

**VISIT TO
A SMALL PLANET**

By Gore Vidal

*The Goodyear Television Playhouse
May 8, 1955*

Director: JACK SMIGHT

Producer: GORDON DUFF

Associate Producer: ROBERT ALAN AURTHUR

CAST

Kreton: CYRIL RITCHARD

Roger Spelding: EDWARD ANDREWS

Ellen Spelding: JILL KRAFT

Mrs. Spelding: SYLVIA DAVIS

John Randolph: DICK YORK

General Powers: ALAN REED

Aide: BRUCE KIRBY

Paul Laurent: THEODORE BIKEL

Second Visitor: LOUIS EDMONDS

President of Paraguay: ALFRED DE LA FUENTE

ACT I

Stock shot: The night sky, stars. Then slowly a luminous object arcs into view. As it is almost upon us, dissolve to the living room of the Spelding house in Maryland.

Superimpose card: "THE TIME: THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW"

The room is comfortably balanced between the expensively decorated and the homely. Roger Spelding is concluding his TV broadcast. He is middle-aged, unctuous, resonant. His wife, bored and vague, knits passively while he talks at his desk. Two technicians are on hand, operating the equipment. His daughter, Ellen, a lively girl of twenty, fidgets as she listens.

SPELDING (Into microphone): . . . and so, according to General Powers . . . who should know if anyone does . . . the flying object which has given rise to so much irresponsible conjecture is nothing more than a meteor passing through the earth's orbit. It is not, as many believe, a secret weapon of this country. Nor is it a space ship as certain lunatic elements have suggested. General Powers has assured me that it is highly doubtful there is any form of life on other planets capable of building a space-ship. "If any traveling is to be done in space, we will do it first." And those are his exact words. . . . Which winds up another week of news. (Crosses to pose with wife and daughter) This is Roger Spelding, saying good night to Mother and Father America, from my old homestead in Silver Glen, Maryland, close to the warm pulse-beat of the nation.

TECHNICIAN: Good show tonight, Mr. Spelding.

SPELDING: Thank you.

TECHNICIAN: Yes sir, you were right on time.

Spelding nods wearily, his mechanical smile and heartiness suddenly gone.

MRS. SPELDING: Very nice, dear. Very nice.
TECHNICIAN: See you next week, Mrs. Spelding.
SPELDING: Thank you, boys.
Technicians go.
SPELDING: Did you like the broadcast, Ellen?
ELLEN: Of course I did, Daddy.
SPELDING: Then what did I say?
ELLEN: Oh, that's not fair.
SPELDING: It's not very flattering when one's own daughter won't listen to what one says while millions of people . . .
ELLEN: I always listen, Daddy, you know that.
MRS. SPELDING: We love your broadcasts, dear. I don't know what we'd do without them.
SPELDING: Starve.
ELLEN: I wonder what's keeping John?
SPELDING: Certainly not work.
ELLEN: Oh, Daddy, stop it! John works very hard and you know it.
MRS. SPELDING: Yes, he's a perfectly nice boy, Roger. I like him.
SPELDING: I know. I know: he has every virtue except the most important one: he has no get-up-and-go.
ELLEN (*Precisely*): He doesn't want to get up and he doesn't want to go because he's already where he wants to be on his own farm which is exactly where *I'm* going to be when we're married.
SPELDING: More thankless than a serpent's tooth is an ungrateful child.
ELLEN: I don't think that's right. Isn't it "more deadly . . ."
SPELDING: Whatever the exact quotation is, I stand by the sentiment.
MRS. SPELDING: Please don't quarrel. It always gives me a headache.
SPELDING: I never quarrel. I merely reason, in my simple way, with Miss Know-it-all here.
ELLEN: Oh, Daddy! Next you'll tell me I should marry for money.
SPELDING: There is nothing wrong with marrying a wealthy man. The horror of it has always eluded me. However, my only wish is that you marry someone hard-working, ambitious, a man who'll make his mark in the world. Not a boy who plans to sit on a farm all his life, growing peanuts.
ELLEN: English walnuts.
SPELDING: Will you stop correcting me?
ELLEN: But, Daddy, John grows walnuts . . .

John enters, breathlessly.
JOHN: Come out! Quickly. It's coming this way. It's going to land right here!
SPELDING: *What's* going to land?
JOHN: The space ship. Look!
SPELDING: Apparently you didn't hear my broadcast. The flying object in question is a meteor not a space ship.
John has gone out with Ellen. Spelding and Mrs. Spelding follow.
MRS. SPELDING: Oh, my! Look! Something *is* falling! Roger, you don't think it's going to hit the house, do you?
SPELDING: The odds against being hit by a falling object that size are, I should say, roughly, ten million to one.
JOHN: Ten million to one or not it's going to land right here and it's *not* falling.
SPELDING: I'm sure it's a meteor.
MRS. SPELDING: Shouldn't we go down to the cellar?
SPELDING: If it's not a meteor, it's an optical illusion . . . mass hysteria.
ELLEN: Daddy, it's a real space ship. I'm sure it is.
SPELDING: Or maybe a weather balloon. Yes, that's what it is. General Powers said only yesterday . . .
JOHN: It's landing!
SPELDING: I'm going to call the police . . . the army!
Bolts inside.
ELLEN: Oh look how it shines!
JOHN: Here it comes!
MRS. SPELDING: Right in my rose garden!
ELLEN: Maybe it's a balloon.
JOHN: No, it's a space ship and right in your own backyard.
ELLEN: What makes it shine so?
JOHN: I don't know but I'm going to find out.
Runs off toward the light.
ELLEN: Oh, darling, don't! John, please! John, John come back!
Spelding, wide-eyed, returns.
MRS. SPELDING: Roger, it's landed right in my rose garden.
SPELDING: I got General Powers. He's coming over. He said they've been watching this thing. They . . . they don't know what it is.
ELLEN: You mean it's nothing of ours?
SPELDING: They believe it . . . (*Swallows hard*) . . . it's from outer space.
ELLEN: And John's down there! Daddy, get a gun or something.

SPELDING: Perhaps we'd better leave the house until the army gets here.

ELLEN: We can't leave John.

SPELDING: I can. (*Peers nearsightedly*) Why, it's not much larger than a car. I'm sure it's some kind of meteor.

ELLEN: Meteors are blazing hot.

SPELDING: This is a cold one . . .

