

Generic Radio Workshop Script Library (BACK)**Series: Suspense****Show: 2462****Date: Jan 21 1962**

Episode: 2462

Transcribed by Kevin Rimney Sept 2009

ANNOUNCER: And now, a tale well calculated to keep you in Suspense!

108303715: I only ask the place and time enough to give some small meaning to the meaningless and point to having lived.

ANNOUNCER: Listen now to 2462 starring Larson Zerbi and written especially for Suspense by George Bamber.

108303715: I woke up on the floor shivering. All my clothes were gone. It was like a nightmare, a nightmare I had dreamed many times before and dreaded coming true. At first I thought I had waken up in my own room, that someone had taken all my furniture and clothes. But then I realized it wasn't so much a room as it was a cube. An empty sterile cube with luminescent walls that hummed with a soft blue-green light. I jumped up then and threw myself against the walls trying to find a way out. And there was none, no door, no window, not even a ventilation tube. I banged on the walls and screamed but no one answered me. Nothing. The smooth plastic blue green walls that hummed with the electric current in them. That gave them light and air. And then--

MUSIC: Duh duh duhn.

108303715: I slumped back down to the soft foam plastic floor of my cell. Afraid to admit to myself where I was and squeezed my eyes tight against the walls because I was afraid I was going to cry.

SFX: electronic buzzer then a short sound of a panel sliding open.

108303715: Just then the wall in front of me slid back on its tracks and in the pale light of the corridor I could see a large shambling man in prison coveralls with a nine digit number tattooed on his forehead.

108303715: Wh-what do you want?

GUARD: Follow me.

108303715: He turned his back on me and stepped on the moving conveyor in the corridor. I stumbled after him because I was afraid to be alone. I had to know what was happening.

108303715: Where are you taking me?

GUARD: No talk, follow me.

108303715: I could tell by the steady movement of his jaw and the dull far away look on his face that I could question him all day and it wouldn't do any good. He was chewing tranquil gum and the effects of that stuff lasts for a week. I could scream at him and it wouldn't bother him, nothing would bother him unless I tried to escape. I knew where I was now, there could be no doubt of that. I rode behind my silent guide up and down what seemed like endless corridors past row on row of cells just like the one I had left. Some of them had their reverse scanners on that means you could see in but the prisoners couldn't see out. Some of them were sitting in the middle of their cube staring at nothingness but most of them were slumped on the floor asleep. Kept that way by Somnigas, a gentle gas that kept the inmates unconscious and manageable until their cases came up. I knew one day I would wind up here and here I was in the most scientific escape proof extermination center in the world.

GUARD: In here

108303715: The guard stepped off the conveyor in front of a heavy chrome door marked courtroom and pushed a button. I moved through the doorway like a schoolboy, called upon to recite. The room was not much bigger than the cell I had left. And it was empty. A lieutenant sat behind a desk, his plastic bars gleamed at me brightly from his shoulders. I heard my guard close the door behind us. Then I noticed one wall was completely covered with the sleepy face of a computer.

LT.'S VOICE: Sit down, sit down.

SFX: low random beeping such as typing as people speak during court scene.

108303715: I did as I was told on the only other piece of furniture in the place, a small three legged stool in the middle of the room. I wished that they had given me some sort of clothes to cover my nakedness because there was a young girl, a secretary sitting at an electrowriter taking down everything

that was said, feeding it into the computer.

LT.'S VOICE: Identity?

108303715: Frank Smith

LT.'S VOICE: I said your Identity.

108303715: I told you sir.

LT.'S VOICE: Do not hold up the proceedings, time is precious. You were issued a combination serial social and telephone number that was imprinted on your forehead at birth. From here it appears to be 108303715. Is that correct?

108303715: That is the number tattooed on my head.

LT: Clerk, let the record show the subject is hostile.

CLERK: Yes sir.

LT: Let us proceed. Case of the people versus 108303715. Convened in the first court at eighteen hundred hours in this day of our world, the eighteenth of November 2462. 108303715 you are charged with two counts. One writing non productive literature and 2 wasting government time. How do you plead, true or false?

108303715: I don't understand.

LT: Have you or have you not written poetry?

108303715: I'm a clerk in the space department.

LT: True or false?

108303715: False.

LT: I have here some hundred pieces of dabbero, I shall read a portion of one, see if you recognize it. In my treeless, greenless office amid the bustling mad despair I hunger after exile from the chrome and filtered air. Well?

108303715: Its not a very good poem is it?

LT: Did you or did you not write this poem? True or false?

108303715: I hardly see--

LT: Answer true or false.

108303715: False!

LT: Account then for the fact that this poem was written on your

electrowriter.

