

## **TREATMENT – *THE CONSTRUCT***

**By Clay Gimenez**

The Arctic. 1987. A mining rig surrounded by a small camp dominates an otherwise white and flat landscape. The dirty, rugged men in the camp speak excitedly in Russian about their Arctic drilling prospects. A crash from underground turns their excitement to fear. A warning shout comes too late as a fireball rises from the Earth to consume the camp.

Twenty-five years later. Professor John Harris, a climatologist, concludes a presentation in a ritzy hotel conference room. He claims that global warming is not due to mankind, but to something in the Earth itself. His former friend and now rival, Travis Murphy, stands and destroys John's presentation and the last shreds of his reputation.

A few weeks later, in John's office, Thomas Sorenson, his chief research scientist, argues with John over his non-mainstream theories. Thomas disagrees with John's adherence to his improbable convictions and fears the effect his association with John will have on his own career. But in the lab, young researcher Marie St. Claire shows them new evidence she discovered. There appears to be a mysterious heat source deep under the Arctic glaciers, but most data, especially modern, American sources, are modified to disguise it. Thomas jokes "might as well hire West Texas roughnecks to drill that deep and do science."

West Texas. The sun pounds down on John's untanned face as he steps out of a car to approach an oil drilling operation in the middle of nowhere. He observes grizzled wildcat legend Henry "Hank" Lloyd in action, calling shots, keeping his men safe, and succeeding in finding oil where there shouldn't be any left. They discuss drilling in the Arctic, and John shakes Hank's greasy hand to seal the deal.

Four months of Arctic drilling have passed, with no results. John's money is running out, and Hank's crew hasn't been paid in far too long. This is their last attempt. The crew surprisingly breaks a modern drill bit. Hank, on instinct, reverts to older, diamond tipped technology, and they break through. A camera is dropped down to investigate. On the monitor, they see what is unmistakably a door, just before heavily armed men descend on the camp.

Some time later, John awakes in a dark room to see Travis. He and his people are in The Facility, a top secret U.S. Government research station dedicated to studying what he stumbled upon, known only as "The Construct." For 25 years, they have tried to get in, but have never succeeded, until John found the door. All they know for sure about the artificial creation is that

it emits incredible amounts of heat and is the prime cause of recent global warming. They decide to explore the Construct.

Down the mineshaft drops a team of armed guards, followed by the science team: Travis, John, Thomas, Marie, and Hank. Initially, their path is simple. Doors are unlocked, no signs of life. But they are being watched. A robot, Prime, awakens at their entry and observes their progress curiously. They encounter a different robot as they reach the spine of the huge ship. A trigger-happy guard destroys it and is killed by a trap triggered by Prime in reaction as he moves to investigate. Prime deems the invaders hostile and moves out. A door slams shut and locks behind the humans, trapping them in the ship.

The explorers move toward the central hub of the ship, visible through the windows of the corridors they move down, hoping to disarm the security and open the doors to leave. As they reach their destination, they are ambushed. The science team manages to escape out a window, hiding in the immense cargo space that makes up the ship's interior, though most of the guards die in the ambush. Prime can no longer track the intruders, with no sensors in the cargo areas. He dispatches robots to search for them.

Amongst racks of pods and heavy machinery and equipment, the explorers keep moving, trying to avoid and hide from searching robots. Hank identifies some of the cargo as mining and construction equipment, and Marie identifies more as medical facilities. They are ambushed by small repair robots, later supported by combat models, who take down one of the two remaining guards. The rest of the team barely manages to escape by fleeing through the pods, since the robots curiously stop firing.

Hiding and resting in the cabin of a mining crawler, John realizes what the pods contain. People. Alien people. The ship's robotic guardians will not risk harm to their most precious cargo. Given the equipment, it is clear the ship is intended to be a colonization vessel, filled with the people and supplies needed to establish major settlements.

After sleeping, the team continues moving toward the back of the ship and eventually reaches the end of the ship. There they find what they assume to be immense engines, glowing red hot. They appear to be failing. Even more, they appear to be replacements, surrounded by scrap and huge holes in the floor and ceiling that suggest long-removed components. They escape through the holes to a lower deck of the ship, hoping to throw the robots off their tails.

The lower level is filled with more pods and large crates of supplies. Some appear to be filled with food, while others contain weapons. They scavenge what supplies they can and move deeper into the level to hide, recover, and plan their next move.

Inside a portable shelter of some sort, the team decides to make for the front of the ship. Their plan: to reach the bridge or command center of the ship and attempt to shut it down and open the doors. It is their only option. On watch, Thomas patches up his strained relationship with John.

They set out in the morning. As they walk the miles to the other end of the ship, they encounter signs of repaired damage, on a massive scale, such as a huge patched hole in the ship, and melted pods and equipment well into the interior opposite it. They guess the ship crash landed, which gives them hope that the goal was not invasion and colonization of Earth.

The team reaches a forward elevator to find it guarded by robots. They ambush them and destroy them with their scavenged weapons. Rushing into the elevator, they begin the journey upward. For safety, they cut their way through the ceiling of the elevator.

Prime moves into action again, with the invaders on his sensors once more. An ambush awaits at the elevator entrance.

The explorers reach their destination. Elevator doors open, and laser fire fills the space but abruptly stops as the robots realize the elevator is empty. A grenade flies out at the robots, and the team drops down, running toward the bridge in a dash for freedom. Thomas is hit, and subsequently killed, protecting Marie.

