The Immigration Desk

Officer Welcome

Staff We found this case in connection
with a single woman of high family
and low taste. That shows something.

Officer This is the year of the big race.

Staff Her grandmother disapproved,
but that didn't stop her.
It all comes to no good.

Officer By big I mean big.
By race I mean race.

Staff By big he means big.
By race he means race.

Officer Now, let's look at our first contestant.

Staff The grandmother thinks it had to come
from the father's side of the family.
They were in architecture, which is
evidently respectable,
but artistic, nevertheless.
Interview (part one) 1:00

JJ This extraordinary work for television,
dating to the late-1940's,
has been brought to the medium, finally,
by the composer, Robert Ashley.

RA Actually, it's far from finished.

JJ Are you sure that the author intended the work for
television, as opposed to, say, something
intended for the stage of the future?

RA All of the instructions refer to television.

JJ And the author calls it an opera?

RA "Atalanta (Acts of God)" is the title of the work.

I call it an opera.

"Atalanta Strategy,"

JJ In this episode, "Add Again,"
you are presenting just an excerpt,
is that true?

RA "Atalanta Strategy,"
"Add Again" is more than an excerpt.

It's a kind of model

or template for the larger work.
JJ Why was the opera not produced in the 1940's?
RA It would have been impossible.
JJ "Atalanta (Acts of God" is very much ahead of its time then.
RA "Atalanta" is a visionary work.
And it's characteristic of that time.
That time was a time of visionaries in America.
JJ Atalanta is a greek myth, isn't it?
A woman who could run faster than any man.
RA The opera is about achievement, I think.
A myth is just a way of telling about how things work.
JJ What happens in this myth?
RA Three different men, who don't know each other, but have something in common, are picked up by a flying saucer to be used on some strange mission. That idea of UFO's doing research on us.
The personnel are discouraged, Captain.

THE PERSONNEL ON THE MISSION, IMPOSSIBLE.

Demoralized, Sir.

THE MORAL IS, LIEUTENANT.

Ized, Sir. Yesterday, one of them said, ...

IT'S STILL IS IN MY BOOK, LIEUTENANT.

It's hard being sad in the morning.

SAID IN THE MORNING, LIEUTENANT. // It lays on the

joy of recovery like a wet blanket.

DO YOU MEAN ONE OF THE PERSONNEL?

One of the transports, Captain.

IT DIDN'T SOUND LIKE SOMETHING PERSONNEL COULD HAVE SAID.

They gather like flies around honey.

TOTAL NEGLECT OF DUTY. // Worse even.

Total disattachment. // AND UNDER QUESTIONING?

That it gets harder. // PROTECT THE PERSONNEL

FROM THAT CHANGE IDEA. // You have to rebuild from scratch.

THAT'S THE DANGER. // Even the mirrors are no help.
Flying Saucer (part one) 1:30

19  It's too slow. // YOU FORGET ABOUT THEM.
20  You wake up thinking I'm nothing.
21  But not nothing enough not to care.
22  YOU HAVE TO REBUILD FROM SCRATCH?
23  One answered, "What was that?"
24  THE PERSONNEL? THAT'S A SYMPTOM.
25  Right, Captain. That's a symptom.
26  THAT'S WHAT I SAID. DREAMING.
27  That's what you said. Dreaming.
28  WHAT WAS THAT? // Yes, what was that.
29  A SIGN OF DISATTENTION. // That's what I said.
30  I KNOW THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID.
31  He answered, "You wake up thinking ..."
32  I NOTHING. // Almost. // WHAT HAPPENED, THEN?
33  The one we call the wise one ...
34  ONE OF THE PERSONNEL? // Yes, said,
35  "Too bad you can't hang on to that."
36  AND HE SAID? I DON'T SUPPOSE ...
37 Yes. "You're not kidding."

