

COOL CARGO

SCREENPLAY BY

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c.2015

ACT ONE -- THE TRIAL OF OVID

The screen is black.

A deep voice heavy with authority speaks.

VOICE

When did you first meet Ovid?

Cue music...I Just Dropped By To Say Hello-- Johnny Hartman

NOTE--The tune sets the tone. The crime of GALACTIC SLAVERY is lightened by the MUSIC OF LOVE. Our COOL CARGO is jazz musicians.

Screen clarifies to show.....

EXT. A RAINY NIGHT IN BROOKLYN

A neon sign displays a golden crescent moon. Blue script writing says CRESCENT LOUNGE. It's our shelter from the storm. In small green script the offer of LIVE MUSIC sweetens the deal. A limousine pulls up. A passenger exits the car and enters the restaurant.

INT. CRESCENT LOUNGE

P.O.V. Camera enters and walks thru this Bar-N-Grill. Not too shabby. To one side a long bar is flanked by booths. To the left is the dining room. A dozen cocktail tables with a handful of customers stand between us and the small stage where the piano is stationed. We walk straight to the piano.

We meet Tony Verona. He's in his 30's, handsome, and he sings and plays with style.

We see our hand, garishly bedecked with large rings, put \$20 into the snifter that is the tip jar on the piano. We speak. We are Ovid.

OVID

Play Stairway to the Stars.

Tony looks up and the camera reverses view. Ovid is a fancy dude. Short, dark, and fat, he sports more jewelry than most men would dare. His beard, mustach and dark glasses mask his features.

I am Tony. I am the witness.

INT. GRAND HALL OF SCALARIS--AFTERNOON

We are in a cavernous hall similar to a cathedral. The setting is grand in scale but stark with few refinements. Tony stands before the Throne. From the raised platform the King struts about as he conducts the Trial of Ovid.

KING LEGNAB

Tell us what happened next.

TONY

When I finished his request he urged me to take my break by bribing me with a brandy. We got to talking.....

INT. Crescent Lounge NIGHT

Tony's narrative sometimes intrudes on the film....

OVID

My name is Ovid. Does that name mean anything to you?

TONY-

Yes, Ovid, the Roman poet. He invented the romantic comedy.

OVID

Excellent! You are a true Renaissance Man, an artist and a scholar. Perhaps you would care to join me in this repast?

TONY--O.S.

Ovid made a sweeping hand motion indicating the sumptuous feast laid out across his table. An imperious wave brought forth another healthy pair of brandy snifters. How could I refuse?

KING LEGNAB O.S.

Get on with it! What about Ovid?

Suddenly we're back at Court.

The stomping of a staff stopped King Legnab short. We look up to the balcony where the Matriarchs are roosting like a clutch of vultures. One of them had slammed her staff to express her disapproval of Legnab's conduct. She wants the whole story. They are the judge and jury.

Ovid leans forward and tells Tony to continue.

Back to the Crescent Lounge. We see Tony and Ovid having a private party and hear Tony's narrative.

TONY--O.S.

Ovid conducted a conversation that developed into an interview. After we established my character to his satisfaction we went on to discuss worldly issues. History, politics, art, science, philosophy, all the academic clap-trap I'm so well versed on was rounded up, trotted out and worked into a good lather. We had fun fencing intellectually. Then Ovid got personal.

OVID

I know your type. You are an educated bum. Society has no use for you. You desire appreciation more than money and thus far you have neither.....

Ovid paused to puff his cigar and let his words sink in.

OVID

You are denied your proper audience because the music that you excel at is considered old fashioned in your country. However, in other countries around the world those romantic ballads are prized as timeless classics.....I am a talent scout seeking performers for a cruise ship. I want to offer you an open ended contract that includes a trip to the islands on a luxury liner; with gourmet meals, exotic locales, and a chance for exposure to a finer class of clientele than you will ever see in this dump. Leave this cold wet city behind and enjoy the finest vacation that money can buy while earning top dollars in a tropical paradise. You could be living a musicians dream.

TONY--O.S.

By that time we were working our way thru brandy and cigars. Then my boss, Marty, decided to interrupt us. He was a nasty runt. That night when I'd asked for my dinner early he said "Sing for your Supper".

MARTY

I came to call you for your dinner break but I see that you've already taken care of that.

Pause on that moment of tense faces. Tony's thoughts race.

TONY--O.S.

What a jerk. Now that the kitchen was closing Marty rudely offered the lousy burger and fries that he'd denied me earlier that night. Blame it on the brandy, but I was pissed off and I let him know it.

TONY

No thanks to you Marty. You still owe me dinner. I'll have it packed to go.

Marty's face contorts into the mug of an ugly clown. Only Ovid's presence kept his nasty temper in check. With a snide tone he said....

MARTY

Don't you think it's about time for you to get back to the piano?

TONY--O.S.

He was trying to piss me off and was doing a good job of it. I wasn't going to let Marty ruin my mood or my conclave with Ovid. I was about to tell him to BUZZ OFF when Ovid took control. He swiftly whipped out a \$100 bill, folded and held length-wise between his fingers. With a flourish he cut Marty short with cash.

OVID

I am paying for the young man's time as well as for his supper. I am sure Tony will favor us with more music after he has eaten his fill. I trust this is satisfactory with you.

With that last remark Ovid releases the \$100 and lets it flutter to the floor. His message is clear. Pick up the money and beat it. Marty drops his hostile eyes, mumbles-Yeah, O.K., picks up the bill and goes away.

OVID

Such an unpleasant man. Tony, I thank you for a fine evening. Soon I must be going. Now, please, play your last set. Leave this place in style. And think about my offer.

With that Ovid wraps a \$50 around his card and hands it to Tony. With hand gestures he urges Tony towards the stage.

TONY O.S. -- MUSICAL COLLAGE

My last night at the Crescent
Lounge was a rousing blast. My
spirits were high and my
performance was better for it. I
was through 'Bidin' My Time', I was
'Ridin' High'. 'Blue Skies' were
smiling at me. I had regained that
'Old Black Magic'. It was 'Almost
Like Being In Love.' It was great!

When I left the bar I passed a limousine at the corner.
Ovid called to me thru the open window.

OVID

Hello there Piano Man. Come here
for a moment. I want you to meet my
partner.

TONY O.S.

I stepped over to the limo with a
smile.

TONY

I want you to know that I'm sold on
your venture. I just need to wrap
up a few matters and I'm all yours.

OVID

You are all mine NOW!

Ovid sprays a gas into Tony's face. Instantly he goes numb.
The driver gets out and shoves Tony into the car. In seconds
they are gone.

BACK TO COURT

Legnab struts about the throne platform and addresses the
audience with dramatic flare and gestures.

LEGNAB

So, let us be clear. Ovid captured
you off a city street, cleanly.
There was no violence or alarm. He
had no reason to fear reprisal.

TONY

Yeah, well, he got lucky.

LEGNAB

What do you mean by that?

TONY

With that limousine, in that part of town, at that time of night, he's lucky he got out alive. There are roving gangs of bandits seeking targets constantly, everywhere. Robbery, kidnapping and car-jacking happen every day.

LEGNAB - WITH FLARE

So, you admit that your people are savages! Your society can barely control your animal impulses!

TONY -- WITH VEHEMENCE

That's a joke coming from you old man! You attacked me this morning when you lost your temper. You can't even handle a negotiation. To me you're a barbarian!

Lots of hubbub. The Matriarchs stamp their staffs. The Lords and Ladies mumble and grumble. Legnab's lackeys hop like toads on a hot skillet. The slaves, Ogres, and Manlings are shocked that a recruit has spoken against the Ventok King. The only one who's cool is Ovid. He's having a hard time hiding his smirk.

Tony senses his advantage and presses it. With drama and a booming voice he turns and addresses the crowd. Upstairs to the Matriarchs, downstairs to the Lords and Ladies, and straight at Legnab and his gang on the throne platform--

TONY

You have no idea who you're fooling with! You have angered a giant. Our people now know who you are... We'll be coming for you!

TOTAL PANDIMONIUM ===== END SCENE

RESUME--SAME SCENE MINUTES LATER

Trumpets blare calling for order.

From the balcony a Matriarch speaks.

MATRIARCH # 7

The witness will refrain from flamatory remarks. Advise him!

That instruction was aimed at Ovid.

OVID-SHOUTING

You asked for a witness. I told you that people from Earth are hostile and dangerous. If you can't face this single savage you should

(MORE)

OVID-SHOUTING (cont'd)
 withdraw to safer quarters. These
 are the recruits that confront the
 Ventok today.

Lots of grumbling all around. Soon they settle down.

 OVID
 Tony, tell the court about the
 Letter Police.

Tony hesitates just a moment as he gets Ovid's drift.

 TONY
 Oh, I get it. You mean, like, the
 F.B.I. And the C.I.A.

Ovid smiles, nods and encourages Tony to continue with a
 rolling-forward hand motion.

 TONY
 Then there's the D.E.A. And the
 A.T.F. The N.S.A. And the S.E.C.

Tony knows there are dozens of federal police agencies but
 he can't recall them at this moment. So he wings it.

 TONY
 We have the I.R.S., the N.F.L., and
 the N.B.A. There's A.B.C., C.B.S.,
 N.B.C., and P.M.S. There's the
 I.R.A., N.R.A., K.K.K., and N.A.A.C.P.

Tony pauses for breath and to assess the situation. So far,
 so good. Legnab is scrutinizing Tony's face for the truth.
 Luckily he's not watching Ovid, who's having a hard time
 stifling his laughter.

 TONY
 There's the D.O.D., the A.F.L., and
 the C.I.O. The C.E.O., Ph.D and the
 D.D.S. There's the N.Y.P.D.,
 L.A.P.D. and....

 LEGNAB
 Grah!! These words mean nothing!

Tony senses advantage and presses on. He acts with drama,
 knowing that this crucial moment will not come again. He
 gathers his wits and hits them with a list of names that are
 frightening by definition.

 TONY
 Then chew on this! We have the
 Secret Service and Treasury Agents.
 Federal Marshals and the National
 Guard. State Troopers, County
 (MORE)

TONY (cont'd)

Sheriffs, and local Police Forces in every city and town around the world. Of particular interest to you is the Military. Many countries are at war. The Army and Navy are constantly on alert. And the Air Force has a special branch that's coordinated with the Space Program whose sole purpose is searching for ALIENS LIKE YOU! Earth is protected by Electronic Surveillance, Orbiting Satellites, Rockets, Missiles, Lasers, Proton Beams, and Secret Weapons that we don't even know about....Frankly, I don't know how Ovid managed to escape Earth.

General hubbub. Legnab's lackeys buzz about him like a swarm of bees, each vying for his attention. The Lords and Ladies argue with each other. They are divided into factions. Their opinions of Tony's testimony are tainted by their loyalties. The Matriarchs sternly reprove each other as to what their proper response should be. The servants are stone faced and silent, they know their place. Ovid alone is smug, satisfied and amused. He knew that Tony's testimony would upset the Ventok hierarchy.

In an attempt to regain control of the situation Legnab's lackeys launch an attack.

ADV # 3

Enough speculation! Stick to the facts. What else happened with Ovid?

TONY

When I awoke I was bound and gagged curled up on the floor of the limo. Ovid was eating my take-out dinner. I struggled testing my bonds and Ovid ...

INT. LIMO NIGHT

OVID

Ah, I see that you are back with us. I trust you are not overly distressed by your rough treatment. We have no time for amenities....

TONY O.S.

Ovid finished my meal, licked his fingers and fired up a cigar. He seemed like a purring fat cat, glowing with pride and gloating over his success.

OID

I enjoyed our discussion earlier so
I decided we should continue, after
a fashion.

Ovid made a vague motion towards himself indicating that
Tony is gagged.

