technicians at the monitoring and control panels. There are radio-whistles and crackles of static. An Engineer is working to control the incoming sound. Pan to the Ground Controller as he turns to Paula.

GROUND CONTROLLER: All right so far. [*He nods at a screen in front of them.*] As long as we're getting that signal.

She looks up at the clock.

PAULA: Not much longer.

GROUND CONTROLLER: The motor should cut off in—*[He checks the dials again.]*

PAULA: The nuclear motor—

GROUND CONTROLLER: It should be in twelve seconds.

Track in on Paula's apprehensive face.

Her eyes are fixed on the screen. Suddenly she cries out.

PAULA: It's gone! The signal—it's gone—

For a moment the Ground Controller catches her alarm. Then he turns quickly to the screen and makes an adjustment to bring up the signal.

GROUND CONTROLLER: We were picking up radiation from the motor. It cut off on time.

PAULA *[steadying]*: They're all right—

GROUND CONTROLLER: Ought to be—

A pause.

PAULA: They'll have had to take over nine G's, in that fast build-up.

GROUND CONTROLLER: He insisted on it, rather than risk running the motor longer. *[Into the microphone]* Control to Quatermass. Control to Quatermass

...

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

It is quiet now, apart from the Ground Controller's distorted voice. Quatermass has raised himself slightly. He frees one of the clamps binding him down, glances at Pugh.

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Information, please. What is your condition? Are you able to answer?

QUATERMASS *[haltingly, his breath rustling in the helmet]*: We're still with you. Slight red-out, but only for a few seconds, I think. *[He studies the instruments, blinking his bleared eyes.]* Velocity as predicted. Nuclear motor seemed to cut off cleanly. No indication of a runaway reaction. I hope we get one when we want it. Now give me a minute or two—we're both feeling G-effects.

He pulls the other clamps free and turns stiffly to Pugh, who is also raising his head now. His face is equally battered by acceleration pressure. A trickle of blood comes from one nostril.

QUATERMASS: Leo? I'll step up your oxygen a bit.

He makes an adjustment on Pugh's pressure-suit. Pugh breathes deeply. His colour starts to return. Quatermass frees him from the binding clamps.

QUATERMASS: Now get your feet down or you'll—float—

He himself is forcing his clumsy legs to obey, while he holds on to the clamps. Pugh does the same. Their feet engage the flooring with a faint rubbery squeak, as the layer of tiny suction cups on their soles takes a firm hold.

QUATERMASS: How's your breathing now?

Pugh nods. He re-sets his oxygen supply to normal.

Quatermass sways towards the main instrument panel, clutching at the handgrips. The haggardness of his expression suddenly changes—to exhilarated amazement as he looks at the screens.

QUATERMASS: Leo! Look at this—the Earth! The halo—the band of brightness spreading there—that must be the dawn. We're racing it. *[Watching, he is moved.]* This is something we were never meant to see. It was for the young, picked crews. Not old men on a Kamikaze mission . . . *[After a moment he pulls himself together.]* Quatermass to control. I'm going to dictate instrument readings now, to check against your telemetered information. First, internal pressure . . .

Fade in linking music . . .

Dissolve . . . to the same, some time later.

Helmetless now, though still wearing the rest of the pressurized clothing, Pugh is crouching at the main control panel. He glances up at the instruments, then turns back to the miniaturized computer he is operating.

Quatermass is on the other side of the cabin. He is also bare-headed. The two discarded helmets are held by spring-grips on the cabin wall. He has removed one of the plastic drink-containers from the rack, and is sucking at the mouthpiece. As he wipes his lips and prepares to replace the container, something catches his eye. He rams the container back into the rack and with some difficulty he manages to stoop. He pulls at an object jammed behind the rack near the flooring. It comes out with a metallic scrape—a perforated cylinder that is at once unmistakable as the cooling jacket of a machine-carbine. Another tug and the whole gun is clear. There is a magazine in it.

Quatermass turns. Pugh is watching him from his place at the control panel.

QUATERMASS: Leo—

PUGH: Something that you overlooked.

QUATERMASS: Overlooked?

PUGH: It may be needed—

QUATERMASS *[angrily]*: It's useless!

He jams the gun into the rack, and sways across towards Pugh, grabbing at handgrips.

QUATERMASS: Look—we're not going outside. If we did, do you imagine a gun would have the slightest effect on what we'd find there? *[Pugh drops his*

eyes, as if in shame.] You'd no business to do this without telling me. Why did you? [*Watching Pugh, he softens.*] Was it just the thought of having a gun at hand—better than nothing? All right, I've felt the same, but—

There is a shrill mechanical squeal from the control panel. A warning lamp flashes brightly.

QUATERMASS: Meteorites!

Pugh has shrunk back, startled.

QUATERMASS: Better get helmets on—

But even as he reaches for them, the warning signals die away. He studies the instruments.

QUATERMASS: I think it's over.

PUGH: Yes—

After a moment Quatermass leans towards the microphone in the panel.

QUATERMASS: Quatermass to control. We have just passed through a meteor swarm. No damage sustained—just enough to set the alarm off. They were apparently natural and micro-sized.

The Ground Controller's distorted voice comes back through a small loudspeaker.

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Good. But we'll keep our fingers crossed hard. You should be in deceleration position about five minutes from now. Ready for a check?

QUATERMASS: No change since last report, except Beta deviation. Now zero seven.

