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ADVERTISER SUSTAINING

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WRITER ARCH OBOLER

PROGRAM TITLE LIGHTS OUT (CHICKEN HEART)

OK

CHICAGO OUTLET
11:30-12:00 PM

WHAQ

(FEBRUARY 23, 1938)

(WEDNESDAY)
DAY

PRODUCTION

ANNOUNCER

ENGINEER

REMARKS

CAST:

DR. ALBERTS....Head of the Research Institute; definite German accent; play him in the "Jean Hersholt" manner.

LEWIS.....A reporter for a news-service; late twenties; the "George Brent" or "Ameche" type.

AN INTERNE

MRS. HALOP.....The chairwoman type of female; big, better club-woman.

BITS:.....A Japanese research assistant; A Hebrew tailor; a colored man; a busybody; woman; policeman; mayor; soldier; fireman. (ALL BITS CAN BE HANDLED BY PRINCIPALS PLUS TWO MORE ACTORS)

VOICE: Lights out, everybody.

TWELVE CHIMES - WIND UP ON ELEVENTH. - OUT WITH

GONG:

DR. ALBERTS: (DEFINITE GERMAN ACCENT - PLAY HIM IN THE "JEAN HERSHOLT" MANNER - CONTROL ROOM FADE IN) Woman, women, women, women, women! I tell you, they make me sick like I have never been sick before!

DR. LEWIS: (YOUNG MAN IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES - AMUSEDLY) I take it, then, Doctor Alberts, that you aren't looking forward with a great deal of pleasure to the annual visit of the wives of our dear trustees.

ALBERTS: Every year I get a headache, every year it is the same time!...Those women - why must they come here? Disrupting our work!

SOUND: OF TELEPHONE RINGING

ALBERTS: Excuse me, please.

LEWIS: Of course.

SOUND: OF RECEIVER OFF

ALBERTS: Hello, hello? Yes, yes this is Doctor Alberts!
(EXPLOSIVELY) What? Sandwiches? Sandwiches for what?
Is this a research laboratory or a restaurant?...All right, all right, order the sandwiches! Maybe if they eat they go away faster!...Ya, ya, I leave everything to you! Goodbye!

SOUND OF RECEIVER UP

ALBERTS: (DISGUSTEDLY) Sandwiches!

LEWIS: (AMUSEDLY) For some reason your annual tour of inspection always give the ladies an appetite, isn't that true?

ALBERTS: Ach, I tell you, it makes me sick! They look in the test-tubes - do they understand what is in them? No! But every year they come- every year the same foolish questions - every year the same waste of time! (IN DEEP DISGUST) The wives of the trustees! Home they should stay! Now, then, what were we discussing?

LEWIS: (AMUSEDLY) The end of the world.

ALBERTS: Ach, yes, yes, that article on the end of the world!

LEWIS: You were saying that it is your belief that the rotation of the earth would gradually slow down until some day the earth would stop entirely.

ALBERTS: Yah. Yah, and when that day comes it will mean the end of all human life - inevitably! Six months of unbelievable cold and then six months of unendurable heat! Finished - everything!

LEWIS: But why, doctor - I mean why should the earth stop rotating? It whirls in a frictionless vacuum, doesn't it?

ALBERTS: Yah, but there are influences which drag it back, particularly the tides of the oceans! Eventually, just as the moon's revolutions have stopped, so will stop the earth, and then, for man, calamity! Of course that will all happen oh, maybe 2 thousand million years from now.

LEWIS: (IN LAUGHING MOCK RELIEF) Well, that's a relief! Two thousand million years gives me time, yet, to clean up a few loose ends!

ALBERTS: Ach, I don't know why I waste time with you! You are like the other reports - nothing but wise-cracks and foolishness!

LEWIS: (CONTRITELY) Oh, no, Dr. Alberts, I didn't mean to -

ALBERTS: (INTERRUPTS CHUCKLING) Ach, it is all right! I need more wisecracks in my life! (SERIOUSLY) You are a fine young man, Lewis - never have you distorted what I have told you to make sensationalism for the headlines like most of the other newspapermen have. You have always been honest with me, and I like you.

LEWIS: (SIMPLY) Thank you, Doctor.

ALBERTS: Now then for this symposium of what scientists predict for the end of mankind; you might also say that I predict that the end for mankind will come with this cessation of the earth's rotation because at that time one side of the earth will always be hidden from the sun, and consequently will be covered with an ice-cap hundreds of miles thick! On the other hand, the side that always faces the sun will be heated to a point where everything will be burned down to a great desert of red-hot sand and rocks!

LEWIS: Well!

ALBERTS: Ach, but that is not all! Between the hot and cold sides of the earth there will be a sort of twilight zone, not affected by the direct blasting heat of the sun. But if you think future man could live in this section, think again! Life would be impossible! Great tearing hurricanes moving hundreds of miles an hour, will roar never stopping from the sunny side of the world to the cold side until finally, after hundreds of years, the air itself is frozen up and there can be no more winds!

LEWIS: Say! That's quite a picture!

ALBERTS: You can quote me as saying further that of only one thing in the future Leon Alberts is absolutely positive of, and that is that the end of the world from mankind's stand-point will not occur until at least two thousand millions of years have passed, and that when the catastrophe does occur -

SOUND OF KNOCKING, BACK

ALBERTS: Excuse me, please. (UP) Come in.

