

SILENT RUNNING

Story and Screenplay

by

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1. INTERIOR, FOREST

We hear a buzz of insects as, in a series of CLOSE UPS, we see ferns, moss, a flowering vine. And now, pushing up from rich, black earth, we see a mushroom with a blanched white cap...

The insect buzz grows louder. We see broad leafed tropical plants, like fans, and the frail, feathered leaves of young bamboo...

A dragonfly appears, shimmering, iridescent green. CAMERA CLOSES on the dragonfly, follows as it darts and stops, drops suddenly, hanging motionless, hovering over something...

A wrist watch. The crystal is shattered and the expansion band is crushed, as if from being struck. Blood beads on the black hairs of the wearer's wrist.

CAMERA CLOSES on the watch. It is rectangular in shape. Where one would normally expect to see a dial with hands, alpha numeric numbers flicker and fade.

TITLES---HEAVY BLACK LETTERS OVER DRAGONFLY AND
THE ALPHA NUMERIC WATCH

"SILENT RUNNING"

We see a YOUNG MAN's face now, then a second MAN's face, and a third. They are all in their early twenties. The sight is not pretty. The faces are bruised, lacerated, as if some violent struggle had taken place. And the MEN are dead.

CUT TO:

LOWELL lies on his back, half conscious, stunned. Like the OTHERS, he bears the marks of violent struggle and his breath comes in gasps, with a harsh, sucking sound. Slowly his eyes gather focus. A moment passes. LOWELL blinks. He is older; perhaps forty.

2. INTERIOR, FOREST, LOWELL'S POV

Above the fronds of an overhanging palm tree, beyond the black tracery of a huge geodesic dome, the planet Saturn looms in the black void of space.

3. INTERIOR, FOREST

For a long moment, LOWELL stares up at Saturn. Then, as memory comes, he starts, tries to turn and almost screams out in pain. Forcing himself, LOWELL gets to his feet.

The bodies of the three dead MEN lie motionless on the grass. Strange, gleaming, chromium plated tools lie scattered around. LOWELL stands for a moment, staring at the bodies. Then he lets his eyes fall, to his own thigh.

Blood is running down his leg, draining out from a rent in the clear plastic fabric of his body suit. Against the delicate network of ducts and printed electrical circuits, the blood seems gross, somehow unreal.

LOWELL hobbles to one of the chromium plated tools, removes a length of cord and applies it in a tourniquet around his leg.

CUT TO:

4. INTERIOR, FOREST, ANOTHER LOCATION

Dazed, LOWELL comes lurching out of the trees. He trips on a stump, falls, then hauls himself painfully back on his feet. As he starts off again, we see a gleaming steel wall some distance ahead. LOWELL crosses a clearing and heads for an open hatchway. A crow caws.

LOWELL turns.

5. INTERIOR, FOREST, LOWELL'S POV

On the uppermost branch of a cypress tree is a large black crow. It caws, then caws again.

LOWELL stares at the crow. Then he raises his head.

Above, we see the planet Saturn again.

A moment passes. LOWELL lowers his head. The crow caws again. LOWELL staggers toward the open hatch.

6. INTERIOR, TOOL AREA

LOWELL crosses out of the forest, across a ringing steel floor, then through another hatch.

7. INTERIOR, SHIP, CORRIDOR

LOWELL makes his way through an endless series of battered hatchways. Ducts and cables go streaming by above his head. In the glare of intermittent, bare bulbed lights, we see that LOWELL, although strong looking and well built, is well past forty.

8. INTERIOR, MAIN STORAGE AREA

The space is immense, in disrepair, a vast catacomb of coded containers stretches away some thousand yards, into darkness.

LOWELL appears in the distance, draws slowly closer. He is pushing himself, driving himself, by an effort of sheer will. As he passes, we see that his face is bathed in sweat.

9. INTERIOR, STAIRWAY

LOWELL clammers toward CAMERA, dragging his leg. We hear radio VOICES, the sound of static.

10. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR TO MAIN CONTROL

Red lights are flashing. The radio VOICES are louder now and a warning signal oscillates at a high, two-tone pitch.

As CAMERA TRACKS with LOWELL, we see names on doors:

BARKER

WOLF

KEENAN

DR. LOWELL

LOWELL slows, gasping for breath, turns through a hatchway...

11. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

In the center of the room is the main control console, blazing with lights, readouts and displays. Facing it are four swivel chairs.

CUT TO:

LOWELL in the hatchway. He stands motionless, as if paralyzed, staring at the gleaming white console with the four chairs.

The warning signal sings on. Static roars. Above the harsh, machine gun crackle of some dozen VOICES, one VOICE comes clear...

VOICE

Apopka. Come in Apopka. Reading

Four...O...O...Four...O. Berk-

shire to Apopka, I read you

negative on your final jettison.

Repeat, negative on your final

jettison. Berkshire on Apopka.

Come in Apopka...

CUT TO:

12. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

In the eerie, absolute silence of space, we see thousands of yards of conduits, catwalks, antennas. Beyond these, in staggering perspective, is the planet Saturn, with the rings now clearly visible.

Suddenly, in the foreground, a Litton Radcliffe LR 260 drone monitor appears, walking soundlessly down a catwalk with an odd rocking gait. The drone is patched, bearing a stencilled number---729---and, like the ship, looks old.

The drone descends a ramp. CAMERA TRACKS as the drone passes over huge, faded black lettering on the ship's hull...

12. CONT.

USA

SOUTHEAST SUB-TROPICAL

(BAHIA HONDA)

APOPKA SECTION 313

Suddenly the drone stops, and its manipulator arm emerges with a gleaming silver disk. The drone tilts forward and there is a flash of blue-white incandescence as it welds the disk to a meteoroid fracture on the ship's hull.

The drone straightens. Its manipulator arm retracts. As the drone passes on in its unending search for damage, disappearing slowly over the curvature of the hull, we see in the distance a second, sister ship, riding parallel orbit, and beyond, in the outer blackness, the planet Mars.

Except that it no longer carries a dome, the ship seems identical, some sort of freighter. On its hull, faded black lettering reads...

USA

NORTHWEST CONIFEROUS

(LOMAX)

SEQUOIA SECTION 244

In the foreground now, two more drones appear. CAMERA PANS as the drones pass by. In the distance we see the gleaming surface of APOPKA's forest dome. As the drones move out along a catwalk, a second ship comes into view, riding orbit on the opposite side.

Like the ship we just saw, it carries no domes. On its hull, the faded black letters read...

USA

NORTHEAST DECIDUOUS

(WARREN)

BERKSHIRE SECTION 777

CUT TO:

13. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL stands as before, motionless, staring at the gleaming white console with the four chairs.

The warning signal sings on. Static roars.

VOICE (CON'T)

Apopka. Come in Apopka. Reading
Four...O...O...Four...O. Berk-
shire to Apopka. Come in Apopka.

LOWELL swallows, stirs. With a superhuman effort he takes a step forward, then another.

Reaching the console, he stops. Sweat streams down his face as he takes up the microphone, hesitates, then opens the line.

LOWELL

Apopka to Berkshire....That you
Neal?

VOICE

....unh what's the trouble John?

LOWELL

Experiencing....little problem
on the main coupling, Neal.

VOICE

.....unh might be your inter-
face is off the AI.

LOWELL

Roger.....we're trying to set
it now.

VOICE

Hadda beat the pins on ours.

13. CONT.

LOWELL

.....right....That's what we're
doing now.

VOICE

Coming into darkness at four
...four...o...nine seven.

LOWELL

.....right.

VOICE

Blow it any old way you can,
John. Big Billy wants to go.

LOWELL

No sweat.

LOWELL lifts his thumb from the microphone and the line goes dead. In the sudden, eerie silence, LOWELL stands for a moment, motionless. Then he turns, lurches across the room to the LR 260 Program Control.

Hurriedly, LOWELL begins punching out a program. As he does so, there is a burst of radio static and another VOICE comes on.

VOICE 2

Yellowstone reports final jetti-
son. Arcadia, Blue Ridge,
Glacier, Mojave report final
jettisons... Unh, we've got a
hold on Apopka.

VOICE 3

Right....

13. CONT. (2)

VOICE 2

Apopka...reports difficulty on
the final dome.

VOICE

...read you clear. All holding.

LOWELL finishes, punches a button and three cards
slide into a tray. LOWELL grabs them, lurches out
the door.

14. INTERIOR, SERIES OF LOCATIONS

LOWELL hurries down the corridor from Main Control.
He descends the stairway.

15. INTERIOR, COMPUTER BANKS

LOWELL passes along a catwalk, high above the softly
whirring machines.

16. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR

LOWELL is gasping again, bathed in sweat. Ahead,
the corridor ends at a sealed door. On it, red
lettering reads...

EMERGENCY USE ONLY

CONTAINS

LITTON RADCLIFFE LR 260

(4) MASTER UNITS

LOWELL stops, tears the hermetic seal from the door.
There is a hiss as the pressure equalizes. LOWELL
pushes in.

17. INTERIOR, LR 260 STORAGE ROOM

Above, on the ceiling, is a single cold white light.
On the walls black electrical cables stream into each
other, forming four thick strands which run through
ceramic insulators into a large locker.

17. CONT.

LOWELL crosses to the locker, tears off the protective seal and opens it up.

Inside, bedded in white styrofoam, we see four gleaming LR 250 Master Monitors. Although similar to the drones we have already seen, they are obviously more intricate, and ~~sophisticated~~ machines.

LOWELL is rushing now. He tears out the styrofoam packing around the monitors, hits a set button on the locker's control panel, punches out a code on the first monitor's keyboard and inserts one of his three cards.

