

## Writing Sample 02 by Scott Selden

' COMMON TIME ' teleplay

### Synopsis

Based on the short story by James Blish, intrepid astronaut Garrard Formosa navigates deep space tasked with a deadly mission.

### Sample contents

Initiating hyperspace transit forces Garrard into an life and death struggle.

17 pages

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

Metallic thunder rattles Garrard's focus as the ship powers to its fullest potential.

JEAN (V.O.)  
Propulsion schema online.

GARRARD  
Reaffirm alignment.

Overhead lights switch to emergency hazards, plunging the cabin into darkness.

JEAN (V.O.)  
Alignment confirmed. Coordinates  
are correct.

Garrard assesses what he's seeing and nods.

GARRARD  
Assume command and initiate launch  
sequence.

JEAN (V.O.)  
Affirmative.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM**

Turbines shriek like pressure cookers, throttling their frames.

**EXT. OUTER SPACE**

The rails detach from safety clamps and rotate freely, gaining speed. Exhaust panels slip loose from the ship's hull and reveal warming engine coils beneath.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

The walls tremble while Garrard sweats wide-eyed.

JEAN (V.O.)  
Thirty seconds.

**EXT. OUTER SPACE**

The rails coalesce into an odd symmetry while the engines burn bright.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

The bird skirts nervously under so much sound.

JEAN (V.O.)  
Ten seconds.

Garrard winces, girding himself for what's next.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM**

Ignition pins FIRE in a chain reaction-

**EXT. OUTER SPACE**

The DFC-3's engines expel a brilliant burst of plasma, melting time and space.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

Garrard glimpses starlight blurring in observation glass and clenches tight.

JEAN (V.O.)  
Five seconds.

Garrard murmurs hurried spanish.

JEAN (V.O.)  
Three... Two... One.

Garrard exhales and shuts his eyes.

**EXT. OUTER SPACE**

Chaotic energy flows through the rails and the engines engage, thrusting the DFC-3 forward with a terrific FLASH-

CUT TO BLACK

GARRARD (V.O.)  
Don't move.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

The corridor hums motionless, lit by unblinking hazards.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
Do not move until you know. As far  
as it can be known.

Garrard's vision is reduced to mere slits, damp with frozen sweat.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
Somehow the anesthetic's worn  
off... I wonder if this happened to  
the others.

Garrard gathers nothing tangible from frozen data screens near his cot.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
Stalled diagnostics. At least we  
appear to be in flight.

The humming seems placid enough, except-

GARRARD (V.O.)  
But the overdrive is supposed to be  
silent.

Garrard considers the issue further and BALKS.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
I'm not breathing.

He's too stunned to stir.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
How am I not breathing?

A quick mental probe confirms it, his body lays stiff- no apparent respiration, no reflexive chest. Strange phenomena given his optimal vital charts nearby.

*POCK.* Garrard's bloodshot eyes open at a glacial pace. The noise rings hollow, like a wine cork pop. Garrard suppresses the urge to move and trains his pupils on the cabin.

For all his effort, Garrard finds nothing amiss.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
(hissed)  
Come on.

Garrard's eyes slowly return to the ceiling, face swollen and flushed. Sweat inches down his naked scalp.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
Think think think think.

Hazard lights gleam inside his ocular whites.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD - EARLIER**

Garrard visualizes the ship's calendar time as it read when he first awoke.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD - PRESENT**

The ship's current calendar shows only two seconds have passed.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
(horrified)  
No.

The calendar's digits hang mid-transition, quivering toward advancement.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
What type of timeframe is this?

CUT TO BLACK

Veins in Garrard's throat ripple under intense pressure.

CUT TO BLACK

His arms tremble with miniature seizures.

CUT TO BLACK

Garrard's eyelids flicker while his head tilts askew.

CUT TO RED

Garrard's body twists inside the harness while hazard lights strobe.

CUT TO BLACK

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

Garrard hangs half-risen inside the harness, stiffly upright on a bent elbow. Time is again practically frozen. Gradually his pupils focus and he pales under a pallid sweat.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
(bitterly rational)  
Panic must have pushed me to move  
when I found I wasn't breathing.

The calendar shows another three seconds passed.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Haertel's equation governs both the  
 ship and its personnel but we never  
 thought the two might diverge given  
 a common vector... Tsk.

Garrard's brow furrows as he resigns to remaining still.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 It is possible though.

POCK. Garrard smolders, instantly alert.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 You can do this. You have to do  
 this. (PAUSE) Three one thousand.  
 Four one thousand. Five one  
 thousand. Six one thousand.