ELLEN: It's opening . . . the whole side's opening! (*Shouts*) John! Come back! Quick . . .

MRS. SPELDING: Why, there's a man getting out of it! (*Sighs*) I feel much better already. I'm sure if we ask him, he'll move that thing for us. Roger, you ask him.

SPELDING (*Ominously*): If it's really a man?

ELLEN: John's shaking hands with him. (*Calls*) John darling, come on up here . . .

MRS. SPELDING: And bring your friend . . .

SPELDING: There's something wrong with the way that creature looks . . . If it is a man and not a . . . not a monster.

MRS. SPELDING: He looks perfectly nice to me.

John and the visitor appear. The visitor is in his forties, a mild, pleasant-looking man with side-whiskers and dressed in the fashion of 1860. He pauses when he sees the three people, in silence for a moment. They stare back at him, equally interested.

VISITOR: I seem to've made a mistake. I am sorry. I'd better go back and start over again.

SPELDING: My dear sir, you've only just arrived. Come in, come in. I don't need to tell you what a pleasure this is . . . Mister . . . Mister . . .

VISITOR: Kreton . . . This is the wrong costume, isn't it?

SPELDING: Wrong for what?

KRETON: For the country, and the time.

SPELDING: Well, it's a trifle old-fashioned.

MRS. SPELDING: But really awfully handsome.

KRETON: Thank you.

MRS. SPELDING (*To husband*): Ask him about moving that thing off my rose bed.

Spelding leads them all into living room.

SPELDING: Come on in and sit down. You must be tired after your trip.

KRETON: Yes, I am a little (*Looks around delightedly*) Oh, it's better than I'd hoped!

SPELDING: Better? What's better?

KRETON: The house . . . that's what you call it? Or is this an apartment?

SPELDING: This is a house in the State of Maryland, U.S.A.

KRETON: In the late 20th century! To think this is really the 20th century. I must sit down a moment and collect myself. The real thing!

He sits down.

ELLEN: You . . . you're not an American, are you?

KRETON: What a nice thought! No, I'm not.

JOHN: You sound more English.

KRETON: Do I? Is my accent very bad?

JOHN: No, it's quite good.

SPELDING: Where are you from, Mr. Kreton?

KRETON (*Evasively*): Another place.

SPELDING: On this earth of course.

KRETON: No, not on this planet.

ELLEN: Are you from Mars?

KRETON: Oh dear no, not Mars. There's nobody on Mars . . . at least no one I know.

ELLEN: I'm sure you're teasing us and this is all some kind of publicity stunt.

KRETON: No, I really am from another place.

SPELDING: I don't suppose you'd consent to my interviewing you on television?

KRETON: I don't think your authorities will like that. They are terribly upset as it is.

SPELDING: How do you know?

KRETON: Well, I . . . pick up things. For instance, I know that in a few minutes a number of people from your Army will be here to question me and they . . . like you . . . are torn by doubt.

SPELDING: How extraordinary!

ELLEN: Why did you come here?

KRETON: Simply a visit to your small planet. I've been studying it for years. In fact, one might say, you people are my hobby. Especially, this period of your development.

JOHN: Are you the first person from your . . . your planet to travel in space like this?

KRETON: Oh my no! Everyone travels who wants to. It's just that no one wants to visit you. I can't think why. I always have. You'd be surprised what a thorough study I've made. (*Recites*) The planet, Earth, is divided into five continents with a number of large islands. It is mostly water. There is one moon. Civilization is only just beginning. . . .

SPELDING: Just beginning! My dear sir, we have had. . . .

KRETON (*Blandly*): You are only in the initial stages, the

most fascinating stages as far as I'm concerned . . . I do hope I don't sound patronizing.

ELLEN: Well, we are very proud.

KRETON: I know and that's one of your most endearing, primitive traits. Oh, I can't believe I'm here at last!

General Powers, a vigorous product of the National Guard, and his Aide enter.

POWERS: All right folks. The place is surrounded by troops. Where is the monster?

KRETON: I, my dear General, am the monster.

POWERS: What are you dressed up for, a fancy-dress party?

KRETON: I'd hoped to be in the costume of the period. As you see I am about a hundred years too late.

POWERS: Roger, who is this joker?

SPELDING: This is Mr. Kreton . . . General Powers. Mr. Kreton arrived in that thing outside. He is from another planet.

POWERS: I don't believe it.

ELLEN: It's true. We saw him get out of the flying saucer.

POWERS (*To Aide*): Captain, go down and look at that ship. But be careful. Don't touch anything. And don't let anybody else near it. (*Aide goes*) So you're from another planet.

KRETON: Yes. My, that's a very smart uniform but I prefer the ones made of metal, the ones you used to wear, you know: with the feathers on top.

POWERS: That was five hundred years ago . . . Are you *sure* you're not from the Earth?

KRETON: Yes.

POWERS: Well, I'm not. You've got some pretty tall explaining to do.

KRETON: Anything to oblige.

POWERS: All right, which planet?

KRETON: None that you have ever heard of.

POWERS: Where is it?

KRETON: You wouldn't know.

POWERS: This solar system?

KRETON: No.

POWERS: Another system?

KRETON: Yes.

POWERS: Look, Buster, I don't want to play games: I just want to know where you're from. The law requires it.

KRETON: It's possible that I could explain it to a mathematician but I'm afraid I couldn't explain it to you, not for another five hundred years and by then of course *you'd* be dead because you people do die, don't you?

POWERS: What?

KRETON: Poor fragile butterflies, such brief little moments in the sun. . . . You see *we* don't die.

POWERS: You'll die all right if it turns out you're a spy or a hostile alien.

KRETON: I'm sure you wouldn't be so cruel.

Aide returns; he looks disturbed.

POWERS: What did you find?

AIDE: I'm not sure, General.

POWERS: (*Heavily*): Then do your best to describe what the object is like.

AIDE: Well, it's elliptical, with a fourteen foot diameter. And it's made of an unknown metal which shines and inside there isn't anything.

POWERS: Isn't anything?

AIDE: There's nothing inside the ship: No instruments, no food, nothing.

POWERS (*To Kreton*): What did you do with your instrument board?

KRETON: With my what? Oh, I don't have one.

POWERS: How does the thing travel?

KRETON: I don't know.

POWERS: You don't know. Now look, Mister, you're in pretty serious trouble. I suggest you do a bit of coöperating. You claim you traveled here from outer space in a machine with no instruments . . .

