"Strangeness in the Night"

Theodore R. Pratt

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MASTERS THESIS

"Strangeness in the Night"

by

Theodore R. Pratt

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA COMPUTER ANIMATION PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
September 30, 1993

Erik Timmerman
Erik Timmerman, Chairperson
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Jack Slutzky
Jack Slutzky
School of Fine and Applied Arts

Charles Gamble
Charles Gamble
PERMISSION GRANTED

“Strangeness in the Night”

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Theodore R. Pratt
Theodore R. Pratt
September 30, 1993
I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to all who have encouraged me to pursue my dream to become an animator and to those who helped me complete this project: Bill & Della Pratt, my parents; brother Bill Pratt for a "most excellent" soundtrack; brother Jim Pratt for editing assistance; the entire Pratt family for love and support; my thesis committee for superior advice: Jack Slutzky, Chuck Gamble and chairperson, Erik Timmerman (many, many thanks to Erik); Dov Jacobson, Bill Trainor, Kent Francis (for paper and sound effects), Skip Battaglia, Stephanie Maxwell, Glenn Workman(soundtrack software), Carl Miller(computer), Cid Collins Walker(titles assistance); Marc Quint(credits assistance), Mark Seeger and W*USA Channel 9, Washington, D.C.; the Rochester Institute of Technology, my friends and fellow graduate students and the Flying Evil Monkeys! It is my hope that anyone who views my cartoon has as much fun watching it as I had making it.
To Della & Bill Pratt
my parents
COMING SOON TO A THEATRE NEAR YOU!

STRAVENESS IN THE NIGHT

An Animated Adventure by Ted Pratt
"Strangeness in the Night"
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REFERENCE LIST
I.
THE BEGINNING -- MY GOALS

In deciding what to do for my thesis project, I tried to focus on three main goals. First, I wanted to explore 2-D character animation like I had never done before. I wanted to see if I could really animate. I wanted to see if I could bring characters to life. And I wanted to see if I could use the computer to make animation that looked traditionally produced. Second, I wanted to produce an entertaining piece of animation with a “light” message. A cartoon, in the tradition of the shorts from Warner Bros. and Hanna-Barbera, that was just plain fun. Finally and most importantly, I decided that whatever it was that I was going do, it had to appeal to me 100 percent. It had to be fun, it had to be challenging and it had to be something to which I would be able to devote a year or more of my life.

II.
THE IDEA -- THE PROPOSAL

The idea for “Strangeness in the Night” sprang from a comic book I had been developing since 1988 entitled “To Rule the World”. The premise of this book focused on two creatures called the Nasties (Sarge and Max), who flew around the world in an evil-looking blimp in their quest “to rule the world.” I felt comfortable using these characters since I had been drawing them for several years (although I wound up modifying them somewhat for the movie). At one point, I had considered a plot using these characters that did attempt to tackle a contemporary issue of society and convey a message. I worked on a script that dealt with the invasion of the video camera and how it is changing journalism, our legal system and how it can infringe upon one’s privacy. But, after hashing this idea out for a
while, I did not feel comfortable with it. Although I believed I should make an effort at “a message movie”, it did not appeal to me. It is not that I do not appreciate animation with a message, on the contrary, I find it enjoyable and intellectually intriguing. I have a great deal of respect for the artists who do it well. But I decided that it was not for me -- right now. I wanted to stick to my goal that the project had to be something I really wanted to do, something that I was going to enjoy.

I decided to do a “cartoon”. I was going to try to be funny, which I later realized is just about as hard as trying to convey a message. But, I felt more comfortable with this approach. At this point in my life, I feel like cartoons are in my blood. I have been watching cartoons all my life -- and I mean really watching cartoons. Cartoons were the main reason I decided to pursue a career as an animator and doing cartoon animation is my ultimate career goal.

Using my two characters, Sarge and Max and a dog character from another comic book I had been working on, I proceeded to write my proposal basing the whole thing on an age old mystery of life -- missing socks.

Briefly, the proposal was as follows: A sinister-looking blimp hovers in the night sky over a laundromat. The tyrannical captain of pirate airship, Sarge, lowers his reluctant first mate down to the laundromat to carry out an evil plan.

