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CAPTAIN L-RAC ON MARS!

A Play by

Heath Houseman

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CAPTAIN L-RAC ON MARS!

by Heath Houseman

CHARACTERS

DR. LAWRENCE B. TOONEY: A psychologist.

DR. KATHARINE WRIGGLEY: A noted scientist.

SETTING/TIME

An office at the Pike's Peak National Laboratories (PPNL) / The Present

AUTHOR'S NOTE

- 1.) Pronunciation of L-rac Nagas: L-RACK NUH-GAAHS.
- 2.) Pronunciation of CSICOP (when not used as an acronym): SCI-COP

Captain L-Rac on Mars!

by Heath Houseman

SETTING: *An office at the Pike's Peak National Laboratories/PPNL.*

A chair with wheels. A loveseat, Center, with end-tables on either side. A platform with steps, behind the loveseat. The top of the platform is level with the back of the loveseat.

Upstage Center is a white screen.

AT RISE: *In the darkness, Center, an image of the red and mysterious Mars landscape projected on the screen.*

Sounds of warfare come up, hold for a beat, then fade away.

A lonesome Martian wind and a snare drum march come up, sounding far, far away.

DR. WRIGGLEY steps out from behind the loveseat, next to the platform.

LIGHTS UP.

DR. WRIGGLEY wears a white lab coat, unbuttoned and pulled back, revealing her Faithful Soldier costume: Knee high boots, lots of leather and cleavage, the Heavy Metal magazine-sci-fi works.

She is the FAITHFUL SOLDIER.

DR. WRIGGLEY

There was nothin' no more. Nothin' but waste. Endless miles of tortured steel, busted-up war machines and bodies, thousands, hundreds of thousands, a graveyard of organic and inorganic engines burning in their own radioactive juices and waste. The battle was over and the smoke rose slowly, so slowly into the barren Martian sky—that is, until the winds came, winds we'd never even dreamed of on earth, winds that can tear your arms off with a single gust. The storms last for weeks, sometimes months, wrap themselves around the whole damn planet, stirrin' up the dust so everything down here is red, red, red. But hell, don't call it the Red Planet for nothin': Mars, world of war, our new battlefield, where the human blood runs red as the sand that blows in these strange winds... I was tryin' to crawl

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

into some broken-up fuselage, outta the air-blasts, wait it out till E-vac came. That's when I saw him – when we all saw him – saw him lift himself up and stand on the canyon cliff edge.

DR. TOONEY enters wearing a black full-face/reflective-visor motorcycle helmet and a beat-up brown leather bomber jacket. The helmet's visor is down, concealing his face.

He is CAPTAIN L-RAC, Daring Spacefarer.

He crosses to the loveseat, climbs the platform and stands on it, defiant, surveying the battle scene in the canyon below.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

It was a crazy thing to do, standin' there, where the winds blow like hell. He could'a been sucked up and out, like a nutsed-up wind-lover longin' for a cyclone's kiss. But it didn't matter. Not today. 'Cause they were down there, those alien bastards, what was left of 'em: The Long Haulers. And screamin' wind or no wind, he had to show 'em, show those alien sons of bitches that we were still standin'. I crawled next to him and somehow, somehow I managed to pull myself up to the edge of the wind and stand by his side.

DR. WRIGGLEY steps onto the platform with DR. TOONEY.

The two of them stand together, Captain L-rac and his Faithful Soldier. The pose is striking: Two warriors from an Edgar Rice Burroughs science fiction story.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

And we showed 'em. What we're made of. Me and my Captain. Captain L-rac Nagas: Human. Scientist. Survivor. Warrior. Man.

They hold the warrior pose for a beat. The Martian slide projection fades. The snare drum march fades.

LIGHTS DOWN.

DR. WRIGGLEY exits.

LIGHTS UP.

DR. TOONEY removes the motorcycle helmet and bomber jacket, having just entered the PPNL office, preparing for his next session with DR. WRIGGLEY.

He looks around the room for a coat rack. There isn't one, so he folds his jacket on the loveseat and puts the motorcycle helmet on an end-table, checks his watch.

He talks into a micro-recorder.

DR. TOONEY

...to prove that she is psychotic, I mustn't give any indication that I've been penetrating her fantasy world. I don't want her to suspect that this is a battle over her mental normalcy, which it indeed is, so have reached this conclusion, this "move in the game," if you will.

Stops the recorder, jots down some notes in a pocket notebook, starts the recorder again.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

Because her academic accomplishment is scientific in nature, I have been concentrating on the attribute that chiefly influenced her toward a scientific career in the first place, that being an insatiable inquisitiveness... surely, if she were a cat, she would have been killed by now.

DR. TOONEY laughs; scribbles the joke in the notebook.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

This method proposes, for the interim, that I embrace the "legitimacy" of her secret life. I feel, to completely sever Dr. Katharine from her aberration, it is essential for me to continue penetrating the delusion and from within rescue her from her lunacy.

Stops the recorder, hits rewind and listens to his recorded voice.

While DR. TOONEY's recorded voice plays, DR. WRIGGLEY enters.

Her lab coat is buttoned up, concealing her Faithful Solider costume.

