

A N T Z

CHARACTERS

VOICES

"Z".....WOODY ALLEN
"WASP #1".....DAN AYKROYD
"WASP #2".....JANE CURTIN
"GEN. FORMICA".....DANNY GLOVER
"MANDIBLE".....GENE HACKMAN
"AZTECA".....JENNIFER LOPEZ
"DRUNK SCOUT".....JOHN MAHONEY
"WEAVER".....SYLVESTER STALLONE
"PRINCESS BALA".....SHARON STONE
"QUEEN".....MERYL STREEP
"CARPENTER".....CHRISTOPHER WALKEN

Z (O.S.)

(over a dark screen)

All my life, I've lived and worked in
the big city...

We see:

EXT. AN ANT MOUND - DAY

The camera swoops towards the entrance, then dives inside, past a couple of tough-looking soldier ants who stand at the gates of the ant colony like insect bouncers...into an access tunnel that snakes this way and that, past a row of ants plodding along...

...and into the MAIN CHAMBER of the colony, a huge, teeming vista that seems to stretch away forever, filled with ants rushing here and there on their business. We see -- a "traffic cop" directing foot traffic, waving his arms like crazy so both sides move at once -- a column of soldier ants marching along in formation -- a chain of ants letting down a matchbox elevator filled with workers.

Z (V.O.)

...which is kind of a problem, since I've always felt uncomfortably in crowds.

INT. MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

We join Z, a worker ant with issues. He's lying on a couch, recounting his woes.

Z

I feel...isolated. Different. I've got abandonment issues. My father flew away when I was just a larva. My mother didn't have much time for me...when you have five million siblings, it's difficult to get attention.

(pause)

I feel physically inadequate -- I've never been able to lift more than ten times my own weight. Sometimes I think I'm just not cut out to be a worker. But I don't have any other options. I was assigned to trade school when I was just a grub. The whole system just...makes me feel...insignificant.

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

(enthusiastic)

Terrific! You should feel insignificant!

For the first time, we see the ant MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR. He's a mixture of Tony Robbins and Ron Popiel (the

hyperactive late-night TV huckster, and founder of "Ronco").

Z

...I should?

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

(hopping around
enthusiastically)

YES!!! You know, people ask me,
"Doctor, why are you always happy?"
And I tell them it's mind over
matter. I don't mind that I don't
matter! Do you get it? Do you get
it?

Z gives a fake smile.

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

(incredibly "up")

Z, we're part of the fastest growing
species in the whole world!

The counsellor rolls down a chart from the wall. An arrow
shows ant population going up, up, up.

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

Ask me why we're so successful.

Z

Why are we so successful?

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

I'm glad you asked me that question!

The motivational counsellor opens some blinds...and we see a
vista of the ant-filled chamber below.

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

What do you see out there?

Z

...Ants...

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

Right! Ants! Millions of creatures,
each with his assigned task, all
pulling together!

Down below, we see a group of ants carrying a boulder up an
incline. One worker ant slips, and the boulder rolls down,
crushing his leg. The other ants rush over -- it looks like

they're going to help their fallen comrade, but instead, they climb right over him, and pick up the boulder, continuing with their task.

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

You see? Being an ant is being able to say, "Hey -- I'm meaningless, you're meaningless."

Z

But -- but I've always felt life was about finding meaning...and then sharing it with someone special, someone you love.

The motivational counsellor puts his arm on Z's shoulder...he seems to understand...

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

Z...you need help.

(looking at a clock)

Whoops! We're gonna have to stop there. Your minute is up!

The counsellor ushers Z out of his seat and towards the door.

MOTIVATIONAL COUNSELLOR

Now back to work! We've made real progress! Remember -- let's be best superorganism we can be!

INT. EARLY MEGA-TUNNEL - DAY

A gigantic tunnel, with the size and scale of the "Chunnel". A banner strung overhead reads: "The Mega-Tunnel -- Tunneling Our Way to a Bright Future!" Along the walls hang 50's work-incentive style posters with messages like, "You asked for it, you got it -- more work!" and "TWO MEALS A WEEK IS ENOUGH!!!" Line after line of ants is working on the tunnel, digging, passing clumps of dirt from ant to ant, everyone synchronized.

CLOSE on a clump of DIRT being passed from hand to hand.
PULL OUT TO REVEAL

AZTECA, a feisty, cynical, female worker ant, who stands there, waiting to pass the dirt on. Z is daydreaming behind her, with clumps of dirt starting to pile up in front of him.

AZTECA

Hello?! Earth to Z! You better snap

out of it, or there's gonna be a lot
of pissed off ants!

Z looks back, and sees the ants behind staring at him angrily.

Z

(snapping out of it)

Sorry Azteca. Here you go, fellas!

Fresh dirt! Alley oop!

(looking at the dirt)

Shouldn't we be wearing gloves? I

mean this dirt is very...dirty.

Doesn't anyone think of hygiene?

