

World That Never Was

by
T. James Belich

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(Colorado Tolston)

James@Playwrighting.org

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CAST

DR. NICHOLAS KREON (M)	A scientist
DR. CHRISTOPHER ARTHUR (M)	His colleague
ANTARCTICA	
TASE	Head of Earth's Space Program (T.A.S.E.)

THE UNITED REPUBLICS OF EARTH

PERU
GREAT BRITAIN
UNITED STATES
BRAZIL
RUSSIA
SWITZERLAND

THE OCEANIC ALLIANCE

AUSTRALIA
CANADA
SOUTH AFRICA
EGYPT
CHINA
NEW IRELAND

THE ENSEMBLE

IRELAND/MARS ASTRONAUT
REPORTER/MARS ASTRONAUT
SCIENTIST/MARS ASTRONAUT
HOUSTON/MARS ASTRONAUT
YOUNG KREON/MARS ASTRONAUT (M)

Total Roles: 21 (2 Male, 19 Male or Female)

Set Description

The stage is divided into two halves. The upper half of the stage, set on a raised platform, forms the laboratory of Nicholas Kreon and Christopher Arthur. A long table, covered with scientific equipment and papers, is located at upstage center. A small desk and chair are at stage left. On it are an assortment of books and papers, as well as an unidentifiable apparatus. Another table, with two chairs, is located at center stage, close to the edge of the platform. It is also covered with a number of papers. The two Earth factions, the United Republics of Earth and the Oceanic Alliance, are seated on opposite sides of the lower half of the stage. They will remain on stage during the entire play, watching. They should be positioned so that they receive adequate focus during scenes with the Earth Council, but do not detract from other scenes. A third table is located on the lower half of the stage, at center, positioned so that it does not interfere with Council scenes. The main areas of the stage are thus 1) The Laboratory, 2) The Earth Council, and 3) Lower Center.

NOTE: The action is intended to be as continuous as possible.

SCENE ONE

(KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. Black out. The sound of marching soldiers is heard from offstage and continues throughout the scene. Slowly a red light fades up off stage right, as if shining through a door, and the shadows of the soldiers can be seen. Unless otherwise specified, the soldiers will be seen and heard during all scenes which take place in the lab, casting a foreboding note on all the work done here. Blue lights fade up within the lab. Blue and red are the only light colors used in this play, signifying peace and war respectively. The stage is dressed in dark, mostly black, colors. It is the color of the lights that provides the emotional "cloud" hanging over the scene. A scientist, NICHOLAS KREON, is sitting at the center table scribbling on papers, attempting to work out some difficult problem. Shortly after the lights have faded up, a second scientist, CHRISTOPHER ARTHUR, enters from stage right, reading the newspaper. He does not notice KREON until KREON speaks.)

ARTHUR: *(To himself as he reads from the paper)* "Current talks between the United Republics of Earth and the Oceanic Alliance stalled again yesterday after a bomb exploded in Washington D.C. at the U.R.E. Headquarters. The bombing is reported to be the work of the Alliance. O.A. officials have denied responsibility, accusing the U.R.E. of staging the incident in order to destabilize the peace process." What's this world coming to! Five years since the Australian War and we still don't have a real peace with the Oceanic Alliance.

KREON: *(Still working)* Don't worry, Chris, it'll come. *(ARTHUR looks up from the paper.)*

ARTHUR: Nick, you're here early.

KREON: Never left.

ARTHUR: *(Incredulously)* You've been working on those equations all night?

KREON: They have to be done sometime. *(ARTHUR sits down.)*

ARTHUR: This is true, but you're allowed to get some sleep. *(KREON keeps working.)* Any progress?

KREON: Nope. *(ARTHUR lifts his hands in a "Why me?" gesture and picks up the newspaper again.)* Any news of interest this morning?

ARTHUR: Stalled peace talks, border skirmishes, this country threatening that country... the usual. *(With a sigh)* Let's face it, odds are we'll be in the middle of another war within a few years.

KREON: As I said, peace will come. Let the Ambassadors do their job, and we'll do ours. *(ARTHUR tosses the paper to the floor in disgust.)*

ARTHUR: We tried that a century ago, and World War II still happened.

KREON: I like to think our planet has learned a few things since then. (*ARTHUR points a finger at KREON.*)

ARTHUR: Do you know what your problem is, Nick?

KREON: No, Chris, what?

ARTHUR: (*Exasperated*) You're an idealist! Half the time you believe the world will sort out its problems on its own, and the rest of the time you think you can solve them all yourself!

KREON: Well, someone has to.

ARTHUR: (*To himself*) Talk about your delusions of grandeur. (*ARTHUR stands, crosses to his desk, and examines the apparatus sitting there. There is a silent pause as KREON works on his calculations and ARTHUR carefully examines his apparatus. In a flash of rage ARTHUR knocks the apparatus to the ground, but not with enough force to seriously damage it. He sinks into his chair in mixture of fury and despair. This outburst is enough to turn KREON's attention completely towards ARTHUR.*) What's the use? This whole blasted world is going to blow itself up anyway! And this (*Gestures to the apparatus on the floor*) isn't any closer to working that it has been for the last ten years!

KREON: You must give it time.

ARTHUR: My work or peace?

KREON: Everything. (*He stands, walks over to the door, and looks outside.*) The peacemakers will do what they can. Better for them to try than to just sit back and let our world go to war. But perhaps we can give the world something that will make its current struggles seem trivial.

ARTHUR: (*Quietly*) Maybe, maybe not. You can change the world, but you can't change human nature, no matter how hard you try. It's one of the few constants of the universe. (*Pause. KREON goes to the upstage table, fiddles with a few instruments, and then turns to ARTHUR.*)

KREON: I'm close, very close. (*KREON walks to the desk and stands behind ARTHUR's chair.*) Think about it, Chris, no more need to fight over Uranium mines or deuterium supplies just to get to the moon. We'll be able to go further, much further. (*KREON goes back to the center table and sits, looking out over the audience.*) The solar system will become our backyard. We'll travel to the *stars*. (*KREON looks at ARTHUR.*) There's enough out there for everyone, and enough experiences to fill a lifetime. We won't need to fight over anything, there's more out there than we could ever possibly need. (*ARTHUR shakes his head.*)

ARTHUR: You've climbed a mountain of optimism so high that you've lost sight of the valley. You may change the world, Nick, but you'll never change the people in it. Give people what they need and they'll just want more. (*KREON stands and walks over to the door. He pauses before exiting and addresses ARTHUR.*)

KREON: Perhaps you're right, old friend, but I know you're wrong about one thing.

ARTHUR: What's that?

KREON: We can try. *(He exits leaving ARTHUR to sit and think. ARTHUR then reaches down and picks up the apparatus. For a short while he simply stares at it. Reluctantly, he sets the apparatus back on his desk.)*

ARTHUR: We can try, my friend, but what hope have we of ever succeeding? *(The lights fade to black as the sound of soldiers dies out.)*

SCENE TWO

(The lights, red, fade up onto the Earth Council. The DELEGATES of the United Republics of Earth, consisting of the United States, Mexico, South and Central America, Europe, and Russia, are seated at stage right. The DELEGATES of the Oceanic Alliance, consisting of Australia, Oceania, Canada, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, are seated at stage left. The DELEGATES will be referred to by their country's name. ANTARCTICA sits at the center stage table acting as a mediator between the two factions.)

ANTARCTICA: This council grants the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Ireland.
(IRELAND stands and takes center stage, facing the other DELEGATES.)

IRELAND: Fellow Delegates of the United Republics of Earth, I have dire news. Last night at 11.30 PM, Greenwich Mean Time, sympathizers of the Oceanic Alliance ousted the Irish government in a violent military coup. *(The U.R.E. DELEGATES react with outrage. ANTARCTICA attempts to restore order, rapping a gavel.)*

ANTARCTICA: There will be order in this council room! *(The DELEGATES calm down and IRELAND continues.)*

IRELAND: This barbarous act of aggression must not be tolerated! The Oceanic Alliance has gone too far, my government demands retributions!

AUSTRALIA: *(Coldly)* The government you represent no longer exists.

ANTARCTICA: *(To IRELAND)* I'm afraid I have to agree with that, Ambassador.

IRELAND: What?

ANTARCTICA: *(To AUSTRALIA)* What is the position of the Australian government regarding this incident?

AUSTRALIA: The coup in Ireland was an entirely internal affair, in no way supported by my government.

PERU: *(To AUSTRALIA)* And who does the new government plan on allying itself with?

AUSTRALIA: *(Neutral)* The New Irish Regime has opened diplomatic talks with the Oceanic Alliance and my government.

IRELAND: You see! This is all a plot to expand Alliance influence and territory!

ANTARCTICA: *(To IRELAND)* What is it you're asking of this Council?

IRELAND: An intervention, the former government must be restored. *(To the U.R.E. DELEGATES)* On behalf of my country, in the name of humanity, I urge you to support me. Fighting has

already broken out across the nation between the supporters of the U.R.E. and the O.A. This coup threatens to plunge all of Ireland into a civil war!

AUSTRALIA: Pity. (IRELAND *glares at AUSTRALIA.*)

GREAT BRITAIN: But to purposely oust a pro-Alliance government would certainly lead to increased global tensions!

CANADA: Agreed! The coup is an internal matter, the U.R.E. cannot interfere!

AUSTRALIA: Such an interference would be considered an act of war.

IRELAND: (*Furious*) The Oceanic Alliance has already committed an act of war!

AUSTRALIA: We had nothing to do with the change of government!

IRELAND: (*To the U.R.E. DELEGATES*) You can't believe him! Please, you must help us! (NEW IRELAND *enters.*)

NEW IRELAND: No help is required.

ANTARCTICA: (*To NEW IRELAND, annoyed*) This council is closed to all non-delegates!

NEW IRELAND: I am the Ambassador of the New Irish Regime to the Earth Council. (NEW IRELAND *gestures to IRELAND.*) I have been appointed to replace the former Ambassador as the new representative of Ireland.