108303715: There are millions of electrowriters.

LT: As you may or may not know each electrowriter has its own characteristics, as individual as fingerprints. An expert has identified this poem as coming from your machine. I can call him in to testify if you like.

108303715: There are two shifts, I'm not the only one assigned to that machine.

LT: You are not only a poet, you are a very stupid one. Every electrowriter imprints the date and hour of transmission. In every case the poems were written on your machine while you were sitting at it supposed to be doing the invaluable work of the space department. What have you to say?

108303715: What can I say?!

LT: You are charged with two very grave counts in this court, writing non-productive literature and wasting government time. How do you answer?

108303715: How else can I answer? Guilty.

LT: 108303715 you insist upon imposing on this court concepts of legality as ancient as nineteen hundred sixty two. In this court subjects are neither guilty or not guilty they are simply productive or non productive, social or anti social. I repeat are these charges against you true or false? Answer one or the other.

108303715: False.

LT: Very well. Clerk.

CLERK: Yes sir.

LT: Signal the judicial computer that all facts and considerations of this court are now at hand and submit the subjects work record, fitness report, sanity estimations, IQ, cooperation quotient---- (fades out)

SFX: computer calculating noises

108303715: I watched like a sleepwalker as the Lt. handled the thin punched and tabulated cards that were the history of my life. I watched with a gamblers fascination as one by one she fitted them into the monsters mouth and the lights blinked and flickered across its face. Digesting my life and worth on this earth and estimating in hours and seconds how

much longer I'd be permitted to stay.

SFX: computer stops

108303715: Suddenly I realized the computer had stopped, the lights across its face were dark. The machine's mouth spat out a thin red plastic card and the girl handed it to the Lt.

LT: Number 108303715 it is the decision of this court you are no longer essential or desirable to life on this earth.

108303715: W-what?

LT: On the three hundred forty third day of the year twenty four sixty two you will be taken from your cell to the division of agriculture for processing.

108303715: No.

LT: Your body will be reduced to its basic components--

108303715: Oh no.

LT: And your existence on earth will be terminated.

108303715: Oh no. No, no, no! In God's name give me another chance.

LT: It is the decision of this court.

108303715: You can't condemn a man to die for writing a few lines of poetry.

LT: Not for writing a few lines of poetry, for being a poet. If you were a scientist or engineer we could afford to overlook these excessive characteristics in your personality. Forgive the writing of a few lines of dabbery, but you are not a scientist or engineer or even a mathematician. You are a clerk in the space department and according to your work record not very good at that.

108303715: I have no head for figures.

LT: At a time when the world is crying out a need for mechanical and technical brains the best you are suited for is rhyming words on scraps of paper. Can you possibly imagine the loss society-- (fades out)

108303715: I stood looking at the young man who was a Lieutenant. Saw his eyes on me, his lips move but no sound came out. Everything he said was true, the world was in trouble. Three hundred, four hundred years ago they thought they were having a population explosion, they should see it no. People live as far beneath the ground as above. New York was built

out thirty miles over the water and people commuted to work from as far away as Ohio and Michigan. Even the deserts were populated. It took mathematical and technical brains just to keep it all going, not to mention the problem of finding new worlds in space.

LT: 108303715 it must be apparent that even if you had some mechanical ability for the service and repair of computers and machines.

108303715: I could try to learn.

LT: But you have no mechanical ability; your aptitude tests show that.

108303715: Just give me a chance to learn.

LT: There is no time. The world needs these talents now, not a year from now, month from now.

108303715: But all I want is to live.

LT: We all want to live, that is the whole problem. The function of this court is to weed out the people who are not necessary to the continuation of life from those who are. Artists, philosophers, theologians and poets are not necessary. You have been found to be a poet.

108303715: I appeal to the mercy of the court!

LT: There is no mercy in a mathematical equation.

108303715: Oh give me another chance, just one!

LT: Number 108303715, you are wasting the courts time. I have many more cases to deal with today. As you stand now you are a drain on the earth's natural resources. In exactly twenty days from now you will contribute to them. Case dismissed.

108303715: Look I have, I have one favour to ask, everyone is granted one last request.

LT: What is it?

108303715: I have the right do I not to spend my remaining days conscious?

LT: Yes but you should request somnigas. Time goes by much more fast and then the end is not so-- painful.

108303715: I want to spend my last days conscious.

LT: Conscious? (pause) Why?

108303715: So I can write.

LT: Write?

108303715: Yes write! I wouldn't have to have an electrowriter in my cell, just a pen would do. I know how to use a pen and, and some paper. I know you have no power over the decision of the court b-but just this one last request as one man to another.

LT: Very well, orders will be left that a paper and pen will be left at your disposal.