Blood swells in one of his ears.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Seven one thousand. Eight one  
 thousand. Nine one thousand. Ten-

**EXT. COSMIC VORTEX BETWEEN DIMENSIONS**

The DFC-3 is a shadow lost in a glorious inferno.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM**

Gargantuan fuel cells drain into intricate chassises.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

Garrard maintains his position, focused on the calendar.

**INT. PILOT'S NEST**

Streams of broken light blaze past observation glass.

**INT. CENTRAL ACCESS CORRIDOR**

The autobird flaps glacially midflight attempting to flee  
 transport.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Seventy hundred forty one, seventy  
 hundred two, seventy hundred forty  
 three.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Seventy hundred forty four, seventy  
 hundred forty five.

The calendar's digits start to shift and Garrard breathlessly skips a beat.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Seventy hundred forty six, seventy  
 hundred forty seven, seventy  
 hundred forty eight.

The last digit nears completion.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Seventy hundred forty nine, seventy  
 hundred fifty-

**18:13:59** gives way to **18:14:00** and Garrard begins the slow process of closing his eyes while counting the math.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Two hours. Two hours of my time  
 equals one second of ship time.  
 That places reemergence at...

Garrard crunches the numbers and nearly chokes.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Six thousand years.

*POCK.* The noise rings while Garrard tries not to collapse.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 (hushed)  
 What will become of me?

The barren cabin hums.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Will I starve first- or go mad? Six  
 thousand years. (GRUNTS) No  
 breathing yet, so my body is  
 definitely keeping ship time.

Garrard's lips tic at the corners of his mouth.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
 Looking forward I'll have to be  
 careful with the impulses but I  
 will arrive alive... And seemingly  
 intact.

He surveys the cabin and spots the autobird frozen in flight.  
POCK.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
With enough concentration maybe I  
could do that too.

Blood oozes from one of his earlobes.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
Like that'd even save me.

Garrard scoffs. POCK.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
I can already see the string  
unraveling.

POCK.

GARRARD (V.O.)  
Surely there's worse-

POCK POCK POCK POCK POCK POCK POCK POCK the autobird flaps in  
real time beneath strobing hazards. Garrard hangs stiffly  
blinking, astonished.

GARRARD  
Alive.

Garrard collapses on the mattress, sucking in air. Harness  
locks disengage and buckled cords decouple.

GARRARD  
Jean?

No response. He rises chest high, crimson faced. Holocharts  
confirm they're midflight. The clock reads normally.

Sparks spit into the corridor but he's too groggy to notice-  
which is why he doesn't glimpse the pulsing ALIEN MIST  
issuing forth from the grated floor.

#### **EXT. COSMIC VORTEX BETWEEN DIMENSIONS**

The extended rails on the hull tremble red hot.

#### **INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

Pale vapors twist and swell into a billowy shroud, obscuring  
whatever they touch.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM**

Generators shriek at full capacity.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

Pockets of foreign LIGHT pierce the cabin and Garrard snaps round to find the mist oozing toward him, the lights streaming from no visible source. He pivots onto limp legs and clatters hissing to the ground.

The lights grow into scions as wet fumes swarm his fallen body. Garrard screams when the first tendrils ensnare him, and pants haggardly vapors flood past. The bizarre lights SEAR-

**EXT. COSMIC VORTEX BETWEEN DIMENSIONS**

Blistering energy lashes out and thrashes the ship's hull.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

Garrard shields his eyes from the blinding beams shouting-

CUT TO BLACK

**INT. WHITE TUNNEL - TIMELESS**

Garrard blinks awake in his uniform, standing upright in a blocky environment composed entirely of something like opaque glass. The brightness dials down and Garrard glimpses angular walls and hints of a larger passage.

While his pupils adjust, his face drains. The "room" extends inside an infinite loop of itself- one flat track of glowing glass beckoning in both directions.

After several terse 180s, Garrard chooses one side and departs. Reflecting on his position further, he's surprised to find normal gravity and air.

Twenty yards of identical segments pass before he halts mystified.

GARRARD (V.O.)

Is that?

Radio static BLARES and Garrard grips his ears. Famous voices and melodies interrupt and scramble into a barrage of random noise. Garrard clamps harder and seeks a possible source-

BLACK PYRAMIDS the size of marbles hover midair just thirty paces away, their oily surfaces rippling in sync with the broadcast. He approaches warily and the transmission CEASES.

The pyramids freeze. Garrard studies their perfect forms.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)  
How do you hear?

Garrard's jaw drops. A single pyramid trembles.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)  
How do you hear?

Garrard gulps.

GARRARD  
Excuse me?

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)  
How do you hear?

GARRARD  
(numbly)  
I uh- we hear this way.