She makes herself comfortable on the loveseat.

DR. TOONEY starts recording again. He circles DR. WRIGGLEY, staring at her as if she were a lab rat.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

Our latest adventure together was quite extraordinary. The intended battle, having just been waged in a steeply wind carved Martian canyon, was the first human victory over the alien invaders, the so-called Long Haulers. The loss of human life, as expected, was enormous. After I brought Dr. Wriggley out of the regression, I informed her that I'd finished reading her written materials on the subject of Captain L-rac and his ragtag army of do-gooder misfits, of her future-life and adventures with them, her arguments and

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

blueprints for undiscovered and fantastic energies, and even the garnered evidence, if I can use that word, in support of said energies, a body of work that is too improbable and extraordinary to admit belief, of course, but even so, because of the work involved, the time invested, the attention to detail – the sheer volume – it is, to the untrained eye, extremely convincing material. (*Boyish; eager*) However, and this is what surprises me most, I think, considering the source of the material and her monumental... no, mind-blowing IQ: The story itself and the characters, when the convincing science and argument is removed, is distinctly pubescent in nature, melodramatic, like an Edgar Rice Burroughs novel, *John Carter Of Mars*. Lots of flowing hormones. And, I have to admit, that I, uh, that I find it most entertaining.

He holds a beat as he studies DR. WRIGGLEY, cool and scientific—until she crosses her legs.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

After having... (*Clears his throat*) ...studied Dr. Wiggley's journals, with, uh, with her help I have solved some of the problems of... consistency – continuity? – in her writings. (*Beat*) I am extremely eager to continue the relationship and carry on the adventure. Oh. Um. Miscellaneous/personal: Don't forget to look at the carburetor on the cycle. Clogged with street gunk, my guess, I dunno. Should have bought the BMW instead of the Harley. Make a note of that for Janice, for future reference, and tell Janice to call the Harley dealership and complain.

DR TOONEY stops the recorder.

DR. WRIGGLEY

How's the ride, Dr. Tooney? Still giving you troubles?

DR. TOONEY

Yes. I'm afraid you were right.

DR WRIGGLEY/DR. TOONEY, *Together*

Should have bought the BMW.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Harley Davidson's are notoriously unreliable.

DR. TOONEY

Yes. I'm becoming aware of that, thank you.

DR. WRIGGLEY

They do look cool, however, and I suppose that is what counts when you purchase one. Having that big fat Hog between your legs, roaring down the street, bursting eardrums with your customized exhaust—intent on making the hapless driver aware of your presence, of course—and all that leather, well, I suppose, at that point, who cares if it's reliable or not? The ego has been stroked, has it not?

DR. TOONEY

Yes. In a manner of speaking, it has... And why is it, once again, that you know so much about Harley Davidson's, Dr. Wiggley? Just so happen to be a Harley Davidson aficionado, do you? Rather convenient.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Just so happen to be a quick study, to be honest, especially when something piques my interest.

DR. TOONEY

And your interest has been piqued.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I'm a fan... And then there's all that black leather to think about. Still no place to hang your hat, I see.

She points to DR. TOONEY's jacket.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

If you're lucky – if you're still here, that is – in about six months you might get a hook on the wall – for your jacket to hang on. The people here at Pike's Peak National Laboratories are very serious, serious science going on here, but when it comes to efficiency and the simple, practical things in life, well, they're nearly as unreliable as your poor Harley Davidson.

DR. TOONEY

I guess I'll just have to forgo the pleasure of having a place to hang my, uh, hat. Goodbye to the simple things in life.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Welcome to PPNL! By the time you do get that hook on the wall, Doctor, our sessions will be over with, PPNL will be satisfied and we'll have to go our separate ways. Me back to work in the lab and you riding off into the sunset on your Harley Davidson. Or should I say pushing into the sunset?

DR. TOONEY

With a wrench.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Yes. Very good. I liked that. With a wrench indeed.

DR. TOONEY

You look positively sunny this morning, Katharine.

DR. WRIGGLEY

And you look rather chipper yourself, Lawrence B. Tooney. What's that "B" stand for anyway, hmmm?

DR. TOONEY

Some other time perhaps. Now...

DR. WRIGGLEY

Yes, I agree: Now. I'm ready.

DR. TOONEY

I appreciate the enthusiasm, Dr. Wriggley, but there are some questions I wish to ask before we uhh shift into higher gear.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Frankly, Doctor, it is my future we're examining, after all. Quite simply, I want to know what happens. I'm more curious than ever now. We won a tremendous victory on Mars, which is quite something considering the technological superiority of the alien enemy. But more than that, something's amiss with Captain L-rac. There's an uncertainty in his behavior. I want to examine that, find out why that is.

DR. TOONEY

As do I, Dr. Wriggley. But, please—

DR. WRIGGLEY

Why postpone? We can discuss and compare notes afterwards, ask your questions. After. After I return.

DR. TOONEY

I don't think so. No. I insist we—

DR. WRIGGLEY

Afterward.

DR. TOONEY

Dr. Wriggley, I understand that you and I have developed a rather pleasant doctor/patient camaraderie, but that doesn't alter the fact that you are my patient, in my care, and I am your doctor, regardless of who's footing the bill and/or why. At this point, the why is guilty until proven innocent.