38 NO. I SUPPOSE THEY LAUGHED AT THAT?

39 You're not kidding. // THAT'S WHAT HE SAID. // Yes.

40 I HARDLY BLAME THEM. ONE OF MY FAVORITES.

41 They keep saying. ... // FROM GETTING UP? //

42 Yes. "The Big A." Then they laugh.

43 CAPITALIZED LIKE THAT? // Yes. // MEANING?

44 Who knows. // BUT THE PERSONNEL IS

45 AFFECTED, I SUPPOSE. // Good supposing.

46 NEXT THING YOU KNOW THEY'LL BE WRITING IN THE TOILETS.

47 Unfortunately, ... // THE BIG A! //

48 they've learned to laugh. // ON-CUE----//

T

49 On Cue. // HE TAUGHT THEM?

50 Well, they're taught. // WHAT'S THE JOKE?

51 He says, in a high voice, "Willard, if you

52 don't turn that TV on when you

53 watch it, I'm gonna throw it out."

54 OH, NO!
Character Reference (part one)

Voice-over) Our various ideas about work --- our politics --- are just ideas about how to get men to work. Women have to work, anyway. Willard took to the one we use like a cat takes to water. When it occurred to him that there had been some mistake in judgment and he had missed the chance to make baseball the main source of energy in his life, he more or less retired. I got there just after this had happened. There was a pall about the world

1:00 B♭ / A♭ Again
Voice-over) (Two men in a bedroom of a palatial house.)

What'd you suppose this thing is for?
You set it to the time you want to get up, and breakfast comes. // How'd you know that?
I tried it yesterday.
What happened? // I set it for nine o'clock and at nine o'clock there was a knock on the door and a woman came in with breakfast. // How did she know what you want for breakfast? // Maybe she just brought what she eats.
You are smart. Do you think it'll work now? // Probably not.
I think we have to go downstairs.
Is that old man going to make a speech again?
If it wasn't him, it'd be the old woman, an' that'd be worse. // If I was them, I'd move out.
They can't move out. That's part of the bargain.
The Mystery of the River (part one)

1) The ridge runs east and west.

2) The river runs east to west with high ridges on either side. This is mountain country.

3) The river runs east to west with high ridges on either side.

4) The river runs east to west with high ridges on either side.

5) The slopes seem in the imagination to have been sculpted some time in the past to an almost perfect smoothness.

6) The river runs east to west with high ridges on either side.

7) hidden now by the ragged overgrowth. The river runs east to west with high ridges on either side.

8) The slopes were sculpted sometime in the past to an almost perfect smoothness.

9) east to west with high ridges on either side.
The slopes are covered with trees now. The work is hidden.

The slopes are covered with trees now. The work is hidden.

At a certain point in the river, according to history,

At a certain point in the river there is evidence of a more mysterious kind of work. A further, more complex structure.

something strange happened. When the people of the area speak about the river, their attention is

Also hidden. This structure is referred to in the story of the river. When the people of the area always inevitably focused on

the mystery of the place

speak about the river, their attention is
where, according to history,

always inevitably focused

on the mystery

a more complex

kind of structure,

of the place

in the river

also hidden as work,

where something

is part of the

plan of the river.

strange happened.
CHICKEN SAID, THEY'RE GONNA WEAR THAT SMOOTHNESS THING OUT. // And I said,

Chicken, that's the only thing they've got.

HE SAID, WELL, WHY'N'T YOU TELL 'EM HOW WE GOT THE MULE DOWN OUT OF THE TREE?

The tree was in this creek bed and the creek was down, and the mule was caught in the fork of the high branches, kicking and fussing to get down. IT WAS RIGHT THERE AT: THE OLD DAM, AND CHICKEN SAID, IF WE CLOSE THE DAM AND THE WATER COMES UP, WE CAN FLOAT THE/MULE OUT. // So we closed the dam and in about four hours the water came up enough so that we could get out there in the branches of the tree and push the mule off the limb.

THEN THE MULE WAS SWIMMING AROUND BUT IT COULDN'T GET UP THE BANK.
The Mule in the Tree  (part two)  1:00  Atalanta Strategy

19 THE SIDES WERE TOO SLICK. SO THE MULE JUST
20 HUNG ON TO THE TREE TO KEEP FROM DROWNING.

21 Chicken and I opened up the dam again, and
when the water came down to where the mule could
walk, the mule/ Climbed out. IF WE HADN'T
24 COME ALONG, THE MULE'D BE UP THERE YET.

