

THE LIGHTNING BUG
BY
RAND HIGBEE

THE LIGHTNING BUG

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THE LIGHTNING BUG

"The Lightning Bug" was originally produced at Saint Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota, in September of 2010. It was directed by Judy Myers and had the following cast:

Thelma Kent ----- Katie Sapper
Roy Corry ----- Billy Lyons
Jimmy Batson ----- Alex Greene
Jack Allard ----- Matthew Kirk
Vivian Wayne ----- Mary Doctor
Rishamie Reid ----- Bryony Livesey
Rosa de la Vega ----- Danielle Weir
Dr. Kasady ----- Stephen A.B. Papaioannou

There are many other people to thank for helping the Lightning Bug fly, including Jenny Nelson, Chris Garcia, Talish Barrow and, of course, Dawson Moore and the gang up at the Last Frontier Theatre Conference.

--Rand Higbee

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Thelma Kent: 30, Receptionist for the Magnopolis Daily News

Roy Curry: 32, Reporter for the Magnopolis Daily News

Jimmy Batson: 21, Cub reporter for the Magnopolis Daily News

Jack Allard: 40, Editor of the Magnopolis Daily News

Vivian Wayne: 35, Jack's fiancé

Rishamie Reid: 20, A shoeshine girl, wears glasses

Rosa de la Vega: 62, A minister

Dr. Kasady: 43, The Evil Dr. Kasady

Setting: It is May of 1939. The play takes place in the offices of the Magnopolis Daily News. Visible are two rooms: An outer office where Thelma, Roy and Jimmy have desks and an inner office where Jack has a desk. There is a door between the two offices. Thelma's desk sits by an outer door which leads to the rest of the offices of the newspaper. All desks have typewriters on them. Thelma and Jack's desks also have phones. There is a window in the outer office that looks out over the city of Magnopolis.

As noted in the script, there should be different light settings that can distinguish between normal time and Lightning Bug time.

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ACT ONE

The stage is black. RISHAMIE and KASADY's voices are heard coming out of the darkness.

RISHAMIE. Previously on "Legendary Heroes."

KASADY. No! Kasady! For God's sake, no! Noooooooooo!

RISHAMIE. And now tonight's episode: "Dr. Kasady Returns."

(The lights rise to find JIMMY and THELMA. Jimmy has cleared off his desk and is curled up asleep on top of it. Thelma is seated at her desk. Her telephone is ringing and she answers.)

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* Magnopolis Daily News. Editor's Office. Mr. Allard is not in right now. May I take a message please? *(A beat.)* Oh, she did not! I don't believe it! She did not! *(ROY enters through outer door and crosses to Thelma.)*

ROY. Hello, Sunshine!

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* He's a married man! I won't believe it! Got to go, Midge. *(She hangs up the phone.)*

ROY. Thelma, you're beautiful, you're witty and you're charming. Wouldn't you like to be my girl?

THELMA. No. But you would make a good press agent.

ROY. Let's go out sometime. We'd make beautiful music together.

THELMA. Do you know the words to "A Good Man is Hard to Find?"

ROY. We'll sneak out early today. You and I.

THELMA. Where would we go?

ROY. The racetrack, natch.

THELMA. Horse racing. All you ever think about is horse racing.

ROY. The horses are life, Sunshine. Yesterday I was at the diner. Someone slips me a napkin with three words. "Seventh race: Dream." I go to the track and sure enough the seventh race has a horse named Dream. I put five bucks on him.

THELMA. How'd your horse do, Roy?

ROY. *(Shrugs.)* You ever see a dream walking?

THELMA. Easy come, easy go.

THELMA. Thought I'd make it up in the ninth with my horse Screwball. But he lost by a nose.

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THELMA. Too bad you couldn't have traded noses with him. Then he would have won. *(The phone rings and she answers.)* Magnopolis Daily News. Editor's office. Mr. Allard is not in right now. May I take a message please?

ROY. I don't mind so much when my horse gets left at the starting gate.

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* Hi, Viv. No he's not here yet.

ROY. I don't mind when he stops to pick a few flowers on his way around the track.

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* Don't you worry. We can get by one day without him.

ROY. But when I see him up at the tote window betting on another horse? Brother!

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* Now Vivian, don't worry. I'll have him out of here in plenty of time. *(Hangs up the phone. To Roy.)* You'd better wake up Jimmy. The Boss will be here any minute.

ROY. *(Looks at Jimmy.)* What's up with lover boy, anyways?

THELMA. How should I know? He was like that when I came in. *(Roy crosses to Jimmy as Thelma busies herself at her desk.)*

ROY. Jimmy Batson, this is your eight o'clock wake up call! *(Roy grabs a chair and sits by Jimmy's desk as Jimmy stirs.)*

JIMMY. Roy? What are you doing in my apartment?

ROY. Hoo boy! You must have tied one on last night.

JIMMY. *(He sits up and looks around as he slowly wakes up.)* Oh. Yeah. I really did. *(Takes a Coke bottle out of his desk.)* Three Coca-colas and an ice cream cone.

ROY. Let me guess. Girl troubles?

JIMMY. And how. I broke up with Doris last night.

ROY. Doris? Who's Doris?

JIMMY. Who's Doris? The only girl I'll ever love!

ROY. Oh, another one of those, eh? That's the third one this year.

JIMMY. This is serious, Roy! I wanted to marry Doris! But she said I was married to my job. I not only work here, I eat here and I sleep here. *(Yawns.)* I'm hungry.

ROY. Jimmy my boy, a little advice. It is better to have loved and lost. Trust me. Much better. A woman can make a fool out of a man in 30 seconds flat.

JIMMY. Yes, but it's a wonderful 30 seconds.

ROY. Tell you what. The Boss will be gone early today. Let's sneak off to the track. You and I.

JIMMY. I don't care for the horses, Roy.

ROY. The horses are life, Jimmy boy. *(Gives Jimmy an elbow.)* Some good looking fillies down there.

JIMMY. Yeah?

ROY. One in particular I have my eye on. They call her "Lightning Bug."

JIMMY. That's an unusual name.

ROY. And a rare beauty she is. The nicest legs I have ever seen.

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JIMMY. Legs? I like legs. What else?

ROY. A beautiful set of teeth.