PUGH: As it should be—

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Right—course is still correct, by precalculations and continued observations of the asteroid.

Quatermass frowns. He speaks quietly, close to the microphone.

QUATERMASS: What's the situation there—d'you think you're going to be free to carry on? Particularly with those observations?

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE [*guardedly*]: Well, the—the military are still with us. Here in the control room. But no interference with our work so far. None at all.

QUATERMASS: Right. Stand by.

As he turns from the microphone, his face is troubled, puzzled.

QUATERMASS: Something's wrong. Leo, let's make another quick cross-check—

PUGH: There's no mistake.

QUATERMASS: We'll do as I say! [*Worriedly*] There's been no sign of any retaliation—no attempt of any kind to prevent us reaching that orbit. Why? Could the reason be that there's no likelihood of our reaching it—because our calculations are wrong?

PUGH: Calculations—

He is standing now, swaying slightly. He mumbles to himself—a few disconnected words of sing-song Welsh.

QUATERMASS: Leo.

PUGH [*softly*]: Leo Pugh . . . Leo bach . . . stand up . . . divide these two numbers instantly in your head . . .

QUATERMASS [*alarmed*]: What's the matter—

PUGH: It seems that you . . . Leo . . . may be what they call a mathematical genius . . . oh, a rare and rich gift has been made to you, boy . . . a brain . . . that when you are grown . . . will have the power to benefit mankind . . .

His face is wet with tears.

QUATERMASS: You're ill—

Pugh shakes his head.

QUATERMASS: Then what is it? We can't have you break down now—we've got to find out—

He stops. As if struck by a terrifying possibility, he moves back from Pugh.

Cut in music and hold.

Pugh remains motionless, anchored by his soles, his lips moving soundlessly. After a moment Quatermass manages to take his eyes from him. He manoeuvres himself across to the rack and jerks the gun free. He removes the magazine from it and pushes this into one of the pouch-like pockets on the front of his pressure-suit. He wedges the empty gun beneath his own G-bunk.

He looks again into Pugh's face, searching for something . . . a quality in the eyes . . . the curious spark of contact with a changed intelligence.

There is a buzz from the control panel.

VOICE OF GROUND CONTROLLER: Stand by to carry out turn and deceleration. Are you in safety positions? Stand by . . .

Pugh moves clumsily across to his G-bunk, and pulls his helmet from the spring-grip. He puts it over his head. The seals at the neck-joint engage and click home. He eases himself on to the G-bunk.

VOICE OF GROUND CONTROLLER [*urgently*]: Control to Quatermass! Are you receiving?

Quatermass crosses to the control panel.

QUATERMASS [*into microphone*]: Quatermass. Message received and understood. Preparing to commence manoeuvre.

He turns to pick up his helmet. His attention is still on Pugh, on the half-hidden face of the man who is now clamping himself down on the other G-bunk.

He pulls the helmet over his own head. He settles down, checking the position of the finger-tip controls.

Fade up music . . .

Dissolve . . . to a vista of bright, unwinking stars against a jet-black sky . . . swinging across them with the motion of a slowly turning rocket, seeing them through its scanning screens. In the background, the music gives place to the thin whine of small directional rocket-motors. As these die down, the star-scape steadies. For a moment only, the bright dots are quite still. Then, once again, comes the shattering roar of the nuclear motor, firing in the reverse direction. The stars shudder . . .

Dissolve . . . to the Rocket Cabin, some minutes later.

The motor is silent again, and the two men are stirring feebly. What they have just gone through has been almost as devastating as the earlier accelerations of the climb. With an effort, Quatermass frees himself from the clamps and pulls himself across to the control panel. His breathing is shallow and fast. After a moment he picks at the helmet fastenings, clumsy-fingered, and twists about to free his head from the thing. He wipes away the sweat that has blinded his eyes.

QUATERMASS [*into panel microphone*]: Quatermass to control. Manoeuvre completed. We should be in the eddy-orbit now, drifting towards—towards the objective. There's something on our radar that may be it. Can you confirm?

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Correct by our observations. That is, your general direction's correct. Nice work.

QUATERMASS: Save that—

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: From here on we won't be able to help you much. [*Quatermass tenses, wondering what is coming, then relaxes slightly as the voice goes on.*] You're getting beyond the accuracy of some of our instruments. But we'll stand by, of course. Just a moment—

Quatermass turns to watch as Pugh frees himself from the clamps. There is a rustle in the speaker. Then he is strangely startled to hear his daughter's voice.

PAULA'S VOICE [*no more than a whisper*]: Hello. I can't talk loudly—

QUATERMASS: Paula—

PAULA'S VOICE: It's good to speak to you again. Now listen—*he's* in here with us.

QUATERMASS: Dillon?

PAULA'S VOICE: Yes, in the control room. Just now I heard him say something. It sounded like: 'They must get there'. What do you make of it?

QUATERMASS [*after a moment*]: I'm not sure. It may be the—the answer to something. I can't explain now. Try not to worry.

PAULA'S VOICE: Oh, be careful—

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: We'll keep in touch during all the final—

Quatermass flicks up a switch, cutting him off. He looks across at Pugh, helmetless now.

QUATERMASS: Have we become part of the plan now? Even this—is it in some way what they intend?

Pugh gazes blankly back at him.

