

Once Upon a Space Time

Written by

Mark Clark

Caught in the valley of the lost heart
 Caught in the valley of the lost soul
 I keep dreamin' about a love I cannot find
 Caught in the valley of the lost heart
 Caught in the valley of the lost soul
 I keep dreamin' about a love I cannot find

I keep dreamin' about your smile
 But who is it smilin'?
 I keep tryin' to see your face
 But I can't seem to find it

I keep dreamin' about a love I'll never know, honey
 I keep singin' about a thing I'll never own
 A thing I'll never own

Why do I cry?
 Why do I cry, honey?
 I've never seen a sunlit sky, honey
 I've only ever seen the starlit void
 No sun can I call home
 No sun to call my own
 No son to call my own
 And so I cry -

Caught in the valley of the lost heart
 Caught in the valley of the lost soul
 I keep dreamin' about a love I cannot find
 Caught in the valley of the lost heart
 Caught in the valley of the lost soul
 I keep dreamin' about a love I cannot find

Gotta keep dreamin', gotta keep dreamin', gotta keep dreamin'
 Dreamin' about your love

At the conclusion of the song, she stands, downstage centre, deep in thought. A fat, pimply adolescent enters, stage right. He is in his mid teens and is dressed similarly to the girl.

Jasper Hey, Mary Lou. What was all that kerfuffle? What you doin'?

Mary Lou Wha's it look like I'm doin', Jasper? Eatin' a scientist? I'm writin' another song.

Jasper Whas it about, Mary Lou?

- Mary Lou It's about wishful thinkin', brother of mine, jus' wishful thinkin'.
- Jasper You so clever, Mary, makin' up tunes 'n all. Me? Why pop says I can't even think. So there ain't much ways I can get to *wishful* thinkin'.
- Mary puts her arm around her brother.*
- Mary Lou Well, let me tell you somethin', Jasper. In our predicament, you are blessed, boy. You are better off not thinkin' at all. 'Cos I tell ya, thinkin' too much out here in the middle of who-knows-where, is enough to drive a person mad.
- Jasper But I do get mad sometimes, sis, on account of I'm so dumb.
- Mary Lou Not mad as in angry, Jasper - mad as in insane. We've lived our whole lives on board this here hunk of metal and no one on board knows where we are or what the heck we're doin' here. Don't you ever get curious about that?
- Jasper But we got a bowlin' alley, an' a golf course, an' a virtual reality play room and a...
- Mary Lou I know all that, Jasper. We got a whole dang city made of steel and titanium beneath us. Heck, this space ship's a floatin' entertainment centre! But don't you ever wonder how it all got here? I mean, don't you ever think about things like that?
- She looks at him for a moment or two. Jasper appears to be in thought.*
- Jasper But we got a bowlin' alley, an' a...
- Mary Lou Never mind, brother, never mind. Like I said before, you are blessed with a superb lack of mental acuity.
- Jasper (*flattered*) Aw shucks, thanks, sis. But how come you know so much?
- Mary Lou 'Cos I can read. There's a stash of books down on level sixteen. Tha's how I learned me to read, and write too.
- Jasper But daddy says books is bad.
- Mary Lou How would he know? He ain't never read one.
- Jasper Daddy says books is evil.

Mary Lou Books ain't evil, Jasper. Far as I can tell, people is evil, not books.

Jasper If 'n I was you, Mary Lou, I wouldn't let daddy catch me readin' no books.

Mary Lou I'm old enough to fight my own battles, baby brother. Now hush. Here come mommy an' daddy now.

Mary Lou sits at the table. Hank and Sarsaparilla enter. They are middle aged and dressed in the same manner as their children. Hank is carrying a video disc which he is holding aloft as he enters.

Hank Now, don't sass me, Sarsaparilla. It's in the video. It's indisputable.

Sarsaparilla Honey, all I said was Charlton Heston might not be the one and only saviour.

Hank *(wheeling around on her)* Why, Sarsaparilla Sinclair, the things you do say. Wha's gotten into you today, gal?

Sarsaparilla Now don't get angry on me, Hank. I hate it when you do that. I'm just questionin' the authority of that particular document. It may not be the be-all and end-all of religious instruction, as you seem to think.

Hank I will not even dignify that opinion with a reply, Sarsaparilla. *(holding up the video)* Both you know and I know that Charlton Heston is the chosen one and he went forward in time, the only being to do so, except for Saint Schwarzenegger, to reclaim the earth from the lowly apes.

Mary Lou That sounded like a reply to me.

Hank *(wheeling on her)* Wha's that you say?

Mary Lou You just finished sayin' that you wasn't gonna dignify momma's comment with a comment of your own, 'n' then you did.

Hank Now don't you sass me, miss.

Mary Lou My goodness. It seems that everybody sassing you today, daddy.

Sarsaparilla Amen.

Hank Don't you get smart with me now, you hear? *(wheeling back on his wife)* And where'd you hear that word, Amen?

Mary Lou She read it in the Bible, daddy.

Hank *(turning abruptly back to his daughter)* In the Bi... Now you listen to me, both of ya. You both know I told you never to read that trash. *(holding up the video)* This here is the only truth you need. The Planet of the Apes, Books One to Five.

Sarsaparilla They're videos, Hank.

Hank And Charlton Heston knew the secret of flight while the apes was still on horseback. So Charlton Heston is God an' that's all there is to it. The end.

A man and a woman, both in their forties, enter. They are immaculately dressed in evening wear.

Monty Back on our hobby horse are we, Hank, old man?

Amanda Please, Monty, let's not start that again.

Monty We have as much right to our opinion as he does to his, Amanda.

Amanda Yes, you're quite right, dear, but for the sake of civility...

Monty Where Hank is involved, Amanda, civility has precious little to do with it.

Monty and Amanda have a polite chuckle between themselves at Hank's expense.

Hank *(mocking them)* Oh te he he he he. *(angrily)* For the sake of civility - kiss my cumquat!

Amanda Really! I'll thank you not to speak to my husband in that tone of voice.

