

# **Green Eyed Monsters**

A Benny audio script by

**Dave Stone**

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Bernice Summerfield Created by Paul Cornell  
Jason Kane created by Dave Stone  
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Scene 1

WE START WITH THE STANDARD 'ADVENTURE IS MY NAME' THEME TRACK  
...

WHEN IT'S GONE ON FOR QUITE LONG ENOUGH IT BECOMES SLIGHTLY  
TINNY, OBVIOUSLY A RECORDING -

THEN IT'S SUDDENLY TERMINATED IN THE CELEBRATED RECORD-NEEDLE-  
WRENCHED-OFF-THE-DECK MANNER.

BENNY  
I can't imagine *what* I was thinking.

AMBIENCE SAYS WE'RE IN BENNY'S ROOMS IN THE BRAXIATEL  
COLLECTION.

GENERAL BACKGROUND SOUNDS OF A GURGLING BABY.

THE FAINT AND POSITIONALLY-VARIABLE HUM OF JOSEPH THE PORTER  
ON HIS FLOATING IMPELLERS - JUST ENOUGH TO FIX HIS PRESENCE.

BENNY  
So are your recording subroutines up and running, Joseph? I want to - don't float  
right in front of his face like that! You'll frighten him! Probably give him a phobia  
about floating silver balls for the rest of his life!

JOSEPH  
(cast-member affecting a posh accent and robotised)  
I don't believe I'm frightening him, Bernice. He's far too young to even be aware of  
me as such. He seems extraordinarily advanced for his age, though. He shouldn't be  
so much as recognising discrete objects - but it's as if he understands every word I  
say. Whosa doozy-woosy little clever, den?

BENNY  
(warningly)  
Joseph ...

JOSEPH  
Er, sorry.

BENNY  
You know what I said about using baby-talk in front of ... well, you know what I said.  
I'm not going to have the poor child starting out in life by thinking people talk like  
complete and utter idiots. Even if they *are* complete and utter idiots. Right, then,  
Joseph. Ready to record?

JOSEPH  
I've been recording for several minutes, now, Bernice.

BENNY

Then be prepared for some really heavy memory-editing in the near future. Okay. (puts on speaking-to-camera voice) Hello there, I'm Bernice Summerfield, and this is my all-new, all-singing, dancing and inexpressibly wonderful diary. I've decided to start keeping one holostatically now, because - goddess only knows, the way my life goes sometimes - almost anything can happen and mostly it always does. So god forbid, if the worst ever comes to the worst, I don't want to be remembered by just a collection of tatty old notebooks ...

THE BABY-SOUNDS BECOME SLIGHTLY MORE NOTICEABLE.

BENNY

And that's because of you, really. I'm making this for you. There you are - ten little perfect toes, eight little fingers. And two thumbs. You're perfect. Little Peter. I *was* going to call you Peanut when you were just about the size of one, but I don't think you'd have been happy if I saddled you with that forever. The spectre of matricide loomed - and I'm not talking about all those persistent attempts of yours to drown the mattress ...

JOSEPH

Just how much memory editing did you have in mind, Bernice? I'm certainly going to try and forget everything you just said.

BENNY

*Anyway.* I'm your mum, which you probably know. You probably know about the strange way I had you, too, but I suppose I'd better start by telling you about it anyway. I wasn't quite myself when it happened - I mean *really* not myself. It's all a bit complicated. You see the way it happened was -

A POUNDING FROM OUTSIDE THE DOOR - THE KNOCK OF SOMEONE NATURALLY STRONG RATHER THAN ANGRY.

ADRIAN

(muffled)

Bernice? Benny? Are you in there?

BENNY

- something I'll have to talk about later. (calls) Yes, I'm in here, Adrian. What do you want?

A DOOR OPENS. (BENNY'S ROOM HAS A KINDA OLD-STYLE ACADEMIC RATTLY-DOORKNOB SORT OF DOOR.)

ADRIAN

(slightly ill-at-ease)

I, uh, came to go over the plans for the new xenoarchaeology wing with you. If some of the exhibits distort the very fabric of the space/time continuum, then we're going to have to think in terms of something more substantial than the occasional flying buttress ...

BENNY

Can't we talk about this later, Adrian? I was trying to - what's that in your pocket?

ADRIAN  
Um ...

BENNY  
It's sticking out of the pocket of your coat. It's a fluffy rabbit! What's a fluffy rabbit doing sticking out of the pocket of your coat?

ADRIAN  
Well, I, um ...

A RATHER PATHETIC SOFT-TOY SQUEAK AS THE RABBIT IS UNEARTHED.

BENNY  
I thought you told me that the males of your people had no involvement whatsoever with their offspring and left it all to the female. Innate and genetically-inbuilt reflex, you said. Some sort of basically canine thing, in human terms, you said.

ADRIAN  
The, uh, fact of the matter is that ....

BENNY  
You're just a bit of an old softy at heart, aren't you.

THERE IS ANOTHER KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

IMMEDIATELY, WITHOUT WAITING FOR A REPLY, IT OPENS.

JASON  
Wotcha, Benny. I was just passing and I thought you might like to go and - what? What's he doing here?

BENNY  
Oh, hello Jason, Adrian was just -

JASON  
I thought he had this biological imperative about offspring or some such.

ADRIAN  
Well, it's not so much of an imperative as -

JASON  
- something you can say to get out of changing dirty nappies as and when. How frightfully convenient.

BENNY  
Jason ...

JASON  
So what you doing, Adrian? Come to check if the kid's got a nice glossy coat?

ADRIAN  
What did you say?!

JASON  
You heard.

(IN THE BACKGROUND WE HEAR THE BABY GETTING RESTIVE AS TENSIONS START TO RUN HIGH.)

ADRIAN  
Who the hell do you think you are? I don't know what you think you're trying to do, but let me tell you something ...

BENNY  
Hey, listen, boys, tensions seem to be running a little high here. This isn't something I want to ... let's not say anything we might -

JASON  
Yeah, Adrian, have a Bob Marten and calm down.

ADRIAN  
(loud)  
You think you're clever with the snide remarks, yes? You think I don't see you sniffing around Benny, looking for a way to slime back in ...

JASON  
(loud, over)  
Yeah, well the only chance you ever had was when she wasn't even in her own ...

THE BABY, WHO HAS BEEN BECOMING NOTICEABLY UPSET, BEGINS TO BAWL.

BENNY  
Right! That's it! Out, the pair of you!

JASON  
Hey listen, Benny, this is just -

BENNY  
You're acting like this in front of my child. My child and you're upsetting him! Take this thing outside the both of you and get out of my sight!

JASON  
(little boy)  
He started it ...

BENNY  
Out!

THE 'SLAM!' OF BENNY SLAMMING THE DOOR OF JASON AND ADRIAN.

THE BABY'S BAWLING SUBSIDES TO SOBS AND THEN GURGLING AS BENNY, OBVIOUSLY, PICKS IT UP AND COMFORTS IT.

BENNY

(to baby)

There you go ... shhhh ... it's all right. The nasty and incredibly idiotic men have gone away ... (to Joseph) Do you know, Joseph, for the first time in my life I'm seriously contemplating saying 'Men!' With an exclamation mark after it. I thought we'd sorted all this out but just it's getting worse! What in all the various hells is up with them?

JOSEPH

I'm afraid I couldn't tell you, Bernice, never having been one.

BENNY

I knew there was something I liked about you. Listen, Joseph, do you still have all that military-command-spec proximity-detection gear inside you? You know, from the time when you had all that kind of stuff inside you.

JOSEPH

Some of it, yes.

BENNY

Well, set it to trigger an alarm if anybody comes within ten metres of my room, okay? I'm sick of people traipsing in and through it as if they own the place. Or think they have some claim just because of ... Well anyway, next time I want some warning.

A LITTLE COMPUTERY BLEEP FROM JOSEPH.

JOSEPH

Stored.

BENNY

I don't suppose you've got a lethal-countermeasures weapons package knocking around somewhere? Something that could zap certain people with a couple of million volts where it would do the most good?