QUATERMASS: Did their influence ever really weaken? [*He moves closer to Pugh.*] When Dillon and his men came, was it to try and stop us? Or was it to make sure that we went—that the rocket took off! I don't know why that should be. I don't understand it. But perhaps you do!

Pugh pushes past him and clings to the handgrips of the control panel. His eyes are fixed on the instruments . . . on the radar tube where a tiny, steady blip shows . . . on the vision screens with their images of starlit sky.

Quatermass catches him by the shoulder, gross in the pressure-suit.

QUATERMASS: Leo—when did it happen to you?

PUGH [*pulling away*]: Nothing—nothing happened—

QUATERMASS: When you came to find me—outside the Plant—was it only the gassing that affected you—or had there been something else?

Pugh's haunted eyes are flicking from dial to gauge.

PUGH: The time is close now. All attention must be on the controls—

QUATERMASS [*jerking him round*]: Try to tell me!

PUGH: Let go—

QUATERMASS: Then I'll know! Then I can see what to do—

PUGH [*cries out*]: Are you trying to destroy us! Don't you know we're almost on the point of—

QUATERMASS: What have you done? Have you changed the alignments? Are you sending us off course? There must be some answer—

The buzzer on the panel sounds sharply, repeatedly. He presses down the switch.

QUATERMASS: Quatermass—

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Thought we'd lost you—check your position! You should be able to start final homing on objective now. Check your position—

PUGH: You hear that?

QUATERMASS [*into microphone*]: You still make our position correct?

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Yes—but I told you—the range of the instruments here—

Quatermass looks from the screens to Pugh, at the bright, feverish eyes trained on the panel.

QUATERMASS [*into microphone*]: Right, we go ahead with the final approach. There's no alternative now.

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Alternative? [*Puzzled*] Is something wrong there—?

QUATERMASS: Just stand by.

He is conscious of Pugh watching his every move as he makes adjustments to the controls. The radar blip is clearer now. He brings two pointers into exact coincidence . . . flicks down tiny switches . . . presses a button. They cling to handgrips as the rocket shudders slightly and sways, under the force of small directional jets. The slightly off-centre radar blip swings into line.

QUATERMASS: I'm giving a final retro blast. Low power.

They cling again, harder, as another vibration shakes the rocket in response to the controls. Quatermass speaks to the microphone.

QUATERMASS: That's it. We should make contact within the next two minutes. Unless everything's gone mad—

He looks at Pugh, but there is not the slightest response from the haunted eyes. They are fixed on the instruments . . . checking . . . checking.

Then Pugh moves rapidly. He pulls his helmet from the grips and starts to fumble it down on to his shoulders. Quatermass is quick to do the same. Valves hiss and click. They hear the sound of each other's breathing rustle through the internal microphones.

QUATERMASS: It's time to take all precautions—

He stoops and pulls the gun from beneath the G-bunk. Weighing it in his hands, he returns to the control panel. The two men watch each other. Quatermass puts his hand to the pocket that holds the magazine, and starts to unzip it. Pugh suddenly points past him at the screens, uttering a wild, incoherent cry. Quatermass turns quickly.

Fade in music.

The main vision screen shows a strange sight—what appears to be a hole in the expanse of stars. A blackness that grows more defined in shape as it slowly blots out more and more of the myriad points of light.

Quatermass is staring at the screen. He glances round, sees Pugh has not moved. He pulls the magazine from his pocket and slips it into the gun.

The stars on the screen are almost blotted out now, by the shape they are approaching.

QUATERMASS: Hello, control! We're right on top of it—homing on it fast. There's only starlight—hard to make out surface detail. It's as big as we thought—a multihedral shape. I'm getting an impression of huge stony plates—encrusted—almost like bark. Now the screens are blinded. We're too close for them—

There is silence for a moment. Then a thunderous scraping shakes the rocket hull. The cabin sways violently. The men grab wildly for support, and Quatermass almost loses his hold on the gun. Desperately he pulls himself to the panel and operates a control there. A signal light flashes its response. A metallic grinding is transmitted through the hull.

QUATERMASS: Hello, control. We're right against it! I've applied the grapple—seems to be holding. [*He works to set the controls.*] I'm going to let the working fluid go now—

Warning lamps flash. A signal blinks in front of his eyes: 'HATCH COVER OPEN'. Air is shrieking from the cabin.

He throws himself round.

The massive cover stands wide open. Pugh's pressure-suited form is twisting through the cavity.

QUATERMASS: Leo—come back—

Pugh's heavily-encased hand disappears round the edge of the opening. He is gone. For a moment Quatermass hesitates. An excited clamour sounds in his ears from the ground control.

QUATERMASS: Control—it's Pugh. He's gone out there. I'm cutting off your relay now—I want a clear line to him. I've got to try to get him back.

He snaps over a switch on the control panel, and starts towards the opening. Still clutching the gun, he struggles to pull himself through.

Cut—to the exterior of the rocket as Quatermass appears through the hatch. He strains to see his surroundings.

In front of his helmet-covered face, only three or four feet away, is the surface of the asteroid. Black, rough, nodular, spreading away into great flat formations that are separated by deep fissures. Between this surface and the rocket that clings to it, is a glimpse of a sea of stars, above and below, reeling into infinity.

The only movement comes from the thin wisps of vapour in the fissures. Quatermass calls through the microphone in his helmet.