JIMMY. (*Thinks a moment.*) Teeth you say?

ROY. Yes, sir.

JIMMY. Two "e"s in that?

ROY. She and I are old friends now. A couple weeks ago...I got to feed her a sugar cube.

JIMMY. To each his own, I guess.

THELMA. (*Her phone rings and she answers.*) Magnopolis Daily News. Editor's office. Mr. Allard is not in right now. May I take a message please?

ROY. Yes sir, I think I'll go down and put a couple bucks on her this very afternoon.

JIMMY. Say! Just what kind of a girl is this?

THELMA. (*Into the phone.*) Thanks for the warning, Midge. (*She hangs up.*) 20 seconds to show time, boys. (*Roy and Jimmy quickly scramble to their feet. Roy sits down at his desk and starts typing. Jimmy puts his typewriter back in place and starts typing as well, although he hasn't put in paper in the typewriter. Moments later JACK storms into the room. As he walks past Thelma she offers him a stack of messages.*)

THELMA. Messages.

JACK. (*He stuffs the messages into a pocket as he crosses to the center of the room.*) Curry! Batson! Kent! Front and center! (*Roy, Jimmy and Thelma quickly cross to Jack.*) Batson! Your typewriter has no paper!

JIMMY. Yes, sir. Just practicing, sir. (*Thelma's phone begins to ring. She starts for it, but Jack stops her and crosses to the phone himself. He answers it and shouts into it.*)

JACK. Call back later! (*He slams the phone down, crosses back to the others and unfurls his newspaper.*) Can anybody tell me what this is?

JIMMY. (*Thinks a moment.*) Newspaper?

JACK. It's the Magnopolis Register! (*At the word "Register" everybody spits.*) We all hate the Register! (*Everybody spits.*) It's our job to hate the Register! (*Everybody spits.*) Can anyone read that headline for me?

ROY. We'll teach you to read someday, Boss.

JACK. Curry, this is no time for levity! It says "Dr. Kasady Returns." Can anyone explain to me why I had to read a copy of a rival newspaper to find out that Dr. Kasady is returning?

JIMMY. (*A beat.*) Because...we got scooped?

JACK. We got scooped! By the Register! (*Everybody spits.*) Do you know how much I hate getting scooped by...them? Where were all of you when this story was breaking? You must have a nose for news in this business! Roy? What has

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happened to your nose?

THELMA. He traded it to a horse.

ROY. Now, now. We're all getting a little too excited here. You know how the Register-- (*Everybody spits.*) --always gets the details wrong.

JACK. Right or wrong makes no difference! We got scooped! Dr. Kasady! The Evil Dr. Kasady! No one has heard from him in 10 years.

ROY. Dr. Kasady.

THELMA. The Evil Dr. Kasady.

ROY. Last we heard of him he was trying to take over the country by hypnotizing congress.

JACK. And before that he tried to drug the Magnopolis water supply. (*Reads from the newspaper.*) "...returns tomorrow morning from an expedition to Gossamer Island. He promises the cargo hold of his ship contains a tremendous surprise."

JIMMY. Does it say what the surprise is?

JACK. If it said it wouldn't be a surprise, would it? Curry! Batson! Kent! We have one job today and one job only: To find out what is in the cargo hold of that ship!

THELMA. But Boss--

JACK. No "buts!"

THELMA. One "but." You have another job this morning. You have to be at City Hall by ten to get married.

JACK. Married? Married? You think I have time to get married? You think I can leave this newspaper in the hands of a bunch of incompetent boobs?

ROY. The incompetent boobs object.

JACK. Here is what we're going to do. Kent!

THELMA. Boss?

JACK. I want you to go around to every department in this newspaper. I want you to spread the word: A fifty dollar bonus for whoever can tell me what Dr. Kasady has on that ship.

THELMA. Fifty dollars! Yes, Boss!

JACK. Curry!

ROY. Boss?

JACK. I want you to hit the streets. There's got to be someone, somewhere in this city who knows Dr. Kasady. Who knows why he'd go to Gossamer Island. Who knows what he'd be bringing back.

ROY. (*He and Thelma move to the outer door.*) Leave everything to me, Big Cheese!

JACK. And don't call me the Big Cheese!

ROY. (*He and Thelma almost exit, but then turn back.*) By the way, Boss. Thought you should know. Our toilet is running again.

THELMA (*Shakes her head.*) Horse racing. All he ever thinks about is horse

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racing. *(Roy and Thelma exit.)*

JACK. Batson!

JIMMY. Yes, sir?

JACK. You're fired!

JIMMY. Yes, sir.

JACK. *(Crosses to Jimmy's desk, starts to pick up Jimmy's belongings and stack them in his arms.)* I've put up with your shenanigans long enough!

JIMMY. Yes, sir. You certainly have, sir. *(Roy comes running back through the door.)*

ROY. Whoa, whoa, whoa! Boss!

JACK. What?

ROY. You can't fire Jimmy.

JACK. Why can't I fire Jimmy?

ROY. Because... Because... *(Turns to Jimmy.)* Why can't he fire you, Jimmy?

JIMMY. I think he probably can.

ROY. You can't fire Jimmy because if you did he'd have to take that job at the Register. *(Everybody spits.)*

JACK. The Register? *(Everybody spits.)* The Register? *(Everybody spits.)* You got a job offer from...them?

JIMMY. No. *(Catching himself.)* Yes!

JACK. You'd do that to me? After everything I've done for you? After everything I've taught you?

JIMMY. No, I wouldn't do that to you, sir. *(Catching himself.)* Oh! Yes I would!

JACK. Batson! You're hired again! Sit down and get back to work!

JIMMY. Right away, sir. *(Starts to put his stuff back on his desk.)*

JACK. *(Turns to Roy.)* And I thought I have you an assignment!

ROY. *(Starts for the outer door.)* Don't worry about a thing, Big Cheese.

JACK. And don't call me the Big Cheese! *(Roy exits as the phone on Thelma's desk begins to ring. Jack crosses to the phone, picks it up and yells into the receiver.)*

Call back later! *(Hangs up the phone and crosses to Jimmy.)* Batson!

JIMMY. *(Starts to gather up his belongings again.)* Am I fired again, sir?