JOSEPH

I can only be fitted with such under express authorisation by Irving Braxiatel. He decided to impose a few restrictions after ... a certain recent unpleasantness. Not that anybody actually died, of course.

BENNY

Hmf. I'll have to go and talk to Brax about getting a little chitty. And don't you say a word. I've ended up spending all my time with someone who spends his life ejecting matter at both ends, an assorted collection of ghastly fluffy toys and a rebuilt mechanoid who can't even horribly murder anybody when I tell it to - and how depressing is that? I think I must be nesting or something.

NOTICEABLE HAPPY BABY GURGLING.

BENNY

(with obvious love to baby)

Yes, you, you little horror. You're a complete and utter little horror who's utterly destroyed my life and I hate you.

THE BABY DOES THAT KINDA CUTE LI'L 'GLAH' SOUND THAT MAKES STRONG MEN MELT.

BENNY

(businesslike again)

Okay. I was going to make a proper start on this. Start recording again, Joseph.

BLEEP.

JOSEPH

Recording.

BENNY

(speaking-to-camera)

Now as I was saying: the way I became pregnant was a little complicated. There was this crystal, you see, and the thing about it was -

THE BLEEP-RING OF A COMMS UNIT AS SOMEONE CALLS. THIS CONTINUES UNDER -

BENNY

What is it now?! Is that your proximity alert, Joseph?

JOSEPH

I think you'll find it's the holophone, Bernice.

BENNY

If that's Jason or Adrian still trying to pester me I'll ...

THE COMMS SIGNAL ENDS WITH A CLICK AND THE 'WHUM' OF A HOLO-IMAGE APPEARING.

(A FAINT HOLOTRANSMISSION-HUM RUNS UNDER THE FOLLOWING.)

BENNY

What do you want?

ASHANTRA

(well-bred, languid, of a certain age)

Good, ah, evening. Would I be speaking to the renowned Professor Bernice Summerfield?

BENNY

(wrong-footed)

Um, yes, speaking.

ASHANTRA

My name is Lady Ashantra du Lac of the Goronos system.

BENNY

Goronos?

ASHANTRA

The House Royal of Goron Four to be exact - as I understand it is known on the galactic charts - although we do of course have a name of our own. Several, in actual fact.

BENNY

All of them highly pertinent and interesting, I have no doubt. And your reason for wanting to talk to me is ..?

ASHANTRA

A matter of some delicacy, and not to mention urgency, Professor Summerfield. Certain factors of our local politics have ... well, suffice it to say that I am in the position of offering you a small commission for which you are eminently qualified. One of the few individuals in the galaxy who *are* qualified, in fact.

BENNY

(interested)

Oh, really ..?

FADE OUT.



Scene 2

POSSIBLY SOME CHAMBER-MUSIC TO CONVEY THAT WE'RE IN OPULENT BUT ELEGANT SURROUNDINGS - THE HOUSE ROYAL OF GORON FOUR.

THE FAINT BACKGROUND SOUNDS OF TWO PRINCES - COMPLETE AND UTTER IDIOTS, LIKE ECCLES OUT OF 'THE GOONS' - MUTTERING AND SNIGGERING TOGETHER (IMPROV BY EXTANT MALE CAST-MEMBERS).

THE COMPUTERY BEEPS AND CLICKS OF AN INTERSTELLAR PHONE CALL BEING CUT.

ASHANTRA

(thoughtful)

So ... that was the famous Professor Summerfield, eh? I can't say I was impressed. The woman is clearly - Ronald! Boris! Will you stop that disgraceful display immediately?!

A PRINCE

Dur, hur-hur ... sorry.

ASHANTRA

(darkly)

I could have done better with a couple of trained baboons. Cleaner sheets in the morning, for one thing. And this is what I have to work with to remould the world. I said, shut up, Ronald! I have to make another call.

THE BEEPS AND DIALLING TONES OF ANOTHER CALL BEING PLACED.

ASHANTRA

(to operator)

Hello there, I ... yes, this is the Lady Ashantra. Place another interstellar call to the Braxiatel Collection, will you. The secure line, this time. A Mr Sloaty.

Scene 3

FADE UP ON A GENERAL RATHER CLASSY LOUNGE BAR AMBIENCE - TINKLING GLASSES, THE MURMUR OF THE PATRONS, TINKLY PIANO IN THE BACKGROUND ETC.

JASON

Give me a boilermaker, single malt for the liquor and chose the beer yourself, sweetheart. Thanks. You, uh, don't happen to have seen - er, what the hell? What are you doing here? Are you following me around now, is it?

ADRIAN

(short)

No. I'm not following you around.

JASON

Well, I hate to crowd you out or anything, Adrian, but I'm supposed to be meeting someone, yeah? Know what I mean? The lady called and told me to meet her here. Bit of a classy spot as it happens, compared to my usual dives, so that probably means ...

ADRIAN

She's meeting me.

JASON

Do what?

ADRIAN

Benny left me a message and told me to meet her here.

JASON

Benny told you to meet her here?

ADRIAN

Benny told me to meet her here.

JASON

Now hang on a minute, that can't be right because -

BENNY

(really cheerful)

There you are! Both of you! Have I kept you waiting? Sorry if I kept you waiting.

(WE HEAR GENERALISED BABY SOUNDS TO ESTABLISH THAT BENNY HAS IT WITH HER.)

JASON

Benny ...?

ADRIAN

What's this about ..?

(BENNY GOES INTO A KIND OF FAST-TALKING CON-ARTIST ROUTINE THAT DOESN'T LET THE OTHERS GET MORE THAN A FEW WORDS IN.)

BENNY

Well, now, funny thing, just after I saw you last I got a call. Some big high poobah on a planet named Goron Four ...

ADRIAN

Goron Four?

BENNY

Goron Four. Somewhere on the other side of the Proximan Chain, apparently. Apparently - and this is the funny thing - they've just unearthed a collection of really important artefacts and totems and whatnot there, and what they need is for someone to go there and help with the identifying of them. Provenances, valuation and so forth ...

JASON

Artefacts and totems?

ADRIAN

What sort of artefacts and totems?

BENNY

Oh, you know, your basic artefacts and totems in general. The sort of thing that's basically right down my street. Or up my alley. Whichever you prefer. So of course, I naturally jumped at the chance ...

JASON

What? Now, hang on -

ADRIAN

But what about the -

BENNY

... but then I thought about the baby. 'What about the baby?' I thought. I mean, I'm a mother now. How can I possibly take a trip halfway across the known galactic spiral arm with a baby in tow? It just wouldn't be right. But *then* I remembered that I had two strapping men on hand, always hanging round and looking for a way to help me out - so problem solved! Here, Adrian, there you go. The straps of the carrying pouch go like this ....

(BABY SOUNDS AND STUFF AS THE POSSESSION OF IT IS TRANSFERRED.)

ADRIAN

Er, what ..?

BENNY

And here, Jason, is the bag with a couple of changes of nappies and powder and so forth. They should last until you can get out to buy some more ...

JASON  
Uh ...

BENNY  
Now, his bottle-formula is stored in the submolecular fabricator unit in my rooms, so that isn't a problem. I don't believe in trying to impose unnatural sleeping patterns, so just let him sleep and wake up when he wants to. If he wants something, believe me, she'll let you know. Hmm ... is that a boilermaker, Jason? Well, I'd appreciate it if neither you nor Adrian got drunk while looking after my baby, so I'll just take care of that shall I? (swallows) Mmm, lovely! Do you know, I haven't had a proper drink for ages. It didn't seem right, somehow. So, now, you've both got everything you need?

JASON AND ADRIAN  
(improv.)  
Um ... er ... but ...

BENNY  
Wonderful! I've gotta run - got a probe ship to prep for launch. Time and tide and stuff. See you in a couple of days.

A BEAT OF JUST THE LOUNGE BAR AMBIENCE.

JASON  
Uh, Adrian ...

ADRIAN  
Yes?