They reach the door to the bridge, and the last remaining guard and Travis hold back the incoming robots as Hank cuts through the door. He succeeds and the scientists enter the bridge. The final guard gives his life covering them and destroys the hallway, preventing the robots from following the humans.

John and the others walk into the bridge. They start toward control panels. The lights snap on bright, blinding them. Prime and other robots appear, surrounding them. Prime raises its weapon. "Stop," a voice rings out and a hologram of a human appears. This being, the ship's artificial intelligence, is in control of the Construct. Acting in self-defense, it killed those deemed threats to its cargo and captured the others to question them on their purpose. The scientists' questions are answered. In particular, the engines are overheating and will soon

explode, wiping out the ship and a large portion of the human race in the process. The despairing A.I. leaves the shocked human explorers on the bridge.

The team discusses what they've learned. John calls on the A.I. to show them a hologram of the Construct in the Earth. He wonders if there is a way to break up the rock around the ship from the surface – if humans could help the ship escape. Hank has a better idea – there is a massive natural gas deposit under and around the ship. With a little help, igniting it will blow the ship's earthen tomb apart and give it the hop it needs to escape. "Let's light that candle."

The ship, giving the option a 30% success rate, deems it the best available option. It releases the humans, who return to the surface and spring into action. The drilling crew and the workers of the Facility plant charges on the surface and drill deep past the side of the ship. The ship dispatches robots to plant mining charges along its hull, to help break up the rock and ice.

When all is ready, John and Travis press the button. The natural gas is ignited and a huge rumbling comes from deep under the ground. With an immense roar, a massive area of glacier shatters upward, rock and dirt flying on fire. Then the Construct rises. Silvery and enormous, it dwarfs anything of human creation. Massive tails of fire stretch out behind it, pushing it up and up. As it flees to the stars, the scientists receive a final communication. "Thank you."

John, Travis, Hank, and Marie observe the aftermath over beers. "Well there goes global warming." "How do you think they'll hide this one?" Travis finishes his beer and gets up. "The same way we always do." He walks away.

A week later. A television anchor covers the strange happenings in the Arctic. An unscrupulous oil company was drilling illegally and ignited a large natural gas and oil reserve. They move to the next segment, on global warming, and we see Travis preparing to give a statement on the terrible effects of the explosion on the environment. We pan back to see Times Square. People going about their lives as though nothing has changed.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

### *The Construct* By Clay Gimenez

My first intentions for this AHS Capstone project were to develop original treatments and learn how I might sell them. I had done a good bit of writing in the past, but I wanted to know how to turn it into something I could do to support myself financially – in short, I wanted to finance my habit of dreaming. My favorite part of writing has always been dreaming up the story, and so I chose to work with treatments, the simplest and shortest expression of such an idea. However, in the process I learned far more than I had expected.

I planned to work in the realm of science fiction. A realm I love, but have little experience working in, science fiction is a deceptively subtle and difficult beast. One particularly important aspect was the need to define the world and set powerful rules with consequences early and clearly.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, any differences from our world as we know it must be clearly articulated early on, as in *The Terminator*.<sup>2</sup> In the opening scenes, we see that the world is exactly as we remember it, with the slight exception of two visitors from the future, one human and one killer robot. We immediately know the rules of the world and can settle into the ride without being confused by inexplicable happenings when the action starts.

I also chose to work with a high concept idea, something unique and interesting. Something the reader or viewer has never seen before. Such a work must leverage this concept to hook the reader or viewer from the very beginning.<sup>3</sup> The 2002 film *Minority Report*<sup>4</sup> does this beautifully. It leverages its high concept, the idea of preventing crimes before they happen, in the very first sequence. We are introduced to the concept, the world, and the characters through the action of preventing one of these crimes. We see the system in action, we see that it works, and so we buy into the story. Our interest is piqued, we naturally wonder what happens next, and perhaps we question what happens if the precogs are ever wrong. We can't help but keep watching.

In the end, I settled on the idea of a ship, a Construct, buried deep in the Earth. Initially, I had been intrigued by the idea of an engine for the Earth itself, and the possibilities that might arise, but a ship is where the true potential in the idea lies. It opened up possibilities for a

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<sup>1</sup> Card, Orson Scott. *How to Write Science Fiction & Fantasy*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> *The Terminator*. Dir. James Cameron. Perf. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Biehn, Linda Hamilton. Orion Pictures, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Field, Syd. *Selling a Screenplay: The Screenwriter's Guide to Hollywood*. New York, NY: Delacorte, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> *Minority Report*. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Tom Cruise, Colin Farrell. Dreamworks Pictures and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2002.

happy ending and further possibilities for a contest between the opposing forces of the Construct and the outside, which may or may not misunderstand each other.

I immediately leveraged the concept of the Construct to hook the audience, showing the strange destruction of the Construct's initial discoverers. Soon after, more of the intentionally mysterious artifact is revealed. Additionally, the rules of the world are set early on – they are the same as ours, as this happens on Earth in the present day. We know our world and can easily insert the Construct into it in an area few of us truly know – it is inherently mysterious to some extent. Then we are able to put ourselves in the characters' shoes, encountering these strange, inhuman creations with them, our surprise and intrigue reflected in them.

