

We open in Polar twilight—the surreal, other-worldly twilight of Antarctica, the immense frozen continent of snow-capped bergs, endless ice fields and thrusting glacial cliffs. We are on the vast ice plain between the South Pole and Beardmore Glacier, watching several parka-clad members of a team, as they engage in what seems to be some type of intense field activity. We discover they are playing baseball, as a solidly hit homer ends the game. (In their bulky clothing, which restricts movement, the players are quite awkward—and the sport takes on the character of comic opera.)

As we enter Windridge (a complex, fully equipped, below-ice scientific station) we discover that the batter who hit the home run is a woman, MARGE POMROY. She's in her 30s, a meteorologist—the wife of RALPH POMROY (whose specialty is glacial science, or core-sampling). At the moment, her husband and two other scientists are working the ice beyond Windridge, at a field camp some miles distant.

Marge begins preparing one of her helium-filled weather balloons for a tracking launch—checking with radioman MIKE GONZALES regarding her husband. Mike tells her that Pomroy and the others are due to break camp soon for their return to the ice station. "But they want to use the light as long as possible." (It is important to understand that life at the South Pole is geared to long, unbroken periods of light and darkness—six months of each. As our film begins, the sun is below the horizon and the twilight period is almost over. Soon the Polar night will close in on Windridge.)

In all, representing several Stateside universities, there are nine men and three women assigned to Windridge Station, each with a specific job. Every station in Antarctica has a "scientific leader"—and here the man is "MAC" MACREADY, a space physicist from UCLA. In his early 30s, a quirky, rebellious individual with a questing mind who is at Windridge to study that spectacular atmospheric phenomenon known as the Aurora.

He is into a relationship with LIZBETH BENNETT, late 20s, also from Southern California (Cal Tech) who "doubles" between working the data computers and tending her hydroponic "greenhouse" at the station. Macready and Liz lived together in LA. before this Antarctic sojourn—but discreetly maintain separate quarters at Windridge. Liz is a dedicated scientist, and keeps to a busy schedule.

Another female scientist handles seismology (Earth Studies) at Windridge. She is CARLA RALSEN, the youngest of the three women stationed there. Carla is almost neurotically possessive regarding the delicate seismometer she has set up at the end of a long tunnel outside the compound; no one is allowed near it without her say so.

She is close to and confides with Marge Pomroy (theirs is a pseudo-daughter/mother relationship). Because of this, Carla has a problem with VINCE STODDARD, who wants to marry her. Vince is disturbed by Carla's dependence on the older woman. Stoddard is part of the civilian (non-scientist) "support group" at the station. He's a utility expert (who takes care of the water supply, which must be melted down and processed from the ice). Grew up in New York. He came to Antarctica with his buddy, TED STEINMETZ, a mechanic, electrician (in charge of the vital power generators).

Steinmetz is the most unstable member of the group, prone to over-drinking and temper flare-ups. There's a lot of "dead time" during these long months on the ice and Ted hates

it here; he's sorry he signed on at Windridge and is already grouching about the fast-approaching winter (which will leave them cut off from all outside contact for half a year).

Medical treatment at the station is in the hands of DR. RICHARD BLAIR, the team's official "father figure," a man in his early 50s, who maintains a leavening sense of humor. (He's interested in penguin psychology, viewing the birds, however, with a mixture of wariness and distaste. "Cute, hell! They'll have at you with flipper and beak!")

WINNIE NORRIS, the cook, completes the support group. He's a rail-thin, sad-eyed man who never seems to enjoy any of the food he serves. He's in the Polar wilderness to escape the legal and emotional problems of three ex-wives and five kids—and looks upon women as "the enemy."

The three men (which we have yet to meet in the film) camped in tents beyond the station itself are RALPH POMROY, PRANK KELLY and DAVE BANNING. Ralph and Prank are veterans (they've "wintered over" here before), while Dave, their young associate, working for his doctorate in Glaciology, is new to the ice.

There's one more member of the Windridge team: the station mascot. He's a mixed blood (Husky/ Malemute) pup named MACHO—whose first birthday creates celebration that day. The happily spoiled animal is a target of much playful rough-housing. No doubt of it: Macho is convinced he's human.