KRETON: Well, these cars are rather common in my world and I suppose, once upon a time, I must've known the theory on which they operate but I've long since forgotten. After all, General, we're not mechanics, you and I.

POWERS: Roger, do you mind if we use your study?

SPELDING: Not at all. Not at all, General.

POWERS: Mr. Kreton and I are going to have a chat. (*To Aide*) Put in a call to the Chief of Staff.

AIDE: Yes, General.

Spelding rises, leads Kreton and Powers into next room, a handsomely furnished study, many books and a globe of the world.

SPELDING: This way, gentlemen.

(*Kreton sits down comfortably beside the globe which he twirls thoughtfully. At the door, Spelding speaks in a low voice to Powers*) I hope I'll be the one to get the story first, Tom.

POWERS: There isn't any story. Complete censorship. I'm sorry but this house is under martial law. I've a hunch

we're in trouble. (*He shuts the door. Spelding turns and rejoins his family.*)

ELLEN: I think he's wonderful, whoever he is.

MRS. SPELDING: I wonder how much damage he did to my rose garden . . .

JOHN: It's sure hard to believe he's really from outer space. No instruments, no nothing . . . boy, they must be advanced scientifically.

MRS. SPELDING: Is he spending the night, dear?

SPELDING: What?

MRS. SPELDING: Is he spending the night?

SPELDING: Oh yes, yes, I suppose he will be.

MRS. SPELDING: Then I'd better go make up the bedroom. He seems perfectly nice to me. I like his whiskers. They're so very . . . comforting. Like Grandfather Spelding's.
She goes.

SPELDING (*Bitterly*): I know this story will leak out before I can interview him. I just know it.

ELLEN: What does it mean, we're under martial law?

SPELDING: It means we have to do what General Powers tells us to do. (*He goes to the window as a soldier passes by*) See?

JOHN: I wish I'd taken a closer look at that ship when I had the chance.

ELLEN: Perhaps he'll give us a ride in it.

JOHN: Traveling in space! Just like those stories. You know: intergalactic drive stuff.

SPELDING: *If* he's not an impostor.

ELLEN: I have a feeling he isn't.

JOHN: Well, I better call the family and tell them I'm all right.
He crosses to telephone by the door which leads into hall.

AIDE: I'm sorry, sir, but you can't use the phone.

SPELDING: He certainly can. This is my house . . .

AIDE (*Mechanically*): This house is a military reservation until the crisis is over: Order General Powers. I'm sorry.

JOHN: How am I to call home to say where I am?

AIDE: Only General Powers can help you. You're also forbidden to leave this house without permission.

SPELDING: You can't do this!

AIDE: I'm afraid, sir, we've done it.

ELLEN: Isn't it exciting!

Cut to study.

POWERS: Are you deliberately trying to confuse me?

KRETON: Not deliberately, no.

POWERS: We have gone over and over this for two hours now and all that you've told me is that you're from another planet in another solar system . . .

KRETON: In another dimension. I think that's the word you use.

POWERS: In another dimension and you have come here as a tourist.

KRETON: Up to a point, yes. What did you expect?

POWERS: It is my job to guard the security of this country.

KRETON: I'm sure that must be very interesting work.

POWERS: For all I know, you are a spy, sent here by an alien race to study us, preparatory to invasion.

KRETON: Oh, none of my people would *dream* of invading you.

POWERS: How do I know that's true?

KRETON: You don't, so I suggest you believe me. I should also warn you: I can tell what's inside.

POWERS: What's inside?

KRETON: What's inside your mind.

POWERS: You're a mind reader?

KRETON: I don't really read it. I hear it.

POWERS: What am I thinking?

KRETON: That I am either a lunatic from the earth or a spy from another world.

POWERS: Correct. But then you could've guessed that. (*Frowns*) What am I thinking now?

KRETON: You're making a picture. Three silver stars. You're pinning them on your shoulder, instead of the two stars you now wear.

POWERS (*Startled*): That's right. I was thinking of my promotion.

KRETON: If there's anything I can do to hurry it along, just let me know.

POWERS: You can. Tell me why you're here.

KRETON: Well, we don't travel much, my people. We used to but since we see everything through special monitors and recreators, there is no particular need to travel. However, I am a hobbyist. I love to gad about.

POWERS (*Taking notes*): Are you the first to visit us?

KRETON: Oh, no! We started visiting you long before there were people on the planet. However, we are seldom noticed on our trips. I'm sorry to say I slipped up, coming in the way I did . . . but then this visit was all rather impromptu. (*Laughs*) I am a creature of impulse, I fear.
Aide looks in.

AIDE: Chief of Staff on the telephone, General.

POWERS (*Picks up phone*): Hello, yes, sir. Powers speaking. I'm talking to him now. No, sir. No, sir. No, we can't determine what method of power was used. He won't talk. Yes, sir. I'll hold him here. I've put the house under martial law . . . belongs to a friend of mine, Roger Spelding, the TV commentator. Roger Spelding, the TV . . . What? Oh, no, I'm sure he won't say anything. Who . . . oh, yes, sir. Yes, I realize the importance of it. Yes, I will. Good-by. (*Hangs up*) The President of the United States wants to know all about you.

KRETON: How nice of him! And I want to know all about him. But I do wish you'd let me rest a bit first. Your language is still not familiar to me. I had to learn them all, quite exhausting.

POWERS: You speak *all* our languages?

KRETON: Yes, all of them. But then it's easier than you might think since I can see what's inside.

POWERS: Speaking of what's inside, we're going to take your ship apart.

KRETON: Oh, I wish you wouldn't.

POWERS: Security demands it.

KRETON: In that case *my* security demands you leave it alone.

POWERS: You plan to stop us?

KRETON: I already have . . . Listen.

Far-off shouting. Aide rushes into the study.

AIDE: Something's happened to the ship, General. The door's shut and there's some kind of wall all around it, an invisible wall. We can't get near it.

KRETON: (*To camera*): I hope there was no one inside.

POWERS: (*To Kreton*): How did you do that?

KRETON: I couldn't begin to explain. Now if you don't mind. I think we should go in and see our hosts.

He rises, goes into living room. Powers and Aide look at each other.

POWERS: Don't let him out of your sight.

Cut to living room as Powers picks up phone. Kreton is with John and Ellen.