However, a beginning does not make a complete story. In laying out the plot, I was drawn to the escape narrative. In such a story, the protagonist(s) typically begin with their freedom, whether physical, mental, or otherwise. But then it is taken away, and the characters must fight to reclaim it and keep it safe from the forces working to take it from them. The Academy Award-nominated 2010 film *127 Hours*,<sup>5</sup> depicts the true story of Aron Ralston, the canyoneer who was forced to amputate his own right arm to survive, after being trapped by a boulder in an isolated canyon. It is a quintessential escape narrative. Aron begins with his freedom, exploring the canyons, a force he loves. But his freedom is taken away by a power beyond his control: Mother Nature. He then is forced to fight and make the sacrifice of his arm in order to survive the ordeal and reclaim the freedom of his mobility and his life.

In *The Construct*, the protagonists lose their freedom principally when they are locked inside the Construct by the ship's Artificial Intelligence. They are then forced to fight for their freedom and make the sacrifice of the lives of most of their party in order to reclaim their freedom and, in the end, to claim the greater freedom of the Earth released from the effects of the Construct.

I was also intrigued by a slight twist on an escape narrative, which I like to think of as an exploration narrative. The protagonists, for whatever reason, explore an unknown area. When they begin, they are sure of themselves, but twists and turns throw them about and force them to adapt and fight to keep moving forward. Upon reaching the initial goal, it is revealed that not all is as it seems, and the protagonists continue on in their exploration of the world with new perceptions and goals. In the case of *Resident Evil*,<sup>6</sup> the security team moves to explore the Hive, a top secret bioweapons research facility deep underground. They believe the facility's Artificial Intelligence has gone rogue and needs to be shut down, but it is not as simple as it seems. The A.I. acted to contain a viral outbreak that zombifies the facility's people and

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<sup>5</sup> *127 Hours*. Dir. Danny Boyle. Perf. James Franco. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *Resident Evil*. Dir. Paul Anderson. Perf. Milla Jovovich. Screen Gems, 2002.

animals. Upon accomplishing their goal of shutting down the A.I., the protagonists realize that they made a mistake and are forced to fight for their freedom as they try to escape the Hive. On their return trip, they are exploring the facility anew, seeing it from an entirely different perspective.

One of my goals with *The Construct* is similar. The team originally enters the ship to explore it, to learn about it. However, their goal rapidly becomes one of survival, of fighting against the ship. Once the team reaches the goal, it is discovered that things are not as they thought. The ship acts only in self-defense and desires nothing more than to leave. Suddenly, the protagonists are on the side of the ship, fighting not only for their freedom, but for the freedom of the Construct, its people, and the Earth itself.

In the process of developing *The Construct*, I have read many books and watched many films. I have drawn inspiration and learned from countless sources along the way, but I have not lost sight of the most important aspect of this work. It is uniquely mine. I want, I need to bring this story to life. It has proven immensely educational and entertaining to me. I can see the movie rolling in my mind's eye. It captivates my mind, ignites my passion, and makes me dream. And I hope it does the same for you. If it does, we may just get to see *The Construct* in a theater near you someday. Cheers and thank you for watching!

# CHARACTER STUDY: THE CONSTRUCT

*The Construct*  
By Clay Gimenez

“The Construct” – an immense artificial creation beneath the Arctic glaciers

## BACKSTORY

The Construct was originally discovered by an unfortunate group of independent Russian oil drillers looking to hit it rich in the 80s; all were killed when their drill hit the Construct (far earlier than they expected to hit oil), sparked, and ignited a large pocket of natural gas.

In the present day, the United States Government has a secret research facility underneath the icecap to study the construct, with the prime directive of getting inside, but no progress has ever been made. However, they have discovered that the Construct’s thermal emissions are responsible for the melting of the polar ice cap, and, in fact, much of the global warming effects noticed in the years since its discovery.

In reality, the Construct is an immense ship. A lifeboat for a lost race, it fled the destruction of its creators’ home, carrying huge numbers of them inside it in stasis pods. However, in its successful escape, it was damaged, and so crash landed on Earth approximately 65 million years ago, burying itself deep into the planet, not to mention leading to the extinction of most land-based life on Earth at the time.

Since then, the ship’s automated systems have been slowly but surely repairing the craft, and now it is ready to leave. The ship’s engines have been activated and are working to free the ship from its grave. However, taking off from a planet’s gravity well was not a prime design concern for the ship, much less shaking off billions of tons of ice, dirt, and rock.

Unfortunately, the engines were never designed to operate under these conditions, and so are overheating, as they strain to melt the ice and rock around the ship to free it. However, the ship’s repairs are imperfect. By the ship’s standards, the replacement engines are old, flawed technology: based on nuclear fusion, they cannot be turned off once activated until they burn themselves out. If the ship is unable to escape soon, the engines will explode as their containment systems overheat, consuming the ship and its inhabitants and leading to the worst human catastrophe the world has ever seen.