(Z's stomach growls)

Boy am I hungry. I'm so hungry I'm
seeing double. It looks like there's
two million ants in here. When's
lunch? Tomorrow, or the day after?

AZTECA

(sweetly)

Z, old pal...

(shouts)

SHUT UP!!! It's bad enough there's
a food shortage without you
complaining about it every day.

Z

The squeaky wheel gets the oil.

AZTECA

No, Z. The squeaky wheel gets thrown
away, alright? You're a good ant, Z,
even though you are a pain in my rear-
segment. I don't wanna see
anything happen to you. So quit
mouthing off, before you get in
trouble.

A WHISTLE BLOWS.

Z

Thank goodness. Breaktime.

All the ants put down their tools. A beat. Then the WHISTLE
BLOWS AGAIN. All the ants pick up their tools again.

AZTECA

(resigned)

Break's over.

Z

(getting back to work)

This colony needs another tunnel like a hole in the ground. Why are we even digging this thing?

AZTECA

Who cares, Z. All I know is, we gotta dig. We're not the ones in charge.

INT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

The huge, spacious main chamber of the colony. Looming over the scene is the royal palace, which seems to be inaccessible, perched on top of a hill-like pedestal.

Around the base of the pedestal, a crew of workers loiters, seemingly aimlessly...can these be the only unemployed ants in the place?

GENERAL FORMICA

STAIRS!

The workers look up and GROAN. Then they start forming a stairway with their own bodies, linking arms, stepping on each other's shoulders. It's extremely unpleasant work. One ant is a little tardy, and just manages to get in place before...

GENERAL FORMICA, the Pattonesque military leader of the colony, STEPS ON HIS HEAD, using it as the first step as he ascends to the palace, his aide-de-camp Carpenter in tow. As Formica mounts the "stairs" we can hear the workers going, "OUCH! OOF! YIKES!" etc.

GENERAL FORMICA

Cut the chit-chat down there!

(turning to Carpenter)

We've spoiled these workers, Carpenter. They've never had it so good, and listen to them -- always grumbling and complaining...

Formica steps on the foot of one of the "stairway" ants, who muffles a yelp.

CARPENTER

...Yes, sir.

GENERAL FORMICA

What have they got to complain about?
Three square meals a day...

CARPENTER

Actually, sir, we've cut them down to
three roughly rectangular meals a
week.

FORMICA

Don't give me statistics, Carpenter.
I know what I'm talking about. DOORS!

Formica and Carpenter have reached the top of the staircase.
There, the two guard ants on either side of the massive
throne room doors pull them open -- and one door hinge
SQUEAKS.

FORMICA

(to guard ant, while
passing)

Oil that, soldier.

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

The QUEEN is on her throne, her huge abdomen sprawled behind
her.

QUEEN

Ah! General Formica.

Formica salutes and marches to her, Carpenter behind him.

Note: Throughout this scene, the Queen is giving birth
repeatedly. Each birth is accompanied by a herald playing a
short "Happy Birthday" fanfare on his trumpet. Mid-wife ants
bring each baby to the Queen for inspection, who COOS a few
words. The midwives put the babies on a moving bassinet-
line, powered by ants on a treadmill.

QUEEN

General, the severe food shortage
that faces the colony...pains me.
The thought of any of my children
going hungry...

(she shudders; then,
to baby)

Who's the cutest widdle worker? You
are! Yes, you! Don't forget to
brush your teeth!

(to mid-wife)

Ship 'er out.

(back to Formica)
What steps are you taking to remedy
the situation?

FORMICA
We are launching a major offensive to
expand our foraging territory...

QUEEN
Yes, what else?

FORMICA
Please don't worry, your majesty.
Leave the worrying to me. As you
know, I'm not an ant of half-
measures. I don't pussyfoot around.
This crisis is my number one
priority, and I promise you it's
being dealt with swiftly, and
decisively.

The Queen's attention is interrupted by another baby being
put in her arms.

QUEEN
(to baby)
No snacking between meals! Off you
go!
(to Formica)
Now -- what were we saying?

FORMICA
(Oliver North-style)
I do not recollect, your majesty.
Will that be all?

QUEEN
Yes, General Formica. Carry on, my
good man! I don't know what we would
do without you.

Formica clicks his heels and bows his head. Carpenter bows
low. Formica smartly about faces --

BALA (O.S.)
General Formica!

PRINCESS BALA hurries through a second doorway, carrying a
swatch book. Something about her sets her apart from the
HANDMAIDEN ANTS with her. Her tiara, probably.

Formica tilts his head quizzically to Carpenter behind him.

CARPENTER

(sotto)

Princess Bala, sir. Your fiancée.

FORMICA

Princess! You look -- outstanding.
Is there anything I can do for you?

BALA

Well -- I thought -- since we're
getting married...it might be nice if
we...got to know one another.

Formica looks confused.

QUEEN

Bala has always been a hopeless
romantic, General.

BALA

It's just that -- well, I'm honored
that you selected me, and everything,
I just thought the marriage might go
a little more smoothly if -- we had
a conversation?