ANTARCTICA: Understood. Does Ireland wish to officially withdraw its request for intervention? (IRELAND *is about to protest but is stopped by a look from ANTARCTICA.*)

NEW IRELAND: It does.

ANTARCTICA: Request is withdrawn. (*Protests from the U.R.E. DELEGATES who support IRELAND's request. IRELAND storms out of the council room.*) Silence! (*To NEW IRELAND*) May I ask which faction the Irish government now sides with?

NEW IRELAND: (*With a look at Australia*) With the Oceanic Alliance. (*The U.R.E. DELEGATES react with dismay.*)

UNITED STATES: (*To NEW IRELAND*) And what does your government intend to do about the outbreaks of violence against the new government?

NEW IRELAND: Anyone who wishes to leave Ireland is free to do so, but this disrespect of the government will not be tolerated. Ireland will defend itself, within and without, with whatever force is necessary.

UNITED STATES: *(To ANTARCTICA)* Ambassador, this council must act on behalf of Ireland before *(Pointing to NEW IRELAND)* these *butchers* begin massacring the civilians of Ireland. *(Slight pause)* If they haven't already.

ANTARCTICA: The official representative of Ireland has already refused such intervention. By the rules of this council we cannot interfere. I'm sorry, Ambassador. *(ANTARCTICA raps the gavel once.)* Meeting adjourned. *(The lights on ANTARCTICA and the O.A. DELEGATES fade out as NEW IRELAND joins the Oceanic Alliance.)*

SCENE THREE

(The lights upon the U.R.E. turn blue.)

UNITED STATES: Fellow Leaders, we assemble here today to prepare for Earth's next giant leap into the unknown. For decades the countries of this planet have attempted to race each other into space, thinking that it was a goal to be reached individually. We know now that the task is too great. Together we can do what none of us can do alone. A country cannot challenge the void of space, but a planet can.

PERU: A single space program would take us countless times further than any of us have ever been.

BRAZIL: Except we only represent half of Earth. What about the Alliance countries, would they be included?

UNITED STATES: Any country, regardless of political alliance, will be allowed to join this new organization. The only requirement is that every country be willing to cooperate towards a common goal: The peaceful, human exploration of space. The American Ambassador to the Earth Council will be delivering a formal invitation to all countries at the Council's next meeting.

RUSSIA: If any member of the Alliance joins, I doubt their purpose will be to cooperate.

SWITZERLAND: The more countries that participate, the stronger our efforts will become.

RUSSIA: Do you truly believe the Alliance would want to cooperate with us on any project, much less one of this magnitude? Don't fool yourself. Keeping diplomatic relations open is difficult enough.

BRAZIL: Indeed. The Alliance wants to control the human race, and to control it, they'll need to contain it.

GREAT BRITAIN: Our current relations with the O.A. may be strained, but that does not mean the countries of the Alliance will never join in our efforts.

UNITED STATES: They will in time.

RUSSIA: Are you sure?

UNITED STATES: Quite sure. And when that time comes, the Alliance will be welcomed.

BRAZIL: Even still, will we be ready to take the next step until that day comes?

PERU: What is the next step going to be?

SWITZERLAND: Yes, what do you propose for the first mission of... What is this new organization to be called?

UNITED STATES: TASE: The Terran Administration for Space Exploration.

GREAT BRITAIN: And our first mission?

UNITED STATES: We have been to the moon many times over, it is time we moved on to other worlds.

GREAT BRITAIN: A Mars landing. (UNITED STATES *nods.*)

UNITED STATES: Before we can move on to other solar systems, we must first overcome our own.

RUSSIA: Do you realize the magnitude of what you're suggesting? At our current technology even putting a man on Mars could take decades!

PERU: It will never become any easier by waiting. Our technology will not improve unless we make the effort. It's how we went to the moon. (*There is a general murmur of approval.*)

UNITED STATES: We have waited on this world for far too long, it is time for us to begin the long day's journey towards the stars. But that journey will not be swift or simple. It will be one of great difficulty, there is no denying that. But it is a journey we must take if our world is to grow and persevere. We strive towards a great dream, and it is our task to bring this great dream into reality. (*The lights upon the U.R.E. fade out.*)

SCENE FOUR

(The lights fade up onto KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. The lights on the lab, unless specified otherwise, will be the same as in the beginning. KREON and ARTHUR are both working on their respective projects. ARTHUR is at his desk and KREON is at the center stage table. After a few moments ARTHUR scribbles out all of his calculations in annoyance.)

ARTHUR: It's not even possible!

KREON: *(Still working)* What's not possible?

ARTHUR: *(Irritably)* Any of it!

KREON: I'm afraid I'm not following you, Chris.

ARTHUR: *(With a wide, encompassing gesture)* Is anything we're attempting even possible?

KREON: Certainly not everything is, but many things are.

ARTHUR: Perhaps, but how do we *know*?

KREON: We don't, not until we try. We gain knowledge by trial and error, and hopefully learn from our mistakes. *(KREON stops working and turns to ARTHUR.)* What exactly are you referring to, Chris? I realize your research isn't progressing as quickly as you...

ARTHUR: This isn't about my research! *(ARTHUR stands and crosses to the door, looking out at the soldiers.)* It's about this crazy world of ours. *(He covers his ears, as if trying to block out the world.)* This world that keeps marching towards impossibilities. *(Quietly)* We're not at war... not yet. *(Angry again, ARTHUR points out the door.)* So why does the world act as if we were? The world marches on towards hope, but it only finds more chaos. Don't you understand, Nick? We're striving towards a peace that can never be achieved!

KREON: Are you sure of that?

ARTHUR: No! *(ARTHUR crosses back to his chair and sinks into it.)* I don't know what I'm sure of anymore, it feels like everything has been turned upside-down. *(ARTHUR stares towards something we cannot see.)* Sometimes this all feels like a dream. I wish it were. Then maybe I could wake up, forget it all, and have peace. *(He looks at KREON.)* Is it all in vain?

KREON: In vain? No. Even if we do strive towards nothing but impossible goals, we must at least still try. If we didn't, then where would we be?

ARTHUR: Maybe not in the mess the world is in now.

KREON: Perhaps, or perhaps our situation would be even worse. We can never know what didn't happen, the results of where we didn't go.

ARTHUR: I just wish I knew where this world was going now.

KREON: Has the end of the race ever been what mattered most?

ARTHUR: Sometimes. Hasn't it ever been for you?

KREON: No, I've found the race to be challenge enough. It doesn't matter what the end result is, so long as we better ourselves in the process. (ARTHUR *shakes his head.*)

ARTHUR: But when you never see the end it's easy to lose sight of why you're running. I'm tired of running, Nick, there's still no end in sight. Peace isn't any closer. All I ever see is a mirage. How am I to know what's real?

KREON: You won't know until you reach it, like you never know what's a dream until you wake up.

ARTHUR: I wish I would! (*Pause*) Or fall asleep and dream this all away. Anything but this dim in-between.

KREON: Nothing in this world lasts forever.

ARTHUR: I hope you're right. Earth has had night for too long, we need the day.

KREON: Nothing lasts forever, Chris, not even the day.

ARTHUR: But day can wash away the shadows of the night, allowing us to forget them and rest.

KREON: Then what prevents you from repeating the shadows?

ARTHUR: Would you prefer to remain in darkness?

KREON: No, but darkness can never erase the memory of the light. We strive willingly towards the day, but plunge into night when we're not looking.

ARTHUR: Darkness drowns the world in despair. We can't live in it forever.

KREON: Of course not. The memory of light will be our guide to the dawn. Don't worry my friend, the night will end.

ARTHUR: I don't understand how you can always be so sure. When will it end?

KREON: That is an answer that no one on Earth possesses. The dawn comes when it will.

ARTHUR: And so all we do is sit and wait. Is there nothing we can do to make it come any sooner?

KREON: We can hope.

ARTHUR: Sometimes I wonder if even hope is real.

KREON: If it wasn't, would we keep trying?

ARTHUR: No, I suppose not. (*ARTHUR stands and heads towards the door.*) I'm going for a walk. (*He looks out the door for a moment.*) Somewhere I can't hear this world's frantic marching. Somewhere that peace, if only for a moment, doesn't feel like a mirage. (*ARTHUR exits. KREON watches him go.*)

KREON: Even a mirage is a reflection of reality. (*The lights on the lab fade out.*)

SCENE FIVE

(The lights, red, fade up onto the Earth Council. RUSSIA is at center stage delivering a speech.)

RUSSIA: And that is only the beginning! The number of border skirmishes, nay, deliberate military incursions, has tripled in just the past month! Russia is surrounded primarily by Alliance countries, our border cities live in constant fear of attack! *(RUSSIA turns to CHINA.)* Most of these unwarranted attacks have originated from China!

CHINA: *(Standing)* I must protest! The Ambassador is making false assumptions. The attacks he speaks of are due to a group of Chinese terrorists...

RUSSIA: Lies!

CHINA: *(Continuing)* ...who view fighting as the only solution to their problems. I assure you, fellow Ambassadors, their views do not reflect those of my government.

UNITED STATES: And how can we be sure of that?

CHINA: As you know, the Treaty of Melbourne, signed after the Australian War, prohibits any member of the Alliance from taking any official military action against any member of the U.R.E. without a formal declaration of war. My government would never violate such an agreement, one agreed on in good faith. There is no war, Ambassador.

RUSSIA: There soon will be, if these unprovoked attacks on my country do not cease! My government will not stand by and allow China, or any other country, to threaten innocent Russian citizens! We will retaliate, I promise you!

CHINA: *(Coldly)* Go ahead, Ambassador, we shall be ready.

RUSSIA: Is that a threat?

CHINA: It is certainly not an idle one.

RUSSIA: If you dare to attack us again I'll...