During the opening section of the film we establish the reality of our characters through their routine of work-and-recreation in this rugged, isolated terrain at the South Polar Cap:

We are with Macready as he checks computer data with Liz on his latest sky photos...we follow Car-la Ralsen along her special ice tunnel as she takes an earth reading from, her seismometer...we play a brief bit with Steinmetz as he struggles to repair a faulty generator part...we are with Marge Pomroy at the launch of a helium balloon from the weather tower.

This balloon becomes a "linking" device, as CAMERA tracks it into the sky, PANNING to show us a swiftly moving metallic object. And, at this point, we switch inside the craft—to an overflight view of the Antarctic shelf, via distorted-lens EFFECT (which we later realize is the POINT OF VIEW of the alien beings, this lens effect representing the way they see our world).

The flyover, which includes a full sweep of Windridge Station, carries us beyond the area on out to the thrusting peaks of the Beardmore Glacier range, where the alien POINT OF VIEW shows us a 3-man field camp, pitched close to the glacier itself.

The camp consists of a trio of reinforced red nylon tents staked to the ice. A motorized "Snowcat" is parked nearby, with an empty pack-sled behind it. Boxes of equipment are stacked around the tents.

Now we are down on the ice with Pomroy, Kelly and Banning—as they drill through the frozen surface to extract a core sample. In the cold twilight the work is rough and exhausting....

The three men are startled to see a dark, glinting shape pass swiftly over them—to drop from sight beyond the glacier's far edge. Possibly a meteor; if so, a really big one! And why no sound of impact? "Let's check it out," says Pomroy.

Banning radios to Mike Gonzales at Windridge, telling him what they saw and that they are going to investigate. He provides Mike with the area coordinates. Then we see them roar off in the Snowcat.

INTERCUT to a brief scene at dinner back in the station: Macho's birthday party. All of the Windridge team are gathered for this festive sequence (allowing individual character traits to emerge). In these INTERCUTS we share Blair's easy humor, Ted's drinking, the cook's melancholy, etc.

At Beardmore, the Snowcat stops and the three dismount, setting out for the cliff. Pomroy is certain that the object dropped into this area. They round an angled section of rock to confront: an alien spacecraft, dark and silent, made of smooth black metal and shaped like the head of a spear. (It is a scout ship, only large enough to hold a crew of three.)

Shock and awe soon give way to curiosity. Is anyone (or anything) alive inside? There is absolutely no sound or movement from the craft—but a circular section of hull gapes open.

Cautiously, the three move forward...entering the craft.

And, as they do, the hull seals itself silently behind them.

DISSOLVE TO: Windridge—some time later—as the trio of Pomroy, Banning and Kelly returns in the Snowcat, their pack-sled loaded with gear and core samples. They seem perfectly normal—tired, but satisfied with their field work, glad to be back.

Macready asks them what they found near the cliff. Not a thing. He, of all people, knows how the Antarctic sky can play visual tricks; the "sighting" was an optical illusion. Mac accepts their story.

But we see Macho, standing rigidly to one side, staring at the three men. There's an intense interest in his animal eyes....

While the Polar twilight deepens, moving toward seasonal darkness, the members of Windridge chart their own windowless, below-ice "days" and "nights." During each "night period" the lights are dimmed in all of the work tunnels to save valuable energy—and there is near-total darkness in the sleeping area.

In their separately partitioned room (on the night following Ralph's return from the ice) Marge Pomroy wakes from sleep, gasping and terrified. Ralph attempts to comfort her as she tells him of her horribly real nightmare in which he was her "enemy." "In my dream," she says, "you tried to kill me!"

CUT TO: next morning. Dr. Blair consults with Marge. He tells her that such a nightmare is not unusual: loved ones often assume reverse roles in dreams, as our minds deal with stored tensions. She needn't feel guilty.

But we, the audience, know that her dream was an all-too-real mental warning—for now Ralph Pomroy is the enemy, along with Carl Banning and Prank Kelly—although the three men seem their normal selves, working over their core samples in the station lab that afternoon.

Mac is puzzled by the fact that frisky, friendly Macho refuses to enter the lab where Pomroy and the others are working. "You guys spill anything in here? Maybe Macho smells something we don't." They shrug; everything's fine. Mac considers it odd, but drops the subject....