Monty Pay no heed to the heathen, Amanda. He's nothing but lower level baggage. He doesn't belong on the bridge at all.

Sarsaparilla Hey, Montague- bite my butt!

Amanda Why, Sarsaparilla, I'm surprised at you. I didn't think you agreed with your husband's gibberings.

Sarsaparilla Well, I don't, but he is my husband, so lay off of 'im. Both you and I know, Amanda, husbands' gibber. It's mainly what they do.

Amanda *(laughing)* It's so difficult to argue with the truth.

Hank *(pronouncing)* Men is superior to woman! Ain't that so, Montague?

Monty Now don't drag me into this, old man.

Hank They is more naturally aggressive.

Monty Tell that to my wife.

Hank And much more intelligent.

Amanda Tell me, how does one spell 'intelligent'?

Hank That ain't the point.

Amanda If you spent more time in the library, rather than spending all your time in the cinema watching science fiction videos, you might learn how to read and write.

Hank Readin' and writin' is the work of Darth Vader.

Mary Lou I think you mean the Devil, daddy.

Hank Hush your mouth, gal. Ain't no devil, only Darth Vader. If it ain't in the science fiction collection, it ain't true.

Sarsaparilla Hank Sinclair, you is my husband but I gotta admit, you a jackass.

Hank Why Sarsaparilla...

Sarsaparilla You standin' there on your high horse, proclaimin' the superiority of men over women, when every word that drops outta your mouth proves you wrong. And, love my son though I do, I gotta be honest, he ain't the greatest advertisement for brain power I ever seen.

Hank Oh come on, Sas, don't bring Jasper into it. That boy ain't normal. He put the 'S' in stupid.

Mary Lou Tha's a cruel thing to say, daddy.

Jasper There ain't no 'S' in stupid.

Hank See what I mean.

Mary Lou Daddy, how do you know how to spell? (*playfully*) Have you been readin' books?

Hank No.

Mary Lou Maybe learnin' how to read and write a little?

Hank Well, maybe I learned how to read some things.

Amanda We should name an award after you, Hank - The Hank Sinclair First Class Hypocrite Award.

Hank I admit, I did look at a few books but that was a long time ago before I seen the error of my ways.

Monty And may the force be with you.

Hank Now don't you make fun of the force.

Two children enter. A boy of about ten and a girl of perhaps seven or eight. The boy is dressed as a sailor and the girl wears a pinafore.

Amanda (*kissing the children as they enter*) Ham! Pickles!

Hank What sorta ijot calls their kids - Pickles 'n' Ham?

Monty I say, steady down, old man.

Pickles Mummy, make that horrible man go away.

Amanda (*in a baby voice*) Don't worry about the horrid little man, mummy's pickly pickly poos. He's just a silly little sausage. He won't hurt you.

Hank I wouldn't bet on it.

Sarsaparilla Hank, you touch one hair on that boy's head and I'll brain ya!

Monty And so will I.

Ham My mummy says you don't read books like the rest of us. My mummy says you're dumb.

Hank *(pointing at Ham)* That reminds me, I have to use the lavatory.

Amanda Why you are the rudest man I ever...

Mary Lou Now let's all just calm down a minute here.

A man in his late thirties and a young woman of about twenty enter. Both are casually dressed.

Harry I see you got 'em.

Monty Yes, Harry. Where were they?

Harry You know that big control room down on level twenty six? The one with the big sign on the door which says in bold letters: 'Danger. Keep Out'? Well guess where they was?

Pickles I can do whatever I please.

Harry Swingin' on a lever which said: 'Extreme caution. Opens To Void'.

Ham He's picking on us, mumsy.

Amanda *(in a baby voice)* Don't you listen to the nasty wittle man. He's just jealous of my clever wittle babies.

Rene You shoulda left 'em swingin' on the door, dad. Done us all a favour.

Amanda How dare you speak about my children in that manner?

Rene Sorry, darlin' but if you can't see these two kids are spoiled rotten, you're not lookin' 'ard enough.

The children poke their tongues out at Rene.

Monty What are you suggesting? These are marvelous children. They're so lovable. Aren't you?

The children smile effusively for their parents who beam back smiles at them. The children then turn and pull faces at Rene.

Rene The trouble is, parents always seem to think that other people love *their* kids as much as they do.

Harry Yeah. What's the definition of a brat? Someone else's kid.

Rene and Harry have a laugh at this.

Amanda Pay no attention to them, children. They are of inferior stock.

Monty The trouble with the lower deck rabble is they don't always know their place.

Harry 'Ere, just because our ancestors come from the lower decks, doesn't mean we're worth less than you, old son.

Rene That's it. We're all equal on this ship.

Pickles The upper deck people were always better than the lower deck people. Isn't that right, mumsy?

Amanda Quite so, Petal.

Sarsaparilla Now where you did you ever hear such nonsense?

Ham It's historical fact, isn't it, Pater?

Monty Indisputable, princess.

Amanda Shall we edify them, Monty?

Monty Let's do, snookums. Let's do.

The others move aside or sit as Monty and Amanda take centre stage. They sing the song with incredible condescension, while the children waltz and poke their tongues out at the others. They are about as annoying as they can be. The children sing the contrapuntal melody in the last chorus.

Song # 2 How Many Times are the Plebs...?