JASON  
What the hell just happened there?

Scene 4

SFX SEQUENCE CONVEYING A PROBE SHIP LAUNCHING AND DOPPLERING AWAY INTO INFRASPACE.

FADE TO INSIDE THE PROBE SHIP'S CABIN: THE FAINT HUM OF ENGINES, BLEEPING CONSOLES ETC.

BENNY

I'd forgotten how cramped the Braxiatel Collection's probe ships were. I mean, they get you where you need to go fast, but here isn't room to swing a feline - if that's actually anybody's idea of a good time.

JOSEPH

Didn't the Goronians offer to arrange a first-class berth on one of their own ships? I gather that they have quite an impressive merchant fleet, considering their relative isolation.

BENNY

I don't want to end up relying on someone else for transport. Anybody else. It's always a good idea to have a way of getting out if things turn nasty.

JOSEPH

So you think our current expedition might turn out to be, ah, dangerous?

BENNY

Probably not - but you know as well as I do how things like this turn out for me. It only ever happens all the time. (pensive) I just hope I'm doing the right thing ...

JOSEPH

Leaving your new-born child exclusively to the care of Mr Wall and Mr Kane? I must confess to some degree of doubt upon the matter.

BENNY

It was the only thing I could think of! They've been prowling round each other like a couple of angry dogs and snarling, and it can only be a matter of time until the pissing contest turns into both of them trying to kill each other! It's got to stop once and for good. All I can do is leave them holding the baby and hope they finally sort it all out.

JOSEPH

You trust them to look after the child properly?

BENNY

Absolutely, in the end. No matter what else, if there are two people in this universe I trust, in the end, it's Jason and Adrian.

Scene 5

CUT TO THE BABY BAWLING IN FULL THROAT.

VARIOUS BANGS, THUDS AND CRASHES TO CONVEY THE CELEBRATED, STANDARD COMEDY-ROUTINE OF A COUPLE OF GUYS PANICKING AS THEY TRY TO DEAL WITH A HOWLING INFANT.

ADRIAN

Where's the bottle?! have you got the bottle ready yet?!

JASON

Don't worry, right? Here it ... blimey, who'd have thought so much of that could come out of something so -

ADRIAN

Watch out for the -

JASON

Yaaah!

THE THUMP OF SOMEONE HITTING THE GROUND AND THE CRASH AND TINKLE OF SOME GLASS OBJECT.

ADRIAN

You broke it. You broke the damn bottle!

JASON

Sorry.

Scene 6

BACK TO THE AMBIENCE OF THE PROBE SHIP.

BENNY

Hook into GalNet will you, Joseph. See if you can find out more about the Goronos system. I might as well spend the time in doing a spot of homework.

COMPUTERY SEARCH-BLEEPING.

JOSEPH

Searching ....

BENNY

Anything good?

JOSEPH

I'm not exactly sure. It seems that the Goronos system was colonised during the first Terran expansion. Contact was subsequently lost during the Earthline Collapse and diplomatic relations with the galaxy at large were only re-established some three hundred years later. More than enough time for them to develop their own particular social structures and mythologies ....

BERNICE

Current status?

COMPUTERY BLEEPING.

JOSEPH

Here we are ... interesting ... it appears, if we can believe the informed commentators of GalNet, that the planets of the Goronos system are in an incipient state of war.

BENNY

(sour)

Oh, really? Marvellous.

JOSEPH

There are five inhabited planets, currently existing as a loose confederation of Principalities, but each believes it should be the ultimate centre of control. The Royal Houses of each planet are advancing their case, but none of them, apparently, are entirely compelling.

BENNY

So what's the situation in the event of a tie? There's always a tie-break in situations like that, in my experience.

JOSEPH

Funnily enough, there is a legend on all five planets that might be pertinent. It only resurfaced quite recently, but it spread across the system like wildfire. It's to do with the reincarnation of the Twin Kings who ruled the entire system in the Old Days.

BENNY  
Which Old Days?

JOSEPH  
Any Old Days you like, I suppose. There's all the usual stuff about magical dandruff-cures and strangely-shaped birthmarks and so forth - but the crucial sign, it seems, that they're the true rulers is that their eyes glow green, with an, ah, 'mystical and most effulgent light', when in the presence of -

BENNY  
Let me guess. Certain artefacts and totems.

JOSEPH  
Certain *significant* artefacts and totems.

BENNY  
So how do they manage to do that, then? Make their eyes flash green? Some form of mutation passed down in the bloodline?

JOSEPH  
Quite possibly.

A CONSOLE-ALERT STARTS UP. THE TONE OF THE ENGINES CHANGES.

JOSEPH  
It appears we're coming up from infraspace, Bernice. I estimate arrival on Goron Four in thirty minutes.

BENNY  
Okay. let's just see what kind of welcome we get, shall we?

SFX AS THE PROBE SHIP DOPPLERS INTO REALITY AND CUTS IN ITS THRUSTERS.



Scene 7

WE'RE BACK WITH LADY ASHANTRA AND THE TWO PRINCES IN THE GORON FOUR HOUSE ROYAL.

(POSSIBLE CHAMBER MUSIC IN BACKGROUND.)

ASHANTRA

There you are, Ronald, a nice clean shirt. Try not to get anything down *this* one for a while ...

A PRINCE

Dur, look! I can tie my shoes!

ASHANTRA

Marvellous, Boris. Any small child would be proud. The difficulty is, Boris, that you happen to be a thirty-five-year-old man.

PRINCE

Dur, what?

ASHANTRA

(laying down the law)

Now, the pair of you listen to me. We are going to go go out there and greet Professor Summerfield - yes, Boris, the Professor who looks so nice in the picture I showed you. You will not speak until I tell you to. You *will* keep your hands to yourselves. We've had quite enough diplomatic incidents in that general area, I believe.

PRINCES

Dur ... yeah ... okay.

ASHANTRA

(to self)

We can only hope that she arrives too inebriated to notice.

Scene 8

AMBIENCE SAYS WE'RE OUTSIDE, IN SOME WIDE-OPEN SPACE LIKE A SPACEPORT LANDING FIELD.

THE SOUNDS OF A PROBE-SHIP LANDING ON ITS THRUSTERS.

A BRASS BAND STRIKES UP A CELEBRATORY ANTHEM RATHER INEPTLY.

GENERAL CROWD-CHEERING AND SO ON - BUT WE GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS HAS ALL BEEN ARRANGED A BIT HASTILY AND NOT VERY WELL. THE ANTHEM AND CROWD CONTINUE UNDER -

THE 'CHOFF' OF A HATCH OPENING, THE WHIR OF A DISEMBARKING STEPLADDER EXTENDING. FEET ON THE RUNGS.

BENNY

(to self)

Well, they're certainly putting the boat out. A small inflatable dinghy, in any case.

ASHANTRA

Welcome, Professor Summerfield! I trust you had a pleasant trip out?

BENNY

(ironically posh)

Oh, a little cramped and stuffy, I fear, Lady Ashantra. Nothing I couldn't handle.

ASHANTRA

You must, of course, take a little time for yourself, to rest and freshen up before getting down to the order of business. You certainly look as though you need it.

BENNY

(icy)

You are far, far too kind.

ASHANTRA

I, ah, understand that you're travelling with your child, so I've arranged apartments with the best of automated care facilities ...

BENNY

No child.

ASHANTRA

We really are quite advanced here, despite out galactically rather out-of-the-way location ... I beg your pardon?

BENNY

No child. I decided that the trip would be far too arduous for a new-born. I've left her in the best of hands, though, never fear.

Scene 9

CUT TO THE BABY, STILL BAWLING AWAY.

ADRIAN

(completely stressed)

Oh, come on ... it's your rabbit! It's your little rabbit! Listen, it squeaks!

A RATHER PATHETIC SOFT TOY SQUEAK.

THE BABY KEEPS ON BAWLING.

JASON

Is isn't working ...

ADRIAN

Then you suggest something better, all right?!

JASON

Look, I don't know! I mean, look at all the used nappies! How many times is it physically possible to change a - hang on, what are you doing?