The cautious first mate, Max, enters the laundromat and discovers the sole customer is fast asleep. He heads for a dryer full of clothes to carry out his dirty deed. He searches through the clothes in the dryer and collects the booty that will please the Sarge.

Max runs into trouble when he is confronted by the laundromat’s guard dog and is frantically chased around the laundromat before making a narrow escape back into the night sky.

Max presents the precious loot to the Sarge who races off to covet his newly-
acquired treasure... a sack full of socks. Sarge amuses himself with the socks by making sock puppets out of them and performing a play. (See appendix a for the original proposal in its entirety.)

The proposal was submitted to my thesis committee and subsequently approved at the end of the Fall quarter 1992.

Something that I want to point out at this time was that in my proposal I compared my thesis to the classic Warner Bros. and "Tom & Jerry" shorts, but I realized that my script differed somewhat because it was structured more like a traditional screenplay with a beginning, middle and end. My thesis and these classic cartoons are similar in that they both contain slapstick/gag-oriented humor, but those cartoons were primarily made up of just that -- gag after gag after gag. I attempted to tell a story using the elements of slapstick comedy that is not only found in cartoons, but in any form of comedic theater or film. Similar to a Marx Brothers movie, my thesis would wind its way through its plot with the characters being put into comedic situations that are meant to make the audience laugh. Therefore, my movie has many influences from animated cartoons to comic books/strips to live action movies.

Upon returning my proposal, Jack Slutzky, a member of my thesis committee wrote, "You have set a mighty task for yourself. Go for it now!"

And with those words, off I went.

III.

PENCIL TESTS and MODEL SHEETS

During the Fall quarter of 1992, while I was developing my proposal, I
decided to register for an independent study with Skip Battaglia that was in some way related to my thesis. The independent study had three goals: a) I would modify and explore the main characters that I would be animating in my thesis resulting in model sheets, b) I would actually be animating the characters in traditional pencil test form and getting an idea of their personalities and manners by the way I would make them move, and c) I would shoot these tests on an Oxberry stand with which I had no previous experience.

The independent study turned out to be helpful in several ways. I used this time to revise and refine my characters and to compose definitive model sheets for the three main characters Max, Sarge and the Dog. I animated each character in various run and walk cycles. A couple of these animated sequences wound up in the finished movie. Seeing my characters come to life for the first time was the first of many exciting moments for me during this production.

IV. STORYBOARDS

I was first introduced to the storyboard process several years ago during a basic media production class at a community college. Since then, I have found it to be the most important step in planning a film or video production.Personally, I prefer to do very detailed storyboards that include full color. But, since I felt like I was a little behind schedule, I did very detailed storyboards in just pencil. When I say detailed, I mean not just thumbnails, but fully rendered illustrations with detailed backgrounds. In
essence, I feel like I am doing the layout and background work at this point, so when I sit down at the computer I do not have to spend time working out those details.

After completing the storyboards in December of 1992, I met with each member of my thesis committee for their input. Both Erik Timmerman and Mr. Slutsky expressed concern about the length of the piece, feeling that it was a large undertaking that might be difficult for me to complete within a reasonable amount of time. Mr. Gamble suggested that I shorten the piece also. Not necessarily because he felt it was too long, but because he thought ending it at a certain point would have a better comedic impact. At this point in time, I had intended to try to complete the project using what I had originally storyboarded, but as time went on Mr. Gamble’s suggestion became more and more appealing for several reasons.

With my storyboard completed and approved, it was time to begin animating.

V.