DR. WRIGGLEY

And I thought we still lived in a democratic constitutional republic, Doctor.

DR. TOONEY

We do. But you don't necessarily work for one, I'm sorry to say—remember what they did to Oppenheimer: Shut. Him. Down. They'll shut you down too.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I'm not Oppenheimer.

DR. TOONEY

They thought he was a security risk. They think the same of you. The fact that they've allowed us to have these sessions is unorthodox enough—quite right: You are not Oppenheimer. You are something else altogether.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I'm a fearless defender of the Bill of Rights.

DR. TOONEY

So the tensions haven't eased between you and—

DR. WRIGGLEY

My passkey to the Men's Room has been revoked, Doctor. I have to use the Little Girl's Room now. Did you know that in some countries in Europe women are allowed to walk right by the boys standing in line and use the Men's Room to pee?

DR. TOONEY

It's also true that in some countries in Europe men don't have to pay to use the toilet and women do.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I'm still angry as hell about that.

DR. TOONEY

Yes, you are. But not about that.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Are you suggesting I'm angry because they broke into my personal files, violated my home, collected my journals on Captain L-rac Nagas and my future-life? And all this time I thought it was because of those darn European countries that make women pay to pee.

DR. TOONEY

"Violated." Interesting word choice.

DR. WRIGGLEY

"Raped" would be more accurate.

DR. TOONEY

I think equating this personal trespass to rape is rather extreme, don't you? PPNL hasn't broken any laws: And from their perspective you are indeed a security risk. They had every right to acquire your journals.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I would like to get started. Can we get started, please?

DR. TOONEY

We will get started when I say so, yes?

DR. WRIGGLEY

All of this is happening because I had a momentary lapse of reason, crucial lack of judgment.

DR. TOONEY

You never should have brought your journal on Captain L-rac to work, is that it?

DR. WRIGGLEY

My bad.

DR. TOONEY

PPNL would have found out about them and your ability eventually, don't you think?

DR. WRIGGLEY

It was never my intention to breathe a word of this to anyone, and it would have remained my little secret if it wasn't for my extraordinarily absentminded blunder and the—

DR. TOONEY

Perhaps you wanted the journal to be found, have you thought of that? After all, you left it in the lunch room.

DR. WRIGGLEY

—and the competitive nature of my scientific colleagues. We're very Darwinian, we scientists—it's kill or be killed, and we go cannibal. That a colleague of mine found, read and then gave my journal to the boys in the Men's Room is not surprising. In fact, it's predictable and a rather sad but accurate – dare I say honest? – reflection of human nature.

DR. TOONEY

Katharine, you are going to have to trust me. I assure you, we're not in the Men's Room now. *(Beat)* And, yes, we will continue to discuss things... afterward. Fine with you? I thought as much. Are you ready?

DR. WRIGGLEY nods and drops into an apparent altered state of consciousness in an instant, without any help or guidance from DR. TOONEY.

LIGHTS FADE. The Mars projection appears on the screen. The snare drum march comes up.

DR. TOONEY and DR. WRIGGLEY become Captain L-rac and his Faithful Soldier, he in bomber jacket and motorcycle helmet, she with pulled back lab coat, revealing her sci-fi costume.

The Faithful Soldier throws herself from the loveseat. She rolls on the floor, reaches into her lab coat pocket and pulls out a calculator.

She aims the calculator at Captain L-rac. The Captain recoils as if he's been hit by a laser blast. The Faithful Soldier jumps forward and punches Captain L-rac in the gut, then flips him over her shoulder. She pounces on his chest, straddling him.

She inoculates him with a pencil.

Captain L-rac moans in pain. The Faithful Soldier picks his limp body up and flings him into the chair with wheels.

Captain L-rac is unconscious.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Alien bastards! You'll never get him, you hear me? Never!

She crosses to Captain L-rac, examines him, then moves to the loveseat, falling into it.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Can't afford to lose the Captain. Not the Captain, oh god, no, not the Captain... Some sort of alien-hybrid blood cell, injected into his system. Bastards! Damn them all to hell! He would'a turned over, gone the way of the mad dog, his ass permanently kicked if I hadn't gotten to him in time. Yeah. And we'd all be Martian toast by now, buttered on both sides. Gotta keep our wits about us. We don't, the whole human race is... the human race... I'm losing it, Doc, startin' to fade.

DR WRIGGLEY Buttons up the lab coat, concealing the sci-fi costume. DR. TOONEY removes the helmet and bomber jacket. The Mars projection fades. The snare drum march fades.

LIGHTS UP.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

I can still smell him, though, the Captain. All sweat Barbs' and nucleic acids—sugary sweet, and something like Old Spice. Apparently colognes haven't gone outta style in the far flung future, Doc. People, even in battle, still wanna smell nice. But that's Captain L-rac for you. One graceful, tough son of a bitch.

DR. TOONEY

How is he?

DR. WRIGGLEY

I inoculated him with the anti-cell. Gonna hurt like hell, but yeah, he'll survive.