QUATERMASS: Leo—where are you?

He clammers further through the hatch, forcing himself to let go the rim and grab at the calloused stone. He pulls himself across to it, clinging there with his toes and the fingers of his free hand.

QUATERMASS: Leo—

He starts across the rough surface. Just ahead is one of the fissures that seem to run deep into the interior of the asteroid. He tugs himself towards it and stares in. There is a sudden rush of movement from the darkness, and he is being swung clear of the gnarled surface. He clutches at it desperately, jerking and kicking, and clubs the gun against his attacker—Pugh. The barrel strikes harmlessly against the tough plastic and steel of the other man's pressure suit. As they struggle, their hoarse breathing rasps through the intercom.

QUATERMASS [*panting*]: Let me go! Get back to the rocket—quickly—

The only answer is a violent blow. The gun is torn from his grasp, spinning him round so that he has to scabble wildly for a handhold.

PUGH: You are not going back—

He is moving away, towards the rocket. Quatermass claws his way after him across the black stone.

PUGH: No—not you! The others!

QUATERMASS: Others—

PUGH [*a hoarse whisper*]: More of them must reach the Earth. This will be the means—

QUATERMASS: Leo!

PUGH: I was shown that these things are to happen. [*He raises the gun.*] You have done as intended. Now there is no need of you.

Aiming point-blank, he slips the safety catch. In the same instant Quatermass, half on his back, lashes out with all his force. His foot catches Pugh on the knee, spinning him round as he fires.

Quatermass clings to the ground. In his ears is a long, tearing scream of terror. Like the cry of a man falling from a cliff. He looks up.

The dim shape of Pugh is whirling away among the stars, gyrating wildly, flung into space by the force of the shots he has fired.

Vapour curls from the nearby fissure. And now from deep inside the asteroid there is a heavy, thudding vibration—a sucking shudder of sheer power that recalls the thing in the Dome. Quatermass starts scrambling back towards the open hatch. Through the intercom there are still sounds from Pugh . . . choking moans of fear . . . a gabble of Welsh. As he reaches the hatch, Quatermass takes a last quick glance among the stars, but evidently sees nothing of him. He drags himself through. Behind, the vapour swirls higher.

The hatch cover starts to close.

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

Quatermass clings weakly to the handgrips just inside. The hatch cover thuds home. Cries are coming through the intercom full of Pugh's utter despair:

'Help—help! Lost—'

Quatermass sways across the cabin to the control panel and snaps on the radio connexion.

QUATERMASS: Quatermass to control. It was—no good, he's gone. I'm proceeding as planned.

He works feverishly at the controls. Signal lamps blink their response on the panel.

The rocket sways.

Quatermass steadies himself. Something thumps on the rocket's outer casing, then comes again at a different point. There is a sudden whipping slam round its whole girth—and the steel shell shudders.

Cut—to the exterior of the rocket.

Emerging from every fissure, countless forms are spreading towards the rocket, joining, twisting. Thick bands of protoplasmic substance form and whip across it, then slabber into shapelessness, exploring.

The vapour rises, dimming the stars.

Slowly the substance thickens about the rocket, as more and more pours from the smoking fissures, winds, and adds itself. The great cylinder is bound by a quivering, glistening mass.

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

The shell of the rocket is echoing with a hundred different sounds—booming, creaking, a slithering engulfment. Quatermass is watching the instruments, nearly mad with anxiety. Clinging to the handgrips, he is almost flung clear by a sudden lurch.

QUATERMASS: Hello—control! The rocket's being crushed! I don't know how long the hull can stand up to this—if the explosive reaction doesn't start soon—

He tenses, feeling through his clutching hands the new vibration that is shaking the rocket. Warning lamps flash. A sign blinks 'REACTOR—DANGER!' The alarm squeals.

QUATERMASS: It's started!

He stumbles from the panel, throws himself towards the G-bunk.

QUATERMASS: I'm going to try and get clear—I don't know what the chances are, but—

He is snapping the clamps down. As he does so, Pugh's voice sounds again, grotesquely through the intercom. It is fainter now:

'Help me . . . help . . . come help me . . .'

The whole rocket seems to lift bodily under the force being applied to it outside. The battering on the hull almost drowns the shrill mechanical squeals of the alarm on the control panel, where the warning lamps continue to flash. Prone now, Quatermass closes his fist over the remote controls.

Cut—to a long shot of the asteroid. The rocket is gripped firmly by a twisting mass. Only the pointed nose can be seen. Suddenly there is a flare of flame. Long strands of the living substance whip high, as in agony, and shred away. For a moment the blast lights up the whole face of the asteroid, sending the huge coarse plates of its exterior into sharp relief, whitening the vapour.

Then the nose section of the rocket breaks free. Spouting flame from its jets, it shoots away across the night sky.

Cut—to the Rocket Cabin.

Close shot of Quatermass, clamped down in the prone position, features twisted by acceleration pressure. Drowned now by the roar of the chemical motor, Pugh's voice is still calling feebly.

Creep in music.

Quatermass's screwed-up eyes are fixed on the timing dials. Pan to where his fingers jerk on the remote controls. The sound of the rocket motor drops to a quieter note, and he is able to move again. But his eyes fix only on the vision screens.

