

SCRIPTS

The Twilight Zone
“Below War”

Rod Serling’s original *Twilight Zone* was and remains a classic. In the 1980s there was a move to revive the classic series. In 1986 I put together the following script, based on the fact that as kids, we were all trained to “duck and cover” should there be a Soviet missile attack. There were also instruction booklets on how to build a fallout shelter. This seemed to be an opportunity to examine what would happen if the fallout shelter got a chance to be used.

The Twilight Zone

“BELOW WAR”

Cast

MARK HENDRICKSON
ALICIA HENDRICKSON
MARY HENDRICKSON
MARK “SNIFFLES” HENDRICKSON, JR.
PETER PAWS, a basset
DAVE RENTSCH
TRUDY RENTSCH
ROBERT “BUDDY” HENDRICKSON
JOE O’LEARY
MADGE RILKE
MR. JACK FULLER
MRS. MARTHA FULLER
MARGARET THAIL

SETS AND LOCATIONS

Interior

A large fallout shelter, circa 1955

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. ELABORATE FALLOUT SHELTER. DAY.

THE FALLOUT SHELTER IS PALATIAL, A VERY LARGE MAIN ROOM WITH A KITCHEN AGAINST THE BACK WALL, A BATHROOM TO THE RIGHT, A PERISCOPE AND AIR VENTS BETWEEN THE BATHROOM AND THE STEPS

LEADING UP TO GROUND LEVEL, WHILE OFF TO THE LEFT THERE IS A STORAGE ROOM, AN OFFICE, AND A BEDROOM, ALL IN A ROW, ALL WITH THEIR OWN DOORS. THERE ARE VARIOUS BOXES FILLED WITH ACCUMULATED JUNK AROUND THE MAIN ROOM AND OTHER SUCH BOXES GLIMPSED THROUGH THE OPEN DOORS OF THE OFFICE AND BEDROOM. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MAIN ROOM STANDS ALICIA HENDRICKSON, A MID-THIRTIES WIFE AND MOTHER LOOKING AT ONCE OVERWHELMED AND RESENTFUL. CURLED AROUND HER FEET IS PETER PAWS, THE FAMILY BASSET. IN THE LITTLE KITCHEN, TRUDY RENTSCH IS LOADING POTS AND PANS INTO A BOX ON THE COUNTER. TRUDY IS EARLY THIRTIES, PEROXIDE HAIR ELABORATEDLY DONE UP IN BLUE-COLLAR BEAUTY PARLOR CHIC. TRUDY PICKS UP A CAST-IRON SKILLET.

TRUDY

I honestly haven't seen one of these since I lived at home. The old professor certainly had a flare for keeping the good old times alive and well.

ALICIA

(BEWILDERED) What? Oh, that—He was very set on never replacing something that was still functional. I guess that's cute in an old man, but thank god Mark doesn't take after his father—

TRUDY

But gracious, why? I think Professor Hendrickson was charming. (SHE WAVES THE SKILLET) And it would preserve more marriages today if people didn't get rid of their spouses while they're still functional. I'm old-fashioned that way.

ALICIA

Yeah, well, if you're that old-fashioned, maybe you'd want to make me an offer on some of that still-functional old-fashioned junk so I don't have to sit in a lawn chair in the hot sun all day long trying to convince some stranger of its profound functionality.

THERE IS A COMMOTION ON THE STAIRS. NINE-YEAR-OLD MARY HENDRICKSON COMES RUNNING IN WITH A PIPE IN HER MOUTH.

MARY

Mother! Mother! You aren't going to sell grandpa's favorite pipe! He'd die if he found—Oops. He'd be very disappointed in us for getting rid of it. (SHE PLACES THE PIPE UNDER HER NOSE AND SNIFFS) And besides, I like what it smells like. It smells like grandpa.

ALICIA

(TAKING THE PIPE FROM MARY) You shouldn't play with that! You'll get sick.

MARY

Grandpa never got sick and he played with it all the time.

ALICIA

Mary, darling. Mother knows what's best for you. That pipe's old and dirty.

THERE IS MORE COMMOTION AT THE STAIRS AND MARK "SNIFFLES" HENDIRCKSON, JR., A SIX-YEAR-OLD, ENTERS. PETER PAWS STIRS AND GOES TO GREET "SNIFFLES."

SNIFFLES

(WIPING NOSE ON SLEEVE) Mom! Mom! Dad broke the lawn chair. ("SNIFFLES" SPOTS THE PIPE IN ALICIA'S HAND, GRABS IT AND STICKS IT IN HIS MOUTH) Wants 'nother chair.

ALICIA

(GRABBING BACK THE PIPE) Give me that filthy thing!

SNIFFLES

Mine-- (MAKES INEFFECTUAL GRABBING MOTION)

ALICIA

Mary, take Sniffles back upstairs and tell your father to use one of the chairs from the kitchen.

MARY HERDS "SNIFFLES" TOWARD THE STAIRS, WITH PETER PAWS FOLLOWING.

MARY

(WHISPERED TO SNIFFLES) Don't worry, Snif, I'll get the pipe for us—

"SNIFFLES" GRABS HER HAND AND ALLOWS HER TO LEAD HIM UP THE STAIRS.

ALICIA

This entire ordeal is going to be the death of me. This household hasn't been the same since Jeremy died. (SHE ALTERNATELY TURNS IN ONE DIRECTION AND THEN THE OTHER, UNABLE TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO NEXT) I feel so lethargic, confused—

TRUDY

(COMING FORWARD TO COMFORT ALICIA) The old guy's death was a blow to all of us. And it wasn't even his fault— Hell, he drove a bicycle better than most people push grocery carts. I still can't believe the "Mole of Maple Street" is gone. And the people who ran him down still at large. We'll all miss him sooo much for sooo long. (SHE PULLS A CHAIR FROM THE KITCHEN AND HELPS ALICIA INTO IT) But look at the bright side. When this weekend's over, it will be smooth sailing. The yard sale today, Mark's birthday party down here tomorrow, Monday whatever's left from the sale and the party will be hauled to the dump, and by Tuesday evening Mark and Dave and the rest of them will have started digging up this crypt and turning it into the biggest and baddest backyard pool in the neighborhood. You'll sit there sipping wine spritzers and we'll laugh at what you felt like today.

ALICIA

(PATS TRUDY'S COMFORTING HAND) You and Dave have been such dear friends throughout this whole thing. I don't know how Mark and I can ever repay you—

TRUDY

You can stencil our names on the back of two director's chairs and put them poolside.

THERE IS THE SOUND OF MALE FOOTSTEPS COMING DOWN THE STAIRS. BOTH WOMEN TURN TOWARD THE DOORWAY. MARK HENDRICKSON ENTERS. A TALL, LEAN, BOOKISH MAN TURNING FORTY, HE IS DRESSED IN KHAKI SHORTS AND AN OLD MADRAS SHIRT. HE APPEARS TO BE ANGRY.

ALICIA

(STANDING) Honey, what's wrong?

