

FUTURE TRANSMISSIONS

EIGHT SCI-FI COMEDIES

By Mike McCafferty

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FUTURE TRANSMISSIONS

By Mike McCafferty

SYNOPSIS: An evening of eight science fiction comedies that combines the uniquely weird with the incredibly awesome! These character-driven shorts challenge the assumptions that sci-fi is too expensive to stage and/or all about “spaceships and laser guns.” In *Boom!*, three scientists try to deactivate a real “time bomb” that keeps blowing them up over and over again. In wry *The Fabulous Facesucker*, everyone in the future gets their face sucked off, but no one ever asks why. *Our Darkest Hour* is a chilling tale of Earth’s first contact with aliens with a unique twist at the end. The comically touching *The Spark Between Us* is about companionship in the distant future. And *The Nacho Effect* is an outrageous look at the choices we make and the nachos we eat. This collection of short plays uses minimal props and sets, and focuses on the characters and their interactions. Beam *Future Transmission* up, and bring new worlds to your stage!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2-6 WOMEN, 3-12 MEN, 0-5 EITHER)

BOOM!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS (m).....(33 lines)

DR. MILLER (m).....(31 lines)

CHUCK (m).....(30 lines)

EVENT 127

NOAH (m).....(29 lines)

TERRY (f).....(20 lines)

ANN (f).....(29 lines)

MAN AND THE MOON

GUY (m)(53 lines)

MOON (m/f)(53 lines)

OUR DARKEST HOUR

ONE (m/f)(58 lines)

TWO (m/f)(52 lines)

THREE (m/f)(43 lines)

THE FABULOUS FACESUCKER

WIFE (f).....(24 lines)

MAN (m)(22 lines)

HUSBAND (m)(No lines)

THE NACHO EFFECT

RICK (m)(35 lines)

JOSS (m).....(36 lines)

JANE (f).....(4 lines)

THE SELF-DESTRUCT SONG

CAPTAIN (m)(34 lines)

LIEUTENANT (f).....(27 lines)

SHAPDAR (m)(17 lines)

COMPUTER (m/f).....(46 lines)

THE SPARK BETWEEN US

ALICE (f).....(61 lines)

CLAY (m).....(62 lines)

BOOM!

SYNOPSIS: Two scientists, one assistant and one big red button that you shouldn't ever push...

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 MEN)

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS (m).....*(33 lines)*

DR. MILLER (m)*(31 lines)*

CHUCK (m).....*(30 lines)*

Perusal Only
Do Not Copy

AT RISE:

A laboratory. DR. ARCHIPELAGOS and DR. MILLER stand behind small table with a strange machine on it. It has blinking lights, switches and on the very top is a large red button.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Well, it's finished.

DR. MILLER: A remarkable achievement, Dr. Archipelagos!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Thank you, Dr. Miller. Remarkable for us all.
The device is finally finished!

DR. MILLER: A thing of beauty!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: A thing of progress!

DR. MILLER: Hear, hear!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: On this day, we can finally say that mankind, through the marvels of science, has elevated himself to a higher, more sophisticated plane. Man is no longer a primal beast, driven by his base needs, but a paragon of intellect over impulse!

CHUCK, the lab assistant, now enters.

CHUCK: Hey docs, what's going on? Ohhh, big red button! Pushy-pushy...

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: No, Chuck! Don't touch that...

CHUCK pushes the button.

ALL: Boooooooooom!!!

The three of them now move in slow motion, as though the device that CHUCK just touched exploded. With arms flailing and bodies twisting, they each spin away from the device, all making the boom noise for exactly four beats. Then, they STOP for one beat and then move in REVERSE, repeating every move they just did backwards until they reach the device and the moment that CHUCK pushed the button. Along the way, they reverse the sound too.

ALL: Mooooooooooob!!!

The three stand there stunned.

DR. MILLER: What just happened?

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: I don't know. It seemed like everything exploded for a moment.

DR. MILLER: We all exploded!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Our bodies thrown about all across the room!

DR. MILLER: Yes, yes, and then it all paused and then reconstituted itself.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: But how?

CHUCK: Well, it all happened when I pushed this button...

DR. MILLER: Wait...

ALL: *(They explode again.)* Boooooooooooooom! *(Then pause and unexplode.)* Moooooooooooooob!

CHUCK: And that happened. Whoa.

DR. MILLER: It happened again!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: A repeat of the first phenomena. An explosion followed by a complete reversal of the event. Such an event happening twice is statistically a billion to one probability.

DR. MILLER: Is it possible that this was a repeatable occurrence then? Something that is not merely a coincidence?