DR. TOONEY

Good. Now, tell me about the Long Haulers.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Can't see 'em anymore. But I can still hear 'em – just – crawling around out there. Can smell 'em too—not Old Spice, more like, I dunno, like... like dry leaves or somethin'. Ever smell dry leaves, Doc? I know that doesn't sound scary or nothin', but that's what they smell like: Dry, brittle, lifeless leaves.

DR. TOONEY

And you're all right, Katharine?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Yeah, I am. Breather pills started to wear off, used up my ration. Have to get back to domebase, restock. I love it there, all those trees and atmospheric converters pumpin' away—a breath of fresh air, literally, Doc. I wish you could see it. Mars is changin' us. We're changin' Mars. If it wasn't for this damn war... You still with me? Am I still with you?

DR. TOONEY

I am, yes, I'm with you, Katharine. Yes, dry leaves. Why, I almost smell them myself.

DR. WRIGGLEY

It's goin', Doc, it's... (*Drained*) ...gone, Dr. Tooney. It's released me. I'm back completely now. Hmmm... I can still taste the Martian sand in my mouth.

DR. TOONEY

Any residual smells? Dry leaves? Old Spice?

DR. WRIGGLEY

No. Nothing, except for the sand.

DR. TOONEY

Interesting. You had me a little worried there. Next time, if you can, be more careful? I wouldn't want you to... to expire out there. That would be, well—I don't know what that would be, to be perfectly frank. Caution is essential, Katharine, under these extreme circumstances. (*Beat*) Katharine?—uhm, Dr. Wriggley? I've been meaning to ask you, that is to say, I'd like to know, to understand better, how you... get yourself there.

DR. WRIGGLEY

As I've told you: I don't know.

DR. TOONEY

Is it something akin to time travel?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Perhaps it's like wishing. Or desire. Of course, I cannot explain this scientifically. Somehow I'm just there, in my future, my future-self, my future-life.

DR. TOONEY

Fascinating. I wonder if perhaps we humans, if all of us, have an ability to explore not only past-lives but future-lives as well. There have been cases of future-life regression documented under hypnosis, but your case is different in that it's more like an example of simple will.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Yes, I agree.

DR. TOONEY

I must confide, Katharine, that sometimes I, myself, feel drawn into the very experience, like I actually undergo what you relay to me. It is very real.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Indeed.

DR. TOONEY

Yes.

DR. WRIGGLEY

For me as well.

DR. TOONEY

What kind of cologne did you say your father wore?

DR. WRIGGLEY

I've never said and you've never asked and it wasn't Old Spice, Lawrence, if that's what you're trying to get at. My father always smelled of Ivory Soap. And nothing like dry leaves, I assure you. Try a different pathway, Doctor.

DR. TOONEY

Fine. Would you like some water before we continue?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Yes, please. Wash the sand out of my mouth.

He gives her a bottle of water, she takes a swig, swishes it around in her mouth, gargles.

DR. TOONEY

How are they treating you here at the Laboratories? How's work?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Work? Oh... Oh, no, I don't work anymore. They've locked me out of Research. I file. I secretary. I have plenty of time to daydream. But I don't work.

DR. TOONEY

And how are you with that?

DR. WRIGGLEY

A-OK.

DR. TOONEY

I hope you've heard the last of the "Spend more time on planet earth" witticisms. Any recent incidents or berating comments I should know about?

DR. WRIGGLEY

A-OK.

DR. TOONEY

I know you're feeling exposed here at the PPNL facility, but, as you are well aware, the option to meet at my office is not open to debate. Are you becoming more comfortable having our sessions here?

DR. WRIGGLEY

I said everything's A-OK.

DR. TOONEY

Well, you're in good company then, you and Alan Shepard.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Would you rather I utter Alan Shepard's prayer?

DR. TOONEY

Not that I don't appreciate the sentiment, but no. Thank you. Let's implement an orbital maneuver. How is everything at home? And please don't say it's—

DR. WRIGGLEY

Super.

DR. TOONEY

How's Benny?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Peachy.

DR. TOONEY

Is he there for you, now that your lives are a little, how shall we say, jumbled?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Always. He's always there for me.

DR. TOONEY

Good, good. Spend some decent quality time with him lately?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Most every evening, I guess.

DR. TOONEY

Hm. You ever have time alone?

DR. WRIGGLEY

When I sleep.

DR. TOONEY

Oh. And how are those sleeps?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Relatively dreamless, always comforting, physically stimulating. The usual.

DR. TOONEY

Did you dream of Captain L-rac on Mars before he found you?

DR. WRIGGLEY

No.

DR. TOONEY

When did Captain L-rac find you?

DR. WRIGGLEY

He didn't find me, Doctor. I found him, and my future-life—we've been through this before, Lawrence.

DR. TOONEY

But—indulge me, please. How? Forgive my slowness of mind, Dr. Wriggley, but I just don't have the speed of your IQ. I need you to help me understand.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I'm a scientist, Dr. Tooney. I have asked these questions myself. And I have compiled what I think is thoughtful and valuable data in my journals, which you yourself have studied.

