

Life Cycle

A script by Dave Stone

6 pages

[A note on the setting: This is set entirely inside a five-mile-wide starship, originally the home of millions of colonists but now floating derelict. A twisting maze of corridors giving access to living quarters, recreational areas, canteens, engineering stations, shopping malls and all the different environments of a colony ship, all strewn with the personal effects of a million people, a lot of them twisted into evidence of the cargo-cult microsocieties of people stranded for a thousand years before they all died out - ritual sacrifice temples built from an automated latrine, an aborigine-like wall mosaic built from scavenged technology, that sort of thing. Amongst the scattered garbage and junk we see familiar things like beer cans, packaging, children's toys etc, but the writing on everything is in the spidery and unreadable script of some future language.

The ship has been deserted for millennia. We see several ancient skeletons and suchlike, but the only living things are vicious rat-sized slimy arachnid monsters occasionally infesting a space in packs. These are the descendants of bacteria and parasite insects, evolved over time to this size. Everywhere we go we'll see little indications of them, watching.

Several of the environmental controls and automated servos of the ship are malfunctioning. The general effect of the place should be like a garbage-strewn, self enclosed ancient technological temple with spiders in its secret tunnels; we are walking through the bones of a dead and rotting cultural relic.

The only other living thing apart from the omnipresent little arachnid monsters is a single human being, her mind and identity eaten away almost to nothing by a constantly recurring cycle of death and regeneration, and this is her story.]

Incidentally, I'd suggest that the art throughout should be without motion effects etc. Each frame is like a moment caught in time by high speed photography; sharp and clear and catching each point in the action at its crucial expressive moment. But then that's just me.

Page 1

1.
Closeup on a slim and naked adolescent woman in semi-darkness, uncurling tentatively from a crouch as though waking up in a strange place. She's glancing about herself with uneasy caution.

WOMAN: UHN.

2.
Pull back and upward from the woman as he climbs unsteadily to her feet, casting around with a hand and starting to become frightened. Peripheral indications of some of the stuff we'll see in the next frame, not enough to fix it, just enough to tie it in. At the moment we're just somewhere dimly-lit and strange.

WOMAN: UH, HELLO, I . . .

WOMAN: HELLO?

3.
Pull right back and up. We see that we're in a cluttered and cavernous space, possibly some long-derelict hold. Lots of shadows and menacing techno-environment forms. Lots of scattered junk.

The woman stands in the partially destroyed and scattered remains of a hovel built from junk, looking about herself worriedly. Note the specifics that we'll actually see below, but the hovel gives off the impression that there was once a sort of self-sufficient scavenged smallholding here.

(For the first sequence, to convey childlike thoughts, the boxes are in a childlike scrawl.)

WOMAN: IS THERE ANYBODY THERE?

BOX: MY FIRST MEMORY IS OF WAKING.

4.
Amongst the ruins of the hovel, the woman is kneeling, puzzled and looking through a collection of ragged papers scrawled with a childlike string of symbols that are obviously entirely different from the spidery alien language we encounter

everywhere else (it's a journal kept by the human who was here previously, in a language that he or she invented.)

BOX: I KNEW THINGS BUT I DIDNT KNOW HOW I KNEW THEM - I DIDNT KNOW WHAT THEY **MEANT**.

BOX; A BOOK THING. THE PEOPLE DO WORD THINGS IN THEM, TO REMEMBER THEM WHO THEY ARE. DID I WRITE THIS? IS IT ME?

5.
The woman is holding up and peering at a kind of coat, roughly stitched together from scavenged cloth and old packaging (remember the alien language on packaging and stuff.) The clothing is obviously makeshift and self-invented, but a lot of self-learned expertise has gone into it.

It is also obviously far too large for the woman. She's peering at it with a sort of cute li'l savage puzzled frown.

BOX: NO.

BOX: ITS NOT ME.

BOX: SOMEONE ELSE, THEN. A MAN, I THINK.. IS HE HERE, WATCHING ME? WAITING FOR ME TO -

6.
Closeup on the woman's face, snapping round in alarm and reacting to something out of shot.

BOX: SOMETHING MOVED.