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: I'm not sure.

CHUCK: *(Hand on button.)* Hey, I know a way to test it!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Chuck! NO!

ALL: *(Presses button.)* Boooooooooooooom! *(And it reverses.)* Moooooooooooooob!

CHUCK: Nope, three for three!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Stop that!

CHUCK: Just testing a hypothesis.

DR. MILLER: And what happens if it doesn't reverse itself? What happens if we just explode one of these times?

CHUCK: Then we will know not to push the button again.

DR. MILLER: This is why you are only a lab assistant, Chuck.

CHUCK: Ouch.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Wait, Dr. Miller! My watch has stopped!

DR. MILLER: *(Checking.)* Great Scott, mine as well.

CHUCK: (*Checking.*) Oh man! Oh man!! I don't have a watch! But if I did, it would probably be like you guy's watches. So what does that mean?

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: It means that time has stopped.

DR. MILLER: We are stuck in a time bubble!

CHUCK: OMG! A time bubble! Fantastic! Amazing! Totally crazy...

On "crazy," CHUCK hits the red button.

ALL: Booooooooooooom! (*Beat.*) Mooooooooooooob!

CHUCK: Total accident!

DR. MILLER: STOP PUSHING THAT BUTTON!

CHUCK: None of this is my fault! Why would you put a big red button on a machine like this? Don't you know that anything that has a big red button has to be pushed? Don't you guys watch cartoons?

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Chuck, would you kindly step away from the device!

CHUCK: Oh, like that's gonna fix it. Moving me away from the button. Dude, it's human nature. If I'm not gonna push it, you are.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: No, I'm not, Chuck.

CHUCK: We'll see. So what's up with the big button? What's it supposed to do?

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: For your information, this is an emergency stop button. Should the device become unstable, then this large, easy-to-reach button would stop the reaction before it became problematic.

CHUCK: And did something crazy like explode. Dr. Archipelagos, I'm just a lab assistant, but based on my observation, the button didn't work as well as it could have.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: I'm aware of that.

CHUCK: In fact, the button seemed to cut out the middle man of emergency stopping and just got to the exploding part without your approval. Maybe it was just bad design.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: How dare you! I have three PhDs! I know this device inside and out. When the reactor becomes overheated or unstable, it sends a signal to this processing core, which then alerts the emergency shutdown sequence here, the kill switch primes, the button lights up, you simply push it and...

He pushes the button.

ALL: Booooooooooom! Mooooooooooooob!

CHUCK: You pushed the big red button.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: I'M AWARE OF THAT!

DR. MILLER: Perhaps I should stand by the device, Dr. Archipelagos.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Dr. Miller, are you moving me because you think I will push this big red button again?!!

DR. MILLER: Let's just call it a safety precaution.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Ah, so we've tried both ends of intelligence meter and now you propose to split the difference?

DR. MILLER: I just think...wait, are you implying that you're smarter than I am?

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: It did take you 2.9 seconds to come to that conclusion.

DR. MILLER: I'll remind you we built this device together! And unlike you, I did not push the big red button on accident. No, I'm doing it on purpose!

ALL: (*He pushes it.*) Booooooooooom! Mooooooooooooob!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: You pushed my big red button!

DR. MILLER: No sir, you're pushing mine!

CHUCK: Hey we're slipping off the deep end here and...

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: How dare you!

He slams his hand on the button. The explosions are occurring faster and faster. Three beats, two beats, then one.

ALL: Boooooom! Mooooob!

DR. MILLER: I dare because you're a jerk!

ALL: (*Hits button.*) Boooooom! Mooooob!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Take that back!

ALL: (*Hits button.*) Boooooom! Mooooob!

DR. MILLER: Make me!

ALL: (*Hits button.*) Boooooom! Mooooob!

CHUCK: Can I...

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Your theories suck!

ALL: (*Hits button.*) Boooooom! Moob!

CHUCK: Let me...

DR. MILLER: Your breath smells like sulphur!

ALL: (*Hits button.*) Boom! Moob!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: AND YOUR FACE LOOKS LIKE URANUS!
AND I MAY OR MAY NOT MEAN THE PLANET!

ALL: (*Hits button.*) Boom! Moob!

CHUCK: (*Separating them.*) Whoa, whoa, whooooooa! Okay, this is weird, but I need to step in here and be the "voice of reason." (*He lowers his voice very deeply.*) Now, I think we need to... (*Regular voice.*) Wow, the voice of reason is really hard to do...

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Chuck, stop being a fool!