Nothing happens.

LOWELL curses, repeats the procedure and inserts the card.

Again nothing happens.

LOWELL turns. On the locker door are complicated, close printed directions.

LOWELL draws his breath, trying to calm himself, to concentrate. He begins to read.

CUT TO:

LOWELL's leg. Despite the tourniquet, blood is seeping from his wound, dripping silently, drop by drop on the polished metal floor.

CUT TO:

18. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

A huge dish-type antenna revolves in silence. Beyond it, the forest dome gleams.

CAMERA PANS to NORTHWEST CONIFEROUS, still orbiting alongside. There is not a sound. On her hull, drones are visible, tiny, like ants.

CUT TO:

19. INTERIOR, SHIP, LR 260 STORAGE AREA

LOWELL turns from the directions on the locker door, hits the set button once again, punches out a different code on the monitor and inserts the card.

There is the shrill whine of an electric pump starting up. As pressure builds, a louvered panel clatters open, venting air. Then the card locks and the monitor begins to throb.

CLOSE UP, LOWELL

He moves to the second monitor, punches it up, inserts the second card. As the pump begins to whine, LOWELL moves to the third monitor, punches it up...

CUT TO:

20. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR

LOWELL comes lurching toward CAMERA.

21. INTERIOR, STAIRWAY

LOWELL clammers up the stairway back to Main Control.

CUT TO:

22. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR

A monitor appears, rounding a corner. The monitor stops by a hatchway. Its manipulator arm emerges, engages a socket in the wall. There is a click, then a shrill, earsplitting whine and the heavy door slams shut.

23. INTERIOR, SERIES OF LOCATIONS

The three monitors close hatch after hatch.

24. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

As LOWELL comes in, static is crackling and we hear the VOICE again...

24. CONT.

VOICE

Berkshire to Apopka. Come in
Apopka...Berkshire to Apopka.
Come in Apopka.

LOWELL crosses to the console, stands for a moment,
trying to get his breath, then he opens the line.

LOWELL

Apopka to Berkshire. Come in
Berkshire.

VOICE

How's it coming John?

LOWELL

Unh, coming along real good,
Neal.....afraid we're going
to have to torch those pins.

VOICE

.....better move on it, John.
....darkness coming up on you
three...three two zero...one.

LOWELL

Right...we'll do our best.

LOWELL clicks off. There is an eerie, near silence
for a moment, then a burst of static.

VOICE 2

Still holding on Apopka.....

VOICE 3

.....All holding.

24. CONT. (2)

LOWELL lets out his breath, turns. He eases himself down in front of the Main Control console.

For a moment, staring at the maze of buttons, switches, readouts and displays, a panic seems to take him.

His hand moves out, wavers. He flicks a switch, tentatively. Then he flicks another.

CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL as he goes to work, hurriedly, re-setting Main Control.

CUT TO:

25. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR TO MAIN CONTROL

The three monitors appear, filing down the corridor in a row. Fully illuminated as they now are, the monitors seem delicate, almost fragile. As they move, their complex hydraulic systems emit subtle, barely audible hissing sounds. Their feet, shod in rubber, make a faint squeaking on the metal floor.

CUT TO:

26. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL starts, turns in his seat as the three monitors come filing in.

LOWELL watches as they cross to the console and align themselves opposite the three empty chairs.

As LOWELL waits, obviously expecting something else, the monitors all vent, throb for a moment and go dead.

LOWELL curses, staggers to his feet. He moves down the console, leans over and punches a start code on one of the monitor's keyboards.

Nothing happens.

LOWELL tries it again.

Again nothing happens.

26. CONT.

Suddenly, cursing himself, LOWELL goes back to his seat and hits a button on the console, pounding it with his thumb.

Immediately, the monitors' electric pumps begin to whine. Their louvered panels clatter open, venting air, and they all begin to throb again.

Breathing easier now, LOWELL hits another button on the console.

The monitors' manipulator arms emerge, home in on the Main Control console, then click into sockets and lock.

LOWELL sinks back in his seat. He hits a button, then another and another.

One by one the readouts on the monitors light up.

LOWELL clears his control panel, re-sets his switches and begins feeding the monitors codes.

On the monitors' screens the codes flicker by.

CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL, sweating again, working feverishly.

CUT TO:

LOWELL's leg. The blood is still dripping, drop by drop, spattering on the polished metal floor.

CUT TO:

LOWELL again, as he punches coordinates into the main gyro control. A screen lights up...

S A T U R N

+477.9 +25/33 + 99:08

LOWELL swallows, staring at the screen. He turns and we see a clock which is spinning off half seconds and approaching a reading of 00:000.

26. CONT. (2)

VOICE

Berkshire to Apopka....Berkshire
to Apopka....You are entering
darkness....You are entering
darkness.....

LOWELL opens the line.

LOWELL

Right.....thank you Neal.

VOICE

Big Billy says blow it anyway,
John.

LOWELL

Right....Neal.... Soon as we can....

LOWELL clicks off. He looks at the three monitors
standing opposite. Corrected coordinates are
flashing out their readouts.

LOWELL hits a switch and the lights all dim.

LOWELL hits a button and a low buzzer sounds.

27. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

Darkness is falling and Saturn is ominous, orange.

Drones appear, numbers 7, 409, 93. On their shells,
tiny red lights are flashing.

28. EXTERIOR, AUTOMATIC LOADING SLOT

As the drones approach, their manipulator arms extend,
lock on a railing. Under the railing an endless
belt conveyor packs them into rows.

29. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

The buzzer on the console stops. A green light goes on.

LOWELL clears the light, hits another button.

30. INTERIOR, COMPUTER BANKS

A buzzer sounds and the whirring reels all stop. A red light comes on and the tapes reverse.

31. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL wets his lips, tensely, watching the readouts on the monitors' screens.

A thin, high pitched beep begins. LOWELL draws his breath, hits a switch, then a button and we hear a loud, explosive crack.

32. INTERIOR, ENGINE ROOM

Automatic switches begin slamming shut, rapidfire.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see the huge, barren white ducts of the Sperry Mass Vector Synthesizers.

A low hum begins, grows louder, rapidly, to a shrill whine. A railing begins to shudder, then to shake.

33. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

Sweat runs in rivulets down LOWELL's face. The sound of the Synthesizers grows louder, shriller, and now static explodes from the radio...

VOICE

(Urgently.)

Apopka...! Berkshire to Apopka...

VOICE 2

(Cutting in.)

I get a two four on Apopka, reading

33. CONT.

VOICE 2 (CON'T)

red, nine nine of Emergency!

I get a two four on Apopka,

reading red...

LOWELL hesitates, fingering a switch, then he cuts off all communication.

The sound of the Synthesizers goes deeper now, to a dull, pounding roar. The ship shudders, vibrates and a monotonous droning sound settles in the air.

LOWELL sits motionless, listening, still with his finger on the communication switch. He removes his finger, slowly, falls back, exhausted, in his chair.

Opposite, across the eerie green lights of Main Control, the monitors' louvered vent panels jiggle and swing.

CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL as he stares at the panels. His eyelids flutter. They close, open, then close again.

CUT TO:

34. EXTERIOR, SHIP, SPACE

We see the ship moving through the great void of space.

CUT TO:

35. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL's eyes are open, wide open, listening.

There is nothing, no vibration, not a sound.

Opposite, across the console, the three monitors gleam. Their readout screens are dark, their manipulators have retracted and they stand in a row, motionless, gone to dead stop.

35. CONT.

For a moment LOWELL stares out, uncomprehending. Then, as a panic takes him, he jerks forward, searching for trouble on Main Control.

On the panel, all the lights show green.

As LOWELL drops his gaze now, staring at something, CAMERA CLOSES on an alpha numeric counter. (SILENT RUNNING) it reads, and below this, shadowy, fast changing numbers flicker and fade.

LOWELL looks up, releases his breath. His eyes fall on the three monitors again and he turns...

We see the three empty seats.

Hurriedly, LOWELL gets to his feet. He staggers as his weight comes on his leg, then he falls, heavily, to the floor.

Cursing, avoiding even the slightest glance at his wound, LOWELL rights himself, gritting his teeth against the pain, and hobbles across to the LR 260 Program Control.

He extracts three cards, inserts them and begins to punch out a code.

CUT TO:

36. INTERIOR, MAIN STORAGE AREA

LOWELL appears, dragging his leg, followed by the three monitors.

37. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR

LOWELL makes his way down the endless hatchways.

The monitors come rocking along behind.

CUT TO:

38. INTERIOR, TOOL AREA

We see LOWELL in CLOSE UP.

38. CONT.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see the three monitors standing by the wall.

In front of the monitors, large chromium plated trenching tools are attached to black metal brackets. The monitors extend their manipulators, lock into the trenching tools and turn to LOWELL with them, waiting.

LOWELL opens his mouth, impulsively, stepping toward the monitors, as if for a moment he thought to speak.

Then, catching himself, he turns; starts into the forest.

The monitors follow.

CUT TO:

39. INTERIOR, FOREST

As LOWELL enters the clearing, he stops, suddenly, freezing in his tracks.

Ahead, the black crow we saw earlier, rises from the grass where the bodies are, flopping, on heavy wings.

LOWELL draws up, turning, watching the crow as it passes low above his head, cawing.

Slowly, the caws die away. We hear subtle, hissing sounds; a venting of air.

The three monitors come rocking up, stop in front of him, waiting.

CUT TO:

40. INTERIOR, FOREST

LOWELL stands motionless, watching, as the three monitors excavate a communal grave. Their trenching tools make a vicious, shrill, almost unbearable sputtering sound, and after a moment, LOWELL hobbles off a few steps, stops.