25 Chicken was scared, 'cause I think
he got the mule up there in the first place.

27 I think the mule was down in the creek bed, and
an' Chicken shut the dam just to see the
mule swim around. When the mule got stuck
in the tree, Chicken opened up the dam again
so he wouldn't get in trouble. He didn't think that
when the water went down, the mule couldn't
get down from the tree.

34 THE SIDES OF THAT CREEK WERE SO SLICK,
36 THAT MULE WOULD'VE DROWN FOR SURE.
1) When the people of the area

2) The slopes, sculpted at sometime in the past

3) to an almost perfect smoothness,

4) speak about the river,

5) they speak about the slopes,

6) are covered with trees now. The work is hidden.

7) Also hidden, also part of

8) sculpted at some time in the past

9) to an almost perfect smoothness,

10) the plan of the river, according to history, is

11) the more complex kind of structure.

12) and that the work is hidden.
13) The slopes are covered with trees now.

14) Its orientation is described in absolutes,

15) And when the people speak,

16) though in fact, with respect to perfect

17) north and south and perfect east and west,

18) their attention is focused on

19) the mystery of the place where

20) as these terms are used to help us to

21) imagine the sphere of earth,

22) according to history

23) a more complex kind of structure,

24) its orientation is skewed to conform to
The Mystery of the River (part two) 1:00

25) perfect north as determined by

26) also hidden, is part of

27) earth's position in the heavens. Thus,

28) the work of the river.

29) the meaning of its position

30) Something strange

31) happened.

32) is to be found in

33) our struggles to understand

34) Otherwise,

35) it is harder to understand.

36) the periodicity of events.
I said, How'd that mule get up in the tree?

HE DIDN'T ANSWER ME. HE JUST KEPT SAYING,

WE GOT TO GET HIM DOWN. // I said, How'd he

get up there? That's the way to get him down.

THAT MULE MUST HAVE WEIGHED A THOUSAND POUNDS.

We couldn't hardly move him even when the

water came up. // CHICKEN SAID, MAYBE IF WE

SHUT THE DAM AND THE WATER COMES UP,

THE MULE WILL FLOAT OUT. // I said,

If he don't drown first.

CHICKEN SAID, I THINK HE CAN SWIM.

I said, I never saw a mule swim.

CHICKEN SAID, HE CAN SWIM. I KNOW IT.

I said, How long'll it take to get the

water up? HE SAID, MAYBE ABOUT FOUR HOURS.

I said, If we drown him, you better not

think about going home. // HE JUST KEPT SAYING,

HE CAN SWIM. I KNOW HE CAN SWIM.
1) Now the slopes are covered,

2) The more complex structure is only partly visible from the ridges.

3) and the work is hidden.

4) The people of the area

5) The top is visible. The top part is a dam positioned at a place in the river

6) speak about the river as if it were

7) almost infinitely deep, as if

8) where its orientation conforms to perfect north as determined by

9) smoothly sculpted slopes had been made
13) at some time in the past when

14) earth's position in the heavens. Among the

15) something strange happened, to hold an invisible,

16) parts of the dam visible from the ridges and

17) are the large entrance doors where the

18) curved plane perfectly erect ---

19) not a boundary (at least not in the way

20) separate things in the lower part of the more

21) complex structure were loaded into the structure.

22) the people of the area speak of it);---

23) a monument of a sort

24) One of the mysteries of the more
complex structure in the way

to the infinite deepness of the river ---

at a time when the slopes were sculpted

the people of the area

speak about the river is the mystery of

(the work is hidden now),

whether the entrance doors will

they were sculpted

in the manner of the sculpting of

be used again or whether the structure

the more complex kind of structure.

is closed for all time.
That sounds sort of crazy.

"Atalanta" is about the things they bring on board with them. What's in their imagination.

Do we see those things?

"Atalanta" is for television. We see everything.

If "Atalanta" is an opera, what about the singing?

All that's in the manuscript. It's different from what we call singing, but it's singing.

Why does it sound so up to date?,

What about the 1940's?

All of that part is left open.

It will always sound up to date.

Does the flying saucer complete its mission?

All three men are put down someplace in the middle of America. Then they have to be admitted.

It's the story of immigrants.

What will we hear in "Atalanta Strategy?"

