

INT. GARAGE OFFICE - NIGHT

The story has aroused Ula, ERB takes notice, slides his hand inside her swimsuit, pulls out a breast, rubs it, sucks the hard nipple, he rubs her between her legs, her crotch panel is wet.

CARTER

How do you get so wet?

ULA

You make me this way.

They French-kiss, Ula comes up for air, LAUGHS.

ULA

(continuing)

At least you didn't kill me off in this one, mighty hunter. Ulah dies and Rojas gets to live forever in John Carter's happy harem.

(pauses)

Don't you think that Carter taking Rojas home to Dejah Thoris is exactly like Ashton taking me home to Florence. You don't think your readers will pick up on that? And surely you will change your mind and censor out that part where Rojas kisses Dejah Thoris? Your readers will surely suspect a lesbian relationship between Flo and myself?

(sardonically)

And Llana of Gathol? Surely some of your readers will suspect an incestuous relationship with Joan's daughter, or even with Caryl Lee.

ERB

Good God, Ula, how could you ever imagine a thing! Llana of Gathol is an adult woman. Joanne and Caryl Lee are only nine and eight years old.

ULA

Look, mighty hunter, you are a man;, you think like a man. What is not obvious to a man is obvious to a woman. Perhaps it is some kind of deep unconscious desire of which you are unaware. Trust me on this, there are some women who will think such a thing.

(jabs ERB in arm)

Come on, Ed, figure it out: you wrote The Chessmen of Mars about the same time you wrote The Girl from Hollywood. It may have appeared that you were writing a fantasy for your daughter, to help her through her difficult adolescent years, but if she was not the model, who was? Flo?

(her eyes widen in understanding)

My God, Gathol is obviously the Hollywood of Mars, wealthy beyond means, full of vain, beautiful people. That would make Ashton, Gahan of Gathol, and Tara, Florence, just as they were the models for Wilson Crumb and Gaza de Lure. That makes Tara's daughter, Llana, equal to Caryl Lee.

She narrows her brows in deep contemplation, looks into his eyes.

ERB

Will Jinx never cease to persecute me? Why can't I be free to create imaginary characters without everyone trying to figure who they are in real life?

ULA

Because it is impossible, Ed. You need to change the story. After all, many believe Caryl Lee is really your own daughter. You will be suspected of having an incestuous relationship with her.

ERB

Do you really believe that?

ULA

Yes, you can bank on it.

ERB

All right, you have convinced me; the last thing in the world I want is for people to think I have a romantic crush on my stepdaughter.

(pauses)

Okay, I will change the story for sure; you heard the uncensored version anyway. Do you think this unconscious desire theory is true about all my fiction?

ULA

I'm no psychologist, Ed, but what do you think?

His hand slides inside the suit between her legs, he fingers her.

ERB

This is what I think.

(pauses)

Dejah Thoris is not as pure as people think. The last time John Carter visited me -

ULA

The last time he what?

ERB

Heh, heh, I know it may sound crazy, but when I write I go into a trance-like state that is a lot like a seance. In that state my characters are real and talk to me. As I was saying, John Carter told me that over her lifetime of a few hundred years, Dejah Thoris has been raped nearly a hundred times. To Carter, Dejah Thoris is a classic psychological case study. He believes that the Princess experiences deep arousal when she is being raped.

(pauses)

Rape and War go hand in hand on Mars. The truth is, Martian women have a choice to live or die, both choices being regarded as morally neutral. Rape is inevitable if you live for nearly a thousand years. How you decide to handle that inevitability is in your own hands. Dejah chose the left hand path of eroticism.

ERB

(continuing)

Dejah and Carter have an agreement to always choose life and never give up hope.

ULA

That is fascinating, Ed; does he like Dejah Thoris to tell him about her escapades in graphic detail?

ERB

I didn't ask him.

They smile.

ULA

Are you sure your readers are ready for your characters having multiple mates?

Outside, the fireworks exhibition finally begins, POP! CRACK! BANG! ERB takes his hands off Ula, takes off his Hawaiian print shirt, steps out of his shorts, he is fully erect.

ERB

My readers are ready for whatever I am. Times have changed, Ula; we're in the Forties now. Besides, this is likely the last John Carter story that I'll ever write. Everyone would hate him if he married his granddaughter, regardless of Martian custom. But if he doesn't, he suffers another seven hundred years of marriage with the same woman! The horror! the horror!

(pauses)

ERB

(continuing)

Frankly, Ula, don't you think my uncensored version makes a perfect fairy tale ending?

ULA

Hardly. I see it as the beginning of a Universal Reign of Terror, with the Warlord and the Radium Princess conquering and terrorizing whole worlds in The Raven. Your idea is dark and nihilistic. I love it.

Ula stands, strips off her swimsuit.

ULA

Take me against this post, like Carter took Rojas!

ERB

It won't be quite the same; I can see you.

ULA

Close your eyes, silly!

He takes her against the post, her feet off the ground, the garage almost shakes from his violent thrusts, the fireworks light up the room, POP! CRACK! BANG! within minutes they work up a heavy sweat in the thick humidity, it pours off their bodies, she looks at the clock, it is almost 11:20 PM.

ULA

Oh, the Jasoomian Gravity Impaler! Fuck me, mighty hunter, fuck me good. Yeah, that's it, give it to me, make me come at 11 xats past the 8th zode!

A final frenzy of WET SMACKING FLESH, the final fireworks go off, POP, CRACK, BANG! LOUD GRUNTS AND MOANS, they collapse against the post, the clock reads exactly 11:20 PM.

A SCREAM outside.

ERB

That sounded like Flo.

Ula reacts swiftly, disengages from ERB, dashes out of the garage, ERB starts to follow, realizes he is naked, puts his trunks and shirt on, grabs Ula's suit, runs after her.

EXT. BEACH AT LANIKAI - NIGHT

Flo HOWLS in pain fifty yards down the beach from the party, hops on one foot, holds the other, only Ashton is with her, he searches the sand, finds his prey, strikes with an empty beer bottle, BAM! BAM! BAM!

ASHTON

A Goddamn centipede, Flo,
you've stepped on a
Goddamn centipede!

Ula arrives, shoves Flo down on the sand, squats down, grabs Flo's foot, places her mouth over the bite, sucks the venom out, spits, plucks out the stingers with her teeth, spits them out. She sits back, stares at Flo.

FLORENCE

Oh, Ula, you're the best.

ULA

I love you, Flo.

ERB arrives with Ula's swimsuit, the whole luau is watching, the kids run up. Lee is mesmerized by Ula's nudity.

LEE

Mommy, why is Ula naked?

FLORENCE

She was probably taking a
bath, honey.

LEE

Is that right, Aunt Ula?

Ula looks at ERB, looks at Flo, looks at the kid.

ULA

I needed to wash off the sea-salt from my swim today. It was making me itchy. When your mother screamed, I hopped right out of the tub and ran straight to her. I didn't have time to put any clothes on, it could have been a matter of life or death.

LEE

Well, you are dripping wet.

ASHTON

Nice improvisation, Ula.

ULA

(smiles)

What's the matter, Lee, haven't you ever seen a naked lady before?

ASHTON

It won't be his last.

Caryl Lee looks at ERB, at Ula's swimsuit in his hand, looks at Ula; Caryl Lee has the witching way, a look of understanding passes across her face, a loss of innocence.

INT. RESTAURANT, HONOLULU, FEBRUARY 1941 -- DAY

ERB, 65, and wife, Florence, 37, sit at table in an expensive Honolulu restaurant FULL OF CUSTOMERS. Florence, dressed fashionably for the weather, looks over a fancy menu, looks at her expensive watch.

FLORENCE
Your friend, MAJOR LANDON,
is late again, Ed.

ERB
Give Ted another few minutes,
dear. He's a busy man.