40. CONT.

Ahead, the bodies of the three men lie motionless in the grass.

LOWELL stares at the bodies for a moment. Then, unable to bear this sight either, LOWELL raises his eyes.

41. INTERIOR, FOREST, LOWELL'S POV

We see Saturn again, hanging low, above the black filagree of the dome.

CUT TO:

42. INTERIOR, FOREST, LOWELL'S POV, ANOTHER ANGLE

The crow flutters back, settles in a tree top and begins to caw.

43. INTERIOR, FOREST

LOWELL, who is watching the crow, lowers his gaze.

Directly in front of LOWELL, we see the bodies, laid out in the grave, side by side.

And above them, standing in a row, we see the three monitors, waiting.

Suddenly, on silent wings, the crow drops down, right past LOWELL, into the grave.

For a moment, before LOWELL reacts, we see the crow clearly---huge, sleek, glossy black, and heading for one of the corpses.

Screaming LOWELL throws himself after it, but the crow flutters up and alights on one of the monitors.

LOWELL yells, scrambles up the embankment, but the crow lifts off and flies away.

CUT TO:

44. INTERIOR, FOREST

The monitors are filling in the grave.

Above the shrill, earsplitting sputter of the trenching tools, we hear LOWELL, shouting.

He is muddy, smeared with dirt, and he seems deranged. Tears come streaming down his face, and his eyes dart around, fearfully, searching the trees as he goes from one monitor to another, howling at them, telling them to hurry.

CUT TO:

45. INTERIOR, WASHROOM

Like someone who has dreamed, or gone mad, LOWELL stands motionless in front of a mirror, staring at himself.

He draws in his breath, trembling, opens the tap on the sink and begins to wash his face.

As he finishes and looks for a towel, his eyes fix on something.

On the adjoining sink is a sophisticated medical kit.

LOWELL looks at the instruments for a moment. Then, unwillingly, steeling himself, he looks down at his leg.

Carefully, LOWELL loosens the tourniquet. Blood gushes out, pours down his leg and spreads in a glistening pool around his foot.

LOWELL closes the tourniquet, hurriedly, then staggers as a wave of nausea comes over him.

He rushes for the toilet, but his legs give out and he falls.

We see him, SLOW MOTION, as his head smashes down on the toilet bowl, and he rolls, landing on his back.

CAMERA CLOSES ON LOWELL's blurred eyes...

CUT TO:

46. FLASHBACK: INTERIOR, FOREST

We see LOWELL, glimpsed, running through the trees, with a gleaming metal tool. He looks half mad.

CUT BACK TO:

47. INTERIOR, WASHROOM

LOWELL blinks. His eyes swim back in focus.

Slowly, painfully, LOWELL struggles to his feet.

CUT TO:

48. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR TO MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL passes down the doors...

BARKER

WOLF

KEENAN

He stops at his own name, hesitates, then pushes in.

49. INTERIOR, LOWELL'S ROOM

There is a bed, a chair, a littered table. In the corner are stacks of dog-eared books.

LOWELL crosses, pulls open a drawer and takes out a bottle. He rummages in his papers and finds a glass, pours himself a drink and knocks it down.

This action seems to please him. It strikes him, in fact, as quiet hilarious, and LOWELL laughs.

Then he wanders out.

50. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR TO MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL comes drifting into CAMERA. Suddenly, as if engaged by some distant memory, he slows, comes to a stop.

CUT TO:

E51. FLASHBACK: INTERIOR, MAIN STORAGE AREA

We see LOWELL, head on, walking with the three young, clean-shaven MEN, whose bodies we saw earlier.

LOWELL looks ruffled, possibly hungover. The young MEN look upright, starched.

LOWELL

I read, write a little. More often than not, gloomy dreams disturb my sleep. ...I am, you might say, one of the last of a vanishing species.

BAKER

What would that be, sir?

LOWELL

(Laughing.)

A drunk.

The three MEN exchange glances.

LOWELL (CONT'D)

Nevertheless, on rare occasion I continue to perform passable surgery. There is also the fact that I am willing, every five years, to re-enlist.

KEENAN

(Horrified, looking around.)

On this?

F51. CONT.

LOWELL

(Wryly.)

Where else?

Again, the three MEN exchange glances.

WOLF

(After a pause.)

No docking maneuvers? Nothing?

LOWELL

Not for a year.

WOLF

A year! That's when they're
taking us off.

LOWELL

(Amused.)

It all comes in one package.

CUT TO:

F52. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST

LOWELL gestures.

LOWELL

(Facetiously.)

The little ones are plants. The
big ones are trees.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see the three MEN, awed,
standing by the tool room door.

CUT TO:

F53. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) FOREST (A LOCATION WE HAVE NOT SEEN)

The MEN move along in LOWELL's tracks. Suddenly KEENAN stops.

KEENAN

What the...? What the hell's that?

LOWELL

Blue heron.

KEENAN

I'll be damned!

CUT TO:

F54. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST (ANOTHER LOCATION WE HAVE NOT SEEN)

BARKER

How many domes does this wreck
.....ah...ship, carry?

LOWELL

Twenty two.

BARKER

(Glancing at others.)

...Who'd ever want a mile of this?

LOWELL

Thirty years ago everybody. Now
I don't know. People forget.

F54. CONT.

BARKER

Would you want this, Larry? I mean around your place?

WOLF

(Distastefully.)

Are you kidding?

KEENAN

What the...? What the hell's that?

LOWELL

Squirrel.

KEENAN

Squirrel?

LOWELL nods. KEENAN studies the squirrel for a moment, turns to the OTHERS.

KEENAN

Not bad, huh? I don't mind that.

The OTHERS shrug.

CUT BACK TO:56. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL stands motionless with his bottle and his glass, gazing absently at the radar screen, lost in memory.

He draws in his breath, releases it, notices his empty glass. As he raises the bottle to pour himself a refill, we hear a low blip-pulse begin. For a moment LOWELL doesn't notice. Then, when he does, he gives a start.

56. CONT.

Opposite, on the radar screen, there is now a small, bright red spot. As the scan passes over it, the spot burns brightly, fades, then burns again, like a drop of blood.

By the wall the three monitors stand motionless, gone to dead stop.

LOWELL looks at the pulse again, then he crosses to the LR 260 Program Control.

Rapidly he punches out three cards, crosses back to the monitors, inserts the cards and activates them.

As the monitors throb to "life", turn and start out the door, LOWELL shouts after them.

LOWELL

Black! You hear me... Black!

The monitors go rocking off. LOWELL stands for a moment, muttering, looking after them.

He turns, goes back to the radar.

On the screen we see the bright, red, blipping spot.

And LOWELL, in CLOSE UP, as he pours himself another drink.

The liquid burbles, plops.

CUT TO:

F57. FLASHBACK: INTERIOR, MAIN STORAGE AREA

We see LOWELL, with KEENAN, BARKER and WOLF, reeling out of the vast, cavernous space.

They are all drunk, carrying lights, bottles, wearing makeshift party hats, and waving sticks with streamers of white paper.

F57. CONT..

SINGING

Good King Wenceslas looked out
 On the feast of Stephen
 When the snow lay round about
 Deep and crisp and even
 Brightly shone the moon that night
 Though the frost was cruel
 When a poor man came in sight
 Gathering winter fuel.....

CUT TO:

F58. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST POOL, NIGHT

LOWELL comes swinging out of the trees on a rope,
 howling like a maniac.

In a FLASHCUT SEQUENCE we see KEENAN, BARKER and
 WOLF all swinging on the rope...

All howling, shouting, splashing, laughing...

CUT TO:

F59. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, MAIN STORAGE AREA

Arm in arm, LOWELL, KEENAN, BARKER and WOLF come
 reeling back from the pool...

SINGING

Silent night,
 Holy night,
 All is calm, all is bright...

CUT BACK TO:

60. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL absently hums on with the song, lost in memory. He murmurs something, falls silent.

Behind him, in the doorway, the three monitors appear, coming back from their task.

They cross to the wall, vent. Then, one after the other, they throb and go dead.

CUT TO:

61. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

LONG SHOT:

Hundreds of drones move slowly across the surface of the ship, "blacking out" the hull with their torches.

Already the ship's name is nearly obliterated.

CUT TO:

62. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

Blood drips from LOWELL's leg, drop by drop, splattering on the polished metal floor.

Glassy-eyed, gripped in some nightmare memory, LOWELL sits motionless, rigid, staring at the empty radar screen.

CUT TO:

F63. FLASHBACK: INTERIOR, RECREATION ROOM

A furious game of ping-pong is in progress. As WOLF shouts encouragement, BARKER and KEENAN battle it out.

F64. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, CORRIDOR TO MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL is approaching CAMERA. He pauses, looks in for a moment at the game, then moves along.

F65. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL enters, crosses toward a book which he has left across the room. He takes it up, checks the title and starts back for the door.

As he reaches it, a warning buzzer sounds.

LOWELL curses, turns, crosses back to the main communications screen. A red light is blinking. LOWELL punches a button and the screen lights up.

EXECUTIVE ORDER A.U.C.-3423

IMMEDIATE ALL PERSONNEL SOUTHEAST
SUB-TROPICAL (BAHIA HONDA) APOPKA
SECTION 441

IMPLEMENT DESTRUCT DIRECTIVE A.U.C. RED.

