

WHERE THERE'S LIFE....

Phil Lewis

Future drama, romance, suspense, thriller, adventure

The world has been destroyed by a virus and the survivors are fighting a losing battle to stay alive. Humans have become infertile - or so a section of the commune will have the rest believe. The once large commune divides and self-destructs, leaving Pascoe a solitary figure in the world. To survive he has to sacrifice everything. The love his life, friendship and above all - trust in fellow man. There is a continuous tension in the play as hopes are raised and dashed.

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WHERE THERE'S LIFE....

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Time - Sometime tomorrow

Act 1 - TAPE 5

Act 2 - TAPE 6

Location - The suburbs of London

Author's note

There are acts of violence within this play.

I believe they are within the context of the story and would be credible should the circumstances described, arise.

CAST

PASCOE

NEWSCASTER *

MARIAN

HAYES

SYKES

FREWIN

MORRIS

CHAPMAN

REID

HARRIS

DIXON

FARROW

THORPE

RODGERS

ADAMS

WESTON

JOHNSON

VOICE *

VIVIAN

TOMMY

* Recorded voices

ACT 1 TAPE 5

THE SET DEPICTS A ROOM PREPARED TO WITHSTAND A SIEGE. IT IS FULL OF BOXES LABELLED WITH WELL-KNOWN BRANDS OF FOOD AND DRINK. BOOKS AND PIECES OF EQUIPMENT FILL EVERY AVAILABLE SPACE. INCLUDED IN THE BACK WALL IS A T.V. WHICH IS CONNECTED TO A VIDEO RECORDER. THERE IS ONE CHAIR WHICH FACES THE AUDIENCE. ONE ENTRANCE (RIGHT) LEADS TO THE BEDROOM/KITCHEN ETC. ANOTHER (LEFT) IS THE FRONT DOOR TO THE OUTSIDE. THE ROOM (WHAT LITTLE CAN BE SEEN OF ITS ORIGINAL STYLE) IS OF A MODERN SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE IN LONDON'S SUBURBS. THE FRONT DOOR IS HEAVILY BOLTED AND CAN BE BARRACADED BY ACCESSIBLE, MOVEABLE FURNITURE. THE ROOM IS IN DARKNESS.

(OPENING MUSIC)

Scene 1. THE ROOM

PASCOE (OFF) Shit!

(THERE ARE MECHANICAL NOISES OFFSTAGE A GENERATOR STARTS UP SLOWLY AND BUILDS INTO A BACKGROUND HUM. SEVERAL SMALL LIGHTS AND THE T.V. FLICKER ON. THERE IS NO BROADCAST ON THE T.V. ONLY 'SNOW'. PASCOE ENTERS. HE IS DRESSED IN WARM CLOTHES, PRACTICAL BUT COMFORTABLE.

(ANNOYED WITH HIMSELF) You're slipping, you stupid bastard. Letting it run out of fuel.

(HE SWITCHES ON THE VIDEO PLAYER AND PRESSES PLAY. A RECORDING STARTS SHOWING A 'NEWSFLASH'. PASCOE STANDS IN FRONT OF THE SCREEN SO THAT THE AUDIENCE CAN ONLY HEAR THE SOUNDTRACK)

NEWSCASTER Good evening. This is Raymond LLOYD, ITN News. We've just received a report of an aircraft crash in Surrey. A Harrier of the Royal Air Force has been in collision with a small private plane. The mid-air crash occurred in misty conditions and the wreckage of both aircraft has fallen onto a government laboratory and partly destroyed the complex. The number of dead is not yet known, but a spokesman from the centre estimates that there were still fifty people inside the building when the two aircraft collided. A spokesman for the Ministry of Defense has said that there might be some contamination from escaped gases and that people in the area should only drink bottled fluids and eat only canned foods until further notice. The spokesman went on to say that these recommendations were only a precautionary measure and for a temporary duration. That is the end of this Newsflash. This is Raymond Lloyd, ITN News.

THE TAPE CONTINUES INTO THE NEXT PROGRAMME AS PASCOE STOPS AND REWINDS THE TAPE. THE T.V. GOES BACK TO 'SNOW'. WITHOUT ANY SHOW OF EMOTION HE OPENS A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE AND DRINKS STRAIGHT FROM THE BOTTLE. HE

SITS IN THE ARM CHAIR AND PICKS UP A REMOTE CONTROLLED HANDSET AND PRESSES A BUTTON. AN AUDIO CASSETTE STARTS. HE LISTENS FOR A MOMENT THEN WINDS THE TAPE BACK A SHORT WAY, THEN PLAYS THE TAPE WHICH IS OF HIS OWN RECORDED VOICE. DURING THE TAPE HE SHOWS VERY LITTLE EMOTION. EVENTUALLY HE GETS UP TO OPEN A PACKET OF BISCUITS WHICH ARE STALE. HE THROWS THEM AWAY IN DISGUST. FINALLY FINDS SOMETHING EDIBLE AND SITS AND LISTENS TO TAPE.