That night the CAMERA shows us the empty bunks of Banning and Kelly—then takes us to Ralph Pomroy, lying beside his wife in their room, eyes staring. He does not blink, just stares—as Marge moans in her sleep, victim to another disturbing dream.

Morning—as Winnie Norris prepares food for the station breakfast. Up to now, Macho has always haunted the kitchen for scraps whenever Norris prepares a meal—but the dog is not around this morning. And no one's seen him.

We CUT from the cook's puzzlement at Macho's disappearance to a sequence on the ice, wherein Vince Stoddard has taken one of the smaller and faster Snow-cats out to retrieve one of Marge Pomroy's weather balloons. Ted Steinmetz is with him, complaining about how bored he is at the prospect of being "marooned" out here at the Pole "for six lousy months". ..(He's nursing a hangover from the previous night's drinking.)

Directed by short-wave radio, they find the balloon (homing in on its signal)—but they also find:

The frozen body of Macho.

CUT TO: Mac, asking Dr. Blair: "But how did he die? What killed him?" Blair can give no answer to this. There's not a mark of any kind on the animal's body—and no poisoned food was found in his stomach.

Mac recalls that the dog has been acting strangely; maybe Macho's odd actions and his sudden death are linked in some way....

Carla Ralsen has a sequence with Marge. The younger girl is concerned with the fact that Marge is still having the same kind of dream—in which she's threatened by her husband. Worried about her friend, Car la insists that Dr. Blair administer a sedative; pills have not helped. He gives Marge a shot that evening—to help her sleep soundly. He, too, is concerned with these abnormal nightmares....

Now we are watching Mac, as he photographs the incredible Aurora from the domed station observatory. Liz Bennett is with him—and she considers the colorful sky display equally fascinating. As Mac takes his pictures he talks about the change in Marge

Pomroy, how "down" she's been. Women are still rare at the South Pole, and the tensions and the isolation may exact a heavier toll on them. Nonsense, says Liz. Something else is responsible for Marge Pomroy's dreams....

Later: Carla Ralsen brings Mac a very unusual report. Her current readings have revealed some type of sporadic seismic activity beneath the station. In the ice cap itself. Mac is surprised. "But we've never had a quake recorded in this area." Could it be an error? No, her force-wave readings clearly indicate a disturbance below the ice. She'll keep checking....

That night, with the tunnels dimmed and the sleep areas shrouded in darkness, Marge Pomroy lies in drugged slumber next to her husband. Ralph is awake, standing beside the bed, his eyes intense as the door to their room opens. Banning and Kelly are there. All three stare down at the sleeping woman. Then Ralph takes her strongly into his arms—and a horrifying change begins; from the fingers of his hands, from his open mouth, from his eyes, glowing strands of yellow emerge, like tendrils of living fire, to penetrate the pores of the woman's body. And, as his alien self pours into the living body of Marge Pomroy, the body of Ralph Pomroy begins to wither and die. He slowly folds down, into himself, as if he is a sack being emptied of all inner matter....

Morning: In the station's medical lab. Marge is there, bright and smiling, telling Dr. Blair how soundly she slept and how well she feels. "I'm sure the nightmares are over," she tells Blair. He nods, "I hope you're right." She smiles. "I know I am."

But when Carla attempts to talk to Marge about her odd seismic readings the older woman puts her off, moves away to other duties. There is a "coldness" separating them.

Mac is trying to locate Ralph Pomroy, but Ralph is not at the station. With Steinmetz, he checks the garage area—to find a Snowcat missing. Why would Pomroy leave so abruptly, telling no one?

"That's not true," says Marge, appearing in the doorway. "Ralph told me." He left during the night hours, she explains, to bring back a piece of equipment needed to complete his core experiments. "He did not want to wake anyone. It's as simple as that."

But Mac is not satisfied. He goes to the radio room, instructs Mike Gonzales to contact McMurdo station. He wants to talk to Pomroy as soon as he reaches the station.

But Mike is unable to comply with Mac's order. The radio is dead. No way to send or receive messages until he can locate the mechanical trouble. How long will it take? No way of telling. "Entire rig has to be checked, every part." This breakdown has Gonzales stymied; he just can't figure the cause. He does tell Mac that the last incoming message he got indicated that some blizzard weather was moving in....