DR. TOONEY

Yes, I have. Exhaustively. However—

DR. WRIGGLEY

I am not a fame and fortune seeking fool, Lawrence. I do not want to land on television. I lead a life of anonymity and I like it that way: Physics, astrophysics, microbiology—there is a long, long list of hermitic letters after my name for a reason. Nor am I an ignoramus or quack. Don't baby me. Don't talk down to me. Don't side-step the issues. And don't imply. *(Beat)* Let's drop the pretense, shall we? Let's be bold: I am certain that I am not mentally ill, as my superiors and co-workers believe me to be—as you believe me to be. Because I cannot explain how I experience my future-life on Mars does not mean it isn't happening. There is no compelling evidence that I am not having these experiences.

DR. TOONEY

If you mean to say your ability is real because it has not been proven false—normally, I would not and could not agree in favor of ignorance, but in your case...

DR. WRIGGLEY

So you are in doubt. I can see it. In your eyes.

DR. TOONEY gives her a slow, careful nod: Yeeees.

DR. TOONEY

But. Extraordinary claims need extraordinary evidence. Even if I believe you, we musn't forget that.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Since the discovery of my journals, I have had no voice, no choice, no defense. If this isn't a struggle for my mental normalcy – if you don't believe that – then this is a struggle to prove to them that I am not crazy but am truly experiencing my future-life, caught in some as yet to be explained "rift in time" or some such thing. As far as you and I are concerned, what evidence I've gathered points toward the most outrageous explanation, as unbelievable and as improbable as it sounds. All things being equal, there is no simple answer because all things are not equal here. So long, Occam's Razor. Admit it, Doctor. I am not psychotic. I am not delusional. I am genuinely experiencing my future-life on Mars.

DR. TOONEY

Um... I'll lay my cards on the table. OK? It is unlikely that a person of your stature and training in the sciences, not to mention superior intellect and reputation, would be prone to storytelling. Your passion is remarkable. That in and of itself is nearly enough to convince me, yes, and there is a certain amount of evidence in your literature which I agree is credible. Nevertheless, to actually believe that you are traveling to the far future and experiencing adventures on Mars with your as yet unmade future-self and one awfully heroic Captain L-rac, that this is indeed real, that you are not psychotic, delusional, that I am—that I am beginning to embrace the legitimacy of your future-life and that of Captain L-rac Nagas, is simply, well...

DR. WRIGGLEY

Is what, Lawrence? Say it.

DR. TOONEY

...astonishing.

LIGHTS DOWN. The Mars projection returns. The snare drum march comes up.

Captain L-rac and his Faithful Soldier appear in full costume.

Captain L-rac hurls himself onto the loveseat. The two of them sit shoulder to shoulder. They appear to be piloting a flying machine. They push buttons on an invisible console. Captain L-rac is doing the flying. As usual, his helmet's visor is down, concealing his face. It's a bumpy ride.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Enemy signal comin' in strong, sir. Shields active! Neutron-lite mines high and low! Compensating... Gonna get a little rocky. Signal lock-on. Targeting thermo NKs.

Sounds of warfare come up.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Long Hauler war ships! Five o'clock and movin' fast! Evasive tactics...! Takin' hits...! Shields at 60 percent... 35 percent...! 15! 10! 5! 4! 3! 2! 1! One and three quarters! Two quarters! One fourth! We've lost our shields! Can't take this kind of heat, Captain! The continuous-time stochastic processes will break us apart! We've gotta get the hell outta here, now, before it's too—

Captain L-rac steadies his Faithful Soldier's hand. She calms in an instant.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Thermos locked on and targeted, sir: Firing.

LIGHTS UP.

Captain L-rac and his Faithful Soldier continue to fly the loveseat vessel. The Mars projection remains.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

It's a trap! Losin' altitude. Long Hauler Nexus Net directly below us. Pull up, Captain! Tractor beam lock-on. They're takin' us into the Net. Oh my god, they're takin' us in.

Sounds of warfare continue. Captain L-rac grabs his Faithful Soldier and throws her "out" of the vessel's cockpit. He's about to throw himself out too, but stops, holds a beat, then removes his helmet. The sounds of warfare and the snare drum march cut off.

DR. TOONEY

Um.

DR. WRIGGLEY comes to apparent full consciousness, buttons up her lab coat, concealing her sci-fi costume.

DR. WRIGGLEY

...it's gone. Yeah, I'm back again, Dr. Tooney. We're back.

Um. DR. TOONEY

Dr. Tooney? DR. WRIGGLEY

Er-uh-ooo. DR. TOONEY

I think we were captured. Doctor? Lawrence? DR. WRIGGLEY

Katharine? I'm going to have to ask you to leave. DR. TOONEY

We've still got fifteen minutes. DR. WRIGGLEY

I'll credit it to you. DR. TOONEY

Wednesday then? DR. WRIGGLEY

Uh... yes, uh Wednesday, same time, same channel. DR. TOONEY

You're being facetious. DR. WRIGGLEY

Um. No. No. Yes, but no. Please go. Please. I will see you Wednesday. DR. TOONEY

DR. WRIGGLEY exits.