CHUCK: Dr. Archipelagos, when you start resorting to Uranus insults, I think you can't take the intellectual high ground anymore. Secondly, I don't know if either of you noticed, but during your "button party" back there, the interval of the explosions and reversals got a lot smaller.

DR. MILLER: Great Scott, I think he's right!

CHUCK: Thank you, Dr. Miller, and thank Scott when you see him. Okay, so I want to ask one last really, really important question which may seem obvious but we're in a time bubble so what the heck: what exactly is your device supposed to do?

The two doctors think about it, then turn to each other, a little confused.

CHUCK: I'm going to go out on a limb and say this is maybe a big, big problem.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Well, I thought we were building a time machine.

DR. MILLER: No, no, we were building a bomb.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Time machine!

DR. MILLER: Bomb!

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: (*Hand over button.*) TIME MACHINE!

DR. MILLER: (*Hand over DR. ARCHIPELAGOS'S hand.*) BOMB!

CHUCK: Whoa! Doctors, heal thy attitudes! So basically what you ended up building a time-bomb. And like any young child wanting to please both parents, it did a little of both, but neither very well. The upshot is that maybe if you had talked this out a little more, you might have realized that you had no idea what you were making.

DR. MILLER: Well, I suppose we could have communicated a little better.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: And perhaps drawing a line down the middle of the machine to work on each half separately was a little short-sighted. I apologize, Dr. Miller.

DR. MILLER: And I offer the same respects to you, Dr. Archipelagos.

CHUCK: There ya go. Who ever said that you can't learn through science?

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: There's just one problem: We're still stuck in this time bubble.

DR. MILLER: Yes, we'll be forced to live this singular moment over and over for all eternity. The device is locked into a default mode now, and there's absolutely nothing we can do to stop it.

CHUCK slowly raises his hand, like in school.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: *(Sighs.)* Yes, Chuck?

CHUCK: Um...did anybody think about unplugging it?

Beat. The doctors look at each other and then at the device. DR. ARCHIPELAGOS unplugs the machine and it powers down. They check their watches.

DR. MILLER: Time has resumed on my watch.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Mine, too.

CHUCK: *(Checking.)* And I still don't have a watch, but I'm noticing how weird and thick my arm hairs are.

DR. ARCHIPELAGOS: Chuck, I believe we owe you an apology. My colleague and I may have been a little harsh and dismissive of you and your abilities.

DR. MILLER: Seconded.

CHUCK: Hey, no prob, docs. You know, there's always time to be nice. And if there's not, now you have a big red button to make more time, huh?

DR. MILLER: *(To DR. ARCHIPELAGOS.)* Agreed. So, pizza, our treat?

CHUCK: I got time for that, too!

They all leave. After a beat, CHUCK runs back in, plugs the machine in and presses the button.

CHUCK: Boom! Moob! *(Unplugs machine.)* So freaking AWESOME!

He leaves.

BLACKOUT.

Perusal Only
Do Not Copy

EVENT 127

SYNOPSIS: Three scientists discover a portal that leads to a very familiar place.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 2 WOMEN)

NOAH (m)(29 lines)

TERRY (f)(20 lines)

ANN (f).....(29 lines)

Perusal Only
Do Not Copy

AT RISE:

A stage. It can be any set for any play. It can also be a bare stage, but an existing interior of a house is best. A door somewhere on stage is pretty useful. After about 20 seconds of nothing happening, DR. NOAH (40s) enters, wearing glasses and an outfit that looks like a flight suit. He enters the stage with a small PDA-like device. He scans the stage for a moment, double checks and then talks into his radio headset.

NOAH: Terry? Tell Ann that I've got a pretty good signal in here. I'm laying down a marker.

NOAH takes out a small orange flag on a stand and set is in the middle of the stage. He types into his PDA. After a moment, ANN (30s) and TERRY (20s) arrive through the same entrance. ANN is attractive but all business. She's in a sci-fi-like jump suit with a headset on. TERRY is the technician of the group and a little bit of a slacker. ANN looks around the stage.

TERRY: Wow, this place?

ANN: You sure about this, Noah?

NOAH: *(Shrugs.)* It's a good wavelength.

TERRY: Last time it was a good wavelength. Time before it was a good wavelength. They're all good wavelengths until they're not. Five bucks says this is another false positive.

NOAH: Bet. Ann, it's a strong signal, but it's a quick one. Maybe another nine minutes.

ANN: *(Surveys the situation then decides.)* Then we need to hurry. Terry, get the gear.

TERRY: It's gonna be a bust...

ANN: Then get the gear quickly, and you'll be that much closer to a moment of self-satisfaction.