He points at a bloody earlobe.

GARRARD  
Here.

Several pyramids reactivate and rotate in sync. Scattered footfalls and phantom laughter startle Garrard and yet he still finds himself alone.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)  
We-they wooed you thiswise, and  
now... You are here.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)  
We-they wooed there and there for a  
many. You are the being Garrard.

The mention of his name intrigues him beyond belief.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)  
We are the clinestern beademung.  
With all of love.

GARRARD  
With all of love.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

We hear the twin radiocles that show beyond the gift source. We-they pitched the being Garrard wooed these waves, and had mind to them- soft and loud alike. (PAUSE) How do you hear?

GARRARD

I hear Earth... But it is very soft and does not show.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

Yes. It is a harmony. Not at first, as ours. The All Devouring is still known there.

Garrard's brow crinkles as he grasps for comprehension.

GARRARD

Where are we?

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

A place between places. Much farther than you sought.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

Let me-mine pitch you-yours so as to have mind with the beademung, in channels most felt to the being Garrard. For none true knows the means of another.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

(whispered)

Come closer.

Garrard approaches and the pyramids slide sideways.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

Closer.

Garrard follows their horizontal flight to find an Earthen doorway set in an otherwise alien wall. The pyramids surround the mundane portal and idle at its borders.

GARRARD

Will this hurt?

No response. Garrard opens the door: no preview of what lies ahead, only empty space. With a forced smile he crosses through-

**EXT. BAMBOO FOREST GROVE - DUSK**

- and steps onto humid soil laid between swaying chutes, ogling Wuxian lanterns strung impossibly high. Fireflies circle lazily in the foliage.

GARRARD

How?

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

Being Garrard is creating this just as much as we.

Garrard ambles farther and discovers a mossy statue etched with ancient engravings.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

We-they meet likewise.

Garrard gathers nothing from the obscure markings.

GARRARD

Have you-they met my others? Two came before me.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

No. Being Garrard is the first.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

None-many pass through this othering.

Garrard pushes past the artifact, delving deeper into the forest. Leaves rustle on the periphery and he spots shimmering shadow trails blazing through the brush.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

We-they prefer caution.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

We-they have been hurt before.

Garrard watches the crackling shadows dissipate.

GARRARD

Being Garrard understands.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

We know.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

You pitch it so clearly.

Garrard enters a clearing where a second door waits, hovering over coiled roots. Frogs chirp as he approaches the stolid portal and steps into the blank frame-

**EXT. ILLUSIONARY JADE SEA - DAY**

-walking out over turquoise waves, plummeting into shallow waters. Garrard struggles to find his footing on paved coral and rises against waist-high currents, more shocked than scared.

No shore in sight.

**EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY**

Alien CREATURES dart around Garrard's toes, curious and colorful.

**EXT. ILLUSIONARY JADE SEA**

Garrard watches them flutter beneath the surface.

GARRARD

I only wish to learn.

MASCULINE VOICE

Learn?

FEMININE VOICE

Learn?

Garrard sashes forward on the flattened coral.

GARRARD

To sense feel. To relate with my others.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

And what would being Garrard relate?

Garrard grins.

GARRARD

Of all the wonders that are possible... Beyond what we know. Mine home-

Garrard's voice falters as several yards of coral emit a soft phosphorescence.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

(whispered)

Closer.

Garrard glimpses the outline of third door in the illuminated coral and brightens.

He advances hurriedly and plunges in to claw at its simple handle. Straining to lift the sunken seal, he manages to pry it loose and dive through.

**EXT. HOLLOW CAVERN - SUNSET**

Garrard falls flushed onto dusty clay, soaked in brine. He stands on shaky knees but straightens once he peers outside.

**EXT. ALIEN DESERT - SUNSET**

Garrard shuffles out of the cave gawking at windswept dunes spanning the entire horizon. Distant sandstorms inch their way across the wastes in a hazy, utterly foreign atmosphere.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

A glimpse of such as we.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

Degrees of was and is.

Garrard looks skyward at carven obelisks piercing the clouds with unseen summits.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

Once we were tall.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

Once we were strong.

Arid desolation lies in every direction.

GARRARD

The beademung are mighty compared to beings Garrard.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

Beings Garrards are young.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

But your intent... Is now known.

A fourth door appears on the crest of Garrard's dune.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

Let us welcome in better offerings.

Garrard starts numbly toward the portal.

GARRARD

(breathless)

Thank you-they.

Winds whip faster as he draws near. Garrard climbs unsteadily through the frenzy and feels out the door's edges, eagerly plodding through.