THE BABY HAS SUBSIDED INTO THE KIND OF FRETFUL CRYING THAT HINTS OF THE BAREST POSSIBILITY OF BLESSED SILENCE IN THE FUTURE.

ADRIAN

I just picked him up ...

JASON

It must be the movement. Walk around with him a bit, see if that does anything.

ADRIAN

(stilted attempts at comfort)

There, uh, there. Um, shush. You're, ah, a perfectly satisfactory result of genetic reproduction ...

JASON

You're not kidding about the males of your species and - hey, watch out for that nappy.

ADRIAN

Yaah!

THE COMEDY THUMP AND CRASH OF ADRIAN, THIS TIME, SLIPPING AND FALLING OVER. IT INCLUDES THE QUIET BUT AUDIBLE SQUELCH OF HIM LANDING ON A FULL NAPPY.

THE STARTLED BABY BEGINS TO BAWL AGAIN IN FULL THROAT.

J

ASON  
Oh my god, the baby -

ADRIAN  
(with great restraint)  
The baby's all right. He landed on top of me. And I'm all right, too.

JASON  
Oh, yes?

ADRIAN  
Yes. I landed on something soft.

FADE.

Scene 10

FADE BACK UP ON THE WELCOMING CEREMONY ON GORON FOUR.

ASHANTRA

(slightly put out for some reason)

You haven't brought the child ..? Well, that's probably very wise. With a task so significant, it's probably best to remain free of distractions.

BENNY

Significance?

ASHANTRA

Only to our small world, of course. Should the, ah, artefacts and totems prove indeed to be entirely genuine, the advantage to Goron Four in the current ... local unpleasantness ... will be incalculable.

BENNY

What, like not being reduced to rubble in a possible war, you mean.

ASHANTRA

More than that, the system itself must be taken firmly in hand. And on that very subject, as it were, allow me to present you to the Princes Royal of Goronos Four! Ronald and Boris.

BENNY

Identical twins, eh? That's handy, considering all the legends and prophesies and whatnot.

ASHANTRA

Why certainly. It's precisely in the light of such legends that every Goronian House Royal has tended to breed for twins. Say hello to the young lady, boys.

A PRINCE

Dur ... hello.

ANOTHER PRINCE

I had eggs for tea.

ASHANTRA

Of course, such manipulation of the gene-pool does upon occasion present problems.

BENNY

I'm sure it does. And this is the pair who are set to rule the entire Goronos system?

ASHANTRA

Under ... suitable advisement. And of course, in the event that they should fulfil the ancient prophesies.

BENNY

(thoughtful)

You know it strikes me, rather, that of all the qualities necessary in a ruler, the ability to make your eyes flash green in the presence of certain artefacts and totems is the least of them - ancient prophesies or not. A lack of chronic dribble, for one. And besides, have actually you tested these princes of yours? Put them near the artefacts and totems to see if they get all effulgent?

ASHANTRA

Of course not! If the artefacts and totems are not genuine, then of course nothing will happen - and the word of that will surely get around. There are ... seditious elements on every planet who would make a play of that. We must do this correctly or not at all - and that is why we require your services, Professor Summerfield. Assure me of the provenance of these artefacts and totems, and the Twin Kings' claim to the throne with all due ceremony.

BENNY

Well, you realise that I can only give you my opinion ...

ASHANTRA

I think you're far too modest, Professor. I do know something of you, and quite frankly, I would rather trust to your opinion than words written in stone. If you need anything - a big bottle of liquor or a destructive and completely meaningless sexual encounter - please let me know.

THE SOUNDS OF THE WELCOMING CEREMONY FADE OUT.

Scene 11

SPEED-DIALING TONES AS SOMEONE PLACES AN INTERSTELLAR CALL.

IT GOES ON FOR QUITE SOME TIME, THEN THE RING TONE, THEN SOMEONE PICKS UP.

SLOATY  
(over phone)  
Hello ..?

ASHANTRA  
Idiot!

SLOATY  
What?

(A QUICK NOTE ABOUT SLOATY: HE'S A MINOR CHARACTER, BUT HE MUST BE DISTINCTIVE SO WE RECOGNISE HIM LATER ON. HE'S A NERVOUS AND WEASELTY CRIMINAL-TYPE OF THE SORT ONCE PLAYED BY ROY KINNEAR.)

ASHANTRA  
You told me that the Summerfield woman was devoted to her child. You told me that there was no circumstance in which she would ever leave it behind, You told me that I would have the proper and necessary ... leverage for this current endeavour. Am I to understand that you lied?

SLOATY  
Yeah, uh, well ... the thing about Professor Summerfield is that sometimes you just can't *tell*, right? Sometimes there's no telling what she might do -

ASHANTRA  
And you wait until now to tell me this?

SLOATY  
I couldn't know!

ASHANTRA  
Well, know this. Whatever might transpire in this small venture, I will survive with quite some sum of credit in the Galactic Central Bank. I was of course salting it away for the vicissitudes of old age - but rest assured that shall spend every last portion, if needs be, on ensuring that your *personal* age advances not one week - should you fail to provide a solution to our current dilemma. You'll have barely time to scream, far less plead. Do you understand me?

SLOATY  
(beaten)  
Yeah, I ... understand. There's something that might be done. It's ... doable.

ASHANTRA

You see that it is. Time is short.

THE CLICK-BLIP OF THE CONNECTION BEING SUMMARILY CUT.



Scene 12

WE'RE IN A GENERAL HIGH-CLASS HOTEL-ROOM AMBIENCE.

THE SOUND OF A BATH BEING RUN IN THE NEXT ROOM. THE CHINK OF BOTTLES IN A DRINKS CABINET HERE.

BENNY

Triple-distilled Proximan vodka, Soldarian brandy ... looks as though someone's been telling tales out of school.

JOSEPH

Someone, of course, who remains unaware of your comparatively recent efforts to cut down.

BENNY

(genuine regret)

There is that, I suppose. Pity to spoil things. How's that bath coming?

JOSEPH'S IMPELLERS MOVE AWAY.

JOSEPH

(from bathroom)

It might be some time, Bernice. It's a large bath.

BENNY

Do you know, Joseph, somebody once said that the state of the plumbing tells you about the state of the civilisation. If that were true, then Goron Four would be in charge of half the galactic sector. I suppose that means I've time to check with the boys and see how they're getting on ...

JOSEPH

(back in the room)

I seem to recall you saying that you had to leave them to their own efforts, Bernice.

BENNY

That's true. They have to sink or swim. It's just ... (decision) I know. I'll call Brax. Have him keep a quiet eye on them. You know, just in case ...

COMPUTERY BLEEPS OF A CALL BEING PLACED. THEY END WITH AN UNDERSTATED LITTLE FART-LIKE BLURP TO CONVEY THAT THE CALL HAS FAILED TO GET THROUGH.

BENNY

That's odd. No outgoing interstellar calls. The system seems to be overloaded, but ...

THE RING-BLEEP OF A CALL COMING IN. CLICK AND HOLOGRAPHIC 'WHUM' OF IT BEING ANSWERED.

BENNY  
Hello ..?

ASHANTRA  
(over holophone)  
Professor. I just thought I'd call to see how you are settling in. Do you have everything you need?

BENNY  
What? Um, yes. Except that for some reason I can't make any outgoing calls.

ASHANTRA  
Ah, yes, our rather basic communications. A large number of people throughout the system are making arrangements to travel here for the ceremony tomorrow - and I'm afraid the offworld relays can't cope. You call was important?

BENNY  
You could say that. I was going to check on my -

ASHANTRA  
Ah, yes, quite. If you'll leave it with me, I'll have some people sort something out.  
Good afternoon to you.

THE HOLOPHONE CONNECTION IS CUT.

BENNY  
(thoughtful)  
Uh ... Joseph?

JOSEPH  
Yes, Bernice?

BENNY  
That couldn't be coincidence, could it? Ashantra calling seconds after I wasn't able to call out?