COMMENCING 1400 HRS ARM AND LOAD
EXPLOSIVE SQUIBS ALL FOREST UNITS

COMMENCING 1800 HRS BERKSHIRE AND
SEQUOIA WILL RENDEZVOUS

COMMENCING 2000 HRS JETTISON AND
VAPORIZE ALL FOREST UNITS

EXECUTIVE ORDER A.U.C.-3423

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COMMENCING 1400 HRS ARM AND LOAD
EXPLOSIVE SQUIBS ALL FOREST UNITS...

LOWELL stands motionless.

As the words on the screen burn and fade, paragraph after paragraph, endlessly repeating, static begins crackling on the radio, sputtering, like machine gun fire.

CUT TO:

F66. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

Whoops, war-cries, howls, some of which are coming from the radio, but most of which are coming from KEENAN, BARKER and WOLF, who stand around LOWELL, shouting, jumping up and down and clapping each other on the back.

BARKER

Decent duty! This is it!

WOLF

What'd I tell you! I told you!

KEENAN

I can't believe it! I can't believe this!

WOLF

Stick with Wolfie! It's Wolfie's luck!

KEENAN

Lowell! Hey, Lowell, I can't believe this!

LOWELL

(Quietly, turning.)

It's insane.

BARKER

Huh?

LOWELL

It's insane.

A silence falls.

F66. CONT.

BARKER

What's insane?

KEENAN

He's right. In a way, in a way you're right, John.

WOLF

Right about what? What's he talking about?

BARKER

That's what I'd like to know! What's he talking about!

KEENAN

The trees! He's talking about the trees.

BARKER

The trees?

KEENAN

The trees. The grass and stuff. It's too bad. I mean they ought to keep all that, but obviously they can't. I mean what's it good for now?

BARKER

Right!

F66. CONT. (2)

WOLF

Right. I mean that's the point.
What the hell's it good for
anymore?

LOWELL

It's precious! ---It's the only
remaining record...!

For a moment LOWELL can't go on, and the three faces
wait, watching him.

CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL as he begins again...

LOWELL

It's insane. Don't you see, it's
insane! This is it, the end,
the last there is or ever will
be. There is no more. There
is no more!

CUT TO:

F67. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) EXTERIOR, SHIP, THE GEODESIC
DOMES

Looking aft down the length of the freighter, the
domes fall away for nearly a mile, gleaming, like
diamonds in the sun.

CUT TO:

F68. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, SHIP, FOREST

A bird flutters off, crying out an alarm. A
rabbit scurries for cover.

F68. CONT.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see LOWELL, KEENAN, BARKER and WOLF appearing out of the underbrush. As the three younger MEN begin thrashing through the grass, searching for something, LOWELL stands motionless, watching them.

CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL. Dangling from his hand is a silver carrying case, marked in red...

---DANGER---

CONTAINS AAK (4) ARMED SQUIBS

---DANGER---

And now, as the OTHERS begin cursing, frustrated in their search, we see that LOWELL has spotted what they are looking for---an eight inch hydrant-like insertion tube sticking up through the grass.

KEENAN notices LOWELL's glance, crosses to the insertion tube.

KEENAN

For Christ's sake, Lowell, why
don't you help a fella.

Numbly, LOWELL crosses with the OTHERS to the insertion tube. As he comes up, KEENAN takes the case from his hand and opens it. Inside, bedded in black packing, are four, gleaming, explosive squibs.

WOLF gives a whistle.

WOLF

Aren't those nukes?

KEENAN

Nukes, yea.

WOLF

AK's? I never knew they had an

AK nuke.

F68. CONT. (2)

KEENAN

Obsolete.

KEENAN removes one of the squibs, arms it with a twist of his wrist, opens the breech lock and drops it down the insertion tube. There is a long, drawn-out sigh of air, then a sharp, metallic click as the squib locks in.

KEENAN grins, closes the breech lock, twists the cap to the "arm" position.

F69. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST, SERIES OF LOCATIONS

We see a startled deer, head high, listening. And suddenly it bolts...

In a FLASHCUT SEQUENCE we see birds taking flight and frightened animals taking cover, as, in dome after dome, the four MEN appear.

And LOWELL, dazed, points out the half hidden insertion tubes.

Squib after gleaming squib goes down. The air sighs up, and the squibs click in.

LOWELL, KEENAN, BARKER and WOLF move on, from dome to dome, swinging the heavy connecting doors tight shut.

CUT TO:

F70. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

We see a blur of switches, lights. There is a roar of static and we see LOWELL now, standing with the OTHERS at the radio unit.

In his arm he holds empty flower pots. In his hand he has a trowel.

F70. CONT.

BARKER

(On the radio.)

Reading nine, nine nine..o..nine.
Plus four nine..o..four. Plus
eight.

VOICE 2

Nine, nine nine..o..nine. Plus
four nine..o..four. Plus
eight.

BARKER

Right...

VOICE 2

Okay, unh...Apopka. Looks real
good. That's a go.

BARKER

Right.

VOICE 2

Ought to be pretty, a real pretty
sight.

BARKER

We're sure looking forward to
it, Jim.

VOICE

Keep an eye on your greenies...
unh Bill, so you don't blow
your own self.

F70. CONT. (2)

BARKER

Right..uh..Jim. Will do.

BARKER clicks off, turns.

Ready?

WOLF

Off we go to the merry-ch!

They all start out.

KEENAN

(Turning back.)

Lowell, c'mon!

CUT TO:

F71. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, MAIN STORAGE AREA

As the four MEN come into CAMERA, there is a dull thud, then another and another.

They all pause, listening.

WOLF

Must be Berkshire.

KEENAN

Yea.

As they all start off again, there are more thuds, louder now, nearer.

And again they all pause, drawing up together in the cavernous gloom.

KEENAN

Sequoia.

F71. CONT.

WOLF

Yea.

BARKER

Man, will you listen to these
babies blow!

They laugh, nodding.

KEENAN

For Christ sake, Lowell...!
Next thing I know you're going
to cry.

LOWELL

It's insane... Don't you see,
it's completely...

WOLF

Lowell, will you please...! I
mean what are you going to do?

A pause.

What are you going to do?

As LOWELL struggles for words, for some way to
touch them, to sway them, BARKER cuts in...

BARKER

It's too late to write your
congressman.

They all laugh...

F71. CONT. (2)

KEENAN

(Impatiently.)

Come on.

CUT TO:

F72. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST

We see the black crow in the tree top.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see LOWELL, with his flower pots and his trowel, looking at it.

The crow caws.

CUT TO:

F73. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, TOOL AREA

BARKER and WOLF are checking out the detonator circuits at control panels in the wall. KEENAN paces, checking his watch.

BARKER

Ready on one.

WOLF

On one.

BARKER

Set.

WOLF

Set one.

BARKER

Ready on two.

WOLF

On two.

F73. CONT.

BARKER

Set.

WOLF

Set two.

KENNAN

Where the hell is he?

WOLF

(Wearily.)

Get him, will you. We haven't
got all day.

KENNAN starts into the forest.

CUT TO:

F74. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST

We see LOWELL, leaning down, looking at a plant for
his pot.

KENNAN (V.O.)

(Calling.)

Lowell...!

LOWELL straightens, turns. KENNAN is standing
across the clearing, sweating.

KENNAN

Lowell, will you come on!

LOWELL

Coming.

CUT TO:

F75. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, TOOL AREA

BARKER

Set.

WOLF

Set twenty one.

BARKER

Ready on twenty-two.

WOLF

On twenty-two.

BARKER

Set.

WOLF

Set twenty-two.

BARKER

Okay?

WOLF

Good.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see KEENAN coming back.

WOLF

(Irritated.)

Where the hell is he?

KEENAN

Blow 'em. We'll hold on this
last.

BARKER

What's he doing?

F75. CONT.

KEENAN

He's getting some plants.

BARKER

(Turning back to
the control panel.)

Ready on one?

WOLF

On one.

BARKER

Okay.

BARKER flicks a switch and the safety cover on a button flips up.

WOLF

Hit it, friend.

In CLOSE UP we see BARKER hit the button. A switch thuds shut and immediately there is a loud detonation.

CUT TO:

F76. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST

LOWELL is kneeling by his plant, listening to the sound, watching as the earth in front of him shudders.

CUT TO:

F77. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) EXTERIOR, SHIP, TRAIN OF DOMES

An opaque white vapor wreathes the last interface. As it clears, we see that the first dome has separated from the train. In the gap, which widens slowly, fragments of black insulation drift and turn.

Suddenly, on the severed unit, a cluster of vernier nozzels go off with a flash.

F77. CONT.

Slowly, trailing a veil of blue-white gas, the dome begins to move, up and away.

CUT TO:

F78. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, SHIP, FOREST

Kneeling, clutching his trowel so hard that his knuckles are white, LOWELL waits.

There is a sudden, soundless, blinding white flash.

CAMERA CLOSES, slowly, on LOWELL's face.

There is another detonation.

CUT TO:

F79. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, TOOL AREA

In CLOSE UP we see BARKER.

BARKER

Ready on three.

And WOLF...

WOLF

On three...

CUT TO:

F80. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) EXTERIOR, SHIP, ANOTHER INTERFACE

The explosive bolts go off and another dome drifts free.

As the vapor clears, there is another soundless, blinding white flash.

The light dies and now, on the separated dome, the verniers fire.

Slowly, trailing its veil of blue-white gas, the dome begins to move, up and away.

CUT TO:

F81. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, SHIP, FOREST

LOWELL is waiting again.

There is another detonation.

CAMERA CLOSES, slowly, on LOWELL's eyes...

CUT TO:

F82. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) EXTERIOR, SPACE, THE DOME WE JUST SAW

The verniers are still firing.

And now, abruptly, the verniers cut out. There is a pause, then a flash of terrible light, consuming the dome, bleaching the color right out of the sky, taking it orange, to yellow, to a stark, unbearable white.