ANIMATION PRODUCTION

Computer and OMDR Tests

The first step in doing the animation was to run a couple of tests to see if the process that I had chosen was actually going to work. Using the Hewlett-Packard scanner in Interlab, I scanned Max’s and the dog’s running pencil tests into the computer as PICT files. I imported these files into Macromind Director and added color to them. After accelerating the animation, these sequences looked great, but with no backgrounds. I
proceeded to illustrate a background of the interior of the laundromat in the paint program of Macromind. The pencil tests I was using were “run cycles” and the shots they were to be used in were “run pans”. A run pan is when a character is running, but remains in the center of the screen as if the camera where dollying along side. The background I created was also a cycle of a wall of dryers and a black & white checker-tile floor. After completing the backgrounds and putting together the animation sequences, I accelerated them using Macromind Accelerator using the Macintosh Quadra 950. I knew from the work I done during my first year of graduate study that when moving large chunks of background in Macromind, an effect called “tearing” is likely to occur. Tearing is when the screen cannot refresh a moving image fast enough and the screen divides into horizontal sections which move at separate rates. This creates an annoying stuttered movement. This effect is worse on slower computers, therefore by using the Quadra I was hoping not to have any tearing. However, it tore, but it was not as severe as with slower computers I had used.

While I wanted the movie to look like a traditionally animated piece; I did not want the tearing effect to show that the movie was done on the computer. My next step was to try a test to an optical memory disc recorder (OMDR). This machine would record the animation from MM Director a single frame at a time allowing me to play it back seamlessly without tearing. Fellow graduate student, Bill Trainor had written a Lingo script for Macromind that would do this procedure automatically. It would call up an individual frame in Director and trigger the OMDR to record that frame then repeat this process until a given animated sequence was complete. The test was a complete success and it was the second really exciting moment for me
during production.

Drawing -- Character Animation

It was now time for the meat and potatoes. Time to draw. Time to animate.

The animation was done in the "traditional" sense. I used over 2,000 sheets of 12 field, acme-punched animation bond paper, a light box and lots of pencils. I would begin each sequence by doing key frames or extremes, then do a breakdown and finally the inbetweens. I would do the first stage in colored pencil for clarity purposes when animating on the light box. I would then do a clean-up drawing with a 2B lead. I wound up using the 2B, because it had to be dark enough for scanning purposes yet not too permanent in case I had to erase.

Scanning

The scanning of the cleaned-up drawings was accomplished on an Apple Scanner using the companion program AppleScan. Depending on the size of the drawing the scanning process would take anywhere from 30 seconds to about a minute per drawing. Using my 2B pencil drawings, I used the following settings in AppleScan to achieve the best results:

- Resolution: 200 dots per inch
- Threshold: 3
- Art Type: Line Art
- Contrast & Brightness: Standard
- Graymap: Light
Using these settings and keeping the scanner glass clean allowed me to use the scanned images in the MM Director paint program with minimal cleanup. The images were saved as PICT files and imported as Cast Members into MM Director. The black and white images were then electronically "painted" in the paint program in MM Director.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds were created entirely in the Macromind Director paint program. I used the gradation function quite extensively to achieve depth and perspective. Initially, I had intended to be very loose with my backgrounds, similar to the backgrounds I had done in an earlier project, "The Case of the Black Cat." But, I found that using the geometric drawing tools in Director was the easiest and most time efficient method for rendering the backgrounds.

Other Animation

Animation, other than the character animation, was done mostly in Director. For example, the blimp was illustrated and animated entirely within the program. After creating the blimp in the Paint program, I simply animated it by using Director's In-betweening function. This procedure involves placing the blimp on the stage in the first key frame position, deciding how many in-betweens were needed to move the blimp across the screen and then placing the blimp in its final key frame position. These two frames are selected in the script window and the in-between function is selected. The computer fills in the in-betweens. This function is quite useful, because it allows for ease-ins and ease-outs.
Shots/Files

Each shot was created as a separate Director file. The final cartoon is made up of 104 separate Director files that I stored on four 44 megabyte removable cartridges. The raw files varied in size from .2 megabytes to 3.5 megabytes. After the first few computer/OMDR tests, I started with shot one and proceeded from there completing each shot in sequence.

Changes

As the animation production was proceeding, I was constantly making changes from the original storyboard. I deleted shots that were unnecessary and added shots for clarity. The most significant change I made was in the ending. Taking Mr. Gamble’s advice, I decided to end the piece with Sarge dancing with the sock puppets. My original ending had a twist in which Max brings the dog back to the blimp by seat of his pants. When Max realizes this, he befriends the dog and gets his revenge on Sarge by sicking the dog on him.