(The Song of Condescension)

Sung by Monty and Amanda

Monty You poor little creatures you haven't a clue
So let us alert you to etiquette's rules

Amanda Gather 'round, you plebeians, from your betters take heed

- Monty** For we wish to avoid all embarrassing scenes
Amanda If you can't afford 'A' deck, we can't talk to you
Monty Your colour determines our loyalty too
Amanda If you work for a living, we're sorry for you
Monty But please don't expect us to parlez with vous
Monty With a shallow politeness we'll smile as we hurry on through
- Both** How many times are the plebs where they ought not to be?
 How many times are the plebs given power inappropriately?
 How many times are the plebs above where they ought to be?
 How many times are the plebs positioned erroneously?
- Monty** It's so hard to govern a rabble, my dear
 If you can't mollify them with TV and beer
Amanda Revolution will swell in their quaint little hearts
 Then they'll slip and they'll fall on their collective arse
Monty They will simply trade masters, they weren't born to rule
Amanda For their blood is too thin and they're thick, as a rule
Monty Please don't be offended, you low level scum
Amanda For the great day approaches and the judgement will come
Both And we have on authority, God is an Englishman.
- Mary Lou Why shame on you, Monty and Amanda. I'm surprised at both of you - believin' in class distinction like that. Why, you've never known more than a handful of people. Where'd you get a notion like that?
- Amanda 'The Handbook for the Filthy Rich' is quite specific about the circumstances under which the hoity-toity may mingle with the hoi polloi.
- Monty Quite so. It specifically details the class wars and states categorically the harmful effects of the upper and lower decks intermingling.
- Harry What a lot of piffle you do talk.
- Mary Lou You don't really believe that, do you, Monty? We don't know for sure if there ever really was any class wars.
- Sarsaparilla I'm with you, Mary Lou and if I was you Amanda, I'd wake up and smell the titanium 'coz we all in the same boat together.
- Monty It's all in 'The Handbook of the Filthy Rich'.
- Mary Lou Jasper, maybe I was wrong, maybe books can be evil.

Jasper At this point I feel that I would like to say somethin'.

Sarsaparilla Well, good for you, Jasper. Do your best.

Jasper Huh?

Hank Go ahead and say what you gonna say, knuckle-head.

Jasper But I already did.

Hank Great Heston Almighty, boy. How could anything so dumb have sprung from my loins?

Jasper I didn't spring from your loins, pop. I been standin' here the whole time.

Hank Jasper, when Charlton Heston was handin' out the brains, you was kissin' Obi-Wan Kenobi

Jasper Who's Only One Canoly?

Monty Look, I'm sure that this is all very interesting, to someone, but isn't it time for dinner?

Harry Um, excuse me, gov, but we may 'ave a slight problem in that regard.

Monty What do you mean?

Harry Well, while I was down below, chasing Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dumber about, I had a geezer in the fridge and, to put it bluntly, we're down to the last carcass.

This news is met with alarm from everyone.

Mary Lou What are we gonna do?

Harry We may 'ave to go on strict rations. Even then we're in big trouble 'cos we got no other food source, 'ave we?

Rene What about the Green Room, dad?

Ham What's the Green Room?

Harry Legend 'as it that once, many generations ago, the Green Room was stocked with edible plant life, but that all died well before my grandfather's day. So, we'll 'ave to start rationin' immediately.

Jasper Does that mean we can't eat as much as usual?

Harry He catches on quick, don't he?

Hank He don't exactly score nine out of ten for brains.

Jasper Nine out of ten? You can't do no better 'n' that.

Hank Where's the last carcass?

Rene Next door, thawin' out. He should be close to ready by now

A middle aged man in a suit enters. He still has the remnants of ice on his hair and on his clothes.

Frank Excuse me, but is this the bridge?

Amanda pushes her children behind her. Everyone backs away in alarm.

Frank Please, don't be alarmed. I'm Frank, Frank Witherstein.

He proffers his hand but no-one will shake it. They are all dumbfounded.

Frank *(looking out above the audience)* Oh excellent. *(pointing above the audience)* I see we've nearly reached Proxima. I tell ya, that was quite a sleep, five hundred years. I feel a little woozy. Do ya mind if I sit down?

The ranks part as Frank passes through and takes a seat. He is watched in silent awe by everyone.

Frank *(looking from face to face)* So, where are the rest? Hard at work in the hydroponics room? Or in the city, inventing, learning, teaching? Or just relaxing perhaps? How many of you now? Thirty to forty thousand we projected.

Monty Ten.

Frank *(surprised)* Only ten? Really? Our projections were way out. Still, ten thousand people should be enough to start the colony.

Hank Not ten thousand. Just ten. Ten people. Us.

- Frank *(standing in alarm)* What? Are you telling me that you're all that's left of the colony?
- Hank It kinda looks that way now, don't it?
- Mary Lou Daddy says he can remember when there was at least thirty of us, but that's as far back as any of us can remember.
- Frank *(pacing about)* Oh my God. This is disastrous.
- Jasper Daddy, why is that steak talkin' to us?
- Frank What did he just say?
- Jasper 'Cos I'm so hungry I could eat the leg off a astronaut.
- Frank Did he suggest that you were gonna eat me?
- Hank No, he did not suggest we were gonna eat you.
- Frank Thank God for that.
- Hank He suggested that we *are* gonna eat you.
- Frank *(horrified)* But this is too awful to imagine. *(having a sudden thought)* Take me to the cryogenic chamber down on level twenty. I must awaken the others.
- Sarsaparilla He means the fridge.
- Monty Look, I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, old boy, but there aren't any.
- Frank Please, don't tell me.
- Amanda We ate them all.
- Frank screams and backs away from the group.*
- Frank This is a nightmare! I'm dreaming! This isn't happening! Do you mean to tell me that the colony has dwindled from three thousand to just ten people? And that you've eaten all the scientists?
- Mary Lou What else are you supposed to do with a scientist?

- Jasper Tha's right. Everybody knows that astronauts make good eatin'.
- Hank It's a time honoured tradition, like the Skywalker Communal Prayer.
- Frank *(aghast)* What are you saying? Don't you know your purpose? Don't you know what you're doing here?
- Mary Lou *(moving towards him)* No. We don't. We have no idea why we're here. Can you tell us?
- Frank *(amazed)* This is too incredible to imagine. You seriously don't ... *(snapping his fingers)* Wait! What about the computer console? You must have consulted the computer console? Watched the video? Surely? Somebody?

The group stares blankly at him.

- Jasper Can we eat him now, pop?

Frank moves urgently upstage towards the console.

- Frank You're not seriously gonna tell me that you thawed out two thousand scientists and not one of them protested.
- Pickles Of course they protested, silly.
- Ham But we ate them anyway. We were hungry and there was nothing else to eat.

