

Ice Station Lemur
Design Document

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[2.0] Changelog

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Initial write-up

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[3.0] Overview

Ice Station Lemur is a short, non-interactive cyberdrama set in an Antarctic research base; the research involves scanning rocks for bacteria, but this is incidental to the plot. Six people live and work in the base: a geologist, who provides samples for a biologist, who is supervising a biology PhD student, who has struck up a relationship with a visiting actor, all of whom rely on an engineer and a survival expert to keep the base safe and operational. The game depicts a short period of time in which these characters go about their business and interact with each other.

The events that take place are rigidly predetermined and players cannot affect them in any way. Players do not control a character, but simply move around the base as if a ghost, manipulating their perspective to follow the unfolding stories.

[3.1] Perspective as a Gameplay Device

The central premise of Ice Station Lemur is that players may not influence events, but must still interact with the game in order to construct a coherent story. Players cannot witness multiple concurrent events at the same time, so there is always a certain ambiguity about the causes and effects of what they have observed. Because player-controlled perspective is the foundation of the game, it is crucially important that this control never be taken away.

Players should move around the base in a natural, unbroken manner, without walking through solid walls or teleporting to a distant location. Players may not leave the base, but may see outside through the windows in the garage and store room.

[3.2] Characters

Each of the characters in Ice Station Lemur have a unique theme associated with them. The following descriptions include a general description of their background and personality, and also their signature themes. These themes should affect every scene the character is in - for example, when Robert walks through the lounge, the TV should be recounting a woeful tale - and themes should collide and merge when characters interact - so Robert meeting Cordelia could result in a slapstick scene where Robert slips on an oil slick.

[3.2.1] Robert Ford, Geologist

Robert Ford, 38, is a clumsy pessimist with a terrible run of luck. Pain and misery follows in his wake, much to the misfortune of the other residents of the base. He is responsible for locating new earth samples for Martin and Rhona to analyse. Because he must make regular trips outside to gather samples, he has a strong working relationship with Cordelia. Robert's key theme is *misfortune*.

[3.2.2] Dr. Martin Hannah, Biologist

Martin Hannah, 48, is an expert on bacterial thermodynamics and a very bitter man. He is consumed by a mixture of envy and adoration for Rhona, his hugely talented assistant. Conversely, he is intensely jealous of her relationship with Jackson, and spends a lot of time brooding in his lab so as to avoid him. Most of his hate springs from his own doubts. Martin's key theme is *insecurity*.

[3.2.3] Rhona Davies, Biology PhD Student

Rhona Davies, 25, is a PhD student studying bacterial thermodynamics under Dr. Hannah. She has a natural aptitude for her work and a very cheerful disposition that borders on the flirtatious, but she is committed to her relationship with Jackson. She mistakenly believes that Dr. Hannah's surly attitude and occasional mistakes are the result of dedicated over-work, and doesn't realise how he really feels. Rhona's key theme is *romance*.

[3.2.4] Sir Templeton Fermi-Dirac, Arctic Survival Expert

Sir Templeton Fermi-Dirac, 54 is a retired SAS officer who is responsible for keeping the residents of the base alive in an emergency. He has little in common with any of the other base personnel and spends most of his time walking around in isolation. He particularly dislikes Jackson who, in Templeton's eyes, is shirking his duties by dodging taxes and so on. Templeton's key theme is *deus ex machina*, in that he intervenes in other characters' lives without them realising.

[3.2.5] Cordelia Roy, Engineer

Cordelia Roy, 44, is an easy-going woman who likes to laugh. She tirelessly maintains the machines, equipment and vehicles around the base and takes great pleasure the absurdities of the situation. She is good friends with Robert and thinks he should have a more optimistic outlook. In the same way that Robert spreads doom and gloom wherever he goes, Cordelia heralds humour and fun. Cordelia's key theme is *humour*.