BOX: IS THAT THE **HIM**, IS IT -

Page Two

7.
Dynamic frame as a rat-sized arachnid thing bursts from the wreckage and launches itself at the shocked and frightened woman. She's automatically trying to batter it aside with a hand.

THING: SKREEEEEE

WOMAN: AAH!

8.
The woman has flung herself to the ground, one hand clutching the struggling arachnid thing as it tries to strike at her like a scorpion, the other desperately reaching for the jagged remains of some broken discarded telescope-like optical device (we see indications of it earlier to set this up.)

WOMAN: WHUH!

9.
On her knees and teeth-gritted vicious savage sexy as all get-out, the woman hammers at the arachnid thing with the jagged object, splattering it spectacularly.

WOMAN: GHAAH!

10.
We're looking past the woman as she turns to see that several other of the arachnid things are appearing in the the wreckage.

BOX: **EATING THINGS!**

BOX: THEY GET INSIDE YOU AND THEY SLITHER AND THEY EAT!

11.
The woman is hurriedly making her way from the hovel, toward an exit of the chamber. Several arachnid things in the foreground watch her go.

BOX: I **KNOW** THAT (WITHOUT KNOWING HOW I KNOW.)

BOX: THEY EAT YOU **UP**.

BOX: NEVER LET THE EATING THINGS GET INSIDE YOU.

12.

Cut to a cluttered corridor. The woman, still naked, is wandering through it, frightened and nervous.

BOX: ITS LATER NOW. I HAVE SOME SENSE OF THE WORLD NOW. I CAN FEEL THE MAN AROUND ME, SENSE HIM. THE THINGS ME MADE, THE THINGS HE MOVED.

BOX: HES HERE. I **KNOW** IT.

13.

Cut to a small living-quarter chamber. The long-discarded and rotting remains of some future-colonist family's life.

The woman is prowling watchfully through it.

BOX: I CAN SMELL HIM EVERYWHERE.

Page Three

14.

Closeup as the woman's hand takes a rotting bedspread from a bunk, spilling a couple of decaying and asininely grinning cuddly toys that look like cheerful furry aliens complete with antenna etc.

BOX: THIS IS WHERE HE WAS.

15.

Closeup on the woman, looking around herself watchful and cautions as she wraps rags from the bedspread around herself in a makeshift halter and clout.

BOX: THIS IS WHAT HE DOES.

BOX: AND WHEN I DO THE THINGS HE DOES WE'LL BE TOGETHER..

16.

It's slightly later. The woman, in her rags, dirtier, limbs now noticeably scratched and bruised, is climbing up a derelict gangway.

(From this point the boxes are in normal style.)

BOX: (THAT'S HOW I THOUGHT, A BIG TIME AGO. I HAD AN IMAGE OF HIM IN MY HEAD. I COULD ALMOST SEE HIM IF I CLOSED MY EYES.)

BOX: (HE WAS LIKE ME BUT OTHER. FLESH THAT WASN'T OF MY FLESH. DIFFERENT IN A WAYS THAT I COULD FEEL SOMEWHERE DEEP INSIDE BUT COULD NOT NAME.)

BOX; (HE WAS LIKE A GOD. AND I WANTED HIM. AND I FOLLOWED HIM.)

17.

She's in a chamber, once an automated refectory, but turned into a kind of ritual temple with fetishes built from junk and technology, strange markings daubed on the walls. Lots of ritual markings and totem-offerings seem to be concentrated on one of the automated food units - obviously still working.

We're looking past the woman as she walks into all this.

BOX: (IT WAS AS THOUGH HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME, AROUND ME ALL THE TIME, BUT RUNNING AHEAD OF ME, ALWAYS AHEAD OF ME, ALWAYS OUT OF LINE-OF-SIGHT.)

BOX: (MAKING ME FOLLOW HIM. LEADING ME. SHOWING ME THE WORLD.)

18.