DOOR OPENING, BACK

INTERNE: (BACK) Beg your pardon, Dr. Alberts --

ALBERTS: Yah, yah, what is it?

INTERNE: (FADE IN) The ladies, sir - the trustee's wives, sir -

ALBERTS: Well? Well?

INTERME: They want you to show them the mechanical heart, sir.

ALBERTS: Mechanical heart? I knew it! I knew it! Mr. Lewis, why is it, the minute a visitor comes into the institute, right away the first thing they must see is the mechanical heart!

LEWIS: Well, after all, the idea of a heart beating away and having life outside of a body is rather intriguing!

ALBERTS: Yah, yah, but this is a institute of research, not a sideshow!

LEWIS: Shall I tell the ladies that you won't --

ALBERTS: Who says that I won't? Come along, Mr. Lewis - you will see me in my annual role as - how you say it - sideshow barker! Come along!

LEWIS: (AMUSEDLY) All right, if you'll give me the rest of my article on the end of the world as soon as you're thru!

ALBERTS: The end of the world! What does that matter when the wives of the trustees want to be entertained! Women, women, women! Ach, they make me sick! (FADE) They make me sick like I've never been sick before!...

TRANSITIONAL PAUSE (SHORT)- (CONTROL ROOM FADE IN ON AD LIB OF LADIES)-
"OH, I DO THINK IT'S THE MOST EXCITING THING!" - "I JUST LOVE THE WAY DR. ALBERT WEARS HIS HAIR - I SIMPLY LOVE IT!" - "A MECHANICAL HEART!" "I

THINK IT'S SIMPLY MARVELOUS WHAT MODERN SCIENCE IS DOING EVEN IF I DON'T UNDERSTAND A THING ABOUT IT - NOT A SINGLE THING!" THESE PRECEDING BITS ARE HEARD DISTINCTLY THRU THE GENERAL AD LIB OF THE VISITING LADIES - AFTER THE LAST ONE, THE GENERAL AD LIB CACKLE COMES UP FOR A SECOND, THEN FADES FAR BACK BEHIND THE FOLLOWING:

ALBERTS: (SOTTO-IN WEARY DISGUST) You hear them, Lewis? Was it for this that the first organism that was eventually to become man - struggled its way out of the Proterozoic slime eight hundred million years ago!

LEWIS: (AMUSED) I wish I could help you out, doctor.

MRS. HALOP: (THE CHAIRLADY TYPE) - (IN FAST) Here we are, Dr. Alberts! All ready! The ladies are simply dying to hear your masterly exposition of the artificial heart or whatever you call it! (AS SHE SEES LEWIS) Oh, this gentleman - I don't believe I've had the pleasure --

ALBERTS: This is Mr. Lewis - with one of the newspapers --

MRS. HALOP: (VERY CORDIALLY) A reporter! How interesting! I'm Mrs. John C. Halop - (SPELLS CAREFULLY) H-a-l-o-p.

ALBERTS: (WEARILY) If you please - in here -

MRS. HALOP: Oh, of course! (UP) This way, ladies! The dear doctor is ready for us!

AD LIB CACKLE OF WOMEN UP...CONTINUING

FLASHES: Oh, my, isn't everything neat and clean!
Look at all the bottles! Just like my own pantry!
Where's the heart! I don't see any heart!

MRS. HALOP: (ABOVE AD LIB) Quiet, ladies! Quiet, please! If you please!

ALBERTS: This table here - if you will step this way...

WOMEN MURMUR

FLASHES: I don't see any heart!
Nothing but tubes and glassware!
Where's the heart?

MRS. HALOP: Yes, Dr. Alberts! Where is the heart - you're not going to disappoint us, are you, dear doctor?

WOMEN MURMUR

ALBERTS: If you please, ladies!

WOMEN MURMUR DIES OUT

ALBERTS: So! Now I can explain! If you will step closer and look where I point you will see - inside of this quartz container is the isolated, extirpated chicken-heart!

FLASHES: ...OH, I see it!...

...Where?...

...Right in there! Isn't it fascinating!..

MRS. HALOP: My goodness! It really looks like a chicken heart!

ALBERTS: And that is what it is! The chicken to whom this heart was a vital organ is dead already for seventeen months, but here in this apparatus, a modification of the robot heart developed by Lindbergh and Carrel, this heart has gone on in an independent existence, beating away as if it were still a part of a living fowl!

FLASHES: Can you imagine that!

Of all things!

Unbelievable!

ALBERTS: Thru these tubes, as you can see, a constant stream of liquid is flowing to and from the heart - this liquid is called Hartman's solution and stimulates tissue fluid.

LEWIS: You mean it artificially replaces the blood stream?

ALBERT: Yah, the blood! The solution replaces the blood!

MRS. HALOP: But, Doctor, what keeps that - that artificial blood circulating?

ALBERT: I will show you - here - in this case - I open it - you see?

BRING IN PUMPING SOUND AS OF A VERY SMALL SYNCHRONIZED PUMP. CONTINUING

BEHIND:

LEWIS: Why, it's a tiny electrically-driven pump!