Mac continues with his station duties, working with Liz at the computer on Aurora data analysis—but he's concerned by Pomroy's sudden leave-taking. A small 2-man copter is garaged at Windridge, usually piloted by Carl Banning. Now the craft is being readied for takeoff. Banning tells Mac that since the bad weather (and the fast-approaching darkness) will soon make flying impossible he wants to take a final run out to Beardmore for a special deep-ice core sample.

"I'll take Stoddard with me to co-pilot," he says.

Mac okays the flight—and the copter takes off that same afternoon with Banning and Vince Stoddard aboard.

But the moment they are airborne Banning goes silent, making no reply to Stoddard's comments. His manner is suddenly cold and remote. We go in, very close, on Banning's eyes. They glow with yellow light....

Next: a brief follow-up scene at the glacier—as the "new" Vince Stoddard emerges from the copter, carrying the deflated, sack-like body of Carl Banning. He moves to the black, silent scout craft, still nestled under the cliff, places Banning's corpse inside the ship, steps away—aims a tube-shaped laser device at the spacecraft. A powerful laser beam blasts the ship to black ash against the rocks.

Back at Windridge, the copter sets down with Stoddard at the controls. "Where the hell's Banning?" Mac wants to know. Stoddard says that Carl "took sick" and that he dropped him off for treatment at McMurdo. "Appendix attack for sure. I knew Blair couldn't handle it." Says he talked to Pomroy there, and Ralph will be staying on with Banning until the recovery.

Mac has no choice but to accept this explanation. With the radio still out he can't verify with McMurdo.

That night—as the others sleep—we follow Stoddard, Kelly and Marge Pomroy as they move silently down the dim ice tunnels toward the hydroponics shack. They do not speak to one another; verbal communication is not necessary between them.

Inside the menacing gloom of the greenhouse they remove some boards in the flooring—to reveal a tunnel, leading downward. As they enter, we see that each of the three carries a tube-thin laser device (the same type we saw used at the glacier). The lasers sizzle into glowing life as they begin using the cutting beams to widen and deepen the tunnel. They cut their way downward.

Later that same night: we are with Winnie Norris as he moves along one of the tunnels leading to the greenhouse. Winnie is after some kitchen supplies, and the food he seeks is stored in this tunnel. He selects a box, and is in the process of removing several frozen steaks when he notices an odd flicker of illumination deep in the ice beneath the tunnel floor.. .like a series of moving lights in dense fog.

These lights lead him toward the greenhouse—which he enters. More deep-ice illumination near the far corner of the building. Winnie crosses to the area, notes a bit of loose flooring. Uncovers the mouth of the tunnel, takes a flash from a shelf—and starts downward.

But he does not get far. Three shapes materialize from the gloom: Stoddard, Marge and Kelly. Silent. Unsmiling. All staring at him with unblinking eyes.

Norris speaks to them, asks what they're doing here? What kind of tunnel is this? No reply. Kelly moves toward him, and Winnie is suddenly fearful; he steps back, reaching

for the cleaver at his belt. (We have established that he carried this meat cleaver in a belt sling, using it to cut the frozen steaks.) Now he panics, buries the blade in the neck of Prank Kelly.

Incredibly—no blood! Instead, a glowing tendril of energized light pools out from the "wound," toward Winnie Norris, whose back is to the tunnel wall. More gleaming threads of energized matter flow out from Kelly's host-body to envelop the cook—until the drained, wrinkled corpse of Prank Kelly folds to the iced floor in a loose spill of boneless flesh....

Next morning: Mac is in the photolab, developing his latest batch of atmosphere shots when Liz comes in to tell him that Kelly is missing. She'd gone looking for him, with some computer data he needed, and: "He's gone...nowhere in the station. Finally, we checked the garage and another Snowcat's gone. Then we found this note in his bunk. Addressed to you."

The note reads: "Can't take the thought of being holed up here all winter. So I'm joining the others at McMurdo. Sorry!" It is signed, "Frank."

Macready is totally shaken by this, and tells Liz he is now convinced that the truth is not being told in regard to all the recent disappearances. First, Pomroy takes off without informing him; then Banning is hit with an appendix attack; now it's Prank Kelly who—Mac hesitates. "Pomroy... Banning... Kelly! They were together at Beardmore, checking on the meteor—"

"But they didn't find anything," declares Liz.