SWITZERLAND: *(Standing)* That's enough, Ambassador! We are here to talk, not exchange threats. *(To ANTARCTICA)* If I may have the floor? *(ANTARCTICA nods. RUSSIA sits as SWITZERLAND takes center stage and addresses the DELEGATES.)* It is true that the hostilities between our two factions have increased dramatically in recent days. *(SWITZERLAND glances at CHINA.)* And I do not believe for a moment that any of these attacks were the work of dissidents and rebels. *(CHINA begins to protest, but is ignored by SWITZERLAND who continues.)* Our respective countries have *all* been purposely provoking one another, attempting to wear each other down, believing that neither side would dare to start an all-out war. That belief is foolish! Sooner or later, one side will tolerate no more and begin what really could be "the war to end all wars," if for no other reason that there will no longer be anyone left to fight! Earth's technology

has grown to the point where we could destroy everything at the touch of a button. It has become too dangerous for us to live apart, we must unite together if we are to turn and face the new challenges which await us. (SWITZERLAND *sits and for a few moments the DELEGATES consider his words in a hushed silence.*)

ANTARCTICA: Wise words, Ambassador, ones we should all listen carefully to in these troubled days. Fellow Ambassadors, we hold in our hands the power to plunge the world into its darkest night, or to lead it into a bright new day. Nothing will be accomplished by constant threats and provocation, consider your actions carefully. Let us not be so hasty as to commit ourselves to a path we shall be forced to follow to its bitter end. (ANTARCTICA *raps the gavel once. The lights upon the council fade out.*)

SCENE SIX

(The lights, blue, fade up onto the lower center table. The DIRECTOR OF THE SPACE PROGRAM OF THE UNITED STATES and the future DIRECTOR OF TASE are standing at the table. The two shake hands.)

UNITED STATES: Welcome, Dr. Please, sit down. *(The two sit.)* I trust that you have kept up to date on the formation of TASE?

TASE: I have, it's good to see the governments of Earth beginning to take such an important step towards our world's future.

UNITED STATES: I agree. Our decades in space have taught us that space is far too great an undertaking for a single nation. Unity is the prerequisite for the stars. Though we are slowly approaching that long desired unity, the task ahead remains daunting. Even the next step, a manned voyage to Mars, will require all our efforts. It will take great leadership to make that step, and all those that follow.

TASE: Are you asking me to lead this new organization?

UNITED STATES: What I am asking of you goes far beyond the leadership of a mere organization. I am asking you to pave the way to our future.

TASE: A heavy responsibility.

UNITED STATES: Of that there is no doubt, but it is a responsibility someone must bear. *(TASE shakes his head.)*

TASE: I am not qualified.

UNITED STATES: Who is, Dr.? No one on this planet is prepared to lead a project of this size. But as I've said, someone must. The Heads of the other U.R.E. space programs and I have discussed this, and we have chosen you.

TASE: But why me? Wouldn't you or one of the other Heads be a better choice?

UNITED STATES: This is not the time for old leaders. It is a time for the new, those with forward looking eyes. You are a visionary, Dr., and that is what we need. Realism has not brought us to the places we have sought.

TASE: And you believe I can?

UNITED STATES: I hope so. *(TASE pauses to consider his choice.)*

TASE: I accept.

UNITED STATES: Thank you, I knew you would not disappoint us. There will be a full briefing next week to bring you up to speed. In the meantime, do you have any questions?

TASE: Just one. All this talk of a global space program means nothing if we have no practical means of getting to Mars or beyond. Do we have the technology to go to Mars?

UNITED STATES: Something more efficient than rocket propulsion? Not yet, but we have a promising lead. *(UNITED STATES takes out a report and hands it to TASE.)* A scientist here in America is working on a means to generate anti-gravitational fields. *(TASE begins to study the report.)* His name is Dr. Nicholas Kreon. *(The lights on the lower center table fade out.)*

SCENE SEVEN

(The lights on KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory fade up. KREON is working with some equipment on the back table, from which emanates an electrical hum. After a short while, KREON finishes tinkering with a fairly large piece of equipment, some form of generator. KREON then picks up a large, flexible wire mesh which is connected to the generator by means of a long cord. KREON brings the mesh over to the center stage table, hurriedly pushes everything off of the table, and covers the table with the mesh. KREON then looks around, picks up a pencil from the floor and sets it on the mesh. KREON goes back to the generator and fiddles with a few of its controls. The humming increases. KREON turns back to the center stage table and watches the pencil expectantly. After a short while the generator is heard to short out as smoke begins to rise from it. The humming fades away. KREON quickly shuts off the generator. As KREON waves away the smoke and attempts to get the situation under control, ARTHUR enters from stage right eating an orange.)

ARTHUR: What are you burning in here, Nick?

KREON: It's just a short, nothing to worry about. *(ARTHUR tries to wave away some of the thick smoke.)*

ARTHUR: I thought you had that working.

KREON: So did I.

ARTHUR: So what's the problem?

KREON: There's a short circuit somewhere in the generator. *(KREON opens up the generator and begins repairing its circuits.)*

ARTHUR: *(Coughing)* So I noticed. *(ARTHUR crosses to the center stage table and sees the pencil.)* A pencil? When this is all recorded for future generations, history is going to show you levitated a pencil? *(ARTHUR turns to KREON.)* Couldn't you think of anything more creative?

KREON: Like what?

ARTHUR: I don't know, anything. Like a... *(ARTHUR attempts to think of something else, but realizes he can't think of anything more creative either. He finishes with the first thing that comes to mind.)* orange. *(KREON turns to ARTHUR.)*

KREON: *(Incredulously)* You want me to levitate an orange?

ARTHUR: Never mind! Use an armadillo for all I care! *(He sits at the table, picks up the pencil and fingers it thoughtfully.)* But a pencil is just so ordinary.

KREON: Don't you have something better to do than criticize my choice of test objects? *(There is a long pause as ARTHUR stares at the pencil and then snaps it in half.)* Chris? *(ARTHUR tosses the two pieces of the pencil to the ground.)*

ARTHUR: I'm finished, Nick. *(KREON turns around to face ARTHUR.)*

KREON: What?

ARTHUR: I said I'm finished.

KREON: Finished with what? Did you solve the... *(ARTHUR shakes his head.)*

ARTHUR: No, I mean I'm finished. Period. It's a dead end. I've hit a brick wall and there's no point in trying to smash through it any longer.

KREON: But your theories...

ARTHUR: ...are just that! Theories! They'll never come to anything! Some things just aren't possible.

KREON: You don't know that.

ARTHUR: Don't I? How many years have I spent on this? And how little progress have I made?

KREON: You must give yourself more time.

ARTHUR: And what good will that do?

KREON: You won't know until you try.

ARTHUR: That's easy for you to say. You're on the verge of a breakthrough.

KREON: So are you, you're just not quite there yet.

ARTHUR: That doesn't mean I'll ever get there. I can approach infinity as fast as I want, but it'll always be out of reach.

KREON: So you're giving up?

ARTHUR: Yes, I should have years ago. It's all been for nothing.

KREON: All of it? *(Pause)*

ARTHUR: Fix that short yet?

KREON: Almost. *(He turns back to the upstage table.)* The generator is drawing too much current. The field coils can't handle all that power. *(A pause as KREON works and ARTHUR stares out into space.)* Is there anything I can do to change your mind?

ARTHUR: Perhaps, but I don't know if that would be for the better. Sometimes one has to accept defeat gracefully.

KREON: And sometimes defeat only means that you must take a different path to reach your goal.

ARTHUR: Then maybe it's time I looked for a new map.

KREON: Maybe. Or maybe the one you have now is simply upside-down. Take a break, Chris, but don't give up. *(Pause)*

ARTHUR: I'll see what happens. *(ARTHUR heads towards the door.)*

KREON: Let me know what you decide. *(ARTHUR nods.)*

ARTHUR: I will, old friend. *(ARTHUR is about to say something more, but instead he simply exits. Something in the way ARTHUR acts suggests that he plans on being gone for quite some time. KREON watches him leave and then turns back to his work with a sense of loss. Lights fade to black. A dim blue spot fades up on the center stage table as the humming resumes. A new pencil is sitting on top of the wire mesh. KREON is at the upstage table running the generator. In the dim light he can barely be seen, and the focus is on the pencil. The marching soldiers are absent. Slowly and steadily the pencil rises into the air until it hovers a few feet above the table. It remains there for a few moments, after which the lights on the lab fade out and the humming ceases. The voice of a REPORTER fades up in the darkness.)*

REPORTER: Our top story this evening comes from right here in America. Noted scientist Dr. Nicholas Kreon has announced a stunning breakthrough: The creation of artificial anti-gravitational fields. These fields cannot only cancel out the Earth's own gravitation field, allowing objects of any size to be levitated with ease, but Dr. Kreon also maintains that these fields could be fashioned into stable pulses, known as soliton waves, capable of propelling a spacecraft. *(The voice fades out.)*

SCENE EIGHT

(The lights, red, fade up onto the U.R.E.)

RUSSIA: As we all know, tensions with the Oceanic Alliance have reached a new peak. It is no longer a question of if a war will begin, but when.

GREAT BRITAIN: Global tensions may be high, but that does not mean we cannot resolve our differences.

SWITZERLAND: With the Earth Council intact, our two sides are at least talking to each other. A diplomatic solution can still be found.

RUSSIA: Can it? The Alliance doesn't want peace, it wants domination! Canada fell to the Alliance during the last war, and only a few months ago Ireland was taken over in a coup. What's to stop them from picking the rest of us off one by one? If we're going to stand against the Alliance, we must act now!

BRAZIL: Or else it'll be the Domino Effect all over again! *(There is a general agreement to this, although a couple of LEADERS express otherwise.)*

UNITED STATES: There has never been a better time to act. At this moment we have the advantage. Dr. Kreon's anti-gravitational waves, known as Kreon Pulses, give us the technological edge we need to beat the Alliance once and for all. My country has been testing the possible military applications of Dr. Kreon's work, and the results are astonishing. A strong, focused, Kreon Pulse can penetrate virtually anything, and the only way to stop one is to create an equal and opposite gravitational pulse.

BRAZIL: And since only the U.R.E. possesses this technology...

PERU: ...the Alliance will be unable to stand against us!

