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A THING INSIDE
A THING INSIDE A THING

BY

IAIN A J ROSS

REH/RECORD: Studio 3 (CF3) BH Lla16-69Sdio 3-S-3() BH)5(Lla16-69S)4(dio 3&) BCa

A THING INSIDE A THING INSIDE A THING**by IAIN AJ ROSS**I/V

I'm Iain A J Ross, writer of A Thing Inside A Thing Inside A Thing. The play was inspired by a photo I saw of some kids who worked on a shipyard. They seemed to be living within their hulks they were tearing apart. My play is set in space, however. And I wanted to write about the least traditional sci-fi character I could think of, a grumpy 90 year old lady

SCENE 1: THE VOID**JOY BREATHE HEAVILY IN HER HELMET.****AIR HISSES AND SPURTS THROUGH HER BREATHING APPARATUS.**

1. JOY:

(V/O) Unreal.**(V/O) T
crashing into a****JUST JOY'S HARSH BREATHING.****(V/O) Not a peep.****DISTANT RUMBLE.****W**

buckled, and the oil and chemical waste is flooding out. Great shining globules of weightless pollutants, bursting over everything.

RUMBLE INCREASES.

(V/O) In space, no-one can hear you scream. Loved that film. Really gory.

2. LANA: (DISTORTED) Joy! Joy!

3. JOY: **(V/O) There were sound-effects, though, in the space**

DIRECTIONAL ROCKETS ON HER SPACESUIT FLARE
NOW AND THEN.

7. JOY: (SINGING) *'I know an old lady who swallowed a fly, I don't know why she swallowed a fly.'*
- (V/O) The Phoenix
this place.**
8. LANA: (D) (STATIC) Come in Joy, I've got no reading on your void suit.
9. JOY: **(V/O) W sort of galactic lower intestine, munching up the undigested crap of the solar system. It all passes through here: heat-blackened warships, office blocks ten miles long. Huge statues chewed up, spat back out to Earth in a grumbling river of recycled matter.**
10. JOY Which wreck am I looking for, then, genius?
11. LANA: (D) (UNIMPRESSED) Oh... oh, you're safe then
- CLICK. JOY SWITCHES OFF HER MUSIC.
12. JOY: I'm a spacewalk pro, doll. If I died out here, you'd slit your wrists. You're not cut out for total solitude.
- 12a LANA: (D) Try me. The silence would be ecstasy. Head for that cargo ship, that ugly blue one, dead ahead. It should be empty like all the others. But the readings say there's heat in there.
13. JOY: I see it. Heading over.

STRESSING METAL OF PASSING HULKS.

34. JOY: It's a boy. A toddler.
35. LANA: (D) What are you talking about?
36. JOY: It's a whole colony. Thousands of... thousands of them.
(CLOSE) They're alive.

SCENE 4: THE MECHANISM, GANGWAY

HEAVY MACHINERY.

42. JOY: **(V/O) The Phoenix Mechanism.**

The crusher gobbles up the junk convoy. Enormous buzz saws slice and dice everything. Then, the smelting area. Controlled lakes of lava; you expect to see dinosaurs roaming around down there. Finally, it all channels through to the nano-chambers; huge silos of red and black sand where the waste is broken down at an atomic level. It all poops out the other end of the machine, in giant sausages of carbon and frozen metals.

Then drones steer the recycled matter back to earth.

nothing.

TWO BIKES, RACING ALONG. JOY AND LANA
PEDAL, BOTH PANTING.

38. LANA: Pedal faster, you bald-headed prune! Come on, Joy!
39. JOY: **(V/O) You have to bike across the complex on a gangway nism is miles long, like a giant, fat worm. A huge metallic tallywacker.**

THEY BREAK, STOP. CATCH THEIR BREATH.

40. (BREATHLESS) Stop, stop a minute I, I can't keep up. I want to die.

41. LANA: Any other day, sure, yeah. Hurl yourself into the smelting furnace, be my guest. But it's a two-woman job, I can't shut the crusher down by myself.

JOY UNSCREWS A HIPFLASK, SWIGS.

43. JOY Cheers.

44. LANA: Oh nice, nice. Thousands of oblivious people about to be crushed to death, and you want to get pissed on... on engine-grease moonshine.

45. JOY: You should try some, it might help. Y' know, when you first got here, your hair was all sleek and long. Now it's coming out in clumps. You're a right shambles.

JOY GULPS, BUT LANA SWATS THE HIPFLASK AWAY.