"Maybe not—but I've got the coordinates...and I'm going to have a look for myself."

CUT TO: Mac, airborne over the Beardmore range in the station's copter. The weather is much rougher; he's fighting crosswinds—but, as he checks a map during a pass over the area, he sees something near the inner cliff.

Mac lands the copter—reaches the exact spot where the alien scout ship landed. Now there is only a charred blackness burned into the rock face—all that remains of the ship. No, not quite all—as we see Mac sift through the ashes, to come up with a small, twisted bit of fire-blackened metal....

We are back at the lab in Windridge, where Mac is finishing a test on the metal fragment. Liz and Dr. Blair are with him, and he tells them that he cannot identify the fragment as any known Earth metal. Still, he's not an expert in this held...Question is: what could it be a piece of? Blair suggests that it could be from a new Soviet test vehicle which crashed and burned there.

"One thing's for sure," says Mac. "Something damned strange landed near that cliff...."

A meeting is called. Full group: Mac, Liz, Carla, Dr. Blair, Marge, Winnie Norris, Stoddard, Gonzales and Ted Steinmetz. Mac tells them that he believes Pomroy, Banning and Kelly lied about finding nothing at the glacier. "Some type of vehicle crashed there. I found part of it." And he holds up the fragment.

So, asks Stoddard, what does it mean? Why would the three be about what they'd found? Mac doesn't know—but he thinks it ties in, somehow, with the death of Macho, the radio blackout, and the sudden departures of Pomroy and Kelly. What is Mac leading up to?

A vote, says Macready. Bad weather is due, and they're running out of flying time. He feels that it would be wise to strike the camp and head for McMurdo. Three round trips in the copter could handle all nine of them. He calls for a vote on this.

"We still have a job to do here," says Vince Stoddard. "Nothing you've said has changed my mind about staying."

But Steinmetz votes to get out now. He thinks Kelly was smart to split when he did. A heated discussion becomes all but explosive, but the station's "team spirit" holds. The vote. 3 to go, 6 to stay.

"Okay," sighs Mac. "We stay."

Now they become truly isolated—as the six-month polar night closes over Windridge Station, accompanied by howling winds and blizzard conditions.

Despite this, the scientific work continues— as Dr. Blair reminds Macready that there is no real proof of anything being seriously amiss—and that once Gonzales gets the radio repaired they can contact McMurdo and verify the fact that Kelly and Pomroy and Banning are there.

"We won't be talking to McMurdo," Mac says darkly. "Mike's gone over every inch of his equipment."

The radioman has found no fault in his rig—yet the radio remains totally dead.

That night Carla Ralsen goes to Marge, confessing that she's frightened and confused. Marge must listen to her. (And the older woman does seem willing to do so.) Carla says that she's been getting stronger he-low-ice reading—and she feels that the disturbance below the station is not a natural one; someone is causing it. Has she told Mac? No, only about the readings, not about her suspicions. Marge advises her to talk to Vince Stoddard; Vince loves her, has been worried about her.

Carla agrees to see Vince. As she leaves Winnie Norris, walks from the shadow to stand beside Marge. Their eyes burn in the darkness....

Carla enters the garage at the far end of the station, and Vince is there, tinkering with the engine of a snow tractor. The looming bulk of machinery lends an aura of tension to the scene....

Carla's glad to see him. Why has he been avoiding her of late? "Oh, but I haven't. Not really," says Stoddard—and takes her into his arms. We, as well as Carla, see his eyes begin to fill with flickering yellow fire. Shocked and terrified, she backs away, runs to the exit. But Stoddard has locked the garage door; she cannot reach the tunnel.

In panic, she lunges away—onto the control seat of the heavy snow tractor Vince has been working on. Its engine is still running. She guns it, aiming the machine for Stoddard, using the massive metal-nose plow to pin him against the wall. But, horribly, Stoddard smiles—as his host-body is crushed by the plow-blade. Obviously, he does not feel any pain—and, again, there is no blood! Snake tendrils of yellow dart from his mouth, eyes, hands.. .emerging from his collapsing corpse to encircle Carla....

Later: an energy failure—as the lights in the station dim... go out, then back on....