SWITZERLAND: Are you suggesting that we conquer the Oceanic Alliance? That *we* start the war?

RUSSIA: The Alliance started the war when they took over Ireland and began attacking my country! Since then the number of armed conflicts between our two sides has increased dramatically. If we want to avoid a full-blown world war, we must strike hard, now, while we have the advantage.

GREAT BRITAIN: I must protest! The current talks are helping to decrease tensions. What you propose will destroy any chance of a diplomatic solution! We must proceed carefully. This is not the time for rash actions.

RUSSIA: Is it rash to protect our freedom? The line has already been drawn, and crossed, by the Alliance.

BRAZIL: It's time we responded!

SWITZERLAND: This is madness! One new weapon doesn't assure us victory over the Alliance. For the past century our world has worked hard to keep from destroying itself. Don't throw that all away. *(There is a short silence as all the LEADERS consider this.)*

PERU: Your words are well spoken, but to allow the O.A. to continue its aggression is to throw away our freedom. Russia is right, the war has already begun. I motion for an official declaration of war.

RUSSIA: I second the motion.

UNITED STATES: All in favor of an official declaration of war against the Oceanic Alliance? *(All the LEADERS except for GREAT BRITAIN and SWITZERLAND signal their approval.)* All opposed? *(GREAT BRITAIN and SWITZERLAND signal their opposition.)* Motion carried. Once all of our forces are armed with the new Kreon Pulse weapons, a formal declaration of war will be issued.

GREAT BRITAIN: I do not agree with this decision, but as a member of the United Republics of Earth, I will stand with you.

SWITZERLAND: And I. But I urge you all to consider this: The war we are about to fight may be the one no one can win. And may God have mercy upon our souls for what we are about to do. *(The lights on the U.R.E. fade out.)*

SCENE NINE

(The lights fade up onto KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. KREON is working at the center table. Some plans are unrolled in front of him.)

KREON: Chris, my friend, I wish you were here to see this right now. A voyage to Mars. The stars really are within our reach. *(There is a knock at the door. KREON answers it and TASE enters.)* Come in, Dr., I was just looking over the plans you sent me.

TASE: Excellent. Any input you can give us would be invaluable. It's your work that's going to make this bird fly. *(They sit at the center table.)*

KREON: I can't take all the credit. My work just laid the foundation. You have your work cut out for you engineering the rest of it.

TASE: We certainly do, but I'm sure you have a few ideas to help us out.

KREON: I'll do my best. But first, I wanted to thank you.

TASE: For what, Dr.?

KREON: For believing in my dream. This is what I intended my work for all along, but I knew that alone I could never take it this far. I had always hoped that there would be others who would continue what I started. You have.

TASE: It isn't just me, Dr. There are many others who share your vision. This is what our world needs, one vision, one dream that we all can share. The first step is the hardest, but now that you have taken it, I have no doubt that Earth shall take all those that are to follow. This may give us a chance to pull our world together before it tears itself apart.

KREON: For all our sake, I hope so. I fear we may be running out of time.

TASE: We are always running out of time, Dr., and we never know how much we have left. The important thing is to make the most of the time we have. This voyage is a far better use of our time than going to war. Unfortunately, not everyone sees it that way.

KREON: When human beings are walking on the surface of Mars, they might.

TASE: I hope they will. The further we go, the more we'll make the world take notice. *(KREON looks ahead and pauses in thought.)*

KREON: If they're even watching.

TASE: If they aren't, they'll miss quite a show. That's assuming we do indeed get this mission off the ground.

KREON: Right. *(He points to a part of the plans.)* Speaking of which, I noticed you're still having problems safely dissipating the pulse.

TASE: Yes, our preliminary studies indicate that once the pulse begins to destabilize, the harmonics will rip the ship apart.

KREON: The pulse can't be allowed to destabilize, you have to keep it steady while decreasing the amplitude. It has to be scaled down as carefully as it's built up.

TASE: Another problem we still haven't solved. Any ideas?

KREON: I'm afraid not. *(He smiles.)* That's why you have engineers.

TASE: Unfortunately they're as stumped as you are.

KREON: I've done it on a small scale, so I'm sure it's possible on a larger scale. It just may take a little time.

TASE: As they say, Dr., time is a quantity that we may not have. *(The lights fade out. When they fade back up, TASE has exited and KREON is reading the paper. ARTHUR enters. It appears that he has been on a long walk and is deep in thought. KREON doesn't notice his entrance. ARTHUR quietly goes over to his desk, stares at his work for a few moments, and then sits down. KREON hears this and glances in ARTHUR's direction. KREON seems surprised to see him.)*

KREON: Chris! I was beginning to wonder if you'd come back.

ARTHUR: To be honest, so was I. I had a long way to go, and a lot to think about.

KREON: I know, you always have. That's a journey we all have to make.

ARTHUR: It never really ends, does it?

KREON: No. It's good to see you, my friend. It's been awhile.

ARTHUR: I know, but it couldn't have waited any longer. I had to leave, for a time.

KREON: Did you find what you were looking for? *(ARTHUR turns away from KREON and is lost in thought for a short while.)*

ARTHUR: I'm not sure. *(Pause)*

KREON: Welcome back, Chris. *(ARTHUR picks up something from his desk, a pencil perhaps, and regards it thoughtfully.)*

ARTHUR: I once read somewhere that a man has to go a long distance out of his way in order to come back a short way correctly.

KREON: Is that what you needed to do? *(ARTHUR nods.)*

ARTHUR: Don't we all from time to time?

KREON: I suppose we do. *(Pause)*

ARTHUR: Did you really believe I wouldn't come back?

KREON: I didn't know.

ARTHUR: Neither did I. There was a lot to think about. *(KREON nods.)*

KREON: There's always a lot to think about my friend. What changed your mind?

ARTHUR: You did. You've shown me that the stars may just be within reach after all. I've heard a few of the Alliance countries are considering joining TASE. Maybe this world of ours really does have a chance.

KREON: A chance of what?

ARTHUR: Of finding its way into the light.

KREON: It does, so long as we have hope.

ARTHUR: Hope, it's a rare commodity these days. But I must have had some left, enough to come back here and give it another try. *(ARTHUR picks up the apparatus on his desk and wipes some of the dust off of it.)*

KREON: Have faith in yourself, Chris. There is no problem that cannot be solved, in time. *(ARTHUR carefully sets the apparatus back on his desk and nods.)*

ARTHUR: I'm beginning to see that now. Sometimes it just takes a long walk. *(A pause as KREON catches ARTHUR's meaning.)*

KREON: Then you...

ARTHUR: Yes, Nick, I figured it out. As I thought about your work, it all became clear. Time and space are one. Gravity warps space, and in doing so warps time. A strong, focused gravitational field, if shaped just right, could punch through time-space and open up a door *(ARTHUR looks out over the audience) into time. (The lights on the lab fade out.)*

SCENE TEN

(The lights, blue, fade up onto the lower center table. The five MARS ASTRONAUTS are sitting at the table, and are being briefed by TASE.)

TASE: Welcome. I am the head of TASE, the Terran Administration for Space Exploration. You have been asked here today because you represent the finest astronauts the world has to offer. It has been over seven decades since man first walked on the moon, the time has come for us to move further. The five of you will comprise the first manned mission to Mars. When TASE was founded nearly four years ago, we did not expect to reach this lofty goal until the centennial of the moon landing. But thanks to Dr. Nicholas Kreon and his work in the area of artificial gravity fields, we will be able to reach Mars within the next few years. To propel itself, your spacecraft will generate a large Kreon Pulse and ride upon it like a wave all the way to Mars. Are there any questions?

FIRST ASTRONAUT: Will the current aggressions between the United Republics of Earth and the Oceanic Alliance affect this mission in any way?

TASE: All of the countries involved in TASE, which include a few from the Alliance, have guaranteed full support of the Mars Mission, regardless of the world's diplomatic situation. The Mars Mission *will* go forward. Conflict will always be a part of our world, I'm sad to say. Aggression is a part of human nature, but so is vision. We can no longer allow those who are looking backwards to hamper those of us who are looking forward towards humanity's future. I have often heard it argued that we should not venture into space until we've solved all of the problems that exist here on Earth. History has shown us that will never happen. In fact, I would argue that we will find some of the solutions we seek among the stars.

SECOND ASTRONAUT: We'll never know for sure until we go out there and look.

TASE: Exactly. It was once said about space that "Humankind always reaches to grow, and that is the next frontier."¹ Fellow dreamers, space is our destiny, there is no where else for our planet to grow. Together, we will help our world reach the stars, *(TASE smiles)* whether it wants to or not. *(The lights on the lower center table fade out.)*

¹Nichelle Nichols on November 13th, 1993 (Minneapolis, MN)

SCENE ELEVEN

(The lights fade up onto KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. Unlike the previous scenes in the lab, the lights are all red. ARTHUR has begun constructing a temporal gate near his desk. ARTHUR enters, reading the paper. The headline consists of only one word: WAR. After a short while ARTHUR sinks into the chair by his desk.)

ARTHUR: Oh, my friend, that it should have come to this. (ARTHUR tosses the paper onto the floor. He then rests his head in one hand and closes his eyes, thinking. KREON enters, unnoticed by ARTHUR. KREON assumes ARTHUR to be asleep and is careful not to disturb him. KREON walks towards the center table and notices the paper. He picks it up and sits. The headline hits KREON like a lightning bolt. There is a long pause as KREON reads the article. When he is done, the paper slips through his trembling fingers.)

KREON: (In a whisper) No... (KREON's hands begin to shake more visibly as he stares at them and speaks louder.) no... (Stricken with grief, he holds his head in his hands and shouts.) NO! (The final cry is heard by ARTHUR who then looks up. He reaches out one hand towards KREON, as if to offer support, but cannot get himself to stand or say a single word. He is not seen by KREON. There is a long pause as both KREON and ARTHUR sit motionless, the marching of the soldiers the only sound. The lights on the lab fade out, leaving the stage in darkness for a few moments.)