TAPE 5 was the main cause of the troubles. I had made my stand on the issue that the survival of our commune, as a whole, must take priority over any individual. As I explained earlier in this tape, Baxter made the mistake of trying to force himself as overall authority in the traditional military coup style. He died for his efforts. It made the point that violence was no longer laying beneath the surface. The camp became divided, neither faction trusting the other. I thought I saw a solution, through Marian. As our only medically trained colleague, she was accepted by both parties. My opportunity eventually arose. After she had returned from a particularly bad sortie, I took her into my home for a drink.

(FADE FROM ROOM TO SCENE 2)

Scene 2. The Meeting Room

(MARIAN IS SEATED AS THE LIGHTS COME UP. PASCOE ENTERS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PREVIOUS SCENE. CARRYING A BOTTLE OF BRANDY AND TWO GLASSES. SILENTLY THEY DRINK.)

PASCOE Better?

MARIAN A bit. Thanks.

PASCOE (PAUSE) Bad trip?

MARIAN I can't go out there any more, John

PASCOE Why?

MARIAN I can't bear to see them.

PASCOE We knew it would get worse.

MARIAN But there's nothing more I can do for them. I just can't handle it.

PASCOE Alright, don't get yourself worked up. (POURS MORE BRANDY)

MARIAN The Beaconscroft Estate, only two miles away, twelve people left, that's all. Bodies everywhere. Rats are swarming. I saw a bite radius of over an inch today. I can't continue pumping morphine, what good is it really doing?

PASCOE You can ease their pain.

MARIAN But I'm suffering too! What harm is all this doing to me?

PASCOE You're the only qualified medical help we have left. You're in more demand now than ever you were in hospital. Your success is vital now.

MARIAN I'm barely a qualified nurse. I'm not mentally prepared for this kind of commitment. My life's at risk every time I leave this commune. I'm fair game for any wandering psychopath, or organised Roamer. I have to be careful where I walk, where I go, who I see. Every action I take. I can only take so much responsibility. They're killing me.

PASCOE We're all dying, Marian.

MARIAN Nothing wrong with you.

PASCOE Not yet. I'm one of the lucky ones.

MARIAN I'm not stopping it, John. I'm not even slowing it down.

PASCOE What would you say to the two of us starting up on our own?

MARIAN Just the two of us?

PASCOE Away from here. Somewhere quiet.

MARIAN But you were the one who fought to make us all into one self-contained unit.

PASCOE Things have changed. Especially the people.

MARIAN John, you convinced us all that survival would be through combining all available facilities, abilities, knowledge and effort. You were right!

PASCOE Only up to a point. All our efforts here are wasted We're becoming split up, counter-effective. All vying against each other. It's no longer working.

MARIAN And us leaving, will that improve the situation here? Will that save lives?

PASCOE It might save ours.

MARIAN When we were all running around in panic. You pulled us together. You had the drive, imagination and strength to make us into a workable commune. Our quality of life is only barely acceptable, but it's a damn sight better than any of us would've had out there if left on our own. YOU did all that. Don't go changing your mind now. What we need now are... are dreamers. People with the imagination, foresight and character to see a way out of this mess. Someone to see it through.

PASCOE See it through? Like you're doing?

MARIAN Come on. You know exactly what I mean. My situation is different.

PASCOE It's no different. You've just given up on your chosen task. No desire left to see it through.

MARIAN I've just told you why I can't go back out there. I feel my value is within THIS commune. We are surviving, just. They're dying out there. Doesn't that tell you that your ideals are right?

PASCOE I can't see through an ideal on my own. We must all pull together, or it's just not going to work.

MARIAN I know that. Christ, we all know that.

PASCOE (HE POURS MORE BRANDY FOR HER THEN STARTS TO LEAVE) I'm not going to stay here and watch everyone pull themselves to pieces. (HE MOVES TO EXIT) Dreamers eh? More like a bloody nightmare.

