

The Twilight Zone: The Midnight Sun

Original Script by Rod Serling

Interpolating *Last Night* by Don McKellar

Reimagined by Sherilyn Connelly

Artwork by Dorian Katz

2006

Karen: Chris Anagnostis

Sandra: Janelle Schwartz

Max: David Stein

Radio Announcer: The Golden Voice of Dr. Hal Robins

...and Rex Hamilton as Abraham Lincoln

It is very hot. Like Africa hot. Tarzan couldn't take this kind of hot. Until the big switcheroo, the cast will be conveying this through fanning themselves, wiping their foreheads, licking their lips, etc.

SOUND CUE #1: "An Emergency" by Coil

After the *Twilight Zone* theme, "An Emergency" by Coil plays (it's about a minute long). The lights come up red on the stage. KAREN is standing stage left, next to her the crateboxbed, looking at a picture on the wall, wiping her brow and fanning herself.

Karen picks up a half empty bottle of water, pours a little into the lid, drinks it. She removes the picture from the wall and tapes it to the back of the stage. The drawing is of the San Francisco skyline with a disproportionately large sun over it. A strong white spotlight begins shining on the picture. Throughout the play, Sandra and Karen try to spend as little time as possible in the light, though Max doesn't mind.

Karen returns to her crateboxbed, and sits down, back against the wall, as the song ends. This will be choreographed to the song, and actions can be extended or removed as necessary for timing.

MAX and SANDRA start their dialogue from the middle pole next to the bar, walking towards the front. Karen opens her eyes, then goes to the edge of the stage right—her doorway—to watch.

SANDRA

Were you able to fill up your tank, at least? There hasn't been any gas in the City for some time.

MAX

I got three gallons. Should get me to Marin. If I can't get more gas, I'll hitch a ride with someone who can.

KAREN

(from doorway)

You're leaving town? Where are you going?

MAX

Seattle. I have a cousin there. But for now, I just want to get out of California.

KAREN

Do you wanna take some water? I've got plenty.

MAX

Nobody's got plenty.

SANDRA

Max, I really don't think this is a good idea. I've heard the highways are bumper to bumper, and with the gas shortage...

MAX

I know that. I've gotta try anyway. It's been good knowing you.

SANDRA

Good luck. Safe trip.

Max leaves. Karen is still in the doorway.

KAREN

Was he the last?

Karen returns to stage left and puts up a fresh piece of paper. Sandra steps on stage—i.e, in to Karen's apartment.

SANDRA

Yep. Nobody in the building 'cept for you and me. Aren't *you* going to leave?

KAREN

No, I'm not going to leave. I don't know where I would go, and I'm out of sunscreen. I used the last of it yesterday, for all the good it does. Besides, whatever else is happening, this place is still rent-controlled.

SANDRA

(chuckles a little, then gets grim) The radio worked for a few minutes this morning. They said scientists all over the world have confirmed the sun *is* getting bigger. It's going to get even hotter, more every day, and that's why we're...that's why...

Sandra puts her hand to her mouth, the lights on stage go dark, spotlight on Rod. As Rod speaks and the stage is dark Sandra exits to backstage, and hides behind the curtain on the other side of the doorway. Karen replaces the blank sheet with one that's half-done, then lies down on the crateboxbed.

ROD

The word that Sandra is unable to put into the hot, still, sodden air is "doomed." Because the people you've just seen have been handed a death sentence. One month ago, the sun began to expand into a Red Giant. Gradually, moment by moment, day by day, the Earth is getting closer. All of man's little devices to stir up the air are now no longer luxuries. They happen to be pitiful and panicky keys to survival. The time is five minutes to twelve, midnight. There is no more darkness. The place is San Francisco and this is the eve of the end. Because even at midnight it's high noon, the hottest day in history...and you're about to spend it in The Twilight Zone.

Lights back up. Karen lying down. Sandra steps onstage tentatively.

SANDRA

Karen? Are you awake?

Karen sits up.

KAREN

Yeah. Come on in. You couldn't sleep either, I take it?

Karen starts working on the picture.

SANDRA

Not even close. So, the latest from the White House is that it's all a hoax. The sun isn't growing larger and redder at all. It's just the media blowing a "slight unseasonal warmness" out of proportion.

KAREN

"Slight unseasonal warmness?" I'm a little out of it, but isn't this January?