ALBERT: Yah, what we call a synchronized alternating pump. It drives the life-fluid thru the heart sixty times per minute, and so the heart lives on and on, though the body it came from is long dead!

A WOMAN: But, doctor, you don't mean that this chicken heart can go on living forever!

ALBERT: As long as we keep the serum that is circulating thru it fresh and at the proper temperatures, there is no reason why this heart cannot outlive a thousand generations of all of us!

WOMEN MURMUR IN SURPRISE

ALBERT: In fact, if an apparatus such as this had existed in the days of, say Napoleon, we might today stand and watch the heart of the Frenchman beating away as it did a hundred and sixty eight years ago!

WOMEN COMMENT AD LIB - "Napoleon's Heart!" - "Imagine that!" - ETC.

MRS. HALOP: But dear doctor Alberts, that chicken heart, isn't really living and beating in there, is it?

ALBERTS: Most definitely! I will put the stethoscope against the chamber - you will hear. So! Now listen!

LUB-DUB, LUB-DUB SOUND OF BEATING HEART. CONTINUING FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN CUT CLEAN WITH:

ALBERTS: So! Now you have heard it!

MRS. HALOP: Oh, I did indeed! Absolutely breathtaking!

ANOTHER WOMAN: Let me listen, Dr. Alberts! I want to hear it, too!

ANOTHER WOMAN: (LAUGHINGLY) No, me first! Let me hear it beat, first!

MRS. HALOP: (LAUGHINGLY) Oh, no! I want to hear it again!

WOMEN GOOD NATUREDLY BEING TO DEMAND CHANCE AT STETHESCOPE - "Me, Doctor Alberts! - "No, I asked first!" - ETC AD LIB CONTINUING BEHIND:

ALBERTS: (ABOVE GOOD NATURED HUBBUB - RATHER DAZED AT SILLINESS OF MATURE WOMEN) No, no, ladies, please! One at a time!... No, no, do not push!...The apparatus - you will please be careful! ...Ladies, please! The instruments - they are delicate - you will break - (UP) Look out!

SHRIEKS OF WOMEN AS APPARATUS FALLS
SOUND OF TABLE CRASHING OVER CARRYING WITH IT APPARATUS. GREAT CRASHING
OF GLASS AND CROCKERY

THERE IS A MOMENT OF TENSE SILENCE AFTER THE LAST TINKLE OF BREAKING

GLASS: THEN:

ALBERTS: (TAKES GREAT SHUDDERING BREATH)

LEWIS: Good grief!

ALBERTS: (HOARSELY) Broken! The experiment ruined!

MRS. HALOP: (NERVOUSLY) W-well, Dr. Alberts, we didn't mean - that is, speaking for the ladies - we didn't mean to harm anything - we --

ALBERTS: (INTERRUPTING INTENSELY) Get out of here!

MRS. HALOP: But, doctor --

ALBERTS: (MADLY) Get out of here! All of you! Get out! You have ruined months of work, you silly women, you! Months of work! See - the apparatus broken - the heart stopped - everything ruined! I don't care if you are trustees' wives! Get out! You women! (FADE OUT) Get out! Get out!

GONG:

BUZZER OF INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION DICTAGRAPH -- CLICK OF SWITCH

ALBERTS: (GRUFFLY) Well?

SECRETARY: (FILTER AS IF OVER INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM)
Mr. Lewis to see you, Doctor.

ALBERTS: Lewis? All right, send him in, send him in!

SECRETARY: Yes, doctor.

CLICK OF SWITCH - DOOR, BACK SLIGHTLY

LEWIS: (FADE IN FAST) Good morning, Dr. Alberts.

ALBERTS: (GRUNTS) WELL? What is it?

LEWIS: It's about that symposium, doctor - I've got to get the rest of the material.

ALBERTS: Symposium?

LEWIS: Don't you remember - last Friday - your discussion on the end of the world for that Sunday feature story we're running. (POINTEDLY) You remember we were - uh - interrupted.

ALBERTS: Yah! I remember it only too well! (BITTERLY) Those women!

LEWIS: I've been thinking about it over the week-end - I mean I've been wondering whether or not you were able to salvage anything.

ALBERTS: Salvage? You think that with so delicate an experiment as with a living heart there could be salvage? No, the experiment is ruined, ruined!

LEWIS: It was most unfortunate, wasn't it?

ALBERTS: Ach, it was a lesson! Hereafter, as long as I am head of this institute there will be no more sight-see-ers to the laboratory! This is a place of scientific work - not a sideshow! This is a place of --

SOUND OF DOOR OPENING, BACK SLIGHTLY

INTERNE: (FADE IN, EXCITEDLY) Doctor Alberts! Doctor Alberts!

ALBERTS: (SHARPLY) What - what's the matter?

INTERNE: Oh, Doctor Alberts! Come quickly! Quickly!

ALBERTS: Quickly where? What's the matter with you, young man?
Is there a fire or something?

INTERNE: It's - it's --

ALBERTS: (SHARPLY) Speak up! It's what?

INTERNE: You - you remember you send me up to clean up that mess
those women left?

ALBERTS: (GRUFFLY) Well? Well?

INTERNE: I - I can't open the door! I - I just can't!

ALBERTS: If you cannot open the door, why bother me? Call the
Janitor? What's the matter with you?