(PASCOE EXITS TO SIT BACK IN HIS CHAIR. MARIAN DRINKS, AS THE LIGHTS FADE TO SCENE 3)

Scene 3. THE ROOM

(PASCOE IS SEATED DRINKING AND LISTENING TO THE TAPE)

TAPE 5 Marian never made another mercy mission again. Within a week Beaconscroft ceased to exist as a community. Marian wasn't told. She was at breaking point. Even so, I felt no guilt about tricking her into believing I might leave because of the unrest with the community. I hoped that her loyalty and respect for us all would spur her into action. If anyone was to have a real effect at peace-making, it was her. But only if she wanted to, badly enough.

(FADE TO SCENE 4)

Scene 4. THE MEETING ROOM.

(SEATED AROUND THE TABLE ARE HAYES, SYKES AND FREWIN. MARIAN STANDS IN OBVIOUS FRUSTRATION)

MARIAN We can argue all night over irrelevancies.

HAYES Survival policy is not irrelevant!

MARIAN What we have here is an urgent problem.

SYKES We see your point, but your reasons...?

MARIAN (ATTEMPTING PATIENCE) Despite our differences we must surely acknowledge the principle of a united community, if we are to survive.

HAYES But a system of leadership is...

SYKES It's not a matter...

MARIAN Shut up. Sidetracking is not going to help. Pascoe brought us this far. Each of you think you can take us the rest of

the way. But who better than Pascoe is going to implement and arrange these ideas?

SYKES It's not a matter of who should have the name of Leader, it's...

MARIAN I'm tired of all this bickering. We are as valuable as each other as long as we each contribute. If we fail to pull together, then we deserve to go to the wall. Pascoe says he wants to leave. If you let this happen...then I go with him. (THERE IS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE)

HAYES You can't just leave us.

MARIAN If you fail to come to a common agreement I'll know that Pascoe's right and this commune is doomed. I'll have no conscience about leaving.

SYKES Blackmail.

MARIAN If you like.

SYKES You're bluffing.

MARIAN Maybe. If this is what it takes, I'll do it. Now, decisions. Talk it through, but remember. We're all affected by this. This is not a battle ground for your egos. We need one authority. I insist it's Pascoe. Now, if you don't mind, I'm very tired.

(THEY BEGIN TO LEAVE. FREWIN STAYS BEHIND)

FREWIN (NOT UNKINDLY) A socialist environment is all very well, but, man is still a predatory animal. The strong will take from the weak. Survival of the fittest.

MARIAN There's still common sense left.

FREWIN One look outside will make you change your mind. We've gone back a few thousands years, Marian. And some of us have reverted quicker than others.

MARIAN Common sense MUST prevail.

FREWIN Civilization has always been but a thin veneer. What's needed in this commune is to weed out those whose veneer has gone. (HE BEGINS TO EXIT. LIGHTS COME UP TO SHOW PASCOE IN CHAIR)

MARIAN But who's going to do the weeding?

(FREWIN EXITS AS LIGHTS GO DOWN ON TABLE. WE SEE PASCOE MOUTH MARIAN'S LAST LINE '*But who's going to do the weeding?*' AS IF DEEP IN REMEMBRANCE. HE PRESSES A BUTTON AND THE TAPE STOPS. HE SMILES)

Scene 5. THE ROOM

PASCOE And in the end it was good old Marian. At just the right time she forgot her Hippocratic oath. To you my love (HE

RAISES THE BOTTLE AND SWITCHES THE TAPE
BACK ON)

TAPE 5 In the following weeks the trouble makers were singled out. Each died quietly and without fuss. Nobody suspected and nobody seemed to miss them. Dying was just a part of life in those days. Marian explained away each case with technical competency. People never fail to amaze me. The commune held together and winter came to an end. Spring was coming, bringing hope and promise for the future.

Scene 6. THE MEETING ROOM/THE ROOM

(MARIAN IS SEATED ALONE AT THE TABLE)

MARIAN John, I've taken life instead of preserving it. It's very hard to live with something like that.

PASCOE (SPEAKING FROM HIS CHAIR IN THE DARKNESS – TALKING ACROSS TIME) By taking only a few lives you've saved many. There was no better way, for either of us.

MARIAN Words can't excuse my actions.

PASCOE Time will. Look out of the window. (SHE MOVES AND LOOKS OUT) We're all still here.

MARIAN We're all still dying.

PASCOE Where there's life.....

MARIAN There's hope?

PASCOE What else is there?