FORMICA

(uncomfortable)

Conversation...yes...well...

(to Carpenter)

Wasn't she briefed?

QUEEN

(holding up a baby)

Look, General! A darling baby
soldier!

(emotionally, to baby)

Don't try to be a hero! Just make
sure you come back in one piece!

(handing it off)

Next!

FORMICA

(using the
interruption)

I'll take your suggestion under
advisement, Princess. In the
meanwhile --

Formica turns to go.

BALA

General -- we have to talk sometime!

FORMICA

Very well. Carpenter, is there a convenient time to talk vis-a-vis: relationship?

CARPENTER

Actually, sir, we're ahead of schedule. We have thirty-six seconds available right now.

FORMICA

Outstanding. Princess...?

Bala's a little fazed...but grabs her chance.

BALA

So, um...how was your day? What did you do?

FORMICA

(scouring his mind)

Well...

(that's it!)

I declared war!

BALA

(sadly)

Oh...and I was afraid we had nothing in common...

CARPENTER

(under his breath)

Fourteen-fifty hours, sir.

FORMICA

Duty calls!

He strides across the floor. Bala watches him go, her antennae drooping unhappily.

FORMICA

No squeak. Outstanding!

We see through the now-open doors into the throne-room as Formica and Carpenter double-time out of the frame.

The Queen sees that Bala is unhappy.

QUEEN

(sympathetically)

I felt the same way before I got married. Confused. Scared.

BALA

(hopefully)

You did?

QUEEN

Yes -- but I did my duty and sorted out all those messy feelings. The wonderful thing about ant life is that everything is arranged. Even marriage. You're lucky -- General Formica is a paragon of anthood.

BALA

(unconvinced)

Yes...he's wonderful...

The doors swing shut on them -- revealing the two guard ants who were CRUSHED in the wake of Formica's exit.

INT. BALA'S QUARTERS - DAY

Bala enters, followed by her handmaidens, who are in a state of giggling infatuation over Formica. Bala is scowling as she leafs through a wedding catalogue.

HANDMAIDEN #1

(swooning over
General Formica)

The General's body segments are so...symmetrical.

HANDMAIDEN #2

(giggling)

I'd let him order me into battle anyday.

Bala hurls the swatch book against the wall.

HANDMAIDEN #1

Princess? What's wrong?

BALA

Wrong? How could anything be wrong?
I'm going to marry General Formica

and be a queen and have millions of babies, just like my mom.

(concerned)

Do I look fat to you?

HANDMAIDEN #2

(knowingly, to
Handmaiden #2)

Pre-wedding jitters.

HANDMAIDEN #1

You just need to blow off some steam.
Let's go to the bar at the Royal Club!

BALA

The Club's so stuffy. I want to try
someplace different.

HANDMAIDEN #2

There isn't anyplace else --
(making a joke)
Except the worker bar.

BALA

The worker bar! Yes! That's where
I want to go!

The handmaidens look shocked.

HANDMAIDEN #1

But -- we can't -- there'll be
workers there.

INT. ANT BAR - NIGHT

A long bar filled with ants. The bar itself seems to stretch for miles, and there are hundreds of ants trying to get a drink...unfortunately, there's only one bartender. Z is at the bar with WEAVER, a burly ant soldier.

Z

We declared war again?
(off Weaver's nod)
Are you scared?

WEAVER

(shrugs)
I'll be back.

The BARTENDER, a grizzled veteran, slaps down what looks like a couple of large green beer mugs. Actually, they're aphids,

little green critters he fills up from a number of kegs hanging from the ceiling. The kegs are specialized ants with hugely distended stomachs, which spray liquid into the aphids.

APHIDS

(as they're slapped
on bar)

Ouch! Ouch!

BARTENDER

Two aphid beers.

Z

(as Bartender leaves)

Did you see that? How he gave you the beers, not me? I'm telling you, he's got something against workers.

WEAVER

I don't know what you're talking about, Z.

Z

Come on -- everybody dumps on us workers. You soldiers get all the glory. Plus you get to go out into the world, meet interesting insects, and kill them.

WEAVER

Yeah, but you get to spend all day with those fabulous worker babes.

We can see that Weaver is eyeing a nearby table of "Worker Babes", including Z's friend Azteca.

Z

Weaver, they're career girls. They're obsessed with digging.

(sighs)

No, I'll probably never meet the girl for me.

WEAVER

Who said there was a girl for you?

I was talking about a girl for me.

(quaffing his aphid
beer)

Don't you want your aphid beer?

Z

I can't help it. I have a thing about drinking from the anus of another creature. Call me crazy.

WEAVER

Z, we've known each other a long time, right?

Z

Of course. You were born two seconds after me.

WEAVER

And all the time I've known you, you've been grumping and groaning. You should quit making waves. Go with the flow.

Z

Weaver, I'm an insect, not a liquid.

Down the bar, there's a commotion. A grizzled old SCOUT ant has had too much to drink.