QUATERMASS [with difficulty]: Quatermass to control. I think it—may have worked. Nuclear motor—abandoned according to plan—it ought to go up any time—now—

The music rises steadily in tempo. And with it comes Pugh's voice, screaming in final hopelessness:

'Help me . . . help! Help me! Help me . . .'

QUATERMASS: Leo—if you can hear—there was nothing I could do—

His face is suddenly lit by a brilliant flash from the screens. There is no sound for a moment, then a gale of static that crackles through both speakers and earphones in the wake of the explosion.

QUATERMASS: Leo—

He listens for Pugh's cries, but no more of them come through the static. Instead, it is the excited voice of the Ground Controller, shouting like a man in a hurricane, booming and fading.

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: Control to Quatermass—done it! The trace completely—must have wiped it out! You must have—about you, are you all right?

QUATERMASS: I'm all right, but Pugh—I hope for his sake—

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE [*booming*]: —What? What was that?

QUATERMASS: The explosion took him.

There is a rising babble from the far-off control room, beating through the static. His daughter's voice is among the others. He strains to hear them.

There is more in the gusts of words than even their excitement or relief would seem to explain. A note of discovery, growing louder and wilder—something that they are desperately trying to tell him. The things are gone! shout the voices. Destroyed, and their influence apparently going with them—

Through the commotion, someone is being brought forward and urged to speak. As the static begins to fade, his voice comes through—halting at first, but familiar, sane, normal.

VOICE: Hello. This is Dillon. John Dillon. I don't understand what's happening here—I think I must have been ill. These people just want me to speak to you—wherever you are, sir—but I don't seem to—

QUATERMASS: All right, Dillon, it's all right. They'll explain—

GROUND CONTROLLER'S VOICE: You agree?

QUATERMASS: Yes. It seems to be over. Control, it's going to be up to you now—to get me back. I'm about done.

He pushes the whole of the remote control handle right over into the disengage position. Exhaustion is taking rapid possession now. He lets himself sink back.

As he does so, his eyes go to the other, empty G-bunk.

Cut—to the nose section of the Quatermass II rocket in flight, pouring out a long wake of flame and smoke that spreads across the starlit sky. It passes from view on its way Earthwards . . .

Fade in final music.

Fade in caption 'THE END'.

Roll final credits and fade to black.