JACK. No, no. Sit back down. *(Jimmy sits and puts his stuff back where it belongs.)* Jimmy, I'm pulling you off the story.

JIMMY. You got it, Boss. Which story?

JACK. The story you've been working on the last two months!

JIMMY. Oh that story.

JACK. The Ghost. There is no Ghost. The story is off.

JIMMY. But you haven't heard what I've written yet, sir.

JACK. All right. Fair enough. Read me what you've written.

JIMMY. *(A beat.)* I haven't written anything yet.

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JACK. That's exactly my point.

JIMMY. But I have notes! I have lots and lots of notes! *(He begins to dig notes out of his desk drawer.)*

JACK. Jimmy--

JIMMY. 16 years ago there was an attempted bank robbery. A man pointing a gun at the teller. Suddenly the gun was gone and the robber in handcuffs. No one knew how it happened. Soon after, a little boy fell out of a fifth story window. Sure death, right? No! Suddenly the boy was standing on the ground without a scratch. Saved by the Ghost.

JACK. And where did this robbery take place? Where is the boy who miraculously survived this fall?

JIMMY. The details are a little sketchy.

JACK. Because those are stories. Myths. A newspaper runs on facts. Not wild speculation.

JIMMY. But sir, the key to the story is that it's happening again. For 15 years, nothing. Now suddenly the Ghost is back. Saturday. A little old lady is crossing the street. She doesn't notice the car racing towards her. The driver frantically brakes, but... Suddenly the old woman is standing safely on the corner. Not a scratch on her.

JACK. And you spoke to this lady?

JIMMY. I did!

JACK. What is her name?

JIMMY. She is rather old and somewhat unclear on her name.

JACK. Stuff and nonsense! It's not real! Reality is Dr. Kasady! His ship and what's in that cargo hold! That's the story I want you to work on!

JIMMY. Yes, sir.

JACK. *(They stare at each other a moment.)* Well? Go!

JIMMY. Yes, sir! Yes, sir! Right away, sir! *(He grabs notebook and starts for the door, Jack's voice stops him.)*

JACK. And take your camera!

JIMMY. Why should I take my camera?

JACK. To take pictures!

JIMMY. Yes, sir! Good idea, sir! *(Jimmy crosses back to his desk and takes a camera out from one of the drawers. He begins to fumble with it, trying to figure out how to put in the film. Thelma re-enters.)*

THELMA. Boss, am I eligible for that fifty dollar bonus?

JACK. If you find out what Kasady has on that ship.

THELMA. I'll do it. I'll find out. *(She sits at her desk.)*

JACK. So? What are you doing?

THELMA. Someone might call me!

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JACK. *(Turning to Jimmy.)* And what are you still doing here?

JIMMY. Got to put film in the camera, sir.

THELMA. *(Her phone rings. She and Jack both reach for it, but she gets it first.)* Magnopolis Daily news. Editor's office. *(She looks at Jack who animatedly shakes his head and mouths the word "no.")* Mr. Allard is not in right now. May I take a message please? *(She takes down a message.)*

JACK. *(Crossing to his office.)* If anyone wants me I'll be in my office.

JIMMY. And I'll be out on the street getting the scoop, sir. *(Jack gets a hand on the doorknob to his office when VIVIAN comes bursting through the outer door. She wears a wedding dress.)*

VIVIAN. Jack Allard! Not one more step!

JACK. *(Turning around.)* Vivian! Sugar!

VIVIAN. Don't you "Sugar" me! Unless you intend to be at that courthouse in two hours.

JACK. It's just going to be impossible today, Sugar.

VIVIAN. And what's the excuse this time?

JACK. It's not an excuse! It's a man! With a boat! *(Thelma hangs up the phone.)*

VIVIAN. Two months ago we were supposed to be married, but no! There was an incident at the bank!

JACK. Potentially the biggest robbery in city history!

VIVIAN. It was a little boy with a cap gun!

JACK. We know that now, sure, but at the time--

VIVIAN. And last month we were to be married, but no! There was a baseball game!

JACK. Opening day of the season! How was I to know?

JIMMY. They put the schedule out in advance, sir.

JACK. Jimmy! Keep out of this!

VIVIAN. You and your stories! You'd call off our wedding if Humpty Dumpty had a great fall!

JACK. If it was a great enough fall, sure. It's a newspaper!

VIVIAN. The only way you'll ever marry me is if the editor of the Register starts asking me out! *(Everybody spits.)*

JACK. Don't be ridiculous. *(A beat.)* He's not, is he?

JIMMY. Does anyone know how to put film in these cameras?

THELMA. Let me take a look, Jimmy. *(Jimmy takes the camera to Thelma and she tries to help him load the camera.)*

VIVIAN. Now I want to know! Are you going to the courthouse today?

JACK. Now Sugar--

VIVIAN. Or am I going to have to bring the Justice of the Peace here and have a honeymoon in your office?

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JIMMY. You can actually sleep on these desks. I've--

JACK. Jimmy! Keep out of this!

VIVIAN. Don't yell at Jimmy!

JACK. Listen, Sugar--

VIVIAN. Enough with the "Sugar!" Get in here! (*Vivian crosses into Jack's office. Jack follows her in and closes the door. Jimmy and Thelma continue to fiddle with the camera. The two conversations go on at the same time.*)

VIVIAN. Jack, do you believe in the institution of marriage?

JIMMY. Thelma, do you believe in the creature the call the Ghost?

THELMA. In theory.

JIMMY. In theory? What do you mean in theory?

THELMA. Some people may have a guardian angel...

JIMMY. But?

THELMA. I don't believe in the actual Ghost.

JIMMY. Why not?

THELMA. It's just a story.

JIMMY. There are too many stories.

THELMA. But no proof.

JIMMY. Not yet. But I will prove it.

THELMA. Lots of people have tried.

JIMMY. For three years I've been searching for evidence. I'm very close to the proof.

JACK. In theory.

VIVIAN. In theory? What do you mean in theory?

JACK. I'll marry you someday, Sugar.

VIVIAN. But?

JACK. Just not today.

VIVIAN. Why not?

JACK. The story!

VIVIAN. There are too many stories.

JACK. It's Dr. Kasady!

VIVIAN. I don't care about Dr. What's His Name.