OID

Tonight you have assisted me in the
completion of a difficult task. I
want to share my pleasure of
achievement with you.....Young man,
I like you. More importantly I
believe that you are an artist and
an asset to me and my people. Due
to these facts I will explain what
it is you've gotten yourself
into.....It's true that I am a
talent scout. I have the greatest
job in the world. Like an art or
food critic I scour the globe
seeking the finest goods that money
can buy. In my case the merchandise
is personnel. I recruit qualified
candidates to fill various
positions in foreign lands.
However, I do not hire people for
wages. Instead, I steal them.
.....I am in a very old fashioned
business. My people believe in
service and loyalty. Our's is a
normal, natural, time honored
enterprise. Throughout history we
have offered full employment and
complete job security as we utilize
people to the best of their
abilities. We call it servitude.
You call it slavery.....I realize
that slavery seems barbaric to you.
Do not condemn the old ways so
easily. Without slavery there would
be no Egypt, Greece or Rome.
Slavery is the foundation of
civilization. The world as we know
it was built by slaves.....Let us
not fool ourselves. Today the
system is wage slavery. The result
is more starving peasants than ever
before. Is that progress? How many
of those wretched billions would
gladly trade the illusion of
freedom for steady work and daily
bread?.....

Back to court as Legnab loses his patience.

LEGNAB

Baah!! I don't care what Ovid said.
I want to know what he did!

The Matriarchs stamp their staffs repeatedly marking their disapproval. That costs Legnab control of the debate. He retires to the throne, his advisors hover about fawning and whispering suggestions. Ovid steps forward.

OVID

Tony, when did you first meet
Legnab?

Tony locks eyes with Ovid. Notions and emotions cross their faces. Then a clarity and agreement. They need each other.

Now with his back to the Throne Tony faces the Lords and Ladies of Scalaris. Hundreds of people fill the hall. Their opinions weight heavily on the outcome of this trial.

TONY

I met Legnab yesterday. We were in
the clinic recuperating from your
hibernation technique when the Dr..

INT. CLINIC A LARGE ROOM WITH 12 COTS.

A dozen zombie patients mill about trying to get their balance. They are tended to by 2 dozen wee people. These pygmies are assisting our men who tetter-totter like toys.

Then the Dr takes charge. He looks and acts familiar. He should. He was born in India and trained in the States. The Dr. brings Tony to his office. There he gives him shots of drugs followed by an electric shock. Tony is jolted into awareness. Then the Dr. coaxes Tony to full conciousness.

DOC

Easy. Easy now. You are going to be
alright. Don't try to talk.....
I am Dr. Patel. I will examine you
and answer your questions. Try to
relax, you've got a big day ahead
of you.

As Doc does his exam as he answers the obvious questions.

DOC

Yes, you have been abducted by
aliens. That's hard to believe but
it's true. I know how you feel
because that's what happened to me
many years ago....This planet is
Scalaris. Our town is called the
Depot. It's the only city in this
colony..... Ventok are a strange
people. They are so aggressive that
their population barely grows.

(MORE)

DOC (cont'd)

They've been here for thousands of years and the planets population is stagnant at about 100,000..... I've heard that you're Ovid's gold. He chose your people for their fine talents. Like he did with me. My medical team was hired by Ovid and abducted by him when he was new to Earth...

TONY O.S.

Doc's story... was like mine. Ovid swayed him with an offer. He stepped that way, and woke up as a popcicle.

Back to court. Legnab could no longer speak so his minions did it for him. His band of advisors broke in whenever they could find an opening to Ovid's arguements. Like now.

ADV # 1

The witness will stick to the subject! The subject is Legnab.

Ovid locks eyes with Tony for a moment and sends him a facial message. Tony reads him loud and clear. Fuck him.

OVID

So you met Legnab...

TONY

So, the Doc finishes with me.....

INT. DR. OFFICE

DOC

Hold still. I'm riveting a translator-earring onto your ear. This earring marks you as a slave of high standing, like a trustee in a prison. Like me. It shows that you are important enough for the Ventok to care that you understand each other.

Doc has the same earring. Then he calls to the Ogre.

DOC

Take him straight to King Legnab. He is in your charge.

A giant steps out of the gloom. He's the biggest man Tony has ever seen. Over seven feet tall and built like a tank, this Man-Mountain is another slave species totally dominated by the Ventok. He too has a translator earring. He grunts

and Tony's earring says "Follow me." They march thru the castle to the Grand Hall....Where we're now gathered a day later. A few others of his kind are stationed around the chamber.

TONY

Legnab was alone, sitting on the throne. Except for two of those dog-men guards. What do you call them? Manlings?

Tony points at the beasts. Baboons with clothes and spears. Dozens of them were on duty at the doors, always in pairs.

OVID

Let's stay on focus. Tony, how did Legnab greet you?

Same place, one day ago. Tony stands before the Throne. The King looks like Ovid except he's a generation older and fatter. He's wearing his 'Hobo Cloak'. Ragged patches of leather, fur and wool are overlaid on a shawl-type affair. That builds a raised collar emphasizing his size and shoulders like a football player in uniform. Fashion is not a Ventok strong-point.

There is one dazzling object in the room. The King holds the Royal Scepter, an elegant yard long sculpture of jewelry. A tapered golden staff is capped by an ornate crown studded with large gemstones that flash brilliant colors.

TONY O.S.

At first he ignored me. He was shuffling thru papers, written by you, about me and the rest of your captives. Then....

LEGNAB

Tony Verona- Painting Visions of Romance with Music. Damn, that is a great claim to fame. My nephew said that you have 'Star Quality'. I thought that I might be taking a personal interest in you, but I didn't think that I'd be working tonight.

TONY O.S.

His Manlings were snarling at me. Legnab taunted me with that threat while he decided what to do.

LEGNAB

Can you really sing and play with style? Ovid says you and the others are exactly what I need to enhance my enterprises. Gourmet chefs,

(MORE)

LEGNAB (cont'd)

dancing girls, and musicians who are adept at the music of love. If this is true we need to talk. If not, you are going to the mines.

Legnab put down the papers and gave his attention to the next item, which was a Cuban cigar. He clumsily fumbled with the wrapper and bit off the tip. His face shows distaste. When he fires it up he chokes on the smoke. Tony laughs. Legnab warns him with his eyes, nobody laughs at the King. Once he got the cigar going right he gave Tony a nod, a wink and a gesture showing he'd learned the pleasure involved.

LEGNAB

I never thought my sister's boy was all that bright but he knew what he was doing when he sent me this. Perhaps he was right about you and your people too.

The King pondered then acted. A gesture brought a servant out of the gloom that surrounds the throne platform.

LEGNAB

Get him a set-up.

Quickly a small table and chair were brought by a slave girl along with a wine bottle and glass.

LEGNAB

Sit down. Pour yourself a drink.

Legnab motions a toast and empties his drink. Tony does the same. Then Legnab issues another command.

LEGNAB

I'm way ahead of you boy, and I don't like to drink alone. Have another.

Tony obeys. Now bathed in the glow of their mutual intoxication Legnab presses Tony into his service.

LEGNAB

According to Ovid you and your crew are worth your weight in gold. He'd better be right, you've already cost me a fortune.....
Ovid claims that a new age of prosperity will shower our kingdom brought by your people and their 'Talents'. I'll believe that when I see it.... What is it that you do that's so special?

TONY

I play piano and sing.

LEGNAB

Well, you better be damn good at it!

Legnab used his smoking ruse to keep Tony dangling.

LEGNAB

Ovid says that I could expect trouble from your people. He says you are 'modern and sophisticated.' What does that mean? You don't look dangerous to me.

TONY

I had a rough day. Try me tomorrow.

LEGNAB

Don't sass me boy! Your kind are like animals. You've always been our slaves and always will be so! Make no mistake, you will serve us or you will be broken! Tell that to the rest of your people..... Ovid says you're the brains of this bunch. I appoint you their Boss. You are responsible for their actions. Counsel them. I'm sure you don't them to suffer..... We're going to try it the easy way. Tomorrow you will organize the crew. You'll report to me daily. We'll see how valuable your people are..... Coercion comes in many forms. Loyalty to one's people often demands sacrifice. I assure you that without your cooperation I'll trash this 'Entertainment' concept. The men will be sent to the mines and the women will be sold as sex slaves..... Tonight you are my guest. Enjoy my hospitality. Consider my commands. After a good nights sleep you'll see that your life here can be rewarding..Think it over Piano Man.

With that Legnab motions the Ogre. He steps out of the gloom and ushers Tony away.

BACK TO COURT

ADV # 5

So, you admit that Legnab treated you fairly.

Tony is fed up with the tactics of Legnab's lackeys. He snaps back.

TONY

Do you want to hear me out or not!

At first the Ogre seems pleased, then his face turns dark and suspicious.

OGRE
What does it mean?

TONY
It's a strong name. Where I come
from we have weapons....

Scene con't as we tour the castle.....

TONY O.S.
So I spent the rest of our walk
explaining all about bullets, guns
and ammo. The Ogre was fascinated.
He's pretty smart, he learns fast.

BACK TO COURT

ADV # 4
Are you saying that you educated an
Ogre?

TONY
Yes. Just as I'm educating you now.

Tony's comparison of the Ogre's intellect to ADV # 4 wasn't lost on the crowd. Titters of laughter go around the hall. This is scandalous. The Matriarchs stamp their staffs calling for order. Too bad for them most Ventok are less formal and have a better sense of humor. Ridiculing the Elite is one of the ways the Nobility is kept in check. Another round of blaring trumpets is required to calm the crowd. Eventually the court resumes.

OVID
Tony, how did the evening end.

TONY
We went to my private quarters.
Because I was Boss I had to live
apart from the other captives. The
price of promotion was separation
from my people.

OVID
How were your accomodations?

TONY
Pretty shabby, but I've had worse.

OVID
Is there anything you'd like to
add?

TONY
Yes. A short time later....

INT. TONY'S ROOM

There's a tapping at the door. A plump young girl bearing a picnic basket shyly creeps into the room. She has bread and cheese, fruit and wine....

TONY O.S.

She gave me a sweet smile as she placed the basket on the table. With an impish grin she pulled a string and her garment dropped to the floor. She was naked and voluptuous. I was tempted but this is war.....Morale is important in any conflict. I'm fighting for my life and my fellow captives. I won't be seduced to accept slavery. So I stopped, thought, and acted.

TONY

Hold it right there sweetheart. You look like a nice kid but I don't need the Boss's handouts. Leave the goods, grab your robe, and get the hell out of here.....

She was hurt, angry and confused. In a moment she was gone.

BACK TO COURT

OVID

So, you refused Legnab's bribe of the slave girl.

TONY

Threats and bribes are all Legnab gave me. He may be King around here but he couldn't run a pop stand back home.

OVID

Tony, I am the only living Ventok who has been to Earth. Tell the court how you compare our kingdom to your planet.

TONY

You have got to be joking.

OVID

No. Seriously, contrast and compare our two worlds.

TONY

O.K. You're like a flea to a bull. This entire kingdom would get lost in Brooklyn. You're hardly worth marking on a map.

OVID -- WITH MOCK OUTRAGE
 How dare you belittle our country!
 There are over 100,000 people on
 this planet!!

TONY -- ACTING BACK AT HIM
 Ovid, you know damn well more than
 Seven Billion People live on Earth!
 When my people get here we won't
 need the army! We'll just walk
 right over you!!

PANDEMONIUM --- Blaring trumpets can't quiet the crowd.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO -- POWER AND WISDOM

INT. MATRIARCH'S CHAMBERS

The old crone sits on a modest throne that dominates the room.

MATRIARCH # 1
 What the hell is the problem with
 you boys?! Today should have been a
 glorious celebration. Instead it's
 a disaster. You have made a mockery
 of our traditions. How do you
 account for yourselves?

Both Legnab and Ovid try to outshout each other.

1
 Silence!!!.....

The old woman can't decide who she's more angry at. She starts with Ovid.

1
 Ovid, why did you demand a formal
 hearing?

OVID

After a lifetime of service I've
 returned from my mission with a
 bounty of live cargo. Legnab has
 tried to steal my wealth and glory.
 He belittles my achievements while
 he conspires with his 'King's
 Cabal' to take my property as his
 own. My Lady, I swear, if he were
 not my kinsmen I'd kill him where
 he stands.

1

We'll have no more talk like that!
 We will settle this in a civilized
 manner, or I will have the Ogre
 break both your necks!!.....Legnab,
 what do you say?

LEGNAB

After a lifetime of service Ovid
 returns with a handful of slaves
 and calls himself a hero. We sent
 ships capable of transporting 500
 captives. He brought 50. My tally
 makes his mission a dismal failure.

1

Ovid, why weren't the ships full?

OVID

Those ships were full! I determined
 that the number of captives that
 could be caught, transported and
 exported in a day was 25. Fifty
 people were poached from Earth in
 two days before their authorities
 could react. Otherwise, they would
 have captured me.