CAST

of the production by RUDOLPH CARTIER for B.B.C. Television

October–November 1955

PROF. BERNARD QUATERMASS — John Robinson

DR. LEO PUGH — Hugh Griffith

PAULA — Monica Grey

CAPTAIN JOHN DILLON — John Stone

SERGEANT GRICE — Brian Hayes

TRAINEE — Tony Lyons

FRED LARGE — Eric Lugg

MRS. LARGE — Hilda Barry

ROBERT — Herbert Lomas

LANDLORD — Richard Cuthbert

TRAMP — Wilfred Brambell

DAWSON — Michael Brennan

CHILD'S MOTHER — Hilda Fenemore

INSPECTOR — Peter Carver

FOWLER — Austin Trevor

VINCENT BROADHEAD, M.P. — Rupert Davies

RUPERT WARD — Derek Aylward

FRANKIE — Melvyn Hayes

FRANKIE'S MOTHER — Ilona Ference

FRANKIE'S FATHER — Sydney Bromley

HUGH CONRAD — Roger Delgado

PADDY — Michael Golden

MCLEOD — John Rae

MRS. MCLEOD — Elsie Arnold

ERNIE — Ian Wilson

DOCTOR — Denis McCarthy

GROUND CONTROLLER — Cyril Shaps

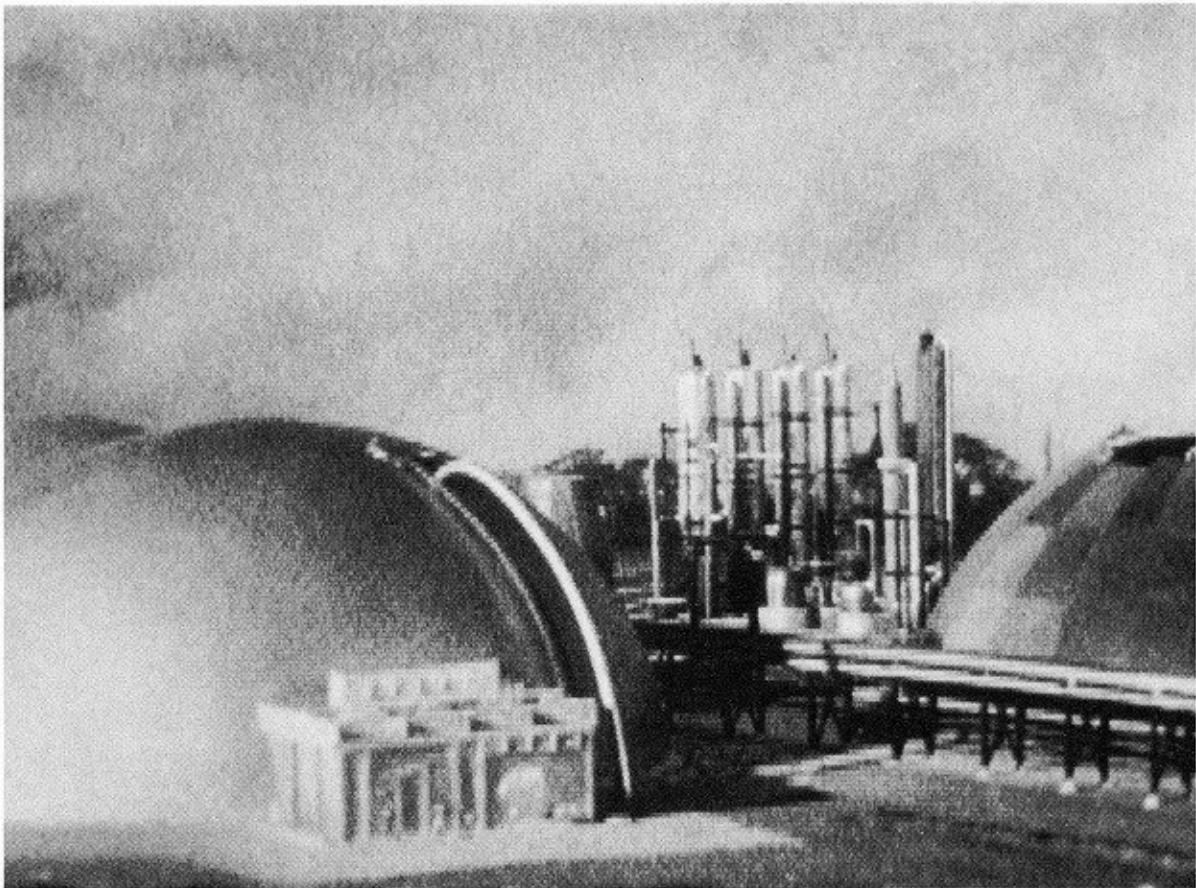
Sets designed by Stephen Taylor

Special Effects by Jack Kine and Bernard Wilkie

Film Cameraman—Charles De Jaeger



'They're building a huge great place - great iron things'



The Moon Project - here on Earth



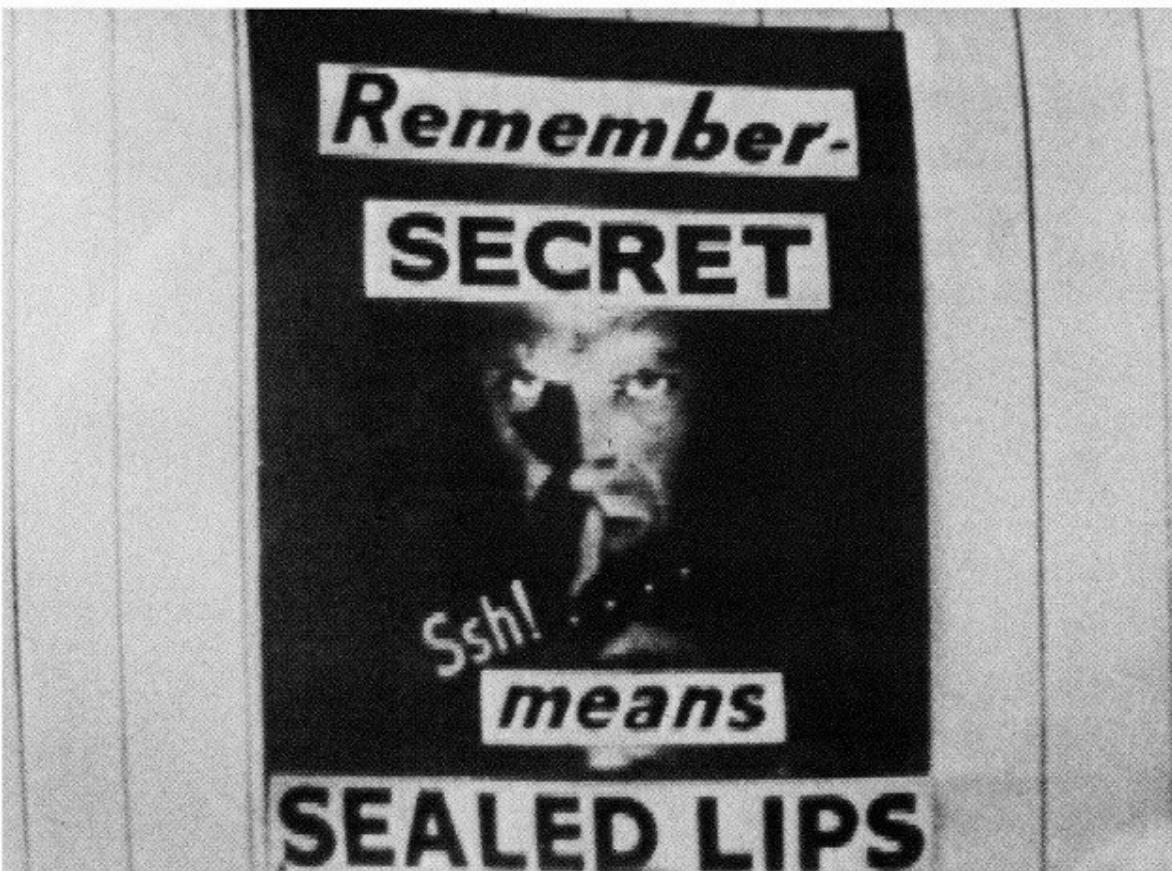
'It's starting to break up!'



'Dillon! There's something on your face!'