(FADE TO SCENE 7)

Scene 7. THE ROOM

TAPE 5 (AS HE RISES FROM THE CHAIR) The peace lasted only a few months. (HE OPENS ANOTHER BOTTLE) Then the same old power struggle started again. For years we lived a hand to mouth existence. Why anyone needed to fight for leadership for a bunch like us is beyond me. Frewin was right, we were degenerating into barbarians. Despite our well meaning efforts, the commune was falling apart. One night a group of us slipped away before the eliminations became less subtle. I knew then that a smaller, more compact and dedicated unit needed to evolve. Once again I found myself the elected leader. Only this time by people who saw a future and intended to be alive to enjoy it.

(FADE TO SCENE 8)

Scene 8. THE MEETING ROOM?THE ROOM

(MORRIS AND SYKES ARE SEATED. MORRIS IS DIRTY AND DISHEVELLED. SYKES IS WRITING A REPORT)

MORRIS I only managed to get about five miles out this time.

SYKES Roads bad?

MORRIS Yeah, mainly bad. There may be less people than ever, but those that are you've got to be really careful with. And the dogs! I shot four yesterday and one of the bastards got me in the leg on the way back here.

SYKES Get it seen to quickly.

MORRIS It's alright, Marian has stuffed one of her needles into me already.

SYKES How about supplies?

MORRIS Good luck there. Found a warehouse. Undamaged, would you believe.

SYKES And the stock (BENDS OVER HIS LEDGERS WITH RENEWED EXCITEMENT)

MORRIS You name it, Sykesy.

SYKES Fuel?

MORRIS Yep. Stacks of it. Oil fired boilers, storage tanks full.

SYKES Water?

MORRIS Cases of it. By the hundreds.

SYKES Meat?

MORRIS Masses.

SYKES You did well.

MORRIS Ta. One other thing.

SYKES What?

MORRIS Ammo.

SYKES In a warehouse?

MORRIS No. Nearby. A private collection, Look (FROM HIS CLOTHING HE TAKES OUT A MACHINE PISTOL AND WORKS THE MECHANISM. HE EXPERTLY RELOADS THE GUN)

SYKES We'd better start getting as much stock back here as we can.

MORRIS No rush. The warehouse is inaccessible.

SYKES Great! Our biggest find for years and we can't get at it.

MORRIS Sykesy, I didn't say it was inaccessible to us. I managed to get a big artic lorry started and parked it across the main entrance. Pulled the necessary bits from the mota (HE LITTERS THE TABLE WITH IGNITION LEADS ROTOR ARM ETC) and now its our own vault.

SYKES Clever. But I'd be happier if the stuff was safe here. If the Roamers get a sniff they'll tear the truck apart just to get at the goods.

MORRIS Don't worry. I'll organise something for tomorrow.

SYKES (STANDS) I'll see Pascoe now and tell him.

MORRIS Good. I'd like a word with him too. (SYKES BEGINS TO EXIT)

MORRIS I noticed the barricades are coming on.

SYKES Pascoe estimates electrification within a week or so. He's worked non-stop on those generators, so by tomorrow we'll have all the power we need.

MORRIS Great, it's getting just like home.

SYKES (SHARPLY) It'll never be that.

MORRIS Sorry. After the outside, this is like home to me. Funny old life, in' it? Electricity by tomorrow you say. Then what?

SYKES What do you mean?

MORRIS Just how long can he keep all that up? He's our only electrician. So if he over does it and flakes out, where will we all be? Knee deep in generators and no power.

SYKES You tell him yourself that he should take it easier. We've all had a go at him. He won't listen to any of us, not even Marian.

MORRIS I'll 'ave a go. I'll just get washed up a bit first and something decent to eat. (HE INDICATES THE BOTTLE OF WHISKY ON THE TABLE) May I?

SYKES Help yourself, you've earned it.

MORRIS Ta. There's cases of this too.

SYKES Yes, well, take it easy with that stuff. (EXITS)

MORRIS Easy? Too bloody right mate. Six days of living out there (DRINKS DEEPLY) I'm going to sleep for the first week, drink for the second and then... I'll see how I feel. (HE PUTS HIS FEET ON THE TABLE AND DRINKS AGAIN) Just like home.

(LIGHTS FADE TO A DIMLY LIT PASCOE STILL LISTENING TO THE TAPE)

TAPE 5 I believed that contact with the outside world would be an important source of knowledge, and knowledge leads to survival. Ultimately I foresaw a rebuilding of society by the unification of some of the more successful communes. Each learning from each other's development. We needed to continue the search for other suitable communes. But as time wore on I realized that the world outside was changing too fast. Old Mother Nature was back in the driving seat. Weeds and animals were man's enemies once again. (SLOW FADE TO BLACKOUT STARTS) While the few humans that were left, roamed the countryside looking for relief from their misery with easy pickings. Just killing time before time killed them.