INTERNE: No, no, Doctor Alberts, you've got to come with me!
It's - it's something else! Something terrible!

ALBERTS: Terrible? What are you talking about?

INTERNE: It's - I don't know what it is, sir, but - but the
corridor's full of the odor of it! And you can hear it -
you can hear it through the door! Oh, come, come, Doctor
Alberts, please! Please see for yourself!

ALBERTS: Is everyone going crazy around here? You hear what I
have to put up with Mr. Lewis? The door to the laboratory
is stuck, so this man goes crazy!

INTERNE: But, Doctor Albert's --

ALBERTS: All right, all right, I'll go with you! I'll go with you! Come along, Lewis! Maybe in between acting as a nursemaid to crazy women and crazy laboratory assistants, maybe I can give you the rest of the article on the end of the world! (FADE) Come along, come along.

TRANSITIONAL PAUSE -- SHORT

FADE IN SOUND OF MEN WALKING DOWN CORRIDOR, CONTINUING BEHIND:

INTERNE: Do you smell it, Doctor Alberts? Do you smell it?

ALBERTS: (SNIFFLING) I - I don't know. You, Mr. Lewis?

LEWIS: There is a peculiar odor in here, isn't there?

ALBERTS: (GRUNTS) Ach, there is a simple explanation for that! The women last Friday - they knocked over the table - the chemicals! I am so disgusted, like you saw, I drove them out and locked the door!..Well, here we are! So open the door, young man!

INTERNE: But - but I can't sir! There's something holding the door back! (STRAINING) See? It's - it's something soft yielding - (IN CLOSE) something living!..

ALBERTS: (EXPLOSIVELY) Wha-at?

INTERNE: I'm not crazy, sir. Listen - put your ear against the door and listen!

ALBERTS: By golly, I --

INTERNE: Please, sir! Listen!

ALBERTS: (ANGRILY) Yah! I'll listen!

LUB DUB - LUB DUB - LUB DUB - OF GREAT BEATING HEART - HAVE IT MUFFLED
AS IF HEARD THRU DOOR CONTINUING BEHIND:

ALBERTS: (EXCITEDLY) Lewis! Lewis, listen! Your ear - close to
the door!

LUB DUB LUB DUB OF HEART UP FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN DOWN AND CONTINUING
BEHIND:

LEWIS: (IN AWE) By golly!

ALBERTS: (IN TIME WITH LUB DUB OF HEART) Lub dub, lub dub, lub dub.

INTERNE: Yes, Doctor Alberts! In heaven's name what's back there.

ALBERTS: (SHARPLY) Come away from the door!

SOUND OF HEART BEATING OUT WITH ABOVE SPEECH

LEWIS: What is it, Doc?

ALBERTS: Hand me that fire-axe - off the wall!

INTERNE: (FADE) Yes, sir!

LEWIS: It - it sounded like some sort of a pump, didn't it,
sir?

ALBERTS: (INATTENTIVELY) Eh? Wha'?

LEWIS: I said it sounded like a pump of some sort, didn't it?

ALBERTS: Yah! Pump!

INTERNE: (IN FAST) The axe, sir - shall I break down the door?

ALBERTS: No, no, you fool! The hinges - knock the pin out and
the door will fall open! Here - let me!

INTERNE: Yes, sir.

SOUND OF HAMMERING PINS OUT OF DOOR HINGES, THAT IS, METAL AGAINST METAL
CLANGING SOUND AS PINS FALL OUT TO FLOOR

ALBERTS: There - now the other one!

SOUND: OF METAL AGAINST METAL AGAIN - ANOTHER HINGE PIN FALLING OUT

ALBERTS: So! Now stand to one side!

LEWIS: What are you going to do?

ALBERTS: The edge of the axe in here - without the hinges - the door will fall open! One side! (STRAINING) So!...Ah! Here it comes! One side!

SOUND: OF DOOR FALLING OUT INTO CORRIDOR - BRING IN LUB-DUB SOUND OF HEART - NOT TOO LOUDLY - HOLD BACK AND CONTINUING BEHIND THE FOLLOWING SPEECHES UP TO GONG

INTERNE: (UP - IN HORROR) Doctor Alberts!

ALBERTS: (IN AWE) Mutter in himself!

LEWIS: (UNBELIEVINGLY) Doctor! That huge piece of flesh on the floor! Where did it come from? Where?

INTERNE: Listen to it, doctor! Listen! Pulsing! Pulsing!

LEWIS: Doctor, it is flesh, isn't it? It is flesh?

ALBERTS: (THE AWE AND DAZED TONE IS STILL IN HIS VOICE) Yah, it is flesh.

LEWIS: A living mass of meat as large as a chair! What is it, Doctor - what is it?

ALBERTS. (SLOWLY) It cannot be...and yet it is...Flesh - pulsing- (IN CLOSE) It is the Chicken-Heart!

LEWIS: (GASPS)

GONG

LEWIS: (FADE IN - PLEADING) ...But, Dr. Lewis, be reasonable, sir! At least let me release the story to my own paper - I won't color the news - I'll just tell what happened!

ALBERTS: (SLOWLY) And do we know what happened?