For an instant, where the dome just was, we see a huge, expanding bubble of hydrogen vapor. Then nothing, not a fragment. Empty space.

As now, in the foreground, another dome appears, riding its veil of blue white gas.

The dome rises, slowly, moving up and away. Then, abruptly, its verniers cut out...

F83. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) IN FASTCUT SEQUENCE, ALL LOCATIONS

LOWELL, in another blinding white flash.

KEENAN, BARKER, WOLF, all working, feverishly.

A thudding switch, an interface separates.

A vernier cuts out.

A squirrel runs on a log. The squirrel stops, listening. His eyes are moist, his fur trembles. And suddenly the squirrel disintegrates, flies apart. We see shredded bone, twisted sinews, and blood.

LOWELL, in another blinding white flash.

F83. CONT.

KEENAN, BARKER, WOLF, continuing the destruct program.

A screaming, tiny, yellow throated bird explodes in flame.

A field mouse, and the blue heron standing in its pool. All exploding. Their hearts, their brains, their livers, their lungs, their lives flying apart.

LOWELL, running, staggering through the forest as the detonations come faster, closer.

A tree disintegrates, another bird, a butterfly, another tree, a rock, a frightened raccoon, a field of flowers.

CUT TO:

F84. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST

LOWELL is running, hard, but there is no sound.

Only gradually, slowly, do we hear it. ...The slap of branches, the snap of twigs. His own hard breathing.

LOWELL stops, suddenly, listening. There are no more flashes, no more detonations. Silence.

CUT TO:

F85. FLASHBACK: (CONT.) INTERIOR, FOREST

KEENAN, BARKER and WOLF stand by LOWELL's flower pots. All of them are exhausted.

KEENAN

Where the hell is he?

BARKER

(Calling.)

Lowell! God damn it...Lowell...!!!

F85. CONT.

WOLF

I'll kill that guy. I tell you,
I'll kill that guy!

Screaming.

Lowell!!! ...I mean this is
all we need, right? Snack in
the June report?

But KEENAN is staring at something.

KEENAN

What the...!

The OTHERS turn, as now, in REVERSE ANGLE, we see
LOWELL emerging from the trees across the clearing.
He stops, sweating furiously; staring at the three
exhausted MEN.

KEENAN (CONT'D)

Lowell. what are you doing?

KEENAN starts forward, but something gleams in
LOWELL's hand and KEENAN falters. He looks at the
OTHERS.

Across the clearing LOWELL is moving now, woodenly,
coming toward them. His face---cut by branches,
bleeding---looks old, much older, and cold, like
chisled stone. In his hand, clearly visible now,
is a large, gleaming, chromium plated wrench.

WOLF

What's he doing!

BARKEP

(With a laugh.)

What is this, some kind of a joke?

F85. CONT. (2)

KEENAN

Lowell, will you cut this out!

But LOWELL, unheeding, comes on. And now, frightened, exchanging glances, the three MEN back off.

Lowell!!!

WOLF

(Screaming.)

He's insane! Keenan, the guy's
insane!

WOLF curses, starts to tear a tool from out of his belt.

LOWELL lunges suddenly, swings, and smashes in his skull.

In CLOSE UPS, LOWELL swings at BARKER. But BARKER ducks and KEENAN lunges, rips a gash in LOWELL's leg, stumbles, and LOWELL clubs him, takes a blow from BARKER and reels back. His legs buckle, but somehow, by force of sheer will, he holds himself up. BARKER, horrified, rushes LOWELL with his last ounce of strength.

LOWELL sidesteps and smashes in his skull.

FREEZE FRAME

CUT BACK TO:

86. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL sits in his chair, motionless, nearly comatose, unbearably pained by the memory of the killings. He keeps shaking his head, back and forth, as if in total disbelief.

Then as CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL, we see that his lips are dry, cracked; that his face is white as chalk.

86. CONT.

From his leg, blood is dripping, drop by drop, feeding a large, gleaming puddle on the polished metal floor.

CUT TO:

87. EXTERIOR, SHIP, SPACE

Girdling the hull like a ring of locusts, the drones continue "blacking out" the ship. The section they have finished is nearly invisible, blending into the dark void of space.

CUT TO:

88. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

We see LOWELL again, sitting motionless, still shaking his head, back and forth.

A droplet of blood begins to form on his wound. The droplet grows large, huge, and falls, with a plip.

Another begins to form, falls, with a plip.

CUT TO:

89. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR OF MAIN CONTROL

Far away, down the empty, shimmering floor, the black crow appears, walking out from around a corner.

The crow pauses, peering left and right, then takes to the air, flapping up the corridor into CAMERA.

CUT TO:

90. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

Slowly, as LOWELL's eyes swim back in focus, he sees it---huge, sleek, glossy black, perched right opposite on the radar screen.

90. CONT.

For a moment, blankly, LOWELL stares at the bird. Then, as he starts, sitting bolt upright in his chair, the crow flaps off across the room.

LOWELL blinks, straining to keep the bird in focus. Then, as he turns, confused, trying to determine where he is, he notices the blood.

Terrified, LOWELL stumbles to his feet, backing off, away from it. He looks down at his leg, unwillingly; then up again, at the gleaming puddle, and the black crow.

Panic comes, closing on him, breaking over him like a wave, submerging him. Breathless, gasping, LOWELL wheels, lurches across to the three monitors standing by the wall. Frantically, he tries to start them. One. Then the next and the next...

LOWELL

Come on... Come on!!!

For a moment nothing comes to him, and then, realizing what the problem is, he curses himself, and moves across to the LR 260 Program Control.

Screaming, waving the crow away, LOWELL sits, inserts three cards and begins punching out a code.

CUT TO:

91. INTERIOR, X-RAY ROOM

We see LOWELL's pale face, as he lies on a table. His leg is stripped to the flesh. A slowly arcing black cone of a three dimensional X-ray machine moves over him.

Above, on a screen, we see rapid X-ray images of his leg, and the flashing codes into which the images are being translated.

LOWELL turns to look at the monitors.

They stand in a row, plugged into the machine, digesting X-ray information codes. On their

91. CONT.

readouts, under the designation INPUT, we see the codes flashing by.

CUT TO:

92. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR

He comes into CAMERA, dragging himself down the corridor, to its end, a door.

EMERGENCY

LR 260 OPERATING ROOM

DANGER

DO NOT USE IF SEAL IS BROKEN

CAUTION

WATCH YOUR STEP

LOWELL stands for a moment, numbly, staring at this information. He tears off the seal, waits as the pressure equalizes, then pushes in.

93. INTERIOR, LR 260 OPERATING ROOM

The place is a deathless, cold, ceramic white--- walls, ceiling and floor, where rectilinear scuppers converge at a single, gleaming, chromium plated drain.

Directly in front of LOWELL, set low to accommodate the monitors, is a mirror finished chromium slab. Above it is a huge light.

LOWELL takes a few steps forward, staring at the slab.

In CLOSE UP we see that a row of black straps hang neatly along its perimeter.

93. CONT.

LOWELL draws in his breath.

On the wall there is a sign...

WARNING

TO ASSURE BEST TRACTION
ON THIS FLOOR REMOVE DRAIN
COVER BEFORE SURGERY.

LOWELL turns, crosses obediently to the drain cover and removes it. As he straightens, holding the object in his hand, we hear the faint squeaking of the monitors foot pads as they advance down the corridor.

The sound grows louder, clearer, coupled now with faint, hydraulic hissing sounds, and the rattle-clink of instruments on trays.

CAMERA CLOSES, slowly, on LOWELL's face.

CUT TO:

94. LATER: INTERIOR, LR 260 OPERATING ROOM

We see the wobbling needle of a pressure gauge, hear hissing gas and the rumble-thump of LOWELL's heartbeat, amplified.

And we see him now, in CLOSE UP, strapped to the chromium finished slab, craning his neck to see.

Opposite, beyond the flesh white pillars of LOWELL's feet, one of the monitors is arranging instruments on a low, gauze covered cart.

There is hiss of venting air and LOWELL turns.

Standing beside LOWELL, extending a scalpel in its manipulator, is the second monitor. The scalpel glints, gleams, flashing shards of light as the monitor begins an intricate test pattern, describing subtle, lightning quick cutting combinations in the air.

94. CONT.

LOWELL watches for a moment, not even breathing, then he lets his head fall back.

We see his eyes.

Above him we see an anesthetic delivery mask, cocked on the end of a gleaming, pneumatic arm.

Suddenly, as LOWELL stares at the mask, gas begins hissing from its ventricles, and now, from behind, we hear the shrill, high pitched shriek of a torque wrench engaging.

Terrified, LOWELL cranes his neck, looking back.

We see the third monitor, engaged by its manipulator into the anesthetic delivery unit. As the scream of its torque wrench goes high, then higher, the monitor begins to vibrate.

In CLOSE UP we see its vent panels---flapping, clattering...

LOWELL, looks up, watching the mask as it homes on his face, begins slowly descending.

A shrill, beeping pulse begins, then a second, and a third.

As LOWELL cranes his neck forward again, we see the two monitors; the one with the scalpel, standing motionless now, beside him; and the other, beyond his feet, holding a tray of instruments, waiting.

LOWELL watches, listening, the three separate pulses grow synecuous, to one monotonous throbbing beep.

Abruptly, the sound stops. On both monitors green lights come on, and the monitor with the tray of instruments starts forward.

Suddenly, panicked, knowing the time has come, LOWELL tries to get up, but the hissing black mask comes over his face, pressing him back.

We see LOWELL's eyes, hear the roar of gas, and now there is a single ringing clink as something hits the floor.