108303715: Thank you sir, thank you!

LT: No more can be granted than the law allows. You may spend your last remaining days on earth conscious and writing gibberish poems or whatever you wish.

SFX: harsh buzzer

LT: Next case.

MUSIC: Transition which carries through scene.

108303715: I had to bite my tongue to keep from shouting and turning handsprings all the way back to my cell. I had won the right to remain conscious my last days on earth. The right to have one more chance at life and freedom. I realized fully how small that chance was. In the days when men still believed crime was cured by punishment my cell would have been a jailers dream. The smooth plastic walls were flawless. I searched the whole cube and no more than the first time I saw them. Not even the little pinholes, which admitted the gas that finished you.

I had hoped to dig under the soft foam rubber plastic on the floor with the point of my pen but I dug at it and couldn't even scratch it.

For what must have been five days I studied the prison routine in hopes of jamming the door and overpowering one of the guards but it was impossible. Once a day the wall was rolled back and food was tossed in, wrapped in electroethelyne and then rolled back again before you could get to it. It was impossible to wait near the door because the guards could see you waiting there and would not open it until you were well back in the center of the cell.

108303715: On what must have been the tenth day I started to have hallucinations. People began to appear in my cell and chat

with me. People who had long since been dead. To stave off madness I picked up the broken stub of my pen and began to write feverishly. I wrote a poem to a girl I had seen once when I was fourteen and then I wrote about the last blade of grass I had seen. I wrote faster and faster until I was completely caught up in the joy of writing. Writing about all the things I could remember until I lost all track of time--

SFX: door buzzer

108303715: --of place.

SFX: door opens.

108303715: Oh no, it isn't time, I still have twenty days left. Twenty days he said!

OLD GUARD: Shhh shh shhh. Quiet son, you still have two days to go.

108303715: W,w,what do you want?

OLD GUARD: To talk. (pause) Mind if I come in?

108303715: It's your prison.

108303715: (voiceover) He didn't come all the way in but stood in the door, out of sight, out of the hall but blocking my way. He was a very old man with mottled parchment skin. His prison coveralls hung on him like elephant skin.

108303715: Who, who are you?

OLD GUARD: I'm the night duty guard.

108303715: Wha, what do you want.

OLD GUARD: Oh, just to talk.

108303715: I've never, I've never seen you before.

OLD GUARD: Oh but I've seen you, every night I see you looking over my shoulder, reading the things you write.

108303715: I, I hope you enjoyed yourself.

OLD GUARD: I did. I haven't read any new poetry in fifty years, since the computers came in. You got a way with words.

108303715: Thank you sir.

OLD GUARD: That's all right. There's one poem you wrote, night before last.

108303715: Which one sir?

OLD GUARD: The one about a man who's going to die and doesn't know why

108303715: Oh, you mean this one?

OLD GUARD: Yes! Yes, that's the one. Would you mind reading it for me, my eyes tire easily.

108303715: OK. In the monumental silence of a long and pointless strife, I'm pained at my reluctance to let go this last of life. I only ask the place and time enough to give some small meaning to the meaningless and point to having lived.

OLD GUARD: Yes!, I like that. How would you like to get out of here?

108303715: Are you crazy?

OLD GUARD: No.

108303715: No one gets out of here alive.

OLD GUARD: Guards do.

108303715: But I'm not a guard.

OLD GUARD: You could be.

108303715: Now I know you're crazy.

OLD GUARD: You could be if you put on my clothes, my uniform.

108303715: That wouldn't do any good, they'd still recognize me by the number on my forehead.

OLD GUARD: That's what gave me the idea. Look at your number and look at mine.

108303715: 108808715

OLD GUARD: Only the eights are different.

108303715: Yes.

OLD GUARD: We could take that pen of yours and make your threes look like eights.

108303715: But you're an old man, I'm young. They would recognize the difference immediately.

OLD GUARD: No, no, no they wouldn't. The only one who sees me is the guard that relieves me and he's on happy gum. The only thing he looks at is my number, as long as that's right he's happy. He couldn't tell you what I looked like if his life

depended on it.

108303715: But why?

OLD GUARD: I don't know why. Maybe I just like poetry. Maybe because I'm going to die anyway. Look at me, I'm a hundred and ten. Yesterday I read where they're going to start eliminating everybody over a hundred and two. It will probably be law before the year is out.

108303715: But that's still a year to live, maybe more.

OLD GUARD: A year of what? I can't smell anymore, my taste buds are gone, my hands and feet are always cold.

108303715: That's not the real reason is it.

OLD GUARD: No. No it isn't.

108303715: Then what is?