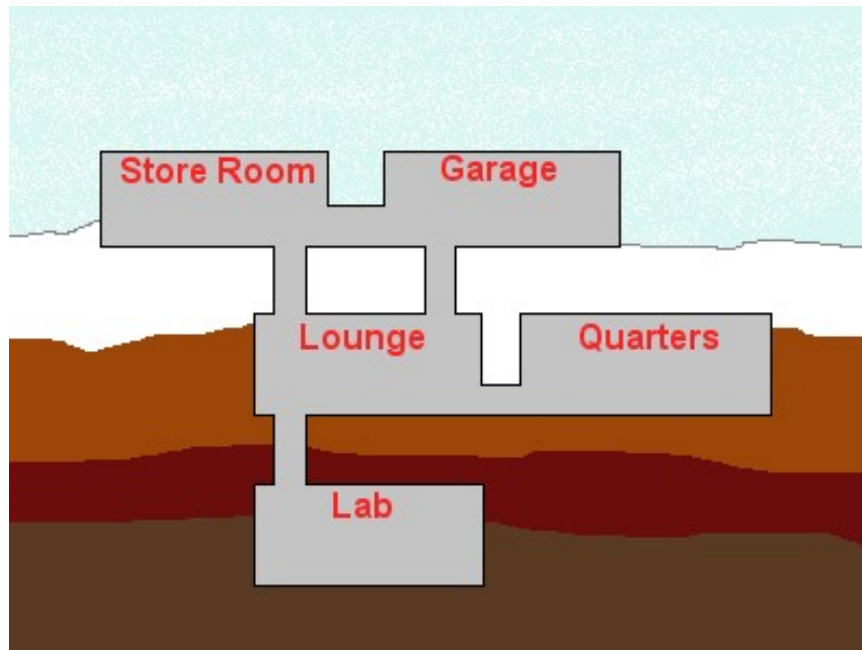
[3.2.6] Jackson Stone, Actor

Jackson Stone, 28, is a wealthy film actor who has very little to do with the operation of the base, but pays a considerable amount of money for the privilege of living there. He reluctantly spends six months of every year living in the Antarctic for tax reasons, and keeps himself entertained by watching films and working out. He is currently in a relationship with Rhona; he likes her, but he doesn't think they have a future in the long-term. He is largely oblivious to how other people on the base feel, and doesn't really care. Jackson's key theme is *drama*.

[3.2.7] Television Characters

Throughout the game, a sitcom is playing on the TV in the lounge. Two characters, referred to in the script as TV Character A and TV Character B, are in a restaurant; TV Character A is proposing to TV Character B.

[3.3] Locations



Room Layout of Ice Station Lemur

Ice Station Lemur is a research base somewhere in the Antarctic. The exact location is unimportant. The base - as is explorable by the player - consists of five rooms, three of which are subterranean. The base itself does not have a very realistic design, but the layout was intended to suit stage transitions and balance out the location of action.

[3.3.1] Garage

The garage is the main entrance to the base, located at surface level. This is where the vehicles are kept, along with some fuel pumps, parts lockers, and so on. It is quite sparsely furnished as fires are a big risk, and there are large windows to look out of. There's is one six-seater snowcat kept under canvas, and three snowmobiles, although only two are ready for use at present - at the start of Ice Station Lemur, Robert is returning on one of these. There is a window that allows players to see outside. Machinery can be heard quietly throbbing in the background. The garage is connected to the store room by a thick door, and to the lounge by an elevator.

[3.3.2] Store Room

The store room is next to the garage, also at surface level. All base supplies are neatly stored on large metal shelving units here, including food, cigarettes and spare mechanical parts. There are large windows that the player can look out of - this is very important, as Jackson's death can be seen from here. The sound of distant fans can be heard coming from the ventilation system. No sounds can be heard through the triple-reinforced window. The store room is connected to the garage by a thick door, and to the lounge and laboratory by a single elevator.

[3.3.3] Lounge

The lounge is beneath surface level, and is the social and geographical hub of the base. Decorated comfortably, the lounge has a coffee table, three sofas, and a noisy TV that is always on. The lounge is connected to the quarters by a corridor, to the garage by one elevator, and to the store room and laboratory via another.

[3.3.4] Quarters

The quarters are located next to the lounge. All base personnel have their own private rooms containing a bed, wardrobe, mirror, etc, and decorated with personal effects. The only rooms it is important to see into are Templeton and Jackson's, as these are the only rooms characters enter. This area purposefully features very little ambient noise. The quarters are connected to the lounge by a corridor.