SANDRA

(shrugs)

Yeah, but it's *late* January.

They look at each other for a moment, then start giggling darkly.

KAREN

Right, right! It's the Democrats, isn't it?

SANDRA

Partisan politics!

KAREN

They should really stop playing the blame game.

SANDRA

Hell, this is what we get for living on a planet so close to the sun. We should have known better.

KAREN

It's our own fault for not leaving as soon as we heard.

The laughter starts to die off.

KAREN

(still chuckling, but sad)

We're really fucked, aren't we?

SANDRA

Yeah. Yeah, that's a better word for it.

KAREN

Better than what?

SANDRA

(a beat, shakes her head)

Never mind.

Sandra goes to the completed picture on the wall. She puts her hand into the light, tentatively at first—it burns! It burns!—then traces the picture with her hand. Then:

SANDRA
(*matter-of-factly*)

Krypton orbited a Red Giant. Superman got his powers from the Earth's yellow sun.

Karen turns and looks at Sandra as though she's speaking in tongues. Then:

KAREN
How do you even *know* that?

Sandra walks over to Karen's phone.

SANDRA
I don't know why I'm bothering to ask, but does your cell phone work?

KAREN
Hasn't for weeks.

Sandra picks up the receiver of Karen's phone and puts it to her ear.

SANDRA
Landlines are still dead, too. I miss that the most, more than the internet or teevee or anything else. There's just no good way to communicate anymore. I'd try smoke signals if I could stand the heat. (*beat, hangs up phone*) The thing is, my girlfriend Ilissa was supposed to be here by now, and...I'm sorry, I probably shouldn't be talking about this sort of thing.

KAREN

No, it's all right. It's been six weeks, and we have bigger fish to fry.
(Wipes sweat from forehead.) If you'll pardon the expression. *(up slightly)*
I hope you hear from Ilissa.

SANDRA

It's just that...*(spits it out, urgently)* she should have been here by now.
And there can't be much time left.

KAREN

(trying to sound cheerful) At least we won't starve, anyway. The store was open yesterday, if by "open" you mean no employees and a bunch of people taking whatever they could grab. There was no more sunscreen—some people were in sweaters and long pants. But I did get some tuna, peanut butter, and pineapple juice. There was Spam, but the world hasn't ended just yet.

SANDRA

Ooh, pineapple juice? Could we open a can now?

KAREN

Knock yourself out.

Sandra looks the pile o' stuff on the table.

SANDRA

Where's the...*where's the fucking can opener?*

Karen walks over and shows Sandra where it is, right in front of her.

SANDRA

Sorry. I'm acting just like an animal, aren't I?

Sandra opens the can and drinks while Karen speaks, still next to each other.

KAREN

It's okay. You're just frightened, that's all. Boy, you should have seen *me* in the store, running up and down the aisles. And I mean running, knocking things over, grabbing things and throwing them away and grabbing them again, like on that old game show. But I was still the calmest person in the store. One woman just stood in the middle of the room and cried. Cried like a baby, pleading for someone to help her.

Radio skronks, comes to life. Karen returns to her picture, but doesn't sit down.

SOUND CUE #2: First Radio Announcement

RADIO

This is station K-R-O-B, coming on the air to bring you essential news. First, a bulletin from the police department: keep your doors locked, and prepare to protect yourself if necessary with any weapons you may have. The majority of the police force has been assigned to the crowded highways outside this deserted city. Citizens remaining in San Francisco may have to protect themselves from the cranks and looters roaming the streets. From the weather bureau: the temperature stood a 110 degrees at eleven o'clock this morning. Humidity 91%. Forecast for

tomorrow...forecast for tomorrow...hot. More of the same, only hotter. Stop it. I don't care. Who are we kidding with this weather forecast stuff? Folks, tomorrow you can fry eggs on sidewalks, heat up Ramen in the Bay, and get help from wandering maniacs if you choose. What do you mean, panic? Who's left to panic? Folks, I'm being told that my departing from the script may panic you. Leave me alone! Do you hear me? Leave me alone! Let go!

SOUND CUE #3: Radio Buzzhumstatic

Listening to the radio, Karen realizes she's clutching herself tightly. She slowly lowers her arms.

KAREN

See? You're not the only one who's frightened.

Karen sits down. The radio stops buzzing.