1

Why such small numbers?

OVID

Because people on Earth are
 dangerous. You heard the witness.

1

I heard him. I don't believe him..
 You there, step forward.

The Ogre, Bullits, grabs Tony by the scruff of his neck and
 propels him forward with force.

1

You've caused too much trouble.
 Perhaps I should have the Ogre
 break Your neck now and be done
 with you..... There was incident
 earlier this morning. Exactly what
 happened?

TONY

Well,...

INT. MESS HALL

MORNING

The mess hall is a large room with long tables flanked by
 hardwood chairs. At the far end a service counter is manned
 by slaves. Another Ogre is in charge. Manling guards are
 stationed at each end of the service counter and at the

doors. Two dozen captives are awaiting Tony's arrival. They are divided in half by sex.

Tony goes to greet the nearest group, the women. Before he gets to ask 'How are you?' the Ogre shouts, "Silence." Tony gives him a dirty look, then goes to the head of the crowd.

Tony leads the men as they shuffle along the line. Each are doled out a bowl, a chunk of bread, and a lump of brown mush that looks and smells like dog food.

TONY O.S.

I realized that last night's feast was a bribe for me alone. I felt a bit guilty and wondered if my fellow prisoners had similar garbage for dinner. The hash breakfast triggered my simmering anger. I decided I'd express it.

Tony brews a plot as they shuffle on. When he reaches his position at the head of a table he stands in place. As the next man arrives, Slim, Tony taps his leg with his lowered left hand. Tony gives him a wink, then expressively re-adjusts his stance to snap to 'Attention'. Slim got the message and passed it down the line. As the other men lined up across the table they got the message. They stood at 'Attention'. When the women took their places at the next table and saw all of us standing at 'Attention' they got the message and followed suit.

1 O.S.

What is this message?

TONY O.S.

Get ready.

Tony holds the tension for a moment. Then he announces..

TONY

'Atten-tion!'

With dramatic display he raises his bowl in his hand. With some ceremony he shouts...

TONY

Ready, Aim, Fire! Gerronimo!!!

Then TONY spins on his heel and launches the bowl of slop at the wall behind him. A garbage parfait splashes the wall and makes an ugly display.

TONY

I said Gerronimo!!!

The gang swings into action and a food riot ensues. Wham, bam, splat, food goes flying in all directions across the room.

Before the jailors can react Tony grabs a chair and raises it as a weapon.

TONY

Protect the women!

TONY shouts as he takes position. The men all follow Tony's lead. They surround the women and reverse the chairs, jabbing the legs at the Ogres and Manlings. The women join the riot. It was great!

Just as the fight seemed about to explode Bullits steps forward and takes control. It's obvious that he has orders. 'Don't damage the merchandise!' He bunts the other Ogre from killing Tony as he barks orders at the Manlings to hold their positions. It takes some time until things calm down.

BACK TO # 1'S CHAMBERS

1

So, you admit that you started the food riot!

TONY

You're damn right Lady! Your people put me in charge of my people. We don't eat garbage!

1

I see. I admire your loyalty. You care for your people. Then what happened?

TONY

Bullits took charge. He ordered the other Ogre and Manlings to herd my people to their quarters. Then he dragged me away to face Legnab....

INT. GRAND HALL--MORNING

Legnab sits slumped on the Throne showing signs of a serious hang-over. His mood is surly and amused. He's determined to take charge of his latest recruit. His Manlings stand between Tony and Legnab, snarling with intent.

Legnab's aide stands beside him whispering into his ear. Legnab waves him off. He needs no advice.

LEGNAB

Boy, you seem to be more trouble than you are worth. Tell me why I shouldn't kill you now.

TONY

You ordered me to be Boss of my people. We don't eat garbage. Treat us right and I'll help you.

LEGNAB

You will do as you are told! Slaves must know their place! Don't sass me boy!

Tony starts to reply when he gets a nasty surprise. Legnab posts the Royal Scepter forward. A jewel on the crown fires an electric bolt that grips Tony. He thrashes about doing a jagged clown dance while all his nerves are being jangled. Seconds later he is released. Tony collapses in a heap. With a dismissive motion Legnab orders Bullits to take Tony away.

BACK TO # 1 CHAMBERS

1

Legnab, is this true? You appointed this man to be Boss of the new recruits. At the first sign of trouble you chose to use force instead of reason. That's poor form and unworthy of a king.

LEGNAB

My Lady, he is only a slave.

1

And you are only a king! A wise man rules willing subjects... You there, Tony, this what you recall?

TONY

Yes Ma'am.

Tony knows when to shut up.

1

Ovid, this was your mission. Tell me why there are only 50 captives.

OVID

Earth has Police, everywhere. When crimes are committed they go to work. From the moment I made my first overt move, kidnapping, I became a criminal hunted around the world. In my case things were worse. I was famous. The Alien Hunters had been after me ever

(MORE)

OVID (cont'd)
since I captured the Dr. and
medical crew all those years ago.

1

Yes Ovid. And we never got to thank
you properly for that service. The
health and wealth of our slave
population has vastly improved...
You hand picked those recruits, is
that correct?

OVID

Yes Ma'am. They were professionals.

1

And you hand picked this bunch.

OVID

Yes Ma'am. These are professionals.
Trade is now of primary importance.
These Performers will entertain our
customers during their stay on
Scalaris. They will make our Trade
Fair a memorable event. From here
ships go in all directions. Our
clients will tell tales of our
hospitality on many worlds. We'll
be famous as the 'Gateway to the
Frontier'. Conquerors and Pioneers
will flock to our shores. The
future of the frontier is ours.

1

You're saying that we can transform
our trade fair from a once in a
lifetime event into an experience
that lasts a lifetime. I like the
sound of that.

OVID

That's exactly what I'm saying. A
visit to Scalaris will be a memory
that won't be forgotten. Unborn
generations will know of the Golden
Planet where they all got their
start. Where their mothers met
their fathers and launched their
new lives. Ventok on the frontier
will never see the homeworld. For
them we are the center of
civilization.

1

You sound ambitious. Are you
suggesting that we take control of
the frontier?

OVID

Not at all. We are a small colony on the fringes of the frontier. We cannot and should not try to dominate the new worlds. Instead we must use trade to contain their ambitions and use culture to soften the hard edges of Ventok nature. We need to avoid the obvious danger. We could be conquered by any major expedition that chooses to do so. We host these forces. We'll guard against aggression by making us too valuable to all Ventok to allow any one fleet to dominate us. Divide and conquer, that is how we will prosper in these perilous times.

1

This plan sounds very fanciful.

OVID

Lady, I have studied the humans for a lifetime. They have made this plan work hundreds of times over thousands of years. It's a science.

1

I am concerned that the traffic to Scalaris has become overwhelming. We live in isolation that is occasionally broken by the arrival of Ventok in force. I do not trust Conquerors and Pioneers. When they leave I feel relieved.

OVID

As well you should. When I left here 30 years ago I warned Legnab that he was opening our doors to treachery from other Ventok. He denied the danger. He ignored my warnings. We became enemies. Legnab used his position as King to force me to make my mission to Earth. He didn't send me off to succeed, he sent me off to fail. No expeditions had returned from Earth in more than a century. He wanted to get rid of me. I accepted the mission, knowing it was my destiny.

1

I was there. I remember that day.

OID

Then you also remember my speech.
I would go to Earth and return with
live cargo. Furthermore I would
solve the mystery of our missing
missions. Now we know, our previous
expeditions reached Earth where
they were killed by the natives. I
know that for a fact because they
nearly got me. I used every trick I
could find to evade capture. The
Police are relentless.

1

Ovid, I'm inclined to give you a
chance to, how did you say, 'Dazzle'
me with these 'Talents'. What
support do you need?

OID

I need total control of my
recruits. Their food, lodging, and
rooms for rehearsals. I'll also
need the Grand Hall.

LEGNAB

The Hell you do!!! That is where
the King does his business!

OID

That is where the Business of the
Kingdom is conducted. The Trade
Fair is the Business of the
Kingdom. The Grand Hall is the only
chamber we have that is suitable as
a concert hall. It can hold 100's
of people. I need that hall.

1

And you shall have it. Legnab, you
will grant Ovid a free hand. The
Grand Hall is at his disposal. We
will have no more disagreements.
Dismissed.

EXT. OVID'S CORNER TERRACE -- LATE AFTERNOON

The view is magnificent. From the fourth floor of the castle
the picturesque town cascades down rugged hills to the sea.
Mountains meet the shore as the narrow coastline stretches
off into the distance. Bays, reefs and islands dot the
seascape on out to the horizon.

OID

I always knew I never could trust
Legnab. When he challenged me to
make my mission to Earth it was a
death sentence. If I refused I'd

(MORE)

OID (cont'd)

look weak. If I accepted he'd be rid of me forever. But he was wrong. You and your people are the proof of my success.....And I want to thank you for your support today. You were an excellent witness.

TONY

I chose the lesser of two evils. Legnab showed me his nature..... I haven't forgotten your crimes, but I see that our futures are linked..... You gave me a job. I'd like to get on with it. I want to see my people.

OID

Of course. But first, let us toast our victory. You should be proud of yourself. You've improved the status of your people. At this moment they are being settled in their new improved quarters. As are you.....Today you helped me certify that I am a hero to the Ventok. As far as I'm concerned, you are a hero to your people. I need you to brace them for the trials to come.

TONY

Now what? Whips and chains?

OID

No Tony. We need them to produce the performance of a lifetime. I bet everything on you people. We must dazzle and amaze our audience. We must conquer our clients with culture.

TONY

You're asking for a lot. All I see is an antique kingdom where slaves support an ignorant elite. You have no machinery, electricity or manufactured goods. Coming here is like a visit to the Dark Ages. How can we change that?

OID

I know you can enlighten my people. You've already done that for me. Ventok are secretive, we do not freely communicate. When I went to

(MORE)

OID (cont'd)

Earth I was educated by radio and T.V. Before I understood your languages your music touched my soul. I realized that my people have become primitive due to our isolation and lack of communication. We Ventok think we are the peak of creation. Evolution goes both ways; in business, society, politics, species, everything. Ventok see these changes as random events. The idea of using cultural influence as a force to guide society is foreign to Ventok thinking. We both know better.

TONY

Ovid, this is vaguely interesting, but I couldn't care less. I want to see my people. Now.

OID

Yes my friend. I want you to bond with them. Tell them you have secured them a privileged position on our world. They will be pampered as long as they do my bidding. Make it clear, I won't tolerate trouble.

INT. --RECRUITS QUARTERS--DUSK

TONY IS GREETED WITH JOY

Our Earthlings are overjoyed that Tony is alive. Hugs and kisses go all around. They thought Tony was Dead Meat when Bullits dragged him away. After intros they get serious.

TONY

I made a deal with Ovid. They'll treat us right if we perform.

Grumbles go throughout the crowd.

TONY

Look, we're all angry about our kidnapping. But that's old news. We must adapt. Our situation is desperate.

Grumble, Grumble.Rat...Traitor...etc.

TONY

Listen, they made threats and bribes. It's a sweet life or we are condemned. If we don't play our men will die in the mines while our

(MORE)

TONY (cont'd)

women are sold as sex slaves.....
I did the best I could, and I did
well. Our food riot is a victory.
They know they can't crap on us.
I've talked to their bosses.
They're fighting over us. We're the
hottest property on the planet.

SLIM

I ain't nobody's property! I say
they can all go to Hell!

TONY

Look man, I feel like you, but it's
not my call. Legnab told me that if
I don't play he'll cancel the
program. I won't condemn our
people. You do what you want. I'm
responsible for all of us, not just
myself.

Grumbling grows into a vociferous argument in several
languages. In the mix Nicole shouts....

NICOLE

Nobodies whoring me out!

A riot is brewing. Tony regains control of the situation
using a ruse.

TONY

Hold it! I'm getting a message.

Tony grabs and displays his earring. He makes hand motions.
Shush, he points his finger at his ear then up and all
around. He fools his group, or does he, into thinking his
earring is wired.

A sudden silence falls upon the gang. This alerts Bullits,
who's standing guard just outside the door. He bursts in.
For all he knows Tony's people just jumped him. Our gang
freezes facing the Ogre.