TERRY grumbles and walks out. NOAH starts entering in some info on his PDA as ANN stares out. He pulls out a small camera and starts to film.

NOAH: Let's see, this is event...127. I'm gonna start recording. Ann?

NOAH: *(She nods. He presses a button on his headset.)* Okay, this is Dr. Noah Archipelagos of team Blue. This a real-sync recording of event – what did I say?

TERRY: *(TERRY enters with a big cart of equipment.)* 127. 127.

NOAH: Right one, two, seven. Time and date... *(Provide real date and time.)* On team Blue today are myself, Dr. Ann Boady, Excursion Manager, and Specialist Terry Tobias.

TERRY: *(To camera.)* Who's about to win five bucks.

ANN: Who's about to set up the equipment before we lose the event.

TERRY: *(Starting unpack the gear.)* Watch me fly.

ANN: And the fish hook too, Terry.

TERRY: Dokey-oak...

NOAH: Not thinking about going out, are you?

ANN: Probably not, but good to be prepared. Time remaining?

NOAH: Seven minutes, 30 seconds. Why do you think we get so many under ten?

ANN: Wish I knew. Under ten minutes or over 90 is the pattern and not a lot of middle ground.

TERRY: Level one good to go. Fast?

It's essentially a professional grade light stand with four side-by-side lights pointed toward the set.

ANN: Fast. Noah, we good?

NOAH: *(Grabs the camera again.)* Hold on... Yeah. Event, uh...

ANN: One-hundred twenty-seven.

NOAH: Right. One-hundred twenty-seven ready for level one experiment. Terry, on your call.

TERRY: Gotcha. And camera, action...lights...

TERRY now turns the lights to face the audience and then flicks the switch. They're low grade lights, and they don't blind the audience. But to the team onstage, they suddenly make the audience and house visible to them. The team has seen this before, but for a wall to suddenly vanish and people appear on the other side is not something that you get used to.

TERRY: Son of a gun. It never gets normal, does it?

ANN: No. Noah?

NOAH: Uh, yes. Level one is established, and we have a clean opening. Time is (*Time.*). Transferring mission to Excursion Manager Boady.

ANN: (*She clicks on her headset to record. Medical examiner calm.*) Event 127 entry point appears viable and similar to earlier entry points. Interior setting, light grid and seating consistent with previous encounters. Humanlike audience in seats, number under I'd say... (*Whatever the theatre seats.*). They display a moderate response rate to our stimulus, but consistent to previous encounters. Let's move to level two?

NOAH: Agreed. Terry, let's get a probe out there.

TERRY: (*Taking out a remote vehicle with a camera mounted on it. A small string tethers it to the stage.*) Probe 127 dash A, going live and wild. Stand clear, please.

TERRY switches it on and places it on the edge of the stage. He uses a remote control and slowly pilots the probe into the theatre. This should be slow and deliberate, like the Mars landers.

TERRY: Probe in the wild. Shifting telemetry to you, Noah.

NOAH: (*Looking at PDA.*) Receiving. Readings all in the green. No toxins, no radiation and temperature is within human tolerance, if a bit on the cool side.

ANN: Terry, give us a full sweep, please.

TERRY: Copy. Taking a spin around the room...

ANN: Terry? Nice and slow.

TERRY: Double copy. Nice and slow.

The probe slowly circles around the edge of the stage. It gets close to people's feet, but not aggressively.

NOAH: Ann, I've got a full set of readings here. We can pull in the probe and pack it up if you want.

ANN: (*After a moment.*) Prep for level four excursion.

NOAH: (*TERRY and NOAH exchange glances.*) You sure about that? We're looking at about five minutes until shutdown.

ANN: Terry, hook me up.

TERRY: Roger. Retrieving probe A, then going to fishing line.

TERRY gets the probe. NOAH stares disapprovingly at ANN.

ANN: You're giving me the look.

NOAH: I'm giving you the look times ten. Do I need to repeat protocol to you?

ANN: Observe and collect.

NOAH: With no contact. Say it.

ANN: You just did.

NOAH: I'm serious.

ANN: So am I. We can't just keep playing it safe. We have to know more.

NOAH: You know what happens if that portal closes while you're on the other side.

ANN: *(Smiling.)* You have to write up a long report?

NOAH: *(Serious.)* I lose a good friend.

ANN: If these things go away one day and we don't do all we can to learn about them, then you'll have a very sad friend. Noah, I'll make it back. I promise.

NOAH says nothing. TERRY has returned with a thin metal cable that is attached to the cart he wheels in.

TERRY: Ooo, awkward silence. I missed some grown-up talk, huh? So are we doing the dance today or not?