FLORENCE
You get drunk with him so
often, you'd think you were
joined at the hip. I often
wonder if that's the real
reason we moved here.

ERB
Come on, Flo, be fair. When
we Honeymooned out here six
years ago, you said you
wanted to move here, remember?

FLORENCE
Has it been that long? It
sure would be a lot nicer
without all of this strong
military presence. What are
you going to eat?

ERB
I'm thinking steak.

ERB carefully observes Flo's body language, her cold demeanor.

ERB
(continuing)
Good God, Flo, you're not
still holding that damn book
against me?

Flo continues to read the menu, a full range of emotions pass across her face. She looks up.

FLORENCE

I don't like it when you remind me of your mortality, Ed. It makes me feel old. You hurt me really bad in the introduction to "The City of Mummies", where Carter talked nonchalantly about your imminent death. When you talked about your survivors, I was noticeably absent, along with my children. Don't we count any more, Ed?

ERB

Of course you count, Flo. I love you with all of my heart. You're my Princess, my Dejah Thoris. It was just a scene to heighten drama.

FLORENCE

I couldn't help but notice that in "Invisible Men of Mars," John Carter cheats on Dejah Thoris again. Wasn't the name Rojas a little too obvious, Ed?

ERB

Not as obvious as Ulah in Swords of Mars.

FLORENCE

And that scene where Rojas and Dejah kiss, what are the people that know I'm your Dejah Thoris going to think? You've practically told the world about my lesbian urges.

(sighs)

Now I know what Emma must have gone through. She warned me about this.

FLORENCE

(continuing)

She said when Jane or Dejah Thoris are left out of a story it means that Eddie has lost interest in you. Dejah is totally absent from that story until the end. And then she appears only for a gratuitous lesbian and orgy scene. You just told the world in that story that you love Ula more than me. I can't believe how insensitive you can be.

ERB

But, Flo -

FLORENCE

Don't deny it, Ed. I recall how you left Dejah Thoris out of most of Swords of Mars when you were infatuated with both myself and Ula.

ERB

Don't be ridiculous. Ashton and Ula brought new excitement into both of our lives the last time they visited. "Invisible Men of Mars" reflects that period and I wanted to preserve my happiness for history.

FLORENCE

What history? That of Earth or that of Mars? You still rarely make love to me.

ERB

Give me a break, Flo. You know I have health problems.

FLORENCE

It must be nice having an excuse all the time. I feel as if I'm nothing but your chauffeur these days.

ERB

Flo, you're the one that got me started on the celebrity party circuit. It's a lot cheaper if I just hang with my friends in the military.

FLORENCE

Well, at least since we moved to Honolulu last August, I no longer have to drive your drunk ass home over that fucking Pali Mountain pass. If I hadn't stepped on that damn centipede, we'd still be out there.

ERB

We were on a tight budget, Flo. It's hard keeping up with the Janet Gaynor set.

ERB SIGHS, the NOISE INSIDE THE RESTAURANT RISES, A MAN, 41, AND WOMAN, 33, enter, are seated across the room. Florence puts her hands over her bosom, pretends to swoon.

FLORENCE

My God! That's ERNEST HEMINGWAY and his wife, MARTHA GELLHORN!

ERB is miffed that his wife idolizes a rival author.

ERB

That's not him. He's in China covering the war with Japan, and probably spying for us to boot.

ERB

(continuing)

I should know, I've been reading him for years. He's famous for his fiction, but its his non-fiction that I like the best.

(reminisces)

I'll never forget the feeling I got when I read The Green Hills of Africa for the first time. Oh, man, I wish I could write something that good someday.

FLORENCE

Just look at the crowd, Ed, it's starting to go crazy! I'm sure it's him. Go on over and talk to him. You're both famous authors and you both lived in Oak Park. You have so much in common.

ERB

Do we? His dad was known as Doc Ed in Oak Park, but I never met him. And Hemingway hated Oak Park, called it a town of wide lawns and narrow minds. That's all we have in common, a mutual hatred of the Puritanical prudery of Oak Park.

(sighs)

Other than that, we don't have much in common at all. Odds are he'll win the Pulitzer Prize someday. That puts him in another league, Flo, and he knows it. I'll not go over there and risk being snubbed in public.

FLORENCE

Let me do it then.

ERB

No!

CLOSE on Hemingway as he notices ERB on the other side. He strokes his beard as he tries to place the face. It comes to him.

HEMINGWAY

My God, Martha, isn't that Edgar Rice Burroughs over there? Do you have any idea what I owe that man? He got my imaginative juices flowing when I was in high school. I'll never forget the feeling I got the first time I read Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar, you know, the one where Tarzan gets amnesia. I don't think I've ever had that same feeling again.

(remininsces)

It was the summer of 1915, I was only 16, spending the summer at Windemere, our place on Walloon Lake in upper Michigan. I started writing fiction after reading that book. He inspired me as much as Ring Lardner. In fact, I reviewed one of his books for the school newspaper. I should go over and introduce myself.

GELLHORN

Don't you dare, Ernie! He's a hack writer.

HEMINGWAY

But Martha, he's the most popular writer of all-time.

HEMINGWAY

(continuing)

I'll never come close to having the number of readers he does.

MARTHA

They're low-brow readers, Ernie! What would the critics say if they knew you got your inspiration from Tarzan? Don't you dare go over there and embarrass me in front of all these people.

ERB's drinking buddy, Major TRUMAN H. ("TED") LANDON, 36, of the Army Air Force, arrives in uniform, sits at the empty chair.

ERB

Good to see you, Ted. What're you drinking?

ERB motions for the WAITRESS, 18, who hurries over.

LANDON

(smiles at girl)

I'll have a whiskey sour, sweetie.

The waitress smiles back, takes his order, scurries off.

LANDON

(continuing)

Sorry I'm late. They've put me in charge of organizing mass flights of B-17's from Hamilton Field in California to Hickam Field. It's a lot of work.

(pauses)

Hey, isn't that Ernest Hemingway over there?

ERB

Go to hell, Ted.

INT. NIUMALU HOTEL, HONOLULU, DECEMBER 7, 1941 -- DAY

ERB and son, Hully, 32, occupy a one-bedroom, sitting room, and bath hotel room at the Niumalu Hotel in Honolulu. They both read the morning newspaper to the radio playing Hawaiian music on channel KGMB, the NOISE OF HIGH EXPLOSIVES in the background. ERB looks up from his paper, smiles at Hully.

ERB

I'm so glad you came out here to keep me company after Flo left me, Hully. It really means something.

HULLY

You were twice her age, Dad. We all knew it wouldn't last, especially Joan, who took it the hardest.

ERB

I'm just an old fool.

HULLY

Did you hear that Joan's going to divorce Jim? He's drunk all the time.

ERB

Ralph was always right about him. Take my advice, Hully, always listen to Ralph. He's the best thing that ever happened to ERB, Inc. Did you know that he answered my ad for a secretary thinking I was the Burroughs Adding Machine Company?

They LAUGH.

HULLY

I agree, Dad, Ralph is totally indispensable. Say, can I change the channel? They've been playing the same Hawaiian music all night.

ERB

My friend Ted Landon -

HULLY

The army pilot?

ERB

Yep, Major Ted Landon, my drinking buddy. He's been flying squadrons of B-17's from California to Hickam. He told me that when they play that music all night, it means there's a flight of planes coming in from the mainland. The pilots use the music as a homing signal.

HULLY

Is the Major coming in from from the mainland today?

ERB

He called me the other day from California and said he'd be making a refueling stop on the way to the Philippines. He was all hush-hush about it since a Japanese attack is believed to be imminent.

HULLY

What do you think?