## **PURPOSE**

The mysterious race that built the Construct was part of a greater galactic community of many races and worlds. Their race was a scholarly one, typically peaceful, though their technological advancement also translated into a strong and efficient military. A relatively young, but numerous and warlike race determined galactic rule to be their right and thus set out to conquer. Their first, surprise strike was against all worlds and fleets of the elder race, who were unprepared and so took heavy losses. The attackers pushed to the Constructors' homeworld, with the goal of genocide and enslavement. In response, a number of large lifeships, of which the Construct is one, were constructed. When the homeworld was attacked, the ships were dispersed to distant stars to ensure the survival of the species. However, the lifeships were attacked before they could successfully flee. All were destroyed, but for the heavily damaged Construct. While it managed to escape, its engines were effectively destroyed, and the Construct ended up on a ballistic trajectory through the stars. In the end, it made it to the Sol system, where it crash landed on the third planet, known as Earth.

## **CONSTRUCTION AND CARGO**

The ship itself is immense, roughly 8x4x4 miles. The race that built it adapted designs for a massive civilian ore and cargo hauler, adding military grade hull, shielding, defenses, and engines. A powerful artificial intelligence was built into the heart of the ship and connected to all systems. The typical command crew areas of the ship, such as the bridge, conference rooms, mess halls, and quarters remain, but only fill a tiny fraction of the ship's bulk. This livable space is primarily found in the heart of the ship, with access corridors reaching to the exterior airlocks and hangars. The remainder of the ship is made up of open cargo space, filled to bursting with stasis pods of men, women, and children and all equipment and resources they would need to establish a new home on a faraway world (such as medical facilities and supplies, construction equipment, farm equipment, cryogenically stored seed cultures, weapons, smaller landing craft, and emergency food supplies).

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

A fleet of robotic guardians protect and maintain the Construct and its inhabitants. They and the ship itself are controlled by an advanced and powerful A.I., which serves as the main antagonist to any would-be explorers. It operates under three primary directives:

- 1) Protect the people.

- 2) Protect itself (the ship).
- 3) Fulfill the mission (reach the intended destination).

Thus, the A.I. has no interest in conquest or communication. It is a calmly logical being, doing whatever it deems to have the highest probability of optimally satisfying the directives. It will act without hesitation and do whatever it deems necessary.

## **THE CRASH**

Approximately 65 million years ago, the Construct's ballistic flight from its origin led it to Earth. At a not-insignificant fraction of the speed of light, it impacted the Earth near the North Pole. The impact triggered a massive extinction event, eliminating most of the land-based life on Earth, ending the time of the dinosaurs. The ship survived the impact thanks to its extremely well armored hull and powerful shielding. However, it was entombed in the Earth, a crippled lifeboat stranded far from its destination and its home.

## **RECONSTRUCTION**

In the millions of years since the crash, the ship's A.I. has managed to repair the critical damage sustained in its escape and subsequent crash on Earth using spare and scavenged components from itself and from the colonization equipment. The majority of the repairs were straightforward, if immense. However, the engines, slagged in the escape, were beyond repair. As a result, the ship was unable to use them for extra power and was forced into low power operation (explaining the incredibly long repair time), massively slowing repairs, especially since entirely new engines had to be constructed out of scrap parts and supplies.

In the end, the ship was able to build replacement engines. By the standards of the A.I. and its creators, they were simple, downright primitive technology: nuclear fusion. These engines essentially create and contain small stars, channeling their energy into power and thrust. These new engines, first started in the 70s, and fully stable and operational in the 80s, cannot be turned off – the star will simply burn until it burns out. The ship has been able to draw power from these engines to increase its effectiveness, allowing it to test systems like the shields that destroyed the Russian oil prospectors.

However, as the Construct is buried deep underground, it has not been able to escape. Instead, the heat from the engines has been used to melt ice and rock around the ship in an attempt to loosen the chains holding it down. But it is not working, and the engines will soon overheat, as they cannot dispose of the heat they generate (they are meant for space, after all).

When that happens, the fusion reactions will break containment and control, grow as they consume more matter, and eventually become unstable and explode in miniature supernovas, obliterating the Construct and its precious cargo, as well as destroying much of the Earth's surface.

## **DEFENSES**

The Construct's defenses are rather basic. Although not a warship, it is equipped with several laser cannons, though most have been cannibalized for parts for the replacement fusion engines. Its hull and shields, on the other hand, are superior to most military craft, so it can take immense punishment from space fleets, much less a crash landing and being buried in ice and rock. Internally, the robot guardians of the ship and its cargo will face destruction if necessary to carry out the directives. Some of these guardians are combat models (equipped with weaponry far in advance of our own), but most are simpler and less dangerous repair, cargo, and medical robots. There are also static defenses, such as doors and traps.

# CHARACTER STUDY: THE PROFESSOR

## *The Construct* By Clay Gimenez

John Harris – the primary protagonist

### PERSONAL LIFE

The Professor grew up the only child of wealthy parents. However, they paid him little heed throughout his childhood, leaving him to raise himself. He discovered his love for science and the world around him at a young age and proceeded to use his parents' money to fund his experiments until he left his home in upstate New York for Boston and MIT. He spent the next 10 years at MIT, finally leaving with a Ph.D. in Climatology, studying the global warming phenomenon.

In childhood, he was never particularly outgoing. He had difficulty making friends and was poor at sports, partially due to the neglect of his parents. And so he retreated into his books and his games. Eventually, his games became science experiments, starting with food coloring chemistry and making sodas in his kitchen, to building engines and prototyping circuits, to his first peer reviewed paper at the age of 17. His parents were all too happy to fund his pursuits, as it meant that he entertained himself and did not interfere in their careers.