(LIGHTS TO FULL BACK AT THE TABLE. FADE OUT PASCOE. MORRIS IS BECOMING DRUNK AND COMPLETELY RELAXED. PASCOE ENTERS HURRIDLY FROM HIS CHAIR)

PASCOE Just heard, well done.

MORRIS Ta. More by luck than judgment though.

PASCOE Are the roads good enough to get a truck out there?

MORRIS Not too bad.

PASCOE How long would you reckon?

MORRIS A day, with three of us.

PASCOE Take four, fully armed. There's an increase of activity out there. Not worth taking chances. Did you notice any roamers?

MORRIS Now you mention it, yeah.

PASCOE (COLDLY) It's a scout's job to notice these things.

MORRIS Blame it on fatigue.

PASCOE If it WAS fatigue. (AS HE REACHES FOR THE BOTTLE AGAIN, PASCOE SNATCHES IT AWAY)

(IN A REACTIVE MOVEMENT A GUN HAS APPEARED IN MORRIS'S HAND AND IT POINTS AT PASCOE'S HEAD. PASCOE FREEZES UNTIL MORRIS CAN RELAX)

MORRIS Sorry. (THE GUN IS PUT ON THE TABLE) After six days....you're reflexes...

PASCOE I'm the one that should say sorry (POURS TWO DRINKS). It's just that... I don't know how much longer we can risk sending people out. Information of the outside world is vital.

MORRIS (AFTER A QUIET MOMENTS DRINKING) You should try it out there, for a day or two. You'll never send anyone out

there again. I'll tell you, two eyes are not enough. The humans, funnily enough are not too much of a problem, you only have to avoid them seeing you. But the dogs are the bastards. Silent, hungry and mean. They move day and night now. (DRINKS).

PASCOE Where do you sleep?

MORRIS Sometimes hotel rooms, there are still many not vandalised. It's O.K. if you lock the door. But, if the dogs hear or smell you they'll scratch at the door all night. You can never sleep well, and they're waiting for you in the morning. Shoot them and you'll get people coming. (DRINKS) The Landrover's the best. It's cold and uncomfortable but at least you can drive away if trouble comes. No fires, no noise, or lights. Never advertise where you are. I had to shoot a man yesterday. He was after the Rover. No, it was the day before. Oh, I can't remember. (INTENTLY TO PASCOE) You have to concentrate on personal survival. No help out there. You haven't got a lot of time or energy to notice what's going on over the hill. Far too busy to look for people, movement, or sunsets.

PASCOE I see.

MORRIS Not fully you don't. You can't. I don't know if I can make many more of these sorties myself, it's too hard on the nerves. It's like coming back from a war. Like coming home.

PASCOE Well you're HOME now. Get some rest. I'll get someone else to do the pick-up tomorrow.

MORRIS No, I'll do it. Finish the job. None of you'll find the place anyway. A bath, food and a good kip. That's all I need.

PASCOE (STANDS TO LEAVE) I've put myself on the scouting roster seventeen times, but was voted off. I'm apparently too valuable. You're the best scout we have. Don't give up on us now.

MORRIS There's a reason I wanted to see you.

PASCOE Yes?

MORRIS Remember that band of Roamers we herd about, the crowd using an army vehicle. (PASCOE STRUGGLES TO REMEMBER) Armored Personnel Carrier it was. You know, an A.P.C. They wiped out a commune over Guildford way. (PASCOE REMEMBERS) Raped everyone in sight, killed everything that moved and took what they could when they left.

PASCOE Yes, I remember.

MORRIS Well, there's a chance they're heading this way.

PASCOE Why didn't you mention this sooner? Why didn't you radio in?

MORRIS They could be monitoring broadcasts. They'd pinpoint our position. Besides, I wanted to tell just you, no need to alarm everyone, eh?

PASCOE From which direction?

MORRIS North.

PASCOE How many of them?

MORRIS I over-heard someone talking, it could be a false alarm.

PASCOE How many?

MORRIS About twenty.

PASCOE Eighteen of us. If only the fence was ready.

MORRIS The A.P.C. would only drive right through it.

PASCOE We'll have to close-up shop for a while. No lights, move only at night. They may pass us by. We're just not ready for this.