KRETON: I don't mind curiosity but I really can't permit *them* to wreck my poor ship.

ELLEN: What do you plan to do, now you're here?

KRETON: Oh, keep busy. I have a project or two . . . (*Sighs*) I can't believe you're real!

JOHN: Then we're all in the same boat.

KRETON: Boat? Oh, yes! Well, I should have come ages ago but I . . . I couldn't get away until yesterday.

JOHN: Yesterday? It only took you a *day* to get here?

KRETON: One of *my* days, not yours. But then you don't know about time yet.

JOHN: Oh, you mean relativity.

KRETON: No, it's much more involved than that. You won't know about time until . . . now let me see if I remember . . . no, I don't, but it's about two thousand years.

JOHN: What do we do between now and then?

KRETON: You simply go on the way you are, living your exciting primitive lives . . . you have no idea how much fun you're having now.

ELLEN: I hope you'll stay with us while you're here.

KRETON: That's very nice of you. Perhaps I will. Though I'm sure you'll get tired of having a visitor under foot all the time.

ELLEN: Certainly not. And Daddy will be deliriously happy. He can interview you by the hour.

JOHN: What's it like in outer space?

KRETON: Dull.

ELLEN: I should think it would be divine!

Powers enters.

KRETON: No, General, it won't work.

POWERS: What won't work?

KRETON: Trying to blow up my little force field. You'll just plough up Mrs. Spelding's garden.

Powers snarls and goes into study.

ELLEN: Can you tell what we're *all* thinking?

KRETON: Yes. As a matter of fact, it makes me a bit giddy. Your minds are not at all like ours. You see we control our thoughts while you . . . well, it's extraordinary the things you think about!

ELLEN: Oh, how awful! You can tell *everything* we think?

KRETON: Everything! It's one of the reasons I'm here, to intoxicate myself with your primitive minds . . . with the wonderful rawness of your emotions! You have no idea how it excites me! You simply seethe with unlikely emotions.

ELLEN: I've never felt so sordid.

JOHN: From now on I'm going to think about agriculture.

SPELDING (*Entering*): You would.

ELLEN: Daddy!

KRETON: No, no. You must go right on thinking about Ellen. Such wonderfully *purple* thoughts!

SPELDING: Now see here, Powers, you're carrying this martial law thing too far . . .

POWERS: Unfortunately, until I have received word from Washington as to the final disposition of this problem, you must obey my orders: no telephone calls, no communication with the outside.

SPELDING: This is unsupportable.

KRETON: Poor Mr. Spelding! If you like, I shall go. That would solve everything, wouldn't it?

POWERS: You're not going anywhere, Mr. Kreton, until I've had my instructions.

KRETON: I sincerely doubt if you could stop me. However, I put it up to Mr. Spelding. Shall I go?

SPELDING: Yes! (*Powers gestures a warning*) Do stay, I mean, we want you to get a good impression of us . . .

KRETON: And of course you still want to be the first journalist to interview me. Fair enough. All right, I'll stay on for a while.

POWERS: Thank you.

KRETON: Don't mention it.

SPELDING: General, may I ask our guest a few questions?

POWERS: Go right ahead, Roger. I hope you'll do better than I did.

SPELDING: Since you read our minds, you probably already know what our fears are.

KRETON: I do, yes.

SPELDING: We are afraid that you represent a hostile race.

KRETON: And I have assured General Powers that my people are not remotely hostile. Except for me, no one is interested in this planet's present stage.

SPELDING: Does this mean you might be interested in a *later* stage?

KRETON: I'm not permitted to discuss your future. Of course my friends think me perverse to be interested in a primitive society but there's no accounting for tastes, is there? You are my hobby. I love you. And that's all there is to it.

POWERS: So you're just here to look around . . . sort of going native.

KRETON: What a nice expression! That's it exactly. I am going native.

POWERS (*Grimly*): Well, it is my view that you have been sent here by another civilization for the express purpose of reconnoitering prior to invasion.

KRETON: That *would* be your view! The wonderfully primitive assumption that all strangers are hostile. You're almost too good to be true, General.

POWERS: You deny your people intend to make trouble for us?

KRETON: I deny it.

POWERS: Then are they interested in establishing communication with us? trade? that kind of thing?

KRETON: We have always had communication with you. As for trade, well, we do not trade . . . that is something peculiar only to your social level. (*Quickly*) Which I'm not criticizing! As you know, I approve of everything you do.

POWERS: I give up.

SPELDING: You have no interest then in . . . well, trying to dominate the earth.

KRETON: Oh, yes!

POWERS: I thought you just said your people weren't interested in us.

KRETON: *They're not, but I am.*

POWERS: You!

KRETON: Me . . . I mean I. You see I've come here to take charge.

POWERS: Of the United States?

KRETON: No, of the whole world. I'm sure you'll be much happier and it will be great fun for me. You'll get used to it in no time.

POWERS: This is ridiculous. How can one man take over the world?

KRETON (*Gaily*): Wait and see!

POWERS (*To Aide*): Grab him!

Powers and Aide rush Kreton but within a foot of him, they stop, stunned.

KRETON: You can't touch me. That's part of the game. (*He yawns*) Now, if you don't mind, I shall go up to my room for a little lie-down.

SPELDING: I'll show you the way.

KRETON: That's all right. I know the way. (*Touches his brow*) Such savage thoughts! My head is vibrating like a drum. I feel quite giddy, all of you thinking away. (*He starts to the door; he pauses beside Mrs. Spelding*). No, it's not a dream, dear lady. I shall be here in the morning when you wake up. And now, good night, dear, wicked children. . . .

He goes as we fade out.

ACT II

Fade in on Kreton's bedroom next morning. He lies fully clothed on bed with cat on his lap.

KRETON: Poor cat! Of course I sympathize with you. Dogs are distasteful. What? Oh, I can well believe they do: yes, yes, how disgusting. They don't ever groom their fur! But you do *constantly*, such a fine coat. No, no, I'm not just saying that. I really mean it: exquisite texture. Of course, I wouldn't say it was *nicer* than skin but even so . . . What? Oh, no! They *chase* you! Dogs chase you for no reason at all except pure malice? You poor creature. Ah, but you *do* fight back! That's right! give it to them: slash, bite, scratch! Don't let them get away with a trick. . . . No! Do dogs really do that? Well, I'm sure *you* don't. What . . . oh, well, yes I completely agree about mice. They *are* delicious! (Ugh!) Pounce, snap and there is a heavenly dinner. No, I don't know any mice yet . . . they're not very amusing? But after all think how you must terrify them because you are so bold, so cunning, so beautifully predatory! (*Knock at door*) Come in.