DRUNK SCOUT

Have you been to Insectopia? Have you? No, ya goddam larvas! But I have...

(becoming emotional)

...Mosquitos n' caterpillars n' beetles -- all livin' in peace, stuffin their guts with food...No rules, no regulations...you can be your own ant there...

(howling drunkenly)

It's Insectopia! Insectopia!

Z

Hey, Weaver, listen!

DRUNK SCOUT

I was cut off from my unit -- found it by mistake --

(slurring)

It changed my life!

(spraying another soldier with saliva)

You see -- ya follow the great yellow egg, and you come to the land of red and white --

SOLDIERS

You've had enough for one night!
Come on, Gramps, before you get in
trouble.

The soldiers pull him from the bar, carrying him out.

Z

(excited)

Hey, did you hear what he said?!

WEAVER

Poor guy's had one too many scouting
missions.

MUSIC STARTS UP.

INT. ANT BAR ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Princess Bala is peering in at the entrance to the ant bar,
accompanied by her worried-looking handmaidens.

HANDMAIDEN #2

We shouldn't be doing this -- it
isn't proper!

BALA

I'm the Princess, aren't I?

HANDMAIDEN #2

Of course --

BALA

And do Princesses do improper things?

HANDMAIDEN #2

Of course not --

BALA

Then if I go to the worker bar, it
isn't improper. Anyway, don't worry.
No one will recognize us in our
disguises.

She adjusts her "disguise", a hardhat, tied down Jackie O.-
style with an ant's version of a Chanel scarf.

BALA

I'm just a common worker, cooling off
after a rough day!

Music starts. An ant BARKER takes the mic at one end of the dance floor.

BARKER
(on loudspeaker)
Okay, folks. It's six-fifteen, and that means it's time to dance.

Every ant gets up to dance. Weaver turns to Z.

WEAVER
(draining his beer)
Time to cut a rug, Z!

Z
I'm not in the mood.
(disgusted)
Even when they're off work, they follow orders.

WEAVER
Well, you just sit here and be a party-pooper.

Weaver joins the rest of the ants who are lining up for the dance. The Barker calls out the steps in a bored monotone -- all the ants already know the steps. Everyone dances in perfect synch.

BARKER
(southern twang)
And a left-right-quarterstep-back
step-halfstep -- a left-right-
quarterstep-backstep-halfstep --
a left-right-quarterstep-backstep
halfstep --

AT THE ENTRANCE, Bala smiles mischievously at her handmaidens.

BALA
I'm going to ask one of these
mindless, primitive worker-types to
dance with me!

HANDMAIDEN #1
But General Formica would be furious!

BALA
(enjoying the idea)
I know.

The handmaidens are appalled. Bala whirls away from them, sets her sights and searches the crowd -- zeroing in on --

Z, who's watching the other ants dance.

Z

What a bunch of losers. Mindless
zombies capitulating to an oppressive
system --

BALA

Wanna dance?

Bala's standing right there. Z is instantly smitten.

Z

Me?! Yes!!! I mean --
(regaining suavosity)
Just let me finish my beer.

Not breaking eye contact with Bala, Z smiles suavely. Reaches suavely for a beer. Suavely grabs the candle in a glass jar off the bar. Suavely singes his face.

He plays it off with a rakish little laugh. A bit apprehensive, Bala heads onto the floor. Z follows her.

Z

So uh -- how come I haven't seen you
around here before?

BALA

(covering up)

I work in the palace, I don't get out
much.

Z

The palace, hunh? I bet those royals
really live it up. Of course they're
all a little, you know, from
inbreeding --

BALA

(shocked)

What?

Z and Bala step onto the dance floor with the rest of the ants, but Z can't do any of the steps.

Z

Now, let's see, I -- it's been a

while since I -- I think you --

Bala watches Z, trying to follow along. It's the blind leading the blind, as Z tries in vain to follow the barker's rapid instructions.

Z

Here, I'll lead.

Z starts doing his own, individual dance. With a suave expression on his face, he leads Bala in a helter-skelter mixture-of Tango, Charleston, and hand-jive.

BALA

Are you sure this is a real dance?

Z

Well, actually, uh -- I'm sort of making it up --

BALA

(surprised)

Really?

Z

Why should everyone dance the same way? It's as exciting as watching fungus grow.

BALA

You're right!

Z

(surprised)

You -- you think I'm right?

BALA

Why can't I just do whatever I want to do? Why can't I just go wild?!
Yahoo!

Bala starts to get into it, making up her own steps in reply to Z's, loosening up, having fun. For a moment, the two of them are actually sexy together. Then they get a little too wild -- and the other ants, who are still doing their intricate dance, start to collide with Bala and Z. Z almost knocks over a big soldier ant. We can only see the ant's back at the moment.

SOLDIER

Hey! Watch your step, worker.

Z has turned around to see the soldier ant, MAJOR MANDIBLE, glaring at him. Mandible is about twice Z's size. He's got one eye missing, and half of his left antenna has been chewed off.