(PASCOE EXITS. MORRIS FINISHES HIS DRINK AND STANDS SHAKILY TO HIS FEET. HE PRODUCES VARIOUS WEAPONS FROM ALL PARTS OF HIS CLOTHING AND CHECKS THAT ALL THE GUNS ARE LOADED AND WORKING. HE STARTS TO EXIT THEN COMES BACK FOR THE BOTTLE. EXITS. FADE TO SCENE 9)

Scene 9. THE ROOM

(PASCOE IS MAKING A COFFEE)

TAPE 5 The band of Roamers came at us next morning. Williams, Reynolds, Atkins, Roberts, Jefferson and Smith died in the fighting. As looters went they were not very organised and we WERE ready for them. Those of them that survived fled. Those that stayed, we buried. (HE EXITS TO RETURN WITH A BOTTLE OF BRANDY WHICH HE POURS INTO THE HOT COFFEE) Morris and the others left in the armored car. The A.P.C. returned later with only two men left alive. See my written reports for details. Both Morris and Osbourne had been killed in a Roamer ambush. Wills and Hutchins had to leave the bulk of supplies behind. It was the A.P.C. that the gang were after this time. It has become a hindrance rather than a help. (THE TAPE SOUNDS AS IF IT HAS BEEN SWITCHED OFF THEN ON AGAIN) The only organisations that are flourishing at this time seem to be the Roamer gangs. They just take what they want contributing nothing to life. Their main interests are weapons and women, and they take both by force. I don't think the Vikings could do a better job. (HE HAS RETURNED TO HIS CHAIR TO LISTEN, WARMING HIS HANDS ON THE CUP). We were down to eleven people. This was no way to raise mankind to its feet. Something had to be done to inject life into us all.

(FADE TO SCENE 10)

Scene 10. THE MEETING ROOM

(SEATED AROUND THE TABLE ARE MARIAN AND CHAPMAN. SYKES AND HARRIS ENTER LEADING A BLINDFOLDED ALLISON REID, SHE IS SEATED AT THE TABLE AND THE BLINDFOLD REMOVED)

REID The cautious approach, eh?

SYKES We've learnt to be careful. We're very selective with who we show around our home. Where's Pascoe?

CHAPMAN I'll get him. (EXITS)

MARIAN (AFTER A PAUSE) Are you well?

REID (CONFIDENT) Yes, thank you. And you?

MARIAN You have no diseases, viral infections? Nothing contagious?

REID Not that I know of.

MARIAN May I examine you?

REID Why?

MARIAN I'm a nurse.

REID (RELUCTANT) Alright, nurse.

MARIAN (BEGINING TO EXAMINE EYES, EARS ETC.) I'm a nurse by qualification. A doctor, surgeon and psychiatrist by necessity.

REID (MARIAN IS HAVING TROUBLE WITH THE STILL SEATED RELUCTANT PATIENT, WHO IS TRYING TO COVER HER EMBARRASMENT AND SHOW SOME AUTHORITY) Well? What are we all waiting for?

SYKES Pascoe.

REID Your leader?

HARRIS He doesn't particularly like the term 'Leader'.

REID Lord, or Master, then? King - God? Any of those he'd prefer?

PASCOE (ENTERING WITH CHAPMAN) How about John? Pleased to meet you. Very good of you to come. (HE WARMLY SHAKES HER HAND AND SHE IS THROWN BY THE PLEASANTRIES) I hope you've been looked after?

REID Yes, sort of.

PASCOE Good. (HE SITS) Introductions. I see by the way she's fondling you, that you've met Millar. This is Sykes,

responsible for supply and records. Harris, security. And Chapman, our construction genius. We regard ourselves as a responsible committee. We encourage last name familiarity, with only a few exceptions (LOOKS AT MARIAN). Heredity may be an important issue in the future. So, first names don't hold much interest nowadays. And you are?

REID What?

PASCOE Your name, please.

REID Oh! Reid. If it's not TOO irrelevant, Allison.

SYKES E.I. and two I's? (SHE NODDS)

PASCOE Right. Off we go. (HE NODS TO SYKES)

SYKES What's your position in your commune?

REID Pardon?

SYKES You know. Lord, Mistress, Queen - Goddess?

REID Duly elected tyrant.

SYKES (WRITING) Total number of occupants in your commune?

REID Twenty five.

SYKES Proportion of male to female?

REID What's all this for?

SYKES Records. We're now making history every minute we live. You'll want your grandchildren to be aware of your contribution to man's revival, wouldn't you?