94. CONT. (2)

In FULL SHOT we see the monitor who had the scalpel.....LOWELL's eyes in CLOSE UP, straining to see.....Then the gleaming scalpel on the floor.

We see LOWELL, struggling, violently, against the gas.

Then darkness.

CUT TO:

95. EXTERIOR, SHIP, SPACE

The hull is completely black now, almost dimensionless, like a great shadow.

96. EXTERIOR, HULL

A drone comes by on it's endless search for damage. As the drone moves up a ramp and disappears, we see the planet Saturn.

It is closer, much closer; huge. Like some cosmic talisman of terrible, preternatural power, it stands against the sky, mute and silent, gripped in its swirling, misty-silver rings.

DISSOLVE:

97. INTERIOR, SHIP, STAIRWAY

We hear the sound of an approaching monitor, the squeaking foot pads, the faint hydraulic hisses.

A moment passes and the monitor comes into the light. We see that its manipulator arm is extended, holding the black crow.

98. INTERIOR, MAIN STORAGE AREA

The monitor appears in the gloom, passes through the vast, cavernous space.

99. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR

In CLOSE UP we see electrical cables streaming by.

We see the walking monitor, the crow.

Ahead, we see the endless perspective of doorless hatchways, stretching away.

100. INTERIOR, FOREST

The monitor, stands motionless by the tool area, holding the crow.

In CLOSE UP, hissing air, we see the monitor's pincer finger release and thrust forward.

The crow, cawing, squawking, flaps up toward the tree tops.

DISSOLVE:

101. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

We see a plastic plate containing a portion of food.

LOWELL sits before his dinner. He is pale, bearded now but somehow, holding a stubby plastic fork and staring hopefully at his food, he looks like a lost child.

Carefully, shaking slightly, LOWELL positions his fork above a solitary morsel of food. But his eyes drift across, drawn, as if by magnets, to the two inert monitors.

There is something cold, disapproving about their stance, like stern, intractable parents, looking on. And this feeling is not the less for there being reflected, in both darkened readout screens, LOWELL's face---pale, thin, haggard, looking like a ghost.

LOWELL glances once more at the monitors, and then, determinedly, begins eating somberly.

CUT TO:

102. INTERIOR, FOREST

We see the crow, like a shadow, gliding low above the tree tops.

LONG DISSOLVE:

103. EXTERIOR, SATURN

We are close, frighteningly close, looking out at the planet across the vast, shimmering, steel-cold surface of the rings. Saturn is awesome, terrifying, cloaked in perpetual clouds of gas, shifting, swirling, boiling out across its surface, wrapping and re-wrapping it in a mantle of endless storm.

Slowly, CAMERA PANS, and we see the rings as they sweep away, like a great, frozen river, curving into darkness behind the planet.

Slowly, as CAMERA PANS, the ship comes into view, standing off the rings at their upper edge, like a schooner outside a reef.

CUT TO:

104. EXTERIOR, SHIP, ELEVATOR

A hatchcover slides open and far below, down a deep shaftway, we see LOWELL with one of the monitors, coming up on a platform.

As the platform reaches the surface and stops, CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL, standing motionless, gazing in awe at Saturn.

We see the planet looming huge above the forward structure of the blackened hull.

LOWELL turns, watching a drone with a red light blinking on its shell. A second drone appears, then a third. As the drones pass by, all of them with red lights blinking, LOWELL glances up at Saturn once more, then he starts forward with the monitor.

CUT TO:

105. EXTERIOR, FORWARD HULL

In LONG SHOT, we see LOWELL, like an ant, walking with the monitor across the vast surface of the ship.

CUT TO:

106. EXTERIOR, CATWALK TO FORWARD BRIDGE

LOWELL and the monitor appear, suddenly, at the top of a ramp, passing behind the towering plates of the forward radio grid.

CUT TO:

107. EXTERIOR, SATURN'S RINGS (LOWELL'S POV)

From where LOWELL stands it is no more than fifty yards to the edge of the rings, a vast forbidding, uncontained stream of multicolored, crystalline particles, passing at tremendous velocity. As the moving particles set up shifting electrostatic fields, the surface flickers like the Northern Lights, glowing, shimmering through infinite, phantasmagoric pastel hues.

108. EXTERIOR, FORWARD BRIDGE

LOWELL hesitates, looking out once more toward the boiling face of Saturn, then he walks toward the monitor at a forward Auxiliary Control. A green light is flashing on the motionless, waiting, monitor.

LOWELL clears the monitor's keyboard. He flicks a switch on the Auxiliary Control console, then presses a button and waits, watching the monitor's readout.

CUT TO:

109. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

We see the second and third monitors plugged into the Main Control console. As a digital code comes up on their readouts, we see switches begin repositioning all over the console. A red light comes on and a new code flashes on the monitor's readouts.

CUT TO:

110. EXTERIOR, SHIP, FORWARD BRIDGE

We see LOWELL as he gets the new code on the monitor's readout.

He punches it out on the Auxiliary Control console, flicks a switch, and hesitates, looking out again toward the boiling face of Saturn.

LOWELL wets his lips, pushes on a button.

CUT TO:

111. INTERIOR, SHIP, ENGINE ROOM

We see the automatic switches slamming shut again, rapidfire.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see the huge, barren white ducts of the Sperry Mass Vector Synthesizers.

A low hum begins, grows louder, rapidly, to a shrill whine...

CUT TO:

112. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

The sound of the Synthesizers grows louder, duller, and we see the two monitors as they

112. CONT.

begin jiggling on the end of their manipulator arms.

CUT TO:

113. EXTERIOR, SHIP, FORWARD BRIDGE

There is not a sound and LOWELL stands motionless, fascinated, watching the catwalk railing as it shudders violently, becomes a blur.

Suddenly the railing goes still, and now, slowly, the ship begins to move over the dangerous rings below.

Leaning out, looking down, LOWELL watches as the gap closes, and his own shadow appears, gliding out across the surface of the forbidding rings.

CUT TO:

114. EXTERIOR, SHIP, SPACE

In a high, LONG SHOT we see LOWELL's ship below, wrapped in a flickering, blue-green aurora, moving with its shadow across the shimmering, shifting colors of the rings.

CUT TO:

115. EXTERIOR, SPACE

In another high, LONG SHOT, looking out from Saturn now, we see the inside of the rings, like a vast protective barrier, more than eighty miles high.

A moment passes and we see LOWELL's ship; tiny, black, like a desiccated beetle, coming out

115. CONT.

from around the planet, riding orbit inside the rings.

CUT TO:

116. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

A drone passes, on its endless quest for damage. As CAMERA PANS with the drone and it disappears over the curvature of the hull, we see the inside face of Saturn's rings, towering high above the main antenna. Spectral, flashing sheets of color writhe and dance across their surface, and sometimes, licking out, they wreath the ship in a sudden, eerie glow.

CUT TO:

117. INTERIOR, LOWELL'S ROOM

LOWELL sits on his bed, somberly, mumbling to himself, holding a bottle and a glass. Whatever he is saying it is rapidfire, fast, hardly forming on his tongue, and his finger keeps lifting to emphasize his points.

A moment passes. LOWELL nods, falls silent.

Then, nodding again, he stands.

CUT TO:

118. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

In CLOSE UP we see the radio switch.

LOWELL, much drunker now, looking at it.

118. CONT.

He hesitates, seats himself before the switch, hesitates again and flicks it on.

We hear static, wave on wave of empty roaring. But now, as LOWELL works the tuner, there is something else...

LOWELL turns the volume up, higher, then higher still, sweating now, straining to hear, but whatever it is remains elusive, uncertain; a voice perhaps, two voices, even three, or none.

CUT TO:

119. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL sits motionless, very drunk now, staring belligerantly out of his chair.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see the three other chairs in a row beside him.

DISSOLVE:

120. LATER: INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

We see the three monitors cutting the three chairs from the floor with acetylene torches.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see LOWELL.

LOWELL

Cut 'em clean now, damnit.

Clean, I said! Cut 'em clean!

...Might as well. ...Open up

some space in here...

120. CONT.

The torches hiss. Smoke billows up around the chairs.

CUT TO:

121. INTERIOR, LOWELL'S ROOM

The room is dark and LOWELL is barely visible, lying on his bed, holding his bottle.

Slowly, CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL.

A shaft of light bisects his face. He is tense, listening.

After a moment we hear a faint, squeaking sound, and then, through the open door of the corridor, we see the three monitors, one after the other, passing by with the severed chairs.

As LOWELL listens, the sound grows faint, fainter, dies away.

CUT TO:

122. INTERIOR, A LONG CORRIDOR

The lights stretch away on the ceiling, many of them broken, the others few and far between.

In the distance, the three monitors appear, coming down the corridor with the severed chairs.

As the monitors pass, CAMERA PANS and we see that the corridor ends at a darkened catwalk, overlooking a huge, pitch black room.

122. CONT.

As the monitors release the chairs over the catwalk railing, wheel and start back into CAMERA, we hear three, dull, reverberating crashes.

The crashes echo, build, melding into each other, ringing down the empty corridor...

CUT TO:

123. INTERIOR, LOWELL'S ROOM

LOWELL listens as the sound comes ringing past his door, comes banging back, and then, like the last tolling of a bell, spends itself and dies away.

Silence falls and LOWELL lets his head drop back. He draws his breath, deep, releases it, slowly, with a long, drawn out sigh.

As if some peace had finally come, his face relaxes. His eyelids flutter, drift shut. And now, as sleep steals out, across his features, his face slips sideways, into the light.