JACK. I do care! It's my job to care!

VIVIAN. For five years you've had me on this merry-go-round reaching for a gold ring.

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THELMA. I'll believe that evidence when I see it myself.

JIMMY. I'll prove it to you, Thelma. I'll prove it to the world!

JACK. We will get married. Very soon.

VIVIAN. I'll believe that evidence when I see it myself.

JACK. I'll prove it to you, Sugar. I'll prove it to the world!

(Jack crosses out of his office and Vivian follows right behind.)

VIVIAN. Just not today! What am I supposed to do with the wedding dress I rented?

JACK. Oh, trade it in for a straight jacket and get me one too! *(To Jimmy.)* What are you still doing here?

JIMMY. *(He stands. His camera is ready to go.)* Just leaving, sir.

VIVIAN. Don't yell at, Jimmy!

JACK. Tell you what, Sugar. We'll get married next month. For real this time. I swear on my mother's grave.

VIVIAN. Your mother is still alive.

JACK. My grandmother then. Don't get technical.

VIVIAN. The only way I'll get married next month is if I marry Jimmy. *(She puts an arm around Jimmy.)* How 'bout it, pal?

JIMMY. Oh, I don't know, Sugar. Uh...Miss Wayne.

JACK. Quit fooling around, you two.

VIVIAN. That wasn't fooling around. This is fooling around! *(Vivian plants a big kiss on Jimmy just as Thelma's phone begins to ring. Jack grabs the phone before Thelma can.)*

JACK. *(Into the phone.)* Call back later! *(He slams the phone down.)*

JIMMY. *(As Vivian lets him up for air.)* Don't fire me, sir. *(Roy re-enters through the outer door with RISHAMIE following shyly behind. Rishamie carries her shoeshine equipment.)*

ROY. Stop the presses! Stop the presses!

JACK. The presses aren't rolling!

ROY. Just an expression, Big Cheese.

JACK. And don't call me the Big Cheese!

ROY. Ladies and gentlemen, I have the answer to all our prayers. *(He gestures grandly to Rishamie and all eyes turn to her.)*

JACK. *(After a moment of silence.)* The shoeshine girl? The answer to all our prayers is the shoeshine girl?

JIMMY. If you're going to get married you'll want to look your best, sir.

ROY. It's not what she does. It's what she knows. She knows Dr. Kasady. She knows what is on that ship. *(Jack quickly hustles Rishamie to a chair as everyone else gathers around. Jimmy briefly pulls Roy aside as he longingly gazes at*

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Rishamie.)

JIMMY. (*Quietly to Roy.*) She's the only girl I'll ever love.

JACK. What is your name?

RISHAMIE. Trish Reid, sir.

JACK. You know Dr. Kasady?

RISHAMIE. He used to work with my father.

JACK. And you know what is on that boat?

RISHAMIE. I believe I do. From what I read in the Register. (*Everyone but Rishamie spits.*)

JACK. (*He studies Rishamie a moment.*) Jimmy?

JIMMY. Yes, sir?

JACK. Time for your first big interview.

JIMMY. Yes sir! (*JIMMY grabs a notebook and a chair as Thelma's phone begins to ring. Thelma quickly answers.*)

THELMA. (*Into the phone.*) Call back later! (*She hangs up and crosses back to the others.*)

JIMMY. (*He sets his chair by Rishamie and sits.*) Hi.

RISHAMIE. Hello.

JIMMY. I've noticed you at your shoeshine stand.

RISHAMIE. I've noticed you noticing me.

JIMMY. I've noticed you noticing me noticing you.

JACK. Interview, Jimmy! Interview!

JIMMY. Oh. Yes. Interview. Official business. Trish Reid, can I ask what your name is?

RISHAMIE. Trish Reid.

JIMMY. Oh. Yes. Guess I already knew that. Little nervous. You spell "Reed" with two "E"s?

RISHAMIE. "E" "I." (*Jimmy just looks at her.*) "E" "I."

JIMMY. Oh. (*He scribbles her name down.*) Your father used to work with Dr. Kasady?

RISHAMIE. They were working together to find Gossamer Island. Most people felt the island was a myth, but my father thought it very real.

JIMMY. Could we speak to your father about this as well?

JACK. Excellent question, Jimmy. Follow your leads.

RISHAMIE. I'm afraid my father has passed away.

JACK. Terrible question, Jimmy! Why would you bring up such a thing?

RISHAMIE. No, it's all right. This was a long time ago. He died in a boating accident when I was five years old.

JACK. (*Rishamie's last line seems to strike Jack. He stares at her a moment.*) Everybody out of the room... (*He points at Rishamie.*) ...but you. (*Nobody moves.*)

Jack yells.) Everybody out of the room! (He begins to push everyone else out of the room.)

VIVIAN. Surely you don't mean--

JACK. I mean everybody!

VIVIAN. Jack Allard, if you don't marry me today-- *(Before Vivian can finish the thought, Jack has pushed her, Roy, Thelma and Jimmy out of the outer door and slammed it shut. He slowly turns to Rishamie.)*

JACK. Young lady, I am going to ask you a question and I would appreciate an honest answer.

RISHAMIE. Yes, sir.

JACK. Was your father Charles Reid? The Charles Reid?

RISHAMIE. *(She hesitates, then...)* He was.

JACK. And are you in fact not "Trish" but "Rishamie?" "Rishamie Reid?"

RISHAMIE. I am.

JACK. *(His entire manner softens.)* Rishamie Reid. I held you in my arms when you were scarcely two months old.

RISHAMIE. I hope you're not going to say you changed my diapers.

JACK. *(Laughs.)* No, no. I was a cub reporter, no older than Jimmy. They only gave me soft news stories I couldn't mess up. So I was there whenever your father donated to a museum or dedicated a new hospital wing. He always treated reporters with respect. More than respect. We were friends. Family. He was one of the greatest men I ever knew.

RISHAMIE. I thank you for the kind words.

JACK. I'll let you in on a little secret. In all my years as a journalist there was only one story I couldn't write. And that was when your father died. *(A beat.)* I always wondered what became of you.

RISHAMIE. I was raised out of the spotlight by my Aunt Harriet. A happy childhood all things considered.

JACK. But a shoeshine girl? You couldn't possibly need the money.