SCENE TWELVE

(A blue spotlight fades up onto the lower center table at which sits a REPORTER.)

REPORTER: The leaders of the United Republics of Earth shocked the world today with their surprise declaration of war on the Oceanic Alliance. The declaration of war went into effect at midnight and was immediately followed by simultaneous attacks on Alliance targets around the world. Alliance troops responded within the hour, a sign that the governments of the Alliance have been expecting war for some time. While war may have been a surprise to no one, it was unexpected that the U.R.E. was the first side to officially begin the hostilities. Ever since the end of the Australian War a decade ago, the U.R.E. has actively pursued a diplomatic, rather than military, solution to the current tensions. *(The lights, red, fade up around the lower center table to reveal the LEADER OF THE UNITED STATES seated next to the table.)* This evening we have the President of the United States here with us to give the U.R.E.'s side of the story. President, could you explain why the U.R.E., after advocating peace for so long, has now chosen to begin a war with the Alliance?

UNITED STATES: A definite global peace has not existed ever since the beginning of the Australian War nearly fifteen years ago. Although we have officially been at peace since that war ended, the Alliance has been slowly chipping away at the U.R.E. The coup in Ireland, attacks on the Russian border, the bombing of the U.R.E. headquarters, events of that nature. The Oceanic Alliance has been attempting to conquer us piece by piece rather than risk an inevitable failure in an all-out war.

REPORTER: So by being the side to initiate this final confrontation you feel we have a better chance of coming out on top? *(UNITED STATES nods.)*

UNITED STATES: I do. The war began when we were ready, and still the stronger, because we struck first and struck hard.

REPORTER: What about the use of the new Kreon Pulse technology? Will it give us a significant technological edge?

UNITED STATES: Absolutely. The Alliance will be unable to create a substantial defense against Kreon Pulse technology without possessing the technology themselves.

REPORTER: What are the chances of the Alliance gaining this technology in the near future?

UNITED STATES: Next to none. It would take them years to duplicate what Dr. Kreon has accomplished. I assure you, the war will be over long before they can get that far.

REPORTER: Even though the Alliance knows such technology is possible?

UNITED STATES: There is a large difference between knowing and doing.

REPORTER: You seem very confident that we will win this war.

UNITED STATES: I am. We would not have started this war unless we were sure of victory.

REPORTER: What if the Alliance was, by some small chance, able to gain the Kreon Pulse technology?

UNITED STATES: That is an extremely remote possibility, negligible even.

REPORTER: But if they were?

UNITED STATES: Then we'll cross that bridge if we come to it. However, I assure you that we never will.

REPORTER: I hope you're right, President.

UNITED STATES: So do I.

REPORTER: One last question: Our planet has fought for so long, after this war do you think Earth will finally know peace? *(Contemplative pause.)*

UNITED STATES: We can only hope. *(The lights on the REPORTER and the UNITED STATES fade out.)*

SCENE THIRTEEN

(The lights then fade up to reveal TASE standing outside, contemplating the night sky. A MARS ASTRONAUT enters quietly and stands to one side of him. TASE does not move, but speaks after a few moments. The lights are a dim, twilight blue. The sky is filled with stars.)

TASE: Status of the last simulation?

ASTRONAUT: It was an improvement. Our orbital approach is still rocky, but at least this time we made it down in one piece. *(TASE nods.)* Is something wrong, sir? *(Beat)*

TASE: It's a long way, isn't it?

ASTRONAUT: To Mars?

TASE: To peace.

ASTRONAUT: Yes, I suppose it is. We still have a long way to go.

TASE: I used to think we'd find peace out there, among the stars.

ASTRONAUT: Perhaps we still will.

TASE: I'm not so sure. Our problems will follow us even to the farthest star, peace won't come from running away.

ASTRONAUT: Then what continues to drive us forward into the unknown?

TASE: Peace requires understanding, and understanding often requires a change in perspective. It is out there that we see a reflection of ourselves.

ASTRONAUT: And by moving towards that reflection?

TASE: We gain a clearer view on who we are and where we've been. Peace is found within ourselves, I realize that now. We won't discover it only by searching without.

ASTRONAUT: Have faith, we may yet learn from the journeys ahead of us.

TASE: Space isn't going to conquer human nature. Rather, it is human nature that will tame the wild stars. But too many have turned their eyes away from the future. It is the unknown that both inspires and frightens us. When we cease to give in to our fears, then, perhaps, may we finally know peace.

ASTRONAUT: Don't judge the world too harshly, confronting one's fear is a difficult task. In many ways, it is more difficult than what we're attempting to do. We all have challenges to face and

obstacles to overcome. *(TASE turns back to the stars. The ASTRONAUT lays one hand on TASE's shoulder.)* We may yet prevail. *(She exits. A pause as TASE watches the stars.)*

TASE: *(Softly, to himself)* We do these things "not because they are easy, but because they are hard."² *(The lights fade out, leaving only the stars.)*

²John F. Kennedy

SCENE FOURTEEN

(The stars disappear as the lights, red, fade up onto the Earth Council. AUSTRALIA stands at center stage, addressing the DELEGATES.)

AUSTRALIA: Only days ago, without provocation or just cause, the Leaders of the United Republics of Earth launched a full scale attack on the Oceanic Alliance. We now see that all the talk of peace in this room was simply a front behind which the U.R.E. has plotted the destruction of the Alliance! *(SWITZERLAND stands.)*

SWITZERLAND: That's not true! The U.R.E. firmly believes in peace!

AUSTRALIA: Then explain this war, Ambassador! You talk peace, but in the night you attack us while we sleep!

SWITZERLAND: My country did not support this decision, and neither did I. Switzerland believes in peace.

GREAT BRITAIN: As does all of the U.R.E.

AUSTRALIA: And yet you started a war. *(RUSSIA stands.)*

RUSSIA: We were not the first to begin the aggression. We have the right to defend ourselves!

NEW IRELAND: The Alliance is not made of fools, Ambassador, we can see that you expect a quick victory with this new weapon of yours. We will not yield.

AUSTRALIA: And now that the first shot has been fired, the line crossed, we will not stop until we achieve complete victory. *(BRAZIL laughs.)*

BRAZIL: I doubt you will be the ones to emerge victorious. *(The ALLIANCE DELEGATES react angrily to this.)*

CHINA: *(Standing)* The Alliance will not be an easy conquest! We will fight!

BRAZIL: *(Also standing)* So shall we!

ANTARCTICA: Ambassadors! This gains us nothing! Our purpose here is to stop wars, not to further them along. Would everyone please *sit down!* *(The DELEGATES grudgingly comply. When it is quiet, ANTARCTICA continues.)* Fellow Delegates, all that we have worked for these past years is in danger of being destroyed. For years we have managed to maintain a fragile peace in the hope that it would one day become a lasting peace. That fragile peace has now been broken, but it is not yet beyond repair. The violence must end, now, before it spreads too far and we pass the point of no return.

EGYPT: We already have. The U.R.E. cannot be allowed to get away with its barbarous acts of aggression.

ANTARCTICA: If both sides would agree to stop the fighting, without any conditions, we may be able to work out an agreement.

AUSTRALIA: The Alliance is willing to cease the war, for a price. The U.R.E. must reimburse us for all the damage it has done to our countries.

UNITED STATES: What sort of reimbursement? Weapons, territories, technology...

AUSTRALIA: Half of the United States. (UNITED STATES *stands, shocked.*)

UNITED STATES: *WHAT?!?*

AUSTRALIA: Our price is half of the land in the United States. The exact half is negotiable.

UNITED STATES: You can't be serious! My government would never consent to such an insane demand!

AUSTRALIA: Then the war continues.

SWITZERLAND: Surely we can find another solution...

AUSTRALIA: Our condition is final. If the U.R.E. wants peace...

RUSSIA: We do want peace, a peace free of Alliance aggression! Giving in to your demand solves nothing. What then? The next time the fighting starts you'll demand another country, then another, and so on. We will not hand over the remainder of the world to the Alliance. The U.R.E. will not go quietly!

AUSTRALIA: Then there can be no peace so long as the U.R.E. still stands.

CANADA: We'll never surrender to you! (*The DELEGATES begin shouting amongst themselves as ANTARCTICA attempts to restore order.*)

ANTARCTICA: Order! (*No response.*) I said order! (*The DELEGATES continue shouting as KREON enters and takes center stage. As the DELEGATES see and recognize him, the room becomes silent.*) Thank you. The floor is yours, Dr.

KREON: Delegates of the United Republics of Earth, Delegates of the Oceanic Alliance, good evening. My name is Dr. Nicholas Kreon, and because of my work we are now at war. I come before you today to urge you all to put an end to the fighting. No conditions, no temporary cease fire, but a complete and total end to this pointless war. We all know that neither side here is willing to surrender. This war can only end in one of two ways: Peace, or the end of the world.

It is with the deepest regret that I watch as my own country wages a war with my greatest creation. My work was never meant to create war, I meant it to create peace. Peace between all countries, regardless of their political alliance. It was my hope that, through the joint effort of the exploration of space, humanity could learn to live as one single entity. Not one contained by the bonds of fear, as some might wish, but one in freedom. This war threatens all my work stands for, and each of you here is as much to blame for that as I myself am. Delegates of Earth, it is our responsibility to ensure that freedom and peace continue on. We are on the verge of a new era of exploration, as the Mars Mission takes us another step into the great unknown. I beg of you to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the Mars Astronauts have a world to come home to. Thank you. *(KREON returns to his lab. The lights on the Council fade out.)*

SCENE FIFTEEN

(The lights fade up on KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. ARTHUR is seated by his desk.)

ARTHUR: Congratulations on your speech, Nick.

KREON: For all the good it did. *(Pause)* What have I done, Chris? What have I unleashed upon this poor world?

ARTHUR: Don't blame yourself. You couldn't have known what would be done with your creation.