Tony takes charge. He spins on his heel and faces the giant
with his palms upraised.

TONY

Easy big guy. It's just a friendly
discussion. Give us another few
minutes.

The gang is shocked that the Ogre obeys Tony. That means
more than words can say. Tony uses that power to cut to the
chase. He motions Nicole to step forward, then close enough
to whisper.

TONY

Help me babe. Work with me. No matter what we do we'll have to sing for our supper.....

NICOLE

Tony's right. What we do is sing and play. They want us so bad they traveled thru space to steal us.... They chose Tony as our Boss.... We've got to stick together....

TONY

Tomorrow we're building a show. Anyone who refuses to play does so at their own risk. Work with me and we'll be O.K. Otherwise, you lose.. Class dismissed!....Bullits, take me home.

INT. CASTLE CORRIDORS

As we walk Tony mumbles, 'Idiots.' He's upset that half his people were against him. He mulls that over as Bullits leads him to his new quarters. It's clearly an upgrade to first class as marble replaces granite as the stone of choice. They arrive.

Bullits ushers Tony into his new digs. It's a palace. Four large rooms with tall ceilings, a Roman bath, and a wrap around terrace viewing the sea. It's the finest apartment TONY has ever had. Ovid was doing his best to buy Tony, and doing a damn good job. A fruit bowl with wine, bread and cheese awaits on the table. There's a note.

OVID - NOTE

Tony. We make a great team. Work with me and we will produce the greatest show this world has ever seen. Fame and fortune are ours. Tomorrow we will 'Break a Leg'. Sleep tight. Ovid

TONY is elated about the days events.

TONY

Hey Bullits, how about a drink.

Bullits gives Tony a dead-pan face that says that Tony is an idiot. Everybody knows Ogres don't drink. Nobody can handle a drunken Ogre. He takes some food.

Bullits stations himself in the foyer and settles down for the night. We drift off to Dreamland.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE COOL CARGO

INT. MESS HALL -- MORNING

The mess hall is being converted into a music hall. Stages are built at all corners of the room. The room is crowded. Ovid abducted another two dozen recruits from Las Vegas the same way he hit New York, like a Blitzkrieg. In and out in one day with live musicians that he labeled COOL CARGO.

Tony looks the new crew over. Chorus girls, a big band, and four guys who aren't musicians. Tony can tell at a glance. They are gangsters.

Ovid took command the moment he entered the hall. With a few words and hand motions he ordered the Ogres to get the Manlings to snap into action. Construction crews were rounded up and sent packing. Ovid mounts the Grand Stage and addresses his troops.

OVID

You all know me. You all agreed to work for me in a foriegn country. Here we are. Welcome to Scalaris... I know you're upset about the rough manner of your transport. That's all over now. Your new lives begin today.....I've negotiated terms with Tony Verona on your behalf....

TONY O.S.

As Ovid proudly extolls the virtues of the deal there's an undercurrent of dissent murmured through the crowd. Ovid squelched these objections. With a change of tone he singles out the vocal troublemakers by pointing and speaking at them as if they were accused of crimes. The penalties are severe. Angry inductees dropped their livid eyes as potential sentences of flogging, hard labor, and sexual slavery were pronounced. They are subdued.... We go to work.

Ovid is an excellent manager. He's educated and enthusiastic about the culture of nightlife. He organizes his troupes. Before noon the Big Band supports Chorus Girls kicking up dust in the center of the room. The Flamenco Group and the Bossa Nova Band play in opposite corners. In another corner the Shimmerlings, a trio of lady singers, are doing their gig with a small combo. Tony, Nicole and a baby grand piano fill the last small stage. They have their instructions. They need to fill the room with 'LOVE'.

On Scalaris siestas are required. Blazing sunlight forces Ovid to call for a break.

OVID

Now, Listen Up! You were recruited for your talents, not the lousy ass dragging I've seen today. This show needs to be a success. I've bet Your lives on it. Don't let me down..... I treat my people right. As of now your quarters have been upgraded. And this is how I feed my people.

Slaves bearing trays of delectable delights go about the room. Wine is served. Our recruits total a party of 50. It's a hardy-party. Ovid sticks around for an hour, talking to his people.

OVID

Remember, we're in this together.... I'm your Patron. Work with me..... You'll be famous on dozens of worlds. That's Real Stardom.

He's kind and generous, displaying his charm which reminds them why they agreed to join him in New York and Las Vegas.

Ovid corners Tony. His face and hands demand a response. Tony must admit that Ovid has made amends for the food riot. Tony grudgingly gives Ovid a smile, nod and wink. Deal done.

Ovid addresses his troops.

OVID

I grant you the rest of the day off. I offer the assistance of my nephew, Ralgez, as your tour guide and assistant. He will see to your every need..... Tomorrow we work in earnest. We have a deadline.Tony, you're with me.

With that commanding note Ovid swaggers out. Tony turns to his people.

TONY

Be cool guys. We'll work this out. I'll see you in the morning.

Ralgez is a skinny kid who's eager to please. He's excited to be part of the show. We leave as our gang surrounds him firing questions from all sides. We hear...

RALGEZ

Yes, anything you want. First we'll see your new quarters. Then we'll walk along the sea cliffs. Scalaris is a beautiful country.....

EXT. OVID'S TERRACE--SUNSET

Ovid and Tony have a private party, similar to their night in Brooklyn. Slaves serve a feast as Ovid lectures Tony about their reality on Scalaris.

OVID

We live in dynamic times. Ventok everywhere know about Scalaris. Our trading post is famous to Pioneers and Conquerors. We are being overwhelmed with trade..... We are best known for our live cargo. Herds of sheep and goats, flocks of chickens and ducks, pigs, burros, and human slaves to tend them.....And of course our women. Slave women are highly prized by Pioneers. And Ventok maidens are bartered by the Matriarchs. Like pets in a shop.... Legnab and I are natural enemies. It's nothing personal. Only one man can be king..... Legnab rules because his 'King's Cabal' supports him. They've been robbing the country for years. Their control of foriegn trade allows City Barons to swindle Country Squires. The Lords and Ladies are on the verge of war. You saw them at the hearing. They're all against Legnab. The future of Scalaris is at stake.

Ovid pauses with his cigar, drawing Tony into his plot.

OVID

This Trade Fair will decide our fates. I need you to marshal our crew and get them to put out the performance of a lifetime. No half measures Tony. I'll use a whip if I have to. I want to feel the Love. They've got to play with 'Heart and Soul'. We must 'Conquer' our audience. They must be 'Dazzled and Amazed', or we fail.

TONY

I care about my people! How will you protect them against Ventok!? Legnab, the King's Cabal, Old # 1, the traders and pioneers, we're all just merchandise to you. I won't fight for my enemies. When this party is over my people will be sold by the pound.

OVID

No Tony, I assure you. You heard the Matriarch. You all are in my care. I won't let you go.

TONY

And if she changes her mind you won't be able to stop her. That's not good enough.

OVID

It's the best you've got. Legnab wants you to fail. He will do anything, pull any trick, use anyone to ruin you, and thereby me. You are a pawn in a dangerous game. Recognize our reality.

TONY

My reality is that we are victims of alien gangsters who are at war. You deserve each other. Back home when one gang wipes out another it's just a day's news. Nobody cares.

OVID

Well you'd better, Bucko. Your life is on the line. Legnab will never forgive you for his humiliation yesterday. You made him and his cohorts look foolish in public. They will find a way to make you pay. I know them, they are vicious.

TONY

O.K. Chief. You wanted me, you got me, and now you're stuck with me. What do you want me to do?

OVID

I want you to lead by example. Give me your best performance. Show our music crew that singing for their supper is the right and proper thing to do. I need you to do this. Now! TONIGHT!

INT. GRAND HALL--EVENING

The Grand Hall has fine acoustics. It's been redecorated along the lines of a nightclub. Dozens of tables with chairs are spread before the stage where the Throne was yesterday. Each table has a sphere the size of a grapefruit emitting a soft golden glow. These globes broadcast Tony's music. The lights are low. No attempt has been made to attract an audience. Tony is on his own.

Tony's hands and fingers haven't danced since he was frozen. He warms up, then jumps with 'Honeysuckle Rose' and a few other lively dance tunes. He plays with gusto and the music reverberates throughout the castle. A handful of curious Ventok venture by. Tony invites them to join him and sit anywhere. Now that he has an audience he gets his act in high gear. He pours out his Heart and Soul and captures the crowd, which grows by the minute.

INT. CREWS QUARTERS

The improved crews quarters are comfortable. Music from The Grand Hall reverberates throughout the castle. Nicole hears the call. She asks Ralgez to let her go.

NICOLE

'Tony's calling me. He needs me.'

Ralgez knows the score. He sends a pair of Manlings to escort her.

INT. GRAND HALL

Matriarchs and Maidens alike are drawn to the music. From the balconies across the Grand Hall they face each other. It's unusual for the girls to visit the Hall unless they are ordered to do so. The old crones are pleased. Those lazy twits. Live music has succeeded where years of talk failed.

When Nicole arrives a dozen Matriarchs and scores of Maidens fill their balconies while about 50 customers occupy tables. Nicole is a pro, she seizes the opportunity and the moment. She slips in behind Tony and belts out...

NICOLE

LOVE....IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING.

Tony picks up the tune. In a moment they're a hit. Ventok women are not immune to the music of LOVE. That emotion was considered a myth until Tony and Nicole fired up the hearts of young girls with music and the poetry of passion. Oooo!!!

Ovid is waiting in the wings. As more customers arrive he hovers about and orders more service. When Ventok see that Ovid the Hero personally is hosting this party the word gets out. In minutes a flood of clients clamore thru the doors. The Castle is home to hundreds and the only hotel in town. The Lords and Ladies of Scalaris flock to the concert.

When our duo finish 'Stormy Weather' Ovid rushes forward as he applauds. Ventok never saw applause before.

OVID

Give it up for our Stars!

Ovid is training Ventok to show their appreciation by banging their hands together. They dig it. Riotous applause resounds throughout the Castle.

INT. MUSICIANS DORM

Flora the boss of the Flamencos starts shouting at her gang. It's obvious that the show goes on, with or without them. She makes a dramatic scene and leaves, swiftly followed by her band. The Brazilians get the message, and also follow. The remaining Yanks shrug and resign. They follow the others thru the Castle. All carry musical instruments. Except the Chorus Girls who carry feathers, satin and lace.

INT. GRAND HALL

Applause continues. Ovid takes charge.

OVID

Let's pause for refreshments. Our Stars deserve a break. We'll have more music in a few minutes.

Slaves work upstairs and down with beverages. The Ladies and Maidens only get tea. Downstairs, it's a party.

Ovid speaks to Tony and Nicole.

OVID

That's the spirit. Heart and Soul. Feel the moment. That's what captured me on Earth. The vibrancy of your culture is what we Ventok need.

Ovid demands another round of applause. The crowd responds. He has made Stars of Tony and Nicole.

OVID

We will have more music in a few moments. Please be comfortable.

Snapping fingers bring another round of slaves to serve more food and drink. Ovid conspires with Tony and Nicole.

OVID

You were great! Take a break and let our clients anticipate your next performance.... Get ready for another set. It will be a long night.... We make it or break it, tonight. We need local Ventok to want our show. Otherwise I can't keep you here.

TONY

What about the band? Should we call them? We could use their help.

OID

No. I only want volunteers. If they haven't got the guts to play we don't need them.....

Just then a trumpet blares from the doorway. Flamenco Dancers blaze into the room. It is astounding! Ventok never conceived of dance as artistic expression. Their rituals are like funerals. Lively dance triumphs over dead butts.

Stomping dancers clack their castinets as they invade the Hall. They dance with fire and fury. Nobody can ignore The Flamencos. Even the Old Ladies hoot as the dancers prance across the floor. The Girls go wild. They can't sit still.

This entry changes everything. Ovid has an army of musicians poised to conquer the Ventok. Like Conquistadors to Mexico he arrived with forces completely unknown. He knows he was overwhelmed by modern music, and that other Ventok will be willing victims to the seduction of Earth's culture.

As the Flamencos ignite the audience the other musicians form up. The Bossa Nova band, renamed Rio by Ovid, takes their places. Their piano player asks Tony to give up his position, which he gladly yields to his fellow

TONY -- WHISPERS

Kill 'em man. They're all ours. We need them begging for more.