[3.3.5] Laboratory

The laboratory is located underneath the lounge, in the deepest section of the base. It is where Martin, Rhona and Robert carry out their experiments. There is a lot of expensive equipment and when the machines are activated they create colourful light patterns in a small test chamber, and an audible spectral glide. The lab is quite a dark and sterile environment; the only indications that anything is out of place are the loose cables dangling between large machines at the back of the room. There is a constant electrical hum and a regular chatter of printers and hard drives. The laboratory is connected to the lounge and the store room, by a single elevator.

[4.0] Technical Specification

[4.1] Game Modes

Ice Station Lemur is designed to create unique, individual player experiences, but this does not mean it should be restricted to a single-player game. A single-player mode is not essential, but would obviously be a very good idea.

A multiplayer mode would also be suitable. Players should not be able to see each other, but should ideally be able to communicate with each other through text or speech. This is to encourage players to collaborate, sharing information with each other about the events they are witnessing. Because players cannot see each other, and the same events always take place at the same time, there is no need to send game information between players - this means that, besides occasionally pinging players to confirm connection, the only data that needs to be transferred is the text and speech that they use to communicate. In theory, players could even be playing different formats of the game - one playing a 3D game and another an interactive movie version.

In either mode, the game begins when all players have selected a room to start in.

[4.2] Save Games

To clarify, there is no game saving system in Ice Station Lemur and no way to record a playthrough. Players should create a unique experience with each game.

[4.3] Graphics

Because of its unique manner of gameplay, Ice Station Lemur could be constructed as a 2D or 3D game, or even as a text adventure, interactive movie or in some other format. The script presumes that players can at least observe an entire room at once, even though in some situations they may choose not to - in a 3D format, players may choose to stare at a wall, instead. It is important that players be unable to view more than one room at a time, however.

[4.4] Audio

With so much emphasis placed on perspective and presence, all in-game audio should be strictly diageitic. The most important background noise is the sound of the television in the lounge, which appears to be playing a strange comedy-romance-disaster movie, which should almost be considered a supporting character - even if the game takes place without sound, the sounds of the TV should always be presented to players viewing the lounge.

[4.5] Controls

As described in section [4.2], Ice Station Lemur could be constructed in a wide range of formats, and the control system would vary with the format and platform chosen. The only controls players should have is to change perspective (either jumping from room to room, or physically moving a camera), communicate in multiplayer, and exit the game.

[5.0] Appendices

[5.1] Game Script

0 - 20 seconds	20 - 40 seconds
<p>Garage</p> <p>The large entry door is open. Robert rides in on a snowmobile with smoke spilling from the engine. The door closes as he gets off, inspects the damage, and says “Not again!”</p>	<p>Garage</p> <p>Robert stands looking at the smoking snowmobile. He produces a radio, presses a button, and talks into it: “Cordy?” (2 second pause) “The engine’s blown again, could you take a look at it?” (4 second pause) “I’ll be waiting”. He puts the radio away.</p>
<p>Store Room</p> <p>Templeton is counting items on shelves and making notes on a clipboard, muttering to himself in the process. “We’re missing some first-aid kits,” he observes.</p>	<p>Store Room</p> <p>Templeton inspects the shelves and looks at his clipboard; something is amiss. He says “These valves shouldn’t be down here!” and relocates a large box to the top of a unit next to the garage entrance.</p>
<p>Lounge</p> <p>Cordelia is sitting on a sofa and watching TV. TV Character A says “I hate to ask this, but have you seen a ring around here?”; Character B replies “Well... I think I ate it...”. Cordelia laughs.</p>	<p>Lounge</p> <p>TV Character A says “You ATE it?!” Cordelia’s radio beeps and she answers it quickly: “Oh, hi Robert”. TV Character B says “Well why was it in my burger?!” Cordelia says “Sure thing, I’ll be right up”, puts the radio away, and exits toward the garage.</p>
<p>Quarters</p> <p>Rhona is sitting at the end of Jackson’s bed, putting her shoes on. “I should get going,” she says, “I want to see what doctor Hannah’s found in today’s test.” Jackson is lying in bed and listening to her.</p>	<p>Quarters</p> <p>Jackson tells Rhona “Don’t let that doctor put you in the background. Once that happens, it’ll be all over for you!” Rhona kisses Jackson on the forehead, says “I won’t!” and exits to the lounge.</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin is operating the scanning laser and recording audio notes. He says aloud “Scanning process at 90%... still no change from yesterday’s results.” He continues observation for 8 seconds and adds “95%”</p>	<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin concludes his test and powers down the scanning laser, announcing “100% complete. Results still inconclusive”. He pushes a button to stop the recording with an audible ‘bleep’ and sighs.</p>