KREON: They're using it to kill! Our own government is using my life's work to wage a war. *(KREON looks back at ARTHUR.)* I never meant it for that. Kreon Pulses were supposed to help Earth stop the fighting, not start it. I tried to tell them that, but they wouldn't listen. *(KREON rests his head in his hands.)*

ARTHUR: You've done your best to give the world some good, but people have to accept that good on their own. You can't force it into their hands.

KREON: *(Bitterly)* And why not?

ARTHUR: Perhaps the world isn't ready for what you have to offer.

KREON: They rejected them, how could they reject them? I brought the stars within reach and Earth rejected them! Why can't mankind look ahead? How long will we continue to throw away our dreams? Will we repeat all our mistakes until the world's end? *(ARTHUR sighs.)*

ARTHUR: I fear that we will. You and I may see the answers, but humanity as a whole never seems to learn. You can take them to the farthest star and beyond, but humans will always remain humans. Good and evil are a part of our nature. It's who we are, Nick.

KREON: Was it so much to ask for? One moment of understanding? One moment to think about all we could do as a whole, once we stopped fighting and started listening to each other. *(Pause)* One moment of peace, Chris, would be more precious than all the world's riches.

ARTHUR: So precious and so rare, my friend. Do you no longer believe that it can be found?

KREON: It has to be out there somewhere, that I'll always be sure of. As for where, I no longer know. *(KREON looks up and lifts one hand, as if holding something in it.)* For one moment I believed I had found it and held it in my hand. But like the sands of time it slipped through my fingers and vanished in the shadows of the night. *(KREON lowers his hand.)* Was I wrong to hope for so much?

ARTHUR: No, never doubt that. Such hopes can never be wrong. Often they are the only lights that shine during the night.

KREON: Night it is. They have turned my light into darkness and brought the night down upon us all.

ARTHUR: You haven't lost hope, have you, Nick? The world still needs your optimism, I certainly do. *(KREON looks back at ARTHUR and almost manages a weak smile.)*

KREON: No, I am only weary. *(KREON turns away.)* I need rest my friend. *(KREON closes his eyes, the weight of everything resting heavily upon him. There is a pause as ARTHUR realizes that KREON has gone to sleep.)*

ARTHUR: *(Softly)* The world has done you wrong. I pray you will sleep until the morning. *(ARTHUR quietly rises and exits. As he is leaving, the lights fade to blue and remain so for a few moments before fading out on the sleeping KREON. As the lights change to blue, the sound of the soldiers fades away. There is one moment of peace. In the blackout we hear the voice of a REPORTER.)*

REPORTER: In other news, a massive explosion crippled the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, the United States, yesterday evening. The American government has not yet issued a formal statement, but a spokesman for the lab denies rumors that the explosion was the work of Alliance terrorists. Lab officials claim that this was only an accident, albeit an unfortunate one. They insist that nothing was stolen or deliberately sabotaged. The Los Alamos research facilities developed most of the U.R.E.'s Kreon Pulse based technologies, and it is suspected that a malfunction in one of these experimental devices triggered the explosion. More details, including a list of those killed or injured, will be disclosed after a more detailed investigation. *(The voice fades out.)*

SCENE SIXTEEN

(The lights, blue, fade up onto TASE and a REPORTER who are standing in front of the lower center table.)

REPORTER: *(To audience)* I am coming to you live from the launch facilities of TASE, the Terran Administration for Space Exploration, where we are about to witness a historic event. In just a few hours the first manned mission to Mars will begin. With me is the Head of TASE, here to tell us more about the revolutionary spacecraft which will make this journey.

TASE: When the planning for the Mars Mission began, we knew that an entirely new type of spacecraft would be needed. The work of Dr. Nicholas Kreon formed the foundation upon which this mission was built, and we owe a great debt to his ingenuity. Man has long dreamed of walking among the stars, and now, after years of hard work, that dream becomes reality. Today we launch Earth's first truly interstellar spacecraft, the United Earth Ship *Enterprise*.

REPORTER: The *United Earth Ship*? Dr., right now Earth is far from united.

TASE: The *Enterprise* will not make this journey for just one piece of our planet, but the whole. This journey is not the accomplishment of the U.R.E. alone, but of the entire Earth.

REPORTER: Including the Alliance? A faction with which we are currently at war?

TASE: All of Earth. It is a lack of trust that has kept our planet in pieces. The time has come for someone to make the first step. TASE hopes that the Mars Mission will be seen by members of the Alliance for what it truly is: An invitation to join us as we reach beyond the confines of this world. Some of them already have.

REPORTER: That's a very idealistic goal, Dr., some might argue that the path ahead requires a more realistic approach.

TASE: Realism did not send us to the moon. This is the age of vision. We will not go anywhere unless we dream great dreams, and we must dream them together. The *Enterprise* is merely a symbol of those dreams.

REPORTER: A symbol that will not soon be forgotten. Congratulations, Dr., this is indeed an incredible achievement.

TASE: Thank you. But it is not mine, nor TASE's, achievement alone. We may bring Earth to Mars, but it is the true dreamers like Dr. Kreon who have given us the stars. They are our future. Perhaps one of the greatest follies humanity has ever committed is to ignore those who have pointed the way ahead. Earth now has a chance to listen and let the stars light our way. *(The lights on TASE and the REPORTER fade out.)*

SCENE SEVENTEEN

(The lights fade up onto KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. ARTHUR is at stage left working on his temporal gate. KREON enters, his mood still heavy.)

ARTHUR: Good morning, Nick.

KREON: You're here early.

ARTHUR: Never left.

KREON: You've been working on that all night?

ARTHUR: Everything is falling into place. I couldn't stop working on it. *(KREON sits at the center stage table.)* I never really expected to get this far, it doesn't feel quite real.

KREON: It is, I promise you. It's all real, everything that's happening, everything I've done, deadly real.

ARTHUR: Nick, you haven't done anything wrong. The world has just gotten a little out of control.

KREON: I don't think we ever had control on the world in the first place, and now I've added one more chaotic element to the system. *(ARTHUR joins KREON at the center table.)*

ARTHUR: I don't believe we're capable of adding new elements to the world. We just create new patterns with the ones we have.

KREON: There won't be a pattern much longer, the Alliance will see to that. *(ARTHUR grabs KREON by the shoulders.)*

ARTHUR: Nick, pull yourself together! I've never seen you like this before. *(KREON picks up a newspaper and waves it at ARTHUR.)*

KREON: Look at what I've done, Chris, look at what I've done! Me! *(ARTHUR grabs the paper from KREON.)*

ARTHUR: This isn't your doing. *(ARTHUR points at the temporal gate.)* That is, if anything.

KREON: That's your work, not mine.

ARTHUR: I based my work on your theories. Without your breakthrough I wouldn't have gotten anywhere.

KREON: You underestimate yourself, Chris. It might have taken longer, but you would have made it this far without me.

ARTHUR: Nick, if it hadn't been for you I wouldn't have come back. I would have given it all up, forever. Don't you see? You've done more than make a scientific breakthrough, you've touched people's lives, helped them. Can you truly say that your only accomplishment is chaos? Wars are a part of human history. This one will pass, as all the others have.

KREON: I'm not so sure. I'm afraid things will only get worse.

ARTHUR: It will pass, Nick.

KREON: Do you truly believe that? *(ARTHUR stands and walks toward the door.)*

ARTHUR: I don't know. I admit I've never been the optimistic type, and I expect things will get worse before they get better. However, I still can't accept that hope is gone. *(A pause as ARTHUR looks out the window.)* Nor did I think you could, you have said so many times.

KREON: I can't. *(ARTHUR turns to face KREON.)*

ARTHUR: Then don't. *(Short pause)* There is nothing you can do for the moment, except hold on to your faith in humanity. My friend, it's what you do best.

KREON: *(Sadly)* Thank you, we shall soon see if that's enough. *(The lights on the lab fade out. In the darkness we hear the voice of the LEADER OF AUSTRALIA delivering an ultimatum to the countries of the U.R.E.)*

AUSTRALIA: Attention United Republics of Earth, this is the Leader of the Oceanic Alliance. I give you 48 hours to surrender unconditionally. The Alliance has constructed a Kreon Pulse generator powerful enough to shatter an entire planet. Unless you surrender, I will fire a Kreon Pulse at the Earth's core, destroying our world. To prove my sincerity, I shall first use my "Armageddon Device" to destroy the moon exactly 24 hours from now. This is not a bluff, my intentions are quite real. The choice belongs to the U.R.E.: Surrender, or else in two days the world ends. *(The voice ceases.)*

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(The lights, red, fade up onto the Earth Council. The DELEGATES OF THE U.R.E. are shouting at the DELEGATES OF THE O.A. and vice-versa.)

RUSSIA: This is intolerable! Such scare tactics should be beneath even the Alliance

AUSTRALIA: This is no idle threat, I assure you, Ambassador!

GREAT BRITAIN: Are you insane? Would your leader destroy the world simply because he can't have it all?

NEW IRELAND: Yes, he would! Don't be fools, surrender or we'll all be destroyed, U.R.E. and Alliance members alike!

UNITED STATES: That's what your leader wants us to believe. Does Australia honestly think it can scare us into submission? What proof do we have that this so-called "Armageddon Device" even exists? *(The U.R.E. DELEGATES all indicate some form of agreement to this.)*

CANADA: You'll receive your proof in twenty hours!

SWITZERLAND: Even if this weapon does exist, no one would be mad enough to use it! It's a weapon of fear! *(To AUSTRALIA.)* Tell your leader that he cannot terrorize us into submission. We will *not* be intimidated!

SOUTH AFRICA: Fool! Your stubbornness will only bring destruction upon us all! *(The DELEGATES begin to shout amongst themselves.)*

ANTARCTICA: Silence, *silence!* *(The room settles down to some semblance of order.)* What we need now is talk, not threats! Everyone, sit down! *(The DELEGATES do not appear willing to do so.)* That was *not* a request. *(The DELEGATES all obey, albeit grudgingly.)* Thank you. We must assume for now that the reports of this "Armageddon Device" are true and we have less than two days before a madman destroys the world. *(AUSTRALIA begins to stand, about to protest this remark.)* Sit down, Ambassador! You know as well as I do that only a madman would even consider the use of such a weapon.