We see Steinmetz in the power room, working on the main generator. He swears, throws down his tools, and reports to Mac. Problem: the generator is losing power, and he can't figure why. If the power loss continues, they can switch to the backup generator, but even the backup won't last long if the condition persists. And if that one goes..."It's your job to make sure it doesn't!" snaps Mac.

And he seeks out Carla, asks to see her latest seismic report. Looks it over. "There's no indication here of below-ice activity," he says. She tells him that her original readings were off. No disturbance below Windridge. She made a mistake. "Everything's normal," she asserts.

No, Mac insists, things are far from normal. He stares hard at her. "And I don't know why—but I think you're lying to me."

The temperature inside the station continues to drop. As the lights go dim, heavy clothing is now worn, even during sleep periods. Mac has made a decision: the storm is clearing, and he will authorize use of the copter to evacuate the station via round trips to McMurdo. No more voting; the generator problem has eliminated choice.

Steinmetz asks for one more try at the generators. Okay, but if he can't fix 'em, the fly-outs begin tomorrow.

That night Liz jarred from sleep. She sits up in bed, awakened by a sound in the greenhouse. A thudding noise. She gets up, opens her door, moves into the narrow tunnelway leading to the hydroponics shack. Light, faint but distinct, flickers under the edge of the door....

When she gets there the light is gone. Sudden silence. No sound or light from within.

Liz pushes the door open...There is a dim, smokey illumination framing the profusion of plants and flowers (many of which are withering from the increasing cold).

"Anyone in here?" Her voice is edged with tension. No reply. She moves down the gloomed lane between the heavy green plants, walking slowly. Liz reaches the end of the row and, with a shock, realizes that someone is standing very close to her in the semi-darkness. Dr. Blair.

She gasps, draws back. "What...I...I woke up...a sound.. .something falling...."

Blair regards her with placid eyes, smiles faintly. "One of your plants. I knocked it over."

And we see the smashed pot scattered along the board flooring.

"Is.. anyone here with you?"

No, Dr. Blair tells her, he is quite alone.

" But... alone... this time of night?"

To meditate, he says, while the others sleep. He comes here often. Now he excuses himself, telling her he's sorry about the plant.

But after he leaves, Liz stares down at the flooring; something had caught her eye. CAMERA PANS to a tall, wooden storage locker. Its door is slightly ajar, and the edge of a woman's shoe is visible.

Very slowly, Liz pulls open the locker—then gasps in shock and revulsion.

Stuffed into the locker: the boneless, sucked-dry corpse of Marge Pomroy.

We are into a scene in the medical lab, involving Mac, Liz and Dr. Blair...The doctor has finished his examination, and the remains of Marge Pomroy lie under a sheet on the lab table.

Blair admits he's never seen anything like it... muscles and interior organs gone, most of the bones "dissolved." But he attempts to render a medical explanation:

"An incredibly fast-growing form of cancerous growth—acting with terrible speed on all of the body cells...triggered, perhaps, by the unique conditions here at the Pole."

"Shouldn't we warn the others?" asks Liz.

"Of what?" says Blair. "We don't know if this thing is contagious—or how to fight it if it is!"

He advises against telling anyone else—until he can spend time studying the body, to determine more about the disease. No one is to enter the med lab until he gives his permission.

In the mess hall, over hot coffee, Mac tells Liz that he thinks the same thing that happened to Marge happened to Pomroy, Banning and Kelly. If so, asks Liz, where are the bodies?

"Probably destroyed. By Blair. He didn't have time to get rid of Marge before you came into the greenhouse."

She's shocked; is he accusing Dr. Blair?

"I'm saying he lied to us. Carla's also involved. And I don't know who else?"

"Involved in what?"

"It has something to do with what landed near the glacier...with Macho's death...with seismic activity below the camp...the radio and generators failing... They're all tied into it."

The point is, he tells her, they must not trust anyone. Not Blair or Carla, Steinmetz or any others. "Whatever's happened has affected some of them—maybe all of them." Then what's to be done; how do they prove any of this?

"We start by finding out what's going on below the ice," says Mac. "Carla lied about those readings..."

They'll start at the greenhouse: "I want to know why Blair was in there!"