40 - 60 seconds	60 - 80 seconds
<p>Garage</p> <p>Cordelia arrives from the lounge. She asks “What’s the problem?” and makes a brief inspection of the snowmobile as Robert says “Same thing that happened last month”. Cordelia exits to the store room, saying “I think it’s another cracked valve!”</p>	<p>Garage</p> <p>Robert wafts some of the smoke away and touches the engine. He immediately jumps back in pain, nursing a burned hand, and then looks for a pair of gloves.</p>
<p>Store Room</p> <p>Templeton says “I think I saw some of those missing medical supplies by the staff quarters,” and exits towards the lounge.</p>	<p>Store Room</p> <p>Cordelia arrives from the garage as Rhona arrives from the lounge. Cordelia says “Rhona! I was hoping I’d bump into you.” Rhona asks “Why?”</p>
<p>Lounge</p> <p>Rhona enters from the quarters, sweeps cheerfully through the room, and exits towards the store room. TV Character A says “I was trying to surprise you! It’s an engagement ring - we came here so I could propose!”</p>	<p>Lounge</p> <p>Templeton enters from the store room and walks straight toward the quarters. TV Character B says “Well... it’s a good job I found it and put it somewhere safe!” Templeton exits to the quarters.</p>
<p>Quarters</p> <p>Jackson gets out of bed and picks some clothes out of his wardrobe. He puts them on, singing the chorus to Phil Collins’ 1989 hit “Another Day in Paradise”</p>	<p>Quarters</p> <p>Jackson buttons his shirt and exits towards the lounge, saying to himself “Let’s see what strangeness awaits today!”</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin bangs his fist on a desk and shouts “Damn it! What am I doing wrong? Where’s Rhona when I want her?!” He regains composure and walks across the room to a bank of monitors</p>	<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin inspects a set of monitors. Squinting at the screen, he says “What’s the problem?” (pause for 4 seconds) “What are you hiding?”</p>

80 - 100 seconds	100 - 120 seconds
<p>Garage</p> <p>Robert puts some thick gloves on and struggles to open the snowmobile's engine compartment. There is a loud crack as part of the chassis breaks away and he falls to the floor. He puts the chassis to one side and exits towards the store room.</p>	<p>Garage</p> <p>Jackson enters from the lounge and approaches the smoking snowmobile, saying “Well, what have we got here?” He inspects the damage and says “Looks like a broken valve...”</p>
<p>Store Room</p> <p>Cordelia looks earnestly at Rhona and says “Well, it gets very lonely here at Lemur, and you're a beautiful woman...” A look of surprise flashes across Rhona's face. Cordelia pauses for 3 seconds and continues “...so if you don't hand that pretty boy of yours over, I'll kill you!” They both laugh, as Rhona picks up a box of biscuits and exits to the lounge.</p>	<p>Store Room</p> <p>Cordelia is rummaging in a box when Robert enters from the garage and stumbles into the shelving unit next to the door. A valve falls from the top of the unit and lands on his head. Cordelia is overjoyed, saying “Ah! Excellent work, Mr. Ford! I'll take the rest from here.” She picks up the valve and exits to the garage; Robert says “It was nothing...” and exits to the lounge.</p>
<p>Lounge</p> <p>Jackson walks across the lounge, pausing to look at the TV. Character A says “But... <i>that's not the ring I bought you!</i>” A sudden, loud crash echos down from the garage; Jackson goes to investigate. TV Character B says “What do you mean?!”</p>	<p>Lounge</p> <p>Rhona enters from the store room with a box of biscuits and puts it down on the table. TV Character B says “How many other people want to marry me?!” In the background, Martin can be seen moving between the lab and the store room. Rhona exits towards the lab.</p>
<p>Quarters</p> <p>Templeton enters from the lounge and stops to think. He says aloud “Now, where would it be?”</p>	<p>Quarters</p> <p>Templeton is standing in the hallway. He says “Ford is a walking disaster area. I'll bet he's hiding bandages in his room.” and advances towards Robert's room.</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin stands up and looks thoughtful, mumbling “Hmm... maybe we'd get a clearer signal if we passed the emitter signal through another amplifier... I'll have to get one from storage.”</p>	<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin quickly exits to go to the storage room. After a few seconds' delay, the word “HELLO?” scrolls across a screen in the background.</p>