JOSEPH  
Possibly. Or possibly she merely has those people of hers keeping an eye out for you, just in case you might need anything.

BENNY  
Hmph. Activate your Galactic Positioning beacon anyway, would you, Joseph? Try to find a frequency the Goronians don't know about. There's just something about all this that smells a little off.

COMPUTER BLEEP FROM JOSEPH.

JOSEPH  
Stored.

Scene 13

WE'RE BACK IN BENNY'S ROOMS ON BRAX AGAIN.

THE FAINT SOUNDS OF A SLEEPING BABY.

ADRIAN

(sotto)

I think he's finally gone. Do you know, I'm starting to realise why my people on the whole have, um, arrangements concerning small children ...

JASON

Believe you me, this was a picnic compared to some - and I speak from experience, believe you me.

ADRIAN

Really? I wasn't aware that you -

JASON

Shhh! You'll wake him. Let's just say that any experience I have was in another life. Nothing to do with here and now. I just get the feeling, right, that we've been told. We're being told, in no uncertain terms.

ADRIAN

What do you mean?

JASON

I mean that ... well, you know as well as I do how little Peter came to be. Well, all right, you know it better. But it's not about who did ... I mean, so far as Benny's concerned, this is a part of her life. You must have seen the way she sort of copes without even thinking about it. I reckon she's telling us that we are basically - so far as this part of her life's concerned - a couple of spare wanks. Some more than others of course, on account of what happened with the -

ADRIAN

Oh really??

JASON

Shush. You'll wake the baby. (slightly proud) You gotta admit, though, we're doing a bit all right after a rocky start. We're proved we can look after her and, after this, there's no way that Benny can say -

THERE IS A CRASH AS BENNY'S WINDOW SMASHES UNDER A DENOTATIVE CHARGE.

THERE IS THE GARBLE-GARBLE OF ARMoured, MASKED AND ARMED KIDNAPPING TROOPERS AS THEY BURST IN AND DEPLOY THEIR RESPECTIVE ARMS.

ADRIAN AND JASON  
(improv.)  
Yaah ... wha ...?

KIDNAPPER  
(harshly electronically-disguised)  
You! Stay back! Make a move and I kill you! I can make a hole!

THE BABY, NATURALLY ENOUGH, WAKES UP AND BAWLS.

VARIOUS SFX BUSINESS TO CONVEY A BAWLING BABY BEING GRABBED UP BY AN ARMED AND ARMoured, GARBLE-GARBLING TROOPER - OH, COME ON, WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT ENGINEERING SOUND EFFECTS.

ADRIAN  
God - Oh my God he's taking the baby!

JASON  
You let him go! You let him go or I'll -

THE CRACKLE-ZAP DISCHARGE OF SOME TASER-LIKE ENERGY WEAPON. BOTH JASON AND ADRIAN CRY OUT AS THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY ZAPPED INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

THE BABY'S WAILS ECHO-PHASE INTO SOMETHING LAST-HORRIFIC-THING-YOU-HEAR-BEFORE-YOU'RE KNOCKED OUT.

IF THERE WAS EVER A POINT FOR A DESPERATELY TENSE-RIDDEN DRAMATICAL MUSICAL STING, IT'S HERE.

Scene 14

WE'RE IN AN ANCIENT AND CAVERNOUS SPACE. WATER DRIPS QUIETLY FROM THE WALLS.

THE CHINKS AND CLUNKS ETC. OF SOMEBODY IDLY TURNING OVER METAL AND STONE BASED ARTEFACTS AND TOTEMS.

THE FAINT HUM OF JOSEPH THE PORTER'S IMPELLERS, TO FIX THE FACT THAT HE'S HERE.

BENNY

Did you ever get the feeling, Joseph, that you've been had?

JOSEPH

I believe I've already mentioned that I'm completely inorganic, Bernice.

BENNY

Ho, ha, bloody ho. I mean look at this stuff! will you look at it?

JOSEPH

I am looking at it, Bernice.

BENNY

Then access your free-market valuation database. Here's a statuette of the seven-armed swamp-goddess Raghi Ano, triumphant over the remains of the All-seeing Celestial Father God Whapo after cutting out his insides and winding them around a stick to make the mystic spirals of the galaxy itself ...

BLEEP.

JOSEPH

Four credits thirty from the Catan Nebula bazaars, but you can get them for a credit fifty from the wholesalers.

BENNY

A consecrated sigil of the Potentates of the Monastery of Wom, fashioned in irradiated bronze and anointed with the fat of unborn souls ...

BLEEP.

JOSEPH

Those are actually quite valuable - assuming that they are genuine. This, however, appears to be a particularly inept forgery.

BENNY

The fabled Book of Dreams, last surviving remnant from the lost citadel of Hokesh ...

BLEEP.

JOSEPH

A credit ninety from the Apocryphal Publishing Consortium on Telos. The deluxe edition sells for twice that much again. This is not the deluxe edition.

BENNY

So what we're thinking, basically, is that these so-called artefacts and totems are the sort of rotten old junk you couldn't even sell on a GalNet auction website. The bloody nerve! These people drag me all this way to evaluate a collection of crap that wouldn't even ... hang on ...

JOSEPH

Yes, Bernice?

BENNY

(slightly worried)

There's not a single thing here that would fool a blind man and his dog. So why would they ask me to look them over - unless anything I might think, anything at all, wouldn't make the slightest bit of difference? They don't want what I think. They just want me. What do they want me for?

CAVE-AMBIENCE FADES OUT.

Scene 15

FADE UP ON BENNY'S ROOMS AS ADRIAN GROANS AND RECOVERS CONSCIOUSNESS.

THERE'S THE SOUND OF BUSY KEYBOARD CLICKS AND BLEEPS AS SOMEONE WORKS AT A TRANSPUTER TERMINAL.

ADRIAN  
Wha ... what happened ...?

JASON  
(absent, still typing)  
Take it easy, Adrian. Try to move slow and calm for a bit. You caught the worst of the stun-blast. You could seriously mess up your heart if you try to come out of it too fast.

ADRIAN  
The last thing I remember, there were these men in - Oh my god! The baby! They came in and they took the -

JASON  
Look, calm down, okay! Try to keep on top of it and breathe. Things might not be quite as bad as they -

ADRIAN  
Not quite as bad?! They took her and they could ... they could ...

JASON  
Keep on top of it! Listen to me! There are things going for us. Think about it. We both saw and heard them - I mean we didn't see and hear them, if you get me. Masks and coveralls to make them unrecognisable, vocoders to disguise their voice-patterns. That's professional S.O.P. for a snatch that doesn't involve a death. The fact that they zapped us rather than killed us sorta might be a clue ...

ADRIAN  
(bleak)  
Professional ...

JASON  
Yeah, professional. But not heavy, you know? That's the point. I came round, the first thing I did, I checked the Collection's transit database. Nobody is on this planetoid that I recognise as heavy - and nobody that I, uh, don't recognise in a certain way. That means this was local, probably performed under contract - and frankly, nobody local has the nuts for really nasty. Whatever happens, the kid's safer than if we were dealing with anything to do with the the Big Boys.

ADRIAN  
(suspicious)  
You seem to know a lot about this sort of thing ...

JASON

Yeah, well. Long story. For the moment, let's just concentrate on giving this one a happy ending, yeah?



Scene 16

WE'RE BACK ON GORON FOUR. GENERAL SOUNDS OF SOMEBODY IN A CORRIDOR OF THE HOUSE ROYAL. THE HUM OF JOSEPH THE PORTER'S IMPELLERS.

(POSSIBLY, AGAIN, SOME KIND OF CHAMBER MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND TO CONVEY THE SALUBRITY OF THE SURROUNDINGS.)

BENNY

The thing I'm worried about, Joseph, is if they want to use me, and they don't care if I know, why haven't I been threatened? Why haven't I been put under guard or some such? It doesn't add up.

JOSEPH

It's certainly is something of a puzzle, Bernice.