SANDRA

Power's off again. Stays on a shorter time each day. Can you imagine what it'd be like if the power shuts off and doesn't come back on again? This place would be a friggin' oven. As hot as it is, it could be so much worse.

As Karen speaks, Sandra crosses the stage to her.

KAREN

The power won't be back at all. Nothing ever comes back. *(laughs dryly)*
It still...my Jenny, the love of my life, the girl I would have married if I

could have...she died, and then they said the world would end. She got sick. Remember that, when people got sick and died from things other than the heat?

SANDRA

It's not your fault.

KAREN

That she got sick? I know.

SANDRA

That the world is ending.

Sandra is standing behind Karen, her hand on Karen's shoulder. She starts to take an interest in the picture. Her eyes never leave it. Karen doesn't really notice this.

KAREN

Yeah, that too. I know. I'm not *that* arrogant. But...it hurt so bad, and everyone kept telling me, it's not the end of the world. It's not the end of the world. Turns out they were wrong. We were already flying into the sun. Jenny got there first, that's all. *(beat)* I just had a horrible thought.

SANDRA

(only half-listening)

Is there any other kind these days?

KAREN

When you said there can't be much time left, it got me to wondering--if we're getting closer to the sun, doesn't that mean the sun's gravity is getting stronger, and we're speeding up? What if we have even less time than they thought?

Sandra points at the picture on the wall, maybe touching it.

SANDRA

What is this?

KAREN

I call it "Big Huge Burning Sun Over San Francisco." Number...42.

(beat) In a series.

Sandra is agitated. She keeps talking and pacing, ignoring Karen repeating her name.

SANDRA

(growing agitated)

You're always drawing the sun lately. Karen, please draw something cool today. Draw something pastoral--

KAREN

(over her)

Sandra.

SANDRA

(not missing a beat)

--with a waterfall and trees bending in the wind. Please draw something cool.

KAREN

(over her)

SANDRA!

SANDRA

(continuing)

Don't draw the sun anymore!

Sandra is now stage right, while Karen remains stage left.

KAREN

Stop it! Stop telling me what to draw! This is all I have left, don't you *get* that? At least you have the thought of Ilissa to hang onto. She may still be alive. I don't even have that much to keep me going. So if you don't like what I'm drawing, I don't fucking care. Go burn up by yourself.

Karen focuses on her drawing, fuming. Quieted, Sandra shuffles uncomfortable, maybe examining her fingernails a bit too closely, before:

SANDRA

(tentative)

Can you maybe draw a tidal wave next time?

Karen gives her a look. Sandra puts up her hands.

SANDRA

Okay, okay.

Loud sound from backstage.

KAREN

What was that?

SANDRA

Sounds like something fell.

KAREN

No. It was *someone*. Oh, shit, the door's unlocked--

As Karen is announcing the obvious, Max comes crashing in, a wild look in his eyes, holding a gun.

MAX

What's wrong with you? It's too hot to play games! Much too hot.

SANDRA

Jesus, Max! You scared us half to death.

As Karen and Sandra are speaking, Max picks up Karen's water bottle, drinks from it, pours the rest on his head, then throws the bottle.

KAREN

That's not Max.

SANDRA

What are you talking about? Of course it is!

KAREN

Look at him. It's the heat. I think he's gone crazy from the heat. He's not our Max anymore.

Max goes to Karen's drawing on the back wall.

MAX

Did you draw this? You're good.

He turns back towards them, past them really, and swinging the outstretched gun directly at them.

SANDRA

Max, please! Be careful with that!

Max looks at the gun in his hand in an almost surprised manner, and throws it on the ground. Sandra and Karen jump a little, startled, half-expecting the gun to go off.

MAX

My wife used to draw. She was a painter, in fact. She was...so fragile. Just a little thing. She couldn't take this heat. I tried to keep her cool, but she couldn't take the HEAT!

SANDRA

Wife? Max would no sooner touch a woman than...

KAREN

He's lost it. He's unhinged. His hinges have melted right off his gate.

MAX

Our baby didn't live more than hour, and then she followed it. *(cries)* I'm not a housebreaker. I'm a decent man.

SANDRA

A housebreaker? Max, you live down the hall--

MAX

(shouting her down)

I swear to you, I'm a decent man! I've been walking around all day trying to find some water. I wouldn't hurt you. I wouldn't do you any harm. Honest. Please believe me. *(goes to Sandra)* Please forgive me, would you? I'm just off my rocker. Please forgive me.