Frank sits in the armchair. Feverishly, he punches at the console in the arms.

- Frank What about the hydroponics; the agriculture?
- Jasper The what?
- Frank The Green Room, for God's sake!
- Mary Lou That died years ago. It's just a shell.
- Mary Lou has moved up to Frank and is watching with interest.*
- Mary Lou What you doin' there? You gonna write a song?
- Frank Is that all you've used this console for?

colours, creeds and we dare say, mixed gene pools. close up on a kid with a face painted khaki.

Cryogenically frozen in the lower levels of the vast spacecraft are two thousand of the brightest people the Earth has to offer. These fine specimens of human-kind will be thawed and revived when the craft reaches its destination in the year 2625. It is they who will undertake the great challenge of running the new colony. Close ups of scientists with talcum powder on their faces so that they look frozen. Frozen bodies being zipped up inside bags.

This voyage is a vital mission for humanity. The future of human-kind may well depend upon the colony's success. We need Proxima for it's pristine atmosphere and clean environment because, let's be honest folks, we've pretty well stuffed up this one. Shots of factory pollution; dead fish; war; killing whales etc Close up of a piece of battered fish with tomato sauce on it laying on a river bank.

So until 2625 it's bon voyage to all on board Proxima One. To the scientific team, it's- sleep well and to the ship's inhabitants, it's- enjoy the cruise of a lifetime. A line of people waving and yahooping at the camera. Tracking shot along the line. Each person has a party hat or blower or some other piece of apparel which suggests a party.

The lights come up. There is silence for a few moments as the members of the group look at each other.

Mary Lou So that's why we're here. We're supposed to start a new world on Proxima.

Frank moves downstage to the others.

Frank Yes. But that was before you ate the intelligentsia.

Hank The what?

Frank The thinkers; the scientists. You've eaten all the scientists.

Jasper Can we eat 'im now, pa?

Sarsaparilla Haven't you been listenin', honey? We can't eat 'im; not now we know he's a human being like us.

Jasper But he ain't a human bein' - he's a scientist, 'n' they taste good.

Frank Hey, Casper, scientists are human beings, contrary to popular belief and if we get hungry maybe we should eat you - there's enough of you to go around.

Jasper moves menacingly towards Frank.

Jasper Hey, Frankenstein, don't call me Casper - the name's Jasper. Okay?

Frank cowers away from the advancing Jasper.

Frank Okay. Okay. I'm sorry. Could somebody please call off the carnivore?

Mary Lou moves to her brother.

Mary Lou Leave him be, Jasper.

Jasper You just watch it, Mister. I got my eye on you.

Mary Lou takes Jasper by the arm and leads him away.

Mary Lou Settle down there, brother. Come on, now. You ain't starvin' yet.

Jasper Well, he better watch out, is all I can say, 'cos when I do get hungry, I'm gonna fry his ass.

Frank It's comforting to know which bit of me you'll be eating first.

Jasper Jus' watch it, Mr Smarty Pants.

Mary Lou Now tha's enough. Pickles, would you an' Ham be kind enough to take Jasper down to the play room so's he can have one of them virtual reality battles and relieve some of his tension? We adults have some things we need to discuss.

Pickles Only if he promises to give us a horsey ride.

Ham Yes, both at the same time.

Mary Lou What do you say, Jasper?

Jasper Well, okay I guess. But you gotta promise not to spur me like you done last time.

The children laugh and clamour aboard Jasper's back. He struggles off stage with them pretending to whip him.

Frank Oh, so you've heard of horses then? You're not completely ignorant.

Hank Sure we heard of horses. Don't be so dang stupid. Tha's what the apes used to ride.

Monty Please old man can we drop the Charlton Heston stuff?

Frank What on earth has Charlton Heston got to do with it?

Hank Charlton Heston is God!

Frank Well he's good, but he's not *that* good.

Sarsaparilla Excuse my husband, Mr Witherspine, but he has religious beliefs based upon the library of science fiction videos we have on board the ship.

Frank Actually, I met Charlton Heston once.

Hank *(shocked)* You what?

Frank Yeah. My father was a great scientist, so we got invited to parties in Hollywood a lot. I was only a kid at the time.

Hank *(in awe)* Did he say anything to ya?

Frank *(thinking back)* Yeah, I think he said: 'Kid, get the hell off my foot' and then he said something about if I wasn't Einstein's kid he'd brain me, or something like that.

Hank Wow!

Harry 'Ere, you tellin' me you're the son of Albert Einstein? The most influential scientific thinker since Isaac Newton?

Frank Yeah. You've heard of him?

Harry No.

Rene He's pullin' your leg, Frank. 'Course he's 'eard of Albert Einstein. There's a book about him in the library.

Amanda We have all heard of Einstein, except for Hank, of course - he is the only one among us who refuses to read.

Hank Books is evil.

Mary Lou Books ain't evil, pop. Well, most books anyhow.

Hank Yes, they is. Books is the cause of all the trouble in the world!

Sarsaparilla Hank Sinclair, what would you know about books? Or the world for that matter? You ain't never had nothin' to do with either.

Hank Don't sass me, Sas. I'm tellin' everyone of you, here and now, books is evil!

Song # 3 Books is Evil

Books is evil, they cause big trouble
 They make you think then they burst your bubble
 That don't teach you nothin' that you might need to know
 If you wanna grow
 Watch a video

'Cos books is evil
 I tell you books is evil
 I swear that books is evil
 I tell you books is evil

What's a book but a tree that's fallen
 Cut into pieces with lies painted on it?
 Disseminated like a mortal disease
 I'm beggin' you please
 Choose technology

'Cos books is evil
 I tell you books is evil
 I swear that books is evil
 I tell you books is evil

I seen the light on the video screen
 It was Arnold Schwarzenegger in the Terminator Three

Frank I'm beginning to get the picture here. Okay, tell me this. If you can all read, except for Hank, and you've got access to the extensive

library on board, how could you not know what is going on here? How come none of you knows how to consult the computer?

Hank There ain't no such books!

Frank There were thousands of reference books and millions of discs on board at take off.