NOAH: *(Beat.)* Hook her up.

He hooks the other end of the cable to the back of ANN's jumpsuit, which has a carbuncle clasp on.

TERRY: 'Kay boss, you're good to walk. I'm on the fishing reel if you need me. Three tugs and you're home.

ANN: Thanks, Terry. Let's go. *(One more look to NOAH, who silently bids her to be careful. She moves toward the edge of the stage like it's a portal.)* Crossing in 10 feet. Five feet. Two feet... *(And she steps off the stage.)* And I'm through the wall.

Though they've done it before, there's still a bit of wonder and fear at this moment. She's on the other side and it is mysterious, new and dangerous.

NOAH: Insertion into entry point complete. Begin level four excursion.

ANN carefully moves from the house to the aisle. She purposely is not making eye contact with the people in the audience. If they laugh, move or talk to her, she will stare at them for a moment, then move on cautiously.

ANN: Preliminary notations: *(Note: change this to suit the theatre.)*
Three grids of multicolored lights all focused on the entry point. Curtains on either side. Walls black, floor black. Single aisle with rear exit.

NOAH: Pleasant reminder, three minutes.

ANN: Thanks, Mom. *(Reacts to the audience if they laugh.)* Okay, still getting minimal invasive response from subjects. Moving to sample collection.

TERRY: I got a sample two rows down, three seats deep.

NOAH: Good eyes, Terry. Hear that, Ann?

ANN: Copy that. Moving in. *(She pulls out tongs and a baggy from a side pouch. She approaches someone holding a script.)* Okay, it's another document. Off-white glossy, multiple pages, printing on front and back.

TERRY: Not that one. The one on the ground.

NOAH: Ann, do not take it from the audience member.

ANN: *(Moving slowly with tongs extended toward the audience member.)* Don't worry...I think we're okay here... *(If she grabs it, she puts it in the baggy, seals it and puts everything in the side pouch. If the audience member pulls it away, then ANN backs off quickly, palms up. She then places everything back in the pouch.)*
Yep, it's all good.

NOAH: Two minutes. Time to come home.

ANN: Copy. Heading in. *(She starts back to the stage then abruptly stops and turns.)* Hold on.

TERRY: Oh, no.

NOAH: (*Worried.*) Ann? Annie, what's up? What are we thinking about doing? Ann, remember the protocol. Ann? No contact!

ANN: (*ANN turns to the audience and stares at them. She shuts off her light and pulls off her headset. She addresses the audience.*) My name is Dr. Ann Boady, but you already know that. We come here in peace...and in curiosity. We've only recently been made aware of your existence. We know so little about you. We know that you're nocturnal, sedentary and generally good dressers. We also know that you've been watching us for over 5,000 years. Honestly, that scares us a little, because we're not sure why you watch us. Some say we're a zoo to you, to look at and laugh. Others think you study us to someday enter our world and take over. I don't know. I think it might have something to do with the way you move through time. You travel linearly through your life. You don't live your best and worst moments over and over like we do. You experience them just once and then they're gone. Gone. To us, that seems...sad. So maybe you watch us to see what those moments looks like, so you can recognize them, be ready for them. Maybe that's what you need to live; maybe that's what feeds you. If so, then that is something we can understand.

NOAH: Ann! Less than 30 seconds. You have to come back!

ANN: (*ANN nods and steps on the stage. She turns around again.*) There will be others like us. And when the moment for formal contact is right, we'll make it. Just know that now we're aware of you. And as you watch us, we might be watching back.

The stage lights now fade to black. All that remains on is the four lights of the machine. They now burn brighter, almost blinding the audience. ANN, TERRY and NOAH stand silently in front of them – silhouettes against the white light.

NOAH: Event 127 now concluded. Normal restored.

And the floodlights go out, leaving the audience in total black. When the lights come on, the machinery is still there, but the cast is gone. No curtain call, just the stage, now looking ordinary under the house lights. BLACKOUT.

BY MIKE MCCAFFERTY

MAN AND THE MOON

SYNOPSIS: After a disastrous date, a man talks with his only true friend, the Moon.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 1 EITHER)

GUY (m)(53 lines)

MOON (m/f)(53 lines)

Perusal Only
Do Not Copy

AT RISE:

A GUY outside at night, in the light of the moon. The MOON, a large picture of the MOON in crescent stage hangs from a string about eight feet up. The GUY waits at a street corner, perturbed. We hear the MOON's voice from offstage or over a speaker system.

MOON: Hey. (GUY ignores.) Hey! Hello? What, are you not talking to me now?