The Flamencos burn for an hour. Meanwhile the audience feels feelings they have never felt before. Especially the Maidens. They're dancing in their balcony. Scalaris will never be the same once the Babes catch fire. Who can control female passion??? Not dried up old hags!! The Matriarchs show concern and argue that their flock is being influenced in a manner they can't control.

By the time the Flamencos finish their set the Grand Hall is crowded. The audience numbers hundreds. Slaves fill the fringes of the concert hall. They were drawn to the music like everyone else. Even the Manlings quit their posts and stationed themselves inside to experience tonight's delight.

Ovid is ecstatic. He intercepts the Big Band and the Chorus Girls in the foyer.

OID

No show for you tonight boys and girls. You're our secret weapon. When they think they know our act we'll knock 'em dead with dance. Go home. Prepare for tomorrow.

TONY -- O.S.

Ovid is brilliant as a manager.
He's making our reluctant dancers
and band want to give their best.
He's also playing his audience. We
want them to want us. Anticipation
whets the appetite and makes for
good promotion.

The sounds of Bossa Nova manually shift the gears of the audience from lively to tranquil. During their set Ovid rounds up our gang with the help of Ogres and Manlings. He sends them packing to their new plush jail. When the Rio band finishes a major number Ovid charges forth with his host routine, calling for applause and stopping the music.

OID

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.
This is a sample of the 'Talents'
I've brought for your pleasure. We
will entertain you nightly.....
I leave you in the hands of our
Piano Man, Tony Verona!

As Ovid ushers Tony on stage he tries to give him advice. Tony cuts him short.

TONY

Do your part Old Man. I got my end.

Ovid accepts Tony's tough talk as proof that he is committed. Tony ought to be, the notions running thru his mind verge on madness. He feels like he's being forged into a new man. He's becoming dangerous.

Tony winds down the show with a series of ballads. Ventok still fill the Hall. He uses music like a lullaby, coaxing his audience to bed. The evening ends gently. All is well.

EXT. CASTLE -- BIRDSEYE VIEW -- MORNING

The Castle is mounted on a cliff that juts out into the sea. It is huge, like a fortress from the middle ages. We zoom in on a large terrace bordering the side facing the town across the bay. The terrace is crowded. Ovid is staging an event.

It's a gourmet buffet featuring the Iron Chefs. Ovid imported exotic cuisines via personel. Everybody loves fancy food, especially Ventok hicks who have never been anywhere. Scalaris is an isolated colony on the Frontier. Fine dining is one of the pleasures they enjoy, but they never tasted France, Italy, China, or Japan before. Ovid conquers the Ventok elite by assaulting them thru their tastebuds. Patrons with full plates are ushered to and thru --

The tall doors alongside the Castle's terrace open to reveal the Grand Hall, now converted into a ballroom of classic proportions. It looks like a wedding; with large tables, a Band Stand and a dance floor. The Big Band is warming up

with dinner music. The party is on.

From the ramparts of the Castle trumpets blare. The sound is heard across the bay. Ventok with villas on the hillside are alerted to the invitation from the Castle. Their terraces fill with spectators. The folks in town know a party is on. Royal Parties are rare, especially since Legnab's been King. In minutes hundreds of Ventok are flocking to the Castle.

From the terrace Ovid conspires with his main man, Tony.

OID

Legnab is such a cheap bastard. The
Romans knew how to handle people.
Bread and circus's. Legnab robs
them and gives nothing in return.
We're going to change that. Today!

Streams of people cross the bridge between the town and the castle. They climb the road that zig-zags up the cliff-face bringing them to the Castle's Entry Plaza. There our terrace can be accessed without entering the Castle. The Iron Chefs are feeding throngs of hungry guests. IT'S A PARTY!!!

EXT. CASTLE -- LEGNAB'S BALCONY -- WITH LEGNAB -- SPYING

There is no doubt that Legnab is seething with anger.....

INT. BALLROOM -- NOON

The Castle is an oasis from the heat. The high cliffs, sea breezes and stone structure keep it cool. It's considered rude to send guests away during mid-day. It's too damn hot. We have captured our audience. The party must go on.

Ovid is driving the audience like a used car. Now that the food portion of the show is over he shifts gears again. Slaves scurry around and remove half the tables. This does two things. It doubles the size of the dance floor as it pushes seated Ventok together. This is unusual for them. They are basically anti-social. It's a form of social engineering, trying to forge bonds of like minded people.

From the stage words aren't spoken or needed. The Band cranks up the music and the Chorus Girls take the floor. 12 count 'em 12 luscious beauties prance about dressed in satin, sequins and feathers. Ventok get a taste of Vegas.

The party goes on all day. The Shimmerlings alternate sets with the Band and Chorus Girls to change pace and keep the crowds attention. Hot and cool, Ovid knows show-biz. And Tony knows nightclubs. He speaks to Ovid.

TONY

Listen Chief. We're missing out
here. Our customers are sitting on
(MORE)

TONY (cont'd)

their butts. Nightclubs and fancy catered parties are where everyone dances, not just the help. You want to make an impression. We've got to get Ventok dancing.

INT. BALLROOM -- SUNSET

Teaching Ventok to dance was a stroke of genius. These cold hearted people are amazed at how much fun can be had by their own efforts. They dance with gusto. The human energy being spent is beyond their experience. Ventok generally are lazy. They made life too easy. Slaves can serve, but they can't live their Masters lives for them.

Tony, with Slim and Charlie on bass and drums, support Nicole as she does her Caberet act. She works the crowd as she sings, encouraging people to dance. This is accompanied by three pairs of dancers who show Ventok how to make easy moves that bring romantic dancing to life. It works. They dance in droves. It's the hottest party ever at Scalaris.

By the time it gets dark there is no way to turn away our audience. Tony told Ovid. "They'll dance till they drop."

By midnight the people were worn out. Our mission was fulfilled. These Ventok learned that life is larger than the culture of Scalaris. We left them spent and hungry for more.

INT. CREWS QUARTERS

Tony goes to congratulate his crew on a job well done. Things don't go well. Tony thinks they should all be happy about their success. Half the crew is still against him. They did not enjoy entertaining their enemies. Slim is the most vocal.

SLIM

Man, I don't give a damn what you've got to say. You bow down to these Ventok. As far as I'm concerned you're a traitor. We're better off without you.

Tony beckons Slim to come close. He covers his right ear with the earring that he suspects is bugged. He whispers.

TONY

Spartacus.

Tony gives the shush sign, winks and makes a hand motion of slashing his throat. Slim is no dummy, he gets the message.

TONY -- LOUDLY

You guys were great tonight! We have got to make the Ventok value us like diamonds. Otherwise we'll

(MORE)

TONY -- LOUDLY (cont'd)
 be sold like beef on a slab. That's
 what we are threatened with. Do you
 understand our reality?

Tony goes around the room and whispers the name Spartacus to
 many of our people. He has confidence they'll talk freely
 once he's gone, even if they didn't get the reference.

TONY
 We are in an intense situation....
 Loose lips sink ships..Don't let me
 down..... Tomorrow is another day.

EXT. OVID'S TERRACE ---- NOON

Ovid and Tony are having a lavish lunch. After amenities
 Ovid gets to business. Bullits, Tony's shadow, keeper and
 bodyguard is lurking in the corner, as always.

OVID
 Do you know why I insist that the
 Ogre watch you? I think Legnab
 would wack you if he could. He
 hates you, and he knows you are my
 key man. We are at war.

TONY
 Alright Chief. What's next?

OVID
 We raise the bar. Today the
 Flamencos and Rio will put on a
 show next to the main dining hall.
 I want every Ventok here to be part
 of our audience before the Trade
 Fair arrives. We seduce our locals,
 gain a vibrant crowd and use them
 to intice our guests to join the
 party.

TONY
 You think this war will be won by
 culture? You heard the Old Lady.
 Any one of these Conquestador
 convoys could knock your kingdom
 over in a minute. You're like a
 bank with no guards.

OVID
 That's why I need to seize control
 of Scalaris now. Legnab is weak. If
 I let him rule any longer my
 country will be lost.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR

Tony is on his way to work when he gets ambushed. A hand reaches out from the shadows and grabs his wrist. It's Legnab. His grip is firm. Tony starts to pull away and Legnab responds by tightening his hold and showing Tony that his other hand is on his daggers hilt.

LEGNAB

I'll have words with you boy. I know what you're doing. I'm watching you. The first time you stumble you're going down hard.

With that said Legnab left. Tony turns to Bullits.

TONY

I thought you're my bodyguard.

BULLITS

I can't lay hands on the King.

INT. GRAND HALL -- MID-EVENING

Tony's trio and Nicole are playing to a fair-sized crowd when Ovid interrupts the performance.

OVID

That's all for tonight folks. We must prepare for tomorrow. The fleet has arrived!!

Excitement ripples thru the crowd. Ovid gathers our crew.

INT. MESS HALL -- BAND ROOM -- NIGHT

Ovid assembles his troupes.

OVID

Right now thousands of soldiers and pioneers are in orbit. They will land at dawn. Ventok hospitality is short lived. You must all prove yourselves too valuable to be sold. I want your services now and in the future. Soon other fleets will arrive..... We will divide our forces. Officers and ranking elite are invited to the castle. Armies and pioneers will make camp outside of town....A stage is being erected in the Central Plaza. The Big Band and Chorus Girls will entertain the troops. They will alternate sets with the Shimmerlings. Rio will play for the Main Dining Hall, alternating with the Flamencos.

(MORE)

OID (cont'd)

Tony and his crew have the nightclub. Any questions? Good. Get a good night's sleep. Dismissed.

END-- ACT THREE

ACT FOUR COMPANY CALLS

EXT. ROYAL TERRACE MORNING

The Royal Terrace is crowded. Legnab ordered all hands to show themselves to welcome our visitors. Castle personel and guests, slaves and Manlings, even the Matriarchs are there. Many children are present. Above the Terrace is a long balcony filled with Ventok Maidens. As spectators they make a pretty display.

The Spaceport is the plateau above the town. Dozens of Space Ships can be seen in the distance. They're all variations of Flying Saucers.

Directly across from the Castle is the Grand Promenade, an elaborate stone stairway that leads from the escarpment above the town to the Central Plaza. This is the official entrance to Scalaris.

At the crest of the Promenade a series of columns and archways mark the town's border. From there ten heralds blow their horns signaling the start of the Master's Parade.

An army of men in black lead the parade. They seem like a modern army with standardized uniforms and weapons. They descend the stairway in loose formation following their officers. They spread out and occupy the lowest tier of the massive stone terraces that flank the stairway. They number about 500 men.

The red army look like pirates. Nobody has uniforms but all wear something bright red. They come down the stairway in a haphazard fashion in small gangs. Most of their weapons look like musical instruments. Trumpets, clarinets and oboes are going off to war. They wave scarlet scarves from the muzzles of their weapons like flags.

The Desert Troops look like they stepped out of the Bible. Tall, lean, bearded, wearing desert robes, they all carry bladed weapons. Each man has a spear, pike or halberd, except for the archers. All carry swords and daggers. They show no obvious organization but they seem disiplined.

The last army looks like dregs swept from bars and jails. Rowdy drunken bums stumble down the stairway, but only as far as the top tier. From 200 yards it's obvious that they aren't fit for polite company.

From the arches the trumpets blare announcing the Parade of Pioneers. Lords, Ladies, Barons and Earls lead the hundreds of civilians descending the staircase. They display weapons with a different flair. Their arsenal resembles Legnab's

Royal Scepter. Full sized jewelry flashes at 200 yards. These weapons are worth a fortune.

The civilians march straight down the stairway to the plaza below. There they are greeted by thousands of locals. The event of the Trade Fair is the highlight of Ventok society. Local residents greet, badger and barter with the visitors every chance they get. A squad of Ogres commands a platoon of Manlings to hold the crowd back, forming a corridor thru the throng of people.

The Pioneers exit the Plaza and cross the bridge that spans the river-gorge. They climb the zig-zag roadway up the cliff to the Castle. From town it's a fine sight as a colorful parade ascends the cliff-face to the Majestic Castle where hundreds greet their guests. By the time the last of the Pioneers enter the Castle it's noon. From the ramparts heralds blow horns calling for siesta.