ELLEN (*Enters*): Good morning. I brought you your breakfast.

KRETON: How thoughtfull! (*Examines bacon*) Delicious, but I'm afraid my stomach is not like yours, if you'll pardon me. I don't eat. (*Removes pill from his pocket and swallows it*) This is all I need for the day. (*Indicates cat*) Unlike this creature, who would eat her own weight every hour, given a chance.

ELLEN: How do you know?

KRETON: We've had a talk.

ELLEN: You can *speak* to the cat?

KRETON: Not *speak* exactly but we communicate. I look inside and the cat coöperates. Bright red thoughts, very exciting, though rather on one level.

ELLEN: Does kitty like us?

KRETON: No, I wouldn't say she did. But then she has very few thoughts not connected with food. Have you, my quadruped criminal? (*He strokes the cat, which jumps to the floor*)

ELLEN: You know you've really upset everyone.

KRETON: I supposed that I would.

ELLEN: Can you really take over the world, just like that?

KRETON: Oh, yes.

ELLEN: What do you plan to do when you *have* taken over?

KRETON: Ah, that is my secret.

ELLEN: Well, I think you'll be a very nice President, *if* they let you of course.

KRETON: What a sweet girl you are! Marry him right away.

ELLEN: Marry John?

KRETON: Yes. I see it in your head *and* in his. He wants you very much.

ELLEN: Well, we plan to get married this summer, if father doesn't fuss too much.

KRETON: Do it before then. I shall arrange it all if you like.

ELLEN: How?

KRETON: I can convince your father.

ELLEN: That sounds awfully ominous. I think you'd better leave poor Daddy alone.

KRETON: Whatever you say. (*Sighs*) Oh, I love it so! When I woke up this morning I had to pinch myself to prove I was really here.

ELLEN: We were all doing a bit of pinching too. Ever since dawn we've had nothing but visitors and phone calls and troops outside in the garden. No one has the faintest idea what to do about you.

KRETON: Well, I don't think they'll be confused much longer.

ELLEN: How do you plan to conquer the world?

KRETON: I confess I'm not sure. I suppose I must make some demonstration of strength, some colorful trick that will frighten everyone . . . though I much prefer taking charge quietly. That's why I've sent for the President.

ELLEN: The President? *Our* President?

KRETON: Yes, he'll be along any minute now.

ELLEN: But the President just doesn't go around visiting people.

KRETON: He'll visit me. (*Chuckles*) It may come as a surprise to him, but he'll be in this house in a very few minutes. I think we'd better go downstairs now. (*To cat*) No, I will not give you a mouse. You must get your own. Be self-reliant. Beast!

Dissolve to the study. Powers is reading book entitled: "The Atom and You". Muffled explosions off-stage.

AIDE (*Entering*): Sir, nothing seems to be working. Do we have the General's permission to try a fission bomb on the force field?

POWERS: No . . . no. We'd better give it up.

AIDE: The men are beginning to talk.

POWERS (*Thundering*): Well, keep them quiet! (*Contritely*) I'm sorry, Captain. I'm on edge. Fortunately, the whole business will soon be in the hands of the World Council.

AIDE: What will the World Council do?

POWERS: It will be interesting to observe them.

AIDE: You don't think this Kreton can really take over the world, do you?

POWERS: Of course not. Nobody can.

Dissolve to living room, Mrs. Spelding and Spelding are talking.

MRS. SPELDING: You still haven't asked Mr. Kreton about moving that thing, have you?

SPELDING: There are too many *important* things to ask him.

MRS. SPELDING: I hate to be a nag but you know the trouble I have had getting anything to grow in that part of the garden . . .

JOHN (*Enters*): Good morning.

MRS. SPELDING: Good morning, John.

JOHN: Any sign of your guest?

MRS. SPELDING: Ellen took his breakfast up to him a few minutes ago.

JOHN: They don't seem to be having much luck, do they? I sure hope you don't mind my staying here like this.

Spelding glowers.

MRS. SPELDING: Why, we love having you! I just hope your family aren't too anxious.

JOHN: One of the G.I.'s finally called them, said I was staying here for the week-end.

SPELDING: The rest of our *lives*, if something isn't done soon.

JOHN: Just how long do you think that'll be, Dad?

SPELDING: Who knows?

Kreton and Ellen enter.

KRETON: Ah, how wonderful to see you again! Let me catch my breath. . . . Oh, your minds! It's not easy for me, you know. So many crude thoughts blazing away! Yes, Mrs. Spelding, I will move the ship off your roses.

MRS. SPELDING: That's awfully sweet of you.

KRETON: Mr. Spelding, if any interviews are to be granted you will be the first. I promise you.

SPELDING: That's very considerate, I'm sure.

KRETON: So you can stop thinking *those* particular thoughts.

And now where is the President?

SPELDING: The President?

KRETON: Yes, I sent for him. He should be here. (*He goes to the terrace window*) Ah, that must be he. (*A swarthy man in uniform with a sash across his chest is standing, bewildered, on the terrace. Kreton opens the glass doors*) Come in, sir, come in, Your Excellency. Good of you to come on such short notice. (*Man enters*)

MAN (*In Spanish accent*): Where am I?

KRETON: You *are* the President, aren't you?

MAN: Of course I am the President. What am I doing here? I was dedicating a bridge and I find myself . . .

KRETON (*Aware of his mistake*): Oh, dear! *Where* was the bridge?

MAN: Where do you think, you idiot, in Paraguay!

KRETON (*To others*): I seem to've made a mistake. Wrong President. (*Gestures and the man disappears*) Seemed rather upset, didn't he?

JOHN: You can make people come and go just like that?

KRETON: Just like that.

Powers looks into room from the study.

POWERS: Good morning, Mr. Kreton. Could I see you for a moment?

KRETON: By all means.

He crosses to the study.

SPELDING: I believe I am going mad.

Cut to study. The Aide stands at attention while Powers addresses Kreton.

POWERS: . . . and so we feel, the government of the United States feels, that this problem is too big for any one country, therefore we are turning the whole affair over to Paul Laurent, the Secretary-General of the World Council.