CUT TO:

124. EXTERIOR, SPACE

We see LOWELL, in CLOSE UP, wearing his helmet. He seems happy, nearly ecstatic, and suddenly, amazingly, he begins to laugh. CAMERA PULLS BACK.

A sheet of flickering blue color wraps around him, envelops him, as if in flame. The color turns to vivid green, then to a brilliant, scarlet red, and we see now that LOWELL is

124. CONT.

floating free in space at the end of a long, silver tether.

Looming above LOWELL and falling away below, is the vast, curving, inside perimeter of Saturn's rings. Like lightning on a cliff, delicate, shimmering, leaping sheets of color play across the surface, dancing, crenelating, licking out on tongues.

A lone monitor is standing at the end of a catwalk, looking on. Above the monitor, dwarfing it, dwarfing LOWELL and the ship itself, is the great, demonic face of Saturn, wrapped in its shifting wilderness of vapor.

For a moment LOWELL stares at Saturn. Then he laughs again, reaches for his tether. Drawing up his knees, he gives a light tug.

As we watch, LOWELL begins tumbling, head over heels.

Through his mask we see the whole, vast, stupendous panorama, reeling by.

And LOWELL, delighted, laughing again.

CUT TO:

125. INTERIOR, SHIP, TOOL AREA

LOWELL stands motionless by the end of the corridor, staring across at the massive steel door that leads to the forest.

A moment passes. LOWELL draws in his breath, crosses to the door and cranks on the latch wheel until it clicks. He hesitates. Then he pulls the heavy door open.

CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL's face.

125. CONT.

We see the forest through the door. Sunlight is streaming through the trees. Insects buzz and somewhere a bird begins a strange, whistling call.

LOWELL stands for a moment, listening.

He moves in through the door.

CUT TO:

126. INTERIOR, FOREST

We see LOWELL in the trees, standing motionless, looking up. He lowers his head; reaches out his hand, touches a leaf, then moves along.

CUT TO:

127. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

We see LOWELL, with his hands behind his back, walking the decks.

Now and then he passes a drone.

He pauses, admiring the view.

CUT TO:

128. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

We see LOWELL with his stubby plastic fork and another plastic dinner, eating.

CUT TO:

129. INTERIOR, SHIP, FOREST

We see LOWELL on his hands and knees with a trowel, transplanting flowers over the surface of the grave.

A moment passes.

LOWELL looks up, stands.

130. INTERIOR, FOREST (LOWELL'S POV)

We see the crow---glistening, black---sitting in a tree top.

131. INTERIOR, FOREST

LOWELL begins to laugh. Suddenly, flapping his arms, he caws at the crow.

We see the crow, squawking, flapping away.

LOWELL turns, still laughing, drops back to the ground. He takes up his trowel and resumes with the flowers.

DISSOLVE:

132. LATER: INTERIOR, FOREST

LOWELL sits on a rock with a piece of bread, calling a chipmunk to his hand.

The animal comes closer, closer, seizes the food and scampers off.

LOWELL laughs.

CUT TO:

133. INTERIOR, FOREST

We see LOWELL in a glade, sprawled face up in the grass, sleeping.

Above, sunlight streams down through the tree tops. Insects buzz and we hear the bird again, with its strange, whistling call.

134. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

In the distance, down the corridor, we hear LOWELL humming, whistling to himself---"We Wish You A Merry Christmas".

CAMERA TILTS to the three monitors by the wall. They are festively attired with red berries, leaves and dangling paper angels.

But now, there is a sound. Over LOWELL's whistling, his approaching steps, we hear a firm, beeping pulse.

As the pulse grows louder, stronger, CAMERA PANS, slowly...past the door...past the solitary seat at Main Control...to the radar screen.

On the screen there is a small, bright red spot. As the seat passes over it, the spot burns, fades, then burns again, like a drop of blood.

Abruptly, LOWELL's whistling, which has grown much louder, stops.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see him, standing at the door with a bottle and a glass, going pale, going white, staring at the screen.

Woodenly, LOWELL moves forward.

134. CONT.

In CLOSE UP we see the blipping pulse on the screen.

LOWELL

Bastards!

CUT TO:

135. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

In the eerie, sunlit silence, we see a welding drone.

Across the face of Saturn, wrapped in vapors, we see the far side of the rings, like a vast and empty ocean, stretching away.

In FULL SHOT we see the ship's gigantic dish antenna, revolving.

CUT TO:

136. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

On the radar screen we see the blip-pulse again, burning red, fading, burning red again.

LOWELL works feverishly, punching out coordinate codes on the Main Control console.

Opposite, on the main communications screen, a red light shows, the screen lights up and codes begin flickering across the top. The codes flash off and we see...

VEHICLE RANGE RATE: +481.2

+2370 +0091

136. CONT.

CLOSING: 763.313.454.979

The last digits on CLOSING begin counting back...

CLOSING: .978

...7

...6

...5

LOWELL hits a button, then another button and a large, black and white vehicle fascimile shows on the screen. But the image is blurred, unintelligible, little more than darkness in a storm of dots.

LOWELL pounds on the re-set button. The image on the screen flickers, then re-forms again, as blurred as before.

Sweat beads on LOWELL's face as he strains to read the image. His eyes move up...

CLOSING: .245

...4

...3

...2

CUT TO:

137. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

We see the far side of Saturn's rings gain, like an empty ocean, stretching away.

137. CONT.

The ship's antenna, revolves endlessly.

CUT TO:

138. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL, drenched in sweat, pounds on the re-set button again.

On the screen we see the same blurred image.

And the CLOSING digits, ticking back...

CLOSING: 763.313.454.000

...3

...2

...1

CUT TO:

139. EXTERIOR, RINGS OF SATURN, SPACE

We are low, looking out across the surface of the rings. In the distance we see a speck.

The speck grows larger, streaking toward CAMERA with incredible speed, gleaming now, glinting in the sun, trailing behind it huge, auroral shards of color.

And suddenly now, FULL FRAME, as it seems about to pulverize the CAMERA, the craft stops dead. There is an explosion, a cataclysm of color, which clears, and we see a squat, dead-looking silver vehicle standing motionless above the surface of the rings.

139. CONT.

It's design is stark, obvious. Protruding from a forward housing which extends back for over half its length, is a battery of sleek, black tipped missiles, racked and ready. On its side, lettered large, in black, is the designation:

A. U. C.

As we watch, the craft turns sharply on its axis and "locks" position. Bristling, sophisticated antennae emerge from housings top and bottom.

The ship turns again, minutely, "locks" again, then suddenly moves off, crablike, above the surface of the rings.

CUT TO:

140. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

We see LOWELL, looking stunned.

Opposite, on the screen, we see the black and white vehicle facsimile of the craft we just saw. Below the image, letter large, in black, is the designation:

A. U. C.

LOWELL sucks in his breath.

We see the monitors by the wall with their dangling paper angels.

CUT TO:

141. INTERIOR, CORRIDOR

A monitor engages its manipulator in a wall socket.

The torque wrench screams and we see a heavy, hatchway door slam shut.

142. INTERIOR, SERIES OF LOCATIONS

We see the monitors in the corridors, closing door after door.

Their wrenches scream and the ship is booming now, thundering like a drum.

CUT TO:

143. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

We see LOWELL working feverishly. There is a faint, hydraulic hissing and he turns around.

The three monitors come filing in. As LOWELL watches impatiently, they cross to Main Control, align themselves.

LOWELL pounds on a button, waits, as their manipulator arms emerge, click into the sockets, lock.

LOWELL activates their readouts, then cuts the lights to a dim, eerie red glow. A low buzzer sounds as he hits another button signaling the drones.

CUT TO:

144. EXTERIOR, SHIP, HULL

A drone stops dead in its tracks, turns. On its shell a red light is flashing.

145. EXTERIOR, AUTOMATIC LOADING SLOT

We see drones approaching. On all their shells, tiny red lights are flashing.

CUT TO:

146. EXTERIOR, SHIP, SPACE

We see LOWELL's ship, far in the distance, a tiny black speck against the rings.

CUT TO:

147. EXTERIOR, SPACE

Beyond the face of Saturn, out across the vast, ocean-like surface of the rings, we see a tiny speck of light.

The speck grows larger, gleaming now, glinting in the sun- A. U. C. again.

As it comes over the rings; its huge, auroral plume disintegrates, suddenly, about two thousand yards away, it stops dead again, turns a few degrees and "locks".

CUT TO:

148. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

The three monitors are standing motionless at Main Control.

Tense, dripping with sweat, LOWELL punches coordinates on a keyboard. He hits a button and now, opposite, on the main communications screen, we see a color television image of Saturn's rings.

LOWELL hits another button and the image scans along the rings, locks on a pinprick of light and zooms to a grainy, telephoto image of A. U. C.

The craft is as we last saw it, motionless, hovering. But now, as we watch, the bristling antennae begin to fold and A.U.C. starts forward.

LOWELL looks down at the Main Control console, hesitates.

In CLOSE UP we see a large red button marked ENGINE START.

CUT TO:

149. EXTERIOR, SHIP, AUTOMATIC LOADING SHOT

The drones are being packed away, but across the surface of the hull we see many others, still approaching.

CUT TO:

150. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

We see LOWELL's face.

A huge, exploding red blip flashes in the center of the radar screen.

LOWELL's finger comes down on ENGINE START.
We hear a loud, explosive crack.

CUT TO:

151. INTERIOR, ENGINE ROOM

Rapidfire, the automatic switches slam shut.

The Synthesizers begin to whine, to shriek.

152. INTERIOR, SHIP, VARIOUS CUTS

We see shuddering railings, dimming lights.
A broom comes sliding down an empty corridor
and the flesh on LOWELL's face jiggles.