EXT. OVID'S TERRACE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Ovid prepares Tony for tonight's mission as slaves clean up their private feast.

OVID

Ventok come from many worlds. We don't know how the crowd will react to our show. We must Conquer our audience. This event is the last taste of culture these people will take to the Frontier. Tonight's show must be legendary. New Worlds will remember us as the center of civilization.

TONY

We'll do our part. You just honor our deal. My people don't get sold.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR AFTERNOON

Tony is on his way to work when Legnab ambushes him, again.

LEGNAB

Tonight's the night boy. You'll get your chance to prove your worth. Charm our guests and I'll reward you. Fail me and you are sold. I'll be watching.

EXT. CENTRAL PLAZA DUSK

Thousands of people fill the huge square. A large stage was erected near the base of the Promenade stairway, offering an excellent view to the armies stationed on the upper tiers that flank the stairs. Hundreds of torches and lanterns light the night lending a festive atmosphere to the evening.

The entertainment of the troops is a rousing success. Twelve gorgeous women in skimpy costumes dancing in unison is a sight that the Ventok had never seen. They went wild.

Early on there were some tense moments. The troops initially didn't understand that they were to look but not to touch. More than once small gangs rushed the stage with the intent of carrying off the girls. Ovid's enforcers, supplemented with Ogres and a platoon of Manlings, handled the situation well. They managed to fend off the rowdy soldiers without insult or injury.

Ovid wisely scheduled the Shimmerlings for short sets to change the mood of the show. Their moving love songs were a soothing contrast to the raw sexual energy generated by the dancers. In this way the show went on, alternating hot and cool without a human explosion.

MEANWHILE.....

INT. CASTLE GRAND HALL\NIGHTCLUB

NOTE--TONY'S NARRATIVE IS FROM HIS JOURNAL--

TONY O.S.

The evening at the Castle was a blast. The Pioneers were prisoners of their Space Ships for months. They are overdue for a party. In many ways these Trade Fairs serve as fertility rites. Scalaris is the last stop before the Frontier. The armies and most of the Pioneers are men. There is no civilization without women. It's the lure of women that attracts these convoys specifically to Scalaris.

Legnab personally leads the Kings and Conquerors to their seats at the Head Tables that flank the stage. He's decked out like a Christmas tree. His Hobo Cloak is decorated with many statuettes. With a flash of insight Tony realizes that this is Legnab's catalog of goods. At a glance strangers could outfit their expeditions. There was a silver fish next to a chunk of salt indicating that salted fish and salt were for sale. Golden statues of men and women, silver sculptures of sheep and goats, pigs and donkeys, chickens and ducks; copper medallions of barrels and jugs of wine and beer showed customers what was available. The rag-tag cloak displayed various leathers and wools. Two of the new worlds were cold. Sheepskin patches showing both fleece and leather sides were tugged at by the clients. It's a hands-on experience. Ventok have no pretense when it comes to business. They are not polite. They're robust and raucous. It's a tough sale.

As the crowd settles down Tony's trio goes to work. Smooth jazz is an exotic sound these Ventok have never heard. They are charmed as Cocktail Hour leads into dinner. The Iron

Chefs deliver a series of knock-out punches with their Culture of Cuisine. It's the greatest feast Ventok ever had.

MEANWHILE-----

INT. CASTLE MAIN DINING HALL

--The Show goes on. The sounds of Bossa Nova soothe the dinner crowd. These guests are of lesser rank but they are the future of the Frontier. Pioneers are taming New Worlds. Legends are being made. Children will remember that their families were born as fruit of this Grand Event.

After a long set the Rio band packs up and heads out. They have a date at the nightclub. The Flamencos take the stage and fire up the audience. The crowd is overwhelmed. These memories will last a lifetime.

INT. CASTLE NIGHTCLUB

The Rio band keeps the magic of music flowing after they relieve Tony's trio. Legnab is in fine form as he presses his clients while they're plied with food, wine and song.

The pace shifts when the Flamencos take the floor. Their dynamic performance ignites the crowd. That level of excitement is unknown to sedate Ventok. They are left with wide eyes, hooting and clapping, calling for more.

Tony sticks to the program. He shifts gears again as his trio now features Nicole. She works her cabaret gig on the audience. Ventok melt under her influence. The slavers are captured by our talents.

TONY O.S.

Then we launched our prime assault. First I sang a sweet love song to the Maidens, making direct eye contact as I reached for their hearts and souls. During that song half the tables were removed. Then I invited-insisted that they come downstairs and join our party. I offered them a special treat. I didn't mention that they were the treat. When they didn't move I turned to Legnab and asked for his help with an open handed gesture. He knew what to do. He ordered the girls to attend, immediately.

We organized the dance party that the Ventok desparately needed. Four pairs of our people demonstrated social dancing to our guests as Nicole worked the head tables. She urged the nobles to rise and join

(MORE)

(cont'd)

in the festivities. Our first customers would be rulers of the New Worlds. Then we endured the Invasion of the Virgins. Hundreds of girls dressed in finery flooded the dance floor. Eager young men were quick to act and sought dance partners before they were taken by rivals. Our plan to promote this event into a mating ritual was working.

INT. SIDE KITCHEN

Tony catches a snack in the catering kitchen that's servicing the party.

TONY O.S.

I was glowing with pride and success when I suddenly realized what an idiot I was. We'd been captured by enemy aliens and shipped off as slaves. Now we're singing for our supper and their amusement. I'd become so wrapped up in these last few days that I'd lost my perspective.....I wasn't merely a musician. I was 'Tony Verona--Secret Agent--Code Name--Piano Man--The Singer with a Cause.'...I was infiltrating the enemy. I was penetrating their society. I had to design a means to exploit my knowledge to gain advantage over our foes. I had to be cunning and dangerous... Yeah, right. I was laughing at myself when Nicole came by. She asked what was so funny. I told her and she laughed back at me.

NICOLE

That's what I like about you Tony. You've got a good imagination and a sense of humor. You keep working on that battle plan. Now, let's get serious. We've got a show to do.

TONY

Honey, let's kill 'em.

INT. NIGHTCLUB

The party is still in full swing. When the Flamencos left the Dining Hall they were followed by their followers. Ventok were pressed closer than usual as every living soul in reach of sound managed to get to the nightclub.

Legnab beckons Tony to the Head Table. Tony meets and greets the cream of the crop of Ventok. One of the women tells LEGNAB that she wants to buy TONY. He refuses her offer. He declares that TONY is his. TONY understands what's going on. His false smile hides his hatred. Piano Man is on the job.

Legnab gives Tony orders.

LEGNAB

I want you to wind down the party.
Sing your sweetest love songs....
I see the value of your music. It
paints sex as a beautiful thing. I
expect to sell more women tonight
than ever before... Get on with it.

INT. NIGHTCLUB---An hour later

Our COOL CARGO has done their job. The guests are dazzled and amazed, mesmerized with dreams of romance. Legnab signals Tony with the cut-throat sign. Then points You, Me, and Outside with a thumb thrust towards the terrace.

EXT. ROYAL TERRACE-- IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING

Legnab smokes a cigar by the balustrade of the veranda. In the distance we see the Spaceport directly across on the escarpment. The fleet of ships gleam in the moonlight. We hear Our Gang play their last song. Tony calls it quits, gets a round of applause for everyone, and ends the show. Moments later he joins Legnab. They take in the view.

LEGNAB

Look out there boy. That is the
future of the galaxy. New Lives on
New Worlds. Tonight we helped them
fulfill their destinies.... I am
inspired to be part of this grand
adventure...You have done well son.
I won't forget it.... Dismissed.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE PAYDAY

Tony's Apt. Mid-Morning

TONY O.S.

No good deed goes unpunished. I was
fast asleep when Ovid burst into my
apt in the morning. He was frantic.
I was groggy at first. Once I got
my head clear I was frantic too.

TONY

He did WHAT!!?

OVID

Legnab sold our entire crew that entertained the troops. The Chorus Girls are gone along with the Big Band. The Shimmerlings and their trio. He even tossed in our Iron Chefs. The least I wanted was to train some of our local cooks before they were shipped out.

TONY O.S.

Ovid's last remark casually reinforced the fact that our slavery was his business. He was our enemy as well as our only ally. Legnab had swindled me. He promised rewards for a great show. Selling our crew was the betrayal that I expected and feared.

OVID

Tony, I need your help. Legnab is an old man with a head full of antique ideas. He values slaves like sheep. Our 'Talents' can't be replaced. We've got to stop him.

TONY

What do you want from me?

OVID

Talk to Legnab. Right now you are his favorite subject. Perhaps you can persuade him to change his mind. Otherwise, we all lose.

INT. GRAND HALL MORNING

TONY O.S.

The nightclub is gone. The room is restored to it's former stark appearance. The Throne offers comfort to no one but the King. Legnab's sole companions are his huge Manling guards. Like Ovid he can't afford friends. It's lonely at the top....Ovid's gang consists of him, his four enforcers, Bullits and me. Two of Ovid's men were almost as big as the Ogres. They stayed outside the doors. Ovid told me to lead the way.....When legnab saw me a toothy grin cracked across his craggy face.

LEGNAB

Ah, the Star of our show. Young man, your performance was excellent. You exceeded all expectations. Your dance program enhanced our mating process. I have been honored to preside over hundreds of pairings since dawn. Congradulations. How can I reward you?

TONY O.S.

Then Legnab noticed that Ovid was lurking behind me. His face tightened as he shifted his grip on the Scepter to the ready position. His Manlings shifted their stance. Spears, claws and jaws were set to tear us apart.

LEGNAB

What do you want? I thought I'd finished with you today!

OVID

Uncle, Tony and I feel that you are making a terrible mistake. I thought that he might explain matters better than I could.

LEGNAB

Alright, I'll discuss matters with him but you stay out of it. I've heard enough from you.....Young man, what troubles you?

TONY

Sir, I've come to plead for the lives of my people. We were chosen for our talents. We gave you the show that you demanded. We did more than stage a party, we brought Love to your mating process. Surely you see our value.

LEGNAB

Indeed I do. As did everyone else. Before dinner was over I had a bidding war for my 'Talents'..... My business is to outfit Pioneers on route to conquer New Worlds. The Far Frontier begins here. Barbarous planets need women for colonization. When we dangled those dancers before the troops they were destined to be sold.

TONY

You promised us great rewards. Now you've sold half our people like animals.

LEGNAB

Listen boy! That expedition is spreading civilization across the galaxy. Hundreds of our own people and twice that many slaves have joined the fleet. So have flocks of sheep and goats along with shepherds, tanners and weavers to reap their products. Farmers with seeds, vines and livestock will enrich our settlements. The people you're concerned with aren't being condemned. They're getting New Lives on New Worlds.

TONY O.S.

Legnab was being unusually polite. The glow from his profits was still warm, and in spite of himself I knew he'd grown fond of me. I tried a tougher tone.

TONY

Look Legnab. We made a deal. If you don't pay, we don't play. Go ahead. Send me to the mines. You go play the fucking piano.

That did it. Legnab dragged his carcass from the Throne flushed with rage. He waved the Scepter in a threatening gesture.

LEGNAB

Don't sass me boy!!

With Legnab's attention focused on Tony Ovid strikes.... He throws a shock grenade at Legnab's feet. The explosion sends the Old Man flying head over heels to crash into the back wall. Instantly Ovid's gunmen drew big pistols and blasted the giant Manlings, killing them where they stood. As soon as shots are fired distant gunfire is heard from the corridor outside the doors. Tony is stunned, he stands still like a dolt. He shouldn't be surprised. Ventok are vicious.

Ovid leaps forward and grabs the Royal Scepter. A quick check on Legnab, who is out cold, and he whirls to his shooters.

OVID

Get out there!!!

The gangsters exit and the gunfire increases. Ovid strips Legnab of his weapon-jewelry as the blitz of gunfire ceases. Ovid grabs Tony by the arm and they join the others.

The corridor is a scene of carnage. A dozen Manling corpses are strewn about bathed in pools of blood. The stench of death is in the air.

Tony is relieved to see his Ogre standing unharmed amongst the slaughter. He locks eyes with Tony and says one word.

BULLITS

Bullets.

Ovid takes charge. He assesses the damage and is satisfied. He orders everyone inside and bars the doors. He points at the Ogre and says...