Max runs offstage. Karen turns and leans against the stage left wall, next to her picture, looking out over (but not at) the audience. As Karen speaks, Sandra walks to the gun and picks it up.

KAREN

My god. We're going to end up like him, aren't we? Before we die from the heat, before we die of thirst or stroke or just burn to a cinder, we're going to go absolutely batshit.

Sandra is stage right, holding the gun, looking away from Karen.

SANDRA

Karen, do you think everything happens for a reason?

KAREN

(bitter and nihilistic)

No, I don't.

SANDRA

I think so, too.

Karen turns around to correct her, sees the look on Sandra's face, and decides not to. Sandra turns to look at her.

SANDRA

See, Ilissa and I had this promise. We weren't going to let the sun take our lives. We weren't going to burn up. When the time came...see, I think you're right, what you said before. I think the end is going to happen a lot sooner than we were told. The end is *now*.

KAREN

Party over, oops, out of time.

SANDRA

Hold on—I have to get something from my place.

Karen walks to the edge of the stage and watches as Sandra exits the stage and goes to the bar, reaches behind it, and pulls out another gun. She's facing the audience, not Karen.

SANDRA

Ilissa was going to bring her own, but I don't think she'll ever get here, and now we have two of them and--

Sandra walks back to the stage and offers her one of the guns.

SANDRA

Will you help me?

KAREN

I will. *(takes gun)* Can I call you Jenny?

Sandra hands her the gun.

SANDRA

Of course, Ilissa.

SOUND CUE #4: “Beige” by Coil

They step into the light and put the guns to each others’ heads. The light gets brighter and brighter; sound builds. They hold the guns to each other’s heads for about five seconds, then start to lean in for a kiss, slowly lowering the guns. The stage goes dark and silent before their lips meet. During the radio announcer (and however much longer is necessary), the stage is rearranged; the crateboxbed is not in the middle, Karen is on it under a blanket, her pictures have been removed from the walls. Sandra and Max, now The Doctor, are crouched down next to her.

SOUND CUE #5: Second Radio Announcement

RADIO

...keep your doors locked, and prepare to protect yourself if necessary with any weapons you may have. The majority of the police force has been assigned to the crowded highways outside this deserted city. Citizens remaining in San Francisco may have to protect themselves from the cranks and looters roaming the streets. From the weather bureau...

SOUND CUE #6: Wind

DOCTOR

(voice only)

She's coming out of it now. Karen?

The lights come back on, a very cold blue. All parties involved are clearly freezing, as obviously as they were burning up before.

DOCTOR

Karen?

KAREN

...yes?

DOCTOR

You have pneumonia, Karen. There's a lot of it going around. You've been running a very high temperature, and seem to be experiencing delirium at times, but I think the fever is breaking.

KAREN

Fever?

SANDRA

Oh, that was so scary. You were so sick, but you're going to be all right, now. Isn't she, doctor? Isn't she going to be all right?

DOCTOR

(nods) Of course. *(they walk away)* I wish I had something left to give her, but the antibiotics all gone now. *(puts on jacket)* I'm afraid I won't be able to come back. I'm heading south tomorrow. Friend of mine has a private plane.

SANDRA

I've heard it's still warm near the equator.

DOCTOR

Maybe. But we're only prolonging it.

The Doctor leaves. Sandra returns to the bed.

KAREN

Oh, Sandra. I *must* have been delirious. It was so...hot. It was daylight all the time. There was...midnight sun. There wasn't any night at all. No night at all. Isn't it wonderful to have darkness and coolness?

SANDRA

Of course it is.

As the radio begins, Sandra gets out a blanket and wraps it around herself. She sits either on the edge of the stage or the crateboxbed and looks up as the lights dim.

SOUND CUE #7: Third Radio Announcement

RADIO

Independent astronomers and physicists around the world have confirmed that the sun is growing dim. Best estimates give us two, maybe three days at the most, before....before...*(noise)*...2X2L calling CQ...2X2L calling CQ...isn't there anyone on the air...?

Spotlight on Rod.

ROD

The poles of fear. The extremes of how Earth might conceivably be doomed. Minor exercise in the care and feeding of a nightmare. Respectfully submitted by all the thermometer-watchers...in The Twilight Zone.



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