An expressive shot conveying that the woman has timidly touched the food dispenser and has lurched back in alarm as it activates. It's just at the point where she looks back, fear dissolving into puzzlement, as she sees that a wrapped package of food has been dispensed.

BOX: (SHOWING ME THE THINGS I NEEDED.)

19.

Bridging shot as the woman wanders watchfully through a darkened chamber, munching on what is obviously the packaged food (still in its packaging and she's eating that as well), pale light from a source in front of her giving her a lambent glow.

BOX: AND SOMETIMES

20.

Small shot, in the dark corridor, as the woman cautiously peers around a door from within which the light is coming.

BOX: WHEN I FOLLOWED HIM

21.

Tight closeup on the woman's face, bathed in this light, looking upward with wonder and childlike awe.

BOX: HE WOULD SHOW ME WONDERS.

Page Four

22.

Big, spectacular shot, taking up about two thirds of the page - and can we please make this the kicker of a turnover?

In the foreground, very small, the woman stands with her back to us on a sort of rock-outcrop analogous pile of junk, looking in wonder and awe at the scene beyond.

It's - all together now - a junk and technology strewn and cavernous chamber with long-dead, twisted and fossilised trees sprouting from the garbage; this was obviously, once, a kind of recreational park.

It's also an observation dome, through the glass of which we can see the view outside the ship.

This view fills most of the frame. It's an absolutely spectacular view of the stars.

23.

Sombre shot of the woman wandering towards us through a junk-strewn corridor. She's obviously older than when we saw her last; more dispirited, more resigned. We get the feeling that she has given up.

BOX: BUT THAT WAS A BIG TIME AGO. I KNOW I'LL NEVER SEE HIM, NOW. I NEEDED SOMETHING OTHER, SOMETHING ELSE, I NEEDED HIM SO BADLY THAT I JUST MADE HIM UP.

BOX: HE WAS IN MY HEAD AND NOWHERE ELSE. THERE'S ONLY ME.

BOX: JUST ME.

24.

Illustrative shot. The woman, now obviously in her thirties, is sitting by a hovel she has built in a chamber, tucking into some servo-provided food which she has cooked on a makeshift range. She wears scavenged rags and clothing, but these have now become fashioned and well-put together after years of self-learning and experience.

Details of the scene suggest that she has settled down here and that this is her home - something like a small croft farm. Fences and spikes to keep the arachnid things out, a water tank, a food store, personal belongings etc. See the stuff on the last page so that this location can be linked and recognisable.

At a knee is a mismatched sheaf of papers, obviously a journal of sorts that she is keeping.

BOX: SO I JUST STAY HERE NOW. I MADE THINGS TO KEEP THE EATING THINGS OUT AND I JUST STAY HERE.

BOX: SOMETIMES I MAKE LITTLE MARKS, THAT I MADE UP MYSELF, SO I CAN LOOK AT THEM AND REMEMBER THE THINGS I DID, THE THINGS I THOUGHT.

BOX: SO I CAN REMEMBER WHO I AM.

Page Five

25.

The woman - now in tough middle age - is wandering through a cavern-space in which we see an interesting engine-like construction. She carries a makeshift spear, a jag of metal tied to a steel pole with electrical flex, a water-bottle hanging at her hip etc. As ever, the ground is basically a wreckage of junk. The general impression is something like a bushman wandering the plain with Ayers Rock in the distance. A sense, simply, of just wandering.

BOX: BUT SOMETIMES, STILL, I HEAR HIM CALLING TO ME. I CATCH A GLIMPSE OF HIM, AND I HAVE TO GO AND I DON'T KNOW WHY.

BOX: I KNOW HE'S NOT THERE. I KNOW HE ISN'T. I HAVE TO FOLLOW AGAIN.

BOX: I HAVE TO BE SURE.

26.

In a junk-strewn chamber, the woman slips and falls, obviously injuring her leg badly and incapacitating herself.

BOX: I KNOW IT'S DANGEROUS.

WOMAN: AH!

27.