LEWIS: Why - why, certainly! That apparatus - robot-heart or whatever you want to call it - was accidentally smashed and over the week-end, in some miraculous manner, that little chicken-heart no larger than my thumb-nail grew into a mass of pulsing flesh a thousand times it's original size!

ALBERTS: Miraculously grew, you say...But in science there are no miracles! I want to know why it grew!...Why?

LEWIS: But let me put the story on the wire, Dr. Alberts! We've been friends - I've never presumed on that friendship, but now - I tell you it's a story that'll --

ALBERTS: (INTERRUPTING) No, wait, wait! Here is a possibility!

LEWIS: Wha'?

ALBERTS: When those women knocked over the apparatus - it fell against that rack of chemicals!. Is it not possible that some unknown combination of those reagents acting upon the tissue resulted in what you choose to call a "miracle" - the super-growth of this heart, this independent existence of an organ outside of its own bodily environment?

LEWIS: Wait a minute! You mean that you think that some of those chemicals that might have fallen on the heart caused it to grow and keep on living without a bloodstream?

ALBERTS: Yah!..It is the only possibility! But there must be no newspaper publicity, my friend! I must have time, peace, quiet to analyze, investigate! If I can discover the secret of this independent existence, it may be in my power to do wonders for medical science that --

MUMBLE OF EXCITEMENT, FAR, FAR BACK - BEGINNING AT "TO DO WONDERS" IN ABOVE SPEECH, AND CONTINUING

LEWIS: (INTERRUPTING) Wait, Dr. Alberts! What's that noise?

ALBERTS: Wha'?

INTERNE (IN FAST - TERRIFICALLY EXCITED) Dr. Alberts! Come quickly! Quickly!

ALBERTS: (SHARPLY) What's wrong?

INTERNE (SPLUTTERING WITH EXCITEMENT) The - the heart! The - the heart!

ALBERTS: Yes, the heart!

INTERNE: It's feeding!

LEWIS: (UNBELIEVINGLY) Feeding?

ALBERTS: No, no, that is not possible!

INTERNE: Come on! See for yourself!

ALBERTS: It is not possible I tell you! (FADE) It is not possible!

TRANSITIONAL PAUSE (SHORT)

CONTROL ROOM FADE IN OF GROUP OF PEOPLE STANDING AROUND THE ENTRANCE TO THE ROOM EXCITEDLY COMMENTING ON THE HEART WITHIN - AT THE SAME TIME FADE IN THE BACKGROUND SOUND OF THE BEATING OF THE HUGE HEART - THIS LUB-DUB EFFECT CONTINUES, OF COURSE, BEHIND ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ACTION - DO NOT BRING IT IN TOO LOUD AS THIS WOULD REDUCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LATER SOUND EFFECTS.

ALBERTS: Quiet, everybody! Quiet now!

BACKGROUND MURMUR OUT

ALBERTS: Stand away from the door! Now then, one of you - you, Dr. Akito! What is the matter?

AKITO: (JAPANESE ACCENT TO HIS ENGLISH - CULTURED) I am not quite sure, doctor. I was standing at the doorway here discussing this with one of the other men of the staff when suddenly out of the mass of the flesh a long tenacle of protoplasm thrust itself upward.

ALBERTS: You mean out of the heart?

AKITO: With my own eyes I saw it. It moved out until it reached that case of white mice there and then it - it wrapped itself around one of the mice.

AD LIB MURMUR OF THE OTHERS

ALBERTS: Go on.

AKITO: Then - then the tenacle retracted itself and the mass of flesh engulfed the mouse?

AD LIB MURMUR OF OTHERS

AKITO: The moment the mouse disappeared into the tissue, the appearance of the entire mass changed completely. Look. Dr. Alberts - look for yourself!

ALBERTS: (IN AWE) Yah! Yah, I see! The color is changing - reddish gray --

INTERNE: Look, Dr. Alberts! The edges - the thing is crawling!

MURMUR OF OTHERS

ALBERTS: No, no, it is not crawling! See - it is growing!
Growing!

WOMAN SCREAMS, BACK

ALBERTS: Dunner wetter, what was that?

VOICE: (BACK SLIGHTLY) One of the stenographers! Fainted!

ALBERTS: Take her away! Everyone stand back!

INTERNE: (IN A PANIC) Dr. Alberts, what'll we do? It's already twice the size it was.

ALBERTS: Unbelievable. Hyperplasea of tissues at so rapid a rate - it cannot be!

LEWIS: But how can it grow like that, Dr. Alberts? Just a mass of flesh - what is it growing on - what

INTERNE: Look! Look! From the center of it!

AKITO: It is a tenacle of flesh like before!

ALBERTS: Yes, yes, I see! A pseudopod - like from a simple organism! Reaching out!

LEWIS: What - what is it reaching for?

ALBERTS: Groping - groping along the floor! Dr. Akito, stand back!
It might - (UP IN GREAT ALARM) Look out!

AKITO: (SCREAMS, BACK)

PUMPING SOUND OF HEART UP SLIGHTLY

INTERNE: Akito! It's crawling around Doctor Akito!

AKITO: (HIS CRIES, BECOMING MORE AND MORE MUFFLED, CONTINUE, FADING BACK SLOWLY BEHIND:)

ALBERTS: No, no, Lewis! Don't go near it!

LEWIS: The axe! Where's that axe?