Monty There's only a smattering of books in the library.

Frank They must be somewhere.

Hank And I'm tellin' ya - there ain't no more books! We don't need no books! It's all in the videos.

Frank Hank, they're actors. Those videos, they're not true. It's all just pretend.

Hank is so offended he can hardly speak. He is furious.

Hank I ain't gonna stand here and listen to this trash! Charlton Heston is God; Saint Schwarzenegger is a Archangel and if you gonna come in here and start up trouble, I'm gonna let Jasper eat ya!

Hank exits in a rage.

Frank Well, there ya go. You try to open someone's eyes and they threaten to make you a main meal.

Harry Don't listen to the old geezer. E's nice enough, if you like simple minded red-necks.

Monty
you. I shouldn't worry, old man, we shan't let Jasper eat

Mary Lou I still have a thousand questions about how we got here and what went wrong and (*pointing above the audience*) what we're gonna do when we reach that planet there.

Frank I had a look at the date on the computer and you've woken me up four days earlier than scheduled. There's almost certainly vegetation on the planet but we're all gonna be starving by then, that is, if Jasper hasn't eaten me.

Rene Gov, listen up. Tell me if I'm wrong, but if you're Einstein's son, then that means you lived in the Twentieth Century.

Frank Yeah, that's right.

Rene So how do you know all this stuff? If you died in...

Frank I didn't die. I was cryogenically frozen in 1989. That's how far they planned ahead. I chose to be frozen at aged fifty just on the possibility that one day this colony would become a reality. And it did. Then, you guys ate all the scientists. Do you realise that you guys and your forefathers have probably dined on every great mind since the second half of the Twentieth Century?

Sarsaparilla It's kinda humblin', ain't it?

Mary Lou It sure is a shame your father isn't here. He was so brilliant, I'm sure *he'd* know what to do.

Frank snaps his fingers.

Frank That's it. Of course. What have I been thinking of?

Mary Lou What?

Frank Oh, I'm such a fool. I forgot all about the Great Brain. I must still have cobwebs from the stasis.

Once again Frank moves urgently towards the armchair where he sits and begins tapping the arms of the computer console.

Sarsaparilla What from the what?

Frank The Great Brain, of course.

Harry Look out. He's tappin' on the armchair again.

Frank *(as he taps)* It completely slipped my mind but this craft was to be guided and monitored by my father's brain. They kept it, you know. That's how extraordinarily intelligent he was. They wanted to see what made it tick. The plan was to examine it and then use it as a giant control for this spacecraft. His brain has guided this ship for nearly five hundred years.

Monty I say, that's a rather long time to concentrate.

Frank Please, please work.

He gives one final tap. A whirring sound is heard and a box on wheels is pushed onto the stage, atop of which is Einstein's head. The front of the box is painted to look like a mainframe computer.

Frank Yes!

Song # 4 Relatively Speaking

Sung by Albert

Let's give a cheer for relativity
 Let's give a cheer for relativity
 Relatively speaking I feel quite okay
 I feel quite okay relatively
 Relatively speaking I feel quite okay
 I feel quite okay relatively

Doctor Harvey kept my brain in a jar at his house
 In ze basement for forty years
 After zeir divorce, Mrs Harvey found out
 She yelled: 'Get zat damn thing outa here!'

So let's give a cheer for relativity (Hooray!)
 Let's give a cheer for relativity (Hooray!)
 Relatively speaking I feel quite okay
 I feel quite okay relatively
 Relatively speaking I feel quite okay
 I feel quite okay relatively

Zese are not my original eyes
 Dr Abrams ripped 'em outa here
 Zey are in New Jersey in a safe deposit box
 Und he visits zem several times a year. Oi!

Let's give a cheer for relativity (Hooray!)
 Let's give a cheer for relativity (Hooray!)
 Relatively speaking I feel quite okay
 I feel quite okay relatively
 Relatively speaking I feel quite okay
 Oi! All things considered
 I feel quite okay relatively

At the conclusion of the song, Frank comes down-stage.

Frank Pop! Pop! Can you hear me?

Albert Apart from ze popping in my ears I can. Of course I can hear you! I still have ears. I don't have much else, but ears, I have.

Frank How have you been, dad? Long time, no see.

Albert You never called; you never wrote. I vas vorried sick. No one visits.

Frank Dad, I've been frozen for six centuries.

Albert Being frozen is no excuse for not seeing your father, Franky. Come here where I can see you a bit better.

Frank does so. The head looks at him.

Albert You've lost some veight. Have you been eating properly?

Frank Dad, I haven't eaten for six hundred and thirty years.

Albert You have to eat more regularly zan zat. No vonder you're losing veight.

Frank So, how are you feeling?

Albert Vell, apart from ze total absence of a body, and the itch I've had on the top of my head for two centuries - not so bad.

Frank I'll scratch it for you.

Albert No, thanks, you'll mess up my hair. Und speaking of mess ups, *(nodding towards the others)* have you spoken vith ze Diner's Club over zere and asked zem if zey'll have you over for dinner, like zey did all ze other scientists?

Frank I just found out what's been going on. Can you shed a little more light on the subject for me?

Albert Light is vone subject I do happen to know something about.

Frank What happened?

Albert It's easier to show you. Zere is nothing zat goes through ze circuits of zis ship zat I don't know about. I have all ze records *(raising the pupils of his eyes as if to look at his brain)* in here. *(nodding towards the video screen)* Look at ze screen. I'll play you a selection zat vill explain everything.

The lights dim and a video begins. We see a man at the bridge's computer console. He is about forty years old and dressed in a space suit without the helmet on.

Strong Greetings earth. This is Commander James Strong speaking to you from the bridge of the Proxima One. The year is 2130. We have been travelling for five years and the colony is doing very well. Many babies have been born since we left, so I guess we're about to encounter the first generation of kids who have never set foot on the earth and who will never set foot on any planet. I can tell you, with all these kids about *(he laughs)* it sure is getting noisy up here. This is Commander James Strong signing off for now.