46. LANA: Shut up!

47. JOY: What you do that for?

48. LANA: We've got, I don't know, five minutes before that ship gets eaten.

49. JOY: There's no bloody food left on this whole st C1s.18 Tm[o]6(n)-3(t)6(h)-3

54. LANA: Right, get on mine.
55. JOY Oh No.
- 55b LANA Hurry up. Try not to touch me with your freakish, body parts, OK?
- 55c JOY If you should be so lucky
- 55d LANA God I'm gonna vom.

JOY CLIMBS ON. LANA STARTS PEDALLING.

62. LANA: That little boy, and all his shipmates, will die.

63.

- 72b JOY; A city's-worth of eager beavers put in medical comas and crammed in freezers for the Great Leap.
73. LANA: Great Leap?
74. JOY: They blast off from Earth, pointed at a new solar system. Then they wake up hundreds of years later and re-colonise whatever dismal rock they find. Makes no sense that one would drift through here, though...
75. LANA: Where are you going now?
76. JOY: Someone's got to get out there and sort this mess. I'll suit up, glue some limpet rockets to the Jochebed's hull. Maybe we can roll it into space before anyone notices. Can you turn all this back on, when I'm done?
77. LANA: Start it up again?
78. JOY: Of course start it up, it's already a bottleneck.

SCENE 6: THE VOID

JOY IN HER HELMET, BREATHING.

MAGNETIC 'CLANK'.

79. JOY: Limpet six attached. It's too quiet, need some soothing music.

SLAYER'S 'RAINING BLOOD' PLAYS OVER TINNY SPEAKERS.

There

JOY HUMS ALONG, PRETTILY, THROUGHOUT.
MAGNETIC 'CLANK'. JOY WORKS AWAY.

80. JOY: Limpet seven, attached.

House Ballet- all the *Orpheus*

106. JOY: Come on then, clever clogs. What the hell do we do now?
107. LANA: Drag him back on his ship. He can't breathe our air.
108. JOY: Or don't drag him anywhere. You can pilot his ship, right?
109. LANA: Oh shut up. (LIFTING HIM) Help me, then.
110. JOY: Check his pockets, at least. Might have food or fags.
111. LANA: Joy!

SCENE 8: THE HUNSTMAN, BRIDGE.

GENTLE HUM OF COMPUTERS.

AIRLOCK CLOSES.

GREGOR SPLUTTERS BENEATH A GAS MASK. HIS BREATHING STEADIES.

112. LANA: There you go, mate. Fresh oxygen.
113. GREGOR: St... stem.
114. JOY: Stem? You want the stem? It's like talking to Lassie.
115. LANA: Give him some water.
- JOY GULPS AT A WATER BOTTLE.
116. JOY: Hmm, one sec.
117. GREGOR: You... You...
118. JOY: Saved you. Reward would be nice. Food would be nice.
119. GREGOR: So hard to breathe.
- JOY HAWKS UP A GRIM BALL OF PHLEGM.
120. LANA: Don't Joy.

JOY SPITS IT OUT -SPLAT- TO THE DECK.

121. JOY: Black mucus. See? Nanomachines, on the Mechanism. They break down the shipwrecks. So wee, they float in the air. You're breathing the stray ones right now. In and out of every pore.

122. LANA: You need to take pills to counteract the nanos. Otherwise; Vikram.

123. GREGOR: Vikram?

124. JOY: Bloke was exiled here too, a few years ago. He didn't keep up with his pills. Nanos ate him away from the inside. Black stuff leaking out of him...

125. GREGOR: They... degrade you?

126. LANA: Oh, you don't even know, mate. She is the physical manifestation of absolute degradation.

(Joy chuckles)

Give him an anti-nano, Joy.

JOY IS RIGHT UP IN GREGOR'S FACE.SHE POPS OPEN A RATTLING PILL CASE.

127. JOY: Machines inside us. Us inside machines. Russian dolls. Over and over. Here, let me-

128. GREGOR: No, it's fine- mmmf

129. JOY: -pop it in your mouth for you. Yum yum.

130. GREGOR: (DISGUSTED) Thank... you.

JOY SMACKS HER LIPS.

131. LANA: I'm Lana, this is Joy.

146. JOY:

Monday morning. And Tuesday, I was tied up and shipped here. I didn't even get to name her.

169. JOY: That's... a bummer.
170. LANA: She'll be five. Five years old. Well. There you go, right?
171. JOY: (TENDER) There you go.
172. LANA: (RECOVERING) God, imagine if you'd had offspring. The nightmare.
173. JOY: If they'd turned out like you, I'd have drowned them in a sack.