INTERNE: Do something, somebody! It's pulling Akito back toward it!

AKITO: (CRIES OUT HOARSELY, BACK - HIS CRIES SHUT OFF SUDDENLY)

LEWIS: (HOARSELY) It - it sucked him in!

SOUND OF HEART BEATS SUDDENLY INCREASE THROBBINGLY

INTERNE: (UP IN GREAT HORROR) Look out! Another one! Another tenacle!

ALBERTS: Run! Run for your lives! Run!

GONG:

STREET CROWDS MILLING AROUND BUILDING - AD LIB SUCH AS "WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE?" - "STAND BACK, YOU PEOPLE!" "STAND BACK" - "MUST BE A FIRE!" - "MAYBE THEY'RE RAIDING THE PLACE!" ETC AD LIB CONTINUING BEHIND:)

SAM: (CONTROL ROOM FADE IN - AT THE SAME TIME FADE CROWD NOISES BACK A LITTLE) Mistuh Rosen? Mistuh Rosen? What's goin' on ovah theah?

ROSEN: (HEBREW - NOT TOO CORNY) Ask me! I should know!

SAM: Mebbe dere'es a fiah!

ROSEN: (SCORNFULLY) Fire - shmire! Ask me - I don't know! I'm information or somethin'? All I know is I look out my store window and all at once there's crowds around the place! (FADE) Fire - murder - ask me - I don't know!

BRING UP CROWD BACKGROUND NOISE WITH ABOVE FADE - HOLD A FEW SECONDS AS
TRANSITION, THEN FADE WITH:

WOMAN: (BUSYBODY TYPE) Officer! Officer! What's going on in there? What's going on in there, officer?

POLICEMAN: (DRAWLINGLY) Don't ask me, lady, don't ask me! Now, keep movin' everybody! Keep movin'!

WOMAN: But - officer, I insist! You simply must tell me what's going on in there! I insist!

POLICEMAN: OK., lady, then insist! But stay back of these lines while you're insistin'!

WOMAN: How dare you speak to me in that tone of voice! There's murder going on in that place - I know it as sure as I'm standing here! (SCORNFULLY) Research Institute It's a house of murder, that's what it is - I've always known it was! (FADE) Vivisection and torture and crimes against nature....

BRING UP STREET NOISE OF CROWDS AS TRANSITION FOR A FEW SECONDS CUT
KNIFE CLEAN - DIALING OF TELEPHONE

LEWIS:

(THERE IS A TENSE, EXCITED NOTE TO HIS VOICE) Hello, hello, give me the chief!...Hello, chief, this is Lewis! Listen, get me a rewrite man! The thing's still growing!No, chief, I tell you the truth! They got squads surrounding the building and nobody seems to know what to do! It's growing so fast that there doesn't seem to be any way to stop it! I tell you, I saw it with my own eyes - the corridors choked with living, crawling flesh! No, no, I'm not drunk! I'm telling you the truth! That little piece of flesh has grown until now it's jamming that building with flesh! All inside the space of an hour! (PLEADING) You've got to believe me, chief! It's the greatest news story of the generation and here you argue with me! (FADE) I tell you it's the truth, chief! You've got to believe me -- you've got to.

ALBERTS:

(FADE IN WITH ABOVE FADE OUT) ... (PLEASINGLY) But Captain, captain, you must believe me! I tell you the only hope is to burn the building to the ground at once!

POLICE CAPTAIN:

(DEFINITE IRISH BROGUE) -- (SOOTHINGLY) Now wait a minute, Doc, wait a minute! Take it easy!

ALBERTS:

I tell you, burn it! To the ground! It is the only hope - believe me, it is! That tissue is undergoing constant mitosis! It is proliferating so rapidly that it has choked the building with living flesh! Burn, I tell you, burn!

POLICE
CAPTAIN:

Now, take it easy, I tell you! Take it easy! I sent in a call for the chief - he'll be here any minute! All this don't make sense - I tell you, it don't.

ALBERTS:

You dumb fool, there's no time to waste!

POLICE
CAPTAIN:

(GETTING A LITTLE IRATE) Now wait a minute --

ALBERTS:

'There is no minute! There is no second! This thing must be destroyed - now - while it is confined. Oh, don't you understand? For some reason I cannot even imagine this tissue is doubling in size every hour! Do you know what that means, you dumb fool, you! In another hour it will be twice the size it is now and long before that it will break open the building with the force of its pressure!

POLICE
CAPTAIN:

Eh? What's that?

ALBERTS: Yes, yes, pressure of the growing flesh will thrust the building aside as if it were paper and then it will be free in the street - you hear me? - free in the street! And then the pseudopods - those tenacles of protoplasm stretching out! It lives on human flesh - you hear me - on flesh! That building must be burned and the crowds must be kept back! Further back, I tell you - further back or else -

CRIES OF THE CROWD ARE HEARD, BACK - GROWING RUMBLE AS THE BUILDING BEGINS TO CRACK UP

POLICE CHIEF: (SHARPLY) What's that? What --

ALBERTS: (UP) The building! See the walls - cracking! I warned you! I warned you!

SHRILL OF POLICEMAN'S WHISTLE IN CLOSE

POLICE CAPTAIN: (SHOUTING) Get back, everybody! Get back! Everybody get back!