OVID

Roscoe, keep your gun in your hand and your eyes on him. He's Legnab's man.....You. Pick Legnab up.

Bullits looks confused. He looks to Tony for guidance.

TONY

It's O.K. Bullits. Do as he says.

Gratified looks pass between Tony and Bullits. At least they had one friend in the room.

OVID

Bullits? You named an Ogre and call him Bullits? Now that's funny.

Then Tony remembers the missing crew.

TONY

What about our people? Maybe we can save some of them. The entire fleet hasn't left yet.

OVID

Tony, that's not possible. All sales are final. Face the facts, they are lost to us.

TONY

And you knew that. You had no intention of saving them. You used me to distract Legnab, offered me as a target.

Ovid grabs Tony by the forearm and pulls him close.

OVID

I've got a kingdom to conquer! Quit your whining and toughen up! We live or die today. Get moving!

Outside in the corridor the sounds of chaos came to order in the form of a battering ram. Our gang has seconds to escape. Ovid waves the Scepter before a sensor that tops the Throne.

guards. They hold their posts as others flee in terror.

Doc is waiting with his med-bag in hand.

DOC

Where's the wounded?

TONY

It's Legnab Doc. Let's get moving.

As Bullits leads Tony and Doc back to the hideout gunfire resumes. Ovid's killers do their second round of sweeps thru the Castle. Gunfire panics people. It's pandemonium.

Our gang progresses until they cross a major junction. A squad of Manlings challenge our men. Bullits orders them to stand aside. They refuse. Their argument in bark-tongue sounds like a dog-fight. Distant Manlings can hear trouble. The guards advance, spears poised. The time to go is now.

Tony fires the lightning ring. Jagged arcs of electricity are drawn to the steel blades of the guards spears. The instant they connect the guards are toast. They pop like popcorn from the inside out. Noses and eyeballs explode spraying blood everywhere. The stench of smoking flesh fills the hallway. This grotesque slaughter is over in an instant. Our trio slips away.

INT. HIDEAWAY LATE AFTERNOON

Legnab is a pathetic sight. He mumbles and moans as Doc tends him. Doc knocks him out with a hypo.

DOC

If he's unconcious Ovid can't
interrogate him. The longer he's
out the longer he lives.

Ovid and his Death Squad arrive at dusk. They're drunk with victory. Their prime targets had been hit, the rest were on the run. Ventok who were spared swore allegiance to the rebel king. The kingdom had been captured by a handful of gangsters in a day.

OVID

Alright. Listen up and settle down.
Today is a great victory, but this
war isn't over. Now comes the hard
part, keeping the prize.....
Surprise was our advantage today.
Next time we'll be surprised.
Thousands of Ventok must become
convinced that I am the legitimate
ruler of this kingdom..... Legnab
has many friends and allies. He
also has enemies and rivals, and a
list of contacts throughout the

(MORE)

OID (cont'd)
 empire. I will know what he knows.
 I'll be crowned tomorrow.

TONY O.S.
 Ovid was anxious to end the
 conflict while he was ahead. If
 this coup d'etat were a fait
 accompli it would be difficult to
 de-Throne him. He decided to call
 for a coronation ceremony to
 legalize his claim on the Throne.

TONY
 That's crazy, chief. They're still
 mopping up blood all over the
 Castle. People will be too scared
 to attend the ceremony.

OID
 They'll be too scared not to
 attend. They will certify my rule.
 I'm not asking them, I'm demanding
 their submission.....Go with the
 Ogre and check on your people.
 We've got things under control
 here.

INT. CREW'S QUARTERS EVENING

Our people know what gunfire is and how to duck for cover.
 They greet Tony with a barrage of questions that take an
 hour to answer. 'Hurrah! Let the bastards kill each other'
 is the general concensus. Tony dampens their enthusiasm.

TONY
 Calm down. First of all, there's
 plenty of innocent victims out
 there, and we could be next.... On
 that score we're involved no matter
 how it goes. Work with me. I've got
 a grip on the inside track....
 We'll act together when the time
 comes. Until then, BE COOL!

EXT. CASTLE BIRD'S-EYE VIEW MORNING

A dozen heralds blow horns from the ramparts of the Castle.

INT. GRAND HALL--THRONE ROOM

TONY O.S.
 Ovid's coronation is a somber
 affair. The Throne Room is sparsly
 crowded. Yesterday's death toll
 decimated the nobility. It's not a
 festive party, it's a mass funeral.
 I was stationed on the mezzanine
 with high-ranking slaves and low

ranked Ventok, mostly kids. From my vantage point I had a commanding view of the ceremony. Downstairs Ovid's allies milled about. I saw that they too were mostly kids. Ovid had decapitated the heads of the families and forced their children to serve him.

Ovid is cruising thru the crowd passing pleasantries. His massive bodyguards shadow him. Meek Ventok melt away before him. It is all too civilized.

Suddenly Ovid is under attack. Lasers lance down from a darkened corner of the Maidens balcony. The gangsters are cut to pieces. Ovid dives under the buffet table, crawling for his life. Laser fire continues, turning the table to splinters. Vince and Roscoe charge forward shooting with both hands. They pepper the balustrade with gunfire but the assassins are protected by stone. Ovid's future looks bleak.

Without thought or hesitation Tony fires his ring weapon. Bolts of lightning streak across the Hall and blast the zone where the assassins hide. Their fire stops, then resumes in Tony's direction. He ducks. The gunfire from below becomes a hailstorm of bullets, stone chips and ricochets. The killers retreat.

The blitz from below and the crossfire above ignites a panic as everyone flees from the Throne Room and mezzanine. Ovid and his henchmen make their escape. The crowd evaporates. In moments Tony and Bullits are alone. Except for the broken bodies of Ovid's men.

TONY

Bullits. Let's get their guns!

Tony leads the race to the prize until he arrives. The butchered carcasses of the slaughtered gangsters are revolting. Tony stops and gags. Bullits is made of sterner stuff. He searches the body parts for weapons. But he won't touch the guns. Tony has to pluck the pistols from the corpses. They scavenge the bodies for all they're worth.

INT. CREW'S QUARTERS AFTERNOON

Tony tells the tale of the day and quickly finds himself arguing with Slim. Slim wants Ovid dead.

SLIM

I can't believe you man. All you had to do was nothing.

Tony and Slim are arguing when Bullits steps forward and grabs Slim by the throat with one hand.

BULLITS

Tony is Boss. Follow orders or I will kill you. Understood!?

TONY

Slim is right. I saved Ovid's life. Fine. Now he owes me. We're fighting for our lives here. Let's try not to fuck things up. Bullits-

The giant puts Slim down. Also the sack he holds in his other hand. Tony reveals the contents. It's their arsenal.

TONY

Merry Christmas boys and girls...
Viva la Revolution.

INT. HIDEOUT AFTERNOON

The trick to finding the Hideout is knowing a complicated combination of unmarked doors and corridors. Bullits leads Tony thru the bowels of the castle. They arrive at the Hideout as Ovid is interrogating Legnab. As they enter the suite they hear a slap and a moan.

Ovid is standing over Legnab, who is bound to a chair. Ovid slaps the Old Man again. Legnab's wounds indicate that it's been a long session. Curses and gory threats fill the air. Ovid wants to know who shot at him, who Legnab's allies are.

TONY

Why don't you cut the bullshit!

Ovid is cold-cocked. Surprise and anger are evident on his face. Before he speaks Tony jumps in...

TONY

Legnab didn't order you killed. You asked for it. You set yourself up as an easy target. Frankie and Johnnie paid for that blunder with their lives. Ask Vince and Roscoe how they feel about that. They're willing to kill for you, but are they willing to die for you?

A moment of silence allows reason to take control.

TONY

We are not expendable! Our lives are as important to us as yours is to you. We're all in this together. If you fail, we fail. So let's try to make some sense out of this disaster while we still can.

Ovid grudgingly calms down and accepts the council of his right-hand man. Tony told him not to have the ceremony and he was right. He also saved Ovid's life. They are at war. This is no time for dessention in the ranks.

Vince and Roscoe are dressed for combat ready for another killing spree. Ovid gets set to go when Legnab coughs hard and spits blood at his treacherous nephew...

LEGNAB

Do your worst boy. Ventok will never accept you as King!

Ovid drew his dagger and moves to murder the Old Man. Doc leaped to intervene, Tony jumps to assist. Before harm is done Tony grabs Ovid's arm and holds fast.

TONY

Hold on! Let's think about this. If you want we can kill him later. Let's use him while we've got him.

OVID

Alright, Piano Man. You want him, you've got him. I owe you a debt of life. I'm paying you with Legnab. Do what you want but stay out of my way.....And one more thing. Don't ever lay hands on me again!

Ovid sheathed his dagger and brandished the Royal Scepter.

OVID

This Kingdom is mine! Those who will not follow me will be dead by morning. My allies have gathered their forces. We strike tonight!

Ovid whirled about and stalked off. Vince and Roscoe gave curt nods as they followed our leader to raise Hell.

There was an awkward silence in the wake of Ovid's exit. Doc broke the ice.

DOC

Tony, today you have made history. You have saved the lives of both Slaver Kings in a single day.... May God have mercy on your soul.

LEGNAB

The Doctor is right. Tony, I owe you a debt of gratitude. So let me give you a bit of council and advice. You noticed how Ovid seemed ready to kill you, then suddenly made his peace. That's exactly how he acted with me yesterday. The

(MORE)

LEGNAB (cont'd)

next time we met he attacked me. He is vicious and vindictive. He will not forgive or forget your defiance. Be advised.

Tony, Doc, Legnab and Bullits have a conference. The Ogre grunts his opinions as response to fancy talk put forth by the others. He's short on words and long on common sense.

DOC

Let's move Legnab. Ovid can't kill him if he can't find him.....I've studied Ovid these last few days. My conclusion is that Ovid is not fit to command.....Ovid is insane.

INT. CASTLE CORRIDORS NIGHT

Our Gang of Four hustles thru the gloom. Orders weren't given to light the lamps so few of them are aflame. Our men are invisible as they flit thru the shadows seeking a safe place. The sound of gunfire draws near. Directly ahead the firefight crosses the corridor. The battle is beautiful. Lasers lines of red and blue, lightning bolts, pulsating flashes of white light, orange bursts of force and other powers are visible as the battle rages on. Ventok weapons sound like cartoons at combat. Pops, whistles, buzzes and pinging ring comically as the background for murder. Then Ovid's Tommy Guns opened fire.

The blasting of machine-guns shattered the enemy. They died in terror slaughtered by Secret Weapons from Outer Space.

Then Ovid unleashed his super-weapon, the Royal Scepter. Six forms of Ventok energy weapons poured forth in a rotating blitz of power. Like a Gatling-gun Ovid's Scepter scoured the hallway of opposition. Counter-fire became sporadic.

Ovid's army crosses our view as they advance. Ovid stalks forward holding the Scepter before him, spewing forth a light-show of destruction. Vince and Roscoe sweep the corridor with machine-gun death. Ovid's allies back them as they close in on the enemy. They are outnumbered but the enemy is out-classed. Ovid is winning this little war.

INT. MUSICIANS DORM NIGHT

Our Gang of Four enters the Dorm. Bullits takes charge. He barks at the Manlings to bar the doors. Once all is secure he motions for Tony to take over.

TONY

Pay attention gang. We are winning this war. We've captured the enemy King!!!!!!

With that Tony yanks back the hood covering Legnab's face. Our people are flabbergasted. For the first time Tony has truly conquered his own troupes. They dance about with glee. Nicole sings an old war song. Our people are happy for the first time since....

The sounds of distant gunfire remind everyone that this war is still going on. Tony needs to know the score. He appoints Doc Boss while he's gone. Slim insists on joining Tony and Bullits on patrol. He won't be denied. No problem.

Our trio flit thru shadows making their way to the Royal Terrace. There they find many spectators and refugees. Even the Matriarchs came out to see, spying from the balcony of the Maidens. The battle is now raging in town. It reaches it's climax. Scalaris is on fire. Rayguns and gunfire mark the combat.

Dawn finds the town in smoke and ruins. Occasional bursts of gunfire confirm that the fighting isn't quite over. The Tommy Guns fell silent, they'd each spent their 1000 rounds. Ovid's killers hunt down the last of the enemy with pistols.

At sunrise the town is as quiet as the tomb that it is. Then trumpets blare declaring the end of the fighting. The signal also calls for everyone to come out and show themselves.