RISHAMIE. My father worked as a shoeshine boy when he was young.

JACK. Did he?

RISHAMIE. He said that many of the world's problems today arise because our leaders have no idea what life is like for the common man. To understand the common man you must live as the common man.

JACK. If you want to understand the common man I know an even better place for you to work. How are your writing skills?

RISHAMIE. I do all right.

JACK. Rishamie Reid, would you come work as a reporter for me? No special favors. Standard entry level. *(He offers his hand to Rishamie and she stands up to shake it.)*

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RISHAMIE. Mr. Allard, I think I would like that very much.

JACK. *(Yells out.)* Batson! *(Jimmy quickly re-enters.)*

JIMMY. Yes, sir?

JACK. You're fired again!

JIMMY. Yes, sir. *(Jimmy starts to clear off his desk, but Rishamie runs over to stop him.)*

RISHAMIE. Oh, please. Don't fire Jimmy on my account.

JACK. You'll have to sit somewhere.

RISHAMIE. I'll have a lot to learn. Jimmy could teach me. We'll share a desk.

JACK. Is that acceptable to you, Batson?

JIMMY. *(Gazing at Rishamie.)* And how! *(Jimmy and Rishamie start to arrange things on their desk so they can share it as the phone on Thelma's desk begins to ring. Thelma rushes back in and almost dives for the the phone.)*

THELMA. Magnopolis Daily News. Editor's office. Mr. Allard is not in right now. May I take a message please? *(She sits at her desk.)* Oh, Midge! She wouldn't do that! He's a married man! *(Roy rushes back in.)*

ROY. I've got it! A horse!

JACK. A horse?

ROY. Of course! How did Dr. Kasady make his fortune? Horses! He bred horses!

THELMA. *(To the others.)* All he ever thinks about is horse racing! *(Into the phone.)* Got to go, Midge. *(She hangs up the phone.)*

ROY. That's what is on this ship! Kasady found a horse somewhere! A super horse!

RISHAMIE. It's not a horse.

JACK. Kasady hasn't been involved in horse racing for years.

ROY. That we know about. Kasady Stables is still around. That horse Jimmy and I were talking about earlier is from Kasady Stables: Lightning Bug.

RISHAMIE. Lightning Bug?

JIMMY. That was a horse we were talking about?

RISHAMIE. *(She sits down lost in thought and whispers to herself.)* Lightning Bug.

JACK. Instead of idle speculation, why don't we ask the person who really knows? Our newest employee: Not Trish, but Rishamie. Rishamie Reid. *(All eyes turn to Rishamie.)* Miss Reid? What is on that ship?

RISHAMIE. If Dr. Kasady truly has found Gossamer Island, there would only be one thing he'd be bringing back: Spiders.

JACK. *(A beat.)* Spiders?

RISHAMIE. Big spiders.

JACK. I've got granddaddy longlegs in my basement, but that's hardly front page news.

THELMA. *(Her phone rings. She picks it up and speaks into it.)* Magnopolis Daily

THE LIGHTNING BUG

News. Editor's office. Mr. Allard is not in right now. May I take a message please?

RISHAMIE. I don't think I'm adequately expressing just how big these spiders are.

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* You don't say! *(All eyes turn to Thelma.)* You don't say! *(She stands.)* You don't say! *(She hangs up the phone and stares at it.)*

JACK. Well? Who was that?

THELMA. He didn't say. *(A beat.)* He did say that Kasady's ship is here. Now. Today. He just parked it in the harbor.

JACK. Now? Now? He's not supposed to get here 'til tomorrow!

ROY. I told you the Register always gets the details wrong. *(Everyone but Rishamie spits. The others all look at her for a moment, then she spits as well.)*

JIMMY. I don't think you park a boat, do you?

JACK. Curry! Batson! Get down to the docks! Now! *(Roy and Jimmy start for the door, but Thelma's next line stops them.)*

THELMA. Wait! There's more! *(Screams are heard coming from the street below. A loud thumping is heard as if something big is banging against the side of the building. The room begins to shake and everyone must hold onto something to retain their balance. A strange animal sound is heard coming from outside.)*

RISHAMIE. These are very large spiders.

JIMMY. *(He manages to make his way to the window and look down.)* Giant spider headed our way, sir. *(Thelma jumps on top of her desk as Jack and Roy rush to the window to look at the spider. Rishamie seems unable to move.)*

JACK. Great Horace Greeley!

ROY. What kind of a spider is that?

JIMMY. A big one!

JACK. Wolf spider, I think. Batson! Pictures! Pictures!

JIMMY. Yes, sir. *(He begins to take pictures of the spider.)*

ROY. *(He rushes to Thelma's desk, quickly dials the phone and speaks into the receiver.)* Charlie? Roy! Five bucks on Arachnid in the third!

JACK. He's looking for something. What's he looking for?

ROY. *(Into the phone.)* I don't know, Charlie. Just a hunch. *(He hangs up the phone.)*

JIMMY. Starting to climb this way.

JACK. *(Turning to Thelma.)* Kent! What are you doing on the desk?

THELMA. Afraid of spiders, Boss.

JACK. Curry! You and Thelma get to the street! Interviews! Angles! Get the story!

ROY. We're on it, Big Cheese!

THELMA. *(Roy helps her down from the desk and the two head for the outer door.)* Spiders! Why did it have to be spiders? *(Thelma and Roy exit.)*

JACK. Batson! Keep taking pictures here! I'm going to mobilize the troops! *(Jack starts for the outer door, but just then the spider reaches through the window*

and grabs Jimmy. After a brief struggle, the spider pulls Jimmy out the window. The lights change to the Lightning Bug mode. Jack freezes as Rishamie steps forward. She quickly removes her outer clothing to reveal that she wears a super hero costume beneath. The costume has the letters "LB" in front. Rishamie takes off her glasses to complete the transformation.)

RISHAMIE. Must save Jimmy. *(Rishamie quickly rushes to the window and climbs out. As soon as she's gone the lights change back to normal and Jack unfreezes. He continues running to the door.)*

JACK. The giant spider got Jimmy! What a scoop! *(Jack exits. As soon as he does, Rishamie appears from beneath the window pushing Jimmy back inside. Jimmy has managed to hang onto his camera.)*

RISHAMIE. Don't worry, Jimmy. I've got you.