DISTANT: THE CRUSHER STARTING UP.

174. LANA: When my sentence is up, I'll find out ...
175. JOY: Clam up, listen.
177. JOY: The Mechanism's started up again. It's Gregor.

LANA RATTLES THE DOOR.

178. LANA: The door's locked.
179. JOY: Oh my God, we've got to get out. Kick it down.
180. LANA: You kick it down, it's solid. Why's he started the crusher?
181. JOY: I don't know. .. unless...
182. LANA: What?
183. JOY: Wait. There should be a circuit breaker for the lock Here, pass me that toothbrush.
184. LANA: Do you know what you're doing?
185. JOY: Not really.

JOY JABS THE TOOTHBRUSH INTO THE
ELECTRICAL CIRCUITS ON THE WALL, VIOLENTLY.
THE DOOR OPENS.

186. Bingo!

SCENE 10: THE STEM.

THE CRUSHING MECHANISM ROARS.

187. LANA: What the hell's going on? The Jochebed'll be crushed!

188. GREGOR: How did you get out?

189. LANA: You've got to stop it now!

191. LANA: There's thousands of sleepers in there, they'll be killed.

192. JOY: Lana – new protocol, right?

193. GREGOR: Precisely.

194. LANA: Protocol? Wait, wait a minute-

195. JOY: Recycle the civvies. Crunch 'em up, spit 'em out.

196. GREGOR: We prefer 'Biomass Resource' as a term, but yes, there's no point denying-

197. JOY: (OVER) Blah, blah blah

198. LANA: No. Not even you lot-

199. GREGOR: (OVER) Blanket processing of live organics is perfectly legal-

200. LANA: (OVER) How can you-

201. GREGOR: You can't stop the machine, ever again. My hand, my genetic print, is the override. If you want to survive, then you do your jobs. It's pretty simple. Even the old woman gets it.

202. JOY: Oh, I get you, pal. Nice toothpaste, by the way.

JOY BEGINS BRUSHING HER TEETH.

203. GREGOR: Is that my, my toothbrush?

204. LANA: We're shutting this place down.

GREGOR UNZIPS A SECTION OF HIS UNIFORM.

205. GREGOR: Stay where you are. Do you recognise what this is? We call it the Last Resort. It's standard issue.

HE CLICKS A SWITCH, AND THE OBJECT

230. LANA: Joy!
231. GREGOR: You disgusting hag, give it to me.
GREGOR GRAPPLES WITH JOY.
232. JOY: It's mine now, I found it! Get off me!
233. GREGOR: Utter barbarism. ..ah.
THE LAST RESORT CLATTERS TO THE FLOOR.
234. LANA: Right!
THEY ALL FREEZE.
This is how it is now.
235. GREGOR: (SIGH) Please, please put it down, Lana.
236. LANA: Shouldn't have dropped it, should you? I just want to get off this place.
- 236a JOY Careful, Lana.
237. GREGOR: You don't know how my gun works.
238. LANA: Oh it's suddenly a gun now, is it?
Start walking.
SHE CLICKS ON THE WEAPON. IT HUMS. + MUSIC
Slowly.
239. JOY We're nicking your ship, mate.

240. LANA: Sit there. Get the launch sequence going.
241. JOY: Or we just shoot him already.
242. GREGOR: Say you escape. There are thousands more Mechanisms, a spider's web stretched along the asteroid belt. Each one being reprogrammed, repurposed for live organics.
243. LANA: How do you get whole colonies to agree to hurl themselves into your wood chipper?
244. JOY: They're all Gen

266. GREGOR: (D) (STATIC) –coming through, Joy? This is *The Huntsman*.
267. JOY: I read you. I'm on the Jochebed now. Bringing her round.
268. GREGOR: (D) Tracking you now.
269. JOY: I've hit the jackpot with the Jochebed. Limitless food.
270. GREGOR: (D) Is there ever a moment you're not thinking with your stomach?
271. JOY: How could you know what real hunger is? To be *hollow*. Sends you insane. Raging.
272. GREGOR: (D) Five hundred metres from the crusher. Closing. Hold that course.
273. JOY: Once... our supplies ran out. We were weeks without real food, retching with hunger. Properly delirious. Then, the soldiers turned up. Dead soldiers.
- Burnt-out burial ships, from all nations and colonies, I thought they'd never stop coming. The Mechanism took them all in, ship after ship.
- And it recycled them into something... edible. I was too weak to feed myself. But I'm not sorry I ate them.