KRETON: Very sensible. I should've thought of that myself.

POWERS: Mr. Laurent is on his way here now. And I may add,

Mr. Kreton, you've made me look singularly ridiculous.

KRETON: I'm awfully sorry. (*Pause*) No, you can't kill me.

POWERS: You were reading my mind again.

KRETON: I can't really help it, you know. And such *black* thoughts today, but intense, very intense.

POWERS: I regard you as a menace.

KRETON: I know you do and I think it's awfully unkind. I do mean well.

POWERS: Then go back where you came from and leave us alone.

KRETON: I'm afraid I can't do that just yet . . .

Phone rings, the Aide answers it.

AIDE: He's outside? Sure, let him through. *(To Powers)* The Secretary-General of the World Council is here, sir.

POWERS *(To Kreton)*: I hope you'll listen to *him*.

KRETON: Oh, I shall, of course. I love listening.

The door opens and Paul Laurent, middle-aged and serene, enters. Powers and his Aide stand to attention. Kreton goes forward to shake hands.

LAURANT: Mr. Kreton?

KRETON: At your service, Mr. Laurent.

LAURENT: I welcome you to this planet in the name of the World Council.

KRETON: Thank you sir, thank you.

LAURENT: Could you leave us alone for a moment, General?

POWERS: Yes, sir.

Powers and Aide go. Laurent smiles at Kreton.

LAURANT: Shall we sit down?

KRETON: Yes, yes I love sitting down. I'm afraid my manners are not quite suitable, yet.

They sit down.

LAURENT: Now, Mr. Kreton, in violation of all the rules of diplomacy, may I come to the point?

KRETON: You may.

LAURENT: Why are you here?

KRETON: Curiosity. Pleasure.

LAURENT: You are a tourist then in this time and place?

KRETON *(Nods)*: Yes. Very well put.

LAURENT: We have been informed that you have extraordinary powers.

KRETON: By your standards, yes, they must seem extraordinary.

LAURENT: We have also been informed that it is your intention to . . . to take charge of this world.

KRETON: That is correct. . . . What a remarkable mind you have! I have difficulty looking inside it.

LAURENT *(Laughs)*: Practice. I've attended so many conferences. . . . May I say that your conquest of our world puts your status of tourist in a rather curious light?

KRETON: Oh, I said nothing about *conquest*.

LAURENT: Then how else do you intend to govern? The people won't allow you to direct their lives without a struggle.

KRETON: But I'm sure they will if I ask them to.

LAURENT: You believe you can do all this without, well, without violence?

KRETON: Of course I can. One or two demonstrations and I'm sure they'll do as I ask. *(Smiles)* Watch this. *(Pause. Then shouting. Powers bursts into room)*

POWERS: Now what've you done?

KRETON: Look out the window, your Excellency. *(Laurent goes to window. A rifle floats by, followed by an alarmed soldier)* Nice isn't it? I confess I worked out a number of rather melodramatic tricks last night. Incidentally, all the rifles of all the soldiers in all the world are now floating in the air. *(Gestures)* Now they have them back.

POWERS *(To Laurent)*: You see, sir, I didn't exaggerate in my report.

LAURENT *(Awed)*: No, no, you certainly didn't.

KRETON: You were skeptical, weren't you?

LAURENT: Naturally. But now I . . . now I think it's possible.

POWERS: That this . . . this gentleman is going to run everything?

LAURENT: Yes, yes I do. And it might be wonderful.

KRETON: You *are* more clever than the others. You begin to see that I mean only good.

LAURENT: Yes, only good. General, do you realize what this means? We can have one government . . .

KRETON: With innumerable bureaus, and intrigue. . . .

LAURENT *(Excited)*: And the world could be incredibly prosperous, especially if he'd help us with his superior knowledge.

KRETON *(Delighted)*: I will, I will. I'll teach you to look into one another's minds. You'll find it devastating but enlightening: all that self-interest, those *lurid* emotions . . .

LAURENT: No more countries. No more wars . . .

KRETON *(Startled)*: What? Oh, but I like a lot of countries. Besides, at this stage of your development you're supposed to have lots of countries and lots of wars . . . innumerable wars . . .

LAURENT: But you can help us change all that.

KRETON: *Change* all that! My dear sir, I am your friend.

LAURENT: What do you mean?

KRETON: Why, your deepest pleasure is violence. How can you deny that? It is the whole point to you, the whole point to my hobby . . . and you are my hobby, all mine.

LAURENT: But our lives are devoted to *controlling* violence, and not creating it.

KRETON: Now, don't take me for an utter fool. After all, I can see into your minds. My dear fellow, don't you *know* what you are?

LAURENT: What are we?

KRETON: You are savages. I have returned to the dark ages of an insignificant planet simply because I want the glorious excitement of being among you and revelling in your savagery! There is murder in all your hearts and I love it! It intoxicates me!

LAURENT (*Slowly*): You hardly flatter us.

KRETON: I didn't mean to be rude but you did ask me why I am here and I've told you.

LAURENT: You have no wish then to . . . to help us poor savages.

KRETON: I couldn't even if I wanted to. You won't be civilized for at least two thousand years and you won't reach the level of my people for about a million years.

LAURENT (*Sadly*): Then you have come here only to . . . to observe?

KRETON: No, more than that. I mean to regulate your past-times. But don't worry: I won't upset things too much. I've decided I don't want to be known to the people. You will go right on with your countries, your squabbles, the way you always have, while I will *secretly* regulate things through you.

LAURENT: The World Council does not govern. We only advise.

KRETON: Well, I shall advise you and you will advise the governments and we shall have a lovely time.

LAURENT: I don't know what to say. You obviously have the power to do as you please.

KRETON: I'm glad you realize that. Poor General Powers is now wondering if a hydrogen bomb might destroy me. It won't, General.

POWERS: Too bad.

KRETON: Now, your Excellency, I shall stay in this house until you have laid the groundwork for my first project.

LAURENT: And what is that to be?

KRETON: A War! I want one of your really splendid wars, with all the trimmings, all the noise and the fire . . .

LAURENT: A war! You're joking. Why at this moment we are working as hard as we know how *not* to have a war.

KRETON: But secretly you want one. After all, it's the one

thing your little race does well. You'd hardly want me to deprive you of your simple pleasures, now would you?