In college, he met his oldest and best friend, Travis Murphy. Both somewhat reclusive, they worked together often and got along famously. But his friend was far more social than John and took it on himself to teach "The Professor" to relate to people, particularly those of the gentler sex. And so, at the age of 20, John dated his first girl. For three weeks.

In the present day, John lives at his inherited family manor with his research assistants. He's converted the largest dining room into a state-of-the-art climatology lab, funded by his generous inheritance of millions. However, after 10 years, the money is running out, and the Professor is getting nervous, fearful of the future.

### EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

Something of a hermit, John has never been a social butterfly, or even a man of many friends. His raw enthusiasm and certainty in his work is off-putting to many, particularly when he goes against the established grain. However, few flaws have ever been found in his work, inexplicable and unbelievable as the results may be.

Internally, though, he is uncertain and filled with doubt, especially now that he is ridiculed within the scientific community and his money is rapidly running out. His models and experiments have gained no traction, his papers are routinely rejected (in spite of being well written and without errors), and no university would even entertain the idea of giving him a job. He's been beaten down by his peers for so long that he's beginning to break, though he does his best to never show it to his research scientists or his peers. His main research scientist (and friend) sees through him, however.

## **RESEARCH**

In his graduate studies, John and Travis worked to develop models of the global warming phenomenon. Their goal was to characterize the problem and hopefully determine the best actions to take to prevent lasting damage to the environment. In other words, they sought to identify the changes in human behavior that would best lessen the impact of global warming. These changes in simulation variables could then be converted into legislation and regulation to save the planet. In the end, their model of the Earth's climate was among the best available, but it was still strangely inaccurate in certain circumstances.

After graduating with doctorates, the pair went their separate ways: John to Oxford for a position as a research scientist, and Travis to work for the government on climate studies. At first, they kept in touch, corresponding about their work. John worked to improve their model and began to suspect that humans were not the only reason for global warming – there had to be something else, something deep in the Earth, the core perhaps, that was changing and warming up our atmosphere. As he expressed these findings to Travis, their correspondence rapidly became colder and eventually stopped entirely. The next time John heard from his friends, it was in a scathing review of his first paper publishing his theories, which led to the rejection of his paper by the journal. The two have been at odds ever since.

Since the end of his stay at Oxford, John has carried out his research independently from his manor home. As a result of his borderline obsession to prove himself right, he's become a bit of a recluse and a joke in the scientific community.

## **PRIVATE LIFE (HOBBIES, ETC.)**

John's life is his work. His every waking hour is spent on his projects, writing grant applications (which are rejected), applying for professorships (and being turned down), and submitting papers for conferences (all of which are rejected). More recently, he spent a large

amount of time and money setting up a conference on climatology in Washington D.C. on his own dime in order to be able to present his work to the greater community, who he believes needs to know what he has discovered.

In those rare moments of relaxation (usually forced upon him by Thomas Sorenson, his chief research scientist), John can typically be found enjoying science fiction books or films, particularly those involving the exploration and terraforming of other worlds in the universe. No doubt he wishes he could design the climate of a new world. That model would be joyfully complex, but likely also elegant. He has also been known to crush his research assistants mercilessly in poker, but that hasn't happened in a while.

## STEP OUTLINE

### *The Construct*

By Clay Gimenez

**Note:** Following feedback from my advisors and the example of several other step outlines, I have begun rewriting my step outline. My goals in this complete rework are: to maintain a focus on time and visuals in language, to develop the story arc in further and complete detail, and to improve the interpersonal interactions between the characters to develop the human element of the story. Due to time constraints, I have not yet completed this rewrite, but would like to include it in the final deliverable for my Capstone project. As such, what follows is in three sections: fully rewritten step outline, cue card taglines (for the part of the story completely planned out, but not written up yet), and the original step outline (for those parts not yet completely planned and rewritten).

#### **Rewritten Step Outline:**

- 1 We start with sweeping shots of the Arctic. The year is 1987. A mining rig surrounded by a small camp dominates an otherwise white and flat landscape. The dirty, rugged men in the camp speak excitedly in Russian about their Arctic drilling prospects – they hope to hit it rich. A crash and a rumble from underground turn their excitement into fear. A warning shout – “Gas!” – comes too late as a fireball rises from the Earth to consume the camp.
- 2 In 2012, John Harris, a former professor in climatology, concludes a talk at a conference in a ritzy hotel conference room. He claims that global warming effects are not the result of changes in the air above us, but of something deep in the Earth. A former colleague and friend, Travis Murphy, crucifies him and his presentation, triggering laughter in the audience. What little reputation John had left is ruined.
- 3 Leaving the conference hall, Travis appears troubled. Behind him, John still stands on the stage, head hanging.
- 4 In John’s office a few weeks later, John argues with Thomas Sorenson, his chief research scientist. Tom is angry over John’s adherence to his non-mainstream theories, without sufficient evidence. He fears he will be tarred with the same brush as John, and his own,

much younger, career will be ruined. Marie St. Claire, the young new research assistant, enters, claiming John is right.