BENNY

I mean, there is absolutely no way they could think I'd be fooled by such a pitiful collection of artefacts and totems, is there? Is there anyone who could think I'd be so incompetent in my work? I mean, there are people who know I like a bit of a drink, and exaggerated stories get around, but even so ...

THE SOUNDS OF THE ACTIVITY WE'LL COME ACROSS NEXT BECOME EVIDENT.

BENNY

Hello, what's this?

A SOUND RATHER LIKE A CAMERA FLASH CHARGING UP AND DISCHARGING.

A PRINCE

Dur .. ow!

ASHANTRA

No, no, you idiot! You have to make both eyes flash together! You listen here, Ronald, I spent good money getting you and your brother those implants - taking you all the way to the Catan Nebula biomanufactories for a start - and I'm damned if I'm going to let your congenital idiocy ruin things now ...

BENNY

Lady Ashantra?

ASHANTRA

(delighted)

Ah, Professor Summerfield! How perfectly lovely to see you! And what do you think of our fine display of artefacts and totems?

BENNY

You know precisely what I think, Lady Ashantra. What I don't understand is how you can possibly think you'll get away with it.

ASHANTRA

Well, the hard part, of course, was planting the legends of the Twin Kings with green-glowing eyes in the first place. Bribing the Guilds of Historians on every planet in the system and then selling it to the respective populations. That was, as I say, the hard part - but believe they do, now. At least enough of those who count.

A PRINCE

Dur ... I like the Professor Summerfield lady. She's nice.

ASHANTRA

Shut up, Boris! (to Benny) And come tomorrow, Professor, with all due ceremony, you will authenticate the necessary artefacts and totems, the rituals shall be performed, and the reincarnated Twin Kings shall take their place in posterity.

BENNY

With you behind them, manipulating them like a couple of glove puppets.

ASHANTRA

Have I so much as pretended otherwise? I'm quite aware that you're far too intelligent for me to even bother with pretence. You'll simply do as you're told.

BENNY

Do you really think so? You think you know me so well? Well, guess what I'm going to say next. I'll give you a clue - it isn't 'happy birthday'.

ASHANTRA

Never the less, I have the feeling that you'll prove ... amenable. If you'd care to examine this small holo-recording I received within the last hour ..?

THE QUIET BLEEP AND 'WHUM' OF A HOLOGRAM BEING ACTIVATED.

WE HEAR THE GENERAL SOUNDS, OBVIOUSLY RECORDED, OF A BABY.

BENNY

(aghast)

Oh my ... goddess ... oh my ...

ASHANTRA

Never fear, Professor. Your baby is perfectly safe, for the moment, and I fully expect that state of affairs to continue.

BENNY

(defeated)

All right. What now? Are you going to call the guards and have them put me under lock and key?

ASHANTRA

Not at all. Feel free to go where you like and do what you like - we've cut communications with the galaxy at large, and it's doubtful that you would arrive anywhere ... useful in time to prevent anything unpleasant. And of course, should you happen to do something I don't like, who knows what the consequences might be?

Scene 17

A MUSICAL LINK TO CONVEY THE GENERAL PASSAGE OF A BIT OF TIME. WE GET THE IMPRESSION OF SUSPENSE FROM IT. THE MUSIC FADES TO A -

CHANGE OF VENUE TO A RATHER ROUGH-SOUNDING BAR. GRUNTS AND BUSTLE AND THE OCCASIONAL SMASHING GLASS ETC.

ADRIAN

I can hardly believe ... I can't believe that things like this can go on, here on the Collection ...

JASON

Well, you have to remember that what you might call the criminal element can creep into anywhere. Braxiatel tolerates it, to a certain extent, on account of it being all part of the whole vast panoply of sentient life - and you know how he's a great one for that.

ADRIAN

All the same, Braxiatel owns this planetoid. He could crack down on things like this ...

JASON

Trust me, wouldn't work. Make things too hard for a certain degree of criminality, you just end up with the kind of hardcore guys who won't be told. Worse for everybody all round.

A BRUTAL-SOUNDING GRUNTING AND WARBLING FROM WHAT IS OBVIOUSLY A LARGE AND BRUTAL-LOOKING ALIEN.

JASON

(to alien)

Wotcha, Nix. Nice set of pseudopodia you're sporting, these days. They're growing back in nicely. Is Sloaty here? Is he out back?

ALIEN GRUNTS.

JASON

Yeah, you could say that. You know me, Nix - and you know what that means concerning appointments. Just call him and give him a heads-up on your mobile, right. We don't want any nasty panic-related accidents when we go through the door.

ALIEN GRUNTS AND WARBLES.

JASON

Yeah, see you around. Give my love to the brood-cluster.

WE MOVE THROUGH THE SOUNDS OF THE CROWD.

WE HEAR THE ALIEN DIALLING ON A MOBILE PHONE AND GRUNTING INTO IS AS WE MOVE AWAY.

JASON

(aside to Adrian)

That was Nix. Lymph-sucking Viceraptor from the Soul Reaver dimensions. Nice guy, for your basic bit of hired muscle. Now, the guy we're going to see basically runs this sort of thing here on the Collection ...

ADRIAN

Some kind of criminal Kingpin ..?

JASON

We're not talking the Proximan Chain, here, Adrian. He's just a kinda nexus point for certain strands of influence, connections that extend out into the galaxy at large ...

ADRIAN

(cold fury)

If he's involved with the abduction of ... I'll kill him ... here and now I'll ...

JASON

No we don't. Be your age. We keep this calm and civilised, simply find out what he knows. Here we go - just try to keep your mouth shut and follow my lead, okay?

A SMALL DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES, SHUTTING OUT MOST OF THE SOUNDS OF THE BAR. (WE STILL HEAR SOME FAINTLY FOR AMBIENCE.)

SLOATY

(the criminal from earlier)

Why Mr Kane! This is a pleasant surprise! And to what do I owe the -

JASON

(completely losing it)

All right Sloaty, you toad-faced little turd! What have you done with the kid! What have you done with him, you bastard!

ADRIAN

(startled at finding the prospective roles reversed)

Uh, Jason, is this what you wanted to -

JASON

What have you ... (pulls himself together) Um, yeah. Right. Thanks, Adrian. (calmly to Sloaty) Okay, Sloaty, you know why we're here. It seems that someone on the Collection is going in for a bit of baby-snatching on the side. That goes over the line. And I think you know who went.

SLOATY

Mr Kane ... you, uh, you know I've always had the utmost respect for you ... but if I did know something - not that I do, but purely for the sake of argument - then it might be more than my life was worth to ...

ADRIAN

(getting furious again)

He's stalling! I've had enough of this. Let me try to -

JASON

Hang on, Adrian. Just hang on. Let's keep the strong-arm tactics as a last resort, yeah? Sloaty. A quiet word in your ear ...

(THE REMAINDER OF THE CONVERSATION IS SOTTO-VOCE, OBVIOUSLY BEING KEPT FROM ADRIAN.)

(JASON, THOUGH SPEAKING QUIETLY, IS UTTERLY AND DEADLY SERIOUS. THERE'S SOMETHING A BIT DISTURBING AND MENACING ABOUT IT - IT'S NOT A SIDE OF HIM WE USUALLY SEE.)

JASON

Now listen to me, Sloaty. Dog-boy here is the father, you get me? I'm barely keeping him on top of going berserk and howling to the roof. And both you and I know precisely how far he'll get if he starts making noise. Where he'll end up. He's ... not exactly a friend, but I don't want that to happen. I'd never hear the end of it.

SLOATY

(a bit nervous now)

Uh, yeah, I understand that the lady in question might ...

JASON

I said listen, Sloaty, not talk. Like I said, I don't want that happening. I don't want it to happen so much, in fact, that I'm considering calling in a favour from some ... associates. You know exactly which associates I'm talking about, don't you, Sloaty?

SLOATY

(terrified little squeak)

Yes ...