Mr. Gamble convinced me that the ending with Sarge dancing was the best joke in the story and would have the greatest impact if it were the ending. This change not only allowed me to make the overall piece shorter, it did prove to be an effective punchline.

Special Effects

There are a couple of effects in the movie that people have asked me how I achieved. The first is a shot in which the character, Max, is peering into a spinning dryer. The camera in this case is inside the dryer looking out. The effect of the clothes spinning in the dryer was simply achieved by using the smear and smudge options that can be applied to any of the brushes in
Director. After rendering a five drawing cycle of the spinning clothes in the paint program, I simply went back in and smeared and smudged the clothes to get a motion blur effect.

Another similar effect was that of the blurred tile floor in a shot where Max is being pulled through the laundromat by his lifeline. I achieved this effect by creating the floor cycle in Director’s paint program and then exporting each drawing out of Director and into a separate paint program called Painter(version 2.0). After opening each drawing in Painter, I just applied a "blur" filter and then imported them back into Director. This effect was very effective in creating a feeling of depth by having Max in focus in the foreground and have the floor out of focus in the background.

I used the transparency ink option as an effective way to simulate glass and light. I also added shading and cast shadows to all the characters to aid in creating dimensionality.

Macromind Director

I realized all along that my thesis project was going to be character-animation-oriented, therefore it was better suited for two-dimensional computer animation as opposed to three-dimensional computer animation. I had toyed with the idea of overlaying 2-D characters on 3-D backgrounds, but realized that the rendering time for 3-D on the Macintosh would add a considerable amount of time to the overall production schedule. The choice of Macromind Director was obvious. I had successfully used during the previous year on "The Case of the Black Cat" and felt very comfortable using it.
Specific settings I used in Macromind were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage size</td>
<td>480 x 640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Palette</td>
<td>NTSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Colors</td>
<td>256, 8-bit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall I was very satisfied using Director and I feel that the movie looks professionally produced. I was not happy with the "jaggies" or the bit-mapped edges of the artwork. Director does have an antialias function, but I did not feel that the considerable amount of extra time rendering each frame was worth it. The only other function I wish Director had that I have seen on another animation program was that of a lightbox or a tracing function. A function that would allow one drawing or more to be seen while working on another drawing.

Aside from those few things, I am pleased with Director. Every shot in the movie is close to how I had envisioned it in my head.

Accelerator

After I finished animating a sequence, I would accelerate it in Macromind Accelerator to check the animation for smoothness and accuracy. Accelerator makes a copy of each frame and stores it so the computer can play it back in real time. Since some of my Director files were fairly large, I was creating accelerated files that were huge, some as large as 20 megabytes. Of course I was fortunate that the Quadra 950 I was using had about 90 megabytes of available memory. After viewing the accelerated file I would decide if the animation was o.k. or if I needed to do some modifications. At this time, I was also checking to see if the animation was going to tear during the real time playback. If the accelerated animation tore, I
would then record the animation frame-by-frame to the optical memory disc recorder.

Frame-by-Frame to OMDR

As I mentioned earlier, the procedure to record to OMDR was relatively easy. Using Lingo, Director's built-in programming language, Bill Trainor wrote a per frame hook script. This two part script would step through the animation a frame at a time while triggering the OMDR to record each frame. This process was accomplished by connecting the Video Out of the NuVista Video card in the Quadra to the Video In of the OMDR. The Lingo scripts were placed into the Movie-Info window and into the Cast Member window in an individual Director file. The monitor configuration was switched so the main monitor was Monitor 2, the video monitor (as opposed to Monitor 1, the RGB monitor). The OMDR is advanced to the first blank frame and put on-line. The Director file is put into the play mode and the per frame hook is carried out -- driven by the script. (See Appendix b for the per frame hook script.)

The only modification I made to the script was in the last delay command. I found that on some of my bigger files the computer needed more time to render each frame. With a shorter delay time the OMDR was skipping frames. By adding more time to the delay, this problem was easily corrected. On the average a shot or sequence would take about 1 to 5 minutes to record to OMDR.