MARK

If I believed in ghosts, I'd figure Jeremy was haunting us.

THE TWO WOMEN MANEUVER MARK OVER TO THE NOW-VACATED SEAT AND EASE HIM INTO IT.

TRUDY

What's the matter, Mark? Nobody making any offers on the Professor's 1945 lab coats?

MARK

The lab coats are no trouble. Every kid in the neighborhood's running around with one of them. They look like clones of my father's ghost. Naw, it's not that—Some guy came up and offered fifteen bucks—fifteen bucks!—for Jeremy's scientific library. Fifteen bucks! There must be eight hundred pounds of books worth, I dunno, eight, nine thousand dollars, and he offers fifteen bucks—And then he sits down on the lawn chair, all three hundred pounds of him, and crushes it—And his wife is threatening to sue—(HE

REACHES OUT TO TOUCH TRUDY'S HAND) Thank god for Dave's help. He gave them some pseudo-legal gibberish about trespassing and they took off like the two vultures they are—Fifteen bucks for my father's scientific library. The library of one of the men who worked the Manhattan Project. Who had more scientific awards than he had I.Q. points—

ALICIA

Let's go up and pack the library in the back of the van and later today one of us will take it down to the college library and donate it on behalf of Jeremy's memory. Maybe that'll clear out the spooks and we can get on with this thing.

MARK

I thought yard sales were supposed to be fun—

TRUDY

Depends on what side of the bargain table you're standing.

ALICIA

Why don't you take a little rest down here where it's cool, and I'll go up and help Dave for a few minutes. You can come up later and help me pack the van.

ALICIA DRAGS HERSELF UP THE STAIRS. TRUDY GOES BACK TO PACKING KITCHEN UTENSILS.

TRUDY

It probably ain't my place to butt in here, Mark, but are you sure it's such a great idea to go ahead and sell your father's stuff? Maybe you should just put it in storage until some of the memories wear off it.

MARK

That might work if I had some place to store it. But with converting his fallout shelter into a swimming pool, our storage space is being seriously compromised—

TRUDY

Are you certain you want to make a swimming pool out of this? (SHE EXTENDS HER ARMS TO TAKE IN THE SHELTER) It's sort of a neighborhood institution. Maybe it needs some time to rest in peace before it's dug up like an old Egyptian tomb—

MARK

No. Alicia and I have been discussing this very thing for years. It stands for everything we don't. We only helped Jeremy built it when we were kids because it seemed like it would be a terrific place to hold record parties on weekends. And it was. And it served its purpose while Jeremy was alive. It was a wonderful place for him to live the kind of life

he preferred—solitary and slightly eccentric. But now that it's no longer his home, it's reverted to what it is: a fallout shelter: a symbol of hopelessness, an admission that there is no other way but to dig a hole in the ground and pull your life in after your.

TRUDY

But, Mark, if there's ever a war, you'll wish you'd had a place to go—(SHE WALKS OVER TO HIM, MASSAGES HIS SHOULDERS) You can't just wish war away.

MARK

(STANDS AND FACES HER, IMPASSIONED) But there is another way. That's what Alicia and I believe in. Beyond War. Getting beyond the idea of war. Convincing people to believe that nuclear war is such a terrible prospect that enough people can be mobilized to effect a change in politics among the nuclear powers. Enough "people power" to force the nations of the world to dismantle their warheads.

TRUDY

But what about in the meantime? Are you sure if there's a war before you guys can make it old-fashioned, you'll want to come running out of the house and jump into a swimming pool?

MARK

(FLUSTERED) But you don't understand, Trudy! We, we must make the first move. We must be committed enough, willing enough to take a chance, to put it on the line, to— to get ride of this monstrosity, this Neanderthal solution to a problem that we, the people of the world, have the wherewithal to effect.

TRUDY

The what-with-all?

MARK

The wherewithal. The ability, the talent, the power. There is still power in the will of the majority of the people. All we have to do is get the word out, convince them that each of their voices can be heard by their governments—

THERE IS A COMMOTION ON THE STAIRS AND ROBERT "BUDDY" HENDRICKSON, MARK'S FIRST COUSIN, ENTERS, CARRYING A GLOBE OF THE WORLD. BUDDY HELPED DIG THE HOLE FOR THE FALLOUT SHELTER. HE IS A YEAR MARK'S JUNIOR, AND IS DRESSED IN A FLAMMEL WORKSHIRT, JEANS, AND BOOTS.

BUDDY

Hey, couz, look what I found on the front lawn. Unc Jeremy's globe of the world from the Dark Ages. One of the kids must have made a mistake and took it topside. (HE PLACES

GLOBE ON COUNTER IN FRONT OF KITCHEN) How's the couz holding up? (HE EYES TRUDY) And who's this?

MARK

Trudy, this is my cousin Buddy. Buddy, one of our neighbors, Trudy. Her husband, Dave, is helping with the yard sale.

BUDDY

Oh, yeah, topside. What's he do?

TRUDY

He's a vice-president at Hanover Bank and Trust.

BUDDY

And you and he are—married?

TRUDY

For six years.

MARK

Buddy's a professional bachelor and has an unadulterated way of admiring the ladies.

TRUDY

Well, I'm flattered. But if you'll excuse me, I think I'll go upstairs and help my hubby move some bargains. 'Sides, looks as though you two haven't seen each other in quite a while. (TRUDY EXITS UP THE STAIRS)

BUDDY

(WANDERING AROUND THE ROOM) It sure looks different, now that unc isn't living here. He used to keep it so spotless, everything in its place. (HE SHRUGS) It's like kind of spooky. I didn't mind it, kind of liked it, in fact, when unc moved down here when he signed the house over to you guys, 'cause even though we had such good parties down here and he was going to change what the place looked like, we'd moved beyond the fallout shelter party scene, so it was okay. But now, I dunno. It's being changed again, but not by anything that's okay. Uncle Jeremy was a good guy. One of the last of the truly good guys. Now this— Makes you wonder what life's all about.

MARK

You sure it isn't your own mortality catching up to you that's making you talk like this? After all, you've only got one more year to go before you hit the big four-0.

BUDDY

(SLAPPING MARK ON THE BACK) That's right, isn't it? Your big four-0 comes up tomorrow. And I am going to be at that party, old couz. First of your birthday parties I'll have made since your 18th. Which we spent, if I may remind you, rrrrright here, in Party Central. Boy, thank god your dad put in a big septic tank. I don't think I've ever been that sick in my whole life! So just how solid is Trudy's marriage to the banking tycoon? Any chinks in the armor I could poke through?

MARK

(LAUGHING) I don't believe you. You're incorrigible. Trudy and Dave are happily married.

BUDDY

You sure? A peroxide blonde and a banker? Come on! There's got to be serious sociological disturbances there. Disturbances big enough to rock the foundation. She sure fills out a skirt, don't she?

MARK

You'd hit on the Statue of Liberty after a few drinks, wouldn't you?

BUDDY

Well, haven't you ever wondered what's under those robes, and whose names she's got written in that book? (SINGS) Who wrote the Book of Love...?

MARK

(GOING TO EMBRACE BUDDY) It is nice to see you again. Thanks for coming. It'll help make my 40th birthday unforgettable. (BREAKS EMBRACE AND GOES TO KITCHEN, PICKS UP BOX OF POTS AND PANS) Here, do something for your country and take these upstairs to be added to the rubble in the yard.

BUDDY

(MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE STAIRS) Okay, sure, but don't let anything happen to the globe of the Dark Ages. I want it for my condo. What a conversation-starter that'll make.

MARK

Fine, okay. When you're up there could you ask Joe O'Leary to come down?

BUDDY

Joe O'Leary, the drunken cop? He's here, too?

MARK

Yeah. He's agreed to be the bartender at the party tomorrow. You know he moonlights as a bartender at The Greek's?

BUDDY

You don't say— You mean they allow Rudolph the Red-Nosed Cop around alcohol?
What's this world coming to?

MARK

Not the Dark Ages, thank god.

BUDDY

You remember how he and Jeremy used to get into arguments over everything under the sun? Joe O'Leary! Does he still believe that the moon landing was all a special effects film the government had Hollywood make so they could siphon off more of the taxpayers' money? Does he still believe that the National Rifle Association should be made inspectors of elections? Does he still smoke cigars? Joe O'Leary! This is one party that's gonna be taped and sent to Ripley's

AT THAT MOMENT, A LIGHT STEP IS HEARD ON THE STAIRS, AND BOTH MEN TURN IN TIME TO SEE THE TRIM AND ATTRACTIVE MADGE RILKE, A DIVORCEE FROM ACROSS THE STREET AND A FRIEND OF TURDY'S. SHE IS EARLY THIRTIES, AND GLORIES IN HER POSITION AS THE OBJECT OF DESIRE OF MOST OF THE MEN ON THE BLOCK. SHE IS CARRYING A PAIR OF WINGTIP SHOES.

BUDDY

(FROZEN IN HIS TRACKS) You must be—

MADGE

You must be new around here.

MARK

Madge, this is my cousin Buddy. He came by to help clear the shelter out and help me celebrate my 40th and he's going to help lift a few shovelfuls of dirt when we start digging up this relic next week.

MADGE

He certainly is—

MARK

(MOVES UP BEHIND BUDDY AND GIVES HIM A PUSH UP THE STAIRS) Don't forget to ask Joe O'Leary to come down. And don't trip on the stairs.

MADGE

He's cute. And that tush. What else are you hiding from me, Markie?

MARK

(NODDING AT THE SHOES) You don't leave much of a man when you're through with him, do you?

MADGE

Oh, these--? They were your father's. Hardly ever used. I'm not sure how you could stand to get rid of The Great One's items of clothing, but if you can quote a fair price, I'd love to have these. I adored your father, you know. I don't know how many times I tried to get him to put his shoes under my bed and he wouldn't. Now he'll have no choice.

MARK

(EXASPERATED) Do you have any vampires in your family tree?

MADGE

You mean the ones that leave hickies on your neck?

MARK

This is turning into a nightmare. This whole thing's going to drive me out of my mind.
(HE PLOPS DOWN INTO CHAIR)

MADGE

(MOVES TO BACK OF CHAIR AND MASSAGED MARK'S SHOULDERS AS TRUDY HAD DONE) My, you're stressed and tight. You're pushing things awfully fast, you know. It's only been six weeks since The Great Man was killed, and already you're trying to erase him as though he never existed. You're going to fill up with guilt and burst.

MARK

I've got to get this thing done, finished. To let it drag on will only make everything more difficult. But every time I turn around, things are becoming unraveled. Jeremy's belongings are coming down the stairs faster than they're going up. People who come by to look at things want to steal them instead of offering a fair price, as though they were vultures picking over the carcass of a Skid Row bum—

MADGE

There, there. Maybe what you need is a little relaxation. (SHE MOVES AROUND IN FRONT OF MARK AND BENDS OVER TO KISS HIM) Madge knows all about the problems men live with—

THERE IS A GREAT COMMOTION ON THE STAIRS, AND A BULKY MAN, OFFICER JOE O'LEARY, FULL-TIME COP, PART-TIME BARTENDER, ROUND-

THE-CLOCK KNOW-IT-ALL AND BIGOT, ENTERS. HE IS CARRYING A BOX CONTAINING SIX GERMAN BEER STEINS.

JOE

Well, well, well. What've we got here? You feeling faint, Mister Hendrickson, and need some artificial insemination?

MARK

(STANDING, TANGLED WITH MADGE) No—Nothing. (SPOTS BEER STEINS AND SEES THEM AS A POSSIBLE DISTRACTION) What's that you've got?

JOE

Now just what does it look like? That's German beer steins. And that's called a diversion, an often-used method of throwing someone off the scent, but a method that us law-enforcement officers are taught to see through.

MADGE

(PLEASED WITH HER ABILITY TO CAUSE CONFUSION AMONG MEN) I think I'll mosey on up to the yard sale and see if I can help move things along—

JOE

You do that, little lady—

MARK

Thanks for all your help...and understanding.

JOE

Understanding it's called now—

MARK

What are you doing with those beer steins?

JOE

This is only some of them. Somebody really goofed up. Doc Hendrickson's whole, entire collection is up there on the lawn. And I know, personally, that the Doc would never want his beer steins sold, especially when his kiddo is going to be serving beer tomorrow for his 40th birthday. So I'm correctin' the obvious mistake, and I'm bringing 'em back down here where they'll be safe. (HE TAKES THE BOX OF SIX STEINS TO THE KITCHEN AND DEPOSITES THEM ON THE COUNTER) I'll be back with the rest of them.

THERE IS ANOTHER COMMOTION ON THE STAIRS AND JOE GOES TO THE STAIRWAY TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON. HE COMES BACK INTO THE ROOM LEADING MR. AND MRS. JACK FULLER, DOC HENDRICKSON'S BEST

FRIENDS FROM DOWN THE STREET. BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM THEY ARE CARRYING A WOODEN BOX THE SIZE OF A BREADBOX THAT CONTAINS WEATHER MEASURING INSTRUMENTS)

JOE

I'll be back down in a little while with more of the steins, Mr. Hendrickson. They'll be perfect for tomorrow's party.

MARK

(TO HIMSELF) It's a conspiracy. (HE ALMOST COLLAPSES INTO THE LONE CHAIR BUT AT THE LAST SECOND HELPS MRS. FULLER INTO IT, TAKING THE WEATHER INSTRUMENTS FROM THEM) Mr. and Mrs. Fuller. What are you doing here?

MR. FULLER

We came to see for ourselves just what's going on here—

MARK

Going on--?

MRS. FULLER

To see just what the hell kind of trouble you're stirring up now, Markie.

MR. FULLER

(ATTEMPTING TO CALM HIS WIFE) Now, now, Martha—

MRS. FULLER

Now, now, nothing. (RISES TO HER FEET) Just what is going on here?

MARK

Well, Mrs. Fuller, we're clearing out some of my father's things—(HE REALIZES THAT HE IS STILL HOLDING THE BOX OF INSTRUMENTS AND MOVES TO SET IT DOWN; MR. FULLER TAKES IT AND PLACES IT ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER WITH THE STEINS) —and next week we're going to do away with this useless fallout shelter as...as a symbol of our belief in moving beyond war by creating an environment in which nuclear war is no longer viable as a solution.

MRS. FULLER

(TO MR. FULLER) What the hell's he talking about?

MR. FULLER

You've got me—

MARK

What I'm talking about is moving beyond war as a solution—

MR. FULLER

Something about making wars bigger, mother.

MRS. FULLER

They're fine the way they are.

MARK

No, no, not bigger. Actually, *smaller*, or better yet, not at all.

MR. FULLER

No wars?

MRS. FULLER

Is he crazy, or what? I *knew* he hurt himself when he was five and dove into the creek when the water was too low—

MARK

We're going to dig up the fallout shelter and turn it into a swimming pool as our way of protesting the attitude people have that war is inevitable, a part of mankind's nature.

MRS. FULLER

But it is—

MR FULLER

Martha's right—

MARK

But she's not. Don't you see that our continuing to think that way is what perpetrates the idea of war as a solution?

MR. FULLER

No, no, son. War isn't a solution. Not long term. But it *is* a method that mankind has employed from Day One. Tearing out Jeremy's fallout shelter isn't going to change that. The only thing it will do is tear up Jeremy. He wanted that shelter there so that his family would have an option, a chance, in case the next war *did* come into his backyard. Those instruments (HE NODS TOWARD WEATHER INSTRUMENTS) were an integral part of his plan for the shelter. They were essential for measuring everything from wind velocity to radiation levels. There's even a Geiger counter in the box. That was the brain stem of the shelter. Take my word for it, Mark, your father's instruments must stay here. And the shelter must stay.

MRS. FULLER

We just don't understand why you didn't tell us about what was happening here—

MR. FULLER

He didn't tell us because he didn't want anyone standing in his way.

MRS. FULLER

Well, we *are* here and we *are* going to stand in your way. Because it's what Jeremy would have wanted.

MARK

But you don't understand—

MRS. FULLER

No, son, it's you who doesn't understand.

MR. FULLER

Martha's right, Mark. Your father left some papers with us. They're in our safety deposit box at the bank. They specify that the shelter's to remain intact, for the safety of his family, even if anything—*especially* if anything—should happen to him. If we'd have known about this, we could have gone to the bank to get your father's papers. But we only now found out about it and the bank doesn't open until Monday.

MRS. FULLER

Your father would be very ashamed of you, hiding your plans from his best friends.

THERE IS THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS. EVERYONE TURNS TOWARD THE SOUND. MARGARET THAEL, A LATE-THIRTIES WOMAN WITH A BUSTLING MANNER, ENTERS. SHE IS THE FORMER COLLEGE CLASSMATE OF ALICIA AND IS A TRAVEL AGENT. AN AVOWED EXPERIMENTER WITH DRUGS IN COLLEGE, SHE IS STILL CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS. SHE IS CARRYING A RADIO ANTENNA IN HER HAND.

MARK

Maggie! What are you doing here?

MARGARET

Tripping over things in your yard, hahaha. (HANDS THE ANTENNA TO MARK) Really, darling, you shouldn't leave things like this lying around. Someone could take a trip they hadn't counted on—and then they could sue. (SPOTS MR. AND MRS. FULLER BEHIND MARK) Why, Mr. and Mrs. Fuller. I heard, through the grapevine, that you're planning a trip to climb Mount Everest. I certainly hope you haven't yet made

your plans with any other travel agent. I can get you a simply divine price and each of you will have your very own Sherpa. (SHE RUMMAGES AROUND IN HER PURSE AND COMES UP WITH A HANDFUL OF CARDS. HANDS ONE TO MR. FULLER) Here's my card. *Do* give me a call before you go with anyone else! Peru is so beautiful at this time of year—

MR. FULLER

(PULLING MARTHA FULLER TO HER FEET) We've got to get going, mother. We've dawdled enough for one day.

MRS. FULLER

We will be back tomorrow to make certain all of this mess is cleaned up and that Doctor Hendrickson's plans are adhered to to the letter of...of his letters.

MR. FULLER

Thank you for the card. (HE LOOKS AT IT FOR MARGARET'S NAME) Mrs. Theal. We'll be certain to call you when we finalize our plans to climb Everest.

MRS. FULLER

(MUTTERING TO HER HUSBAND) That Mark, he's such a nasty boy. I'm certainly glad you agreed to have a vasectomy. (THEY EXIT UP THE STAIRS)

MARK

(AGAIN SINKING INTO THE CHAIR) God, what a day! (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH) And it's not even eleven o'clock yet. (HE REALIZES HE IS SEATED WHILE MARGARET IS LEFT STANDING; HE HOPS UP) I'm very sorry, Maggie. Here, sit down.

MARGARET

No, thank you. I'm in a hurry. Lots to do. Just wanted to drop by some brochures... (SHE ONCE AGAIN RUMMAGES THROUGH HER BAG AND COMES OUT WITH SOME TRAVEL BROCHURES) ...so you and Alicia can think about that trip to Alaska

MARK

(SCANNING THE BROCHURES) But these are for Yugoslavia—

MARGARET

--and Alicia didn't have anywhere up there to put them. I think this is wonderful, what you're doing. Turning this dank, depressing place into a hot house. Wonderful, wonderful. (SHE ADDRESSES HIM CONSPIRATORIALLY) I do have some very special maryjane seeds I've been saving that I'd be glad to donate to the cause—

THERE IS AGAIN THE SOUND OF FOOTSEPS ON THE STAIRS AND ALICIA RETURNS, CARRYING SNIFFLES, VERY MUCH ASLEEP)

ALICIA

Maggie, you found Mark!

MARK

(LOOKING AT SNIFFLES) Is this something else we were going to sell that's found its way back down here?

ALICIA

What--?

MARK

(shrugs) Maggie gave me the brochures and says she's got some marijuana seeds for the hothouse we're going to build here—

MARGARET

Having it underground will simply confuse every law-enforcement agency in the country. And it grows very well under artificial light— (SHE HEAD FOR THE STAIRS) I must be off—

ALICIA

You will remember the birthday party tomorrow—

MARGARET

But of course— (SHE WALKS BACK TOWARD ALICIA, STROKES SNIFFLES' HAIR) How old did you say the little fellow will be?

MARK

I'll be 40.

MARGARET

(WITH ASTONISHED LOOK) I've got to cut back on caffeine—Ta-da! See you folks. (SHE EXITS UP THE STAIRS)

ALICIA

(SITS DOWN WITH SNIFFLES IN HER LAP) I think you might want to go up there and help get things settled down.

MARK

What's the matter now?

ALICIA

Mr. and Mrs. Fuller from down the street won't let Dave sell anything, and they're getting support from your cousin Buddy and from O'Leary and from your daughter. Madge is going through your father's clothes and she seems fascinated by his boxer shorts. And *I've* had it. If this is what Beyond War is all about, all-out nuclear war might be preferable to neighborhood skirmishes. It's like Gettysburg, Custer's Last Stand, and the '68 Democratic Convention all rolled into one.

MARK

It's the same down here. Every time someone comes down the stair, I cringe. Every person who's come down here this morning has been on an assault mission. As though you and I had killed Jeremy and were now robbing the grave—They even bring his artifacts with them, like religious relics—

ALICIA

Well, maybe if we can get through today, everyone will have a wonderful time at your birthday party-- (SHE SHIFTS SNIFFLES' WEIGHT AND NOTICES A BLUGE IN HIS POCKET) --tomorrow and will forget— (EXTRACTS THE PIPE THE KIDS HAD BEEN LUSTING AFTER ALL MORNING) --the problems of today.

MARK

(TAKING THE PIPE FROM ALICIA AND STICKING IT IN HIS OWN MOUTH) Or else every friendship in the neighborhood will go up in smoke.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. ELABORATE FALLOUT SHELTER. LATE AFTERNOON, NEXT DAY.

THE BOXES THAT WERE LITTERING THE MAIN ROOM OF THE FALLOUT SHELTER DURING YESTERDAY'S YARD SALE ARE NOW ALL STOWED SAFELY IN THE STORAGE ROOM AND THE OFFICE. A PICNIC TABLE HAS BEEN SET UP AS A BUFFET AGAINST THE BACK WALL NEXT TO THE KITCHEN AND THE BENCHES FROM THE PICNIC TABLE HAVE BEEN SET IN FRONT OF THE STORAGE ROOM AND THE OFFICE, EFFECTIVELY BLOCKING THOSE ROOMS. CHAIRS HAVE BEEN SET UP RANDOMLY. A STEREO COMPONENT SYSTEM IS TUNED TO AN EASY LISTENING RADIO STATION.

THE KITCHEN IS UNDER THE COMMAND OF OFFICER JOE O'LEARY WHO HAS TURNED IT INTO A BAR, THE SINK FILLED WITH ICE AND BEER, THE BAR FULLY STOCKED. SNIFFLES SITS ON A CHAIR NEXT TO THE KITCHEN WHILE PETER PAWS IS CURLED AROUND THE LEGS OF THE CHAIR; SNIFFLES PUFFS ON HIS GRANDFATHER'S PIPE, PRETENDING HE'S BLOWING SMOKE RINGS. NEAR THE PERISCOPE, BUDDY HENDRICKSON SPEAKS EARNESTLY TO TRUDY RENTSCH, WHO HE HAS WEDGED INTO THE CORNER. DAVE RENTSCH SPEAKS JUST AS EARNESTLY TO MADGE RILKE AT THE OTHER END OF THE ROOM, BUT MADGE SPENDS MOST OF HER TIME ATTEMPTING TO CATCH BUDDY'S EYE. MARK HENDRICKSON AND MARGARET THAEL ARE STANDING IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM, MARGARET CHATTING AWAY WITH STATISTICS ON ALASKA WHILE MARK ATTEMPTS TO GET A WORD IN EDGEWISE, BUT FAILS MISERABLY. THERE IS A SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRWAY AND ALICIA HENDRICKSON AND DAUGHTER MARY ENTER CARRYING THE LAST OF THE FOOD: POTATO SALAD AND BAKED BEANS. MARY USES THEIR ARRIVAL AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BREAK AWAY FROM MARGARET.

JOE

(LOUDLY) Batten down the hatches, 'en let's get this party rollin'! Drinks on the house.
(MADGE HEADS FOR THE BAR)

MARK

(TO ALICIA) You haven't heard anything from the Fullers, have you?

ALICIA

Not so much as a growl.

MARK

Thank god. Maybe they've forgotten what day it is and we won't have to put up with their criticism.

MARY

I like Mr. and Mrs. Fuller. You should like them, too. Grandpa liked them—a whole lot.

MARK

(TAKING THE BAKED BEANS FROM MARY AND PLACING THEM ON THE TABLE) Mary, dear, it's not that we don't like them. It's just that we—

ALICIA

Don't always see things the way they do.

MARY

But I like them.

ALICIA

So do we, dear. We just don't happen to agree with them.

MARY

Well, when are they coming? Mr. Fuller promised to tell me about when he and Grandpa found dinosaur bones—

ALICIA

(STRAIGHTENING OUT THE FOOD ON THE TABLE) Maybe they'll be here a little later, dear. Why don't you go play with Sniffles? (TO JOE AT BAR) One white wine, Mr. O'Leary, and don't be stingy with it. (JOE POURS AND HANDS DRINK TO HER. SHE LOUDLY CLEARS HER THROAT) Friends! Relatives! And others!

MARY

And Peter Paws—

ALICIA

And our fine, furry friends!

PETER PAWS

Whoof.

ALICIA

I'd like to propose a toast to our guest of honor, Mark "Middle Aged" Hendrickson. On attaining his 40th year on Planet Earth relatively unscathed, and wishing him 40 more wonderful years. Years that will continue to be brightened by such incredible friends as have gathered today. (SHE RAISES HER GLASS) To four decades!

ALL RAISE THEIR VARIOUS GLASSES AND CANS, AND WITH VARIED TALENTS BEGIN TO SING "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU." MARK ABSORBS THEIR WELL WISHES LIKE A BIG SPONGE, SHUFFLING AND SMILING, TOASTING EACH IN THEIR TURN. AT THE END OF THE SONG THERE IS A CHEER AND ALL PARTAKE OF THEIR DRINKS.

BUDDY

Since most of us, with the exception of Officer O'Leary, have not yet had the opportunity of turning 40 years old, perhaps we could induce Markie to tell us a little about what it's like on his first day of sliding down the other side of the hill—

ALL

(MUTTERINGS OF AGREEMENT)

MARK

(SHUFFLING HIS FEET NERVOUSLY BUT RELISHING THE ATTENTION) Well, I don't really know where to begin—

BUDDY

It all began four decades ago, in this very house—

MARK

Not in this house it didn't. This house comes later. It all started aboveground—

BUDDY

But not aboveboard—

MARK

In 742 Maple Lane. (HE POINTS TO THE CEILING) Up there, in the real world. I was born second in line, behind Howie...Howard. Son of Jeremy and Anna Hendrickson, two pretty nice people. Two years behind Howard. He kind of paved the way. Our parents tried parenting out on him and I kind of skipped along in the wake. As you all know, my mother died young, when I was six. And Howie went to Vietnam and never came back. And Jeremy was killed six weeks ago while riding his bicycle on Second Street. (MAKES TO WIPE HIS EYE, BUT CHANGES HIS MIND) I'd heard turning 40 was a sobering experience, but I didn't mean it to be quite that sobering.

BUDDY

Careful with that word "sober" at this party—

DAVE

Tell us about how you met Alicia.

ALICIA

No way! Not that again—

BUDDY

Tell them about how Uncle Jeremy got us to spend summers, weekends, and evenings building this place—

JOE, DAVE, MARY, SNIFFLES

Yeah--!

MARY

Yeah, Daddy, we like that story—

MARK

Well, I dunno. This might not be the best weekend to get into that story. (BUDDY SLIDES A CHAIR ACROSS THE FLOOR; MARK RELUCTANTLY SITS)

ALICIA

(REACHING OVER TO TOUCH HIS ARM) It might be good therapy—after the way it haunted you last night...

BUDDY

(REACHES TO A WALL CONTROL AND LOWERS THE LIGHTS) Yeah, Markie, start at the beginning. The very beginning...

MARK

(TAKES A SIP OF HIS BEER) Well, all right. As most of you know, my father...late father...Dr. Jeremy Hendrickson, spent two years working on the Manhattan Project.

MADGE

What's the Manhattan Project?

BUDDY

The atomic bomb. Hiroshima.

MADGE

Your father did that?

DAVE

He had a lot of help.

MARK

My older brother Howie was born at Los Alamos, and I guess it was something...some kind of connection...between the promise of what the Bomb could do in the wrong hands and starting his family, but Jeremy got out as soon as the war ended, took a job at the college, and moved his family here. I was born not long after they moved into the house upstairs.

ALICIA

And Buddy was born less than a year later.

BUDDY

Yeah. My dad—Professor Hendrickson's kid brother—came out of the Army and moved here to be near his older bro.

TRUDY

(DISENGAGING HERRSELF FROM BUDDY) But how about this place?

MARK

Jeremy grew increasingly concerned about the Cold War and the implications of it heating up, what with both America and Russia having the Bomb. He began reading a lot of utopian books, and began to feel that in order for the human race to move into the next phase of evolution, to take a step closer to civilization, it was going to have to go through a traumatic change. He figured that atomic war was inevitable—especially as more and more countries learned how to build the Bomb.

BUDDY

He believed that as long as the two giants had the Bomb, they sort of cancelled each other out. There was too much to lose on both side, so they'd form a sort of balance of power, and nothing would happen.

MARK

But his real concern was that once other, smaller powers had the Bomb, they would be able to use it to attempt to exaggerate their own world power, which might lead to confusion and possible over-reaction by the Super Powers...

ALICIA

So he decided that when—and if—that happened, he wanted his family to be around to pick up the pieces and help civilization take its next step toward utopia.

TRUDY

That sounds all so morbid. Like all the rest of us would have been gone—

MADGE

Atomized—

JOE

Hey! In a nu-cu-lar attack, man, I wanna go with the first hit. I don't wanna hang around watching my fingers fall off and see my bones start shining green through my skin—

TRUDY

But Professor Hendrickson seemed to me like such a happy, pleasant man—

MARGARET

Maybe he had a stash down here somewhere—(SHE MAKES A MOTION AS THOUGH TO INVESTIGATE)

ALICIA

He was one of the most pleasant, cheerful, fun-loving men I've ever known—

MARY

Grandpa was super—

SNIFFLES

Super—

PETER PAWS

Arf!

MARK

He was a terrific guy. But once he made up his mind about something, that was it. At least until overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary arrived—

TRUDY

But did he really think utopia was going to come—after all that killing?

MARK

I don't think he really knew one way or the other—But he wanted to be prepared if there was a chance. And he wanted his family with him—

TRUDY

But what about the rest of us? We'd have been microwaved while you'd have been down here...playing Scrabble.

BUDDY

You've got to put it into historical perspective—

TRUDY

What?

MARK

What Buddy means is that this was all happening 30 years ago. Almost every family on the block was either thinking about putting in a fallout shelter or they were already digging. Sort of like people in the Midwest putting in tornado cellars.

BUDDY

Yeah, it was pretty crazy— Even in school. They used to put us through these duck-and-cover drills, where we'd have to get down under our desks and put whatever paper we could find over our heads—

DAVE

I remember that. A girl next to me...I'll never forget it...we used to have flypaper on the windowsill because there were so many flies during spring...and during a drill, she got excited and pulled a sheet of flypaper over her head. God, it took a month until her hair grew in long enough to hide the massacre.

BUDDY

I wouldn't be surprised if there wasn't a fallout shelter in one form or another incorporated into half the houses in town. We got started long after Professor Hendrickson, so all ours ended up being was an expanded cellar where my mother put in a washer and dryer.

MADGE

But how about this place? How'd it get so big?

BUDDY

Professor Hendrickson's grand plan combined with early onset adolescent lust.

MARK

That's pretty much true. Jeremy had a plan to make a large, very self-contained fallout shelter. Howie and Buddy and I had a plan to turn it into a den of iniquity. Both plans seemed to dovetail pretty well, and Voila!, a super shelter.

BUDDY

Your dad used psychology on us— He saw through our lustful plans of having a subterranean playpen where we could have all sorts of wild high school parties and great sessions of debauchery (GRABS TRUDY WHO SHRIEKS AND BREAKS LOOSE) and used our lust to get his work done.

ALICIA

The psychological goal of every woman, but master-minded this time by a man.

BUDDY

He didn't get tapped to work on the Manhattan Project because he was slow-witted—

MARK

The place is a marvel of design.

BUDDY

Yeah! Walls of poured concrete three feet thick. A concrete slab roof two feet thick. Its own deep well. A remote underground generator with a huge gasoline tank, from which Howie used to siphon go juice for his '49 Merc. Lead air shafts. Measuring equipment with precise instruments he could hook up to read the atmosphere outside.

ALICIA

We always knew what to give the Professor on birthdays and holidays. He was always appreciative of any advanced scientific equipment that came along that he could use to upgrade his shelter.

DAVE

He used to call it The Bunker.

MARK

And until his dying day, he continued to replenish the Civil Defense supplies in the storage room.

ALICIA

Yeah. There's enough free-dried food there to supply an army of backpackers for several years.

MADGE

God, I hate freeze-dried food. My first husband tried to force me to go on backpacking trips with him. Yuck—

MARGARET

Eaten dry, it can give you a pretty good buzz—

TRUDY

It all sounds pretty sad to me. That such a nice man would have such a bad outlook on the world that he'd be willing to actually live down here, getting used to it, thinking that this is where the world was going to end.

ALICIA

We tried to get him to live in the house with us, but he was content with his life underground. We certainly can't complain, though. We certainly couldn't turn down the offer of the house so we'd have a place to live while Mark taught at the university.

MARY

I like it down here.

SNIFFLES

Me too!

PETER PAWS

Arf!

MADGE

But he seemed like such a nice man—

JOE

One of the best.

MADGE

But it's...sick. Isn't it?

BUDDY

I dunno. I think he lived his life the way he wanted to. He had his opinions about things—educated opinions, I'd call them—and he went with them.

MADGE

So why're you going to dig the place up? Why not leave it as a monument to the old man?

ALICIA

Because Mark and I don't happen to feel the way Professor Hendrickson felt about peoplekind's helplessness in the face of nuclear weapons. Do we, Mark?

MARK

That's right. Our feeling is that with enough people wanting to think Beyond War, something positive can be done to get rid of the nuclear weapons and we can get on with life as it was meant to be lived.

BUDDY

So starting this week, you're going to undo all the months of sweat and hard work we put into building this place. And you're going to destroy the professor's life work: a fallout shelter that would make NORAD jealous.

DAVE

Maybe they'll name the swimming pool after Jeremy—

BUDDY

The Dr. Jeremy Hendrickson Memorial Swimming Pool just doesn't make it.

MARY

I won't swim in it.

SNIFFLES

Me neither.

BUDDY

No comment, Peter Paws?

PETER PAWS

Arf. Arf.

BUDDY

But suppose— Just suppose your Beyond War kookiness doesn't get the job done? Just suppose there is a nuclear war someday? By mistake, sure... But still, a nuclear war. Maybe even, let's say, a minor nuclear war. You gonna hide on the bottom of the pool until it blows over?

ALICIA

But to even think like that is defeatist. It's not the way we think at Beyond War. We've got to think positively.

JOE

Lots of people thought positively that we'd never get involved in Double-U Double-U Two. Lots of them thought so right up until and even after we were picking steel splinters out of our backside at Pearl Harbor.

MARK

That's not the same thing.

ALICIA

It certainly isn't.

JOE

That's right. This time it's gonna take in a lot more territory than Pearl Harbor.

MARK

So what, in your mind, is the solution?

JOE

(RAISING A SHOT GLASS) Keep the liquor cabinet well-stocked and a bullseye on your roof.

MARGARET

Be nice to your connection—and keep a couple of stashes always handy.

ALICIA

Maggie! The children—

MARY

I know where Auntie Maggie's stash is—

SNIFFLES

Me too—

PETER PAWS

Arf. Arf--!

DAVE

I think I may be the only one here who can see both sides.

TRUDY

This'll be a first.

DAVE

I agree that it would be nice if we lived in a perfect world and if we could all get together philosophically and put a stop to even the thought of nuclear war. But most of the people on this planet don't even know what nuclear war is. They're too busy scratching the earth for feed enough to get them through the next day. And the other half of the world is used to going to war to get what it wants instead of sitting down and negotiating it. It's all a very nice dream, but very impractical. A fallout shelter, on the other hand, is practical. At the bank we have Civil Defense provisions in both the basement and inside the vault. If the Big One comes, and yours truly is at work, he's not going to try to will radiation away with good thoughts. He's going to take six giant steps and get into that vault—

TRUDY

Well, that's all very nice, loving husband or mine, but what about me, stuck at home with no fallout shelter? Or at the beauty parlor, around all that peroxide?

BUDDY

Mark and Alicia will let you use their pool—

ALL VOICES RISE IN CONFUSION AND CHAOS ATTEMPTING TO GET IN A POINT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. ALL HAVE DRINKS IN THEIR HANDS, AND IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT MARGARET HAS BEEN PUFFING A JOINT IN THE B.G. THE CHILDREN AND THE DOG SIT QUIETLY WHILE THE COMMOTION ROLLS AROUND THEM LIKE WAVES. SUDDENLY, THERE IS A KNOCKING AT THE FALLOUT SHELTER DOOR. ALL FALL SILENT.

ALICIA

Can't be the police. Noise doesn't travel out of this tomb—

JOE

Besides, I'm the police—

TRUDY

And it can't be the neighbors coming to complain, 'cause we've got the neighbors down here with us.

MARK

Well, who can it be?

MARY GETS UP FROM HER CHAIR AND GOES UP THE STEPS BEFORE ANYONE CAN STOP HER.

ALICIA

Mark! Do something! Stop before she lets them in—

MARK MAKES A MOVE TOWARD THE STEP BUT IT'S TOO LATE. MARY IS ALREADY COMING DOWN THE STAIRS, CAREFULLY LEADING MR. AND MRS. FULLER, WHO IS CARRYING A COVERED CAKE DISH.

MR. FULLER

Now the party begins! O'Leary, a round of drinks for the little lady and me!

MARK

(HAND TO HEAD) Oh no--!

ALICIA

Now, honey. Be nice—

MR. FULLER

(MOCKING ALICIA) Now, honey. Be nice—

ALICIA

I'm sorry, Mr. Fuller. We weren't expecting you.

MR. FULLER

Of course you weren't. You didn't invite us, did you?

MRS. FULLER

Yes, to think after being friends with the Professor for most of our lives to be forgotten like that.

MR. FULLER

We knew it was an oversight, so we came anyway. (TO MRS. FULLER) Give them the cake, dear, and let's get partying. (MRS. FULLER HANDS THE CAKE TO ALICIA, WHO PLACES IT ON THE TABLE; MR. FULLER ACCEPTS DRINKS FROM JOE, HANDS ONE TO HIS WIFE) So, you've locked yourselves away from the rest of the world for one last time, have you? Well, now that this place is going to be bulldozed out of here, it's the last real peace you'll ever have. You'll have nowhere left to go to hide when you need a break from the real world.

ALICIA

But we don't try to hide from the real world.

MARK

We don't have any reason to hide.

MRS. FULLER

That's not what the Professor used to tell us when we'd come to visit him down here. He said that one or the other of you was always coming down here to get away from something bad that was happening. (SHE ROLLS HER EYES CEILINGWARD) up there.

MARY

I came down a lot. Grandpa used to help me with my homework and it was nice and cool down here in the summer.

SNIFFLES

Me, too. And Mommy and Daddy, too.

ALICIA

(CRADLING SNIFFLE'S HEAD AGAINST HER HIP) Now, now, Sniffles, that's not entirely true.

SNIFFLES

It isn't?

ALICIA

No. Your mother would come down here once in a while to see how your grandfather was doing, that's all.

MARK

And I kept some of my tools down here.

JOE

I used to come down to play poker with Professor Hendrickson every Thursday night.

MR. FULLER

I used to see you coming here once in a while, Mrs. Rilke.

MADGE

(LOOKS AROUND DEFENSIVELY) Well, maybe.

ALICIA

Madge. I didn't know you came over here without dropping in to say Hello.

MRS. FULLER

She wasn't coming over to see you.

MARGARET

The Professor was always fond of my brownies.

DAVE

Sounds like the Professor's retreat was anything but.

BUDDY

(MOVING EVEN CLOSER TO TRUDY) And how often did you come down here?

TRUDY

Not very often. I had a beauty parlor business to run.

MARK

Well, it's all beside the point, isn't it? You're all here for your last look, for your last day in the dungeon, and once we can somehow get rid of all the stuff down here, we start digging! It's that simple.

MARY MOVES TO THE PERISCOPE WITH SNIFFLES IN TOW. SHE MOVES A FOOTSTOOL OVER UNDER IT AND THROWS THE SWITCH TO ACTIVATE IT.

ALICIA

Yes, it's that simple. And you're all invited for the grand opening of the pool. (SHE SPOTS MARY AT THE PERISCOPE) Mary, don't play with that thing. Honey, get Mary away from that—

MARY

I'm looking around to see if there's anyone else coming to the party.

MARK

Just leave it be, Mary. Get Mr. and Mrs. Fuller a chair.

MARY CLIMBS OFF THE STOOL BUT LEAVES THE PERISCOPE IN OPERABLE POSITION. SHE PULLS CHAIRS OVER FOR MR. AND MRS. FULLER. MRS. FULLER SITS, BUT MR. FULLER DOES NOT.

BUDDY

So, Mr. Fuller, with the way the Professor's spirit seems to have arranged that none of his goods got sold yesterday, and in fact, that they all ended up back here, do you think it's worth turning down the lights and holding a séance to see what his vote would be on the fate of the old Bunker?

MR. FULLER

I think we know what Jeremy's vote would be.

BUDDY

Well, why don't we take a vote of everyone here, since everyone here seems to have at least a passing emotional attachment for this place, and see how the majority's opinion compares to the dictator's decision. The Professor gets only one vote, of course, since this is still a democracy.

MARK

This is absurd. You're all talking about this place as though you owned parts of it.

BUDDY

In a sense, they do—at least emotionally.

JOE

I own the card table against the wall in the storage room. And the chips.

ALICIA

I agree with Mark. This is absurd.

MR. FULLER

But it's just for fun. It doesn't really count. (IN AN ASIDE TO BUDDY) Just like their wishing war away doesn't count.

BUDDY

What can it hurt?

ALICIA

(LOOKING TO MARK FOR SUPPORT) It can hurt a lot. It can push emotional issues that might be better left still.

MARK

Alicia's right. We've all had emotional involvements of varying degrees with my father, and we're still too close to his funeral. You're all still equating this place where he lived with him and it really has little if anything to do with him. It's just a place, for god's sake.

DAVE

But it was very important to your father, Mark.

JOE

That's true enough.

MARK

But taking a vote to preserve it is an emotional knee-jerk reaction that has nothing to do with reality.

MR. FULLER

Reality? Does reality matter to you? Does it, really?

MARK

We're not going to get involved in that argument again.

MARGARET

What argument is that?

MARK

About reality.

MARGARET

Oh. Leave me out of that one.

MARK

I think I'm quite capable of dealing with reality. And the reality is that if enough people in this world make up their minds that there is not going to be any more war, and if they really feel that and act upon it in their personal lives, and make that statement over and over every day, and if they live their lives that way, there will be no war.

THERE IS A RUMBLING SENSATION AND AT THE SAME TIME AN INTENSE BEAM OF LIGHT SHOOTS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PERISCOPE, WHERE IT IS REFLECTED ONTO THE CONCRETE WALL; IT DIES ONLY GRADUALLY AS ANOTHER WAVE OF RUMBLINGS SHAKES THE SHELTER. PEOPLE GRAB FOR CHAIRS, WHICH OVERTURN, AND SOME BRACE THEMSELVES AGAINST THE WALLS. THE LIGHTS GO OUT. THE ONLY LIGHT IS THE GRADUALLY DYING LIGHT FROM THE PERISCOPE LENS.

DAVE

An earthquake! And a good one.

MARK

Is everyone all right?

THERE IS THE SOUND OF RANDOM SHUFFLING AROUND IN THE DARK. A BIC FLICKS ON AND THE FACE OF JOE O'LEARY IS VISIBLE.

BUDDY

Where's the switch for the generator?

MARK

On the wall inside the storage room door.

BEFORE BUDDY CAN GO FOR IT, THE LIGHTS COME UP BUT WITH ONLY PARTIAL POWER.

BUDDY

Look like the batteries cut in. I'll get the generator. (HE DISAPPEARS INTO THE STORAGE ROOM; A MOMENT LATER THERE IS THE DISTANT SOUND OF A MOTOR TURNING OVER AND BUDDY IS BACK AS THE LIGHTS COME UP)
Boy, that was something!

BUDDY, DAVE, AND MARK MOVE AROUND THE ROOM, HELPING PEOPLE STEADY THEMSELVES. MARY SCAMPERS UP ONTO THE FOOTSTOOL AND PUTS HER EYE TO THE PERISCOPE LENS, TURNING THE PERISCOPE.

ALICIA

Mary! Don't!

MARY

Mommy (A NOTE OF GROWING CONCERN IN HER VOICE) our house if knocked over.

MARK

(RUSHING TO THE PERISCOPE) And no earthquake insurance. (HE LOOKS INTO THE LENS) My god! It's been caved in—from the side. Like a big fist—

ALICIA

(RUSHING TOWARD THE STAIRS) Oh, no. No!

MR. FULLER

(INTERCEPTS HER) I don't think you should go up until we know that it's safe.

MRS. FULLER

Mr. Fuller is right, dearie.

MR. FULLER

Mark, come here and take care of your wife.

MARK

(STILL LOOKING THROUGH THE PERISCOPE) There's a red glow over toward Millport. And the rest of the houses I can make our are knocked down, too.

MR. FULLER

(TURNING ALICIA OVER TO BUDDY) Where's the Professor's instrument box? And don't anyone think of going near the door until we're sure.

MARY

I know where it is. (SHE RUNS INTO THE OFFICE AND RETURNS LUGGING THE INSTRUMENT BOX) Here it is!

MR. FULLER

(TAKING THE BOX AND ATTACHING IT TO THE WALL NEAR THE PERISCOPE) I hope I remember which wires plug in where. (HE FIDDLES WITH THE WIRING WHILE MARK CONTINUES TO USE THE PERISCOPE) Ah, there. That seems to be it.

THE REST OF THE FOLKS MOVE IN A TIDAL WAVE TOWARD MR. FULLER, PETER PAWS YIPPING OCCASIONALLY AS HE TRIES TO AVOID BEING STEPPED ON.

MR. FULLER

(FROWNING AS HE READS INFORMATION FROM THE INSTRUMENTS) The temperature is 124, wind is 47 miles an hour, and—(HE FUMBLES WITH ANOTHER SWITCH; AS HE IS SUCCESSFUL, THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH A MANIC CLICKING SOUND)—the Geiger counter is going crazy. (HE WALKS AWAY FROM THE BANK OF INSTRUMENTS, HIS HAND TO HIS FOREHEAD. THE REST PUSH IN TO GET A BETTER LOOK)

MARK

The telephone lines are down, too, and now the sky is a weird pink color over toward Millport.

MADGE

What does this mean?

MR. FULLER

I'm afraid that it means we won't have to take that vote after all. The will of the majority has prevailed—

FADE OUT:

END