EGYPT: He will use it! *(To the U.R.E. DELEGATES)* Only your surrender can prevent the end of the world!

RUSSIA: *(Coldly)* We would die before surrendering to you.

EGYPT: You will.

ANTARCTICA: *(To AUSTRALIA)* Does your leader truly expect democratic nations to just hand over their freedom? To willingly enslave themselves?

AUSTRALIA: Our leader expects that they will make the wise choice and prevent what would be an unfortunate disaster.

PERU: Unfortunate? You're talking about the end of the world, and all you can say is that it would be unfortunate?

AUSTRALIA: It would be most unfortunate for us all. Don't you understand? There is only one solution!

BRAZIL: To give in? To live in constant fear that this dreadful weapon you've created could be unleashed at any moment?

AUSTRALIA: Control would have to be maintained.

PERU: Over your new slaves?

GREAT BRITAIN: *(Breaking in)* This is getting us nowhere! *(To AUSTRALIA)* Let me make this very clear to you: The United Republics of Earth will never surrender. Nothing you do can force us to relinquish our freedom, not even your "Armageddon Device."

AUSTRALIA: Have it your way, Ambassador, but never say you were not warned. *(The lights on the Earth Council fade out.)*

SCENE NINETEEN

(A circle of blue light, the moon, fades up in the center of the stage. The voices of the LEADER OF AUSTRALIA and a SCIENTIST are heard juxtaposed with the voice of a REPORTER.)

REPORTER: I'm coming to you live from the Earth Council Chambers where the Delegates of the Nations of Earth continue to search for a diplomatic solution to the current crisis.

AUSTRALIA: The time has come for our demonstration, Dr. Are we ready for the Device's final test?

SCIENTIST: The Device is fully functional. We can proceed at any time.

REPORTER: In the meantime, the world waits in fearful anticipation. Does the so-called "Armageddon Device" in fact exist? If it does, is the leader of the Oceanic Alliance desperate enough to actually destroy the Earth?

AUSTRALIA: The U.R.E. will now learn the price of defiance. I shall bring them to their knees!

SCIENTIST: The projected environmental effects will also impact the Alliance, are you sure you wish to go through with this?

REPORTER: Will the Dictator of Australia do as he has threatened, or is this all an elaborate bluff?

AUSTRALIA: Are you questioning me?

SCIENTIST: No, of course not.

REPORTER: Is that a chance that the U.R.E. is willing to take?

AUSTRALIA: Then keep to your work! Target the moon. *(Pause)*

SCIENTIST: Moon targeted.

REPORTER: All we have now are questions, and all we can do is wait for answers.

AUSTRALIA: Prepare to fire on my mark.

REPORTER: Hope is the one weapon we have left against the night. Hope that we will live to see the dawn...

AUSTRALIA: Mark.

REPORTER: *(Continuing)* ...and a bright new tomorrow. *(The circle of light turns red and then slowly vanishes. Silence.)*

SCENE TWENTY

(The lights fade up onto KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. ARTHUR is finishing the temporal gate while KREON sits at the center table, reading the newspaper. With each passing moment KREON grows more and more despondent. The sound of sirens has joined that of the marching soldiers.)

KREON: When will it end? All these years, all these long years, and none of this madness is any closer to ending than when it began. *(KREON sighs.)* But soon it'll all be over. *(ARTHUR pauses in his work.)*

ARTHUR: Do you truly believe the Alliance plans on destroying Earth?

KREON: They destroyed the moon.

ARTHUR: And that isn't causing half the environmental havoc they claimed it would.

KREON: It's too soon to tell.

ARTHUR: It could have, but it's not. Why? Because whatever else the O.A. is, it isn't stupid. They wanted to scare us, not ravage the biosphere.

KREON: We won't surrender, which means we're forced to call their hand. *(ARTHUR stands and joins KREON at the center table.)*

ARTHUR: When we do, we'll find that this has all been an elaborate bluff and their hand is empty.

KREON: Or else that their intents are seriously real.

ARTHUR: All right, suppose this isn't just a bluff, what then? It's out of your hands now.

KREON: I let this genie out of the bottle, Chris, I have to do something to stop it. *(ARTHUR sighs.)*

ARTHUR: You're not responsible for what the genie does. If you hadn't let it out, someone else would have.

KREON: But not now, not at this time. Not at just the wrong moment when it would start a war.

ARTHUR: You don't know that! You can't go second-guessing yourself about what might have been. There comes a time when you have to admit defeat gracefully and realize there's nothing left for you to do. *(KREON shakes his head.)*

KREON: There's the difference between us, Chris. I can't accept anything as inevitable, not until I've tried everything possible and then some.

ARTHUR: Nick, sometimes I think you must be the proverbial irresistible force encountering the immovable object. *(KREON manages a slight smile.)*

KREON: I suppose in some ways I am. What immovable object do you believe I've encountered?

ARTHUR: Human nature. *(KREON's smile vanishes.)*

KREON: So the war is the result of that collision?

ARTHUR: I wouldn't say that.

KREON: I would. *(Silence)*

ARTHUR: So what now? What can you possibly do to change what you've already done?

KREON: There has to be something. This can't be the end! *(Softer)* It just can't be.

ARTHUR: My friend, all things come to an end eventually, each in their own time. *(At the sound of the word "time" KREON freezes as if he's suddenly had a profound revelation.)* What is it, Nick?

KREON: *(With realization)* Time. *(KREON suddenly stands and heads towards the door. ARTHUR also stands.)*

ARTHUR: Where are you going?

KREON: To prepare. *(KREON exits. ARTHUR begins to follow.)*

ARTHUR: Prepare? Prepare for what? What are you going to do? Nick, wait up! Nick! *(ARTHUR exits. The lights on the lab fade out.)*

SCENE TWENTY ONE

(The lights, blue, fade up onto the U.R.E. The LEADERS OF THE U.R.E. have met for a final discussion about the Alliance's demands. For a few moments there is only silence.)

UNITED STATES: Fellow Leaders, it has become evident that the threat we face is frighteningly real. The decision now before us could determine the fate of the entire world. Do we surrender, and assure ourselves a future without freedom, or stand firm and take the chance on no future at all.

RUSSIA: The Alliance hasn't given us much of a choice. Either way, we lose.

PERU: The real issue here is whether or not the Alliance is willing to follow through on its threat. Destroying the moon is one thing, but the Earth?

BRAZIL: Why shouldn't the Alliance be serious? Their leader is insane! When they go down, they'll take us right along with them.

PERU: Do we have the right to condemn the world to death simply to preserve our freedom?

SWITZERLAND: Do we have the right to condemn the world to slavery simply because we lack the courage to stand up for our ideals?

BRAZIL: What can we do? It's a fifty-fifty chance, we might as well flip a coin. Do we live as slaves or die as free men?

GREAT BRITAIN: You assume that it'd be better to live under Alliance rule than to see Earth destroyed. Would it? With their new weapon they'd have complete control. If we don't stand against them now, then who would ever dare oppose them? We cannot think only of ourselves, we must also think of the generations of humans who might never know freedom.

SWITZERLAND: Isn't that what the United Republics of Earth is all about? Preserving the freedom of our planet and taking a stand against oppressors? Fellow Leaders, we cannot let fear force us to abandon our ideals, we must stand firm and face our enemy.

RUSSIA: And if we die?

SWITZERLAND: Then we die upholding what is right.

RUSSIA: Then you believe we will die if we do not surrender?

SWITZERLAND: I do not know. But should we die, remember that there are far worst things we could give our lives for. It would be a noble death, and no noble death is in vain.

UNITED STATES: I agree. It is time for us to draw the line and finish what we started. Life or Death, the United States will not surrender.

SWITZERLAND: And neither shall Switzerland.

GREAT BRITAIN: Nor Great Britain.

UNITED STATES: And the rest of you? What is your position?

RUSSIA: The Alliance demands unconditional surrender. If any one country refuses, it does not matter what the rest of us decide. Therefore, I suggest we present a united front and not yield a centimeter. *(The LEADERS all agree to this statement.)*

BRAZIL: You're right. The Alliance's goal has always been to divide us and conquer us one by one. Now is the time we must stand together, whatever the cost.

UNITED STATES: Then it's decided. *(The lights on the U.R.E. fade out.)*

SCENE TWENTY TWO

(The lights fade up onto KREON and ARTHUR's laboratory. The lights are red. KREON enters from stage right in non-descript clothing and heads towards the temporal gate. Its controls are on ARTHUR's desk. KREON is carrying a gun. ARTHUR enters right behind him.)

ARTHUR: You can't do this, Nick! This is insane! *(KREON stops suddenly and turns on ARTHUR.)*

KREON: Insane? I have to do this! Everything that's happening, the war, the Armageddon Device, it's all because of me! If I hadn't created Kreon Pulses, none of this would have happened, the world would still be safe.

ARTHUR: You don't know that! The world was on the brink of war long before you made your breakthrough.

KREON: On the brink, and I pushed it over the edge. This is the only way. *(He starts moving towards the controls, ARTHUR stops him.)*

ARTHUR: No! I won't let you use my invention to murder yourself!

KREON: Do you think I want to? If only there was some other way, besides erasing the memory of myself and my accomplishments. *(He sinks into a nearby chair.)* I gave this world a way to the stars, and it turned my discovery into another way of destroying itself.

ARTHUR: Listen to me, Nick, they won't do it. The Alliance won't destroy Earth. You don't have to do this.

KREON: The Alliance knows it'll never win this war. It's led by a madman, and madmen sometimes do desperate things. I can't take that chance!

ARTHUR: You must give it time, you taught me that. You were right.

KREON: I know, but now there isn't time to wait.

ARTHUR: This situation isn't your fault, but you're still putting all the blame on yourself. Technology is neutral, you and I both know that. You can't blame yourself for every evil use of your discovery.

KREON: But that's exactly it, it is my discovery. And that makes it my responsibility! I'm not willing to take the chance that my creation will result in the end of the world.