GUY: Shut up.

MOON: What? Are you mad? Are you still mad?

GUY: Guess. Better yet, don't guess and leave me alone.

MOON: You've been mad at me this whole walk? Eleven blocks of silent stewing at me and you're still pissed? That is like a new record.

GUY: Eleven blocks because I lost my ride is perfectly acceptable to be angry.

MOON: Not my fault.

GUY: Your fault completely.

MOON: Did you call a cab?

GUY: Not your business. Maybe, but not your business.

MOON: So you're freezing me out?

GUY: I'm trying. Don't talk to me.

MOON: Okay. (Beat.) Wanna hear a joke?

GUY: That answers itself, doesn't it?

MOON: You'll like it. New material. Been working on it on the other side of the planet. "A-list" stuff. You ready? You're silent because you wanna hear it, right? Okay, where does the solar system catch bugs? In the Venus fly trap! What do you think?

GUY: You've been spinning around the Earth for 3 billion years and that's your "A-list" stuff?

MOON: Well, that's a little on the lighter side. But trust me, I do have a dark side, too. Get it? *Dark Side of the Moon*?

GUY: And moments of my life continue to get wasted talking to you. Done.

MOON: But if...

GUY: DONE! You've said enough tonight! Done!!

MOON: (Beat.) So can I tell you my one thing?

GUY: Yes, and that was it.

MOON: No, seriously, it's a good thing. Can I?

GUY: No.

MOON: Good, as in useful. (*Silence.*) As in helpful. (*Silence.*) As in necessary to a better, uh, life?

GUY: Oh my god! If I let you, will you...

MOON: I won't talk again – I promise. Okay. Ready?

GUY: Yes.

MOON: The cab you may or may not have called?

GUY: Yes.

MOON: It's leaving.

GUY: What? Where?

MOON: I see it down the block. It's been waiting there for a couple of minutes but now it's leaving.

GUY: (*Starts to run after it.*) Wait! Wait!!! (*Leaves stage for a minute, then angrily returns.*)

MOON: It was a good thing. Past tense. Was. So here we are, huh? You're stuck, and I rotate ever so slowly...

GUY: Fine! You wanna get into it, let's do it.

MOON: Okay! I do! I still don't know what you're talking about, but...

GUY: You do. You're being glib, and you know it.

MOON: Define my "glibness."

GUY: I liked her.

MOON: I know! I could see that all the way up here.

GUY: She was smart and beautiful.

MOON: Are you telling me or asking my opinion?

GUY: And this whole night was to see if we could be compatible as a couple.

MOON: A sound plan. It was very romantic.

GUY: Thank you.

MOON: The daisies instead of roses were a simple but classy substitution.

GUY: I thought so. So was the rest of the night. Dinner, movie, walk by the lake.

MOON: It's a pond.

GUY: Lake, pond, what's the difference?

MOON: I affect the tides, it matters to me.

GUY: And the night with her mattered to me. Perfect night, walking by the lake...

MOON: ...Pond...

GUY: Whatever! Conversation is good. A chill in the air; I offer my coat. She turns to me, and we lock eyes.

MOON: Here it comes.

GUY: And you have one task. One! Shine on us as we have our date.

MOON: I know, I know.

GUY: Moonlight. That's all I needed. Beautiful moonlight to make the moment perfect.

MOON: And I did that. I am waxing gibbous right now, but I pumped out the lumens just for you!

GUY: You did. So we move closer, she closes her eyes, and as I'm about to kiss her, what do I hear?

MOON: I don't remember.

GUY: What do I hear but a voice.

MOON: In your head?

GUY: A voice! A voice from the heavens.

MOON: God?

GUY: Lower.

MOON: Superman!

GUY: Higher. A voice that utters four words. Four words that shouldn't be said to a woman under any circumstance.

MOON: That's not true...wait, maybe it is.

GUY: I'm about to kiss this lovely young lady when suddenly I hear drifting through the night the phrase: "Girl gotta big butt." And you know what? She hears it too. "Girl gotta big butt." And we look around and there's nobody else who could say that. So she looks at me.

MOON: It was more like a glare. Dagger eyes or laser eyes. Very intense.

GUY: And she asks me if I just told her that her butt was big.

MOON: Well, it was! It was a disproportionately big behind. Trust me, I been around a long time and that back was off the track!

GUY: And so what am I supposed to tell her? That the Moon blurted that out? Do you know how crazy that sounds?

MOON: Did you see how crazy big that butt was? That was "put a billboard on it" size. Look, I said I was sorry for ten straight blocks, and I mean it.