Transfer to Video

The files that were accelerated were transferred to 3/4” videotape directly from the computer utilizing the NuVista card. As with the OMDR, the monitor configuration is set with the main monitor being Monitor 2. The accelerated file is
then simply played "real time" and recorded to videotape.

The sequences that were recorded to OMDR were played and recorded to 3/4" tape. This procedure offered some flexibility in that the sequences could be slowed down by playing the same frame multiple times during playback.

Of the 104 shots in the movie, 51 were transferred from the OMDR. All the animation was completed and transferred to videotape at the end of the Spring quarter of 1993 and ready for post production.

VI. POST-PRODUCTION

Video editing

With the animation complete and my second year of graduate study at RIT complete I headed to Washington D.C. for summer job as a video news editor at W*USA-TV, Channel 9 (CBS Affiliate). I had left an initial rough cut with Mr. Timmerman to view for feedback. His initial reaction was that the piece could be a lot shorter. The initial cut was almost ten minutes in length, he wanted me to cut it down to around six or seven minutes.

I had planned to do the editing at the TV station using Sony Betacam SP editing equipment. I used an A-B roll editing system with a Grass Valley Switcher. The movie is mostly straight cuts, but I used a few fades, dissolves and wipes for aesthetic reasons.

By the middle of June 1993, I had edited a second rough copy of the movie without sound. It was a little under nine minutes in length. I sent this version to Mr. Timmerman for feedback. He still maintained that the movie would be better shorter. He suggested that after establishing the man in the laundromat, he was no longer necessary until the end when he discovers his missing socks. He also felt
that other shots could be cut and that the movie could be tightened in general.

I proceeded to recut the movie with this advice and wound up with the third version which I did not like at all. I spoke with Mr. Timmerman about this and asserted that with sound the movie will have a whole different feel and that the scenes he wanted me to cut would have more significance and enhance the movie as I had originally intended.

I believe that animation is usually edited during the animation production. Shots are usually animated to their approximate length, so time is not wasted on work that will not make the final cut. So the physical videotape editing of the piece goes like clockwork. The shots typically fit into place and the original vision finally comes alive. The only tough aesthetic decisions I had to make were the ones involving the length of a shot, particularly the ones involving a repeated comic gag. This was a judgment call and I did what felt right to me. Looking back I feel good about the decisions I made.

I had a "working" final cut at the beginning of July 1993 after about 40 hours of editing time. This cut, minus titles and credits, was about eight and a half minutes in length. I was comfortable with this cut and was ready to begin work on the soundtrack.

Titles and credits

The "Prattoons" logo and the "Strangeness in the Night" title were originally drawn with black marker on white paper. I then gave this artwork to Cid Collins Walker, a graphic designer at W*USA, who digitized the artwork and added color to them using a Quantel Paintbox. The art was then dubbed to Betacam SP and subsequently edited onto the master videotape.

The credits were done by Marc Quint at W*USA using a Super Scribe chyron
Soundtrack

The method in which I produced the soundtrack was not the best method I could have used, but it was what I had available to me at the TV station. It would allow me to do it by myself without any outside professional help that would cost me. I started by doing a breakdown of all the sound effects and dialogue in the movie. I wound up needing at least five tracks of audio: two for sound effects, two for dialogue and one for the musical score.

I collected all the sound effects from various sources. My brother, Bill Pratt whose owns and operates a 24-track recording studio in Baltimore, Md., has a ten compact disc library from which I obtained several sounds. I enlisted the help of Kent Francis, a fellow graduate student, who taped and sent to me several sound effects from the 40 disc sound effects library that RIT owns. Dov Jacobson, a friend and fellow animator, loaned me an excellent set of five "cartoon" sound effects discs. And if I could not find what I needed from any of these sources I recorded the effect I needed directly to videotape via a microphone.