JASON

The deal is this. The baby is found, ten minutes from now, not a scratch and not a hair touched. That way you get to know that you, that nice new wife of yours, the wife and kids you left for her, the dog you took with you and the mother in a stasis tank that you think everyone's forgotten about ... you get to know that you and everyone you love or know ... you get to know that they'll live out the natural course of their lives. There won't be ways found of keeping them alive for a while. Do you understand me, Sloaty?

A BEAT OF SILENCE.

Scene 18

A SMALL DOOR OPENS AND WE'RE BACK IN THE BUSTLE OF THE BAR.

JASON  
(cheerful)

Well, that seemed to go okay. Sloaty's decent enough if you take the trouble to talk to him ...

(INCIDENTAL CHARACTER-POINT: THERE SHOULD BE A MARKED CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE SERIOUSLY COLD AND MENACING JASON OF THE PREVIOUS SCENE, AND THE GENERALLY CHEERFUL-FARTAROUND PERSONA HE IS BACK IN NOW. YOU'D NEVER GUESS HE HAD THAT DARKNESS IN HIM.)

ADRIAN  
What did you talk to him about?

JASON  
I just played on his sympathies, yeah? The guy goes home to his wife at the end of the day like everybody else. Everybody who has a wife, anyway. Except for those who don't. We did good, okay? He said he'd put the word out. Possibly, it might be worth checking with the medibays again. You know, I really think there's a chance we'll get a break quite soon ...

FADE TO -

Scene 19

WE'RE BACK ON GORON FOUR, IN A CAVERNOUS HALL FILLED WITH THE HUBBUB OF A LARGE CROWD OF GORONIANS.

(POSSIBLY, SOME SOLEMN AND RISING MUSIC TO CONVEY THE SIZE AND GRANDEUR OF IT.)

THE MUSIC CUTS OFF ABRUPTLY, LEAVING THE FAINT HUBBUB OF THE CROWD. THERE'S AN EXPECTANT NOTE TO IT, LIKE AT THE OPENING OF A PLAY.

ASHANTRA

The Great Suppliquary of the Goron Four House Royal! Representatives from every planet in the system are gathered here!

BENNY

(sour)

Very impressive. And just what exactly is it you're expecting me to do, here?

ASHANTRA

(solemnly)

I shall speak to the people, prepare them for the moment of glory. At the proper time, I shall ask you if the artefacts and totems here arrayed are those that are indeed foretold, and you shall say that this is indeed so. (change in tone to the personal) Think of it this way, Professor Summerfield - you won't in actual fact be lying since it was I who foretold these things in the first place.

BENNY

That's a great comfort.

ASHANTRA

After which, the Princes Royal shall be presented, and thereafter, with all due ritual, take their rightful place by acclaim!

BENNY

... and after which you'll be effectively in charge of the entire Goronos system. What will you do then? Syphon off the money, bleed them dry and spend it all on shoes?

ASHANTRA

Oh no, Professor Summerfield, don't you see? There is much that needs to be done. So much. There are so many ... errors that must be corrected. Do you not understand the foul excrescence and slithering depravity into which the planets of our system have been allowed to sink?

BENNY

Uh ..?



ASHANTRA

Deviance and sedition! Why, there are those who even believe that the Houses Royal are not forged by direct descent from the throne of God! They're spreading lies, you know - lies about me. I can hear them. They don't think I can hear them but I can.

BENNY

Well, this is all very interesting, but -

ASHANTRA

(barking mad)

The filth must be rooted out! Root and branch! It must be disposed of with all due alacrity and the world at least made clean! I have in mind the setting up of a number of camps ...

BENNY

Er, what?

FADE.

Scene 20

A BEAT, THEN FADE UP THE ROAR OF A FAST AND SERIOUSLY FUCKOFF-POWERFUL STARSHIP.

(POSSIBLY, HEROIC WE'RE-COMING-TO-SAVE-THE-DAY MUSIC.)

THEN CUT TO INSIDE THE SHIP'S COCKPIT.

ADRIAN

Do you think the baby will be all right with Braxiatel?

JASON

Absolutely. He'll protect it with his life, at the very least. He sets a lot of store by our Benny, does Brax.

ADRIAN

It was a bit strange, now I come to think - the way those masked men burst in to the Collection's central medibay, left the baby and ran out. The charge-nurse said that they looked as if they were running for fear of their lives ...

JASON

Yeah, well. Personally, I just think they caught a whiff of unexploded nappy.

SOUNDS OF CONTROL-MANIPULATION. THE ENGINES CHANGE THEIR TONE.

JASON

Goronos ETA in five minutes.

ADRIAN

That's fast ...

JASON

Zip to blip in less than half a parsec. Courtesy of General InfraDynamics.

ADRIAN

I was wondering ... how the hell did you manage to get hold of a General InfraDynamics Hypersystems military-spec, Pulse-pump Canon Class Interstellar Battle Corvette ..?

JASON

Well, it was short notice. I couldn't get anything better. Let's just say a couple of friends owe me a couple of favours. Have you managed to contact Goron Four yet?

ADRIAN

There's nothing. The Goronos system seems shut - off or down, it doesn't make any difference. I just hope she's alive and safe ...

JASON

Bound to be. Bound to be. You know what Benny's like when she gets into these situations. She's probably ruling the whole damn place by now. And you know she's gonna get narked at us for coming in and sticking in an oar whatever happens. I sometimes wonder why we even bother.

ADRIAN

(serious moment)

I know.

JASON

Do what?

ADRIAN

I know why I do. It's ... something inside, inbuilt ...

JASON

Coming it with the ole biological imperative, then, Ade?

ADRIAN

It's more than ... (wretched) My people mate for life, you see. So after Benny and I ... well, it was ...

JASON

It threw the switch. I get you. Is there no way to take it back?

ADRIAN

None at all. I mean, I know she doesn't feel that way about me. I know that what ... we did can never be repeated - because ... because the person was a different mind in the body. But the body's still there, walking around with Benny in it. I try to be civilised and keep on top of it - but sometimes, well, it's hard. And she can never know - never.

JASON

I think I know what you mean. Years, I spent away ... somewhere else ... and the one thing that kept me going was the thought of her. I built it all up in my mind, you know? Lived for it - and then came back to find the reality of it frankly fucked. There's this whole part of me, I think, that just knows she's my wife, and refuses to believe otherwise whether we're actually still married or not. So, yeah, I think I know what you mean ...

CONSOLE ALERT-BLEEP.

JASON

And thank you, listeners, for sharing. Proximity alert. We're hitting orbit - I've got a Galactic Positioning System lock! I think it's Joseph the Porter! He's set himself to distress-beacon mode!

ADRIAN

So let's go down there and save the woman we love.

JASON

Or some reasonable facsimile thereof.

THE SHIP'S LANDING JETS CUT IN. FADE TO -

Scene 21

THE GREAT HALL AGAIN. (POSSIBLY A BIT OF MUSIC TO FIX IT.)

THE CROWD, WHAT WE HEAR OF IT, SEEMS EXPECTANT.

ASHANTRA

(in ringing tones)

... as all gathered here can see, here are arrayed the mystic artefacts and totems as were spoke of in legend, unearthed at great inconvenience and expense by the archaeologists and historians of Goron Four!

THERE IS AN IMPRESSED SUSURRATION FROM THE CROWD. ONE OR TWO PEOPLE FAINTLY BUT AUDIBLY SAY THINGS LIKE 'GORBLIMEY' AND 'WELL I NEVER'.

ASHANTRA

These artefacts and totems have been diligently authenticated in ever aspect and respect by none other than the galactically-renowned xenoarchaeologist, Professor Bernice Surprise Summerfield! I now call upon you, Professor Summerfield to inform us of your findings.

BENNY

Um ...

ASHANTRA

(hissing angrily)

That is your cue, I believe, Professor! I need hardly remind you that the life of your child hangs in the balance ..?

BENNY

(with cold loathing)

Well, when you put it like that, Lady Ashantra, all I can say is -

THERE IS THUNDEROUS PLASMA-GUN GUNFIRE AND AN EAR-SPLITTING CRASH!