People appear in the streets and head towards the Central Plaza. Daylight reveals scores of corpses strewn all over town. The living have to weave their way thru the dead.

Castle personel drift to the Royal Terrace to be seen and counted. It's not much of a crowd. Tony is counting heads when Doc and most of their crew join him.

Then Ovid arrives at the top of the Promenade. From the crest of the marble stairway that dominates the Kingdom he takes command of his realm. He slowly descends leading his prisoners of war. The vanquished number about 100. Ovid's allies herd their enemies like sheep to the slaughter. They halt their parade at the middle level, then divide the captives into two groups. They split the prisoners left and right.

Ovid takes center stage. He's too far away to hear but his gestures show him exhorting the crowd to support him. He brandishes the Royal Scepter as proof of his right to rule.

Then Ovid proves his true nature. Without ceremony he shifts his grip on the Scepter and reverses the gaudy weapon so the staff's tip is pointed forward. He aims the sculptured jewelry as if he's holding a cannon. He is.

The golden staff blasts thunderbolts that make Tony's ring weapon seem like a toy. The prisoners explode on contact. Scarlet geysers erupt, then shower back staining the marble stairs. Scattered rags, blood and bones are all that remains of 50 people seconds later.

Shock and horror overwhelm the crowd. Screams and cries fill the air. Our crew is sickened by the spectacle. Even Bullits is rocked. The Manlings howl in distress. Regardless of race the witnesses to this grotesque slaughter are revolted.

Tony turns to face his crew. Their eyes accuse him. Ovid is alive because of Tony. This massacre is partly Tony's fault.

Ovid turns to the rest of the hostages. He demands their loyalty. One by one they accept, until an old woman curses with vehemence. She became a crimson cloudburst that spattered blood on the other captives. After that all agreed. Ovid's conquest of the Kingdom was complete.

Ovid leads his minions back to the Castle. He deliberately tramps thru the pools of blood that settle on the stairway. His followers must follow in his footsteps. In this way he taints them all with the blood of guilt.

The order of Procession shows the ranks of the new regime. First Ovid alone. He leads his allies; elegant, armed and dangerous. They march in a pair of lines two meters apart and behind. Then come Ovid's killers, Vince and Roscoe, keeping the nobles in check. Finally the fifty unarmed hostages who agreed to follow Ovid. They mark the blood-trail that leads to the Castle.

The Royal Terrace empties out as the locals prepare to greet their new King. Our crew is left behind. Few words are said.

Tony searches every face in his gang; including Doc, Bullits and the Manlings. There's nothng else for them to do. Either they kill Ovid now while their blood is up or live in fear from this moment on. It isn't a vote, it's a verdict. Guilty.

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX ROYAL WELCOME

TONY O.S.

Ovid's victory parade marched up the zig-zag roadway that climbs the cliff to the Castle. That gave us plenty of time to prepare our crime.

Tony and the crew reach the Grand Foyer. It's lightly crowded with Ventok and slaves eager to curry favor with the new King. Many children are there to witness this historic event. Matriarchs and Matrons watch from the balconies. Nobody is in charge, all the ranking nobles are with Ovid or they are dead. Armed Manlings are posted at the doorways.

TONY O.S.

I recognized the Manlings as a resource. I had Bullits whip them into line in a minute. We used them for crowd control. They backed the civilians away from the threshold

by turning their spears sideways forming a moving barricade. We cleared the kill zone of collateral damage.....Our arsenal consists of four pistols and my lightning ring. We kept the plan simple. Death by firing squad. On my signal we'd blast Ovid with everything we've got. Forget about his allies, they'll scatter when he's down. Ovid must die or we will. I hoped we were up to the task. After all we're musicians, not assassins.

The Castle is a fortress designed to repel enemies. The main entrance can only be reached by climbing the cliff and then a final steep flight of stairs to the fortified door. Ovid would be alone as he enters the Castle. The plan is to kill him as he crosses the threshold.

Ovid appears one body segment at a time as he climbs the final stairs. His allies are paces behind him. As soon as he enters the threshold Tony blocks his path. When Ovid sees Tony, his trusted right-hand man, he smiles. It's his last.

TONY O.S.

I steeled myself for action. When Ovid entered our trap I fired my lightning ring. The Royal Scepter drew the power harmlessly into the staff. I should have known Ovid wouldn't give me a weapon that I could turn on him. His face turned to hate when he realized that I was now his enemy. Someone shouted "Fire, Fire, Fire." That was me. A volley of shots were followed by rapid gunfire. Ovid went down as his allies scattered. The deed was done in seconds... Only not quite. Our gang can't shoot for shit.Ovid was dying in agony. I rushed forward and grabbed the Scepter from his feeble grasp. He snarled at me unable to speak. We both knew I wasn't in his league. He was a King and a hardened killer. Only my treachery brought him down. I didn't feel happy or proud.

Someone shouted "Hold your fire" in English. Vince and Roscoe came to the entrance. Their empty hands were raised showing signs of peace. We weren't enemies. Vince came over to inspect Ovid who was choking on his blood. He gave me a

glance, slowly drew his gun, and blew Ovid's brains out. He sneered at all of us.

VINCE

Amateurs.

ROSCOE

O.K. Tony, now you're Boss. You better have a plan.

TONY

With you guys on our side the plan is complete. Stand by.

Doc examined Ovid to confirm his death and searched him for hidden weapons. Bullits barked commands to the Manlings and restored order. The shooting had upset the crowd. Slaves carried Ovid away and cleaned up the mess. Tony looks to the balconies and signals the Matriarchs and Matrons to stay put. They look at Tony with disdain. They aren't going anywhere. They will witness the fate of their country.

TONY

Bullits, take a brace of Manlings to fetch Legnab. Don't say a word. I want you to be silent and menacing. I want Legnab to feel his fear. This could be his execution.

Minutes later the prisoner arrives, escorted by Bullits and the rest of the rebel crew. When Legnab sees Tony holding the Royal Scepter his face betrays his feelings. His world has been turned upside-down.

Tony leans in close and speaks softly to Legnab.

TONY

Everybody dies.

They lock eyes. Then Legnab nods and casts his eyes down. He kneels and prepares to accept his fate.

Tony brandishes the Royal Scepter and shouts loud enough to echo throughout the Hall.

TONY

There has been enough bloodshed!!
Peace has returned to Scalaris!
King Legnab is back! Bring on the children!!

Dozens of kids rush in from the wings. Tony is up to his hips in happy crying faces, including Legnab's. A massive group hug results as everyone sighs relief that the war is over. The captive crowd falls to their knees. The Iron Women in the upper tiers are crying like little girls. Even the Ogres and Manlings seem touched by emotions. Tony gets back to work.

TONY
Arise King Legnab!

As the Old Man rises Tony holds the Scepter high. Legnab reaches for the weapon that certifies his power. As he grasps the Scepter Tony holds fast and gives a subtle tug. They lock eyes again.

TONY
Remember, everybody dies.

They give each other 'The Nod' and their deal is set in stone. Tony releases the Super-Weapon to it's proper owner.

TONY O.S.
That was a dangerous move but I couldn't see what else I could do. Ventok would never accept me as king, and Legnab was impotent without the Scepter. Before he could speak I took control.

TONY
These are your Royal Bodyguards.

Tony presents Vince and Roscoe. From now on our killers would be at Legnab's back.

TONY
This is your Prime Minister.

Tony appoints Doc to that position.

TONY
And I am your advisor.

With those few words our human crew gained a grip on the new regime.

Tony's suggestion is Legnab's first command.

LEGNAB
Send out the children. Tell the world that King Legnab is back!

A mob of screaming kids ran out the Castle entrance. Legnab turns to the crowd in the Hall.

LEGNAB
You people, get to work. We have a Royal Celebration to attend to.

Hundreds scurried about to tend to their jobs. Legnab addressed the women in the balconies.

LEGNAB
And you women. Stop your crying and regain your dignity. We have a Kingdom to rule!

King Legnab was back in business.

TONY O.S.

Vince and Roscoe were fitted with translator earrings so they could spy on Legnab. Doc's job as Prime Minister was to rebuild the town. He had grand plans of how to improve the Depot. That left our music crew with nothing to do but sing, play, and dance for the people. Morale is essential to life. We perform daily at the Central Plaza and nightly at the Castle. We still do.

THE END

OVID

Our path is clear. Destiny calls on us to conquer Ventok society. My people have needs they don't understand. Their souls are empty.....Tomorrow we launch our attack to capture their hearts and minds. This is our moment..... We will start a cultural revolution that leads to enlightenment. One day slavery will be history..... My job is to help my people. So is yours. Help me free you. Work with me and all will be well.

Ovid could sell ice cubes to Eskimos. Our crew, who were ready to kill him yesterday, were now willing to bet their lives on his program. Not that they had much choice.

It will be Legnab or me.... Your people are my secret weapon. We will Seduce and Destroy the enemy.....Did you know that these Trade Fairs are also mating rituals? Clans from many worlds exchange people to enrich the gene pool. From here they'll go on to colonize the Frontier. Ventok deny love. It's not very romantic. Until now....When I reached Earth I realized how shallow Ventok culture is. Ventok deny love. Ventok withhold information. Communication is minimal. Messages are concealed. It's like we're in a Dark Ages. It's feudalism in space.

TONY

It's slavery! You enslaved me.

OVID

Cool out lad. We are on a mission. Our job is to save your people from being sold. My life and your's depend on it.

LEGNAB

I must object. These claims are unsubstantiated.

OVID

I am the only living Ventok who has been to Earth and back. Why is that? Do you think our ships can no longer make the journey? The reason the previous missions failed is because their crews were slaughtered by the natives. You have no idea what they are capable of.

1

Bullits grabs Tony firmly by the back of his neck and propels him forward with force.

OID

Tony, tell everyone about the letter police.

TONY'S THOUGHTS

I realized that this was a chance to ruin Ovid. I could get my revenge for his kidnapping me and the rest of our people. However, it had become clear over the last two days that he was the only Ventok who gave a damn about us. He'd told me how he valued our talents and wanted to promote us to be the 'Stars' of his world. Our natural ally was facing his enemies before the Matriarchs. His fate was in my hands. I knew what he needed. I saw a chance to divide and weaken our enemies. So I decided to support Ovid, thereby gaining his confidence and putting him in my debt.

TONY

Oh, I get it. You mean, like, the
F.B.I. And the C.I.A.

Ovid smiled, nodded and encouraged me to continue with a
rolling forward hand motion.

TONY

Then there's the D.E.A and the
A.T.F. The N.S.A and the S.E.C.

TONY'S THOUGHTS

I knew there were dozens of federal
police agencies but I couldn't
recall them at the moment. So I
winged it and carried on.

TONY -WITH DRAMA

We have the I.R.S. and the N.F.L.
D.N.A.and I.B.M. The N.B.A.and
N.F.G. U.S.C.and U.C.L.A.
A.B.C.,C.B.S.,N.B.C.and P.M.S.
There's the I.R.A.,N.R.A.,K.K.K.and
N.A.A.C.P.

Tony paused for breath and to assess the situation. So far
so good. Legnab had a sour expression on his face as he
tried to discern the truth of the matter. With his attention
focused on Tony he didn't see Ovid's smirk. He knows that
Tony is putting on a show.

TONY

There's the D.O.D., A.F.L.and the
C.I.O. The C.E.O.,Ph.D.,and the
D.D.S. There's the N.Y.P.D.,
L.A.P.D., and.....

LEGNAB

Grah!!!

TONY'S THOUGHTS

Legnab had enough. I sensed
advantage and pressed forward.

TONY

Wait a minute. We haven't gotten to
the important parts. We have the
Secret Service and the Dept of
Justice. Treasury Agents and
Federal Marshalls. State Troopers,
County Sheriffs, and local police
in every city in my country and
around the world. Of particular
concern to you is the Military. The
Army and the Navy have their own
intelligence services. And the Air
Force has a Special Services

(MORE)

TONY (cont'd)

division that's coordinated with our Space Program whose sole occupation is searching for Aliens Like You! Earth is protected by Electronic Surveillance, Orbiting Satellites, Rockets, Missiles, Lasers, Proton Beams, and Secret Weapons that are only revealed when used. Frankly, I don't understand how Ovid managed to survive.