GUY: No, I don't think you do.

MOON: Why would you say that?

GUY: I think you're very happy with me being unhappy.

MOON: That's a terrible concept. No. Can I tell you why I said it?

GUY: I already know. Because you're jealous! You're petty and scared that if I find someone that I won't talk to you. You're keen on ruining my life from 300,000 miles away so that you have someone to talk to. Well, it's not fair, and I'm done with it. I don't care how lonely you get anymore. I don't want to talk to you. You can keep revolving around me, but don't bother talking to me. I won't respond.

MOON: (*Sad. Beat.*) She was with another dude before she saw you.

GUY: What?

MOON: Across town. I watched her making out with some old rich guy. Pops out of his limo and checks his dental work with her tongue before she drove over to pick you up.

GUY: Really?

MOON: Yeah. I've seen them a couple of times now. I think you're a side order and he's the main course. Sorry.

GUY: Wow...

MOON: But you're right. I am lonely and maybe a little jealous. Every time I'm on the other side of the world, I wonder what you're doing, if you're having fun. Not in a creepy way, I just like talking to you. You're a good guy and we get along. But I didn't want you to get hurt, even if it meant that you'd stop talking to me. So I sabotaged your date. I'm sorry.

GUY: She kinda did have a big butt, didn't she?

MOON: Dude, if her pants fell off I'd be the smaller of the moons.

GUY: (*Laughs.*) Why didn't you tell me earlier?

MOON: I was hoping you'd screw the date up before it came to that. You're a pro at scaring off the ladies.

GUY: Look who's talking. One hundred seventy-four moons in the solar system, and you got the solo orbit.

MOON: Impressive! I didn't know you could count that high. NASA is looking for guys like you.

GUY: No, thanks, to see the moon they want to see Uranus.

MOON: Heyyoo! The planet that is always a punch-line. Seriously though, he's a nice guy.

FUTURE TRANSMISSIONS

GUY: (*Beat. Serious.*) Hey. Thanks.

MOON: You're welcome.

GUY: Can I ask you something? (*Gestures to himself, then the MOON.*) Why?

MOON: People been talking to me since there's been people. I've been listening, always listening. I think I just wanted someone to listen to me for a while.

GUY: I can do that.

MOON: I know. Thanks. (*A moment, then.*) Oh, I see another cab down the street. You should go get it. Get home and get some rest.

GUY: (*Thinks, then sits.*) Nah, I think I'm gonna hang with my buddy a little longer.

MOON: Aw, thanks. Wait, you're talking about me, right?

GUY: Of course I am. Who did you think?

MOON: Sorry! You know, I'm not that smart, but people in my family are. You should see my sun. Talk about bright! Hey-ooo! I'm the man tonight! Man in the moon! Suck it, Neil Armstrong, ain't nobody stepping on me, yo!

GUY: Oh, boy. Good night, Moon.

BLACKOUT.

BY MIKE MCCAFFERTY

OUR DARKEST HOUR

SYNOPSIS: A group of people recount the world's first contact with aliens.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 EITHER)

ONE (m/f)(58 lines)

TWO (m/f)(52 lines)

THREE (m/f)(43 lines)

Perusal Only
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AT RISE:

An empty stage. Pools of light around each actor. Each actor stares straight ahead, blank expression, but passionate. This a recollection.

ONE: It was our darkest hour.

TWO: Our darkest hour.

THREE: Darkest.

TWO: One built with fear and pain.

ONE: One that pushed us all to the brink.

TWO: A brink that we almost didn't return from.

ONE: Our darkest hour. A time to forget.

THREE: But one that cannot be forgotten. One that has to remain in our collective consciousness to remind us of the worst that can happen.

TWO: So that it never happens again.

ALL: So that it never happens again.

ONE: Humanity has a history of being awful...

TWO: Cruel.

ONE: Ignorant.

THREE: And as long as it was against one another, that was at least tolerable.

ONE: A self-solving problem.

TWO: But when humanity turned its destructive eye toward other species.

THREE: That is when people were the most dangerous. The most deadly.

ONE: It happened one day in the summer...

TWO: June 29th.

ONE: The first ones were seen over Beijing.

TWO: 1:20 pm.

THREE: But as the day wore on, they appeared everywhere.

ONE: Everywhere in the sky...

TWO: People described them as looking like "colorful shopping bags."

They each hold up a colored scarf above their head. They stare at it as light from above shines through.

ONE: Cellophane.

THREE: Toy soldier parachutes.

ONE: They were beautiful.

TWO: They shimmered and sparkled in the sun. A million different colors reflecting through them.