- 5 On a large screen, Marie displays her evidence. She has found suggestions of a massive heat source deep under the Arctic glaciers. However, most of the recent and all of the American sources are modified to disguise it. Only through her analysis of a plethora of data did she find it.
- 6 John and Tom discuss Marie's discovery, and the unreasonable depths they would have to drill to in order to get appropriate samples. Tom jokingly suggests going to his hometown in West Texas and recruiting out-of-work roughnecks to drill for scientific oil in the Arctic.
- 7 John steps out of a car in West Texas. His untanned skin bakes in the bright, hot sun out in the far side of nowhere. He approaches an oil drilling operation. He sees grizzled wildcat legend Henry "Hank" Llyod in action, calling commands out, keeping his men safe, and succeeding in finding oil where there shouldn't have been any left. In Hank's office, they discuss drilling in the Arctic. John promises good payment and shakes Hank's oil-covered hand to seal the deal.
- 8 Four months of Arctic drilling with Hank's motley crew have passed, with no results. John's money is running out, and Hank's crew hasn't been paid in far too long. In an argument in the command center of the camp, Hank declares that after this drill, he and his crew are leaving. A crash outside interrupts them and Hank sprints for the door.
- 9 Outside, the drilling rig has already been shut down. Hank's crew chief, a thin, heavily tattooed man, approaches. "We broke a bit." Hank is surprised – that bit is modern, expensive, and should not have broken in what they were drilling through.
- 10 In the camp mess hall, over food, Hank and his man explain. They've broken three top-of-the-line bits in a row. The right hand man doesn't know what to do. Hank does.
- 11 Hank unboxes an older piece of technology – a diamond-tipped bit. It's taken to the rig to be fitted despite the skepticism of the younger driller.
- 12 The diamond bit makes progress, albeit slowly. Then it breaks through the tough area, only to encounter a second similar section soon after. Curious, Marie suggests lowering a camera, and Hank agrees.
- 13 Hank and the researchers are watching a screen as the camera is lowered. The light is dim and wavery this far in the Earth, as the camera swings lightly on its cable. They pass through the first difficult stretch and suddenly the view lights up – the lamp reflecting

off of shiny surfaces. They see the second difficult stretch and tilt the camera up to see what is clearly a door or hatch of some sort. The door to the room flies open, and heavily armed men enter.

14 Helicopters, snowmobiles, and more armed men descend on the drilling camp.

**Cue Card Taglines:**

15 John wakes in a dark room to Travis. Questions ensue, and John is led out into a clean, expensive facility filled with scientists and armed guards.

16 John is reunited with Hank, Tom, Marie, and the others. "What's going on?"

17 Travis questions them more. "Why are you here?" – "To find the answer to global warming." – "Well, you found it." Travis leads them out.

18 Travis explains as they walk. End in a cavernous room with shiny metal surface below catwalks. "An alien ship." Excavation is happening toward the "front" of the Construct.

19 Travis shows them the approximate scale of the Construct on a monitor. History of the Construct is described, especially the heat it's emitting.

20 Travis and John in private. Travis confirms John's theories and apologizes for shooting him down for years. Necessity of hiding the Construct. "What are you gonna do now Travis?" – "I'm gonna knock on that door and see if anyone's home."

21 The crew argues with Travis to let them go with him. Convince him eventually.

22 Getting ready/briefing/"relaxing" before the big day.

23 Back to the drill site. The first security team going in is lowered. Flashlights click on. "We're in."

24 Everyone is in the airlock now. How to open door? Just press the button. See faint light down the very long hallway.

25 See the team's heat signatures moving down simulated ship layout. Robot awakens.

26 The team reaches windows and looks out into the cavernous storage area. Light coming from status lights on countless pods of some sort.

- 27 In an atrium before the main spine of the ship. Set up to open door. Press button. A robot is present on the other side. The point guard shoots, destroying it. Yelled to stand down by guard captain.
- 28 Threat analysis routines run on the simulated people, identifying weapons and guards. The original robot moves out fast, armlike appendages deploying.
- 29 “Why did you shoot that?” – “Nothing human on this thing.” The point man walks through the door to investigate the dead robot and dies to a brutal trap. The rest of the team is stunned and wants to leave and send in their own robot to investigate. As they turn to leave, the door slams shut and locks behind them.
- 30 Team disarms trap and moves forward. Large, spartan, but nice area. Moving forward again, heading for the big central area they can see through the windows. Hoping they can shut it down and open the doors.
- 31 Having success, moving forward, disarming traps. Haven’t seen robots and are chatting and such, spirits relatively high.
- 32 Get to door into main area. As they get set up to enter, door slides open and three robots open fire, killing guards fast. Captain thinks fast, throwing a grenade and shooting out a window. The survivors (the scientists, the guard captain, and one other guard) jump out and fall onto equipment below and hide.
- 33 The invaders vanish from the lead robot’s mental model. They are in the cargo areas of the ship, where it has no sensors and cannot monitor their location. Robots swarm the area, examining the dead guards and leaving the crew areas of the ship to search the cargo areas for the remaining invaders.

### **Original Step Outline:**

#### THE CONSTRUCT, EQUIPMENT STORAGE

The A.I. does not have sensors in this area of the ship, so it sends out robots to hunt down the explorers. They move deeper into the equipment around them down narrow access ways by the dim, wavery light coming from readout panels on countless capsules in the ship.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, MEDICAL

The remaining explorers (John, Travis, Thomas, Marie, Hank, the guard captain, and one other guard) hide in an equipment module to avoid a combat robot like the ones they met at the Atrium door. They realize the module is a hospital of some sort, but where are the people who would use the hospital?