The voices were recorded at my brother’s recording studio. My brother Bill and myself did the voices by watching the videotape and speaking the voices into a mike trying to match the animation the best we could. I voiced Sarge and some of the sock puppets at the end. My voice was altered with the aid of a sound processor called a harmonizer. My brother, Bill, voiced the dog, some of the sock puppets and Max. Max’s “chipmunk-like” voice was achieved by slowing the playback of the videotape down 80 percent and recording his normal voice to tape. When I edited his voice to videotape I speed the dialogue source tape up to 120 percent making his voice higher pitched. The effect worked perfectly.
The musical score proved to be an interesting challenge. My brother had suggested that I try using a sequencer program that was driven by the SMPTE code on the videotape. I wound up using a program called One-Step(version 1.1) by Freq Sound. The set-up I used was a Macintosh SE (with One-Step), an electronic router (made by One-Step) called a Jam Box, a sampler with a musical keyboard (Roland W-30), a drum module (Alexis D-4), two other synthesizer sound modules (the Proteus and the Kawai K-1) and a VHS videotape deck. Longitudinal time code was recorded onto one of the audio channels of a VHS window dub of the edited version of my movie. This audio signal was routed into the Jam Box from a VCR, as well as Midi inputs from the keyboards I was going to be composing on. A modem cable was then run from the computer to the Jam Box. To record music into the sequencer program, the videotape was played and the sequencer would start. As I watched the video, I would play what I felt was appropriate music for that section of video.

I had separate tracks for percussion, acoustic bass, vibes, hi-strings, lo-strings, trombone, clarinet, oboe, bassoon and flute. All these sounds were generated from the synthesizers or samplers I listed above. The only live instrument in the score was an acoustic guitar that my brother played for the dance sequence at the end.

This program allowed for a great deal of flexibility. I had sixteen separate tracks to record on. I could lay down a basic rhythm on one track then add more tracks until the sound was full. As the music was recorded it was displayed graphically on the screen, so I could edit the score by cutting and pasting the notes on the screen. The musical score took about 50 hours of composing time to complete. I wound up composing 80 percent of the score myself. My brother played the rest. I found that in composing the score myself I did not have to translate to another person what I wanted to hear. This gave me even more creative control in
the overall process.

I decided to use the A-B editing suite to do the sound. This suite had two Betacam SP decks and a 3/4” deck that I could simultaneously sync roll at one time, therefore giving me 6 separate tracks of audio to mix down from. So I created what I called my sound sub-master tapes. These sub-master tapes were exact dubs of the final edited version of the movie. I recorded the sound effects on the four separate tracks on two beta tapes. This was done by simply synching a given sound effect to the action on the tape. This involved shortening and lengthening some effects by slowing the tape down, cutting it or looping it. The dialogue was edited the same way by simply matching the dialogue with the animation. There are over 200 sound effects and dialogue edits in the movie.

After the score was completed, it was recorded onto 3/4” videotape in sync with the video. I then sync-rolled my three audio sub-master tapes and mixed the final soundtrack to the master copy of the video. One of my earlier mixes treated the score as just background sound with the sound effects being more prominent. After viewing this version, I realized the score was very strong and could be a vital part of the overall feel of the movie. I remixed it over ten times before being truly satisfied with the soundtrack.

VII.

THE FINISHED “CARTOON” -- CONCLUSIONS

"The cartoon was in the can." Looking back, I felt I accomplished my goals and then some. I was very pleased with the character animation. I definitely
pushed myself further than I had previously. Aside from the "jaggies", I am very happy with the overall look and feel of the movie. Producing the soundtrack turned out to be a challenging, but extremely gratifying experience. In composing the score myself, I rediscovered my love of writing music and I was pleasantly surprised with the results. I enjoyed making this cartoon every step of the way. I cannot remember a point during the production where I was not having a blast.

This cartoon represents a culmination for me. It represents my two years of graduate studies at RIT, my lifelong passion for cartoon animation, my skills as an artist, a filmmaker and a musician and my outlook at life. Life can be all too serious sometimes, that's why we turn to comedy for relief. With this movie I am hoping to bring a little of that comic relief to our sometimes serious world.

Remember the next time you find yourself missing a couple of socks after a round of laundry, you might want to gaze skyward to see if there is a blimp hovering over your neighborhood.

Ole'!
INT. BUMP (24)
A CLAMP MOVES ACROSS THE CEILING ON A TRACK AND SUDDENLY DROPS TO THE FLOOR.