BALA

You watch yours, soldier, or my worker friend will beat you up!

Z

(terrified)

Oh, that's okay, I'll let him off this time.

(whispering to Bala)

Are you crazy? This guy's built like a pebble!

(ineptly trying to placate the soldier)

You know they do great prosthetic antennas nowadays --

BALA

Aren't you gonna stand up for yourself?

Z's caught between a rock and a hard place. He doesn't want to get beaten up, but on the other hand, he doesn't want to lose face in front of Bala. More soldiers have gathered around, looking hostile.

SOLDIER

How come you don't dance like the rest of us?

Z glances over at Bala. Then, shaking with nervousness, he says defiantly...

Z

Because -- because I'm an individual!

SOLDIER #2

An individual? Never heard of it.

MANDIBLE

You look like a worker to me.

WEAVER

Hey, lay off my little buddy!

Z, meanwhile, looks far away, ecstatic, as if he's just

realized something very important. Unfortunately, just at this moment, A soldier pushes Weaver...Weaver pushes him back...somebody makes a dive for Z -- and before you know it, there's a regular bar brawl going on, with Weaver in the middle of it, cracking heads together, punching ants in the face, having a great time. Just then, the Princess' handmaidens hurries over.

HANDMAIDEN #1

Princess Bala! Princess Bala!

Z, who's scabbling around on the floor, overhears.

Z

Princess? You're a Princess?

HANDMAIDEN #2

The police are coming!

BALA

Uh oh.

(to Z)

Goodbye! Gotta run!

Z

Wait! When can I see you again?

BALA

Let me think. Hmmn...

(thinks)

Never. Bye!

Bala rushes off with her handmaiden, just before a squad of whistle-blowing POLICE wade into the crowd.

Z

Wait! Princess! Wait!

But she's already gone, leaving Z holding her scarf.

CUT TO:

INT. DORMITORY - THE NEXT DAY

Z is talking to Weaver, who's getting ready to go off to war. Nearby, columns of ant soldiers march by.

WEAVER

Get real, Z! She just dropped the scarf by accident!

Z

Are you kidding? There were sparks between us! This scarf is a sign!

WEAVER

It's a sign that you're crazy! Do you know what the penalty for impersonating a soldier is?

Z

What's gonna go wrong?! I take your place for the royal inspection. Bala comes strolling down the line, she sees me -- bingo! Love is rekindled, and she takes me up to the palace for a little...

(wags his eyebrows suggestively)

tea and crumpets... and you take your place again, and go march around to your heart's content!

Weaver looks unconvinced.

Z

You have to help me. Please, Weaver. Think of all the things I've done for you!

WEAVER

(thinks)

I can't think of any.

Z

(pause)

Well I'm gonna start doing things for you...

WEAVER

Will you introduce me to some worker girls?

Z

You bet! They'll really go for a sensitive guy like you!

WEAVER

Maybe I'll get lucky.

(Weaver thinks about it)

You know, Z, I wouldn't do this

for anyone but you...

Weaver hands Z his helmet.

WEAVER

Wear this.

Z

(overjoyed)

You're a real buddy.

WEAVER

(sourly)

Yeah, I know.

Z

What do I do?

WEAVER

Don't tell anyone you're a worker.

Follow that column over there. And

come right back after the inspection!

Weaver points to a bunch of soldiers hurrying by in formation.

Z

(overjoyed)

Thanks! I owe you!

Z skips off and joins the column, marching in time with the soldiers but too excited to keep from jazzing it up a little.

INT. TOWN CENTER - NIGHT

The ant army has gathered in a huge HALL in front of a reviewing stand. We can hear the murmuring of thousands of soldiers -- but all we can see is a HUGE POSTER of an ant General pointing right at the camera. The poster reads, "GENERAL FORMICA WANTS YOU -- to obey".

Z turns to some of the soldiers near him.

Z

Any of you guys know when the

Princess will show up? She's kind of

a personal friend.

The soldiers look at Z like he's nuts.

LOUD VOICE

ATTEN-SHUN!

MARTIAL MUSIC sounds, and we hear thousands of ant feet as they snap to attention. Z imitates the soldiers awkwardly.

GENERAL FORMICA struts to the middle of the screen, slapping his thigh with a swagger stick (the antenna of some unfortunate insect)

FORMICA

First of all, let me make one thing clear. Nobody ever won a battle by thinking for himself. All this "thinking" stuff is a load of crap. If the almighty had wanted you boys to think, he wouldn't have given you huge mandibles and a brain so small you'd misplace it if it wasn't trapped inside your head.

In the audience, Z starts laughing -- he thinks Formica's just made a joke.

Z

(slapping his thigh)

"Trapped inside your head" -- that's a good one --

Z notices nobody else is laughing. He stops.

Z

Geez -- tough room.

From the stage, Formica is squinting at the audience, trying to make out who was laughing, but there are just too many ants. He continues.

FORMICA

(striding back and forth)

We ants survive as a species because we do what we're told. We survive because we work together, as one, we get the job done, we do whatever it takes to persevere!