120 - 140 seconds	140 - 160 seconds
<p>Garage</p> <p>Cordelia enters from the store room. Jackson says “I think you need a new valve”; Cordelia says “Already got one!” and holds it up. She begins to repair the snowmobile. Jackson says “I need some fresh air” and walks to the store room.</p>	<p>Garage</p> <p>Cordelia continues to repair the damaged snowmobile. She hums the tune of Tears for Fears’ underrated 1989 single “Woman in Chains” while she works.</p>
<p>Store Room</p> <p>Martin arrives from the laboratory and begins looking for a electronic device about the size of a shoe box. He mutters “Where is it?”</p>	<p>Store Room</p> <p>Jackson enters, announcing his presence by saying “Hey Doc, how’s it going?”. Martin knocks some equipment onto the floor in shock, and replies “Fine, fine... I’m going to trial a new emitter configuration.” Jackson picks up a pack of cigarettes and says “Sounds great!” and exits to the garage.</p>
<p>Lounge</p> <p>TV Character A says “But if that’s not my ring, then where did it go?” Robert can be seen in the background, moving from the store room to the laboratory. TV Character B says “I guess I must have eaten it, after all!”</p>	<p>Lounge</p> <p>The room is empty. TV Character A says “I can’t believe it. The same thing happened last time!”</p>
<p>Quarters</p> <p>Templeton enters Robert’s room. He looks under the bed and mutters “Well, that’s something I don’t need to see”, before moving towards the wardrobe and looking inside.</p>	<p>Quarters</p> <p>Templeton pulls a first-aid kit out of Robert’s wardrobe and closes the doors. He looks at the kit and says “I knew he was hiding something”</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Rhona arrives from the lounge and says “Let’s see what the old man managed to do this morning”, walking to the test control panel to see the latest results while she does.</p>	<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Rhona is studying results on the main test monitor. Robert enters from the lounge and says “Rhona! Can you tell Martin that tomorrow’s samples are going to be late?” Rhona replies “Sure thing!” and Robert exits to the lounge.</p>

160 - 180 seconds	180 - 200 seconds
<p>Garage</p> <p>Jackson arrives from the store room and walks across toward the base entrance. Cordelia looks up briefly from her repair work to say “Remember to shut the door!” Jackson exits the base and leaves the door open. He can be seen walking past outside the window, towards the store room.</p>	<p>Garage</p> <p>Cordelia finishes repairing the snowmobile and steps back to admire her work. She looks at the broken valve and says “Well, guess I’ll put you in with the broken parts” and exits to the store room. A polar bear walks past the window outside, towards the store room. A gust of snow breezes in through the open base entrance.</p>
<p>Store Room</p> <p>Martin mutters “Bloody smokers... they’re so shallow! No regard for his health or the feelings of others!” He finds the device he was looking for and takes it away back towards the lab.</p>	<p>Store Room</p> <p>Jackson appears outside the window. He lights a cigarette and begins to pace back and forth while smoking.</p>
<p>Lounge</p> <p>Robert arrives from the lab and stops to eat a biscuit from the box on the table. TV Character B says “You mean you’ve done this before?! When were you going to tell me?”</p>	<p>Lounge</p> <p>Robert splutters and says “Urgh! Coconut!” TV Character A says “You don’t have to make such a big deal out of it.” Robert recovers and exits to the quarters. TV Character B says “I guess.”</p>
<p>Quarters</p> <p>Templeton, carrying a first-aid kit, takes a quick glance around Robert’s room before returning to the hallway.</p>	<p>Quarters</p> <p>Templeton, carrying a first-aid kit, says “I’ll just take this up to the stores” and exits to the lounge.</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Rhona is checking results when she stands up and says “We’re doing this all wrong! We need to run bisecting scans!” She grabs a pen and begins to quickly write notes.</p>	<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin arrives from the store room with a scowl on his face and is surprised to find Rhona working in the lab. His foul mood lifts immediately. “Rhona!” he says, “I just bumped into that boyfriend of yours...”</p>