CUT TO:

153. EXTERIOR, SPACE

We see A. U. C. some thousand yards away,
rocketing into CAMESA and stopping dead again,
FULL FRAME, with its bristling battery of
missiles filling the screen.

153 CONT.

The craft "locks" its position, adjusts, "locks" again.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see LOWELL's huge black ship, slipping into the deadly, flickering colors of Saturn's rings.

CAMERA PANS with the ship, fast, holding on its last, faint silhouette, as the rings take hold of it, streaking it away.

CUT TO:

154. INTERIOR, SHIP, MAIN CONTROL

We hear buzzers, bells, alarms; a cacophony of sound. Across the Main Control console hundreds of red lights flash as LOWELL works frantically to maintain control.

Gradually, as he gains control, a dead, terrible silence falls, as if a blanket had been wrapped on the universe.

Drenched in sweat, trembling, LOWELL looks up from the console.

Opposite, on the main communications screen, millions of white, iridescent particles are streaming in, like snow.

LOWELL stares at the screen for a moment, punches it over to manual control and takes hold of two knobs on the console.

154. CONT.

As LOWELL turns the knobs, we see the ghostly silhouette of the radar antenna appearing on the screen, then a mast, and now, suddenly, as LOWELL tilts the remote television camera down, we see the automatic loading slot.

Like a panicked crowd frozen in flight, scores of drones are massed around their slots. To their rear, scattered in a great arc across the surface of the hull, we see more drones, scores and scores more, all headed for the loading slot. But nothing is moving. Only the streaming, iridescent particles, like snow.

For a moment, LOWELL stands absolutely motionless, aghast, staring at the screen.

He punches a button on the console; again, the again and again, desperately, but nothing happens. The drones remain frozen. The iridescent particles come streaming in.

LOWELL swallows.

We see the three monitors.

We see LOWELL again, in CLOSE UP, as if calculating some terrible risk, looking at them.

CUT TO:

155. INTERIOR, ELEVATOR

We hear the whir, clank of the mechanism. LOWELL is seen against the exposed shaftway, wearing space helmet, gloves and protective shoes.

155. CONT.

Slowly, CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL's face. He is looking at something, anxiously, as if gripped by some terrible dread.

Across the huge, dimly lit platform, we see the three monitors, riding up with him.

LOWELL takes his eyes from the monitors, trying to distract his thoughts. He looks down at his feet, checks his gloves, and now, as we hear a low, rumbling sound, LOWELL's head snaps up.

Above, at the top of the shaftway, we see the huge hatch cover moving slowly open. In the widening gap we see blackness and the storm of streaming, iridescent silver particles.

CUT TO:

156. EXTERIOR, SHIP, ELEVATOR

The platform comes flush with the surface of the hull, stops. There is not a sound and for a moment LOWELL stands motionless, staring at the strange silver particles, streaming in.

Some twenty feet away we see a motionless drone, glowing, faintly luminescent, gone "dead" on its feet.

LOWELL starts toward it, stops.

From ANOTHER ANGLE we see more "dead" drones, some of them standing, some of them fallen over, all of them glowing with a faint, eerie luminescence.

CUT TO:

157. EXTERIOR, HULL, VARIOUS LOCATIONS

We see LOWELL and the three monitors collecting "dead" drones, dragging them back across the hull in the furiously swirling silver particles.

158. EXTERIOR, ELEVATOR

We see a pile of "dead" drones on the elevator platform.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see LOWELL and one of the monitors, dragging in two more.

We see LOWELL's face, strained, dripping with sweat.

CUT TO:

159. EXTERIOR, AUTOMATIC LOADING SLOT

LOWELL and the three monitors have progressed to the mass of "dead" drones packed around the conveyor railing.

As we watch, LOWELL appears with the monitors, gasping, verging on exhaustion.

LOWELL seizes a drone, the monitors follow suit, and they drag them away.

160. EXTERIOR, ELEVATOR

The drones are stacked three deep now, in a great, eerie, glowing pyre.

160. CONT.

CAMERA PANS and we see LOWELL come staggering back from the loading slot, dragging a drone. As he heaves it onto the pyre, a tremor runs through the ship, then another.

LOWELL staggers, nearly losing his balance.

On the far horizon there is a flash, a flickering play of intense blue light.

LOWELL wheels, looking for the monitors and sees them ahead, coming toward him through the storm.

LOWELL shouts, starts for the monitors, the ship shudders again, lurches up, and LOWELL finds himself flat on his face.

Through his mask we see his jaw distend, his lips, his eyes, as some tremendous force presses him down.

The ship lurches again and LOWELL is floating, six feet in the air. ...And so are the monitors, and the pyre of drones.

There is another blue flash and LOWELL gets slammed to the deck again.

We see him in CLOSE UP, stunned, gasping, trying to recover his breath.

He climbs to his feet, fighting another upward lurch, and freezes.

In REVERSE ANGLE we see the entire forward radio grid, turning end over end, floating in toward LOWELL through the streaming silver particles.

161. CONT.

The grid shears off towers, catwalks, antennas...

LOWELL is in the air again.

He slams back to the deck, and now, staggering to his feet, he sees two of his monitors crushed flat under the open gridwork of a twisted catwalk.

LOWELL turns, sees his third monitor, walking uncertainly in a circle, like a lost child.

LOWELL grabs the monitor, drags it bodily across the deck, stumbling over wreckage, to the elevator control.

He takes the lever, slams it full over. The platform shudders, and then, miraculously, bearing its cargo of twisted metal and glowing drones, begins moving down.

CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL as, again, a blue flash lights the sky. Then another and another...

CUT TO:

162. INTERIOR, SHIP, ELEVATOR

Looking up the shaftway, we see the flashes coming faster and faster, like bands across the sky. The hatch cover begins grinding through the wreckage on the deck. A drone comes toppling down the hatchway.

162. CONT.

LOWELL presses himself back.

The drones crash into the platform and fly apart.

LOWELL tries to look up again, but the ship is accelerating, passing out of its own gravitational field, and LOWELL is being pushed, pressed, spread-eagle back against the wall.

As CAMERA CLOSES on LOWELL's face, we see his jaw distend again, his lips, his eyes. Around his bared teeth, blood begins oozing from his gums.

CUT TO:

163. EXTERIOR, SHIP, SPACE

Looking forward, we see the bands of light, hurtling over the ship in a synchronous, flickering, ever increasing beat, coming faster and faster and faster...

The bands fall away--fluttering into each other, streaking, blurring.

Suddenly now, as the ship is catapulted out of Saturn's rings, there is a brilliant, blinding burst of light.

For an instant, Saturn itself is clearly visible, wreathed in cloud, gripped in its shimmering rings. But rapidly, with incredible speed, the planet grows smaller, becomes a "star" in a Galaxy of "stars".

163. CONT.

And now, as we watch, the Galaxy itself grows smaller, diminishes, to a cluster of dust; and the cluster of dust draws in, diminishes, to a final, tiny, pin-prick of light...which fades, and disappears ---in darkness, in absolute primal blackness.

CUT TO:

164. INTERIOR, SHIP, CORRIDOR

After a time a beam of light appears, far down what seems some endless tunnel of the night.

As the light approaches slowly, we begin to hear squeeking, faint, hydraulic hisses, and the hollow, ringing sound of footfalls on a metal floor.

Gradually, two ghostly, luminescent figures appear---LOWELL, with his last monitor, following it down the endless, pitch black space.

As the monitor passes, we see that the light is beaming from a housing in its "chest".

As LOWELL passes, we see his face; faintly luminescent, battered, swollen, blank.

CUT TO:

165. INTERIOR, MAIN CONTROL

LOWELL stands with the monitor, at the door.

165. CONT.

In REVERSE ANGLE, illuminated by the monitor's beam, we see the main Control console. Amid the maze of buttons, readouts, gleaming switches, there is not one light.

LOWELL crosses, stands for a moment, staring down. He clicks a switch, another switch, then one more, and lets his hand go slack. He turns, looking over at the monitor, as if to speak, as if to scream out all his fear, his stark and unimagined terror...

But nothing comes, and now, slowly, a faint, ironic smile creases in his eyes, as if some haunting, unexpected memory had suddenly arrived.

LOWELL laughs, murmuring...

LOWELL,

What better place...

CUT TO:

166. INTERIOR, TOOL AREA

In the monitor's beam, we see the massive steel door that leads to the forest.

166. CONT.

LOWELL crosses, cranks the latch until it clicks, then draws the heavy door open.

We see LOWELL's face, as the sounds of night come over him, wrapping around him, softly, like a wind.

Ahead, the forest is dark, black, illuminated only by the monitor's light. But now, as the sounds grow louder---the rustlings, the tickings, the shrill of the crickets, the croak of frogs---LOWELL steps into the shaft of light, leaving the monitor standing motionless at the door.

167. INTERIOR, FOREST

Streamers of light flow around LOWELL's silhouette as he crosses the clearing. At the edge of the forest he turns, looking back at the monitor, shielding his eyes from the light.

The beam is harsh, unwavering.

LOWELL looks up, around. All is blackness. Once more he looks at the monitor, then he turns and walks into the forest, further and further, until the light thins and he becomes a shadow.

167. CONT.

LOWELL sits on the ground and props himself against a rock. He remains motionless for a time with a faint, ironic smile on his face. His skin is luminescent, glowing with a cold, white light, and below it's surface we see the dark, delicate tracery of his veins. He presses his hands into the soil and feels the warm earth between his fingers. It calms him.

The shrill of the crickets goes louder, higher, to a thin, ululating scream.

THE END