(dramatic pause)

Hell, we're not an army of ants...we're one giant ant, with giant fists, and giant jaws!

The soldiers CHEER! Z CHEERS along with the rest of them.

Z

(to the soldier ant
next to him)

Lays it on a little thick, doesn't
he? If you ask me, he's one giant
bore.

FORMICA

Now I've heard a lot of scuttlebutt
about a food shortage. Well you boys
are gonna be taken care of. But in
the meantime we're gonna eat the
enemy for breakfast, we are gonna
eat the enemy for lunch, and we are
gonna eat the enemy for dinner!

Z

Geez, and I forgot my toothbrush.

FORMICA

(reflective moment)

Dammit, I'm proud to be an ant.

(he looks out at his
army)

And I know each and every one of you
boys will do your duty. Dismissed.

Z applauds and whistles as the other ants look at him in
confusion.

Z

(clapping)

Bravo! Bring on the Princess!

COLONEL

Stow the gab there, soldier! Let's
move 'em out!

The soldiers turn to the right and start to march out past
the reviewing stand.

A COLONEL marches at the head of Z's column as Z looks around
for the Princess.

COLONEL

Eyes...left!

Finally, as Z's part of the army marches past the end of the
reviewing stand, he sees her, looking bored, standing next
to the Queen, who is giving the royal wave.

Z

(waving)

Princess! Princess Bala! Hey! It's me! Z! I've got your scarf!

ON THE REVIEWING STAND, Bala sees Z -- that is to say, she sees one of the thousands upon thousands of ants marching by...

BALA

(peering out)

Who is that idiot?

QUEEN

Darling, you must encourage the troops -- wave!

Bala waves unenthusiastically, little more than flopping her hand back and forth on her wrist.

Down below, Z takes this as a sign that Bala has seen him.

Z

(excited)

Excuse me, guys -- That's my date. Well, it's been fun. Have a great war!

Z tries to squeeze his way back towards the royals, but he's surrounded by a solid wall of soldiers -- and they're carrying him along with them.

Z

Hey! Wait!

Z loses sight of the Princess as he's carried away. BARBATUS, a hard-as-nails "grunt" soldier ant, taps Z on the shoulder.

BARBATUS

You new, kid?

Z

I just joined up. But I'm quitting! I got a trial membership!

BARBATUS

Trial membership? Kid, when you join this ant's army, you're in for the full hitch.

At that moment, Z is swept out of the cramped corridor they've been marching along, as the army emerges into the OPEN AIR outside of the colony.

EXT. ANT MOUND - NIGHT

It's a starry, moonlit night. The shadows crowd around the panicked Z, who looks up at the sky as we see the army on the march...

Z

Wait a minute, there's been a mistake! I've got to get back to the colony!

Z starts to fall out of line, but Barbatus, looking concerned, stops him.

BARBATUS

Are you crazy, kid? They shoot deserters!

Z swallows hard.

BARBATUS

You just stick by old Barbatus. He'll watch out for you.

(off Z's look)

Whatsamatter, kid? Leave a girl behind?

Z

Yeah. Well -- no. She's kind of playing hard to get. As a matter of fact, she's playing completely unattainable.

(nervously)

So, what's on the schedule? A brisk walk? a foraging expedition?

BARBATUS

No -- we're going to attack the termites!

Z

(alarmed)

Attack? But -- I hate attacking! It's so hostile!

Around Z and Barbatus, the ants start up a marching song, which we intersperse with dialogue between Barbatus and Z to

form a montage/time-cut as the ant army marches on to the termite capital.

ANT SOLDIERS

(to the tune of "When
Johnny Comes
Marching Home")

We ants go marching one by
one, hurrah, hurrah! We slaughter
termites just for fun, Hurrah!
Hurrah!

Z

So -- these termites, they're little,
shy, retiring insects?

BARBATUS

(grim smile)

No such luck. Those dirty terms are
five times bigger than us, and they
shoot acid from their foreheads!

SOLDIER ANTS

We ants go marching two by two,
hurrah! Hurrah! We'll all be dead
before we're through, hurrah! Hurrah!

Montage shots of an ant column marching diagonally across the screen, fading into another column marching diagonally downwards across the screen...

Z

Well, what exactly does our platoon
do? Serve beverages? Process
paperwork?

BARBATUS

Our platoon has the best assignment
of all. We're the first into battle!

ANT SOLDIERS

We ants are marching three by three,
hurrah! Hurrah! Dead ants is what
we soon will be, hurrah! Hurrah!

...montage shot of Z's column crossing a bridge composed of living ants -- all of whom look extremely uncomfortable as they're getting stepped on...

Z

So we're going back for more armor,

right? I mean, these guys are from outer space, how are we supposed to beat them?!

BARBATUS
Superior numbers, kid!

EXT. TERRAIN NEAR TERMITE STUMP - NIGHT

Z looks up to see...looming high above them...the TERMITE CITY, which is built in the stump of a dead tree. From here it looks like a demonic Mount Fuji. The COLONEL ANT shouts an order.