DR. TOONEY pulls his cell from a holster attached to his belt, tosses it in the air, spinning it like a cowboy's pistol, catches it, dials.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

Uh, Janice? Yes—no, no, fine, just fine, I'm fine. How's the office without me? Good? Good. Listen, do me a favor, would you? I'm gonna make your life hell, sorry in advance: Cancel all my appointments for the next... for the foreseeable future, please. Yes. Sorry, but—no. That's correct. I'll be staying here at the Laboratory. For as long as it takes. Yes. Complicated. Oh! And, oh, on my desk—yes, behind the bust—you'll find the Harley Davidson dealer's number scribbled on a post-it. Yes, that's right, stuck to the back of Freud's head. What? That's why I pay you the big bucks, Janice. Tell them I'm not happy

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

with my Harley. I am not happy with the Harley at all. Can you do that? Thanks. Big Christmas bonus.

He places the cell in its holster, holds a beat, deep in thought.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK. The Mars projection is still visible.

The distant snare drum march comes up.

We see DR. TOONEY in a collection of frozen moments/poses, five in all, each one bathed in a single spotlight, starting Stage Left, then moving Right.

When a spot fades, DR. TOONEY crosses Stage Right in darkness and then another spot comes up and reveals his new pose.

With each pose DR. TOONEY is more and more convinced and enthusiastic so that by the fifth pose he looks like a mad scientist.

DR. WRIGGLEY enters when DR. TOONEY's first pose appears in spotlight. She climbs the platform and watches him go through his transformation.

By the fifth and final pose, DR. TOONEY is Downstage Right with some of DR. WRIGGLEY's papers crumpled in one hand, a piece of chalk in the other and a chalkboard full of complex mathematics and diagrams behind him.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

(To AUDIENCE) I know what you're thinking! I used to be one of you. Convinced it was the storytelling of a genius psychotic, I felt it was my job to rescue her from within her lunacy. But let me tell every psychologist, psychiatrist and scientist here today—and I thank each and every one of you for coming—let me tell you what changed my life: I discovered the truth. *(Beat)* My fellow colleagues, Dr. Wriggley can enter into – by sheer force of will – that other future-life. Like you, I kept asking, where are the facts? And I found them, enough to persuade even a skeptic like me: In Dr. Wriggley's journals! It was ridiculous of me to doubt them in the first place. They are chock-full to overflowing with hard scientific data. Her explicit personal future-life experiences, the dozens of technical treatises on alien politics, geography, architecture, astronomy, geology, alien-life forms and sexuality, sex with said alien-life forms and the sexual benefits and consequences, alien, human and hybrid genealogy, the ecology of planets and other stars, the future of the entertainment industry and technology, not to mention, the future of the future—to name but a few! Could

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

this be the delusion of one stoic, rather unimaginative and lonely, but not unattractive, scientist? Or could it be sure evidence of a reality and ability we have yet to understand? Yes! And the proof is in the details! Now, I want to assure you that I'm not shooting from the hip, I haven't had a religious experience, I'm not delusionary, hypnotized, on drugs, been drinking, and I haven't been abducted by aliens. (*Laughs*) This is based on research and good science. The experience is very real. Allow me to illustrate. Take yesterday's session:

SPOTLIGHT FADES. The distant snare drum march continues. The Mars projection remains.

DR. TOONEY becomes Captain L-rac. In full costume, he crosses Downstage and wrestles with an invisible Long Hauler alien. He punches, he gouges, he kicks, fighting back with all he's got.

Now he's caught by each arm. He resists, but the aliens seem to be winning, trying to tear him in two. It looks like it's curtains for Captain L-rac.

He reaches for his cell phone, pulls it from its hip-holster and blasts the hell out of the aliens, blam, blam, blam!

Afterwards, he flips the phone like a cowboy's pistol and places it back in the holster.

He removes his helmet and jacket.

LIGHTS UP.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

I was right there with Captain L-rac. Fighting shoulder to shoulder. Bam! Boom! Pow! Can anyone explain that to me? I could smell the dry-leaf-stink of the aliens, those dirty alien bastards. Could smell Captain L-rac's Old Spice-like cologne, graceful, tough son of a bitch. And Katharine? She's been abducted, and ever since then, the Captain and I have been searching for her. I'm convinced she's still alive and that we will find... I, I'm—I'm sorry, what...? No, I don't need to have my head examined and... and I am a shrink, thank you very much.

DR. WRIGGLEY steps off the platform, exits.

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

Huh. I see how it is. Disbelievers. Heretics. Deniers. That's what you are. The lot of you. I had hoped you would be enthusiastic about my discovery, that you'd support me—if nothing else, trust me. I'm a scientist. I know what I'm talking about. I have scientific consensus on my side. Yes, that's right: When 99% of lunar scientists agree that the moon is made of cheese, it is no longer open to debate. The moon is made of cheese. Once you

DR. TOONEY, *Continued*

believe me, I will have scientific consensus, and you will believe me, believe me, that the moon is made of cheese. I know you will. Look at all the facts I've collected! Look at all the data! But what about, what about the—what about the what? The scientific method? Sorry? No. No, no, I haven't faked any data, nor have I altered data to produce a narrative that supports—well, yes, but continuity is... Look, I simply made adjustments to keep everything in her journals consistent, but that's not... Oh, ha, ha, OK. I see. You can't trick me. You're close-minded and cynical, afraid to embrace the unknown, that's what it is, terrified of something new! You resent my success and this has nothing to do with the size of my penis, thank you very much! I will not allow your ignorance to stop me, oh no, not me! I will stand my ground, alone if need be, but stand I will, and when this is over, you will see that I will still-be-standing... still! Good day!