LAURENT: I think you must be mad.

KRETON: Not mad, simply a philanthropist. Of course I myself shall get a great deal of pleasure out of a war (the vibrations must be incredible!) but I'm doing it mostly for you. So, if you don't mind, I want you to arrange a few incidents, so we can get one started spontaneously.

LAURENT: I refuse.

KRETON: In that event, I shall select someone else to head the World Council. Someone who *will* start a war. I suppose there exist a few people here who might like the idea.

LAURENT: How can you do such a horrible thing to us? Can't you see that we don't want to be savages?

KRETON: But you have no choice. Anyway, you're just pulling my leg! I'm sure you want a war as much as the rest of them do and that's what you're going to get: the biggest war you've ever had!

LAURENT (*Stunned*): Heaven help us!

KRETON (*Exuberant*): Heaven won't! Oh, what fun it will be! I can hardly wait! (*He strikes the globe of the world a happy blow as we fade out*)

ACT III

Fade in on the study, two weeks later. Kreton is sitting at desk on which a map is spread out. He has a pair of dividers, some models of jet aircraft. Occasionally he pretends to dive bomb, imitating the sound of a bomb going off. Powers enters.

POWERS: You wanted me, sir?

KRETON: Yes, I wanted those figures on radioactive fall-out.

POWERS: They're being made up now, sir. Anything else?

KRETON: Oh, my dear fellow, why do you dislike me so?

POWERS: I am your military aide, sir: I don't have to answer that question. It is outside the sphere of my duties.
KRETON: Aren't you at least happy about your promotion?
POWERS: Under the circumstances, no, sir.
KRETON: I find your attitude baffling.
POWERS: Is that all, sir?
KRETON: You have never once said what you thought of my war plans. Not once have I got a single word of encouragement from you, a single compliment . . . only black thoughts.
POWERS: Since you read my mind, sir, you know what I think.
KRETON: True, but I can't help but feel that deep down inside of you there is just a twinge of professional jealousy. You don't like the idea of an outsider playing your game better than you do. Now confess!
POWERS: I am acting as your aide only under duress.
KRETON (*Sadly*): Bitter, bitter . . . and to think I chose you especially as my aide. Think of all the other generals who would give anything to have your job.
POWERS: Fortunately, they know nothing about my job.
KRETON: Yes, I do think it wise not to advertise my presence, don't you?
POWERS: I can't see that it makes much difference, since you seem bent on destroying our world.
KRETON: I'm not going to destroy it. A few dozen cities, that's all, and not very nice cities either. Think of the fun you'll have building new ones when it's over.
POWERS: How many millions of people do you plan to kill?
KRETON: Well, quite a few, but they love this sort of thing. You can't convince me they don't. Oh, I know what Laurent says. But he's a misfit, out of step with his time. Fortunately, my new World Council is more reasonable.
POWERS: Paralyzed is the word, sir.
KRETON: You don't think they like me either?
POWERS: You *know* they hate you, sir.
KRETON: But love and hate are so confused in your savage minds and the vibrations of the one are so very like those of the other that I can't always distinguish. You see, we neither love nor hate in my world. We simply have hobbies. (*He strokes the globe of the world tenderly*) But now to work. Tonight's the big night: first, the sneak attack, then: boom! (*He claps his hands gleefully*)

Dissolve to the living room, to John and Ellen.

ELLEN: I've never felt so helpless in my life.

JOHN: Here we all stand around doing nothing while he plans to blow up the world.
ELLEN: Suppose we went to the newspapers.
JOHN: He controls the press. When Laurent resigned they didn't even print his speech. (*A gloomy pause*)
ELLEN: What are you thinking about, John?
JOHN: Walnuts. (*They embrace*)
ELLEN: Can't we do anything?
JOHN: No, I guess there's nothing.
ELLEN (*Vehemently*): Oh! I could kill him!
Kreton and Powers enter.
KRETON: Very good, Ellen, *very* good! I've never felt you so violent.
ELLEN: You heard what I said to John?
KRETON: Not in words, but you were absolutely bathed in malevolence.
POWERS: I'll get the papers you wanted, sir.
Powers exits.
KRETON: I don't think he likes me very much but your father does. Only this morning he offered to handle my public relations and I said I'd let him. Wasn't that nice of him?
JOHN: I think I'll go get some fresh air. (*He goes out through the terrace door*)
KRETON: Oh, dear! (*Sighs*) Only your father is really entering the spirit of the game. He's a much better sport than you, my dear.
ELLEN (*Exploding*): Sport! That's it! You think we're sport. You think we're animals to be played with: well, we're not. We're people and we don't want to be destroyed.
KRETON (*Patiently*): But *I* am not destroying you. You will be destroying one another of your own free will, as you have always done. I am simply a . . . a kibitzer.
ELLEN: No, you are a vampire!
KRETON: A vampire? You mean I drink blood? Ugh!
ELLEN: No, you drink emotions, our emotions. You'll sacrifice us all for the sake of your . . . your vibrations!
KRETON: Touché. Yet what harm am I really doing? It's true I'll enjoy the war more than anybody; but it will be *your* destructiveness after all, not mine.
ELLEN: You could stop it.
KRETON: So could you.
ELLEN: I?
KRETON: Your race. They could stop altogether but they won't. And I can hardly intervene in their natural development. The most I can do is help out in small, practical ways.

ELLEN: We are not what you think. We're not so . . . so primitive.

KRETON: My dear girl, just take this one household: your mother dislikes your father but she is too tired to do anything about it so she knits and she gardens and she tries not to think about him. Your father, on the other hand, is bored with all of you. Don't look shocked: he doesn't like you any more than you like him . . .

ELLEN: Don't say that!

KRETON: I am only telling you the truth. Your father wants you to marry someone important; therefore he objects to John while you, my girl . . .

ELLEN (*With a fierce cry, Ellen grabs vase to throw*): You devill (*Vase breaks in her hand*)

KRETON: You see? That proves my point perfectly. (*Gently*) Poor savage, I cannot help what you are. (*Briskly*) Anyway, you will soon be distracted from your personal problems. Tonight is the night. If you're a good girl, I'll let you watch the bombing.

Dissolve to study: Eleven forty-five. Powers and the Aide gloomily await the war.

AIDE: General, isn't there anything we can do?

POWERS: It's out of our hands.

Kreton, dressed as a Hussar with shako, enters.