ERB

They'd be crazy to attack us! But it's probably inevitable. According to a book I read back in the 20's, The Great Pacific War, by the British journalist, Hector Baywater -

HULLY

Wasn't he murdered last year?

ERB

Yes, and many believe the Japs assassinated him due to a secret meeting he had with Admiral Yamamoto. In his book, he describes a future war in the Pacific between Japan and America, beginning with a surprise attack on our fleet at Manila.

HULLY

Wow, I guess that's why the Major's flying to the Philippines, huh?

ERB

Let's hope that Bywater is wrong, Hully.

(taps paper)

There's an interesting review of a new book by John Steinbeck and a marine biologist out of Old Monterey named Ed Ricketts called The Sea of Cortez. Remind me to buy it the next time we're at the bookstore. You can't go wrong with anything Steinbeck writes.

HULLY

Hey, Dad, look at the funnies!
Jack's John Carter of Mars is
on the front page. Wow, it
looks great.

He holds up the page for ERB to see, SHUDDERS! as an EXTRA
LOUD EXPLOSION, BOOM! goes off somewhere near.

ERB

Goddamn! That was rather
close. Where did they say
today's shelling exercises
were taking place?

Hully looks at his watch.

HULLY

Damn, Dad, we'd better get
moving or we'll lose our
place on the courts this
morning. I'm up on you two
games, don't forget.

They put down their papers, pick up their rackets, leave the
room.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS, NIUMALU HOTEL -- DAY

ERB and Hully compete hard on the courts, A CROWD gathers at
the sunbathing area at the far end.

The crowd points to a hill that obscures the view to nearby
Pearl Harbor where BOMBS ARE EXPLODING. The sky above the
harbor is full of planes.

ERB and Hully stop, A MAN runs hurriedly out of the hotel,
SCREAMS:

SCREAMING MAN

The Japs are attacking,
the Japs are attacking!
They've sunk most of the
ships and destroyed most of
the planes on the ground.
Take cover, take cover!

ERB and Hully watch the crowd begin to panic. No bombs drop near them.

HULLY

Damn, Dad, this ain't Manila!

ERB

So it begins. Well, there's nothing we can do about it right now, Hully.

ERB

(continuing; looks all around)

It seems safe enough here, so don't just stand there, serve the damn ball!

PAN UP over Waikiki to Diamond Head, a flight of 12 B-17's comes in from the mainland, flies out of formation to conserve fuel.

INT. COCKPIT OF MAJOR LANDON'S B-17 - DAY

Major Landon's 38th Recon Squadron is almost out of fuel, each plane manned by a skeleton crew of a PILOT, COPILOT, FLIGHT ENGINEER, NAVIGATOR, and RADIO OPERATOR.

They approach Hickam Field, are attacked by 9 Japanese Zero's, who open up at them at close range, RAT-A-TAT-TAT.

RADIO OPERATOR

Major, the tower reports that Hickam is under attack by unidentified planes.

COPILOT

Those are Jap Zero's and they're shooting at us!

LANDON

Goddammit, we can't shoot back. Our machine guns are still in the Cosmoline and we've got no ammo. What a way to start a war, unarmed and out of gas!

Landon flies into the clouds, evades the attacking planes, drops down, makes his approach to Hickam.

LANDON

(continuing)

Oboe Leader to Oboe Flight,
we're being attacked by the
Japs! Take evasive action!
Land wherever you can!

RADIO OPERATOR

Hickam says to come in west
to east, Major. They say
we've got three Zero's on our
tail.

COPILOT

Goddammit, Sir, our own men
are shooting at us!

LANDON

Call the tower and tell those
sons of bitches to stop
shooting at us!

Landon's plane is third to land, the air is full of smoke and fire from burning ships and planes.

The second plane is hit by Japanese fire, RAT-A-TAT-TAT! bursts into flames, WHOOSH! from midsection to tail, shreds in half as it touches down, the front half careens to a stop, SCREECH!

Landon dodges craters and six burning planes on the runway as he touches down, almost collides with the burning back half of the second plane, the three Zero's follow him down, pour fire into his plane, RAT-A-TAT-TAT!

EXT. TARMAC OF HICKAM FIELD - DAY

Landon and his crew jump out of the B-17, run for the hangars with THE FIRST TWO CREWS, the Zero's strafe everywhere, RAT-A-TAT-TAT!

LT. SCHICK, the squadron doctor from the burning second plane, limps for cover with a wounded leg, a ricocheting bullet, KA-PING! hits him in the head, SMACK! he falls. Landon picks him up, carries him into the hangar.

LANDON

Our squadron's surgeon is
the only one hit! What a
way to start a fucking war!

EXT. WATERFRONT DOCKS, HONOLULU, DECEMBER 7, 1941 -- NIGHT

ERB, Hully, and fellow hotel guest, ANTON ROST, 40's, drive onto the docks in ERB's Buick. ERB parks, they get IN LINE where MILITARY POLICEMEN are issuing Springfield rifles for guard duty to VARIOUS CIVILIANS.

ROST

From hotel guests to guarding
the docks, what an adventure,
eh, Mr. Burroughs.

ERB

Let's make sure we get the
same assignment. We can be
the Three Musketeers.

ROST

Do you really think they'll
launch a land attack?

ERB

No, but if we're lucky,
maybe we can bag us some
saboteurs.

HULLY

I've been thinking, Dad, I'm
going to enlist in the Army,
like you and Grandpa. Just
look at what the Goddamn Japs
have done to our fleet!

ERB

How proud that would make me,
Hully. Even the Old Major
would take his hat off to you.
I think I'll try to get a job
as a war correspondent.
Maybe I'll see some action
yet in my old age.

EXT. GUADALCANAL, FEBRUARY 1943 -- DAY

ERB stands on top of a hill, watches a tank unit descend into a valley in formation, attack the jungle, flush out the remnants of Japanese left-behind suicide squads. ERB is with the UNIT COMMANDER, 20's, watching with binoculars.

ERB

Isn't Joe Kennedy's kid
stationed out here somewhere?

UNIT COMMANDER

He's with a PT boat squadron
not far from here, keeping an
eye on the Tokyo Express.

ERB

Old Joe produced one of the
first Tarzan movies.

UNIT COMMANDER

That old bootlegger? My, my,
what a life you've led.
Can you see how we're
flushing them out?

ERB nods, his mind going back, back.

ERB

It's like a story I wrote.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PELLUCIDAR -- HIGH NOON

The black air dirigible, 0-220, rests on the open plain.

A LINE OF MEN descend from a ladder into the open, led by Jason Gridley, followed by Lt. Van Horst, Muvari, and ten of his warriors, 20-30's. The blacks carry rifles and plenty of ammunition, Gridley and Van Horst carry .45 Colt semiautomatics.

GRIDLEY

Tarzan's been missing since yesterday as far as we can tell from the clocks. There's no other way of telling time in this strange place. He was last seen by a crew member taking to the trees in this area.

(points)

Any questions?

There being none, they press into the jungle, find a game trail, follow it.

After a long march A BEDLAM OF HIDEOUS GROWLS AND ROARS AND SCREAMS all around them, they are unable to determine the source.

VAN HORST

(GERMAN ACCENT)

Mr. Gridley, have you noticed that most of the noise seems to come from the rear? To the right and left SQUEALING and the TRUMPETING of elephants, but most of the more savage GROWLINGS are either in our rear, or to the rear of the other sounds.

GRIDLEY

How do you account for it, Lt. Van Horst?

VAN HORST

I cannot, it is as though we are part of a vast procession with all the savage carnivores behind us.

WAZIRI WARRIOR

Look, Bwana! Look!

Gridley and Van Horst turn around, look in the direction the warrior points.

CLOSE on their shocked faces. Slinking slowly behind them, a massive saber-tooth tiger, followed by a dozen more.

WAZIRI WARRIOR

Shall we fire, Bwana?