**INT. CUBED WHITE CHAMBER - TIMELESS**

Garrard enters a slice of the white tunnel he first awoke in except this section concludes in four walls, each undulating with sluggish ripples.

Garrard walks forward bewildered and the walls turn rigid. Bony human limbs appear behind the amorphous barriers, pressing against them- Garrard watches wide eyed as sexless IMITATIONS of men and women break through.

The MIMICS stride out of the umbilical goo, a simple matte resin lending their flesh a dull sheen. Thirty strong pour into the enclosure and quickly surround him.

GARRARD

With all of love.

BEADEMUNG

With all of love.

Those nearest Garrard halt within reach.

MASCULINE VOICE (V.O.)

Harmony is truce.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

Walk with these featurelings. Learn as you wished to learn.

One of the figures offers Garrard an open palm and he gladly accepts. Thin smiles erupt on the identical faces around him.

FEMININE VOICE (V.O.)

The beademung welcome yours in kind, being Garrard.

The figures lead him to a pulsing wall and several demonstrate by dipping into the mysterious liquid. Garrard catches on.

And in one shining moment- embraced by many- Garrard walks willingly into the ooze.

**EXT. UNKNOWN MOON**

Fragmented asteroids float suspended over gossamer rings.

**EXT. UNKNOWN PLANET'S SURFACE - DAY**

Rivers of bubbling magma course through jagged crystalline peaks.

**CLOSE UP: GARRARD'S FACE**

Garrard squints at blinding light.

**EXT. COSMIC FURNACE**

Raw star material flows between torn nebulae.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard floats alone in vacant matter, tears streaming from lidded eyes.

**EXT. UNKNOWN GALAXY**

Colliding planets reduce each other to splinters.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard forces his eyes open against tremendous pressure.

**EXT. PREHISTORIC JUNGLE - DAY**

Spiders snare dragonflies between branches while volcanic ash flurries.

**EXT. PRIMORDIAL SOUP - NIGHT**

Neon microbial life swarms in vibrant groups.

**EXT. ILLUSIONARY JADE SEA - DAY**

Garrard marvels at waves streaming between his fingers.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

A blood vessel bursts and clouds Garrard's vision but he stares on madly.

**INT. CUBED WHITE CHAMBER - EARLIER**

Garrard and the sexless figures enter the plasmic wall.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard's shadow phases in and out, losing substance.

**INT. ANCIENT INDUSTRIAL FACTORY - NIGHT**

Decrepit gears connect dormant alien architecture.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard's strength begins to slip-

**INT. CUBED WHITE CHAMBER - EARLIER**

Garrard stands alone in the empty room with his hand out as if to shake.

**EXT. UNKNOWN PLANET'S COAST - DUSK**

BEADEMUNG stand on pebbled inlets, silently staring, their shapes thin and ephemeral. Cool sparks twinkle inside what's visible of their corporeal selves, like little blue candles gathered beneath the growing dark.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard exhales roughly, totally overwhelmed.

**EXT. UNKNOWN PLANET'S COAST - DUSK**

The beademung remain watchful and motionless.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard nods off and starts to sink.

**INT. CENTRAL ACCESS CORRIDOR**

The DFC-3's emergency halogens flash hazard signs.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard's body drifts, spinning paralyzed.

**INT. PILOT'S NEST**

Uranus looms large outside observation glass.

**INT. BRILLIANT VOID**

Garrard slips soundlessly away.

**EXT. OUTER SPACE**

Small jet bursts propel the DCF-3 past Uranus.

**INT. TRANSPORT HOLD**

The autobird blinks above Garrard sleeping strapped in as if he never left. Time flows at a normal rate. The artificial bird fidgets, unsure how to proceed.

Sleek medical flood Garrard's veins with dark liquid until he wakes with ragged gasps.

JEAN (V.O.)

Garrard?

Garrard heaves, seizing on reality.

JEAN (V.O.)

Garrard listen carefully- you need to ignore your reflexes and allow the spasms to pass. This is only temporary I assure you.

Garrard huffs while he pupils swim.

JEAN (V.O.)

In ten seconds I can administer a reagent okay? Maintain.

Garrard sways in his harness as the tremors subside.

JEAN (V.O.)

Five seconds.

Garrard cringes as cold liquid funnels into an IV taped to his spine. Jean releases straps constricting his chest and Garrard breathes freely as the dope sinks in.

JEAN (V.O.)

Does that feel adequate?

Garrard croaks a failed attempt before responding.

GARRARD

Yes.

JEAN (V.O.)

Good.

The autobird flaps to Garrard's side, cheerfully agitated. Garrard grins and weakly returns its affection.

GARRARD

Haertel's?