'They got thousands of men workin' there - like an army'



'We're asked to co-operate by keeping our traps shut, same as in the war'



'I had a cast made of the one Dillon brought'



'That was taken a couple of weeks ago over central Brazil'



Inside the Plant



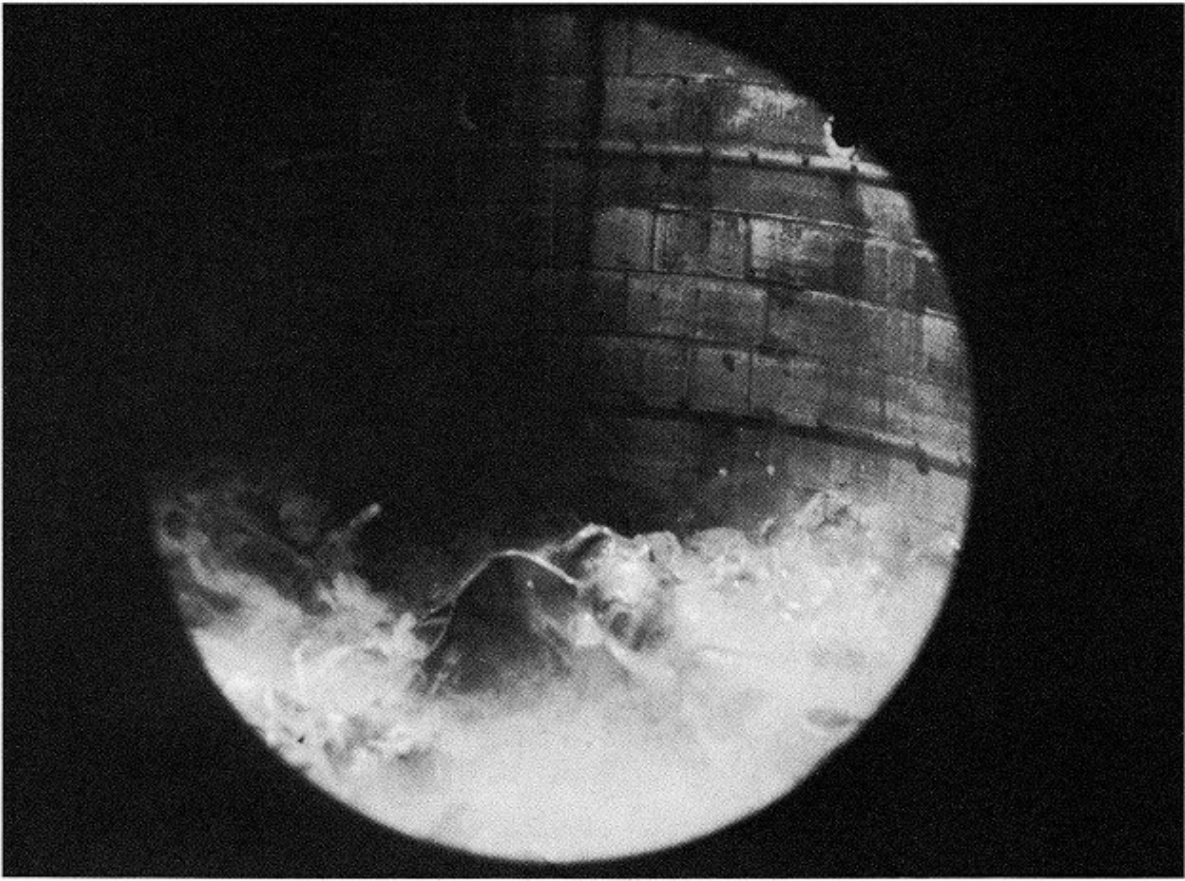
'My God - it burns! And he's covered with it!'