ONE: (*Letting the scarf lower.*) They descended down slowly, gracefully on Beijing...

TWO: Then Tokyo. Melbourne.

THREE: Hawaii, Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Chicago.

ONE: New York, London, Paris, Abu Dhabi...

TWO: The world.

ALL: The world.

ONE: They floated down and made the slightest of noises. Like a small child's whisper.

ALL: (*They all make whispering sounds.*) Ssssswsssss-wsssss...

ONE: So they became known as "whispers."

TWO: At first, there was curiosity and confusion.

THREE: Don't touch them. Close the windows. Call someone. But who?

ONE: (*Now playing with it.*) Kids playing with the things as they fell.

THREE: Don't touch them! Inside. Inside.

TWO: Hours turned to days. The whispers kept falling. Thousands, millions, more. Blanketing the cities. Washing ashore from the oceans. Rainbows of them on the beaches.

ONE: And then the authorities stepped in.

THREE: Stay away. Keep clear. Barricades, caution tape and buckets. Police, then army, then CDC, then the government.

ONE: But for all the bungling of each organization, all the fear and head-scratching, it was the scientists...

THREE: ...the smartest and calmest of the bunch...

ONE: ...that caused the most panic with two announcements:

TWO: They are from space.

ONE: (*Examines scarf.*) Space?

THREE: (*Examines scarf.*) Space? Outer space?

TWO: And they are alive.

Each actor drops the scarf on their line.

ONE: (*Whisper.*) Alive.

THREE: (*Whisper.*) Alive.

ONE: (*Whisper.*) Alive.

TWO: (*Whisper.*) Alive.

THREE: (*Whisper.*) Alive.

ALL: They are alive.

THREE: And with that, the world lost its mind.

TWO: Panic.

THREE: Fear.

ONE: Questions.

TWO: (*Picking up scarf.*) Why are they here?

ONE: (*Picking up scarf.*) Where did they come from?

TWO: How can they still be alive?

ONE: Are they intelligent?

TWO: Can we communicate with them?

ONE: Are they peaceful?

THREE: (*Picking up scarf.*) Is this an invasion? (*Long silence.*) That was the one question that everyone wanted to know. The scientists studied that question for an answer.

TWO: But not soon enough. Without answers, people supply their own.

THREE: Dark answers.

TWO: Answers built on fear, prejudice and lies. Answers that serve governments, religions or special interest groups better than they serve the truth.

ONE: So it was inevitable that when the news reported that a little girl got sick and died from handling one of the whispers...

TWO: That poor little girl.

ONE: Or was it a boy?

THREE: From Omaha, Nebraska.

ONE: And no one ever saw her...or him touch one.

TWO: America. The heartland.

ONE: People just assumed it was them that made her sick. Then they assumed more.

THREE: Monsters.

ONE: Demons.

THREE: Those things kill. They kill our children.

TWO: And so, those with the power met those with the fear and together they decided what had to be done.

THREE: Gather them.

ONE: But we don't know if they're...

THREE: Contain them.

TWO: Give the scientists more time to...

THREE: Destroy them. All of them.

ONE: And so, with amazing clarity of purpose and the world's governments working as one, the extinction began.

TWO: The scientists tasked with trying to communicate with them, were now purposed with destroying them.

ONE: In India, there were piles of them almost three stories tall. They were incinerated in smelting facilities, with plumes reaching the sky. Italy dumped them in acid. Russia buried them all and then nuked them.

TWO: Millions, then billions.

ONE: Day and night.

TWO: A whole race being erased. Erased by humanity.

ONE: It was our darkest hour.

TWO: Darkest...

ALL: It was our darkest hour.

THREE: And it was almost too late when it was discovered. Completely by accident.

ONE: Or luck.

TWO: Or serendipity.

THREE: An accident at the Mali killing facility. An explosion burned 17 men. Badly.

ONE: Third degree burns. Ninety percent of the skin burned on most.

THREE: The flames were so intense that rescuers couldn't reach them for hours. Days. The priests prayed, the families wailed and the press waited.

TWO: And when they finally found the workers, they were shocked at what they saw.

ONE: (*Places scarf on body.*) The whispers, covering the men.

TWO: (*Also placing scarf.*) All over their bodies.

THREE: (*Scarf on body.*) And the workers were all alive.

TWO: And healed.

THREE: They stood up and walked...

FUTURE TRANSMISSIONS

TWO: Walked...

ONE: They all walked out. Wounds healed.

TWO: Smiles.

ONE: Families, hugs, cameras.

THREE: The world was stunned.

ONE: The whispers had healed them.

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