GRIDLEY

Not yet. Close up and be ready.

The Waziri warriors fall back, form a line as the column slowly retreats from the danger.

Muviro, the forward scout, runs up to Gridley.

MUVIRO

For a long time, Bwana, there has been the spoor of many elephants in the trail, and just now I sighted the beasts ahead.

VAN HORST

Are you sure they are elephants, Muviro?

MUVIRO

If they are not elephants they are very much like them. And there are either elephants or tigers on either side of us. I can hear them moving through the brush.

The trail suddenly breaks into a huge round clearing, at least a hundred acres wide, sparsely covered with brush and trees.

AERIAL SHOT: from various trails, meeting spoke-like into the center hub of the clearing, a strange procession of creatures emerge: great ox-like animals with shaggy coats and wide-spreading horns; mastodons and woolly mammoths; a gigantic elephantine kind of creature, with a head four feet long and three feet wide, pig-like ears, a short powerful trunk, mighty downward-turning tusks, stands at the shoulder ten feet from the ground.

GRIDLEY

Did you ever see anything
like it before in your lives?
That huge thing is a
Dinotherium of the Miocene.

VAN HORST

We are being flushed out into
a killing field. Can you not
see?

MUVIRO

Yes, Bwana. If we are going
to escape certain death, we
must cross this clearing at
once. If we are not eaten by
the cats, we shall be
trampled to death by this
vast herd in its panic.

VAN HORST

There is an opening just in
front of us. Quickly, we
have no time to lose.

They make a run for it.

MUVIRO

Look, Bwana, there are tigers
entering the clearing from
all sides. They have
surrounded their quarry.

The animals graze, become aware of the tigers. A mastodon TRUMPETS SHRILLY, all the animals alert, make distinct ANIMAL SOUNDS, joined by hideous GROWLS and ROARS from the tigers.

All hell breaks loose.

Hundreds of saber-tooth tigers charge into the herd. The search party runs for its life, dodge animals as they stampede willy-nilly all about. One of the warriors fires his rifle, BANG! a prehistoric Bos Primigenus CRASHES! to the ground.

The sound of the rifle focuses the attention of the cats on the men, the tigers make a concerted dash for them.

GRIDLEY

Give them a volley, then beat
it for the trees. It's every
man for himself!

The Waziri wheel, form a picket line, Gridley gives the order to Fire! BANG! BANG! BANG! Many tigers fall dead, the stampeding animals retreat, the tigers keep coming.

Gridley and Van Horst fire their pistols at anything that moves in front of them, BANG! BANG! gain the trees. A huge tree sloth bowls Gridley over, he loses sight of Van Horst. He recovers, climbs high into a tree, observes the slaughter in the clearing.

It is a scene of wonder and horror and lasts for hours. At the end, the killing field is littered with both dead animals and tigers. Scavenger hyaeodons, jackals, and wild dogs move in, feast on the remains.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRIDGE OF THE DESTROYER, USS SHAW, FEBRUARY 1943 -- DAY

ERB is heading home after his first assignment on the destroyer USS Shaw. The CAPTAIN, 30's, is humoring him.

CAPTAIN

All done with the war, Mr.
Burroughs?

ERB

I'm going to try like hell to get another assignment back in Pearl. This is the adventure of my life.

CAPTAIN

Well, I'm afraid it could be shortened at any time aboard this ship. She was run aground on a coral reef in the Solomons.

ERB

That bad, eh? Well, as far as I'm concerned, it's a miracle she's even floating at all. I saw her forward magazines blow off her bow in the second wave at Pearl.

CAPTAIN

What an explosion that was! But they had her fixed and back in action by the summer. And now her keel's badly wrinkled, some of her plates are sprung, and she's got holes in her bottom patched with concrete.

(smiles)

Hell, a heavy storm or even the concussion from one of our depth charges could sink her in the wink of an eye.

ERB

What about Jap submarines?

CAPTAIN

That goes without saying. So, what are you looking for, anyway? I see you out here every day scanning the water.

ERB

Oh, you know, the usual, whales, sharks...floating corpses. My morbid fascination in floating corpses has been lifelong. I once read a story about a corpse in the water. No one knew where it had come from, everyone could only speculate.

CAPTAIN

No speculation out here, Mr. Burroughs.

The ship's Klaxon alarm goes off, the CREW scurries up and down ladders forward and aft, man their battle stations.

CAPTAIN

Damn, another sub sighting! Prepare for the worst.

The Shaw zigs-zags in the water, launches depth charges, BOOM! BOOM! huge spouts of foamy sea water gush up.

EXT. TARMAC OF TARAWA AIRFIELD, MARCH 1944 -- DAY

ERB is about to board General Ted Landon's Headquarters B-24 Liberator, the Pacific Tramp, on a routine bombing run. Landon commands the Seventh Army Air Force Bomber Command, has provided for ERB to be reunited with son, Hully, 34, an aerial photographer.

ERB is dressed in flak jacket over a simple khaki shirt with no insignia, khaki slacks, tan oxfords and baseball cap. Hully, 35, in uniform and pith helmet, salutes the General, 41, also in uniform, then embraces ERB.

HULLY

Wow, Dad, you're finally going to be in the action!

ERB

I think we can thank the General for both of these serendipitous events.

HULLY

I hear you're the oldest war correspondent in the nation.

ERB

Yep, and I intend on giving Ernie Pyle a run for his money.

Hully bows his head, remembers something, sighs, looks up.

HULLY

Oh, yeah, did you hear about Tom Reynolds?

ERB

Fred and Lizzie's son?

HULLY

Yes. Tarawa was Tom's samurai head-hunter island, Dad.

ERB

What do you mean?

HULLY

I got a letter from Mom last week. Tom was a captain in the Marines. He was killed November 22, the third day of Tarawa.

ERB

How terrible.

HULLY

A thousand Marines were killed and two thousand more were wounded in the 76 hours it took to take the island. Over here, it's called Bloody Tarawa. I was overhead taking pictures at the time.

HULLY

(continuing)

It was like something from
one of your stories, it was
so awful.

Hully takes out a glossy picture from his rear pocket,
unfolds it, hands it to ERB.

HULLY

(continuing)

This shows the position of
the 6th Marine Regiment, 1st
Battalion, 2nd Division,
on the evening of the 22nd,
right before the Japs
conducted a series of Banzai
suicide counter-attacks.

(points)

It was just over there on
the southeast side of the
tarmac.

PAN to southeast side of tarmac.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TARAWA ATOLL, SOUTHEAST SIDE OF LANDING FIELD, NOVEMBER
22, 1943 - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

CAPTAIN TOM REYNOLDS, 36, crouches inside a disabled
Japanese anti-aircraft gun position, ready to take orders
from MAJOR W. R. JONES, late 30's, as the Japanese counter-
attack his front line. The Marines have adapted the bunker
into a .30 caliber machine-gun nest.

SEVERAL MARINES are in the bunker, A RADIO-MAN, TWO MEN man
the machine-gun, THE REST ready to take orders.

The landscape is a scene from hell, huge craters pockmark
the shattered sand, blasted palm trees and fronds litter the
ground, hundreds of dead bodies cover the battlefield like a
blanket.

Major Jones orders artillery fire to quell the attack.

MAJOR JONES
(to radio-man)
Bring it in 75 yards from our
position.

RADIO MAN
Fire mission!

REYNOLDS
Isn't that a little close,
sir?

MAJOR JONES
We're Marines, Reynolds. We
do whatever's necessary.

The artillery shells SOUND LIKE TRAINS GOING OVERHEAD, they land, THWUMP! THWUMP! THWUMP! too far for the current attackers but keep the rest of the Japanese force at bay.

MAJOR JONES
(continuing)
The Japs have breached our
lines between Abel and Baker
Companies. Captain Reynolds,
take some men and plug it up.