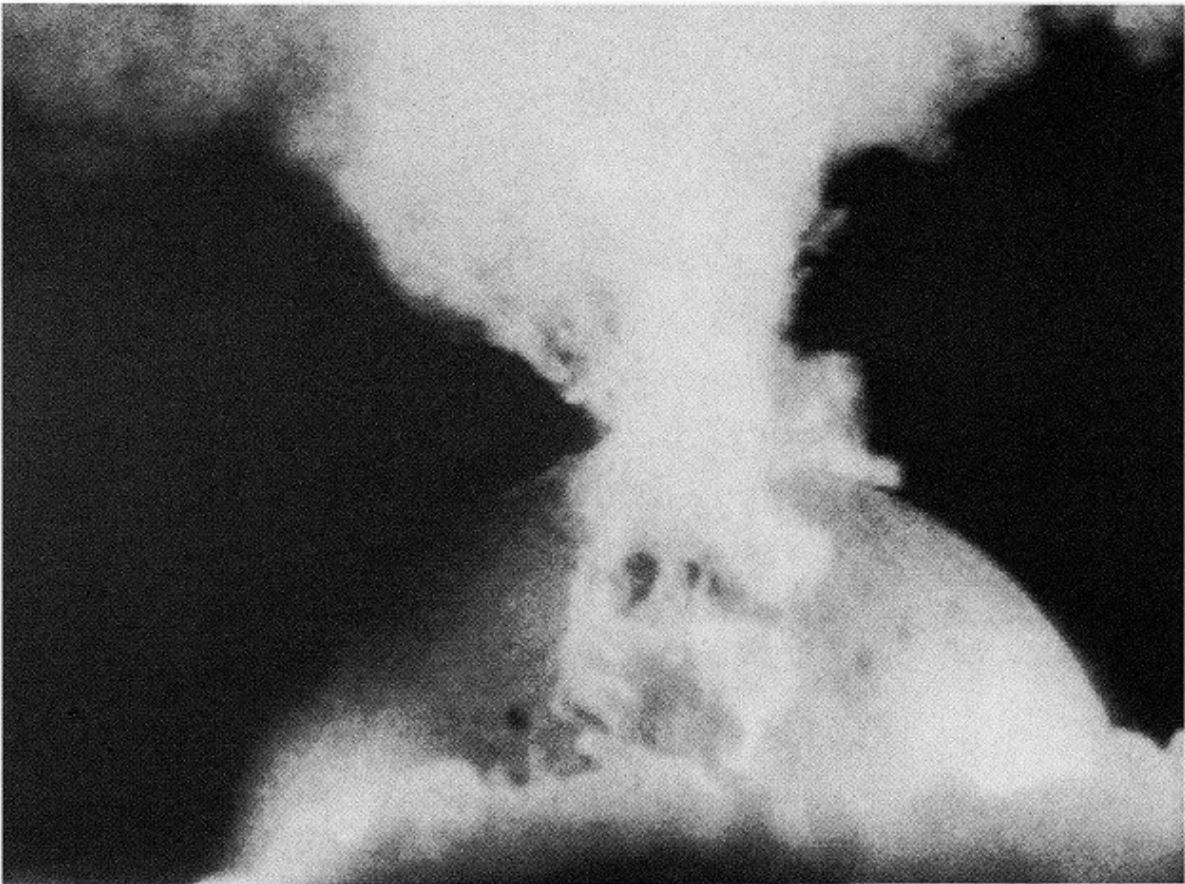
'An asteroid or something like it - not more than half a mile across'



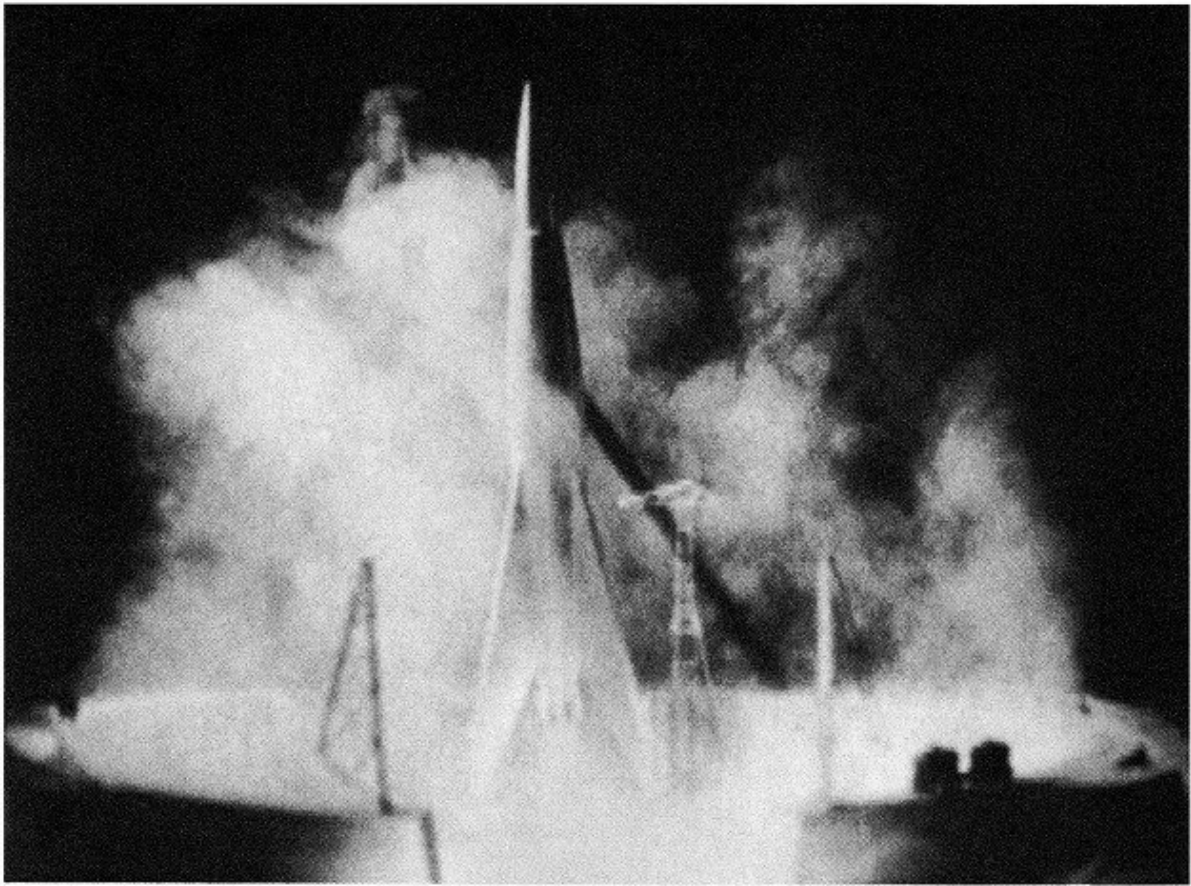
'Zombies!'



Inside the Dome



The Dome explodes



'Two - one - zero!'



'When did it happen to you?'