ARTHUR: So you're going to throw away your life on a worst case scenario?

KREON: Do I have a choice?

ARTHUR: There are always choices.

KREON: Not this time. There is no other way.

ARTHUR: *(Becoming desperate)* But if you take your creation away from the world, we'll lose the good applications as well as the bad! By this time tomorrow humans will have set foot on Mars for the first time. Before Kreon Pulses we were still years away from that, and decades away from ever leaving the solar system! *(KREON is still unconvinced, but it appears that he might be swaying.)* The stars are within our reach. You said it yourself: Endless resources, infinite experiences! No need to fight. You're not the only dreamer in this world, there are others, and they believe in your vision. *They* are the future, not those who would use what you've created for destruction. You've given this world the stars, don't take them away again, we may never get them back. *(A pause, and it looks as if ARTHUR may have gotten through to KREON. However, KREON soon shakes his head.)*

KREON: It all means nothing if the dreamers on Mars have nothing to return to. Too soon, it has all been too soon. *(KREON rises and walks over to the gate's controls. He turns back to ARTHUR.)* You know this is the only way, you know I'm right. *(Pause)* My only regret is that when the world forgets me, you shall too. *(KREON turns to the controls and inputs his destination time. ARTHUR picks up an electronic armband sitting on the upstage table and puts it on.)*

ARTHUR: *(To himself)* I will remember. *(KREON finishes with the controls and the machine begins to hum. He turns to ARTHUR.)*

KREON: Good-bye, my friend. I am sorry it had to come to this.

ARTHUR: So am I. Farewell. *(KREON walks forward into the gate. Just as KREON enters, he turns back to ARTHUR for a moment before exiting stage left. When he does, there is a large flash of blue light from the gate. The stage lights immediately go out.)*

SCENE TWENTY THREE

(After a few moments, occasional flashes of blue and red light come from opposite sides of the stage. It is as if a battle is taking place, one we cannot see. The mixed voices of a MARS ASTRONAUT/HOUSTON and the LEADER OF AUSTRALIA/SCIENTIST are heard. The two conversations come from opposite sides of the stage, ASTRONAUT/HOUSTON on the blue side and AUSTRALIA/SCIENTIST on the red side.)

ASTRONAUT: Houston, this is the *Enterprise*.

HOUSTON: We read you, *Enterprise*.

AUSTRALIA: Doctor, prepare the Armageddon Device.

SCIENTIST: *(Surprised)* The U.R.E. still refuses to surrender?

ASTRONAUT: Our voyage is proceeding as planned. We are now making our final approach to Mars.

HOUSTON: Copy that, *Enterprise*, prepare to dissipate your Kreon Pulse.

AUSTRALIA: The U.R.E. is still attempting to negotiate, but I will settle for nothing less than unconditional surrender!

SCIENTIST: Perhaps they only need more time.

ASTRONAUT: Roger, Houston, preparing for deceleration.

HOUSTON: We copy. How's the view over there?

AUSTRALIA: The U.R.E. has run out of time!

SCIENTIST: We use this weapon and we all run out of time!

ASTRONAUT: It's quite a sight, Houston. We'll bring back some home movies for you.

HOUSTON: You do that, *Enterprise*. You should be ready to dissipate your Kreon Pulse now.

AUSTRALIA: The U.R.E. has brought this upon themselves, blame them for the world's fate!

SCIENTIST: You can't do this!

ASTRONAUT: We copy, commencing deceleration. *(Sound of the Enterprise shaking.)*

HOUSTON: Bumpy ride, *Enterprise*?

AUSTRALIA: Yes I *can*! The world will be mine or no one's!

SCIENTIST: This is insanity!

ASTRONAUT: Roger that, Houston. Our velocity is slowing... coming in on approach vector... reaching orbital velocity.

HOUSTON: Good job, *Enterprise*.

AUSTRALIA: This is war, Doctor!

SCIENTIST: No! I will not allow you to destroy us!

ASTRONAUT: We have achieved orbit around Mars, commencing landing procedures.

HOUSTON: Take it nice and slow, *Enterprise*.

AUSTRALIA: You are not in control of this, I am. Stand aside!

SCIENTIST: I'll destroy the device and us with it!

ASTRONAUT: She's coming in nicely. Thank Dr. Kreon for us, this is the only way to fly.

HOUSTON: We'll do that, *Enterprise*.

AUSTRALIA: No! I will win!

SCIENTIST: *No one will win!* (AUSTRALIA *cries out in rage and there is the sound of a struggle between him and the SCIENTIST.*)

ASTRONAUT: Houston, Utopia Planetia here, the *Enterprise* has landed. (*The flashing lights cease.*)

SCENE TWENTY FOUR

(The lights, blue, fade up onto the lower center table which is covered with books and papers. A student, a younger version of KREON, sits there studying. A few moments later KREON enters with his gun aimed at the YOUNG KREON. When he enters the lights change to a deep red.)

KREON: Nicholas Kreon? *(The YOUNG KREON turns, surprised, then frightened when he sees the gun.)*

YOUNG KREON: Yes, who are you?

KREON: I am you. *(The YOUNG KREON does not quite understand.)*

YOUNG KREON: I don't understand, what do you want? *(With an anxious look at the gun.)* Are you going to kill me?

KREON: I must. If you survive, the entire planet could be destroyed. *(The YOUNG KREON laughs ironically.)*

YOUNG KREON: What could I possibly do that would have such a profound effect? I'm only one man.

KREON: Yes, and one man can change the world. I did. You cannot be allowed to repeat my mistake. I made it, and you'll make it too if I don't stop you.

YOUNG KREON: What mistake are you talking about? That you've already made, that I will make. What sort of nonsense is that? Who are you? *(He stares at KREON. After a few tense moments he suddenly realizes the truth.)* You are me! How is that possible? Why are you doing this? Why kill yourself?

KREON: If you live, if we live, you will make an incredible discovery, one that could be used to bring this world to a premature end. Do you understand? The end of the world! And it's our fault unless... *(KREON readies the gun, determined. The YOUNG KREON tries to find another way out of this.)*

YOUNG KREON: So tell me what this discovery is, and I won't discover it! *(KREON shakes his head.)*

KREON: No, you don't understand. If I let you live, there is always the possibility that the future I've seen will occur. I can't allow that to happen! Whatever happens, we die. The least I can do is ensure that the rest of the world will survive.

YOUNG KREON: Please, there must be another way, there's always another way!

KREON: Not this time. The future must end, now. *(KREON fires. The YOUNG KREON slumps back into the chair, his eyes opened wide with shock and pain. KREON watches, in horror of*

what he has just done.) No! (He tosses away the gun.) Please, forgive me. I didn't want to, but there was no other way, nothing else that could be done. I looked, I tried!

YOUNG KREON: *(Faintly)* I only wanted to change the world. *(He looks up.)* The stars, I see the stars... *(He dies. KREON falls to his knees and cries.)*

KREON: Dear Lord, what have I done? What have I done! I am sorry... *(KREON cries out in anguish.)* Forgive me! *(The lights fade out.)*

SCENE TWENTY FIVE

(After a few moments the lights, blue, fade up onto the Earth Council. ANTARCTICA is addressing the DELEGATES.)

ANTARCTICA: Fellow Ambassadors, we stand on the eve of a new era. During the past two decades our world has stood on the brink of destruction, and many felt that another world war was inevitable. At times, here in this council room, we have felt the same. But through the clouds of these troubled times, the flame of peace and hope still burned. Today, for the first time in many years, we meet not to discuss how to find peace, but instead how to preserve it. Our history contains the story of a world which has known war ever since its beginning. Over the centuries the pieces of this planet have slowly come together, the final steps walked in these very chambers. Representing all of Earth, we have worked to form a treaty that will unite all of the countries of this world together. The struggle has been long and hard, but now we take the final step towards unity. All that remains is for this council to ratify the United Earth Treaty. All in favor? *(The vote is unanimous.)* All opposed? *(No one votes nay. ANTARCTICA raps the gavel once.)* Motion passed. *(All the DELEGATES applaud.)* Thank you all for your hard work, let us pray that we never lose what we have accomplished this day. *(The applause continues for a few moments before the lights switch to red and all the DELEGATES freeze. TASE sits at the lower center table. The phone rings and TASE answers it. He pauses between sentences, listening to the person on the other end.)*

TASE: Hello? Speaking. Ah, Ambassador, what can I do for you? *(TASE looks disappointed.)* I see. No, our progress has been slow, but these things take time, once we find an efficient means of propulsion, we should be able to reach Mars in only a matter of years. But Ambassador, we do have some promising leads, if we could have more time to continue our research... I understand, I'll inform my staff. As do I, someday we'll find our way to the stars. Good day, Ambassador. *(TASE hangs up the phone and stares ahead with the look of one who has had his dream slip through his fingers.)* Someday. *(The lights fade out on the Earth Council and the lower center table.)*

SCENE TWENTY SIX

(The lights, blue, then fade up onto a graveyard at night. The sound of a storm is heard in the background. ARTHUR stands in front of KREON's grave, still wearing his armband on one arm.)

ARTHUR: You did it, Nick, you saved the world. Without your invention, your life's work, neither the Alliance nor the U.R.E. was willing to start a new world war. No war, no Armageddon Device, no end of the world. Instead, peace. It's exactly what you hoped for. *(ARTHUR removes his armband and regards it for a few moments.)* You wanted to send us to the stars, but we weren't ready. A visionary in a time of realism. *(He falls to his knees at the grave and cries.)* I told you that you wouldn't be able to change human nature! You tried anyway, and for what? What did you give your life for? You will not even be remembered. An unknown man gunned down by an unknown killer, you deserved so much more. All the things you could have done, all the things you still could have been... *(Pause)* But you did change the world, we're at peace now. The world is at peace, but I shall never be. For I shall forever be haunted by the memory of a world that never was. *(ARTHUR slowly stands and tosses his armband on the grave. He slowly walks away and exits. As he leaves the lights slowly fade to black.)*

FINIS