BUILDING SLOWLY CRUMBLING .. ROAR OF FALLING BRICKS, MASONRY .. CRIES OF CROWD .. PAINT A PICTURE OF CHAOS .. SHRIEKS OF CROWD, RUMBLE OF FALLING WALLS CONTINUING BEHIND:

ALBERTS: (IN CLOSE) (SO THAT HE IS CLEARLY HEARD ABOVE THE BACKGROUND) - (ALMOST TEARFULLY) I tried to warn them...

THRU THE GENERAL CROWD NOISE PIERCING SHRIEKS ARE SUDDENLY HEARD -

LEN SHRIEK WOMEN SHRIEK

ALBERTS: But now it is too late....

BOVE ALL THE CROWD BACKGROUND NOISE THE LUB DUB LUB DUB OF THE GREAT
MASS OF MOVING FLESH IS HEARD

ALBERTS: Too late...the flesh is free!

GONG:

BOARD OF ALDERMEN OF THE CITY IN ANGRY SESSION - EXCITED TALK OF MEN
AD LIB SUCH AS "MR. MAYOR, I DEMAND TO BE HEARD!" - "LISTEN TO ME YOU
MEN!" - "WE'VE GOT TO KEEP OUR HEADS" - "MOVING MASS OF FLESH!"
"WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!"

MAYOR: (UP ABOVE AD LIB CONFUSION) GENTLEMEN! Gentlemen!
Come to order please! Gentlemen!

CONFUSION DIES DOWN

MAYOR: As mayor of this city, no one realizes more than I do
the necessity of immediate action in curbing this
unspeakable unbelievable calamity which has befallen us,
and I assure you --

VOICE: (BACK) (SLIGHTLY) Cut the speeches, Mack! That blasted
thing is spreading like a forest-fire! It's ricked in
a fifty people already! Call the governor! Get the
National Guard out!

OTHERS MURMUR AD LIB - "Yeah, that's right!" - "Call the governor!"
"No, no, let's not be hasty." - "The National Guard!"
"No, wait, the mayor's right!"

ALBERTS: (BACK SLIGHTLY) - (OVER AD LIB COMMENTS) No, no, wait.
gentlemen! If you please, gentlemen! Listen to me!
Listen to what I have to say!

VOICE 1: Who is he?

VOICE 2: What does he want?

ALBERTS: Please, gentlemen! Just a word! A word!

MAYOR: Wait, men, wait! It's Doctor Alberts of the Research Institute! Let him speak! Step up here, doctor!

MURMUR OUT

ALBERTS: (FROM HIS VOICE HE IS OBVIOUSLY VERY WEARY) Gentlemen, listen to me! It was in my Institute this horror began, and if you give me the chance, maybe I can stop it!

MAYOR: What is it, doctor! Tell us first what that monster really is!

ALBERTS Yes, I will tell you. That great ever-growing mass of flesh - it is - or it was - a chicken-heart!

MAYOR: (EXPLOSIVELY) Chicken-heart? Are you crazy, man?

THE FOLLOWING VOICES ARE AT VARYING LEVELS

VOICE 1: Chicken-heart He's nuts!

VOICE 2: Chicken-heart a block square.

VOICE 3: Crazy.

VOICE 4: Throw him out!

VARIOUS VOICES! Chicken-heart He's crazy! Throw him out! He's cracked! ETC AD LIB CONTINUING

ALBERTS: (ANGRILY ABOVE AD LIB OF MEN) Yes, yes, chicken-heart I tell you Chicken-heart! Listen to me, you fools! Listen! Listen!

BACKGROUND MURMUR OUT

ALBERTS: I tell you that mass of flesh was a chicken-heart, the tissue of which, for some reason, a mystery of science - is undergoing constant, rapid, accelerating growth! With every passing hour it's growth is doubling! Do you know what that means, you fools! If it is now one block in size, within thirty hours that cannibal flesh will have increased in size to one square block to the thirtieth power! In thirty hours every inch of this whole city will be crushed under that moving flesh! Within sixty hours it will have covered the entire State! Within two weeks the entire United States! You ask for the National Guard! I say call out the entire United States army! Blast this thing off the earth! Bombs - artillery! It is the only way, gentlemen! It is the only way to save the earth!

GONG:

SOUND OF THUMPING HEART FADE BACK AFTER FEW SECONDS AND CONTINUING

BEHIND:

FADE IN CROWD NOISES OF PANIC-STRICKEN CROWD TOGETHER WITH SHRIEKS OF FIRE-SIRENS - THESE EFFECTS FADE IN AS HEART-BEAT FADES BACK.

FIREMAN: All ready, chief! Pumpers are ready - all the hose is coupled up! We'll flood that thing with water! From all angles!

FIRE CHIEF. All right! Here's the signal!

GUN-SHOT

FIRE CHIEF: (UP) Open 'em up! Full blast!

HISS OF STREAMS OF WATER RUSHING FROM FIRE-HOSE.

FIREMAN: (UP) Chief! Look out! That flesh! It's reachin' --

CHIEF (SCREAMS)

SHOUTS OF MEN - FADING QUICKLY BACK - TOGETHER WITH OTHER BACKGROUND

EFFECTS - BRING UP HEART BEAT SO THAT IT ALONE PREDOMINATES

ALBERTS: (IN CLOSE) The fools! What good is water? I told them!