#### THE CONSTRUCT, INTERIOR

As they push further in, they notice a glowing reddish light in front of them, illuminating a wall extending upward to a ceiling far above. They realize that based on the size of the Construct, they are only on one deck of many. They decide to investigate the light.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, POD RACKS

Moving through the racks of capsules to their destination, the team encounters several robots. A small repair droid ambushes the remaining guard, using its cutting tool on his leg. More droids swarm him, and a combat droid finishes him off and turns to the others and opens fire. However, when they dodge behind pods, the fire stops. The team uses this to their advantage and is able to destroy the repair droids and escape the bulky combat droid among the pods.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, MINING/CONSTRUCTION

The team winds up hiding out in a large mining/construction machine, to eat and sleep if possible. They discuss the behavior of the combat droid, and realize that the pods are full of beings. The ship carries a veritable army of beings, and more than enough equipment and supplies for all of them. The explorers fear they are here for conquest, but question why they had not conquered earlier if that was their goal. Thomas talks to John in private, apologizing for doubting him.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, ENGINES

The team makes it to the glowing red light. It is from shells of massive engines, and the area is quite hot, though the engines are clearly being cooled heavily. The scientists note that the engines look cobbled together, particularly given the mountains of spare parts all around them. Hank comments that the jagged weld lines and cut out holes in the floor in patterns around the engines suggest that these are not the original engines, but rather jury rigged replacements for

broken or destroyed ones, that could explain the ship's presence on Earth. The scientists realize that the engines are the source of the heat the Construct is outputting that is warming the Earth. On the security guard's recommendation, they drop through the holes to another deck to avoid the robots as much as possible.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, LOWER DECK

This deck is filled with pods and stacked cases of supplies. Opening some cases, the team finds what appears to be food, as well as some weapons, which they scavenge for their own use. The notice shafts reaching between decks, one under the Atrium, and another farther forward. They make for the forward shaft, hoping it will take them to the bridge where they might have a chance to disable the A.I.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, LOWER DECK WALLS

Working their way around the outer edge of the lower deck, as the center is packed tight with supplies and pods, the team notices obvious signs of repair – jagged weldlines around replacement plates, spare parts near repair sites, signs of damage to pods or supply cases nearby. The encounter one particularly large area of damage, that looks as though a huge laser beam pierced the ship, melting away hull, pods, and supplies for a distance into the ship.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, FORWARD SHAFT

Tired and beaten down, the explorers make it to the forward shaft. Not trusting the elevator and the A.I., they instead climb up the equipment and pods around it and return to the main deck through a repair shaft.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, FORWARD MAIN DECK

The team continues climbing up equipment and pods, attempted to get back up to the main walkway, but on the opposite side of the Atrium as before. As they near their goal, combat droids find and fire upon them. Marie is hit lightly and slips, but is saved by Thomas. The last two to reach the walkway, he helps her up with cover fire from the guard captain. As he climbs up, however, another shot catches him, and he falls to his death.

## THE CONSTRUCT, BRIDGE ATRIUM

The team reaches the open area before the bridge doors. As they had hoped, there are no droids – they are all guarding the main atrium, where they believe the A.I. and other main systems are. Hank uses the scavenged mining laser he had been using as a weapon to cut through the bridge door. As he works, droids attack from the narrow corridor, and the guard captain and the scientists hold them back. Marie falls back to help Hank, who succeeds in opening the door. The team falls back through the door, except for the guard captain, who is hit defending them and uses the last of his explosives to blast a hole in the walkway to prevent the droids from following.

## THE CONSTRUCT, THE BRIDGE

The four humans still living explore the bridge. They find a damage summary hologram, depicting the damage they had already observed, but far worse as well. They move toward a command station in the center of the room, hoping to shut down the A.I., but the lights turn on, droids enter the room, surrounding them. The A.I. had been herding them into a trap.

## ACT III

## THE CONSTRUCT, BRIDGE

Expecting to die, the explorers drop their weapons despairingly. The damage hologram of the ship wavers, and the A.I. shows itself as an abstract representation. It speaks in English over the bridge speakers, having studied their language as they moved through it. It questions them on their purpose in invading it. The discussion turns to the purpose of the ship, a lifeboat from genocide, and then to the engines, which are revealed to be overheating and will explode. The despairing A.I., realizing that they are harmless, leaves them on the bridge under guard. Later, John calls the A.I. back. With friends on the surface, it could be possible to get the ship out and on its way, into space where the heat from the engines will not overload the ship's systems. However, there is no time to excavate the ship. Hank suggests taking advantage of the massive natural gas deposits under the ship – ignite them, using them like a giant bomb to pop the ship

out. The A.I. determines it can survive the blast, and that it has the highest probability of success. It releases them.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, MAIN CORRIDOR

Running back to the airlock and the surface, the team sees robots bustling into activity, moving crates of mining equipment around and preparing the ship for this last ditch effort. As they near their entry point, they regain radio contact with their people on the surface, who had not been able to penetrate the ship again after them.

#### THE CONSTRUCT, EXTERIOR

Small repair droids navigate cracks in the ship's cocoon of ice and rock, planting mining charges to crack the rock and improve the chance of success for the natural gas explosion.

#### THE ARCTIC, ABOVE THE CONSTRUCT

Workers from the Facility place explosive charges in stress points in the glacier to help break up the ice and rock above the Construct.