They are moving down one of the narrow passageways when Steinmetz and Gonzales appear at a fork in the tunnel. At this point neither Mac nor Liz (or we, the audience) is sure who's a friend and who's an enemy.

The four confront one another in the dimly lit, frosted corridor. Then Steinmetz says: "Mike and I have been working on the generator. No use. Power's almost gone. We were heading for the radio shack—to have another go at the rig."

"Yeah," nods Gonzales. "Got to reach McMurdo. Let 'em know our situation."

Liz starts to speak, but Mac stops her. (She's to trust nobody.) "Okay," he says. "Give it another try. But we'll be flying out of here in any case."

They continue along the tunnel as we follow Gonzales and Steinmetz into the radio room. CAMERA IN on the eyes of Mike Gonzales as they begin to glow.

He moves toward Steinmetz....

Inside the greenhouse Mac is carefully checking the floor around the locker....

CUT TO: Blair and Carla—as they enter the radio shack, to face the "new" Ted Steinmetz. The drained corpse of Mike Gonzales lies crumpled in one corner.

The three aliens leave silently, heading down the corridor—toward the greenhouse.

Inside, Mac has just uncovered the entrance to the ice tunnel. We see him check the clock on a .45, then enter the tunnel with Liz. Behind them, they push the boards carefully back into place to hide the fact of their discovery. Then they start down the tunnel, Mac (with a flash) leading....

Back to the aliens—as Carla, Blair and Steinmetz enter the greenhouse, move to the ice tunnel, remove the loose flooring, and enter. They move with unhurried calm.

To Mac and Liz—as they reach the tunnel's end. There's a glow, a humming of vast, stored energies Just ahead of them....

Now they emerge into a vast cavern which extends for miles under the ice—to encounter a stunning sight: a giant spacecraft fills the cavern, a multi-level mammoth of tiers and decks and oddly-angled sections—a star king built to range far galaxies. (Note: this ship is truly immense—as large as the Empire State Building placed sideways under the ice!)

The metal skin of the ship glows and pulses, filling the cavern with intense light....

The total effect is mind-numbing.

Mac and Liz now stand beside the craft, staring up at it with awe. Finally, Mac says softly: "So this is what they came for!"

"They?"

"Whoever or whatever they are...aliens from another solar system...they landed near the glacier... took over Pomroy and the others—then sent them hack to gain control of the rest of us., used us."

"Marge," breathes Liz. "But why?"

"They were obviously sent to bring this back." He looks up at the ship. "God knows how many tens of thousands of years it's been buried here under the ice cap.. .but they cut their way down to it—to bring it back to life."

"Which explains why the generator failed. They were using our power...."

"Yes...to activate the ship's primary drive," says Mac. "Once this thing is fully operational the atomic heat generated by a ship this size at takeoff could melt enough of the polar ice cap to destroy McMurdo Station and everyone in it!"

"But there's no way we can stop it!"

"We've got to try," says Mac.

They range quickly along the side of the mammoth craft, searching for a possible way inside. But the glowing metal is smooth and seamless.

A sound of coming footsteps! Mac grabs Liz and they duck behind a projecting ledge of ice.

Blair, Carla and Steinmetz appear, moving from the tunnel toward the forward hull.

They stop near the ledge—and Blair removes a beam device from his jacket, aims it at the ship. A ground level section of the hull sinks inward.

Blair and the other two aliens enter the spacecraft—and just before the hull reseals itself, Mac and Liz are able to slip inside.

The interior is mind bending. Warily, keeping well back, they follow the three aliens upward (via a series of moving ramps) past multi-level crew areas— to the main control deck.

Blair, Steinmetz and Carla step forward—to a wall of curving metal, where they "rack" their tube-shaped laser devices. Then all three move into a circular area embracing the ship's central control unit.

As Liz and Mac watch from the shadows, they see Blair pass his hand over a control stud—and a "shielding" begins to shape itself (from particles of shining matter). It solidifies into a dome which totally covers the circular area.

Now, a glowing, golden mist rises from vents in the flooring to fill the bubble and, as this occurs, we see the aliens shedding their earthbodies as a snake sheds its skin.

Mac and Liz squint their eyes against the blazing, incandescent beings now standing within the bubble. In "natural" form, each creature seems to exist in its own separate core of dazzling light—and through this rippling curtain of brightness we sense the shape, the bones and incredible body structure, of things truly alien.. .other-worldly.