In the foreground the woman is trying to raise herself on an elbow, her other hand clutching her spear. We're looking past her as she stares in fear at arachnids who are appearing in the junk in the celebrated, menacing, one-by-one-by-one-we're-coming-to-get-you manner . . .

BOX: I FEEL TIRED AND WEAK ALL THE TIME NOW AND THE EATING THINGS ARE ALWAYS THERE.

BOX: BUT I HAVE TO DO IT. I HAVE TO FOLLOW.

28.

Horrible shot as the entire frenzied pack of arachnid things surge over the struggling body of the woman to tear her to pieces. We don't see much actual gore - just the horrific sense of something being smothered by a squirming mass of little monsters.

BOX: I HAVE TO GO.

29.

Tight closeup on the upturned, agonised face of the woman, mouth going slack and eyes rolling up in her head as she relaxes into death.

(The boxes in this sequence the thought-processes of the AI's that control the ship, directionless voices articulating the rebirth process. For the sake of clarity we'll tag them: COMPUTER.)

COMPUTER: Survivor is inviable.

30.

Largish spectacular shot. Lots of tentacle-like servo arms burst in from out of shot and blast several of the arachnid things, mowing them down in a spray of slime and scattering the rest.

The horribly injured body of the woman lies sprawled and obviously dead in the foreground.

COMPUTER: Neutralize extraneous biohazard factors.

31.

We're looking up and at an angle as several tentacle-servos gently gather the woman to them and lift her up. She hangs limply in them, obviously dead.

COMPUTER: Retrieve inert resources for recycling.

Page Six

32.

Closeup as the snout of a blaster-like tool cuts a diagonal swathe across the now-

naked dead woman's stomach, boiling off her tissues..

COMPUTER: Initiate biomass reclamation.

33.

A computer image, slightly grainy and staticy to indicate that the AI intelligence experiencing it is very old and very slightly malfunctioning - it's like a tape that's been recorded over too many times. The image shows a stylised DNA helix, a cluster of cells undergoing fission and a stylised graphic of a human figure slightly reminiscent of da Vinci's noted 'two men doing asynchronous star-jumps' without being too obvious about it.

The image as a whole looks bulging and slightly alien. There's a lot of wireframe vector-lines and text in the spidery and unreadable alien language we've seen throughout.

COMPUTER: Download DNA signature from colony data archives. Genotype: random. Phenotype: random.

COMPUTER: Gestate.

34.

Atmospheric, illustrative shot. A foetally-curved adolescent figure floats in amniotic fluid in a clear and womblike egg. Hardcore techno-stuff surrounds it, connected to the egg by organic-looking cables and tubes. The impression is of the egg buried in a churning, chaotic mass of alien technology.

COMPUTER: Download personality matrix.

COMPUTER: Data error 42.1. Key memory fields severely disrupted. Continue?

COMPUTER: Continue.

35.

Robotic servo arms place the foetally-curved adolescent human being on a floor. The background is dark and we can't make out any details.

COMPUTER: Decant.

36.

This is an almost exact reprise of the sequence that started this story. Closeup on a slim and naked man in semi-darkness, uncurling tentatively from a crouch as though waking up in a strange place. He's glancing about himself with uneasy caution.

MAN: UHN.

37.

Pull back and upward from the man as he climbs unsteadily to his feet, casting around with a hand and starting to become frightened. Peripheral indications of some of the stuff we'll see in the next frame, not enough to fix it, just enough to tie it in.

MAN: UH, HELLO, I . . .

MAN: HELLO?

38.

Pull right back and up. We see that we're in the cluttered space that the woman eventually made her home. Lots of shadows and menacing techno-environment forms.

The man stands in the partially destroyed and scattered remains of the hovel that the woman built - it's recognisable so we know where we are. Although containing differences, this frame is strongly reminiscent of the pertinent frame on the first page. The life cycle has come full circle and is starting again. (And the box is childlike.)

MAN: IS THERE ANYBODY THERE?

BOX: MY FIRST MEMORY IS OF WAKING.

END