REYNOLDS
Yes, sir.

Reynolds takes FIVE men, runs down the line where the Marines fight a desperate hand-to-hand battle with bayonets and hand grenades.

Several Japanese breach the line, rush towards Reynolds and his men, engage in hand-to-hand combat. The men fight savagely.

Reynolds shoots several with his 45. semi-automatic, BANG! BANG! BANG! a Japanese officer runs him through with his samurai sword, SQUISH!

Reynolds clutches the Japanese officer tightly, unloads his pistol into him, BANG! BANG! darkness covers his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TARAWA TARMAC - DAY (PRESENT)

HULLY

They sent the samurai sword
home to Fred.

ERB

How sad, but at least he
died with his boots on.
I'm Goddamn proud of that boy.
And to think, twenty years
from now, no one will
even remember November 22nd
as a date in history.

HULLY

Give 'em hell, Dad!

LANDON

Time to mount up, Ed.
Take some good pictures of
your Pa, son.

HULLY

Yes, sir!

LANDON

Have you ever been in a B-24,
Ed? Compared to the B-17 it
handles like a big truck.
Newer is not always better.

Hully takes pictures, ERB and Landon pose in front of the
plane, then board.

INT. THE PACIFIC TRAMP -- DAY

ERB is just behind the cockpit, talking with Captain OLIVER
R. FRANKLIN, 30's, Bombardier of Headquarters, Seventh
Bomber Command. General Landon flies the B-24 at 7,000 feet
over the target, the Japanese-held island of Jaluit. The
NOISE OF THE PLANE IS NEAR DEAFENING as they talk.

FRANKLIN

Gosh, Ed, I haven't seen you for two years. I think the last time is when you came over to my place in Waikiki to watch the high waves rolling in after that big storm. You'd been fighting with your wife.

ERB

Don'tcha miss it now? I'll never forget those rum drinks you made, the strong sea breeze rustling the palms.

FRANKLIN

Remember how I gave you such a bad time about your treatment of ritualistic religion in your books?

ERB

Of course, I told you I was an idealist agnostic.

They LAUGH.

FRANKLIN

I had the Marines load up six 500-pounders in the front racks. The General wants to give you an idea of precision bombing.

(points at map)

Our target is the three-story frame government house on Jaluit, which the Japs are using for food, storage, and, some say, geishas. It's guarded by several operational ack-ack guns, mostly 75 mm.

(points)

FRANKLIN

(continuing)

I'll be up front in the nose
and you'll be stationed in
the right-waist gun position,
with headset and microphone.
Your job will be to spot
where the bombs hit and to
advise on the position of
any ack-ack fire. Got it?

ERB

Yes, show me where to go.

FRANKLIN

Remember Pearl Harbor!

ERB is shown to his place, strapped in, wired to go.

The Japanese guns open up on them as they come in for the
first run, ACK-ACK-ACK!

ERB sticks his head out the window for better visibility,
his baseball cap is blown off in the 200 mph wind. All
communication is over the plane intercom.

The shells explode: BOOM!

ERB

Ack-ack burst at 3 o'clock
high.

LANDON

(IN HEADSET)

Don't worry, boys; we've got
Tarzan the mighty fighter
on board.

BOOM! the plane rocks as another blast hits nearby, FLAK
HITS THE PLANE, MAKES MULTIPLE METALLIC WHACKS against the
fuselage, makes holes in the wings, no one is hit.

ERB

Burst low, straight
underneath.

FRANKLIN
(IN HEADSET)

Bombs away!

The bombs fall, ERB sticks his head so far out the window, he has to hold on to the headset with one hand, BOOM!

ERB
Bomb slightly over and a bit
left of gun position.

The next bomb takes out the gun position, BOOM! the next two, BOOM! BOOM! go right through the administration building, blow it to pieces, KABOOM!

ERB
Yeee-hawww! Direct hit!

The crew CHEERS!

LANDON
(IN HEADSET)

No pussy for those Goddamn
Jap bastards tonight, eh,
Ed?

EXT. ENIWETOK ISLAND -- DAY

They land on Eniwetok Island.

Landon brings down the craft onto the tarmac, the nose wheel folds, he fights at the controls, keeps the plane upright, it tears a huge gouge in the runway, scoops up a large amount of coral gravel, comes to a stop.

The crew climb out rapidly, look over their shoulders, expect flames. ERB and Landon crawl out of the bomb bay. They walk away from the wreck nonchalantly, don't look back. ERB is aware that the General is red-faced, suffering from embarrassment.

ERB

Have you ever seen such a
desolate place in your life?
What a Goddamn dump!
Someone should bomb this
island off the map!

The crew CRACKS UP.

A Marine jeep comes across the tarmac, picks up ERB and Landon. Landon slaps ERB on the back.

LANDON

Goddammit, Ed, you're the
perfect guest, and the best
damn good luck charm a pilot
ever had. Did you see how
many holes we took from that
ak-ak over Jaluit?

ERB

I never paid any attention.
It was the most fun I've ever
had. And as long as your
crew keeps stealing your good
booze to keep my tongue
lubricated, I'll be the best
Goddamn lucky charm you've
ever had.

They LAUGH.

EXT. FOREST LAWN CEMETARY, APRIL 27, 1946 - DAY

ERB, 70, walks across the well-kept lawns of the cemetery towards a solitary FEMALE, 32, standing, head-bowed, over a grave-marker. He gets closer, it is Ula.

ERB comes up beside Ula, puts his arm around her, looks down, sees the inscription on the grave-marker: ASHTON DEARHOLT, APRIL 4, 1894 - APRIL 27, 1942.

ULA

I come here every year on
the anniversary. I'm so
glad you could make it, Ed.

ERB

Ashton was a dear friend;
I will miss him greatly,
more than Emma, who died
in '44.

ULA

He died so suddenly -

ERB

There were many rumors.
What was the cause?

ULA

Take your pick.

ERB takes her left hand in his, spies the huge diamond ring she wears. She notices.

ULA

I've married a very rich man,
but there's little love in
the arrangement, I'm afraid.

She starts to weep. ERB takes her in his arms.

ULA

I feel so alone, Ed.

ERB

Ula, you know how I've
always felt about you.

She sniffs, looks him in the eye.

ULA

Ever since you won me in
that bet, I've always had
you in my heart. Let's get
a bottle of wine, mighty
hunter.

ERB

Where will we drink it?

Ula smiles for the first time. She kisses him on the lips, reaches down, feels his erection, rubs it.

ULA

Ah, still the mighty hunter.
There's a hotel near by.
Let's get a room.

ERB

You'll be the death of me
yet, Ula.

ULA

That'll be the day.

They embrace, French-kiss, he rubs her buttocks, the SOUND OF DRUMS, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! RISE from the graves. They walk toward the parking lot, arm in arm.

INT. ERB'S LAST BUNGALOW, 5565 ZELZAH AVE., ENCINO, MARCH 19, 1950 -- DAY

ERB, 74, in very bad health, sits up in his bed, watches as JOAN, 41, and JACK, 37, enter the room. Joan brings him breakfast on a bed tray, Jack brings him a copy of the Sunday paper and a manila envelope.

JOAN

It seems like all the women
in your life accused some
poor man of corrupting you:
Texas Pete with your
mother, Ashton Dearholt with
Mom, and General Landon with
Flo. But I don't believe
they corrupted you at all.

(contemplates)

You just lived your life and
attracted like-thinking men.
You were who you were.

ERB

Thanks, Joan; that means a
lot to me. However, you
shouldn't have been so
unforgiving with Flo.

ERB

(continuing)

That nearly broke my heart.
Your mother's been dead for
six years now, don't you
think it's time to let it go?

JOAN

She used me to get to you,
Popsy.