INT. BUMP (25)
L's OF THE CLAMP THROWING MAX TO THE FLOOR AND CLOSING AROUND HIS WAIST.

INT. BUMP (26)
A LARGE FISHING-POLE ARRIVES SLIDING IN PLACE IN FRONT OF THE SHARK. HE TUGS THE ROD A LITTLE AND CRAKES THE REEL A LITTLE.

INT. BUMP (27)
MAX MOVES THROUGH FRAME DANGLEING FROM THE CEILING.

INT. BUMP (28)
2 SHOT OF GARREY + MAX
AUDIO -
GARREY: IT'S TIME TO DO YOUR STUFF AND YOU BETTER NOT DISSAPPOINT ME.
MAX AN Y-YES SIR, SIR.

INT. BUMP (29)
GARREY TREADING ANOTHER BUTTON ON THE CONTROL PANEL.

INT. BUMP (30)
A METAL TRAP DOOR ON THE FLOOR OPENS.

INT. BUMP (31)
MAX FALLS THROUGH THE FRAME.
EXT LAUNDROMAT
MAX'S POV OF THE
LAUNDROMAT GETTING
CLOSER.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT
MAX PICKS HIMSELF UP
AND SITS. VENTILATOR
SHOART.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT
MAX PEEKS UP AS
HE HEARS NOISE ON
THE ROOF. HE RUNS OUT
TO INVESTIGATE.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT
KIDS OF LAUNDROMAT
AUDO. OF KIDS SCREAMING
OUT OF ROOF.

INT. LAUNDROMAT
CT. OR MAX FALLING INTO
THE MACHINES THAT ARE ON
THE LAUNDROMAT ROOF.
INT LAUNDROMAT
LS OF MAX EMERGING FROM VAPE/SMOKING MACHINE

INT LAUNDROMAT
CO OF MAX'S HEAD REELING.

INT LAUNDROMAT
LS MAX CONSIDERS  HIMSELF REACHES INTO MACHINE AND TAKES OUT A BAG FULL OF SOMETHING - HE TURNS TO EXIT AND

INT LAUNDROMAT
CUT - MAX TURNS FACE TO FACE WITH NIPPER. MAX PARTS OFF MAX AND NICE CANE LS

INT LAUNDROMAT
LS - MAX TOSSES AWAY FROM NIPPER! DAMNABLE

INT LAUNDROMAT
NIPPER IN HOT PURSUIT

INT LAUNDROMAT
MAX RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE

INT LAUNDROMAT
SARGE SOUNDLY SLEEPING AS ROOK SLIDES CAT OF CONTROL

INT BLIMP
DISOLVE TO
INT. BLOP.
MAX HEADING THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR

INT. BLOP
SARGE FINALLY PULLS MAX INTO THE TUBE. MAX TURNS THE SEAT OF HIS PANTS AS THE TRAP DOOR CLOSES QUICKLY.

INT. BLOP
MAX USES EXHAUSTED ON THE TRAP DOOR. HE PICKS UP AS HE HEARS A SCRATCHING FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

INT. BLOP.
SARGE GRABS THE SACK - THROWS MAX TO THE GROUND AND TRAVELLES ON HIS BACK AS HE RUNS OFF.

INT. BLOP
MAX (SINGING) YES, SIR - HERE SHE -
STILL FRAMES
ILLUSTRATIONS
Somewhere in the friendly skies aboard the Bad Ship Nasty...

Helmet Cam?
Lifeline?
Have fun!

Check!
Check, sir!
But...

To Rule the World

No one said ruling the world was going to be easy!

Art and letters by Ted Pratt
APPENDIXES
Appendix a.

The Original Proposal

Description

The story opens as a sole man comes to a 24-hour laundromat in the middle of the night to catch up on some dirty laundry. The customer is greeted by the laundromat's loyal and fearless guard dog, KILLER.

Unbeknownst to the inhabitants of the laundromat, a sinister-looking blimp hovers over the clothes-cleaning establishment. The tyrannical captain of the pirate airship, THE SARGE, summons his entire crew -- a single, scrawny first mate, MAX, to carry out his evil plan. The Sarge lowers the reluctant first mate down to the laundromat via a large fishing pole-type apparatus.