DR. WRIGGLEY enters, catching DR. TOONEY addressing the AUDIENCE.

The drum battle march cuts off, but the Mars projection remains.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Dr. Tooney...?

DR. TOONEY

Dr. Wiggley! Um, uh, er...

DR. WRIGGLEY

Practicing a speech or having your very own psychotic delusion?

DR. TOONEY

You're early.

DR. WRIGGLEY

No, I'm not. Right on time. I'm never early and I'm never late. May I hear it?

DR. TOONEY

Hear what?

DR. WRIGGLEY

The speech.

DR. TOONEY

Oh. Oh, no, no, no. I was just imagining what it would be like, you know, telling myself stories—the speech needs work, especially toward the end where I, uh, lose it, uh, I mean, when everything falls—it's not quite ready.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Later, then. Can't wait.

DR. TOONEY

Me too. I am rather anxious, Katharine, to get started, as I'm sure you are as well. What of your future-life, eh? Is she tortured at the sticky pads of the enemy? And what of Captain L-rac? Will he and I rescue you today? Come, come, let's get started! Zoom-a-zoom-zoom!

DR. WRIGGLEY

Have you been drinking by any chance, Doctor?

DR. TOONEY

No.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Prescribed yourself a strong stimulant, perhaps?

DR. TOONEY

No.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Fall and hit your head?

DR. TOONEY

No.

DR. WRIGGLEY

But there's something you're not telling me.

DR. TOONEY

You're probably thrown by my kinetic energy—it can be somewhat overwhelming, I know, especially when I get excited—grrrr, watch out, *Easy Rider* here I come. And, yes, you're right, OK, OK, OK, I have something to tell you, exciting news!

DR. WRIGGLEY

Oh. Boy.

DR. TOONEY

As you know, I've been going over and over your data, our notes, our sessions, the recordings, joining you on your future journeys, for quite some time now and... and I feel there must be no more secrets between us.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I agree.

DR. TOONEY

Not if we're going to take this to the Next Level.

DR. WRIGGLEY

The next...?

DR. TOONEY

Level. Yes. I have an announcement to make: Katharine. I'm convinced. Utterly.

DR. WRIGGLEY

You're not trying to convince me you are convinced, as part and parcel of therapy?

DR. TOONEY

No, I am not. And to be honest, I've been convinced for a while, but I was afraid, perhaps even ashamed, to admit it.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Well, if that is indeed the case, I think it might be prudent for us to lay all our cards on the table—

DR. TOONEY

Doctor. I believe you. We are tapping into an as yet to be discovered natural human resource, a mysterious human potential: The ability to experience your future-life on Mars! We need more documentation, evidence, facts, yes. Then we'll publish. I've called a number of journals and magazines, including *Nature*, *National Science Weekly*, *Skeptic*, even the... (*Spells this out*) C.S.I.C.O.P.

DR. WRIGGLEY

You called The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal?

DR. TOONEY

Yes. That was the speech you caught me practicing—for them.

DR. WRIGGLEY

For CSICOP. You're planning on giving a speech to CSICOP. About me.

DR. TOONEY

Don't worry, Katharine. I've been convinced. How then can they not be? But that's in the future! Let's focus on the present, today's session. It is my hope that the Captain and I will rescue you, uh, I mean, your future-self. Now. Will yourself into the future!

DR. WRIGGLEY

Um, y-yes, uh, wait a minute...

DR. TOONEY

What if I concentrate with you? Will that help?

DR. TOONEY concentrates. It doesn't help.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Lawrence. Did you really call CSICOP?

DR. TOONEY

Oh, yes.

Oh, my.
DR. WRIGGLEY

DR. WRIGGLEY takes a deep breath and descends into an apparent altered state of consciousness.

I'm here, Doc.
DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Good, good.
DR. TOONEY

The snare drum march comes up.

I can smell the dry-leaf-stink of the aliens. Oh, it's horrible.
DR. WRIGGLEY

I can smell it too! Whoof! Where's the Captain, where's my future-self?
DR. TOONEY

I don't know—dunno. Seems I'm alone. I'm... I'm above the floor, I think.
DR. WRIGGLEY

LIGHTS FADE into darkness. DR. TOONEY exits.

DR. WRIGGLEY turns into the Faithful Soldier, costume exposed. She crosses behind the loveseat, steps up the platform and raises her arms as if strung up in shackles.

The Mars projection remains.

I'm hanging—hangin'—from the ceiling somehow, I dunno. Bastards! Sons of bitches! I don't feel well. Oh god, I think I'm gonna puke. Captain? Where are you?
DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Captain L-rac enters in full costume.

Captain! I'm here! Above you!
DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

He climbs over the loveseat, reaches the platform and tries to free her. It is impossible.