SCENE 13: THE MECHANISM AIRLOCK / INTO: (THE MECHANISM GANGWAY).

AIRLOCK HISSES. ALARMS, FADING.

JOY UNZIPS HER VOID SUIT.

AS GREGOR APPROACHES:

293. GREGOR: Bravo. You are truly diabolical.
294. JOY: Oh! You still kicking about? Thought I'd finished you off.
295. GREGOR: (BREATHLESS) I barely got out of there. My ship is wrecked. I can't get home.
296. JOY: Sucks, doesn't it?
299. GREGOR: You're taking me to the Jochebed, right now.
300. JOY: Why would I want to do that?
301. GREGOR: I have the anti-venom on my ship – you could still save Lana's life.
- 301a JOY I told you, I don't care about the girl.
- 301b GREGOR I don't believe you.
- JOY GNASHES AND SNARLS AS SHE BITES.
304. GREGOR: Ah! You tr

308. JOY: You keep 'em. Gotta go.

JOY SUDDENLY RUNS, MOANING WITH PAIN.

309. GREGOR: Stop! There's nowhere *to* go!

AIRLOCK AMBIENCE FADES TO MECHANISM
GANGWAY

GREGOR BREATHING, STAMPING AFTER HER.

310. JOY: **(V/O) Then I see my salvation.**

JOY PICKS UP HER BIKE, JUMPS ON, PEDALS.

311. JOY: **(V/O) Old faithful, lying there all beautiful and shiny
on the deck, where Lana left her. All his physical**

by a five-speed bike.

(FX BICYCLE BELL)

HE FIGHTS TO BREATHE, COUGHS.

316. GREGOR: (NEARER) I looked you up, your crime file. I know all about you.
- Finn. He's called Finn. I can make it happen. You can talk to him, see him.
317. JOY: (WHISPER) I've got nothing to say to him.
320. GREGOR: He's still alive. Grown up. Got his own family.
321. JOY: **(V/O) Last time I saw him, Finn was ten. Phoenix agents stalking through our house, me hiding in the bathroom.**
down the bog before they find me. Unfit mother, see? That was their thing, back then. Grass up your parents. - he was just a kid.
322. GREGOR: I can't protect you when the men get here. Come on, Joy.
- 323.

344. GREGOR: Up we go, Nana!

HE STAGGERS ON THE METALLIC GANGWAY.

345. JOY:

347. **rockets**

on.

JOY'S SUIT JETS 'WHOOSH' INTENSELY.

GREGOR HOWLS IN AGONY.

JOY CRASHES TO THE GANGWAY FLOOR.

GREGOR STUMBLES, COLLIDES WITH THE
RAILINGS, FALLS OVER.

HE PANICS, SCRAMBLES AT THE METAL.

380. LANA: Rrrright.
381. JOY: Generations of the little sods, flitting about here in the dust for decades. In and out of me.
382. LANA: . Here, lie down.
- LANA HELPS JOY RECLINE.
383. JOY: (FLAGGING) Look, take the Jochebed and piss off. More Phoenix ships will be here soon. If I'm going to die, I want some peace. Don't start praying or singing or something; I might pop off early.
391. LANA: (IGNORING HER) I'm hungry.
392. JOY: Me too. Hey you won't believe what I found on Gregor's ship.
- A CELLOPHANE WRAPPER RUSTLES.
393. LANA: Let me see it!
394. JOY: Take a bite. It's real chocolate.
- THEY GORGE, TALK WITH FULL MOUTHS.
395. LANA: Unbelievable. Unbelievable!
- THEY LAUGH, THEN CRY A LITTLE.
399. LANA: Can I hold your hand?
400. JOY: (MOUTH FULL) No. Get off.
- MACHINES POWER DOWN AROUND THEM.
- MACHINES STOP.
-

SCENE 16: THE MECHANISM.JOY'S VOICE IS DIFFERENT, FILTERED.

404. JOY: (SINGING, HOARSE) *'I know an old lady who swallowed a fly. I don't know why she swallowed a fly, perhaps she'll die..'*

405. (V/O)

FX MACHINES

ebed, with

a whole colony of rebels, just woken up.

She dragged my body to the nanochambers. Put me to rest in the carbon mounds. Not a trad burial, but

MUSIC

***merging* with the Mechanism. My body is being dismantled by the nanobots as wo-3(mth)4(e)-3(na)-4(nob**

406. JOY (CONT'D): **The men. I can feel it. But I will
recycle the recyclers! Here they come. Crawling
slowly towards my mouth. My wide open mouth.
!**

MUSIC + CREDITS

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Joy