As Max descends on his target, he crashes onto the roof. Killer hears the commotion and goes outside to investigate. Max eludes Killer at first and enters the laundromat through an open window. Once inside he discovers that the sole customer is fast asleep with a pair of headphones blasting music into his ears. Max spies the man’s clothes spinning around in a dryer and cautiously enters the dryer in search of the Sarge’s precious loot.

After completing his act of theft, Max dizzily emerges from the dryer only to be confronted by Killer. A rowdy chase ensues. Max frantically tugs on the fishing line, which should alert the Sarge that he’s in trouble -- but alas, the Sarge, a true fisherman, has fallen asleep. Killer continues to chase Max all over the laundromat entangling Max’s lifeline around all sorts of obstacles. The Sarge finally wakes up and realizes Max is in trouble. Just as Killer is about to pounce on his cornered intruder, the Sarge begins reeling Max in. Killer does not give up and continues in hot pursuit, but Max evidently escapes through the window and flies back up into the night sky from whence he came.

The Sarge safely reels Max back into the blimp, but not before tearing the seat of Max’s pants on the blimp’s jaw-like trap door. Max lies exhausted on the floor, but the Sarge just grabs the sack of loot and runs off, down one of the blimp’s dark corridors (tramping all over Max in the process.)

As Max continues to lie on the floor, he hears some scratching and whimpering from outside the blimp’s trap door. He peers out a window and sees Killer clinging to the scrap of his pants that got caught in the trap door during his ascent. Max smiles as he contemplates the fate of his pursuer.

Meanwhile, back on earth, the man is folding his clean clothes when he
discovers that he has a basket full of single socks. He stops and wonders aloud, “What happens to all those bloody socks I lose when I do laundry?”

The scene dissolves to two socks puppets acting out a love scene from a movie. The camera pulls out to reveal the Sarge as the puppeteer, sitting in a room filled with stolen single socks. The Sarge is wearing socks all over his body, which he models and admires in a full-length mirror. In his moment of ecstasy, he is interrupted by a whistle from off screen.

Sarge spins around to see Max standing there with Killer at his side. Max gets his revenge by sicking Killer on the Sarge. Max does his good deed for the day and releases the blimp’s cargo hatch sending all the stolen socks earthward.

I propose the short to be a humorous explanation of an age-old mystery: what happens to all those single socks that people lose while doing laundry? I am proposing that the short be funny, in the tradition of the classic Warner Bros. or “Tom & Jerry” cartoons, therefore I will be thoroughly examining and executing gag-oriented cartoon animation.
Appendix b.
Per Frame Hook Script

-- put this in the movie-info script
on startmovie
    if objectp(discrecord) then
        discrecord(mdispose)
    end if
    DiscRecord(mNew)
    DiscRecord(mReady)
    set the perframehook to DiscRecord
end startmovie

on stopmovie
    set the perframehook = false
    discrecord(cleanup)
    discrecord(mdispose)
end startmovie

-- Put this in a cast member
--
factory DiscRecord
method mNew
    global videoport, ETX, STX
    if objectp(videoport) then
        videoport(mdispose)
    end if
    put numtochar(02) into STX -- Start of command for OMDR
    put numtochar(03) into ETX -- End of command for OMDR
    set videoport=SerialPort(mNew,0)
    put 10 + 16384 + 4096 + 1024 into config
    videoport(mConfigChan,0,config)
    videoport(mConfigChan,1,config)
        -- OMDR TQ-2023F: 9600 baud, 7 data bits, 1 stop bit, odd parity
method mReady -- set up record mode
    global videoport, ETX, STX
    put STX & "R" & ETX into recSet
    videoport(mWriteString,recSet)
    put videoport(mreadstring) into input
    delay 120

method mAtFrame -- defaults to single frame record
    global videoport, ETX, STX
    put STX & "G" & ETX into recGo
    videoport(mWriteString,recGo)
    put videoport(mreadstring) into input
    delay 120 -- "delay 60" might be better here

method cleanUp
    global videoport, ETX, STX
    videoport(mdispose)