JIMMY. You've got me! But who's got you? *(He is back inside the window and offers his hand to Rishamie, but she stays on the window sill.)*

RISHAMIE. I must take care of that spider before he harms anyone else.

JIMMY. But... But... Who are you? Will I ever see you again?

RISHAMIE. As long as there is danger the world, I will be here. I am the Lightning Bug. *(Rishamie exits back out the window just as Jimmy gets the notion to take a picture, but she is gone before he can. Jimmy stands in silent awe for a moment.)*

JIMMY. She's the only girl I'll ever love. *(Jimmy moves back to the window again and cautiously looks out. The lights switch to the Lightning Bug setting as Jimmy freezes. Rishamie re-enters through the outer door. She puts her glasses and her outer clothes back on. The lights return to normal.)*

RISHAMIE. Jimmy?

JIMMY. Rishamie!

RISHAMIE. You got away from the spider.

JIMMY. I did. You won't believe how. A girl. A super girl! She called herself the Lightning Bug!

RISHAMIE. Yes. I know her.

JIMMY. You do?

RISHAMIE. We've met a couple times.

JIMMY. *(Pointing to the window.)* She got rid of the spider. She's amazing. She moves as fast as lightning!

RISHAMIE. Actually, she doesn't move fast at all.

JIMMY. No?

RISHAMIE. She somehow manages to use Einstein's Theory of Relativity to warp time. She puts herself into a different reality, what Niels Bohr would call a quantum reality, whereby she moves at normal speed while the rest of the universe slows to micro-speed.

THE LIGHTNING BUG

JIMMY. Yes. That's kind of what I was thinking. (*He must sit down.*) Hoo-boy!

RISHAMIE. Are you all right?

JIMMY. A little flushed.

RISHAMIE. I'll get you something to drink.

JIMMY. That would be great. (*Rishamie exits through the outer door then immediately re-enters carrying two bottles of pop. Jimmy sets his camera on the desk.*)

RISHAMIE. Here we are. (*She sits at the desk with Jimmy and gives him one of the bottles.*)

JIMMY. That was fast.

RISHAMIE. Oh. Yes. I...found a pop machine nearby.

JIMMY. You're the best, Rishamie.

RISHAMIE. You can call me "Rish" if you'd like, Jimmy.

JIMMY. Thanks. You can call me "Jimmy."

RISHAMIE. I will do so. (*They exchange shy glances.*)

JIMMY. It sure is a pretty name.

RISHAMIE. "Jimmy?"

JIMMY. No. I meant your name. Rishamie.

RISHAMIE. I knew what you meant.

JIMMY. Oh. Okay. (*They both giggle.*)

RISHAMIE. Jimmy. The Lightning Bug is a little shy, but I think she's just about ready to come out and introduce herself to the world. The best way for her to do that would be to give an interview to one of the local newspapers.

JIMMY. Oh. I hope she doesn't choose the Register. (*They both spit.*)

RISHAMIE. No, I was thinking...or rather, she was thinking of the Daily News.

JIMMY. Really?

RISHAMIE. Would you like to interview her, Jimmy?

JIMMY. Would I! You could arrange that?

RISHAMIE. I could. (*Jack and Roy re-enter through the outer door. They at first do not see Jimmy and Rishamie.*)

JACK. The extra must hit the streets within the hour!

ROY. Sure thing.

JACK. I'll write about the spider! You write Batson's obituary!

ROY. You got it.

JACK. (*Spotting Jimmy.*) Batson!

JIMMY. Yes, sir?

JACK. You're alive!

JIMMY. Yes, sir. I'm sorry, sir.

JACK. Curry, write the obituary. We'll retract it later. Jimmy, give him the details.

JIMMY. Yes, sir.

THE LIGHTNING BUG

JACK. Reid! You're with me!

RISHAMIE. Mr. Allard. *(Roy rushes to his desk as Jack and Rishamie start for Jack's office. Everyone stops as Thelma re-enters carrying three copies of a newspaper.)*

THELMA. Boss! An extra from the Register! *(Everybody spits. There is then a moment of silence as all eyes stare at the newspapers Thelma holds. Jack slowly crosses to her, takes a newspaper and reads the headline.)*

JACK. "Giant spider attacks Magnopolis." *(A beat.)* How? How did they beat us? That's twice in one day! Our city is attacked! Our cub reporter killed! Temporarily. And we are scooped twice by...them! What else could possibly go wrong? *(Vivian re-enters through the outer door. She carries a bouquet of flowers.)*

VIVIAN. Jack Allard! We are getting married! Right now! *(Rishamie takes a newspaper from Thelma and starts to read.)*

JACK. Oh, for-- Do you not understand what is going on around here? Our city was just attacked!

VIVIAN. There's no escape this time! That's why I brought her. *(She gestures as if someone is standing beside her.)*

JACK. Who?

VIVIAN. *(She looks around to realize no one is standing beside her.)* Just a second. *(Vivian quickly exits as Thelma's phone begins to ring. Thelma answers.)*

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* Magnopolis Daily News. Editor's office. Mr. Allard is very definitely not in right now. May I take a message please?

RISHAMIE. *(Whispers to Jimmy.)* Jimmy. Follow my lead.

JIMMY. Sure. *(Rishamie crosses to Jack. She drags Jimmy behind her. Roy crosses over to listen.)*

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* I tell you she wouldn't do that! He's a married man!

RISHAMIE. Sir. I believe we have your scoop.

JACK. Scoop? What scoop?

RISHAMIE. *(Holding up the newspaper.)* This article in the... *(Everyone gets ready to spit, but Rishamie considers for a moment.)* ...in the rival newspaper makes no mention of how the giant spider was defeated.

JACK. The spider wasn't defeated. It just left.

RISHAMIE. It was driven off. And Jimmy and I know how.

JACK. How?

JIMMY. The Lightning Bug.

ROY. The horse?

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* Oh, I know how she talks, but still! *(Through the next several lines Thelma continues to talk quietly on the phone.)*

JIMMY. No, not the horse. It's a person. The same person who saved me from the spider also chased the spider away.