COLONEL
ATTAAAAAAAACK!!!

The front line of ants starts rushing towards the termite colony...Z is swept along...

BARBATUS
Over the T0000000000000-OP!!!

Z is swept along and up the side of the stump as thousands of ants invade the colony through every possible entrance. Up...over the lip of the stump...and down inside, to the very middle of the termite colony...

Into a disquietingly peaceful scene. They're in the middle of the hollowed-out trunk, and ants keep pouring in -- but there's not a termite to be seen. Barbatus looks around suspiciously.

BARBATUS
It's too damn quiet.

Then we hear a strange tapping noise. Barbatus looks over, and sees that Z's teeth are chattering with fear.

BARBATUS
Don't be scared, kid. Barbatus's got yer back.

Z
(petrified)
Maybe they went out for the evening.
Let's leave them a message and head home.

COLONEL
(ignoring him)

Light it up!

A nearby soldier ant take a firefly out of his knapsack and pinches him. The firefly, yelling "Yipe! Yipe! Yipe!", shoots into the air like a flare, lighting up the interior of the stump with eery, shifting luminescence.

Then we notice, hollowed into the inside of the stump like innumerable pockmarks, termite holes staring out upon the stump...and, with an unearthly ROAR, we see the first of hundreds of termites emerging to pour into the center of the tree, right onto the ant army.

COLONEL

They're here!!!

BARBATUS

(to Z)

Keep your head down!

Within moments, Z finds himself in the middle of a BLOODBATH. The ants have broken into the colony, but are taking heavy losses from the gigantic, blind, acid-spewing termites. The battle scene is as sprawling and chaotic as something out of Braveheart. In a few QUICK SHOTS from Z's perspective, we see:

-- A squad of ants rushes towards a termite soldier, but are literally melted into smoking heaps of flesh by a jet of acid from its forehead...

-- A termite warrior is overwhelmed by a crowd of ants and is pulled to pieces with hideous ripping sounds...

-- Another termite warrior takes on an ant soldier one on one and slowly crushes his head in his huge jaws...

Z

(looking around)

Guys! Guys! It isn't too late for all of us to just talk this over!

Just then, a termite burst up from the ground and turns to face Z. Z is dwarfed by this hulking, roaring, drooling monstrosity.

Z

Wait! Please! Acid makes me come out in spots! -- Could I just say I have always had the greatest respect for your species? I mean, eating

wood -- why didn't I think of that?

I --

The termite rears, getting ready to melt Z, when OOF! he's knocked backwards by...

Z

BARBATUS! You -- you saved my life!

BARBATUS

Don't get all sappy about it!

As Barbatas and some other soldiers kill the termite, the Colonel strides up to Z, puffing on a cigar.

COLONEL

I love the smell of formic acid in the morning.

Z

Look out!

A stream of termite acid engulfs the colonel, instantly burning him to a cinder clutching a still-burning cigar; Z's paratroop buddies turn in terror to see a herd of termites rumbling towards them. Z, terrified, dives into the hole that the huge termite made...

INT. TERMITE TUNNEL - NIGHT

...and tumbles headlong into a corridor of the termite mound. The corridors here are primitive, caveman-like, pocked with jagged access holes.

No sooner has Z landed in the tunnel than a termite comes burrowing out from one of the side walls, snapping at Z's head. Z just avoids getting decapitated, and digs straight through the wall in order to escape...

INT. TERMITE QUEEN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

...straight into the hub of the entire termite complex -- the Queen's chamber. This is nothing like the civilized court of the ant colony -- it's a huge, stinking, fetid dungeon whose walls are held up by one massive (to Z) column of piled stones.

The termite queen, a repulsive, slimy, squirming, foot-long monster, is attended by a crew of diminutive, blind termite nurses. The queen turns to look Z right in the eye.

Z

Excuse me. I seem to be lost, and I
was wondering if you could give me --

Before Z can say, "directions", the queen gives out a
piercing, blood-curdling shriek. The nurses start shrieking
too.

Z

(backing away)
I'll let myself out.

But the queen's shriek has summoned a soldier termite -- the
biggest one we've seen yet -- who is charging headlong at Z,
jaws snapping open and shut like huge scissors.

Z

(backing away)
Shoo! -- Torro! Torro!

At the last moment, Z jumps out of the way -- and the termite
runs headfirst into the supporting column of the chamber. As
if on a spring release, the termite's jaws clamp shut -- and
shatter the base of the column. The walls of the room begin
to rumble...

The termite turns to eat Z...but is crushed by a stone
falling from the ceiling, which gives a final shudder and
collapses, raining earth and stones down on the queen.

As the walls of the chamber crumble, melees of ants and
termites pour into the room from the corridors around and
above...they keep struggling until...

ANT OFFICER

(points at Z)
He's killed their Queen!

Z

Hey, I'm sorry, it was a mistake --

ANT OFFICER

VICTORY!!!