ERB

She never used you, Flo. We
were lovers way before she
became close friends with
you.

Joan is shocked. She lowers her head, folds her hands in
her lap.

JOAN

It's not just that, it was
the deception involved. She
pretended to be my friend
when she was leading a
double life that I never
suspected.

(sighs)

She may not have been as good
as Janet Gaynor in The
Johnstown Flood, but she
could act well enough to
fool me. Even Clark Gable
retired for years after
making that movie with her.
And to think that I spent all
that time with a lesbian!

ERB

Only with Ula, and only then
to compete for Ashton's
affection.

JOAN

Believe what you want, but I can recall several evenings when she would get very friendly with me. After a couple of glasses of wine she would get all kissy-face. I thought it was just girl stuff, but who knows?

ERB

Look, Joan, it was all my fault. I had a huge crush on Mary Pickford. Every time I saw Flo, I saw Mary. In the end I was unable to separate my real world from my fantasy world. Did you know that when she was a little girl she believed that she was Dejah Thoris?

JOAN

I remember well, Popsy.
(wipes tear from eye)
Well, Jack and I have an appointment to keep. We'll be back later. Have a good breakfast.

Jack hands him the Sunday paper and envelope. ERB looks at the envelope. It is blank.

ERB

Where did this come from, Jack? Who sent it?

JACK

I believe it came from General Landon. Very hush-hush. A courier delivered it at the office, since you move around so much.

ERB CHUCKLES.

ERB

Your old man is just a
Gypsy at heart.

Joan and Jack say GOODBYE, leave ERB to himself. He takes a few bites, then sets the breakfast table aside.

He opens the manila envelope. Inside is the official Air Force report on Operation Sandstone, the set of three nuclear weapons tests on Eniwetok Atoll.

The report is stamped: TOP SECRET.

The first test: X-Ray, a 37 kiloton blast; the second: Yoke, a 49 kiloton blast; the third: Zebra, an 18 kiloton blast -- all set off between April 14th and May 14th, 1948.

A type-written note is attached to the report.

CLOSE on note: It looks like they took your advice about blowing the island off the map; too bad they couldn't hire the services of Fal Silvas. The note is neither addressed nor signed.

ERB

(continuing; to himself)

I guess I'm not supposed to
have this.

He puts the report down and turns to the Sunday Comics. He CHUCKLES as he reads a strip, gets angry when he gets to the Tarzan strip.

ERB

(continuing; to himself)

No, no, Tarzan would never do
something like this.

He looks up at the ceiling.

ERB

(continuing)

Oh, Gaberell, when are they
going to get it right?

He SIGHS, reaches inside a bedside table-drawer, pulls out an envelope, opens it, pulls out the July 14, 1915 letter from Lizzie, reads it again:

CLOSE on letter: July 14, 1915, My darling Ed: I dream of you every night. Happy Bastille Day. Thank you for that wonderful Fourth of July. Our church, or temple, as Wright would have it, is scheduling a charity for the Bohemian immigrants of Cicero on the S.S. Eastland on the 24th. Mark that on your calendar. I will be free afterwards. I am very excited and hope for an opportunity to see you. You are my Uberman. I love you so, my darling, Lizzie.

He reaches for the envelope, this time pulls out an old newspaper clipping.

CLOSE on clipping: July 24, 1915: The S.S. Eastland, while tied to the docks on the south bank of the Chicago River, rolled over today, killing 841 passengers and 4 crew members. Always considered top-heavy, the Eastland was refitted with extra lifeboats pursuant to the Seaman's Act, the extra weight directly contributing to the catastrophe. A canoe race on the river caused most of the passengers on deck to rush to one side, capsizing the ship...

ERB pauses, HEARS THE STIRRING MUSIC OF WAGNER'S "RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES" coming down from Heaven.

The ghost of a young naked Lizzie Reynolds materializes over the bed, the redness of her wind-blown hair and bush heightened by the whiteness of her skin, she reaches out:

LIZZIE
Come to Valhalla with me,
my Uberman!

ERB drops the clipping, with both hands reaches out for her.

ERB's young naked spirit leaves his body, embraces Lizzie, his penis penetrates her vagina, she MOANS in pleasure, they make love in the air, ascend to Valhalla in a WHIRLWIND OF MUSIC.

ERB's body slumps on the bed, dead, in peace.

INT. HALLWAY, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY AT NORTHRIDGE,
JANUARY, 1984 -- DAY

BACKGROUND MUSIC: The opening piano riff to Bob Seger's "Old
Time Rock 'n Roll."

BOBBY HARRIS, 19, late for the first day of his English 1B
class, runs recklessly down the hallway to the classroom.
He wears faddish MTV-style clothing, his long blond hair
combed comically like the New Wave rock group, A Flock of
Seagulls. He slides up to the door like Tom Cruise in Risky
Business, opens the door, shuffles inside.

INT. ENGLISH 1B CLASS -- DAY

Professor HAROLD PANGHORN, 50, a tall, slim, handsome black
man with gray flecks in his short-cropped hair, writes his
name on the blackboard with chalk, turns, faces a FULL CLASS
OF STUDENTS, all dressed in hip clothing.

Panghorn wears Levis, a button-down shirt, a herringbone
jacket with patches on the elbows. He stares at Bobby as he
slinks into a vacant chair at the rear of the classroom. He
speaks with a noticeable Southern accent.

PANGHORN

Glad you made it, er...?

BOBBY

Bobby Harris, sir.

PANGHORN

Glad you made it, Bobby.
Okay, this is an English
literature class, but, as
you shall soon discover, one
man's literature is another
man's boring read.

(pauses)

Who knows who died last week?

Bobby, class clown, in his best imitation, gives the classic
Johnny Weissmuller TARZAN YODEL! The whole class CRACKS UP!

PANGHORN

Very good, Bobby. Yes, Johnny Weissmuller passed away last week in Acapulco at the age of 79. A tape of his Tarzan yell was played at his burial.

(pauses)

Tarzan of the Apes was, of course, the creation of Edgar Rice Burroughs, who also founded Tarzana on the exact opposite side of this valley. In my opinion - and many English professors would burn me at the stake for saying this - Edgar Rice Burroughs was the most influential writer of this century.

BLACK FEMALE STUDENT

He was a racist! He portrayed our people as dumb Bwana niggers! How can you say that?

PANGHORN

Burroughs believed the white man was dominant for evolutionary reasons, just as he portrayed the black man as the dominant race on Mars. He was no more a racist than any other white man of his generation. At the time he wrote, the white man dominated the planet. It was what it was. In fact, comparatively speaking, he was quite liberal about the races, making any man of any race a hero if he possessed what he considered to be noble characteristics.

HIPPIY STUDENT

He was a capitalist, the first mass-marketer of a fictional character, a harbinger of the horrible evil to come. He incorporated himself to avoid paying income tax.

PANGHORN

Yes, he was one of the first men to incorporate himself to pay less income tax. And there is no doubt that he made a lucrative business marketing his characters.

(pauses)

But my thesis goes beyond all of your obvious criticisms. It is based on what I call the "Imaginative Urge," the ability to create worlds, events, cultures, languages, creatures, that only do not exist, cannot exist -- but make them credibly exist!

LITERATURE SNOB

He was a hack writer of pulp fiction. He wrote only for the money. No one will remember his name a hundred years from now.

PANGHORN

I radically disagree with you. You pose the classic dichotomy between high-brow and low-brow literature, but I submit to you that there is no real difference of real merit.

(waves hand)

PANGHORN

(continuing)

Compared to the vast majority of the world's illiterate population, the low-brow readership consists of a significant majority of all readers in America. Any literature makes the reader acquainted with the English language in an intimate manner; makes the reader better able to communicate with his fellow man.