THE LIGHTNING BUG

JACK. But what has a lightning bug got to do with it? (*Vivian re-enters through the outer door dragging ROSA behind her.*)

VIVIAN. Jack! We are getting married! Right now!

ROSA. Ay, que gracioso. Una rana que se casa con un raton. (*She laughs.*)

VIVIAN. (*She gives Rosa an elbow.*) Concentrate.

JACK. Who is that?

VIVIAN. Rosa de la Vega. The first woman pastor ordained in... (*To Rosa.*) Where were you ordained, Rosa?

ROSA. (*Thinks a moment.*) Oh. Right on top of my head.

VIVIAN. Doesn't matter. She's an ordained minister and can legally marry us.

ROSA. ¿Como?

VIVIAN. I said you're going to marry me.

ROSA. Oh. I would like to, but I am already married.

VIVIAN. Best I could do on short notice.

JACK. Vivian! A giant spider has just attacked the city!

VIVIAN. One excuse after another.

ROSA. ¿Pero quien ha escuchado de dos mujeres que se hayan casado?

JACK. Curry, Batson, Reid with me. Kent, keep those two out of here.

THELMA. (*Into the phone.*) Got to go, Midge. (*Thelma hangs up the phone as Jack ushers Rishamie, Jimmy and Roy into his office, closes the door and locks it. Vivian comes running up to the door.*)

VIVIAN. Jack!

THELMA. (*She runs over to place herself between the door and Vivian.*) Sorry, Vivian.

JACK. All right. Start talking. What is this lightning bug?

RISHAMIE. Not a what. A she. (*Roy picks up Jack's phone and dials.*)

VIVIAN. Jack! I'm giving you to the count of ten to get out here!

ROY. (*Into the phone.*) Charlie? Roy! Five bucks on Lady Preacher in the fifth!

JIMMY. Remember what we were talking about earlier, sir? The Ghost?

ROY. (*Into the phone.*) Another hunch, Charlie. (*He hangs up the phone.*)

JACK. Not that nonsense again!

VIVIAN. One!

RISHAMIE. The Lightning Bug may seem similar to the old legends of The Ghost, but the difference is that I have actually seen her. So has Jimmy.

VIVIAN. Two!

ROY. I think we should listen to them, Big Cheese.

JACK. Listen to who? And don't call me the Big Cheese!

VIVIAN. Three!

ROY. Listen to Rish and Jimmy. This could be a scoop.

THE LIGHTNING BUG

ROSA. Cuando el estudiante estè listo, aparecerá el maestro.

VIVIAN. *(She gives Rosa an elbow.)* Concentrate. Four!

JACK. It could be a scoop. Or it could turn the paper into a laughing stock. The Lightning Bug!

VIVIAN. Five!

RISHAMIE. What can we do to convince you, sir?

JACK. I need proof. Or at least very solid evidence.

VIVIAN. Six!

RISHAMIE. Two eye witnesses aren't enough?

JACK. Not when one of those witnesses is Jimmy. No offense, Batson.

JIMMY. Of course not. What did you say?

VIVIAN. Seven!

ROY. Any idea what's going to happen when she reaches ten?

JACK. Don't worry. Thelma won't let her through.

VIVIAN. Eight! *(Thelma's phone rings. Thelma thinks about this a moment, then rushes to her desk to answer. She speaks into the phone.)*

THELMA. Magnopolis Daily News.
Editor's office. Mr. Allard is not in right
now. May I take a message please?

VIVIAN. Nine!

JACK. Oh for heaven's sake.

(JACK crosses to his office door and opens it. Vivian doesn't notice as she puts her head down and prepares to charge. Meanwhile, Thelma starts quietly chatting on the phone.)

VIVIAN. Ten! *(She charges towards Jack's office.)*

JACK. *(He catches Vivian.)* Now Sugar, let's be reasonable here.

VIVIAN. Reasonable? Leave me at the altar three times in two months and I'm supposed to be reasonable?

JACK. It's the craziest news day ever! A giant spider of all things! *(Jack leads Vivian into his office. Jimmy, Rishamie and Roy all leave the office and go back to their desks.)*

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* I won't believe it until I see a picture of them together.

VIVIAN. You act like the giant spider is more important than I am.

JACK. He's not more important than you. He's bigger news than you.

THELMA. *(Into the phone.)* You show me the picture. *(She hangs up.)*

VIVIAN. At least do me the favor of sitting down and talking.

JACK. *(He takes a quick look at his watch.)* I can spare you three minutes.

THE LIGHTNING BUG

VIVIAN. It's our entire future, Jack!

JACK. Maybe four. *(Jack sits in his chair. Vivian quickly crosses to him, takes out a pair of handcuffs and cuffs him to the chair.)*

VIVIAN. Got you, Jack.

JACK. Hey! What the--

VIVIAN. Rosa! Come in here!

ROSA. Leccion numero uno: Nunca debes atacar con coraje.

JACK. Thelma! Thelma, come in here and get me out of these!

THELMA. *(She starts for Jack's office, but her phone then rings and she quickly goes back to answer it. She speaks into the phone.)* Magnopolis Daily News. Editor's office. Mr. Allard is not in right now. May I take a message please? *(Thelma starts to jot down a message as Rosa joins Jack and Vivian in Jack's office. Meanwhile, Roy crosses to Jimmy and Rishamie's desk.)*

ROY. Let's do this. Let's get an extra out on the Lightning Bug.

VIVIAN. Let's do this.

JIMMY. How do we convince people that she exists?

JACK. We can't get married today.

RISHAMIE. Witnesses.

VIVIAN. Why not?

JIMMY. We have two. Rish and I.

JACK. We have no witnesses.

ROY. We need more than that. This has got to be a sure thing.

VIVIAN. We have Thelma, Roy, Jimmy...

RISHAMIE. Pictures! We could get pictures!

ROSA. La leccion numero tres es llegar a leccion numero cuatro.

JACK. Pictures! There's no one to take pictures!

JIMMY. She came before when I was out the window.

VIVIAN. Jimmy can take pictures.

(No one seems to notice as Jimmy crosses to the window and crawls out just far enough to pretend to be in peril. Jack tries to get out of his handcuffs.)

JACK. Thelma! Come over here and help me!

RISHAMIE. What if I could get a

picture of the Lightning Bug in her costume?