200 - 220 seconds	220 - 240 seconds
<p>Garage</p> <p>Immediately, a polar bear runs past outside the window, towards the store room.</p>	<p>Garage</p> <p>Templeton, carrying a first-aid kit, enters from the lounge and stops in his tracks. He says “Who in blazes left the door open?”, before putting down the first-aid kit and going outside. He leaves the door open. He can be seen outside the window, walking in the direction of the store room.</p>
<p>Store Room</p> <p>Rhona enters from the garage and puts a broken valve away in a large box of broken machine parts. She does not see Jackson standing outside, smoking a cigarette. A polar bear appears outside the window, lunging at Jackson and dragging him out of view below the window. A small amount of blood splatters against the glass as he is savagely mauled. Rhona remains oblivious to these events.</p>	<p>Store Room</p> <p>Rhona dusts herself off and exits to the lounge, humming the tune of Phil Collins' 1989 hit “Another Day in Paradise”</p>
<p>Lounge</p> <p>Templeton enters from the quarters, carrying a first-aid kit. TV Character B says “I just have trouble trusting other people.” Templeton exits towards the garage.</p>	<p>Lounge</p> <p>Rhona enters from the lab, picks up a biscuit from the box on the table, and exits towards the bedroom. TV Character A says “Is that how you feel about me?” and TV Character B replies “You know how I feel about you...”</p>
<p>Quarters</p> <p>Robert enters from lounge and goes to retrieve a first-aid kit, stashed in his wardrobe.</p>	<p>Quarters</p> <p>Robert opens his wardrobe and finds his stashed first-aid kit is missing. He says “Who took my first-aid kit?!” and starts walking back to the lounge, dejected.</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Rhona turns to Martin and says “I've worked it out! The scanners need to bisect each other! I've got the plans right here.” Martin mumbles “Bisecting scans?...” and walks over to take a look, while Rhona runs past him and says “And Robert says tomorrow's samples will be late! See you later!” while exiting to the lounge.</p>	<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin reads Rhona's notes on bisecting scans and everything begins to fall into place. He slaps his forehead and says “Of course! Why didn't I see it?! It's nothing to do with emitter amplifiers!”</p>

240 - 260 seconds	260 - 280 seconds
<p>Garage</p> <p>A polar bear with blood on its face and front paws casually walks in through the base entrance and walks across to the stores</p>	<p>Garage</p> <p>Templeton drags Jackson's corpse past the window, and enters the garage through the main door. Breathing heavily from exertion, he inspects the body and asks aloud “How am I going to break this to them?”</p>
<p>Store Room</p> <p>Outside the window, Templeton appears, looking at the horrific attack taking place underneath the window. He pulls out a revolver and scares the polar bear away, and then walks forward to drag Jackson's unseen corpse back to the garage.</p>	<p>Store Room</p> <p>A polar bear with blood on its face and front paws enters from the garage and begins eating from a box of biscuits.</p>
<p>Lounge</p> <p>Cordelia enters from the store room, helps herself to a biscuit from the box on the table, and sits down to watch TV. TV Character A says “Judging from the way you look, I'm not sure how you feel!” TV Character B begins to cough and splutter.</p>	<p>Lounge</p> <p>Cordelia is sitting down, watching TV. TV Character B hacks and coughs loudly, as if bringing up a previously-swallowed engagement ring. TV Character A says “There is it! The ring! Will you marry me?” TV Character B says “ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!”</p>
<p>Quarters</p> <p>Rhona enters from the lounge, and bumps into Robert just as he's about to leave. She gives him a hug and cheerfully cries “Robert! How are you?”</p>	<p>Quarters</p> <p>Robert and Rhona are talking in the hall. Robert says “Today's been going from bad to worse!”. Rhona replies “Cheer up, Robert! There's always a silver lining... I thought living here would be dreadful, but meeting Jackson made it all worthwhile!”</p>
<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin drops to his knees and holds his head in frustration, shouting “I'm supposed to be the expert! Why do I need her to make things happen?”</p>	<p>Laboratory</p> <p>Martin, kneeling and filled with sorrow, leans forward and supports himself on his hands, quietly muttering “She's just so... <i>perfect.</i>”</p>