LITERATURE SNOB

What kind of values do you have? Are you saying a person is better served by reading Edgar Rice Burroughs than Ernest Hemingway?

PANGHORN

The reader is served by either of them. High-brows make up your so-called values so they may look down upon the low-brows, to reinforce the illusion that some type of superior class system of intelligence exists.

(clears throat)

To prove my point, I cite the fact that there is not one science fiction author of acclaim today that does not owe a huge debt to Edgar Rice Burroughs.

SCIENCE FICTION SNOB

His Mars never existed. There is nothing scientific about it at all.

PANGHORN

You are very ignorant.
 Burroughs portrayed Mars as
 a dying planet, with
 evaporated oceans. That Mars
 certainly exists. And even
 his Mars that does not exist
 inspired every major science
 fiction writer since.

(jabs finger)

The Mars of H.G. Wells' War
 of the Worlds certainly did
 not exist, but it's regarded
 as a modern classic. Who can
 read "The Third Expedition"
 in Ray Bradbury's Martian
 Chronicles - where the
 Martian's use telepathy
 to take over the mind's
 of astronauts from earth -
 without thinking of the
 Lotharians in Thuvia, Maid
 of Mars, or the ghosts of
 the ancient auburn-haired
 race that inhabited Mars
 millions of years before
 the advent of John Carter
 in "The City of Mummies"?

(jabs finger)

Bradbury's Mars certainly
 does not exist, either,
 but who would say his book
 is not a masterpiece of
 modern literature?

LITERATURE SNOB

You make a good argument;
 but I'd still rather read
A Farewell to Arms or The
 Old Man and the Sea.

PANGHORN

Or take, for example, Robert Heinlein, the Dean of Science Fiction. He too started in the pulps and published many influential books, such as Stranger in a Strange Land. A few years ago, he published The Number of the Beast, one of his worst written novels, but still a stirring tribute to Burroughs and his Mars. It was on the New York Times bestseller list for three months.

(sips his soda)

Or how about the idea that Burrough's developed in Swords of Mars, of a ray that penetrates human tissue allowing you to see inside a human brain. Ever heard of Magnetic Resonance Imaging? And how about this time paradox: Heinlein recently underwent heart surgery and was saved by a newly invented heart valve.

(pauses)

The doctor who invented the valve was inspired to go into medicine after reading one of Heinlein's earlier Future History stories.

SCIENCE FICTION SNOB

I'm still not convinced.

PANGHORN

What about the Gridley Wave, a product of radio static?

PANGHORN

(continuing)

In 1978, two scientists at Bell Labs discovered that the static was cosmic microwave background radiation left over from the Big Bang.

SCIENCE FICTION FAN

That's really stretching it, Professor Panghorn.

PANGHORN

Very well, how about a fax machine and directional radar, ideas he developed in Warlord of Mars and Thuvia, Maid of Mars? Or, best of all, Burroughs' idea of a mechanical brain running all crucial aspects of a spaceship, as he also created in Swords of Mars. That idea is taken for granted in the greatest science fiction TV show of all time.

BOBBY

Beam me up, Scotty!

More LAUGHTER. Panghorn frowns at Bobby.

PANGHORN

As I said, his influence is everywhere and most of the time unheralded. Consider the fact that Arthur C. Clarke, another science fiction icon - inventor of the geosynchronous communication satellite - was also influenced by Swords of Mars.

PANGHORN

(continuing)

He took the sinister suggestion in that story that such a mechanical brain might begin originating its own thoughts hostile to man. He used it as the premise for the greatest science fiction movie of all time.

BOBBY

Open the pod bay door, Hal!

The class CRACKS UP. Panghorn sighs, lets it go.

PANGHORN

You are very perceptive, Bobby. But give me a minute, please.

Panghorn picks a book off the desk: The Beasts of Tarzan, thumbs through it, finds a passage.

PANGHORN

(continuing)

In my opinion, the only thing that separates Burroughs from the Hemingways and Steinbecks is grammar and style. Once you get beyond the obvious paid-by-the-word livid prose, a world of imagination opens up in your mind that has no parallel in modern literature.

(takes a sip)

Burroughs had a unique style; he was a pioneer in the literature of horror, whose eerie territory was mapped out by the likes of Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft.

PANGHORN

(continuing)

Most of Burroughs' stories begin with the lead character starting out on some kind of mission. But that is merely a device to give the story the appearance of a plot. After some introductory pages, Burroughs' unique style kicks in, and you are of on a roller-coaster, the stories take on the logic of the nightmare.

(clears throat)

Countless times his characters are placed into absolute pitch blackness, and you experience first-hand his own personal nightmares of being buried alive, or alone in the dark.

(pauses)

To keep it honest, he devotes the last two or three pages resolving the plot. This only emphasizes the fact that you have spent the last few hours reading a story which had absolutely nothing to do with the alleged plot.

(stares at class)

I submit to you that when you read Edgar Rice Burroughs, you are reading the literature of pure anarchy.

Panghorn lets his point sink in. He clears his throat, takes a sip from his soda.

PANGHORN

(continuing)

The Tarzan and Mars books largely overshadow the fact that Burroughs was the King of Pulp fiction. His stories of prostitutes, Hollywood drug and sex scandals, rape and murder, were the fodder of pulp fiction.

(pauses)

Pay attention; the following point cannot be over-emphasized. This may seem hard hard to believe, but in the early days of pulp fiction, it was the legal pornography of its time. The stories created for the reader the same sort of prurient titillation that the modern reader experiences when reading a novel by Harold Robbins, as for example, The Carpetbaggers, the modern equivalent of Burroughs's The Girl from Hollywood.

(takes sip)

In spite of the social, moral, and cultural paradigm shifts that have occurred in American history since that time, the reading experience would be the same. Adventure, sex, and violence; what more could a reader ask for?

He takes a sip from his soda, he has the attention of the whole class now.

PANGHORN

(continuing)

The first book I ever read while growing up in the Deep South was The Beasts of Tarzan. I'll never forget the feeling I got the first time I read it. The noble black warrior, Mugambi, was a hero to me. Tarzan treated him as an equal.

(passionately)

Tarzan, and all of Burroughs' characters had the ability to bring diverse elements - even blood enemies - together to achieve a common purpose. And even though his heroes were constantly beset with a million-to-one chance for survival, as long as they lived, they never gave up hope.

(pauses)

As I said, his prose is florid, purple, and paid-by-the-word, but his flair for storytelling borders on the genius. I don't know if Burroughs ever read Joseph Conrad, but Tarzan's journey up the Ugambi River with his hideous crew into the heart of darkness is every bit as riveting as Conrad's journey up the Congo. Now sit back and let your imaginations run free as I read this passage.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUTH OF UGAMBI RIVER, EQUATORIAL AFRICA -- DUSK

Jane floats down the Ugambi, naked but for the bandolier over one shoulder, her dugout canoe comes into the mouth of the river, she sees the Kincaid anchored ahead. Her hair is disheveled, her whole body streaked with dirt and sweat.

She tries to steer the canoe, the current is too swift, it is sweeping her wide of her mark, if she misses, she will be swept out into the Atlantic Ocean.

She paddles harder, comes close, almost misses, grabs hold of the anchor chain just in time.

She secures the canoe bow rope to the chain, she runs the rope out, the boat moves along the side of the ship, pulls alongside the monkey ladder, she boards the ship, her rifle slung over her shoulder.

EXT. DECK OF THE KINCAID - DUSK

Jane scouts around, the ship appears deserted, she finds TWO SAILORS in drunken slumber in the forecastle, she locks the hatch over their heads.

She finds a revolver in the captain's quarters, food in the galley, eats, unashamed of her nakedness.

She hears a boat, goes back on deck, some of the crew are on the shore, reuniting with Rokoff.

The sun sets. She returns to forecastle, the men are now awake.