A little bit of everything.
Voice-over) ...But the Pirates didn't sign him up.

   It fell through for Willard,
   and he went into the drift.
   'As when a curveball doesn't break.
   He dreamèd. He read the
   newspaper and did other things.
   He moved to the desert.
   He lost the wife he had taken with him.
   He moved back to Headquarters.
   He saw peachpits on the windowsill
   turn into flying saucers.
   Sorry.
   He saw a flying saucer
   where others saw a peachpit.
   He pioneered TV.
   (Before I knew the meaning of it,
   when as a boy I was still
   in the confidence of women
and they would let me hear them talk to each other,
one of the "funny" stories was that Willard had fallen in love with a ballerina in a red dress that only he could see ---
the "set" didn't even have to be on --- and my mother's sister came home from the factory one afternoon and said to Willard, "Willard, if you don't turn that TV on when you watch it, I'm gonna throw it out."
Check that against your curveball.)
And he died.
So long, Willard.
JUST LIKE THAT? // A threat.

AND THEY ALL LAUGH? // And they all laugh.

Like flies at honey. // LIEUTENANT!

Sorry, Sir. // ART, THE BARTENDER

IS NEVER DRUNK. // I don't think his name is

Art, Sir. // IT IS IN MY BOOK.

They keep changing it, I guess.

SO, HOW IS IT SPELLED?

Just like it sounds.

AT LEAST WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.

One said, "It must be great to be there."

THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

Same thing. Long pause, and they all ...

STAND AROUND LIKE FLIES AT HONEY,

You got it. // THEN WHAT?

Same one said, "You wake up and

first think you think is ..."

NOT, BIG A? // You got it.
We may make it and we may not.

THAT'S WHAT ONE OF THEM SAID?

No, that's what I said.

I KNOW YOU SAID IT, BUT WHERE'D YOU GET IT?

I didn't notice that it wasn't mine.

THIS IS DEFINITELY AN EMERGENCY.

You won't regret it, Captain.

MAY I REMIND YOU AGAIN ABOUT THE ORDERS?

Has regret been reclassified?

NOT RE-CLASSIFIED, LIEUTENANT.

Do you mean it's always been reserved?

I'M SORRY TO SAY SO.

It must be the pressure on me, Sir.

CLOSE THE DOORS WHEN YOU GO OUT, LIEUTENANT.

It's just a saying, Sir. There are no doors.

I SIMPLY LIKE THE SOUND OF IT, DON'T YOU?

The cadence seems more and more important.

RIGHT, THE CADENCE. WHAT IS IT NOW?
37 We take them to the coordinates.

38 A PLACE OF EXCHANGE IN ILLINOIS.

39 And they appear as in a dream.

40 WHAT'S ILLINOIS AGAIN?

41 Some Indian place. It's not important.

42 AND THEY APPEAR AS ...

43 As in a dream, briefly.

44 AND THEN THEY'RE GONE.

45 No, that's the point. They're not gone.

46 WE TAKE THEM. THAT'S THE MISSION.

47 We take them, but they're not gone.

48 WE TAKE THEM, BUT THEY'RE NOT GONE.

49 Repetition helps, sometimes.

50 THEY HAVE DIVIDED, SO TO SPEAK.

51 Only in the sense of multiplicity.

52 THERE IS NO FIRST ONE?

53 No first one as it appears.

54 WHAT'S THERE IS JUST A REPLICA.
55 Only in the sense of multiplicity.

56 THEN, WHAT HAVE WE GOT?

57 I think that's the problem, Sir.

58 I DON'T BELIEVE IT. THE MISSION SAYS: "ORIGINALES."

59 There was trouble from the start.

60 THE MISSION SAYS: "ORIGINALES."

61 They duplicate themselves, Sir.

62 "DIVIDE AND CONQUER." I SAW IT.

63 Seems to be their motto, Sir.

64 LET'S GO OVER THIS AGAIN.

65 We are to put them in another place.

66 YES. THEY ARE TO BE SEEN ...

67 But not identified.

68 WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ...

69 Remaining where they were.

70 AS THEY WERE AND UNCHANGED.

71 To all appearances, we hope.

72 AND IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, TOO.