There is a brief spray of static on the screen. Another man sits at the bridge. He is middle aged.

Strong This is Commander Mark Strong speaking to you from the bridge of the Proxima One. The year is 2170. We have been travelling for forty five years and Houston, we have some problems. As a member of the last generation on board this spaceship ever to live on the Earth, I am becoming increasingly disillusioned with the generations of space kids coming through. None of them seem to want to work. They seem to think that life is one big party. Last week I went into the hydroponics room and found two dope plants growing next to the tomatoes. Some of the first generation colonists must have smuggled the seeds on board. From now on we will have to be more vigilant. Several stills have been found. We believe a trade in moonshine may have begun. On a sad note, my father James passed away last year. He was a great man. He passed command on to me as I hope to do to my son, if I can get him off his virtual reality playstation. This is Strong signing off.

There is a brief spray of static on the screen. The same setting, but Commander Mark Strong is very much older, probably in his eighties. His voice is weak; his whole demeanour that of a beaten man.

Strong This is Commander Strong. The year is 2210. Earth, we have some big problems up here. The young people of the colony have gone crazy. They had a huge party down on the lower levels yesterday. Twenty kids put on space suits and painted anti-upper deck slogans on the hull of the ship. I think some sort of gang, or class warfare is developing. Those of us old enough to remember Earth are vastly outnumbered now and we're too old to control the space kids. I was supposed to hand control of the ship over to my son twenty years ago but he spends all his time in the virtual reality room making love to a hologram of Drew Barrymore. His

girlfriend takes some new drug they call Braindelete. She believes in free love, walks into walls and wears a bandanna with 'Smash the Future' written on it. No one reads. They watch video discs. I heard some kids arguing over who was the better actor, Moses or Charlton Heston. Everything is getting mixed up. I just don't know where we go from here. God help us all. This is Strong. Over and Out.

Static on the screen. Two scraggly haired teenagers (one boy, one girl) appear on the screen. The boy is pulling back away from the camera as if he has just switched it on. The two giggle throughout this section.

Sigourney Is it on, man?

Charlton Yeah, I think so. The thing's flashing.

Sigourney Cool. *(putting her face near the camera)* Hello, Earth. I'm Sigourney Weaverson.

Charlton And I'm Charlton Hesterton.

Sigourney And the year is 2222.

Charlton Yeah, as in four twos.

They laugh uproariously. Finally, Sigourney calms down.

Sigourney So, we just wanna say one thing, for the record.

Charlton Yeah. The upper levels suck, man! The Planet of the Apes rules!

Sigourney Books suck! Sci Fi rules! Power to the lower levels!

They shake their fists and jump around like monkeys. Static once again. A young woman is looking anxiously around as the picture comes on. She addresses the camera urgently in a stage whisper.

Laurel My name is Laurel. According to this computer the year is 2320. I'm from the upper decks. There are only a small number of us left. The lower levels have taken control of the entire ship and if they catch me here, they'll kill me too. Can you help us? From a small store of books that we've discovered, we believe that we originally came from a small blue planet a light year or so from here. Can you confirm this? Who are we? From what we can work out, the tribes in the city stole the majority of the books and discs decades ago. They worship the cinema and believe the videos to be true.

Are they? We don't know what to think but there are those of us who believe we have a higher purpose. The room with the plants is now empty. We need a new food source. If you can hear me, please, help us.

Static. A sinister looking man wearing black and red war paint appears.

Arnie I am Arnie, the ruler of this universe. It is the year you would call 2360. I leave this message as a record of my greatness. Whoever you are, know this - I, Arnie, control this ship. My people survive on the carcasses of the upper level dwellers but their numbers dwindle. Soon, we will have to eat the carcasses from the frozen room. We believe that ultimately, Saint Schwarzenegger will return through time to us as he did in the Terminator Book Two to save our civilisation. The ancient video tapes are the only source of truth. Charlton Heston is God! Long live the empire!

Static. The video tape presentation ends. The lights come up.

Albert So it's ze Dark Ages all over again.

Frank Oh, my God. How depressing.

Albert You're depressed. Listen, I've been sitting here for five hundred years vatching zese morons. Zis is ze first time I've been out of the closet in four hundred and twenty years. And you're depressed?

Monty I refuse to believe that I am related in any way to lower level working class rabble.

Harry *We are.*

Monty *(Surveying the others)* Well, yes.

Harry Wake up 'n' smell the stale beer, old son. You're no better than us.

Rene That's right. We all have a common ancestry.

Monty *(looking around)* Please, not so loud.

Mary Lou If that video's right, how come daddy's the only one who believes in the sci- fi movies, an' not all of us?

Amanda I believe it's related to intelligence, rather than upbringing, dear.

- Harry Yeah, it's more or less the same as sayin' 'ow come U.F.O.s only pick up dumb people?
- Amanda Less intelligent people have a propensity to believe what they're told, 'n' then stick to it.
- Rene Then they spend the rest of their lives tellin' you what the truth is-according to their parents.
- Monty What a pity old Hank didn't see that little presentation.
- Mary Lou Oh, it wouldn't have made no difference to daddy. He's like all people with set opinions. It wouldn't matter how strong the facts was you put before him, he can't change his mind. He's lost the ability to think.
- Sarsaparilla Ain't that the truth. That man got a axe to grind and my lord, he is gonna grind it.
- Amanda There are none so blind as those who will not see.
- Albert Vat is zis? A convention of cliches?