JANE

Listen to me, men. I will let
you out if you give your word
that you will obey my orders.
I will kill the first man
to disobey. Do you agree?

SAILORS (OFFSCREEN)

(in unison)

We do.

She sets them free, holds them at bay with the revolver, forces them to cut the cable that holds the ship to her anchorage. The night sky is deeply overcast, heavy clouds ride low over the jungle and water.

JANE

Quickly, cut that cable!
There's no time to lose!

Heading towards the ship in the dark are a row boat and a dugout canoe, the former manned by Rokoff and the REST OF THE CREW, the other, right behind, by Tarzan's hideous crew: Sheeta, at the bow, then Mugambi, Kaviri's daughter, Akut and FOUR SURVIVING APES OF HIS TRIBE.

The cable is cut, the Kincaid, with a METALLIC GROAN, slips free of her mooring, heads out to sea.

Then, a GRINDING JAR as she runs into a hidden sandbar. The ship spins around, continues out to sea.

Tarzan stands naked, bleeding, on the river bank, listens, tries to locate the ship. It is pitch black, he cannot see a thing.

He hears the PADDLES of the canoe, the OARS of the launch, the NOISE of the ship hitting the sandbar.

The two boats get closer.

Rokoff and his men fire their rifles at Mugambi's canoe, BANG! BANG! Kaviri's daughter SCREAMS.

Tarzan dives into the river, SPLASH! swims towards the sound of the guns.

At the sound of the scream, Jane takes her eyes off the two crewmen, looks over the bow. The crewmen sneak up behind, tackle her, take her gun, molest her.

Jane SCREAMS! The men lower her naked body to the deck. One holds her arms, the other unbuckles his belt, pulls down his pants, kneels down between her kicking legs. Jane KICKS, SCREAMS, the man punches her viciously in the face, POW! POW! dazes her.

SAILOR

Fuck that blonde pussy,
Morgan.

MORGAN

Ain't it a beaut!

Morgan holds his penis, rubs it against Jane's clitoris, he takes a deep breath, sticks it in her vagina, Jane MOANS, he copulates her, Jane fights the eros, she KICKS, SCREAMS, tries to buck him off, drives him in deeper, she MOANS! has an orgasm, she can't help herself, moves with his hips.

Tarzan clammers over the vessel's rail. The moon rises on the horizon, backlights the overcast. Tarzan hears Jane SCREAM, runs toward the bow.

Jane sees Tarzan, STRUGGLES HARDER, it drives her rapist deeper into her vagina, he GRUNTS, ejaculates.

JANE

Hurry, Tarzan, help me!

The man holding Jane's arms sees Tarzan, lets her go, jumps to his feet, reaches for the revolver. Jane's rapist pulls out, jumps to his feet, Jane KICKS him in the testicles, SCRUNCH!

Neither men are in time to escape Tarzan.

Tarzan grabs them both by the shoulders, hurls them across the deck, CRASH, BAM! they roll into the scuppers, stunned and terrified.

Tarzan helps Jane to her feet, she falls into his arms, he disregards her bloody, bruised face, kisses her.

JANE

Hold me, Tarzan.

TARZAN

Jane, thank God you are safe.
Where's baby Jack?

JANE

Rokoff kidnaped the wrong
baby, it wasn't ours!
It died of fever, God rest
its soul.

The clouds part, Rokoff and the rest of the crew climb over the railing. At the rear, Tarzan's hideous crew throngs aboard, led by the Apes, with Mugambi carrying a spear, Sheeta follows close behind.

The two stunned men in the scuppers come to their senses, rise, Mugambi is upon them, spears them to death, SQUISH! SQUISH! the apes RIP THEM APART, eat them, CRUNCH, CRUNCH!

Tarzan pushes Jane behind the cabin, rushes Rokoff. Two men behind Rokoff fire their rifles, BANG! BANG! they miss.

Rokoff bolts for the forecastle. Tarzan quickly dispatches the men with the rifles with his bare hands, snaps their necks, CRACK! CRACK!

Tarzan's hideous crew attack the rest of the crew, all but four are killed by Mugambi or torn apart, eaten by the apes.

The four survivors escape into the forecastle, after a brief moment, they throw Rokoff outside.

Tarzan and Sheeta move forward to kill him.

Rokoff SHRIEKS, too frightened to move. Tarzan's hands open and close, open and close, he has finally reached the point where he is going to kill Rokoff. Sheeta GROWLS.

TARZAN

No, Sheeta, he is mine!

Rokoff snaps out of it, runs to the bow. Tarzan starts to run after him, Jane pulls at his elbow, stops him. Akut and the Apes menace her.

JANE

Don't leave me, Tarzan.
I'm afraid.

Tarzan GROWLS at the apes, warns them back, turns again to Rokoff.

Rokoff's back is against the bridge, he TREMBLES, watches the huge cat approach.

Sheeta stalks him, belly to the plank, makes a DEEP LOW GUTTERAL GROWLING sound, his tail SWISHES.

An Ape leaps to seize the bridge rail, prepares to jump on Rokoff.

Sheeta pounces first, knocks Rokoff down on his back.

Rokoff SCREAMS! goes silent, the great fangs tear at his throat and chest, CRUNCH, CRUNCH!

Sheeta eats him.

TARZAN

By the bones of St. Peter!
Rokoff was right; I didn't
get to kill him.

Jane turns in horror, Tarzan watches, smiles, Jane turns back, she can't take her eyes off the terrible sight.

JANE

He was a devil, Tarzan; he
raped and beat me viciously.
But I can't stand to see him
being eaten.

Tarzan pulls away from Jane, approaches Rokoff's body, Sheeta turns, bares his fangs, GROWLS at Tarzan.

Tarzan turns to Jane, shrugs. He takes her in his arms, comforts her, rubs his hands over her bloody and bruised body, cups her buttocks, gets an erection.

TARZAN

He was evil. Sheeta is
nothing more than the revenge
of nature.

TARZAN

(continuing)

I find the sight of him being eaten most satisfying. You should adopt the way of the jungle and enjoy it too.

Jane looks at Sheeta, he has made a large hole in Rokoff's ribcage, CRUNCH! CRUNCH! he RIPS at Rokoff's internal organs, pulls out his intestines with razor sharp teeth.

Jane changes her mind, becomes aroused, she smiles, reaches down, takes hold of Tarzan's penis, inserts him inside her vagina, they copulate.

TARZAN

No matter what has happened, we both live, Jane, my love. Life and love are stronger than any temporary dishonor. You survived so we could be together again.

JANE

Oh, Tarzan, I love you so much. I'm so glad I survived to see this day.

They copulate harder, Jane watches Sheeta eat Rokoff, CRUNCH! CRUNCH! she MOANS in orgasm, she MOANS again and again.

JANE

(continuing)

You are right, my love; the sight of Rokoff being eaten by Sheeta is most satisfying.

TARZAN

His burial will take place the next time Sheeta defecates. His elemental remains will fertilize the jungle.

JANE

At least his life will
have had some value.

Akut and the survivors of his tribe run amok on the deck,
beat their chests, give their VICTORY CRIES.

Mugambi takes Kaviri's daughter into the bridge, copulates
her against the wheel, the young girl GROANS in ecstasy.

Tarzan leans Jane back in his arm, beats his chest with his
fist, makes the CRY OF THE VICTORIOUS BULL APE.

CLOSE on Sheeta's face, his green eyes gleam, blood and body
tissue fleck his furry spotted snout, drip from his fangs.

Sheeta looks into the camera, ROARS!

FADE TO BLACK.

CREDITS ROLL to Peter Gabriel's "Shock the Monkey."

END OF PART SIX

The characters and events depicted in this screenplay are
fictional. Any similarity to actual persons, living or
dead, or to actual events, is purely coincidental.

THE END