REID Is he serious?

CHAPMAN Of course.

REID This is all a bit presumptuous, isn't it?

HARRIS We work toward the survival of our race. With proper records we can analyse our development and recognise our mistakes.

REID Were you in, marketing?

CHAPMAN Should other communes survive we can compare their development and so improve everyone's lot even further.

REID Is it worth it?

CHAPMAN We think so.

REID What is it you want from me?

HARRIS It's a matter of safety in numbers.

REID We have enough in our commune, why should we combine. Why do we need you?

HARRIS We're thinking more along the lines of us needing you?

REID You want our women.

HARRIS We have good defensive position here. Security, excellent supply management. Good health, thanks to our doctor here.

REID Nurse.

HARRIS If you prefer...nurse...and a well balanced attitude to survival.

REID (TO SYKES) Got all that down?

SYKES All the important bits, yes.

REID Very holiday brochure. You have everything except fresh women?

HARRIS We're looking towards the future. Man must have heirs.

REID Breeding! You're on about bloody breeding! (TO SYKES) Two e's in breeding.

HARRIS For some time we have risked our lives to find a commune with a high proportion of women. We found you.

REID So, we've survived all this time to only become breeding stock?

CHAPMAN Nuptial traditions will be observed, naturally.

REID Naturally. They'll be brief and meaningless and on with the main event of the evening. The answer, gentlemen, is no. (TO SYKES) N.O.

PASCOE (AFTER A PAUSE) Is she fit and well, Marian?

MARIAN She'll do.

PASCOE Harris. (PASCOE NODS FOR HIM TO CONTINUE)

HARRIS I would point out to you just how vulnerable your commune really is. Positionally, you're wide open to a breach attack from the west.

REID (ON THE DEFENCIVE) We've booby-trapped that entrance.

HARRIS Two of our men slipped through that way last night. Just an experimental sortie, you understand. You have no communications set-up.

REID Don't need it.

HARRIS Communication is vital. You have no way of being warned of any Roamer activity in your area.

REID We have permanent lookouts.

HARRIS So you do. Our men went passed them last night as well.

CHAPMAN The structure housing your generator is leaking. The equipment will soon get damaged. Can you repair it?

REID We have done without power in the past. Tomorrow's problems don't interest us.

HARRIS To the south are two gangs of Roamers. If we found you, so can they.

REID We're armed.

HARRIS They're determined. You'll be raped and murdered, Miss Reid.

REID In that order, do you think?

HARRIS None of us would like either of those things to happen to you.

REID It's a chance we all have to take.

HARRIS The alternative is to combine with us. We'll protect and look after you all. Keep you healthy and as happy as possible.

REID In return for being your whores.

HARRIS In return for being...in the case of the women...mothers.

PASCOE You will all be expected to work. You will all contribute to the running of the commune. No-one sits on one function here.

HARRIS That's the deal.

REID I'll think about it and let you know. (STANDS)

HARRIS Sorry. Just send for the rest of your people. We'll help them move.

REID So, I never had a choice?

HARRIS None at all.

PASCOE The Roamers will be with you within days. We had to act quickly.

REID Are you sure God wouldn't suit you better?

(FADE TO SCENE 11)

Scene 11. THE ROOM

(PASCOE HAS FALLEN ASLEEP IN HIS CHAIR HOLDING HIS MUG)

TAPE 5 As we were transporting Reid's people, we were hit by a Roamer gang. Our A.P.C. saved the day by running the gauntlet for the others to follow. We suffered only a few casualties and no fatalities. As usual, full details recorded. This fight on the run tactic was becoming part of a day's work. It was only as the newcomers were settling in did the real headaches start. Their commune consisted of all females. Now, all of a sudden, we had too many women.

Scene 12. OUTSIDE

(PASCOE, MARIAN AND REID ARE STANDING)

MARIAN We now have four women to every man. In a normal world that would satisfy most male fantasies, but here it presents a danger. We must ensure the men don't become animals and the women do not feel abused. Our drive towards conception must not lead to carnal excesses.

(PASCOE ENTERS)

PASCOE Neither must it become only a duty. It must be functional AND fun.

REID Worked it all out have you?

PASCOE Yes.

REID What do you suggest?

PASCOE We must act quickly, the natives are getting restless. We must organise a system of allocation.

REID Matchmaking?

PASCOE More peacemaking, I thought.

MARIAN If it can be established quietly and without fuss, four women must be allocated to each man. Any couples that are unsuccessful may be rotated to find the best combination.