A hive-hum of sound begins to build within the ship.

"They're getting set to lift off!" says Mac.

"...and take us with them!" murmurs Liz.

Macready breaks from the shadows, runs forward to the dome-bubble's edge, the big .45 gripped in his right fist. (In this sleek, futuristic surrounding, the gun seems an antique—almost ridiculous!)

A metallic voice rings out in warning as Mac points his weapon at the bubble. (Note: This voice forms words in English, but the spacing and pronunciation are alien—and triple-toned—as all three creatures speak with one voice.)

"Be warned, Macready! This craft is about to depart your planet. Leave at once—or you will not survive."

"You speak of survival—when you've murdered Dr. Blair and all the others...."

"We do not murder," the voice declares. "Of necessity, we utilize native host bodies in order to perform our duties. We use these bodies for food, shelter and disguise—as we do whenever we are assigned to a new planet."

"If you engage full power to lift this ship .you'll kill hundreds more!"

"Their deaths cannot be avoided," says the voice. "This spacecraft, lost here on your Earth, must be returned to our people. We have been sent to reclaim it." Then, a command: "Leave. Now!"

"I'm not leaving—and neither are you!" And Mac fires the .45 at the bubble.

The bullets have no effect.

The rising hum of atomic power is intensified. The ship trembles with energy....

Liz turns past Mac to the curving metal wall, to the racked lasers; she pulls one free, swings toward the bubble, fires.

The laser charge slices through the side of the dome, releasing the life-sustaining atmospheric vapor inside the bubble.

"Now we shall all die," the triple-toned voice coldly declares. "In destroying this shielding you have activated the ship's self-destruct mechanism...."

The hum fades, and a new siren-like sound replaces it. Inside the fractured dome the aliens are weakening, their bodies darkening, shrinking, as the light dies in each of them.

Intent on escape, Mac and Liz run for the exit—the great ship has sealed itself—and they must use lasers to cut their way free.

Now we INTERCUT between their flight for life and the dying spacecraft's instrumentation—as the dials tick and whirl toward Self-Destruct. The numerals on the control panel are alien, but the pattern is clear as they record the final minutes until implosion.

Liz and Mac leave the cavern, sprint up the angled ice tunnel toward station level. "At McMurdo..." gasps Liz. "Do they have a chance?"

"I hope so," says Mac. "When this thing goes Windridge will go with it—but the ice cap might hold..."

We play the final scenes at full tempo, INTERCUTTING between our protagonists and the clicking instruments on the ship.

Mac reaches the garage, and, with the help of Liz, rolls the station helicopter into the outside darkness. The wind is strong, but the blizzard has passed... Flying is possible.

But will the copter start? "The engine has its own independent heat generator...battery powered. It should kick over!"

And, after several tense moments, it does! The copter blades begin to revolve lazily as Mac pulls the hatch closed. He increases power, throttles for liftoff...

"What about the fuel?" asks Liz.

"Enough to reach McMurdo—if we can get this thing in the air before the ship blows!"

CUT TO: the spacecraft—as the needles merge.

Destruct!

A giant fireball of raw heat ruptures the ice—as Windridge is blown into fiery ruin.

The copter is airborne—but the massive shock wave smashes it sideways, as Mac fights for control. A landing skid bangs the ice—but Mac throttles skyward again....

And they survive. As does McMurdo station— since the explosion was not great enough to destroy the mile-deep ice cap....

Below, in the final SHOT of our film, only a wide, smoking crater in the polar shelf remains to mark the death of a great starship.

THE END

About William F. Nolan

Critically acclaimed as the author of the iconic SF classic, Logan's Run (bestseller, MGM film, CBS television series, etc.), William F. Nolan's prolific career spans more than half a century. He has garnered major awards in each of his primary fields: science fiction (voted Author Emeritus by the SF Writer's of America), dark fantasy (named a living legend by the International Horror Guild), and crime fiction (twice winner of the Edgar Allen Poe Special Award by the Mystery Writer's of America).

William Nolan has 80-plus books to his credit in a variety of global editions, and his work has been selected for some 325 anthologies and textbooks.

He lives and works in Vancouver, Washington, near the Oregon border.