Song # 5 If You've Got An Axe To Grind

Sung by Mary Lou, Monty, Amanda and Albert

- Mary Lou** Some people spend their waking hours with far too much to say
At least, in disproportion to intelligence displayed
But brainwashed from the cradle they'll repeat from four years old
And regurgitate ad-nauseam exactly what they're told
- All** If you've got an axe to grind then surely you will grind it
If you seek the truth to find then surely you will find it
But if it's just your prejudice you wish to verify
The conclusion you've already reached will be the one you find
- Monty**
Amanda
Monty
Amanda Some people clutch their ideas like the shipwrecked to the jetsam
They seem to feel that doing so affords them some protection
From the wrath of some external force they cannot understand
But still they knock upon your door to tell you of it's plan
- Albert** Let's cheer ze open mind which seeks ze evidence empiric
Und ze villingness to change, which is ze scientific spirit
Give us all ze logic to pursue ze facts ve know
Und ze clarity of foresight to imagine where to go

- Harry So what do we do now?
- Rene We should be able to make it to Proxima.
- Amanda We'll be starving by then.
- Albert You'll be *starving* but you *von't* be starved. Zere's a big difference, believe me. But let me see vat I can do. I vill contact Earth for you, if you promise not to eat my son.
- Mary Lou You mean contact Earth? Now, in the twenty seventh century?
- Albert Ya. Vhy not?
- Frank Pop, that ain't very practical. I mean, you say 'Hello' here and now, and four and a half years later a voice at the other end says: 'Could you hold the line please?'
- Albert Ya, ya. I know zere is a four point two year time delay between us und ze earth but I vorked out a vay to squash up time.
- Monty Is that possible?
- Albert Sure it's possible. Doing it iz ze hard bit. Believe me, I've had a lot of time to think about relativity theory. It's not as if I've been diverted by gymnastics. I mean, look at me. I'm a head!
- Sarsaparilla If you could help us in any way, Mr Stein, we would be eternally grateful.
- Albert Please, call me Ein. Okay, let's see vhat ve can do here.

Albert starts pulling a few contorted faces as the video screen comes to life. This time the lights do not fade on the stage. On the screen is a close up of a young man. His hair looks like it is painted on. He has a little kiss curl painted above his forehead. He wears a weird assortment of accoutrements, is very dainty and speaks with a pronounced lisp. There is a lot of noise in the background as if a party is going on.

- Cyril (*shouting*) Hello. Cyril Stapleton. Can I help you?
- Albert Yeah. I'm after the chief administrator for ze Proxima Project.
- Cyril Hang on a tick, would you, petal. (*shouting to off camera*) Fellas! Can you keep it down a bit? I'm trying to speak to someone.

The background noise subsides.

Cyril Thanks, treasures. Hi. Sorry, I couldn't hear you. Who is this?

Albert Albert Einstein.

Cyril *(becoming surly)* Oh yeah right, Albie. Like I came down with the last meteor shower.

The video screen goes to static.

Rene What happened?

Albert He hung up on me. Do you believe ze nerve of zat guy? Vait. I'll try again.

Once again Albert contorts his face. Once again Cyril appears. He is waving to off camera telling them to turn down the music.

Cyril Hello.

Albert It's Albert.

Cyril Oh, it's you again. Now listen. I don't know why you kids do this. It's not funny. *(he starts crying)* It's the twenty seventh century for crying out loud. It's okay to come out of the closet!

The screen goes to static.

Albert *(shouting at the screen)* I know it's okay to come out of ze closet! I've just come out after four hundred and twenty years! Oi! Vat a schmuck! I'll try vone more time.

Again Albert contorts his face and again Cyril appears. He is wiping his eyes with a hanky.

Cyril *(rather pathetically)* Hello.

Albert It's Einstein. Don't hang up.

Cyril turns and nods to a person off camera.

Cyril It's him again.

V/O Give it to me.

Cyril moves off camera and a brute of a man enters shot. He looks very aggressive.

Grogan *(shouting)* Who is this?

Albert Your name is Grogan?

Grogan I know who I am. Who are you?

Albert Zis is ze brain of Albert Einstein.

Grogan pulls a really mean face and raises his finger as if he is going to get stuck into the prank caller but just as he does the picture freezes.

Albert *(to the others)* Not a very attractive sight, is it? Okay, Grogan, I've frozen time around you und your pals for a minute but I know you can still hear me, so listen up. Zis is Albert Einstein calling from ze region of ze planet Proxima. You vere expecting a call from me in about four days. Ze special pass code is as follows: Zurich-Special 1905; Berlin-General 1915 und If I'd known zey vere gonna do zat vith my theory I would have never given up vatchmaking. Do you believe me now?

The video screen unfreezes. Grogan still has his finger in the air but his tone has changed.

Grogan Albert, it's really you. I've been waiting to hear that code for my whole life. What happened? We lost contact for so long. Tell me, was the mission a success?

Albert It's a long story. I'll give you ze details later.

Grogan Great. Okay, listen. I've got great news for all the inhabitants of Proxima One. Since you left, technology has been going wild here. In the last two hundred years we've managed to colonise tens of star systems in the Milky Way, including the Proxima system. There's already a colony of one hundred and fifty thousand people on planet Proxima. I tell you what, I'll send up some entertainment and a few Proximians as a sort of a welcoming party. You guys just sit tight and enjoy. I'm getting in a teleporter right away. I'll see you when you get to Proxima. *(pause)* Oh, uh, Albert just before I go, everything did go pretty smoothly, right? I mean, I don't wanna press the point but, um, Proxima is *my* system and if there were any problems, it would sort of reflect badly upon me, if you see what I'm saying.

Albert No. Everything is fine. I shall speak vith you soon.

Grogan Great. Okay I'll send up the welcoming party.

The video screen goes to static.

Albert *(yelling out at the screen)* Und bring some schnitzel!

Frank How come you never told him the truth, pop?

Albert I'm not so sure about zat guy. I have a seventh sense about him.

Sarsaparilla You mean a sixth sense.

Albert Listen, when you've been sitting around on a box for as long as I have, you'd be amazed at ze number of senses you develop. Everybody, go, meet the Proximians. I gotta rest. Zis is ze most activity I've had in centuries. My jaw is aching.

Frank Okay, pop. And hey, pop. Thanks, huh.

Albert Don't mention it. Just buy me a nice birthday present.

The box is pulled off stage.

Mary Lou *(excited)* I wonder who they're gonna send up?

Amanda Oh Monty, finally we're going to have some guests.

Monty Come, pumpkin, we must dress for the occasion.

They start to exit.