The only hope is -- bombs -- artillery!

HEART BEAT OUT CLEAN JUST BEFORE "BOMBS" -- "ARTILLERY" IN ABOVE SPEECH

FADE IN CODE SIGNALS CONTINUING BACK BEHIND:

MALE VOICE: (USE FILTER FOR RADIO EFFECT) General mobilization orders!

All National guardsmen report to your armories! (FADE WITH

CODE EFFECT) All national guardsmen report to your

armories! General mobilization orders...

FADE IN HEART-BEAT - HOLD BACK AND CONTINUE BEHIND:

SOLDIER: Battery in position, sir!

CAPTAIN: Commence firing on the hour!

SOLDIER: (FADE) Yes, sir!

CAPTAIN: (SOTTO) Twenty-fifteen - ten - five - ZERO: COMMENCE

FIRING!

VOICE: (BACK) Fire!

ROAR OF CANNON - SHOUTS OF MEN - CANNON FIRE CONTINUING INTERMITTENTLY

FADING QUICKLY BACK - BRING UP HEART BEAT SLIGHTLY

ALBERTS: (HEARTBROKENLY) Useless! Useless! It has grown too large! And it grows too quickly! The flesh is already engulfing the guns! They came too late! Too late!

GONG.

FADE IN EFFECT OF AIRPLANE FLYING EFFECT CONTINUING FAR BACK BEHIND.

LEWIS: You all right now, Doctor Alberts?

ALBERTS: Yah, yah! I am all right, Mr. Lewis? All right!

LEWIS: Well, I sure am glad I located you! I stalled as long as I could - another ten minutes and we couldn't have taken off - that blasted protoplasm or whatever it is was sucking at the wheels by the time we left the ground!

ALBERT: (A VERY WEARY OLD MAN) Yah...I saw...

LEWIS: Five thousand feet... Well, we'll cruise around up here for a few minutes and then head west.

ALBERT: It will do no good...

LEWIS: Eh?

ALBERT: I have told you - like I have told so many, many - the flesh below - it grows like a mathematical progression - faster, faster - greater, greater - there is no hope!

LEWIS: In the name of all that's rational, doctor, you don't mean it'll go on and on until --

ALBERT: Until there is no place more to go? In the Institute - when it was small - then there was hope! Fire would have killed it - but now what can man do? It is like telling the sea to go back!

LEWIS: (INTENSELY) You can't mean it! It must stop growing sometime! It must!

ALBERT: Look at it down there - a gray blanket of evil covering everything! No hope I tell you! None! See how the roads are black with men and women and their children running for their lives! See how the protoplasmic grey reaches out and engulfs them! See how --

LEWIS: (INTERRUPTING ALMOST HYSTERICALLY) Stop it! Stop talking like that! I've had all I can stand of horror! We'll get away I'll tell you! We'll get away! The government - they'll send bombing planes and blast it off the earth! Yes, that's it - bombing planes - poison gas!

ALBERT: (INEXORABLY) No hope! It will be the same as bombing the ocean! The flesh will go on and on! It is too late.

LEWIS: No, I tell you! No!

ALBERT: The little men down there did not believe their doom either until it engulfed them! Oh, listen to me, Lewis - you remember only a handful of days ago you asked me my prophecy of the end of the earth? You remember my answer - ah, such a scholarly prophecy! - cessation of earth rotation - mighty sounding astronomical theories! But now, this is reality, Lewis! The end has come for humanity - not in the glory of interstellar combustion not in the peace of white cold silence - but (IN DISGUST) with that - creeping, grasping flesh below us! It is a joke, eh, Lewis? A great joke! The joke of the Cosmos! The end of mankind - because of a chicken's heart!

LEWIS: No, no, we won't die! I can't die! I'll find a safe landing somewhere! I'll find a place where --

MOTOR BEGINS TO SPUTTER AT "I'LL FIND" - CUTS OUT COMPLETELY

LEWIS: The motor! It's cut out!

INCREASING WHINE AS PLANE BEGINS TO FALL

LEWIS: We're in a spin! I can't get out of it!

ALBERT: I told you! Doomed!

LEWIS: (UP MADLY) No! No!

ALBERT: All mankind! Doomed! Doomed! And we with them!

WHINE BUILDING UP - BEGIN TO FADE IN GREAT BEAT OF FLESH BELOW AS IF PLANE WAS FALLING RIGHT TOWARD PROTOPLASMIC MASS - CONTINUE TO BUILD UP BEAT OF HEART BEHIND:

LEWIS: (UP, MADLY) We're falling right into it! Into the flesh!
(SCREAMS MADLY WITH:

GREAT SEMI-LIQUID SOUND AS AIRPLANE PLOUGHS INTO THE JELLY LIKE PROTOPLASM - THEN BRING UP LUB DUB OF HEART FULL SO THAT THE POWERFUL BEAT POUNDS AWAY IN FULL STRENGTH FOR A FEW HORRIBLE SECONDS - CUT CLEAN WITH:

GONG:

ANNOUNCER: Lights Out, written especially for radio by Arch Oboler, comes to you each Wednesday from our Chicago studios.

mc: 2/17/38: 2:10 PM

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