REID This gets worse. Drawing lots is better than this cold calculating approach.

PASCOE Allison, (MARIAN REACTS TO THIS USE OF REID'S FIRST NAME) we're trying to avoid a free-for-all. We're supposed to act responsibly, but this bloody virus has certainly been selective. There is no way we can please everybody, there can be no real finesse in the way we do this.

REID And marital arrangements? Number one wife, number two wife. A pecking order?

MARIAN When a couple prove to be productive they may have any marital arrangements they wish.

REID As a reward for good screwing.

PASCOE I suggest that you both talk to the other women. I don't want the men to have to choose.

REID (STANDS AND HOLDS HIS STARE) Right! I have to make my choice too?

PASCOE Of course. If you're up to it.

REID I've already decided who not to have.

PASCOE Good.

REID (AS SHE EXITS) And that only leaves one.

(MARIAN LOOKS FOR PASCOE'S REACTION. HE SMILES IN PUZZLEMENT UNTIL HE CATCHES MARIAN'S HARD STARE. AS IT DAWNS ON HIM REID'S REMARK, HE BECOMES EMBARRASED)

(FADE TO BLACKOUT)

TAPE 5 (IN THE BLACKOUT) After six months we had a big party to celebrate the fifteen confirmed pregnancies. A few months later the first child was born and the rest followed quickly. (THERE IS A FALTER IN HIS VOICE) All were born dead. It was the hardest thing we'd had to accept. (PAUSE) For some it was too much to bear.

Scene 13. THE BEDROOM

(REID IS LYING ON THE BED AND MARIAN HAS JUST FINISHED AN INJECTION)

MARIAN Rest a while, that'll calm you down.

REID I doubt it. (STANDS TO LEAVE)

REID Why has all this happened?

MARIAN Wish I knew.

REID I can't go through all this again, Marian I really can't.

MARIAN (SITS) We'll see. You'll get over the depression part soon enough. It's all very natural you know. If it helps, I'll have a word with John. A second failed pregnancy entitles you to a break.

REID We're all losing children. Nothing LIVES anymore.

MARIAN Come on. Don't lose hope now. (STANDS)

REID (HOLDS MARIAN'S HAND TO STOP HER GOING) Have you had children?

MARIAN No.

REID Oh, I thought that you and John might have.....

MARIAN No. I can't have children. Medically impossible. One of the reasons I took to nursing. Surrogate motherhood and all that.

REID John knows all this?

MARIAN Yes, of course. I told him when we first met. He never mentioned it again.

REID I never wanted children at all. Most of them wanted kids and it would've worked out very well if...It's asking too much of us all now.

MARIAN We'll manage.

REID Can't YOU persuade him that there's no use to carry on? It's obvious that it's not going to work.

MARIAN He still has hope that just one combination might work. It's keeping him going.

REID What if women can't have children, ever again?

MARIAN He would fall apart at the seams if you convinced him of that. We would all end up like those out there. You'll change your mind. You'll see.

REID But I've made up my mind.

MARIAN As long as there's a chance, Pascoe won't give you a choice.

REID That's becoming the story of my life.

(FADE TO SCENE 14)

Scene 14. THE ROOM

TAPE 5. I have just returned from the hospital room and have admitted defeat. The women are no longer psychologically able to continue with the conception programme. Yet there are still so many permutations left. Some are in a state of complete mental and physical exhaustion. Some have undergone severe personality changes, others had nervous breakdowns. I never thought it would come to this. All this pain. Could I have been so wrong? I'll put Sykes onto documenting. (THERE IS THE SOUND OF A DISTANT SHOT)

(PASCOE WAKES UP IN HIS CHAIR, LISTENS AND REACTS SILENTLY)

(IN THE DISTANCE VOICES BEGIN SHOUTING AND CALLING PASCOE'S NAME. WE HEAR HIS HURRIED DEPARTURE FROM THE MIKE. THERE IS CONFUSION, A SCREAM TAKEN UP BY OTHERS. AFTER A TIME WE HEAR HIM RETURN. THE MIKE IS SWITCHED OFF AND ON AGAIN. HE IS CRYING) Allison has just shot herself. She has indicated that it is in protest. I can't continue now...(THE MIKE IS SWITCHED OFF)

(PASCOE SWITCHES OFF THE TAPE IN ANGER. HE POURS A BRANDY AND DRINKS DEEPLY. SLIGHTLY CALMER HE MOVES TO A