Harry Ere, Monty, what do ya call the clobber you're wearin' then? 'Gawd, I wouldn't get that dressed up for the end of the universe.

Monty The one thing that separates human beings from the animal kingdom is dress sense. *(to Amanda)* Shall we?

Amanda Yes, Montague - let's shall.

Monty and Amanda exit, stage left.

Rene Bleedin' toffs.

Harry They have got a point though. If we're gonna 'ave guests, we should dress up a bit nicer 'n this. You never know, Rene, there might be a nice young man for you 'n all.

Rene *(embarrassed)* Dad.

Sarsaparilla You too, Mary Lou.

Mary Lou Oh momma, I been on this ship my whole life. I don't know as I'd know what to do with a real man.

Sarsaparilla Well I've been married to your father for so long I dare say, neither would I.

Rene I'm sure we could improvise though, 'eh, Mary Lou? *(winking)* You know, make it up as we go along.

Mary Lou Well, I don't know. I...

Rene moves over and takes her father and Mary Lou by the arm.

Rene No buts about it. Come on you two, let's go 'n get ready for a party.

Mary Lou I can't believe it. We're actually gonna meet some new people and have some real fun.

Rene There might even be someone for you, dad.

Harry Gawd 'elp us. At my age I'd 'ave a bleedin' 'art attack.

Rene Oh blimey, listen to the old man. Come on. See you soon, Sas. See you Mr Witherstein.

They exit, stage left.

Sarsaparilla You okay, Mr Witherspoon? You look a little worried.

Frank Huh? Oh, yeah, I'm okay. This is just not quite what I expected to wake up to.

Sarsaparilla Well now, like my ol' mammy used to say: 'You don't know you got a bum until you eat Mexican food'.

Frank What is that supposed to mean?

Sarsaparilla *(taking him by the arm)* It means, until you try somethin', you ain't ever gonna know what the experience is like. Sometimes in life you just gotta jump in 'n' swallow them enchiladas.

Frank Well, no offence to your mom, but I don't like Mexican food. It's all the same thing but with different names. The menu has more variety than the food.

Sarsaparilla To tell you the truth, I ain't never had Mexican food, neither had momma, but I think what she said was supposed to be a metaphor.

Frank A metaphor? Hey, you do read books.

Sarsaparilla Sssh, now. Hank might hear ya. C'mon, let's see if we can spruce you up for the ball.

Frank I wish I didn't share my father's misgivings.

Sarsaparilla You know what? You scientists taste real good, but you do a whole lot more thinkin' than you need to.

Frank That's my job.

Sarsaparilla Yeah, well, that maybe so, but I want you to hush your mouth now, Mr Scientist, 'cos we goin' to a party and we gonna have us a good time.

Frank Sarsaparilla, I'll bet you look real pretty all dressed up. I'm looking forward to seeing that.

Sarsaparilla *(flattered and laughing)* Why, Mr Witherside, the things you do say.

They exit together arm in arm, stage right. Sarsaparilla is still giggling. Hank and Jasper enter, stage left. Hank catches a glimpse of his wife as she leaves.

Jasper Couldn't I jus' eat 'is arm, pop? Jus' to tide me over?

Hank Jasper, will you shut up about that? Holy Aliens Two, boy, if we get to starvin', we'll eat the scientist. Speakin' of which, was that him I just seen walkin' out arm in arm with my Sarsaparilla? 'Cos if it was, I'm gonna get real angry.

Jasper Then can I eat 'im, pa?

Hank Yes, son. Then you can eat 'im.

Jasper Oh boy, oh boy. I'm so hungry I could suck the teeth out of a geophysicist.

A group of attractive dancing girls enter wearing sexy futuristic space gear, (leotards and knee- high plastic boots).

Emily Excuse me, but is this the Proxima One?

Jasper Look, pop- hors d'oeuvres!

Hank Who are you, gal and what do you all want?

Emily We're part of the welcoming party. We're the dance team.

Hank We don' know nothin' about a dance team!

Emily I'm sure this is the right place.

Hank What in the name of The Time Machine is goin' on here? I bet it's that scientist, Witherstein, causin' trouble again.

Jasper I think I'd be a lot easier if we jus' ate 'im.

Hank Be patient, Jasper. *(looking at the girls)* Somethin' tells me we're gonna get plenty to eat, real soon. Now you appetisers, you wait here a bit.

Emily *(not understanding what he means)* Okay.

Hank Come on, boy. We gonna find out wha's goin' on here.

Hank exits, stage right.

Jasper I have to admit, you is the best presented dishes I ever did see.

Jasper exits, stage right, smacking his lips.

Emily Now wasn't that a nice thing to say? *(Clapping her hands)* Okay girls, fall in for a rehearsal.

The dancing girls move into positions.

Emily Now, girls, I know that some of you are a bit nervous about this but we've been ordered to do it by the colony, so we don't have

much choice. Just keep it light-hearted, like they told us to, and everything's gonna be okay. Hit it.

Emily sings the song accompanied by the dance team.

Song # 6 Plasticine Love

Sung by Emily

When I first got to the colony
 I met a guy who claimed that he
 Was looking for my kind of a girl
 He said we'd travel all 'round the new world
 He preyed on my naivety
 His love was made of plasticine
 He was spreading it all over the world
 He was foolin' 'round with other girls
 And he left me broken hearted

So beware you girls, for young men's pearls
 Are fashioned out of plasticine love
 And the colony is full of these
 Young men and their plasticine love

Plasticine man your anatomy is a mystery to me
 Plasticine man your anatomy is a mystery to me

I don't understand why he
 Broke my heart and lied to me
 By playing all 'over the world
 By foolin' 'round with other girls
 So, all you young girls, listen to me
 Young men's love is plasticine
 They spread it all over the world
 They fool around with other girls
 And they leave you broken hearted

You'll be cold and dry, tears you'll cry
 Over nothing more than plasticine love
 And the colony is full of these
 Young men and their plasticine love

Plasticine man your anatomy is a mystery to me
 Plasticine man your anatomy is a mystery to me

They bow as the curtain closes.

End of Act One