#### A SAFE DISTANCE

In radio contact with the A.I., John and Travis coordinate the efforts.

#### NEW DRILLING CAMP

Hank and his crew work frantically to drill down around the side of the Construct, then horizontally to make contact with the natural gas.

#### A SAFE DISTANCE, IN A BUNKER

When all is ready, John gives the word. The A.I. and the men on the surface detonate their charges to loosen the rock, and Hank immediately sends the ignition charge down to the gas.

The gas ignites and explodes out as the A.I. burns its engines at full power. The sky lights up in fire and ice and rock fly into the air. Then, metal rises. The A.I.'s last communication as it leaves its prison on Earth is to thank them.

#### THE ARCTIC, OUTSIDE

John and Travis watch the Construct rise, almost ponderously. They bid farewell to global warming. John questions how this will be covered up, and Travis replies that they have plenty of practice.

#### TIMES SQUARE

On the big screen, a newscaster explains away the strange happenings in the Arctic. Pan out to see human life continuing undisturbed, just as it was.

# TREATMENT SUBMISSION GUIDE

By Clay Gimenez

Everything starts with the idea. Every great film takes a great idea and realizes it impeccably, bringing it to life on the silver screen. And the first step of that realization is the work of the screenwriter, who makes (or takes) an idea and crafts it into a compelling story with a powerful presentation.

The premise for a script will come from one of two places. Either the idea will originate externally, from a book, video game, comic, ancient mythology, or the like, and the screenwriter will adapt it for film, or the screenwriter will dream up an original and unique idea.

Regardless, for the screenwriter to fund his or her writing habit, the script will have to sell (unless of course one is lucky enough to write on commission, that is, to be hired to write a script, for instance based off of a novel a producer has acquired). But what makes a selling script?

That, no one, including script buyers, truly knows. What sells depends entirely upon what a studio, producer, or actor would like to work on at the time. Some scripts do not sell for decades but then go on to win Academy Awards. Others sell immediately but do not make it to production.

However, certain characteristics are common across most or all scripts that sell. First, the writer must be passionate about the idea. Without passion, the script will not breathe, will not come to life. The writer's passion, or lack thereof, is easily and immediately apparent in the work and will compel the reader to read it hungrily or throw it away in disgust. Second, the reader must be able to see the film rolling in their mind's eye. The language must be strongly visual, emphasizing the passage of time and the story's movement forward. Last, the idea must be intriguing. Expressible in a tag line of a sentence or two, it must pique the reader's interest, making them want to read more (or to buy a ticket and see the movie).

The idea can be expressed in a few different forms. The most concise complete form is a treatment, a short (3-5 page) condensed narrative of the plot. The treatment will often be used as a selling tool, as it captures the essence of the film in a quick read. On the other hand, the most complete form is the script itself. These two are the most commonly sold forms for novel ideas in Hollywood.

So you have a script, now what? For a writer looking at Hollywood, agents are everything. In order to sell a treatment or script, particularly as a new writer, one must have an agent. They are the middlemen between writers and producers, filtering out poor

content and leveraging their many connections in the industry to sell quality, marketable content. Thus, you must sign with an agent.

However, before sending your work out into the world, outside of your trusted circle of family and friends, you should protect your copyright. Plant your flag in your idea and your work, so that should there ever be any issues, you have legal evidence of your first authorship. One simple way to do this is to register your script with the Writer's Guild of America's online IP service, a respected and standard means of demonstrating copyright. By doing this, you insure yourself against unauthorized usage or plagiarism as best you can and at the very least create solid evidence of your ownership for use in court.

With your copyright properly secured, the next step is to select agencies and the proper agents at each agency. Agency websites and various insider sources such as Donedealpro.com and the Writer's Guild of America can provide information on quality agents. The dominant agencies and top agents will make the majority of sales, though other, smaller agencies can be just as effective as the major agencies, at least in their area of specialty. However, when searching for an agent, starting with the larger, more established agencies is a reasonable choice.

At the time of writing, as judged by quantity and size of deal closings, the top five agencies are:

- William Morris Endeavor
- International Creative Management
- Creative Artists Agency
- Paradigm
- United Talent Agency

To start, select the proper agent at each agency. Send each agent a log line (a one sentence hook for your idea; two sentences at absolute most) and perhaps a 1-3 page pitch or treatment. In your initial contact, be sure to hook the agency on your credibility – what makes you a writer they should pay attention to (previous published work, experience as a journalist, an expert in the field the idea arises from, etc.). Ask if they would be like to read more, such as a step outline or script. Do not initially send a complete script and expect it to be read immediately.

If an agent is interested in representing you, the formal relationship will begin with a contractual agreement. In short, the agent will agree to represent and sell your work in exchange for 10-20% of all proceeds of the sale. However, the contract will be significantly more complicated and so should be reviewed by a lawyer representing your interests (as with all contracts).

The agent will then leverage their contacts and attempt to sell your work. If they succeed and you approve of the terms (once again, consult your lawyer), your work will be sold to a film studio, producer, or similar force within the industry, and you just might see

your work made into a movie someday. Not to mention that once a successful sale is made, future sales become easier, as you have some credibility as a writer (even more if the movie is made).

In short, from the perspective of a writer, the selling process is simple, if by no means easy. Write ideas that capture your passion and find an agent who can sell them. Now start writing.

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