ROY. Anybody can dress up in a costume.

JIMMY. Lightning Bug! Save me!

RISHAMIE. What if she was climbing up the building?

ROY. She climbs?

RISHAMIE. Like a bug?

JIMMY. I'm going to fall Lightning Bug! I'm going to fall. *(He slips.)* Oh, No. I really am going to fall.

ROY. If we could get a picture of her climbing up a building...

JIMMY. Guys? Oh, guys?

RISHAMIE. ...along with the eyewitness accounts of Jimmy and I...

ROY. Yes.

(Jimmy slips a little more. No one else has noticed him. Thelma hangs up her phone.)

JIMMY. Uh, oh. Guys? Rishamie? Roy?

VIVIAN. I'm not dressing up like this for nothing, Jack.

ROSA. ¿Donde esta el bebé?

VIVIAN. El bebé?

ROSA. No podemos tener un bautismo sin un bebé.

JACK. Thelma! Thelma! Help me!

VIVIAN. Jack. This isn't hard. I do. I do. And it's done.

JACK. I don't. I won't. I can't today!

VIVIAN. So when do we get married, Jack? The next slow news day?

JACK. Doesn't have to be slow. Just one without any giant spiders.

THE LIGHTNING BUG

VIVIAN. I have had enough of your delays. You need to tell me something, Jack.

RISHAMIE. And we do have one other thing on our side.

ROY. What's that?

RISHAMIE. The truth.

ROY. The truth? *(Laughs.)* What is truth?

JIMMY. *(Yells.)* Lightning Bug!

RISHAMIE/ROY/THELMA/VIVIAN/JACK. *(Together as all eyes turn to Jimmy.)* Jimmy! *(Roy dives for Jimmy and catches his hands just as Jimmy is starting to fall. Thelma and Vivian rush over and grab hold of Roy. Jack tries to get to the others, but he must drag the chair he is handcuffed to behind him. Rosa slowly makes her way to the action as Rishamie watches the scene unfold.)*

ROY. Jimmy! Hang on!

JIMMY. I... I can't...

ROY. Jimmy! *(Jimmy slips and starts to fall as the lights turn to the Lightning Bug setting. Everyone freezes except Rishamie. She quickly takes off her outer clothes and her glasses to again reveal her Lightning Bug persona.)*

RISHAMIE. Jimmy. We've got to quit meeting like this. *(Rishamie crosses to the window and crawls out. The lights resume a normal setting as everyone unfreezes. Rishamie carries Jimmy back in through the window. Everyone gapes at Rishamie.)*

JACK. What in the--

JIMMY. Lightning Bug! I knew you'd save me!

RISHAMIE. Jimmy, you need to be a little more careful. *(Roy quickly grabs the camera from Jimmy's desk and takes a picture of Rishamie. The lights change back to the Lightning Bug setting as everyone freezes except Rishamie who crosses back to her clothes and quickly dresses. Everyone unfreezes as the lights turn back to normal. Jack, Roy, Thelma and Vivian all cross to the window and look out as Rosa crosses to Rishamie.)*

ROSA. You disappeared.

RISHAMIE. I what?

ROSA. Just for a second, you disappeared.

RISHAMIE. Don't be silly.

JACK. *(He grabs Jimmy and shakes him.)* Jimmy! What kind of a damn fool stunt was that?

JIMMY. I got you the Lightning Bug, didn't I?

JACK. What's more important? The story or your life? *(He thinks a moment, then slaps Jimmy on the back.)* Well done, Batson! *(There is a disturbance outside the*

office. Screams, shouts and thuds are heard. Suddenly all is silent. All eyes turn to the outer door as it slowly opens. KASADY steps inside. He wears a gas mask and the room behind him seems to be filled with smoke. He shuts the door and takes the mask off. He holds a canister which is letting out a few lasts wisps of smoke.)

KASADY. I am Dr. Kasady. The Evil Dr. Kasady.

JACK. *(Pointing to the canister.)* What have you--?

KASADY. Your colleagues outside shall be fine. Just a little sleepy for a while. *(He laughs as he tosses the canister aside.)*

JACK. What do you want?

KASADY. I never forget a face. The rest of you I don't know. But you... *(He studies Jack a moment.)* Jack Allard. Star reporter for the Magnopolis Daily News.

JACK. Editor.

KASADY. Editor now? I have been away from this fair city far too long. I want only one thing, my friends. I want...the Lightning Bug. *(The others all exchange looks.)*

JACK. You want what?

KASADY. Oh, do not play coy with me. I want the Lightning Bug and I assure you I shall get the Lightning Bug.

ROSA. *(Whispers to Rishamie.)* You did disappear.

RISHAMIE. *(Whispers back to Rosa.)* Shhhhh.

KASADY. I have worked many years on my latest plan for global domination. I have a trained army of giant spiders who will first take over this city and then this world. There is nothing to stop me. Except, perhaps, that meddling kid.

JACK. We've heard rumors of--

KASADY. *(Shouts.)* You've heard more than rumors! *(Calmer.)* I released the first spider and he came directly to this building and directly to that window! Why? Because someone in this room knows the secret of the Lightning Bug. One of you could fetch her for me this very instant. *(A beat.)* Come, come. You know the girl. Cute little thing? Moves as fast as lightning?

JIMMY. She doesn't really move fast. She uses Einstein's relatives to enter a different reality where--

JACK. Jimmy.

JIMMY. That's what someone told me at the Register. *(After thinking about it a moment, Jack, Jimmy, Rishamie, Roy and Vivian all spit.)*

KASADY. *(Crossing to Jimmy.)* So we do know the Lightning Bug after all. Where may I find her?

JIMMY. I... I don't really know.

KASADY. *(He takes out a gun and points it at Jimmy.)* Young man, I would suggest cooperation. *(The lights change to the Lightning Bug setting as everyone freezes but Rishamie. She crosses to Kasady and takes the gun away from him.)*

THE LIGHTNING BUG

RISHAMIE. How many times am I going to save your life today, Jimmy?
(Rishamie is about to walk back to where she was, but suddenly, with everyone else still frozen, Kasady reaches out and grabs Rishamie by the throat.)

KASADY. Surprise, my little Lightning Bug. *(Kasady laughs as the lights quickly fade to...)*

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