OLD GUARD: I have a granddaughter about your age. Beautiful girl. She used to write and paint some when she was young. Of course we had to discourage it after the computers came in. Well it just would make me feel good to know they haven't stamped out the genes for poetry completely. I hate to live in a world where you don't get anything more than what comes blasting in at you over the telecommunicator. Well, what do you say? Are you willing?

108303715: I'm willing if you are.

OLD GUARD: Ah, good. Now listen carefully.

108303715: He sat up most of the night explaining his job to me. Cross questioning me to be sure I remembered it right. His job was simple, mostly just pushing buttons. The difficult part would be finding my way out of the huge prison without looking like I was groping and getting off the overhead rail at the right stop, to find his daughters home. Finally when he was convinced I had it right he left, promising to change places with me the following night. I was almost afraid to believe him.

108303715: The hours of what was to be my final night on earth crept by. The day had been bad enough but the night was worse. A hundred times I decided the night was over, that it had all just been a sadistic trick by the old man so he could watch the agony of my final hours on earth to pass the time. I was just about to beat against the walls and scream when.

SFX: door buzzer and opening.

OLD GUARD: Quick, quickly help me out of these coveralls.

108303715: I thought you wouldn't come.

OLD GUARD: I had to wait until the end of the watch so you'd have the best chance of escaping.

108303715: How much time do I have left?

OLD GUARD: About twenty minutes. The day guard will be coming to relieve me soon so hurry will you. Where's your pen?

108303715: H, h, here it is.

OLD GUARD: Now hold your head still while I change these threes to eights.

108303715: Alright, alright

OLD GUARD: Now remember, stay on the overhead rail until you get out of Arizona, my daughter is the next stop after that.

108303715: Ok.

OLD GUARD: Ah, there you're finished. Goodbye.

108303715: I don't, I don't know what to say.

OLD GUARD: Don't say anything. Say goodbye before I change my mind. At best courage is a quick silver thing.

108303715: Goodbye old man and thanks.

OLD GUARD: Quick close the door.

108303715: I did as I was told, raising my hand to break the circuit and I watched as the old man smiled at me and take up his position in front of it. The clock on the board said 10 minutes to five in the morning. Ten minutes before I would be released.

GUARD: Hows it going?

108303715: Huh?

GUARD: I said how's it going? Everything quiet?

108303715: Oh, oh, oh fine, fine, fine, fine.

108303715: I recognized him as the guard who was to relieve the old man. For a minute I was afraid he'd recognize me as his eyes drifted across my face but then they flicked up to my forehead to check my serial number and he resumed his

steady, quiet chewing.

GUARD: I came in a little early, you can never tell about the overhead rail, when its going to get jammed up.

108303715: Y,yes I know, things, things are a mess.

SFX: warning beep

108303715: What, whats that?

GUARD: Trouble in cell number 84, see the flashing light on the board.

108303715: Yes, I'd better turn it off.

Cell 84, that was my cell. The one I'd just left. That meant the old man was probably banging on the walls.

GUARD: I see cell 84 is scheduled for termination this morning, he probably lost his nerve. They should make them all stay under somnigas while they're here. Makes them easier to handle that way.

108303715: I can't turn the alarm off!

GUARD: Of course you can't as long as he's banging on the walls and screaming that way. You'd better go down and see what he wants.

108303715: D, do, do I have too?

GUARD: Of course you do, it's the law. He might have something more he wants to say.

108303715: I walked down the hall, feeling the guards eyes on my back. I didn't dare argue with him anymore for fear he would become concerned. It was all over now, I knew it was all over. I could see the old man beating on the walls of his cell beyond the transparent plastic walls screaming soundlessly. He had changed his mind. He wanted to live. In a minute he would be running down the hall shouting for help and in two hours I would be dead.

I raised my hand to break the electric circuit.

SFX: door buzzer and opening sound.

OLD GUARD: Ahhhh, ahhh, oh, oh there you are. I was afraid you wouldn't come back. You took the poems with you and I couldn't remember that one. All I can remember is, I only ask the place, I can't remember how it ends.

108303715: I only ask the place and time enough to give some small meaning to the meaningless and point to having lived.

OLD GUARD: Yes, yes. That's it. And point to having lived.

ANNOUNCER: Suspense. You've been listening to 2462 starring Larson Zerbi and written especially for Suspense by George Bamber. Suspense is produced and directed by Bruno Zarato Jr. Music Supervision by Ethel Huber. Featured in tonight's story was Robert Randal as the Lieutenant, Bob Dryden as the Old Guard, William Mason as the Young Guard and Rosemary Rice as the Court Stenographer. Listen again next week when we return with Please Believe Me written by Ben Kagen. Another tale well calculated to keep you in Suspense!