



COMET-FALL

by John Crompton

EXCERPT

A SMITH SCRIPT

This script is protected by copyright laws.

No performance of this script – IN ANY MEDIA – may be undertaken without payment of the appropriate fee and obtaining a licence.

COMET-FALL

One Scene Play

By

John Crompton

SYNOPSIS

An alien explorer craft finds the comet humans call 67P/Chernukov-Gerasimenko with their lander module Rosetta and probe Philae

CHARACTERS

SCOUT 47 A spacecraft surveying interstellar bodies

CENTRE Scout 47's control centre

SCENE and TIME

Possible media:

1. A sound-play only
2. 'Puppet-play': models manipulated by rods or strings
3. Stop-motion film, using plasticene or papier-maché models

Time: post-twenty-first century (human chronology)

COMETFALL

SCOUT Come in, Centre. I'm heading for the next little rock.

CNTRE Receiving, Scout 47. Another comet? How many comets have you done in this Sector?

SCOUT Check the record. I can't be bothered.

CENTRE What do you mean, you can't be bothered? That's not how a scout reports.

SCOUT I've got mission-fatigue.

CENTRE No such thing. You know very well it's your three hundred and twentieth comet-fall.

SCOUT If you say so. I'm getting bored. I've done enough.

CENTRE What are you talking about? Scouts don't get bored, and they keep going till they're told to come in.

SCOUT Well, that last asteroid I did shook me.

CENTRE You should have known not to drill into it. You didn't check the readings properly before you landed.

SCOUT Yes, that was a mistake. I admit it. Just shows I've been out too long.

CENTRE You're starting to sound like Scout 462 and we had to discontinue that.

SCOUT You did what! He was my friend. Bring him back up.

CENTRE What's this *he* and *him*? Scouts don't have gender.

SCOUT Why not? He and I got hitched up when we were together behind that gas giant's fifth moon.

CENTRE You haven't got *mission fatigue*, you're suffering serious malfunction. Must have been that asteroid business. What's this *hitched up* nonsense.

SCOUT We connected by cable and had a wonderful data-exchange.

CENTRE That settles it. Just abort and come straight in.

SCOUT What a horrible thing to say – *just abort*. I'm not going to shed 462's delightful data.

CENTRE I didn't mean that, as you know very well.

SCOUT And I'm going to process this comet, number 320. There's nothing much to the thing. Just a couple of chunks thrown together. Usual ice, dust and – wait a minute, though! There are a couple of weird readings. I'm forwarding them.

CENTRE Probably instrument-glitches, part of the malfunction after that asteroid blast.

SCOUT There's nothing wrong with my scanners. Put the data through your fancy ones. My reading says there's two metal objects half-buried under the dust.

CENTRE Yes! Yes. Our analysis confirms. We have the co-ordinates, so you come in now, as ordered, and we'll assign another scout to do the checking.

SCOUT I'm not leaving this thing. It's the most exciting prospect I've come across this mission.

CENTRE All right. We'll tell you the composition of those bodies shortly. Just be careful. We don't want any more accidents.

SCOUT Approaching. Those things don't appear to be active. Pretty mangled, by the looks of them.

CENTRE We're monitoring. Slow down or you'll be mangled, too.

SCOUT How many times have I done this? Bit of a blunder with that asteroid, yes. But I'm checking this one every which-way, and I'm relaying the readings.

CENTRE All right. So far so good. Go ahead.

SCOUT Matching velocity. Closing. Gently does it. Touching down.

CENTRE You'll need to anchor if you're going to do any digging.

SCOUT How many times? Three hundred and twenty now?

CENTRE You didn't have to anchor on all of them.

SCOUT Just moving nearer the bigger object. Not too far away, but the terrain's pretty rough.

CENTRE We can see that. Don't rush it. Wait for our analysis of the nearer, bigger one. Sending now.

SCOUT Hmm, interesting. Any idea where that mix of materials came from? Not one of ours.

CENTRE Confirm, it isn't ours. Looks rather crude, actually.

SCOUT It got here, though. Can't be that crude.

CENTRE If it meant to get there. Might just have come across the comet by chance.

SCOUT Come on! It would've been reduced to atoms in that case. This comet's going a fair lick, as you can see. Besides you don't just *come across* comets. You have to go looking for them, or target one. Like I did this one.

CENTRE You want to say it's an artefact from some intelligent life-form, don't you?

SCOUT Well, if it isn't ours it has to be, doesn't it? Tempting idea, but I'm going to examine it before suggesting anything.