THE ROAR OF ENGINES AS A BATTLESHIP HANGS IN THE AIR OVER US. THE CROWD SURGES AND ROARS WITH PANIC.

ASHANTRA

Oh my ... what is ..?

BENNY

That's a General InfraDynix Hypersystems, military-spec Pulse-pump Canon Class Interstellar Battle Corvette! What's a General InfraDynix Hypersystems military-spec Pulse-pump Canon Class Interstellar Battle Corvette doing here?!

THE BARK OF A TANNOY CUTS THROUGH THE CHAOS OF THE CROWD.

ADRIAN  
(tannoy voice)  
Is this thing working? Is it on? I -

JASON  
(tannoy)  
Oh, give it here! Benny, this is Jason!

ADRIAN  
(tannoy)  
And Adrian!

JASON  
(tannoy)  
And Adrian. We've just some to tell you that the baby is safe! The baby is safe!

ADRIAN  
(tannoy)  
Of course you realise, Jason, that if she didn't know the baby was in danger in the first place, she's going to kill the both of us ...

JASON  
(tannoy)  
There is that. Uh, Benny? If you thought the baby was in danger then he's perfectly safe! If you didn't know anything about that then there's nothing going on at all and you should forget everything we just said, right? There you go, Adrian. That should sort it.

ADRIAN  
You know, you can really be a complete twot at times, Jason ...

FADE.

Scene 22

WE'RE IN A SMALL SIDE-ROOM OFF THE GORONIAN GREAT HALL - SOUNDS OF CROWDS AND CONTINUING FROM THE PREVIOUS SCENE, AS A DOOR OPENS FROM IT.

GENERAL SOUNDS OF ASHANTRA'S HURRIED ESCAPE WITH THE TWO PRINCES IN TOW.

A PRINCE

Dur, is we running around now? I like running around ...

ASHANTRA

Oh, for God's sake, Boris, will you shut your mouth!?! Years I've had of this! Thirty years! You know, there are really times I regret having to have had your parents assassinated ...

A PRINCE

(completely failing to take this in)

Dur ...

A HOTLY-PURSUING BENNY BENNY BURSTS IN.

JOSEPH'S IMPELLERS TO CONVEY THAT HE'S WITH HER.

BENNY

Ashantra!?! You come back here, you bitch, I'll -

ASHANTRA

I rather think not. Oh, boys? You like Professor Bernice Summerfield, don't you.

A PRINCE

Dur ... yeah.

ANOTHER PRINCE

Professor Bernice lady is nice.

ASHANTRA

Well, you can play with her. Just this once. And you don't have to be careful.

THE PRINCES ADVANCE IN A KIND OF 'DUH, I HAD A FRIEND ONCE, BUT IT DON'T MOVE NO MORE' WAY.

BENNY

Uh, Joseph ..? A little help ..?

JOSEPH

Certainly, Bernice.

THE ZAAAP! OF AN ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE. THE TWO PRINCES HIT THE FLOOR WITH THUMPS AND GROANS.

BENNY

I thought you told me you couldn't zap people with a couple of million volts where it would do the most good?

JOSEPH

Yes, well, I lied. It wouldn't do for you to get too trigger-happy would it?

ASHANTRA

Infamy! Oh have you any idea of how you'll *pay* for such -

A COMPREHENSIVE, POLE-AXING 'SWACK!' AS SHE'S HIT AND DECKED WITH ALL THE FORCE OF ANGRY YOUNG MOTHERHOOD.

ASHANTRA

Ungh!

COLLAPSES.

BENNY

Not one more word. I've had *quite* enough of you.



Scene 23

(POSSIBLE MUSICAL LINK TO SUGGEST WE'VE CHANGED LOCALES TO SOMEWHERE MORE FAMILIAR AND SAFE. IS THERE A STANDARD 'BACK HOME ON THE COLLECTION' TRACK?)

FADE UP ON BENNY'S ROOMS IN THE BRAXIATEL COLLECTION.

NOTICEABLE BABY-SOUNDS TO FIX ITS PRESENCE. LIKEWISE THE VAGUE HUM OF JOSEPH THE PORTER.

BENNY COLLAPSES INTO A COMFY CHAIR WITH A SIGH.

BENNY

Whoof! I never thought I'd be so glad to be back! If I ever mention the words 'artefact' and 'totem' again, Joseph, you have my express permission to have me taken out and shot. (to baby) Did you hear that, sweetheart? Mummy's going to be taken out and shot.

JOSEPH

(diplomatic)

I, uh, doubt if I'd find somebody willing to do that, Bernice.

BENNY

Oh, I don't know. The Lady Ashantra had the right kind of look about her when they led her off. Of course, what with all that screaming about how she was going to hunt me down to the ends of the known universe and wind my guts around a pole, it wasn't exactly easy to judge her expression.

JOSEPH

I have to say, I was very much impressed by the way you took control of the ceremony, after telling the crowd that their entire belief-structure had been faked ...

BENNY

Well, there's something about a sodoff-huge battle corvette hanging in the air above you with its gun ports open that commands respect. The Goronos system is probably going to go back on a war-footing of course, but then again you can't have everything. And on the subject of that - can you access the personnel systems and see if Jason and Adrian made it back okay?

JOSEPH

I understand that they had to make a detour to drop off the gunboat with some of Mr Kane's friends. Funnily enough, the only inhabited space on the projected route is a no-go zone, infested by the notorious Plague Dog pirate band ...

BENNY

Well, you know Jason. Friends all over and a finger or two in everything. Or possibly everyone. Check for them anyway, will you?

COMPUTERY SEARCHING-BLEEPS.

JOSEPH

Searching ... ah, yes. It appears they arrived barely a few minutes ago via commercial hopper.

BENNY

Then we haven't got a lot of time to batten down the hatches. If I know them - and god help me I do - the first thing they're gonna do is -

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, WHICH IMMEDIATELY BURSTS OPEN TO THE SOUNDS OF TWO MALES TRYING TO GET THROUGH IT SIMULTANEOUSLY.

ADRIAN

If you would just get -

JASON

Look, I was here first and i think I should -

BENNY

(cold)

Hello, boys.

ADRIAN AND JASON

(a little shamefaced)

Hello, Benny ...

JASON

We, uh, just popped round to see if you got back all right in the probe ship ...

ADRIAN

And to make sure there that things were all right with the, uh, you know -

BENNY

My baby is perfectly fine, Adrian, thank you for asking. No thanks to the pair of you, of course.

ADRIAN

Oh, er, well yes, uh ....

BENNY

I mean, all it takes is a crack squad of armed troops to nearly kill you, and then you have to spend half the day finding my child and saving her from almost certain death ...

JASON

(getting it)

What ... uh, yeah. But that wasn't too big a deal in the end. Adrian helped a lot. Well, a bit. Oh, who am I kidding, it was all me on account of how I'm frankly brilliant.

ADRIAN

Hey, now, hang on a minute! Are you forgetting your part in losing her in the first place?

JASON

Oh, really? As I recall - and correct me if I'm wrong - you went down like a collapsing brick shithouse!

THE BABY IS, BUT OF COURSE, GETTING RESTIVE ...

JASON

Had a nice rest, did you? Flat on your back and snoring while I did all the hard work?

BENNY

Now come on, boys, this is just the sort of -

ADRIAN

Now you listen here, Kane -

JASON

You were about as much use as a particularly useless plank.

ADRIAN

You take that back!

THE BABY BEGINS TO BAWL IN FULL THROAT.

BENNY

Oh, bugger!!

THE PROPER END-THEME STARTS UP AND PLAYS.

PERIODICALLY, IT CUTS OUT TO BENNY, ADRIAN AND JASON ARGUING AND DESPERATELY TRYING TO CALM THE BABY (IMPROV, WHAT THE HELL). THE TRACK AND AUDIO END WITH:

BENNY

(desperately harassed young mother)

Listen! Here it is! Here's your fluffy little rabbit!

A RATHER PATHETIC SOFT-TOY SQUEAK.

THE END.