KRETON: Everything on schedule?

POWERS: Yes, sir. Planes left for their targets at twenty-two hundred.

KRETON: Good . . . good. I myself, shall take off shortly after midnight to observe the attack first-hand.

POWERS: Yes, sir.

Kreton goes into the living room where the family is gloomily assembled.

KRETON (*Enters from study*): And now the magic hour approaches! I hope you're all as thrilled as I am.

SPELDING: You still won't tell us who's attacking whom?

KRETON: You'll know in exactly . . . fourteen minutes.

ELLEN (*Bitterly*): Are we going to be killed too?

KRETON: Certainly not! You're quite safe, at least in the early stages of the war.

ELLEN: Thank you.

MRS. SPELDING: I suppose this will mean rationing again.

SPELDING: Will . . . will we see anything from here?

KRETON: No, but there should be a good picture on the monitor in the study. Powers is tuning in right now.

JOHN (*At window*): Hey look, up there! Coming this way!

Ellen joins him.

ELLEN: What is it?

JOHN: Why . . . it's *another* one! And it's going to land.

KRETON (*Surprised*): I'm sure you're mistaken. No one would dream of coming here.

He has gone to the window, too.

ELLEN: It's landing!

SPELDING: Is it a friend of yours, Mr. Kreton?

KRETON (*Slowly*): No, no, not a friend . . .

Kreton retreats to the study; he inadvertently drops a lace handkerchief beside the sofa.

JOHN: Here he comes.

ELLEN (*Suddenly bitter*): Now we have two of them.

MRS. SPELDING: My poor roses.

The new Visitor enters in a gleam of light from his ship. He is wearing a most futuristic costume. Without a word, he walks past the awed family into the study. Kreton is cowering behind the globe. Powers and the Aide stare, bewildered, as the Visitor gestures sternly and Kreton reluctantly removes shako and sword. They communicate by odd sounds.

VISITOR (*To Powers*): Please leave us alone.

Cut to living room as Powers and the Aide enter from the study.

POWERS (*To Ellen*): Who on earth was that?

ELLEN: It's another one, another visitor.

POWERS: Now we're done for.

ELLEN: I'm going in there.

MRS. SPELDING: Ellen, don't you dare!

ELLEN: I'm going to talk to them. (*Starts to door*)

JOHN: I'm coming, too.

ELLEN (*Grimly*): No, alone. I know what I want to say.

Cut to interior of the study, to Kreton and the other Visitor as Ellen enters.

ELLEN: I want you both to listen to me . . .

VISITOR: You don't need to speak. I know what you will say.

ELLEN: That you have no right here? That you mustn't . . .

VISITOR: I agree. Kreton has no right here. He is well aware that it is forbidden to interfere with the past.

ELLEN: The past?

VISITOR (*Nods*): You are the past, the dark ages; we are from the future. In fact, we are *your* descendants on another planet. We visit you from time to time but we never interfere because it would change *us* if we did. Fortunately, I have arrived in time.

ELLEN: There won't be a war?

VISITOR: There will be no war. And there will be no memory of any of this. When we leave here you will forget Kreton and me. Time will turn back to the moment before his arrival.

ELLEN: Why did you want to hurt us?

KRETON (*Heart-broken*): Oh, but I didn't! I only wanted to have . . . well, to have a little fun, to indulge my hobby . . . against the rules of course.

VISITOR (*To Ellen*): Kreton is a rarity among us. Mentally and morally he is retarded. He is a child and he regards your period as his toy.

KRETON: A child, now really!

VISITOR: He escaped from his nursery and came back in time to you . . .

KRETON: And *everything* went wrong, everything! I wanted to visit 1860 . . . that's my *real* period but then something happened to the car and I ended up here, not that I don't find you nearly as interesting but . . .

VISITOR: We must go, Kreton.

KRETON (*To Ellen*): You did like me just a bit, didn't you?

ELLEN: Yes, yes I did, until you let your hobby get out of hand. (*To Visitor*) What is the future like?

VISITOR: Very serene, very different . . .

KRETON: Don't believe him: it is dull, dull, dull beyond belief! One simply floats through eternity: no wars, no excitement . . .

VISITOR: It is forbidden to discuss these matters.

KRETON: I can't see what difference it makes since she's going to forget all about us anyway.

ELLEN: Oh, how I'd love to see the future . . .

VISITOR: It is against . . .

KRETON: Against the rules: how tiresome, you are. (*To Ellen*) But, alas, you can never pay us a call because you aren't born yet! I mean where we are you are not. Oh, Ellen, dear, think kindly of me, until you forget.

ELLEN: I will.

VISITOR: Come. Time has begun to turn back. Time is bending. *He starts to door. Kreton turns conspiratorially to Ellen.*

KRETON: Don't be sad, my girl. I shall be back one bright day, but a bright day in 1860. I dote on the Civil War, so exciting . . .

VISITOR: Kreton!

KRETON: Only next time I think it'll be more fun if the *South* wins!
He hurries after the Visitor.

Cut to clock as the hands spin backwards. Dissolve to the living room, exactly the same as the first scene: Spelding, Mrs. Spelding, Ellen.

SPELDING: There is nothing wrong with marrying a wealthy man. The horror of it has always eluded me. However, my only wish is that you marry someone hard-working, ambitious, a man who'll make his mark in the world. Not a boy who is content to sit on a farm all his life, growing peanuts . . .

ELLEN: English walnuts! And he won't just sit there.

SPELDING: Will you stop contradicting me?

ELLEN: But, Daddy, John grows walnuts . . .
John enters.

JOHN: Hello, everybody.

MRS. SPELDING: Good evening, John.

ELLEN: What kept you, darling? You missed Daddy's broadcast.

JOHN: I saw it before I left home. Wonderful broadcast, sir.

SPELDING: Thank you, John.
John crosses to window.

JOHN: That meteor you were talking about, well, for a while it looked almost like a space ship or something. You can just barely see it now.

Ellen joins him at window. They watch, arms about one another.

SPELDING: Space ship! Nonsense! Remarkable what some people will believe, *want* to believe. Besides, as I said in the broadcast: if there's any traveling to be done in space we'll do it first.
He notices Kreton's handkerchief on sofa and picks it up. They all look at it, puzzled, as we cut to stock shot of the starry night against which two space ships vanish in the distance, one serene in its course, the other erratic, as we fade out.