Hurry! The Long Haulers are coming!
DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

She convulses, wracked with pain.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Oh! Uck! Ew! Somethin'... wrong. Aaaaah!

She falls forward, dropping to the loveseat. Captain L-rac crosses to her and cradles her head.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Cuttin' away at my guts, somethin' monstrous inside, an alien, alive...

She screams, convulses, spits up blood.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Aw, hell... This is it, Captain. End of story. The whole ball o' wax. It's accountability time. Bastards got me. Sick... alien... bastards. Oh god!

More pain, more convulsing, more screaming, then... she pulls her dog tags from her neck and gives them to Captain L-rac.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

...here. Take 'em. To remember me by. *(Beat)* You're my Captain. And I'm your Faithful Soldier. And I told you, you dumb son of a bitch, you shoulda' bought the BMW instead of the Harley.

She kisses the Captain on the visor, convulses and dies. Captain L-rac jerks his head back and screams in despair. He pulls the helmet off.

LIGHTS UP.

The Mars projection shuts off and the snare drum march cuts off.

DR. TOONEY weeps.

DR. TOONEY

Oh!

DR. WRIGGLEY

Dr. Tooney...? Damn, I bit my tongue. Ow.

DR. TOONEY

Oh!

DR. WRIGGLEY

Lawrence...? Are you all right?

DR. TOONEY

She's dead!

I'm sorry.

DR. WRIGGLEY

You're dead!

DR. TOONEY

I know. It's hard.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Oh my god, oh my god, she's—

DR. TOONEY

Doctor?

DR. WRIGGLEY

DEAD! DEAD! DEAD!

DR. TOONEY

DR. WRIGGLEY slaps DR. TOONEY. Beat.

I didn't know what else to do. You were so excited, and when you mentioned CSICOP, well, I panicked a little, rushed the ending. I can't believe I bit my tongue.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Wha... what?

DR. TOONEY

I said, I can't believe I bit my tongue. Got a bit rough there, at the end. Sorry about that. My future-self is young and feisty. I wish I was like that, in real life.

DR. WRIGGLEY

My head hurts. Oh my god. My head hurts. Did she say – wait a – just before she died, did she say, "You should have bought the BMW instead of the Harley?" Is that what she said? Why would your future-self say that?

DR. TOONEY

Lawrence, you're not listening: Because I wanted her to.

DR. WRIGGLEY

You want/you did?

DR. TOONEY

Yes. I wanted you to know. You needed to know.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Wait, wait—slow down. She's dead. Your future-self is dead. How are you handling this? Are you handling it well? I am not handling this well.

DR. TOONEY

DR. WRIGGLEY

No, you're not, Lawrence.

DR. TOONEY

And, and what of our Captain? What of the Long Haulers and the war on Mars?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Lawrence.

DR. TOONEY

What of—Dr. Wriggley! Just um just what the hell is going on here?

DR. WRIGGLEY

This is going to be harder than I thought. *(Beat)* You might want to sit down, Doctor. Sit down. Lawrence. Sit!

DR. TOONEY sits down.

DR. WRIGGLEY, *Continued*

Now, I want you to keep your temper in check. All right?

DR. TOONEY

I'm sorry? Temper?

DR. WRIGGLEY

Promise me.

DR. TOONEY

But—? All right, yes... my temper is in check.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Good. *(Beat)* Not to put too fine a point on it, Doctor, but I've been telling a story, making it up—as it were.

DR. TOONEY

What on earth are you talking about?

DR. WRIGGLEY

(As if to a child) From the very beginning. None of it is real. You knew that once.

DR. TOONEY

That's um... impossible.

DR. WRIGGLEY

No. Given the alternative, sir, it's very probable.

DR. TOONEY

Nope. Even if you yourself aren't aware, Dr. Wiggley, you have been abducted into your future. The future aliens have done something to your present brain. That's it! You'll probably have Lost Time now, implants under your skin, and anal probes. They always have anal probes. Lots and lots of anal probes.

DR. WRIGGLEY

Listen to yourself, Doctor, and you will know that I am telling the truth.

Beat.

DR. TOONEY

I see. No, I mean, *I see*. Well, then, that means then that I was right after all, you are psychotic. Delusional, I am—I mean, I am after all, uh, your doctor, and you are here with me, proof positive of, uh, of your psychosis.

DR. WRIGGLEY

I may be a little crazy, but I doubt it's anything clinical. More like eccentric. Foolhardy perhaps. I'm here mostly because my superiors and you insisted I be here.

DR. TOONEY

Oh... oh! I see, oh-hohoho! You think you're so clever. You and that sky high IQ. Yeah, well... I knew. I knew that, that it was a story, oh yeah, yeah, weeks ago, was just giving you enough psychological rope to hang yourself and hang yourself you indeed have. Ha, ha, ha! Nanny-nanny-poo-poo, I got you-hoo!

DR. WRIGGLEY

I couldn't do it anymore, Lawrence. I am concerned about your mental health.

DR. TOONEY

My mental health? My mental...? But, no, um... Do you realize what you're saying, do you? (*Real loss; boyish*) No more Captain L-rac. No more adventures on Mars.

DR. WRIGGLEY

No more stories.

Long beat.

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes