

# The Cactus Rustlers



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**The Cactus Rustlers**

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**The Cactus Rustlers** was first performed as a staged reading on January 14, 2017 at Showtimers, Roanoke, Virginia: Aisha Mitchell, stage manager; Linsee Lewis, director.

**CEE CEE:** Emma Sala

**DEE DEE:** Kelli Hobson

**RHONDA:** Heather Sexton

**FONDA:** Kelly Anglim

**ZEKE:** Stephen Baltz

**51HUNTER2:** Joel Gruver

**COMMANDO JOE:** Brian Lee

**KIA:** Bella Lerch

**MIA:** Skylar Gay

**POW:** Faith Lewis

**ALIEN:** Stephen Glassbrenner

**LONG HAUL LARRY:** Nick McCord

## The Cactus Rustlers

**COMEDY.** In this sequel to *Rhonda's High-Class Roadkill Chili*, Rhonda, Fonda, and Drona are busy organizing an alien festival to attract more visitors to Hurleyburg. To make things more "festive," Rhonda's husband, Zeke, hauls out *all* of his holiday decorations, and his display attracts America's foremost alien hunter, 51Hunter2, as well as Commando Joe and the Armadillo Company. Meanwhile, Cee Cee and Dee Dee pursue their dreams of becoming Wild West desperados by rustling cacti to sell to black market landscapers. But their plan hits the dirt when an alien crash-lands in the desert and falls in love with the same cactus they are trying to rustle. There are plenty of conspiracy theories, alien antics, and Hurleyburg hysterics in this cosmic comedy!

**Performance Time:** Approximately 90-120 minutes.

## Characters

(3 M, 8 F, 2 flexible)

**CEE CEE:** Waitress at the Rustler Steakhouse who dreams of becoming a desperado; female.

**DEE DEE:** Cee Cee's best friend and waitress at the Rustler Steakhouse who dreams of becoming a desperado; female.

**RHONDA:** Volunteer organizer of an alien festival; female.

**ZEKE:** Rhonda's husband who is obsessed with holiday decorations; male.

**FONDA:** Rhonda's flighty younger sister who really wants to win the alien costume contest and meet a real alien; female.

**DRONDA:** Rhonda's sister who is obsessed with conspiracy theories; female.

**51HUNTER2:** America's foremost independent alien hunter and conspiracy theorist; carries a video camera; male.

**COMMANDO JOE:** Owner of Commando Joe's End Times Supplies store and leader of Armadillo Company; loves to watch The Conspiracy Channel; wears battle fatigues; male.

**KIA:** Joe's eldest daughter and a member of Armadillo Company; wears battle fatigues and carries around a toy bow and arrow; female.

**MIA:** Joe's second eldest daughter and a member of Armadillo Company; wears battle fatigues and carries around a plastic sword; female.

**POW:** Joe's youngest daughter, who desperately wants to shoot someone with her slingshot; a member of Armadillo Company; wears battle fatigues and carries around a toy slingshot; female.

**ALIEN:** Alien who falls in love with a cactus; flexible.

**LONG HAUL LARRY/LOIS:** Truck driver; flexible.

**Note:** For flexible roles, change the script accordingly.

## Setting

Small town of Hurleyburg, somewhere in the Southwest.

## Sets

The sets may be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows but must be easily moved on and off. Some short scenes may be played before the curtain, if desired.

**Exterior/roof of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.** The exterior of a doublewide trailer can be seen. There is a front porch with a chair. The roof is a platform that can be accessed from behind the trailer by an unseen ladder or steps.

**Commando Joe's End Times Supplies store.** There are store displays of assorted survivalist goods and merchandise.

**Desert.** A desert backdrop may be used. There are a few large fake cacti.

**Town of Hurleyburg.** A backdrop of a small town may be used.

## Synopsis of Scenes

### ACT I

- Scene 1:** Western-style restaurant.
- Scene 2:** Exterior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 3:** In front of curtain.
- Scene 4:** Interior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 5:** Commando Joe's End Times Supplies store.
- Scene 6:** Side of the road, desert.
- Scene 7:** Exterior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 8:** Commando Joe's End Times Supplies store.
- Scene 9:** In the desert.
- Scene 10:** Exterior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 11:** In the desert, later.

### Intermission

### ACT II

- Scene 1:** In the desert, later.
- Scene 2:** Exterior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 3:** In the desert, later.
- Scene 4:** Exterior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 5:** Front seat of Long Haul Larry's "truck"
- Scene 6:** Interior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 7:** Downtown Hurleyburg.
- Scene 8:** Exterior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer.
- Scene 9:** Downtown Hurleyburg.
- Scene 10:** Downtown Hurleyburg, later.

## Props

Newspaper	Gas mask
2 Shovels	"Flamethrower"
Rope	Large "weapon"
Watering can	Assorted merchandise for Commando Joe's End
Blanket	Times Supplies store
2 Pair work gloves	2 Welding goggles
Makeup kit, for Fonda	4 Sunglasses
Assorted Christmas lights (some flash)	"Dead buzzard"
Binoculars	Santa hat, for Pow
Toy bow and arrow, for Kia	Battle gear including helmets, for Pow, Mia, and Kia
Plastic sword, for Mia	Welder's suit with mask and goggles, for Drona
Slingshot, for Pow	Cowboy hat, for Fonda
Coupon	2 Crazy alien costumes, for Fonda
Assorted digging gear	Holster, for Cee Cee
2 Shovels	2 Ticket vouchers
2 Garden trowels	Plastic remnants
Rake with a broken handle and missing teeth	Bench
Cactus cutout	
Highway map	
Video camera	
Valentine decorations	

## Special Effects

Zapping sound	Strobe/flashing lights
Sound of a bus departing	Sound of "ray gun" firing
Headlights of an oncoming truck (light effect)	Loud "pop"
Truck horn	Sound of spaceship flying off
Truck screeching to a halt	

**"From Golden Corral  
to the O.K. Corral!  
Here we come!"**

**—Cee Cee**

## ACT I

### Scene 1

(AT RISE: *Rustler Steakhouse, a western-style restaurant, Hurleyburg, end of the workday. Waitresses Cee Cee and Dee Dee are cleaning and setting up for the next day.*)

CEE CEE: Remember when we were gonna be infamous?

DEE DEE: Don't you mean famous?

CEE CEE: Nope, infamous. That's even better...or worse...or better. Depends on how it's used.

DEE DEE: Better watch out. You're starting to sound like a schoolmarm.

CEE CEE: Ain't no schoolmarm. Ain't, ain't, ain't.

DEE DEE: That oughta do it. They didn't like us saying "ain't" when we was in school. None of them other four-letter words either, for some reason.

CEE CEE: It's like notorious. You can either be notorious or *notorious*. We were gonna be *notorious*.

DEE DEE: That's a good thing, right? Like a bad thing that's a good thing?

CEE CEE: (*Sadly.*) We were gonna be outlaws...

DEE DEE: Now people keep asking when we're gonna have in-laws.

CEE CEE: (*Sadly.*) We were gonna rob trains...

DEE DEE: Now they've torn up all the train tracks and turned 'em into hiking trails.

CEE CEE: (*Sadly.*) We were gonna rob banks...

DEE DEE: Now everybody just banks online.

CEE CEE: (*Sadly.*) We were gonna rob the stagecoach...

DEE DEE: Only coach around here is the football coach, and he hasn't won a game in 50 years.

CEE CEE: (*Sadly.*) We were gonna be desperadoes in the Old West...

DEE DEE: Now we're just desperate to get to the Old Navy store at the mall.

CEE CEE: Remember when we used to skip school and watch those old westerns all day?

DEE DEE: What was the word that truant officer used?

CEE CEE: "Incorrigible." I think the word was "incorrigible." We were gonna make that our nickname: "The Incorrigibles." Except we didn't know how to spell it.

DEE DEE: Well, we were only in third grade at the time.

CEE CEE: He did seem to enjoy the movie, though.

DEE DEE: As I recall, he didn't seem to have a choice.

CEE CEE: We did kind of tie him up.

DEE DEE: And stuffed that bandanna in his mouth to keep him quiet.

CEE CEE: Well, he was getting repetitive. "Only five more years until retirement, only five more years until retirement."

DEE DEE: I don't know why he was so upset. I thought everybody liked John Wayne movies.

CEE CEE: What happened to us, Dee Dee?! We had dreams! We had plans!

DEE DEE: I guess we've already ridden off into the sunset.

CEE CEE: Maybe that guidance counselor was right, after all. It's hard to find a job as an Old West outlaw these days.

DEE DEE: Maybe so. I keep looking in the want ads. I never see anything listed for rustlers.

CEE CEE: I'm beginning to think all the good rustling jobs are just a thing of the past.

DEE DEE: I guess we are rustlers in a way, though.

CEE CEE: Waiting tables at the Rustler Steakhouse ain't exactly the same thing.

DEE DEE: True. True. I got a confession to make, Cee Cee.

CEE CEE: What's that, Dee Dee?

DEE DEE: Sometimes, when nobody's looking, I serve 'em drinks in a dirty glass.

CEE CEE: Cee Cee and Dee Dee...health department outlaws!

DEE DEE: *Incorrigible* health department outlaws!  
CEE CEE: Oh, Dee Dee, we weren't meant to be saloon gals.  
We were meant to have exploits!  
DEE DEE: Sometimes I feel pretty exploited. This whole  
working for tips thing is pretty overrated.  
CEE CEE: We were meant to have feats of daring!  
DEE DEE: Sometimes I think I have two left feet. But I don't  
think I'm very daring.  
CEE CEE: We were meant to have adventures!  
DEE DEE: Serving drinks in a dirty glass can be an adventure.  
Sometimes you have to turn 'em around so the people can't  
see the other side. And if you've got someone sitting across  
from them at the table, that can be kind of tricky.  
CEE CEE: Not that! *Real* adventures!  
DEE DEE: Oh, it was a real adventure the time that health  
inspector showed up.  
CEE CEE: (*Sees a "fly."*) Uh-oh! (*Indicating "fly."*) I see a  
fugitive from justice.  
DEE DEE: Really? Where?  
CEE CEE: (*Points.*) Up there. (*Sets her sights on dispatching the  
"fly."*)  
DEE DEE: Oh, I thought you meant a real one.  
CEE CEE: Real enough to that health inspector. They take off  
points for flies for some reason.  
DEE DEE: True. I guess that's about as real as it's gonna get.  
CEE CEE: Public enemy number one.  
DEE DEE: I thought *we* were gonna be public enemy number  
one.  
CEE CEE: Now we're reduced to rounding up a posse to catch  
a fly.  
DEE DEE: Probably won't even get a reward.  
CEE CEE: I wish I had my six-shooter.  
DEE DEE: I've got a newspaper.  
CEE CEE: Close enough. (*Swats at the "fly" with a newspaper.*)  
Got him! Still the fastest draw west of the Pecos! Of course,

that's what the art teacher said because all I could draw were little stick figures.

CEE CEE: (*Looking at the newspaper.*) Hey, what's this?

DEE DEE: Um, probably what's left of that fly.

CEE CEE: No, I mean *beside* it.

DEE DEE: The other part of the fly?

CEE CEE: No. Listen to this... (*Reads.*) "Police in Arizona are battling a new crime wave, cactus rustlers"!

DEE DEE: Cactus rustlers? Sounds prickly.

CEE CEE: (*Reads.*) "The demand for desert landscaping in the growing cities of the Southwest is fueling a growing trade in swiped succulents. Cactuses of all sizes are being dug up from the desert floor and sold on the landscaping black market."

DEE DEE: I didn't even know there was a landscaping black market.

CEE CEE: (*Reads.*) "Law enforcement sources say a spindly ocotillo plant can sell for as much as \$150 while the iconic saguaro cactus can fetch up to—" Oh, my gosh!

DEE DEE: What? What's it say?

CEE CEE: Five thousand dollars!

DEE DEE: Five thousand dollars for a cactus?!

CEE CEE: Well, one of those big ones...you know, with all the arms. (*Poses like a cactus.*)

DEE DEE: That's a lot of money for a cactus. What else does it say?

CEE CEE: Oh, just how it's a felony to dig up a cactus from federal land or transport a stolen one across state lines...that sort of thing. Nothing really important.

DEE DEE: I never knew you could rustle a cactus.

CEE CEE: Probably easier than a cow. They don't move. That was the problem we had at the 4-H rodeo that one time.

DEE DEE: That and the fact they were still in the judging ring at the time.

CEE CEE: So a cactus we could sneak up on.

DEE DEE: They have stickers, though.

CEE CEE: But they don't have horns, so they wouldn't try to gore you when you try to lasso them.

DEE DEE: True.

CEE CEE: And they don't "moo." They wouldn't make any noise. You could just tie one of the big ones to the top of a car.

DEE DEE: Or stuff one of the little ones in the trunk of a car.

CEE CEE: Put a blanket over it, and if anybody asks, say it's a boat.

DEE DEE: In the middle of the desert?

CEE CEE: Or a gun rack...a really big gun rack.

DEE DEE: Oh, okay. That would work, then. It is [Texas], after all. *[Or insert another southwestern state.]*

CEE CEE: So what do you think?

DEE DEE: I don't know. What do you think?

CEE CEE: I think we need some work gloves.

DEE DEE: Why? You're not thinking—

CEE CEE: And a great big shovel! Come on!

DEE DEE: Shouldn't we clock out first?

CEE CEE: Nah, we're outlaws! And not just any kind of outlaws, either! We're gonna be cactus rustlers!

*(Cee Cee and Dee Dee rush off. Blackout.)*

## Scene 2

(AT RISE: Exterior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer. Zeke is sleeping on the porch in a chair. Rhonda enters with her sisters, Dronda and Fonda. Rhonda looks disapprovingly at Zeke, drumming her fingers and gesturing that she's unhappy with him sleeping. She waves her hand in front of his face. No response.)

RHONDA: (Shouts.) Zeke!

ZEKE: (Wakes up.) What?!

RHONDA: Wake up!

ZEKE: I'm awake! I'm awake!

RHONDA: Yeah, and I'm the Queen of England. Now get moving! My sisters are here! You need to get their stuff in!

ZEKE: Oh, right! Right away! I'm on it! I'm on it! (Flails around and starts to exit.)

RHONDA: The car's that way. (Points in the opposite direction.)

ZEKE: Oh! Okay! (Heads in the proper direction and exits.)

RHONDA: (To Fonda and Dronda.) Poor thing is so worthless, he couldn't get elected dogcatcher.

FONDA: Oh, that's a terrible thing to say about your own husband.

RHONDA: Well, it's true. He couldn't get elected dogcatcher...came in second.

FONDA: Oh, well, that's too bad.

RHONDA: And that's hard to do when you're running unopposed.

FONDA: So who won, then?

RHONDA: "None of the above."

FONDA: Oh. So who catches the stray dogs, then?

DRONDA: This is [Texas], Fonda. We don't need no stinking government to regulate our dogs. We let our dogs run free the way nature intended. (Inhales deeply.) Ah, now this is what freedom smells like. [Or insert another southwestern state.]

FONDA: That's odd. I didn't realize freedom smelled like—

*(Zeke enters and runs across the stage.)*

ZEKE: *(Shouts.)* They're after me again! They're after me!

RHONDA: That's not a dog, Zeke! It's just a tumbleweed!

ZEKE: You can't be too sure! *(Exits.)*

RHONDA: *(To Fonda and Dronda.)* Then there's that. Poor boy hasn't been right since the accident.

FONDA: Oh? What accident was that?

RHONDA: Well, his mother used to say it was being born. But I think it was that time when— *(Stops.)* Well, we don't talk about it. Anyway, come on. We've got to get this placed fixed up for Alien Fest. We can't let Roswell have all the fun.

DRONDA: Leash laws are for liberals!

*(Rhonda, Fonda, and Dronda exit. Zeke enters, and runs across the stage.)*

ZEKE: *(Shouts.)* Don't bite me! Please! Don't bite me! *(Exits.)*

### Scene 3

(AT RISE: Side of a road. Cee Cee and Dee Dee enter, carrying gear including two shovels, a rope, a watering can, a blanket, and work gloves.)

CEE CEE: All right, let's check our gear.

DEE DEE: (Holding up shovels.) Shovels...to dig it up with.

CEE CEE: (Holding up rope.) Rope to pull it out of the ground with.

DEE DEE: (Holding up watering can.) Watering can to keep it happy with.

CEE CEE: (Holding up rope.) More rope to tie it up with.

DEE DEE: (Holding up blanket.) Blanket to cover it up with.

CEE CEE/DEE DEE: (Holding up work gloves.) Work gloves so we don't get stuck.

CEE CEE: There's just one thing we're missing.

DEE DEE: What's that?

CEE CEE: Something to haul it in.

DEE DEE: Oh. Guess that little red wagon we used to have won't work for this.

CEE CEE: As I recall, it didn't work that well that time we tried to rustle Miss McCorkle's cat.

DEE DEE: That cat definitely did not want to be rustled.

CEE CEE: At least it was good practice. I don't think the cactus will fight back.

DEE DEE: Neither will Miss McCorkle.

CEE CEE: She was right sore about it.

DEE DEE: As I recall, so were we. Both of them scratched!

CEE CEE: We still need a way to haul it.

DEE DEE: And a way to get there.

CEE CEE: And back.

DEE DEE: We could take the bus.

CEE CEE: Rustlers don't take the bus!

DEE DEE: I don't exactly see any horses around to steal.

CEE CEE: On the other hand, buses do have those big luggage compartments...

DEE DEE: Big enough to hold a cactus?

CEE CEE: Big enough to hold luggage.

DEE DEE: *(Excited.)* So we could ride in air-conditioned comfort!

CEE CEE: *(Excited.)* We're not just cactus rustlers! We're luxury-class cactus rustlers! Come on, Dee Dee! It's time to ride!

*(Cee Cee and Dee Dee exit. Blackout.)*

## Scene 4

(AT RISE: Interior of Rhonda and Zeke's trailer. Fonda is putting on makeup and getting dolled up. Rhonda and Dronda enter and look on disapprovingly. Fonda doesn't notice. Finally, Rhonda's had enough.)

RHONDA: (To Fonda.) What the heck are you doing?

FONDA: I'm just beautifying myself. I want to look good for the aliens, you know. (Giggles and turns around for the big reveal.) So how do I look?

RHONDA: Same as you always do.

FONDA: That's a terrible thing to say to your sister...even if it's true. I dated a postal clerk one the time. It didn't work out, though. Do you know they don't really lick stamps anymore? It's all some kind of special stick-on adhesive.

DRONDA: Another reason the country's gone soft. First, they make you wear seatbelts, and the next thing you know, we can't even lick our own stamps anymore.

FONDA: Do you think I'll see some aliens?

RHONDA: I've told you there's no such thing as aliens! Not the little green men kind, anyway.

RHONDA: Come on. We've got work to do.

FONDA: What kind of work?

(Zeke enters, tangled up in lit Christmas lights.)

ZEKE: (To others.) I think I'm going to need some help here.

RHONDA: Oh, good grief!

ZEKE: I think I'm missing a bulb, too.

RHONDA: Oh, trust me, you're missing more than just a bulb. (To Fonda.) Well, don't just stand there. Help him get untangled.

FONDA: I-I hardly know where to begin...

RHONDA: (Under her breath.) I don't know why I ever volunteered to head up this stupid festival, anyway. (Exits.)

DRONDA: Because it celebrates the biggest government cover-up of all time? Well, that we know of, anyway! For all we know, there's a cover-up of the cover-up!

*(Dronda exits after Rhonda. Fonda's still working on untangling the lights around Zeke.)*

ZEKE: Easy there! I think that's attached!

*(Blackout.)*

## Scene 5

*(AT RISE: Interior of Commando Joe's End Times Supplies store. The proprietor, Commando Joe, is wearing battle fatigues and scanning the sky with binoculars.)*

COMMANDO JOE: *(To himself.)* "Vigilance"...that's the watchword. "Vigilance." When they come, we won't get much warning. The black helicopters—we can hear those—they make helicopter sounds... *(Makes helicopter sounds.)* But saucers...saucers are silent. They'll just swoop in...maybe just a few scout ships first, or maybe a whole invasion fleet. We don't know how they'll come, but we know they're coming. *(51Hunter2 enters. Joe doesn't see him.)* That's why you always need to know your surroundings—be alert at all times—because you don't want the saucer people to sneak up on you and—

51HUNTER2: Uh, excuse me...

*(Commando Joe turns around, sees 51 Hunter, and screams.)*

COMMANDO JOE: *(Shouts.)* Arrgh! Red alert! Red alert! DEFCON 1! The British are coming! The British are coming! I can see the whites of their eyes! *(Thinks.)* Or is it the greens of their eyes?

51HUNTER2: I think they're more hazel, actually.

COMMANDO JOE: One if by land, two if by sea, three if they come out of the sky! And they have! They're here! They're here! The first wave already has a beachhead! And we're not anywhere near a beach!

*(Kia, Mia, and Pow pop up and point their weapons at 51Hunter2. Kia is armed with a bow and arrow. Mia has a plastic sword. Pow has a slingshot.)*

KIA: *(To 51Hunter2, holding up bow and arrow.)* All right, don't make a move, or I'll blast you to kingdom come!

MIA: *(To 51Hunter2.)* Or at least to Mars! Have you come from Mars?

POW: *(To 51Hunter2.)* Or Alpha Centauri?! Are you from Alpha Centauri? I bet you're from Alpha Centauri!

MIA: He's not from Alpha Centauri. The Alpha Centaurs are half-man, half-horse. And he doesn't look half-horse to me. Doesn't quite look half-man, either.

51HUNTER2: What the—?

COMMANDO JOE: *(To Kia, Mia, and Pow.)* Be careful! He might be a shape-shifter!

POW: So maybe he is an Alpha Centaur! And he's just shape-shifting the horse half! *(Thinks.)* Or is it the man half?

51HUNTER2: What? No, I'm a human. I'm 100 percent human!

COMMANDO JOE: *(Suspicious.)* You know, that's exactly what one of those shape-shifters would say...

51HUNTER2: Unless, of course, we all have some DNA from the ancient astronauts, in which case, it might be a little less.

KIA: *(To Mia, Pow, and Joe, excited.)* Maybe we should take a DNA sample from him to be certain?!

POW: *(Excited.)* Yeah, we could dissect him!

MIA: *(Excited.)* And sell his organs on eBay!

51HUNTER2: What?! Wait! I think there's been a misunderstanding.

KIA: *(To Mia, excited.)* Don't be ridiculous. We're not selling his organs on eBay.

51HUNTER2: Oh, thank goodness...

KIA: *(To Mia, excited.)* We'd sell them in the store...as souvenirs!

MIA: *(Excited.)* Commando Joe's End Time Supplies and Alien Souvenirs!

POW: *(Excited.)* I bet if we cut him open, he'd explode slime all over us! Maybe even *green* slime!

51HUNTER2: What?! No! No! I'm just here for the festival! I just came by your store to pick up some supplies. I have a coupon and everything!

COMMANDO JOE: A coupon, huh? What kind of coupon?

51HUNTER2: Uh, the discount kind. You know, "Buy one, get one free."

COMMANDO JOE: Let me see it.

KIA: I've got you covered!

MIA: *(To 51Hunter2.)* If that's not a real coupon, you're a dead man, mister.

POW: *(To 51Hunter2.)* Yeah, a dead alien! A dead shape-shifting half-man, half-horse green slime alien!

51HUNTER2: Here you go. *(Hands Commando Joe the coupon.)*  
It also says with every purchase of \$50 or more, you'll throw in a complimentary Commando Joe's End Times Supplies 2020 calendar.

COMMANDO JOE: Technically, I never say when the end times will be.

POW: *(Looking at 51Hunter2's hands, disappointed.)* Wow, he's got hands. I thought he'd have tentacles. What a bummer.

COMMANDO JOE: *(To 51Hunter2, inspecting coupon.)*  
Hmmm...looks real enough. What's your name?

51HUNTER2: Oh, I never give out my real name. You never know when the government might be listening in.

COMMANDO JOE: True. Got a point there.

51HUNTER2: The government's been covering up the existence of extraterrestrials ever since Roswell, and maybe longer. Maybe ever since... *(Looks around.)* ...the ancient Egyptians. You don't think those pyramids built themselves, do you?

COMMANDO JOE: I like the way you think.

51HUNTER2: But my screen name is 51Hunter2. Apparently, somebody has just plain 51Hunter. That's why I had to add the "2." It's probably the government trying to confuse people.

COMMANDO JOE: "51Hunter2," huh? What do you hunt?

51HUNTER2: What else? Area 51! You don't think it's where the government says it is, do you? Oh, no, the government's too clever for that. It's all misdirection. They'll admit there is such a place, but they'll deny what it's really all about, and then they'll put it someplace else...maybe even somewhere around here. It's all part of the plan!

COMMANDO JOE: Oh, you know about the plan, huh?

51HUNTER2: Everybody knows about the plan!

COMMANDO JOE: *(To Kia, Mia, and Pow.)* It's all right, girls. He's one of us.

KIA: *(To Mia and Pow.)* At ease, soldiers! Lower your weapons.

MIA: Yes, sir!

POW: *(Disappointed.)* Aw...now I won't get a merit badge for shooting an alien.

MIA: "Merit badge" is just another word for "mind control." They lure you in with the promise of campfires and s'mores and, next thing you know, they've got you selling cookies! Just another tool of the global elite!

POW: Can I at least shoot him in the foot?

51HUNTER2: Hey!

KIA: *(To Pow.)* No, you can't shoot him in the foot!

POW: But you told me to lower my weapon. Doesn't that mean you want me to shoot him in the foot?

KIA: Not now...maybe later.

51HUNTER2: What?!

POW: *(Disappointed.)* I never get to shoot anybody...

COMMANDO JOE: *(To 51Hunter2, introducing girls.)* So, this is the local militia. Sorry if they're a little trigger-happy. Things have been a little tense around here lately...what with the alien festival coming up and all. The tourism people say it's all just bunk—something to hustle the tourists—but I say you can't take any chances, not when the fate of the whole planet is at stake. Go ahead, girls, you can introduce yourselves. *(Indicating 51Hunter2.)* This one's a friendly.

KIA: Yes, sir! Company roll call! Kia! Present!

51HUNTER2: "Kia"? That's a pretty name.

COMMANDO JOE: It stands for "killed in action."

51HUNTER2: Oh.

KIA: Mia!

MIA: Present!

51HUNTER2: Mia?

COMMANDO JOE: Missing in action.

KIA: Pow!

POW: Ready willing and able to shoot any of that alien slime that dares set foot or tentacle on the great sacred soil of the United States of America! Or at least the states that vote the right way. Some of those others may have to fend for themselves when the end times come.

*(51Hunter2 looks at Commando Joe for help with the name..)*

COMMANDO JOE: *(To 51Hunter2.)* "Prisoner of war."

51HUNTER2: I see.

KIA: *(To Commando Joe.)* Sir! A company present and accounted for! Sir!

COMMANDO JOE: If those aliens show up here, I don't know if we can stop them, but we can at least slow 'em down some. That's why this here is called "A Company."

51HUNTER2: "A" for "alpha" because it's the first?

COMMANDO JOE: No, "A" for "armadillo." We're really just like those armadillos trying to cross the highway in front of you—they're really not much more than a speed bump—but when they jump up at you, they can sure mess up your grill.

KIA/MIA/POW: Hooyah! *(Make an aggressive gesture, such as thrusting their weapons forward as if they have bayonets.)*

COMMANDO JOE: *(To 51Hunter2.)* Besides, we don't want those aliens to get the idea we're good to eat. Tried armadillo once. Broke a tooth off.

KIA: I think you're supposed to take the shell off first.

COMMANDO JOE: *(To 51Hunter2.)* Kids...they're always trying something new.

51HUNTER2: Uh, you know, the odds are that any alien civilization capable of interstellar travel is really quite likely to be peaceful. The level of cooperation required to develop that kind of technology would surely mitigate against any aggressive tendencies.

COMMANDO JOE: Yeah, well, Armadillo Company, here, isn't taking any chances. We'll shoot first and ask questions later.

51HUNTER2: You know, it might better to ask the questions first. You don't want to provoke an interstellar incident.

COMMANDO JOE: *(Suspicious.)* Say, you're not one of those alien *sympathizers*, are you?

51HUNTER2: Well, I wouldn't say "sympathizer," exactly, but think all of the things we can learn from extraterrestrials—a whole universe full of science, and philosophy, and art, and —

COMMANDO JOE: Sounds like a *sympathizer* to me. You'd best be moving on down the road, unless you want to risk getting vaporized.

51HUNTER2: Oh, I don't think the aliens will vaporize us—death-ray weapons are probably just science fiction, anyway.

COMMANDO JOE: I don't mean the aliens. I mean Armadillo Company, here.

KIA: Eyes on target.

MIA: Locked and loaded.

POW: *(Excited.)* Do I get to shoot somebody?! Do I get to shoot somebody?!

51HUNTER2: Whoa, whoa, whoa!

COMMANDO JOE: We've got a full arsenal, here, with enough firepower to light up the skies all the way from here to El Paso! *(Slight pause.)* Well, metaphorically speaking, anyway.

51HUNTER2: But I've got a coupon!

COMMANDO JOE: Good. You can use some it on all those leftover fireworks over there. *(Points.)* Guess we kind of overstocked for the Fourth of July.

51HUNTER: *(Backing away in fear.)* Uh, that's okay. I think I'll be going now. I was just looking, anyway. I don't really need anything. Nothing at all! *(Rushes off.)*

COMMANDO JOE: *(To Mia, Kia, and Pow, disappointed.)* Dang. I don't know why we have such a hard time converting shoppers into customers. Oh, well. Come on, girls, let's go get something to eat. All this talk of fending off alien invasions makes me hungry. *(Exits.)*

MIA: *(To Kia and Pow.)* I hope it's not those MREs again. Those are definitely Meals-Not-Ready-to-Eat.

KIA: Watch it, soldier. If your morale doesn't improve, I'll put you on kitchen duty until it does.

MIA: *(Disappointed.)* I thought we'd be roasting things over campfires...you know, small animals that we caught with our bare hands.

POW: *(Disappointed.)* Does this mean I don't get to shoot anybody?

*(Kia, Mia, and Pow exit. Blackout.)*

## Scene 6

(AT RISE: Side of a road in the desert. Sound of a bus departing. Cee Cee and Dee Dee enter, carrying their digging gear.)

CEE CEE: Well, that was—

DEE DEE: Awkward?

CEE CEE: Abrupt.

DEE DEE: Embarrassing.

CEE CEE: That's an "E" word.

DEE DEE: Oh, sorry. Anomalous.

CEE CEE: That doesn't sound like an outlaw word.

DEE DEE: I think it's a Scrabble word.

CEE CEE: Yeah, well, we're going to have to do some scabbling after that driver put us off the bus in the middle of nowhere.

DEE DEE: I don't think that was really our stop.

CEE CEE: (As bus driver.) "All right. You two. Off now." I don't think that's the friendly customer service they advertised.

DEE DEE: I wonder what we could have been doing to upset him so?

CEE CEE: I don't know. I thought organizing the passengers into a game of "Cowboys and Indians" was a fine way to pass the time.

DEE DEE: I think that driver was just upset that we wouldn't let him play.

CEE CEE: We did let him play. We told him he could be the stagecoach driver and we'd ride shotgun.

DEE DEE: Maybe he didn't like the fact that we had actual shotguns.

CEE CEE: Well, he wasn't much fun, anyway. I just wish he hadn't put us off the bus out here in the middle of the desert.

DEE DEE: On the other hand, we are closer to the cactuses.

CEE CEE: (*Looking around.*) Hmmmm...I guess we are.

DEE DEE: So how does this work? Do we have to sneak up on them?

CEE CEE: Probably not. I don't think they're going to run away.

DEE DEE: They're a lot bigger than I expected.

CEE CEE: And pricklier, too.

DEE DEE: Good thing we brought gloves.

CEE CEE: Kinda wish now we'd brought the dynamite.

DEE DEE: I don't think the bus driver would have liked that much, either.

CEE CEE: Oh, well. We'll just have to make do with what we have.

DEE DEE: Two shovels, two garden trowels, and one rake with a broken handle and some missing teeth.

CEE CEE: You know, if you hold it up just right, it looks kind of like a prospector's pick-axe.

DEE DEE: You think maybe we'll find some gold?

CEE CEE: Don't know. But I know we'll find some green.

DEE DEE: Green?

CEE CEE: (*Eying up a cactus.*) Well, maybe more of a grayish-green with some stickers on the outside.

DEE DEE: Oh.

CEE CEE: Come on, let's go rustle us up a cactus!

(*Cee Cee and Dee Dee exit. Blackout.*)

## Scene 7

*(AT RISE: Exterior of Zeke and Rhonda's trailer. Zeke enters, dragging Christmas lights. He's not as tangled up as he had been. He drags the lights to the roof but the more he works, the more tangled up he becomes. By the end, he's completely tangled up in the lights.)*

ZEKE: *(Realizes.)* Oh. I thought I was untangling them.

*(Zeke struggles some more with the lights but only gets more tangled up. 51Hunter2 enters, waving a state highway map and carrying a video camera.)*

51HUNTER2: *(Calls.)* Hello! Hello? Anybody home? I'm trying to find—

ZEKE: *(Calls.)* Up here!

51HUNTER2: *(To himself.)* It's one of the pod people! They're already here! And it has tentacles! I've got to get evidence of this. *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Just wait right there till I get my video camera! *(To himself.)* Fascinating! It has no upper limbs!

ZEKE: *(Struggling to untangle himself from the lights. Annoyed, calls.)* Uh, I could use a hand here, if you don't mind!

*(51Hunter2 gets out his video camera. Zeke keeps struggling, trying to free himself from the tangle of Christmas lights.)*

51HUNTER2: *(To himself.)* That crazy guy at the store was right, after all! It's here to harvest our organs! *(To Zeke, shouts.)* No! You can't have my hand! Or any other part of me, you slimy alien filth! *(Readies camera.)* Now, you just hold still and tell me...where do you come from? Andromeda? The Crab Nebula? The dark side of the moon? *(To himself.)* I knew NASA was hiding something. Wait a minute! The moon landings were fake. But Roswell was

real! *(To video camera.)* This is 51Hunter2, America's foremost independent alien investigator, not that other 51Hunter. He's an imposter! Anyway, I've got a positive visual sighting of an extraterrestrial –

*(Zeke finally frees himself from the lights.)*

ZEKE: There! Whew! *(Calls.)* So, can I help you?

51HUNTER2: *(Pointing video camera at Zeke, narrating.)* Amazing. It appears to have shed its exterior skin of tentacles and now is fully bipedal with upper extremities. Strangely, its skin tone isn't green, and its head appears only slightly larger than normal...likely more evidence of how the being is trying to assume a human form to make First Contact go more smoothly...either that or trick our entire species into servitude to our new alien overlords. *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Greetings! Do you come in peace?

ZEKE: *(Confused.)* Uh, sure. Peace on earth...all that, I guess.

51HUNTER2: *(To video camera, narrating.)* My hands are shaking. This is such an awesome responsibility...to be the first Earthling to make contact with an alien life form. If I say just one thing wrong, our whole planet could be doomed to extermination. *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Welcome! Welcome to our world! It's a pleasure to meet you! *(To video camera.)* Wait. Maybe "pleasure" isn't the right word. They might take that the wrong way...really the wrong way. *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Uh, happy to meet you! Joy! Joy from this world!

ZEKE: *(Confused.)* What? Huh? Yeah, I've got "Joy to the World"...both the traditional version and the one about the bullfrog that drinks wine. Never did understand that one.

*(Zeke starts to climb down from the roof.)*

51HUNTER2: Bullfrogs? No! No, not bullfrogs! Humans! We are the dominant species on this planet...humans are.

Bullfrogs...they're just...icky and slimy. Not that we have anything against slimy creatures, nothing at all, it's just that they're small and green and live in swamps and— *(Realizes. To himself.)* Swamp gas! Now it all makes sense! *(To Zeke, shouts.)* Look, I'm really sorry about what happened at Roswell. I didn't have anything to do with that, I swear. That happened before my time. *(Hunched over begging for mercy.)* Please don't experiment on me! Please! Not the probe! Anything but the probe!

ZEKE: *(Completely confused.)* Who are you, and what do you want?

51HUNTER2: *(Terrified.)* Me?! I'm just a nobody, nobody at all! It's the government you want! They're the ones who have all the secrets! *(Looks up at Zeke, realizes.)* Wait a minute. You're just a guy.

ZEKE: You were expecting maybe the Sugar Plum Fairy?

51HUNTER2: No, but—

ZEKE: I've got some Sugar Plum Fairies right over there. *(Points.)* Got some elves, too. *(Points.)* Toy soldiers. *(Points.)* Snowmen. *(Points.)* Even got an inflatable polar bear somewhere. But I don't think they'd really fit the occasion, if you know what I mean.

51HUNTER2: Uh, what occasion is that?

ZEKE: Oh, that silly alien festival everybody's going on about. My wife says the whole town has to be quote, "properly decorated." Something about how we have to "keep up with Roswell." I know all about "keeping up with the Joneses," but I don't see why we have to keep up with Roswell.

51HUNTER2: So you're putting up Christmas decorations?

ZEKE: Christmas, Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Fourth of July...you name it, I'm supposed to put it out here. We're supposed to look "festive."

51HUNTER2: *(Confused.)* So that would explain the leprechaun dressed in a miniature Santa suit while holding a plastic jack-o'-lantern full of Easter eggs and fireworks?

ZEKE: Just trying to cover all my bases.

51HUNTER2: *(Confused.)* I see.

*(Fonda enters, carrying Valentine decorations, which are not yet revealed to the audience.)*

FONDA: *(To Zeke, calls.)* You forgot one! You forgot one!

ZEKE: What? I don't think there are any decorations for Arbor Day.

FONDA: *(Revealing her decorations.)* Valentine's Day! *(Sets up her decorations. Zeke gives her a disapproving look.)* What? We want the aliens to know we're friendly! What do you think about this? *(Recites.)* "Roses are red. Violets are blue. I want you to take me home with you."

Beam me up, Scotty! Oh, yes! Beam me up! *(Exits.)*

51HUNTER2: *(To Zeke.)* That's your wife?

ZEKE: *(Horrified.)* Oh, heavens no! That's my sister-in-law. She's here to help with the festival.

51HUNTER2: *(Confused.)* And she thinks Valentine's Day decorations will help attract aliens?

ZEKE: I don't think she's too particular who she attracts. But this week, yeah, aliens.

51HUNTER2: *(Confused.)* I see.

ZEKE: Me, I don't know why anybody would want to attract those little brain-sucking reptiles, anyway.

51HUNTER2: Well, I doubt they'd really suck our brains out. They've probably come to share their vast knowledge of the universe.

ZEKE: Trust me, they want to suck our brains out. First, they'll send out some kind of signal that makes your car stall on some lonely back road. Then they'll shine this bright light in your face. But instead of asking, "Take me to your leader," they're sucking your brains out. And you know what the worst part is?

51HUNTER2: What's that?

ZEKE: When they put them back in, they won't do it right, and after that, everything's all mixed up and doesn't make any sense, and everybody thinks you're just the town crazy.

51HUNTER2: That's rather...specific.

ZEKE: Yeah, saw it in a movie once. Watched a lot of movies when I was laid up after my accident.

51HUNTER2: Oh, I'm sorry. Were you hurt badly?

ZEKE: Mostly my pride. That, and a bunch of bones I'd never heard of before.

51HUNTER2: Oh. What happened?

ZEKE: Fell off the roof.

51HUNTER2: Oh. Ouch!

ZEKE: It's all Henderson's fault, if you ask me.

51HUNTER2: Henderson?

ZEKE: The fellow across the street...been trying for 13 years to beat him in the town contest for best Christmas lights.

51HUNTER2: And...?

ZEKE: Lost every year. I cut a Christmas star out of plywood and string some lights around it...Henderson over there puts up a whole planetarium show. I set out a boom box to play some holiday music...and Henderson marches his wife and kids outside to sing carols all night. Well, at least I think it was his wife and kids. For all I know, he hired some urchins off Craigslist. Then there was the year I had the accident— *(Stops.)* We don't like to talk about that...

51HUNTER2: What happened that year?

ZEKE: Like I said, we don't like to talk about that!

51HUNTER2: Oh, right. Sorry.

ZEKE: I just had no idea that reindeer kicked so much.

51HUNTER2: Reindeer?

ZEKE: Turns out, they don't like being up on the roof so much.

51HUNTER2: You had reindeer up on your roof?

ZEKE: Oh goodness, no. You can't find those around here. *(Slight pause.)* I rented some mules instead. Figured if I put some fake antlers on 'em, they'd look about the same from a

distance. They really are pretty stubborn, though. Kicked me right in the...well, you know.

51HUNTER2: A place you don't talk about, eh?

ZEKE: No, actually, I can't remember. They just tell me I was stretched out facedown in the yard and that ornery cuss was jumping around and braying and just carrying on.

51HUNTER2: The mule, you mean?

ZEKE: No, Henderson, across the street. The mule was still up on the roof. I learned my lesson, though.

51HUNTER2: I can imagine.

ZEKE: Mules don't like their noses painted red.

51HUNTER2: I see...

ZEKE: It seemed like such a good idea at the time, too. But no more of that! Now, I say it's time to fight fire with fire! And by fire, I mean a couple hundred gigawatts of pure electricity. Nobody's going to outshine me this year. Nobody! Rhonda couldn't care two cents about the Christmas lights contest...says all those flashing lights and plastic thingamabobs somehow detract from the "true meaning" of the holiday, whatever that's supposed to mean. But once I told her I could use 'em for the alien festival, she was all in. Anything for the aliens, apparently. (*Makes a spacey sound.*) Ohhhhh! Good for "town spirit," she says. "Helps put the town on the map for tourism." As if I care about all that hokum! I just care about beating Henderson over there. (*Shouts.*) Yeah, that's right, buddy! I'm talking about you! No more of that "peace on earth" nonsense! This is war! (*Looks around, calmly.*) I think I might need some more extension cords.

51HUNTER2: Did you say a couple *hundred* gigawatts?

ZEKE: I might have underestimated a bit. It might be closer to a thousand.

51HUNTER2: But that's—! How are you going to do that?

ZEKE: See that power pole over there? (*Points.*)

51HUNTER2: Yeah?

ZEKE: Tapping right into the power grid.

51HUNTER2: Isn't that illegal?

ZEKE: Last year, I used so much electricity the power company sent me a thank-you card.

51HUNTER2: Oh.

ZEKE: And a bill about the size of the [Dallas] phonebook. Did you know that banks don't like to give out 30-year mortgages to pay off power bills? I don't know what's wrong with this country. [*Or insert another suitable city.*]

51HUNTER2: (*Amazed.*) But with that much power—

ZEKE: (*Proudly.*) You should be able to see this baby from—

ZEKE/51HUNTER2: (*Looking up.*) Outer space...

*(Zeke and 51Hunter2 look at each other. Blackout.)*

## Scene 8

(AT RISE: *Commando Joe's End Times Supplies store. Rhonda, Dronda, and Fonda enter.*)

FONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* What is this place?

RHONDA: It's a store. What's it look like?

FONDA: It looks like a war zone.

RHONDA: I'm sorry it's not up to your big-city expectations.  
It's all we've got.

DRONDA: *(Looking around.)* I love it!

FONDA: Are those... *(Points.)* ...gas masks?

DRONDA: If I had had some of those, I might still be married.  
You have no idea how bad men smell. That's something  
they ought to be teaching in school instead of all that other  
gobbledygook.

RHONDA: Maybe if this alien festival can put us on the map,  
we can work our way up to a Dollar Store...or at least a 50-  
cent store. For now, this will have to do.

FONDA: *(Points.)* And a flamethrower?

DRONDA: Ah, even better! I could have used one of these to  
fumigate the house after Earl moved out. In fact, come to  
think of it, I could have used one of these *before* he moved  
out.

FONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* When you said they sold survivalist  
gear, I thought you meant things like, you know –

RHONDA: Milk and bread?

FONDA: Well, actually, I was thinking more like brisket and  
sweet tea, but I suppose milk and bread could do in a pinch.

*(Suddenly, Pow appears. Fonda is startled. Rhonda pays no  
attention.)*

POW: *(Shouts.)* Intruder alert! Intruder alert! Battle stations!  
Battle stations! We have a perimeter breach! Bogeys at six

o'clock! Repeat: Bogeys at six o'clock! *(To herself.)* Or is it twelve o'clock? It's hard to tell on a digital clock.

*(Mia enters.)*

MIA: Calm down. They're called "customers," Pow.  
*Customers.*

POW: Oh. How can you tell the difference?

MIA: Well, good question. First, you have to surveil them...like this... *(Pulls out binoculars and demonstrates.)*

POW: Is that anything like shooting them?

MIA: *(Creeping around Rhonda and Fonda.)* Study their movements...learn their habits...

POW: And then I can shoot them?! Huh?! Please?! Please?!  
Can I shoot them?!

FONDA: What the—?!

*(Kia enters.)*

KIA: If they were really intruders, they'd have shot you by now...what with all the noise you're making.

POW: Oh.

KIA: I had them in my sights from the time they drove up.  
They're friendlies.

POW: *(Disappointed.)* Darn. I wanted to shoot somebody.

KIA: Even if they are registered with the government.

FONDA: Registered with the government? What are you talking about?

KIA: License plate.

MIA: *(Suspicious.)* She probably has a driver's license, too.

POW: *(To Fonda.)* Big Brother's got you right where he wants you!

RHONDA: Hello, Kia.

KIA: Hello, Mrs. Anderson. I'll go get my father.

RHONDA: Thanks.

*(Kia exits.)*

POW: *(Suspicious.)* Just so you know, I'm keeping my eyes on you.

MIA: Go stand in the corner.

POW: Why? What did I do?

MIA: Nothing. It's a better stakeout position. Nobody can sneak up behind you.

POW: Right!

*(Mia and Pow take up their positions.)*

FONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* Is this normal?

RHONDA: Nah. Usually they stake out over in that corner.  
*(Points.)*

POW: *(To Mia.)* Oh, man, she's onto us. We must have a mole.

*(Commando Joe and Kia enter.)*

COMMANDO JOE: *(To Rhonda, Dronda, and Fonda.)* Ah, hello there. Sorry to keep you waiting. Kinda got tied up watching The Conspiracy Channel.

FONDA: I don't believe I've ever heard of that one.

COMMMANDO JOE: Well, that's not the real name, of course. The official name is The Weather Channel. But trust me, it's conspiracy central. Every time they say a hurricane is going to show up...it does. That can't be a coincidence. I think the UN's behind it.

DRONDA: Oh, you're right! *(To Rhonda and Fonda.)* I like how he thinks. *(Smells Commando Joe.)* And he doesn't smell too bad, either.

COMMANDO JOE: It's my new cologne. It's called ["deer rut."] *(Laughs.) [Or "Doe in estrus."]*

DRONDA: Yummy.

COMANDO JOE: Helps me blend in with nature when we're out on patrol. Anyway, enough of that. How can I help you ladies today?

RHONDA: I was hoping you could help us out with some prizes for the Alien Festival.

COMMANDO JOE: Prizes, huh? What kind of prizes did you have in mind?

RHONDA: Oh, you know...whatever you want to donate. Let's see, we'll have our "best alien costume" contest. Our "most unusual alien costume" contest. That sort of thing.

FONDA: *(To Commando Joe.)* "Weirdest alien costume." That's the one I want to enter!

RHONDA: *(To Commando Joe.)* And then, of course, the grand prize: "First Person to Find an Alien." Not that we expect anyone to claim it. It's just for show...something to help get attention and draw a crowd. Goodness knows, we need a crowd.

COMMANDO JOE: Oh, well, I've got just the thing in case anyone does try to claim it.

RHONDA: What's that?

FONDA: *(Dreamily.)* Imagine the first time talking to an alien...

*(Commando Joe produces a large weapon.)*

COMMANDO JOE: Yeah, well, here's what I've got for First Encounter. This oughta be enough to make those little green men think twice about coming around here.

FONDA: You want to shoot them?

COMMANDO JOE: Of course not.

FONDA: Whew!

COMMANDO JOE: I want to nuke 'em! But the government keeps pretty tight control on those A-bombs.

POW: We could put one in the microwave!

MIA: Don't be ridiculous, Pow. You can't put an alien in the microwave.

POW: Why not? They are *little* green men.

KIA: That does it! Fifty demerits! You're on kitchen duty!

MIA: You'd have to chop him up first, and after that, what's the point?

KIA: Both of you!

MIA: (*Pouty.*) Man, I'm always on kitchen duty.

KIA: And no microwaving, either! The government might be able to pick up those frequencies and know what we're eating.

POW: (*To Mia.*) I don't mind kitchen duty. I get to use that bayonet we have. (*Pantomimes chopping things up with a bayonet.*)

KIA: A rusty bayonet.

MIA: Adds flavor!

COMMANDO JOE: (*To Rhonda, Fonda, and Dronda.*) Sorry. The girls are a little gung-ho. This whole alien thing has everyone a little on edge. It's not every day your whole way of life is threatened by some gelatinous mass of goo in a flying pie pan.

DRONDA: Sounds like Fonda's cooking, if you ask me.

POW: (*To Rhonda, Fonda, and Dronda.*) We've been practicing on real pie pans!

MIA: (*To Rhonda, Fonda, and Dronda.*) And that "crop duster" that came over. I'm telling you, I know a surveillance flight when I see one.

POW: (*To Rhonda, Fonda, and Dronda.*) I wish Dad would have let us use the bazooka. I bet we could have got him then.

FONDA: Wait. You're serious about wanting to hurt them?

COMMANDO JOE: Nah, I don't want to hurt anybody. Hit 'em just right and they probably won't feel a thing.

FONDA: But...but...why?

RHONDA: (*To Commando Joe, indicating Fonda.*) I'm sorry, you're going to have to excuse my sister. She's spent too many years in the big city. It's warped her values.

DRONDA: *(To Commando Joe, indicating Fonda.)* Do you know when she first moved in with me I caught her drinking un-sweet tea?

COMMANDO JOE: *(To Fonda.)* We're all red-blooded Americans around here, not green-blooded whatever-they-ares.

KIA: *(To Fonda.)* It's "we the people," not "we the people and some aliens."

MIA: *(To Fonda.)* "When in the course of human events," not "alien events."

POW: *(To no one in particular.)* I just wanna shoot something.

RHONDA: *(To Commando Joe.)* We'll take whatever you have to donate. The festival's nonprofit so it can be a tax write-off.

COMMANDO JOE: Oh, we don't pay taxes.

KIA: *(To Rhonda.)* Taxes are a government conspiracy to take our money.

DRONDA: Well, you got that right! Is that something you learned in school?

MIA: Nah, we don't go to school. That's just government-mandated brainwashing.

POW: Yeah, in school they make you learn *Arabic* numbers!

DRONDA: Oh, I've heard about that! Next thing you know, they'll be making us use the metric system. Say, how much for that liter bottle of soda pop? *(Points.)* That is soda pop, isn't it?

KIA: Um, that's nitroglycerin.

POW: *(To Dronda.)* It'll definitely go "pop"!

MIA: *(To Dronda.)* Want me to shake it up for you, or you want to do that yourself?

RHONDA: *(To Commando Joe.)* I'll put you down for some mystery prizes. How about that?

COMMANDO JOE: Yeah, sounds good. Why don't you make it "undisclosed." That sounds better.

RHONDA: An "undisclosed" prize?

COMMANDO JOE: No, I meant the place. "Grand prize from an undisclosed location." Don't want too many people finding out about this place.

RHONDA: Oh, right.

COMMANDO JOE: I just wish business was better. I don't understand why it isn't. Come on, girls, let's go. We need to practice maneuvers. *(Exits.)*

KIA: *(To Mia and Pow.)* Armadillo Company! Fall in line!

MIA: Yes, sir!

POW: *(To Kia, hopeful.)* Now do we get to shoot something?

KIA: Ten-hut! Company, march! Left, right!

KIA/MIA/POW: Left, right! Left, right! Left, right! *(Exit.)*

FONDA: *(To Rhonda.)* You have a very strange town here, you know that, don't you?

RHONDA: Oh, they're harmless.

*(Zeke bursts in.)*

ZEKE: *(Shouts.)* Quick! I need all the sunglasses you've got in stock! Industrial strength!

RHONDA: *(To Fonda.)* Zeke, on the other hand...now that's a different story.

*(Blackout.)*

## Scene 9

(AT RISE: In the desert. Cee Cee and Dee Dee are appraising the cacti.)

CEE CEE: Well, what do you think?

DEE DEE: I think they're awfully big.

CEE CEE: The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

DEE DEE: I don't want one of those to fall on me!

CEE CEE: It's an expression.

DEE DEE: Oh, I figured. They've got lots of stickers.

CEE CEE: So, which one you think is best?

DEE DEE: I-I don't know. Do we just pick one and take it?

CEE CEE: That's pretty much how rustling works, I think.

DEE DEE: Oh. Well, I guess that's how the West was won, eh?

CEE CEE: Nah. The West was won by squatters and speculators and scoundrels and— (Realizes.) Well, yeah, I guess this is kinda how the West was won.

DEE DEE: (Points to a cactus.) That one looks kind of pretty.

Do you think we can really take it home with us?

CEE CEE: Only one way to find out.

DEE DEE: How's that?

CEE CEE: Let's start digging!

(Cee Cee and Dee Dee start "digging." They quickly give up.)

DEE DEE: This is kind of hard.

CEE CEE: You can say that again.

DEE DEE: This is kind of hard.

CEE CEE: I guess that's why they call it "hardpan."

DEE DEE: Well, they're definitely right about the hard part.

You think maybe we should pick another one?

CEE CEE: And give up?! Did Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid give up robbing banks and trains just because they were too hard?

DEE DEE: No, but in that movie we saw, they went to South America.

CEE CEE: I suppose we could try the south side of the cactus...

*(Dee Dee moves to another side of the cactus. Note: The cactus may be positioned so the audience can't see Dee Dee well, if desired.)*

DEE DEE: How do we know which side is the—? *(Shouts.)*  
Ow!

CEE CEE: Let's see...the sun is right up there... *(Points.)*

*(Dee Dee is stuck in the cactus. Note: For the following, Cee Cee is oblivious to Dee Dee struggling with the cactus. Sounds of Dee Dee in pain and struggling.)*

DEE DEE: *(Shouts.)* Ow!

CEE CEE: Looks like it's about high noon, wouldn't you say?

*(Sounds of Dee Dee in pain and struggling.)*

DEE DEE: *(Shouts.)* Ow! *(Sounds of Dee Dee in pain and struggling.)* Ow!

CEE CEE: They tell people to get out of town by sundown.

*(Sounds of Dee Dee struggling in pain.)*

DEE DEE: *(Shouts.)* Ow!

CEE CEE: That always seemed really unfair, too. Because depending on the time of year, the sun goes down at different times.

*(Sounds of Dee Dee in pain and struggling.)*

DEE DEE: (*Shouts.*) Ow!

CEE CEE: I guess that means if you're an outlaw, you're better off in the summer because you've got more time to get out of town. We should remember that.

(*Sounds of Dee Dee in pain and struggling.*)

DEE DEE: (*Shouts.*) Ow!

CEE CEE: So, anyway, that means south should be thataway.

(*Cee Cee points off. Sounds of Dee Dee in pain and struggling.*)

DEE DEE: (*Shouts.*) Ow!

CEE CEE: What are you bellyaching about now, Dee Dee?

DEE DEE: I think I'm stuck.

CEE CEE: Yeah, these stickers are on the sharp side.

DEE DEE: No, I mean I can't get out.

CEE CEE: Well, you're going to have to bite the bullet and pull it out. (*Realizes.*) That is, if we had any bullets...

DEE DEE: I'm trying, but— (*Shouts.*) Oh! Ow! I think I need some help!

CEE CEE: (*Finally realizing Dee Dee's predicament.*) What in the world?!

DEE DEE: I told you...I'm stuck.

CEE CEE: I thought you meant you'd gotten stuck, not that you were stuck.

DEE DEE: Well, I'm kinda both.

(*Cee Cee attempts to free Dee Dee from the cactus.*)

CEE CEE: How did you get way up there?

DEE DEE: Well, I thought if I pulled myself up, I could pull myself loose. Instead, I just got more stuck.

CEE CEE: I see.

DEE DEE: Can you help me?

CEE CEE: Sure, let me just— (*Shouts.*) Ow!

DEE DEE: I think if you can just grab hold of me —

CEE CEE: You're right. Those things *are* sharp!

DEE DEE: It's got me by the leg!

CEE CEE: Maybe if I just — ?

DEE DEE: And my arm!

CEE CEE: Or what if I — ?

DEE DEE: Both of them, actually.

CEE CEE: Uh-oh... (*Gets stuck in the cactus.*)

DEE DEE: What you mean "uh-oh"?

CEE CEE: I mean *uh-oh*.

DEE DEE: Don't tell me you're...? (*Pause.*) Well?

CEE CEE: You told me not to tell you.

DEE DEE: Oh.

CEE CEE: Yeah.

CEE CEE/DEE DEE: Uh-oh!

(*Blackout.*)

## Scene 10

*(At RISE: Exterior of Zeke and Rhonda's trailer. Zeke and 51Hunter2 are looking up at the Christmas lights, admiring them. They're also both wearing dark sunglasses or welding goggles since the lights are very bright.)*

ZEKE: Whaddya think?

51HUNTER2: About magnitude minus 27 or 28, I'd guess.

ZEKE: I have no idea what you're talking about.

51HUNTER2: Very bright...brighter than the sun.

ZEKE: *(Flattered.)* Thank you.

51HUNTER2: Just think, in 4.3 years that light will be arriving at Alpha Centauri, which means if they see it and wonder what it is and send a message to us, all we have to do is be standing here in 8.6 years.

ZEKE: Eight years?

51HUNTER2: Eight point six...speed of light.

ZEKE: Well, I hope I don't have to wait that long to hear from the decorations committee. I'm treating the Alien Festival as kind of a tryout for the Christmas lights contest. So what do you think? Are they bright enough?

*(51Hunter2 puts on a second pair of sunglasses or goggles.)*

51HUNTER2: Maybe...

ZEKE: Are you ready for the... *(Pronounces badly.)* ... pièce de résistance?

51HUNTER2: What's that?

*(Zeke clicks a button and the lights start flashing in time with unheard music.)*

ZEKE: To the tune of "Joy to the World." I still don't know what a bullfrog has to do with Christmas, though.

51HUNTER2: Oh my...

ZEKE: Or you think I should use the other one? I think they sing it in church.

51HUNTER2: You know –

ZEKE: Not that I go to church much...interferes with putting up the Christmas decorations.

51HUNTER2: Actually –

ZEKE: I think your friends on Alpha Centauri might like that one better. It's all peace and love and all that...unless they speak bullfrog.

51HUNTER2: What if...what if you programmed something else into those lights?

ZEKE: Oh, you mean like "Silent Night"? I tried that. Too slow. Needs to be something peppy so they flash a lot.

51HUNTER2: No, I mean a different message entirely...a message that the Alpha Centaurians would know how to read.

ZEKE: Aren't Centaurs those half-man, half-horse things, anyway? So does that mean the Alpha Centaurs are like the really tough ones?

51HUNTER2: What? No. I don't know what kind of species they are. They might even be silicon-based for all we know. If we could broadcast some kind of code...some kind of universal thing they'd understand –

ZEKE: On TV, all the aliens speak English. I thought that was the universal language.

51HUNTER2: No, I mean like some kind of chemical signature...like for helium –

ZEKE: Gotta be careful with helium. One year, I didn't weigh mine down, and I had some elves float away on me.

51HUNTER2: Or hydrogen! Hydrogen is the most common element in the universe!

ZEKE: When they hit the power line, Old Man McCreedy said it reminded him of the crash of the Hindenburg.

51HUNTER2: Or nitrogen!

ZEKE: Oh, the humanity! Oh, the humanity!

51HUNTER2: Or carbon!

ZEKE: Or maybe it should be, "Oh, the elfanity"! "Oh, the elfanity!"

51HUNTER2: Or the whole periodic table! That's it! We'll program the lights to flash the atomic weight for each element in the periodic table! That's something they'll recognize...unless they use a different numbering system. Well, can't be helped. Base 10 rules! *(Exits.)*

ZEKE: *(To himself.)* I have no idea what he just said. But if it means more lights, I'm all for that. It'd be pretty cool if the centaurs could speak bullfrog, though.

*(Blackout.)*

## Scene 11

*(AT RISE: In the desert, later. Cee Cee and Dee Dee are both stuck to the cactus.)*

DEE DEE: Well, this is a pretty pickle!

CEE CEE: I don't think it's a pickle, Dee Dee.

DEE DEE: It's green, at least. And pickles are green.

CEE CEE: I suppose you could pickle a cactus.

DEE DEE: I wonder if we're going to get pickled...being stuck out here in the sun like this.

CEE CEE: Nah. You need water for that...lots of water.

DEE DEE: Oh, I wish you hadn't said that.

CEE CEE: How come?

DEE DEE: Now I'm kind of thirsty.

CEE CEE: Yeah. Me, too.

DEE DEE: You don't think—?

CEE CEE: What?

DEE DEE: You know...that we might—

CEE CEE: Oh. Naw. I don't think that'll happen.

DEE DEE: Oh, okay. Good. I just asked because I thought I saw a buzzard up there circling around.

CEE CEE: I don't think that's a buzzard.

DEE DEE: Oh, okay. That's encouraging, then...I guess.

CEE CEE: It's two buzzards.

DEE DEE: Great.

CEE CEE: Oh, don't worry about them.

DEE DEE: Why not?

CEE CEE: They won't eat us till we're dead.

DEE DEE: Oh!

CEE CEE: We should probably worry more about the coyotes.

DEE DEE: Coyotes?! Where?!

CEE CEE: Up in those hills, probably. They won't come out until it's night.

DEE DEE: Oh. Then what?

CEE CEE: They'll probably circle around us, trying to figure out the best time to attack.

DEE DEE: No!

CEE CEE: Of course, coyotes aren't the only thing we have to worry about.

DEE DEE: What else?

CEE CEE: Spiders.

DEE DEE: Spiders?!

CEE CEE: Tarantulas, to be precise.

DEE DEE: Ew!

CEE CEE: Big hairy ones.

DEE DEE: I don't like spiders.

CEE CEE: But they seem to like you.

DEE DEE: What do you mean? *(Cee Cee nods in Dee Dee's direction.)* What?

CEE CEE: I'd have thought they'd be kind of ticklish, actually.

DEE DEE: What? Oh! *(Notices "tarantulas" on her arm, starts thrashing about, shouts.)* Ow! No! Get off of me! Help! Help!

CEE CEE: Good grief, Dee Dee. They're not poisonous.

DEE DEE: They're not?

CEE CEE: No.

DEE DEE: Whew!

CEE CEE: But that rattler down there is. *(Dee Dee screams.)* Hold it down. You don't want to draw the coyotes...or the javelina pigs. You know, the ones with the tusks out to there. Or the game wardens on the lookout for rustlers. Why, they'd find us and they'd throw us in jail for the night, and then we'd have to sleep on cots and eat jailhouse food and...and...and—

*(Cee Cee and Dee Dee look at each other. Pause. They both scream.)*

CEE CEE/DEE DEE: *(Shout.)* Help! Hey! Help! Is anybody out there? Help!

*(Alien enters. Alien looks at the cactus with a quizzical look on his face. Note: The Alien speaks in an indecipherable language. Unless noted, feel free to improvise as long as each line ends with "erk.")*

ALIEN: *(Alien talk.)* Erk?

CEE CEE: *(Sees Alien.)* What the—? *(To Dee Dee.)* Hey! Look!  
Somebody's coming to help us!

DEE DEE: *(To Alien, calls)* Yoo-hoo! Up here!

ALIEN: Erk?

CEE CEE: Can you help us down?

DEE DEE: *(To Alien.)* We're kind of stuck.

ALIEN: Erk?

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee.)* I don't think he speaks English.

CEE CEE: *(To Alien.)* Hola, señor! Could you be so kind as to  
help us down? Por favor!

ALIEN: Erk?

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee.)* I don't think he speaks Spanish,  
either.

CEE CEE: Well, what other languages are there?

ALIEN: Erk!

*(As lights fade to black, Alien hugs the cactus warmly and affectionately, as if greeting a long-lost relative. Intermission, opt.)*

## ACT II

### Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Desert, sometime later. Cee Cee and Dee Dee are still stuck to the cactus. The Alien is still hugging the cactus.)*

ALIEN: Erk!

CEE CEE: Uh, excuse me, I hate to interrupt—

DEE DEE: *(To Alien.)* If we could ask you just one teeny-tiny favor—

*(Alien looks up at Cee Cee and Dee Dee and then returns to the cactus.)*

ALIEN: Erk!

*(Alien hugs the cactus.)*

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee.)* I don't think we're getting through to him...or her. Or—

CEE CEE: I think what we have here is called a "language barrier."

DEE DEE: Is that anything like the sound barrier?

CEE CEE: There's only one thing we can do to make ourselves understood to someone who doesn't speak our language.

DEE DEE: What's that? Sign language?

CEE CEE: Don't be ridiculous. Where are we going to find any highway signs like that?

DEE DEE: Oh. So what do we do, then?

CEE CEE: Simple. We talk louder. *(To Alien, shouts.)* Excuse me, but do you think you could help us down?!

DEE DEE: *(To Alien, shouts.)* We're kind of stuck up here!

*(Alien ignores them and proceeds to act out a story. Note: For the following, the Alien speaks directly to the cactus.)*

ALIEN: Erk! (*Indicates it was flying in a flying saucer, encountered mechanical difficulties, and crashed.*) Boom-erk!

CEE CEE: (*To Dee Dee.*) Oh, look! It's telling a story!

DEE DEE: To the cactus?

CEE CEE: Ssssh! Maybe we'll learn something...

DEE DEE: There you go, acting like a schoolmarm again.

(*Alien indicates it crawled out of the crash and encountered soldiers.*)

ALIEN: (*Saluting "soldiers."*) Take me to your leader-erk!

DEE DEE: (*To Cee Cee.*) Oh, it can speak English now.

(*Alien indicates the humans take him to a general.*)

ALIEN: (*Saluting "general."*) Leader-erk. (*Laughs to indicate how comical it is that humans think they are the dominant species on the planet.*) Humans-erk. (*Indicates this took place in Roswell.*) Roswell-erk. (*Laughs, dismissing the official cover story.*) Weather balloon-erk. (*Indicates he was imprisoned and experimented upon.*) Probed-erk. (*Cries and hugs the cactus again. Alien resumes his story and indicates that he was transported to Area 51.*) Area 51-erk. (*Indicates he was held prisoner there for many years while the military experimented on the spaceship.*) Alien technology-erk.

DEE DEE: (*To Cee Cee, confused.*) Does any of that make any sense to you?

CEE CEE: None whatsoever.

(*Alien indicates that for years he plotted his escape. Finally, one day, he escaped but was unsure where to go*)

ALIEN: (*Realizes where to go.*) Roswell-erk! (*Sticks out his thumb to indicate he hitch-hiked to Roswell.*) Thumbing it-erk. (*Describes arriving in Las Vegas.*) Las Vegas-erk! (*Describes some of the attractions there.*) Blackjack-erk. (*Acts out a chorus line of showgirls with high kicks.*) Va-va-va-voom-erk! (*Acts*

*out a slot machine.)* Lemon-erk. Orange-erk. Wild cherry-erk! *(Acts out seeing an attractive lady.)* Va-va-va-voom-erk! *(Acts out hitch-hiking to current location.)* Erk! *(Lovingly hugs the cactus.)*

CEE CEE: *(To Dee Dee.)* Although, if I'm not mistaken –

DEE DEE: Yes?

CEE CEE: I know this sounds crazy –

DEE DEE: Yes?

CEE CEE: I mean, like, really crazy –

DEE DEE: Go on...

CEE CEE: Like out-of-this-world crazy –

DEE DEE: I'm all ears...

CEE CEE: I think he might be –

DEE DEE: Well, come on, out with it.

CEE CEE: I think he might be a real fugitive from justice.

DEE DEE: Oh. Should we turn him in...for a reward?

CEE CEE: We could. Or we could invite him to join our gang!

DEE DEE: We have a gang?

CEE CEE: We will if we invite him to join us!

DEE DEE: Oh.

CEE CEE: *(To Alien.)* Say, Mister – *(To Dee Dee.)* What do you think I should call him?

DEE DEE: I don't know. He's awfully...green. Why is he so green?

CEE CEE: Maybe it's camouflage.

DEE DEE: Or maybe it's a new type of sunscreen.

CEE CEE: Either way, let's call him, "Green Go"! *(To Alien, shouts.)* Hey, Green Go! Up here! Yo! Green Go!

DEE DEE: You sure that's not an insult?

CEE CEE: Nah. We're outlaws, remember? We're supposed to get insulting nicknames. *(Calls.)* Hey, Green Go! Wanna come ride with us? We'll cut you in our share of the loot! That is, if you can cut us down from here first!

*(Alien drops to his knees to propose to the cactus.)*

ALIEN: *(To Cactus.)* Erk! *(Gets up and gestures for the cactus to join him.)* Erk! *(Indicates that when he gets to Roswell, perhaps other aliens will arrive to rescue him, and the cactus can go with them.)* You. Me-erk!

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee.)* What language do you think he's speaking?

CEE CEE: I don't know, but it's definitely not American.

DEE DEE: *(Dreamily.)* It sounds to me like the language of love...

CEE CEE: It's a cactus.

DEE DEE: I know, but they do make a cute couple.

CEE CEE: That's like saying a cute couple would be Butch Cassidy and a train, or Jesse James and a bank teller. Or—

DEE DEE: Wait. Jesse James dated a bank teller?

CEE CEE: What? I don't know! I was just trying to make a point!

DEE DEE: No wonder he was such a good bank robber. It was all an inside job!

CEE CEE: My point is...anyone can plainly see he's trying to rustle the same cactus we are.

DEE DEE: Oh. Are you sure?

CEE CEE: Absolutely. Why else would he be acting like that? He thinks he's hit the mother lode. That means it's a really valuable one.

DEE DEE: Oh.

CEE CEE: Though you'd think he'd at least have the professional courtesy to let us go. *(Calls.)* Hey, Green Go! If you want this one, you can have it! We don't mind. We'll find another one. This desert's big enough for the both of us. If you let us go now, we can be out of town by sundown. Maybe even a little bit before...depending on whether there's Daylight Saving Time and how far away the county line actually is.

DEE DEE: We could probably look it up on MapQuest.

CEE CEE: Any time now would be good.

*(Alien finally notices Cee Cee and Dee Dee.)*

DEE DEE: Oh, look, I think he heard you this time!

ALIEN: Erk!

*(Alien helps extricate Cee Cee and Dee Dee from the cactus. Note: Alien adlibs alien-speak as he does this.)*

CEE CEE: Thanks.

DEE DEE: *(To Alien.)* I don't know what we'd have done if you hadn't come along.

CEE CEE: *(To Alien.)* Probably been stuck up there all night.

DEE DEE: *(To Alien.)* Until the coyotes came along to eat us.

CEE CEE: *(To Alien.)* Or the javelina pigs. Or the sidewinders. Or the —

DEE DEE: Or the what?

*(Alien looks at Cee Cee and Dee Dee.)*

CEE CEE: Why is he looking at us like that?

DEE DEE: Like what?

ALIEN: Erk! Parasites-erk!

*(Alien hugs the cactus and adlibs romantic-sounding alien-speak. Cee Cee and Dee Dee shrug.)*

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee.)* I guess that means he doesn't want to join our gang, huh?

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**