We can see that the termite warriors, deprived of their
leader, are suddenly confused and directionless, easy prey
for the ants.

Z

(facetious)
This is terrific! Let's exact

crippling war reparations! Let's set
up a puppet government!

ANT OFFICER

Let's slaughter them all!

The ants set about killing the disoriented termites when...we hear another rumble coming from the outside...the ants look up confusedly...

...And a (from the ant's point of view) five-hundred foot long tongue bursts through the top of the chamber with a CRASH. The ten or so ants standing directly below are smashed by the tongue, which squirts out a spray of saliva around the crater. As quick as it appeared, the tongue retracts, with a hideous SLUUURPING sound. We can now see the end of the snout of an ant-eater poking through a hole in the ceiling high above...

ANT OFFICER

INCOMING!

The tongue comes down again, smashing some more ants, whose bodies are slurped up by the tongue...the ants scatter, but to no avail, as the tongue comes smashing down again and again...

Z heads into a side corridor as the tongue smashes down again, barely missing him!

Z retreats along the corridor as the tongue searches for him, across the tunnel from intersecting access-tunnels, getting closer and closer to Z, dragging more and more screaming ants and struggling termites...

....Then the tongue disappears. Silence. Z wipes his brow...

And we hear a thunderous SNIFFING noise as the anteater searches for more prey... and the tongue starts rumbling down the corridor right towards Z, the tip squirming as it ricochets along the walls!

Z gets up and runs, the tongue lapping towards him, reminiscent of the stone sphere that nearly crushed Indiana Jones in Raiders of the Lost Ark! The walls disintegrate under the pressure of the tongue, which gets closer to Z...closer...

...and just misses him as Z tumbles out of the stump and down to the ground...Z sits there, dazed, as we see the huge form of the anteater withdraw its tongue and, with a final

contented burp, shuffle off into the distance.

EXT. TERMITE STUMP - MORNING

Z makes his way across the corpse-strewn battlefield, an expression of horror on his face.

BARBATUS (O.S.)

Z! Over here!

Z

(hopeful)

Barbatus?

Z looks down at his feet, where Barbatus's still-living, decapitated head is looking up at him.

Z

(shocked)

Barbatus!

BARBATUS

Be honest, kid -- am I hurt bad?

Z

No, no, you're...lookin' good.

You've got good color in your cheeks.

BARBATUS

No -- I can see it in your eyes. I'm a goner. It's alright, Z. In this ant's army, a soldier's life ain't worth a sack of fungus.

(he winces)

I can't feel my legs...

Z

Hang in there, buddy! You can make it! Just -- take deep breaths, I'll try and find your body -- it's gotta be around here somewhere!

BARBATUS

(gasping)

I wonder...what...was it all...for...

Z

Barbatus, hang on -- Barbatus!!

BARBATUS

Don't make my mistake, kid...

don't...be a grunt...your whole
life...

Barbatus dies, leaving Z heartbroken.

CUT TO:

INT. EARLY MEGA-TUNNEL - DAY

Weaver is "passing" as a worker, working alongside much smaller worker ants. He actually loves the work. He's throwing up dirt like a bulldozer. He's so enthusiastic, he scoops up a WHOLE ANT in his shovel and tosses him aside. Azteca, who's standing next to him in line, is shocked by, and a little attracted to, this turbo-worker.

AZTECA

Hey, slow it down, big boy. You're making the rest of us look bad...How come I haven't seen you around here before?

WEAVER

(covering)

I'm new...I was born yesterday.

AZTECA

Tell me about it.

WEAVER

Nobody told me digging was so much fun! You pick up the dirt, you move it, you pick it up again, you move it again -- lots of repetitions, you exercise the forceps, and the pincers --

AZTECA

(ogling him)

Mmm, yes, I see what you mean...

While Azteca is checking out the hunky new worker, work has effectively stopped...clods are piling up behind Weaver. A Foreman comes striding down the line, furious.

FOREMAN

What's the holdup here?!

Weaver whips his shovel up to his shoulder and salutes, as if he's dealing with a superior officer.

WEAVER

Sorry, sir -- I was just having a little chat with my friend --

FOREMAN

(yelling at Weaver)

Who said you could have a chat? You're not a chatter, you're a digger! So shut up and dig!

AZTECA

Leave him alone! He's new.

FOREMAN

You too? Well just for that, you lose your day's rations! Now get back to work!

The Foreman heads down the line, shoving and berating the other workers as he goes along.

AZTECA

(surprised at herself)

I don't know what came over me, talking back like that. I must be going crazy...

WEAVER

Sorry I got you in trouble. But listen, you can share my rations.

AZTECA

(flirting)

Are you asking me out to dinner?

WEAVER

(blushing)

No -- I mean yes -- I mean -- if you don't have other plans.

AZTECA

I'll make myself available...Listen, better watch out with the backtalk. I don't know want you to end up like the guy who used to work next to me. I'm afraid he got... downsized.

EXT. ANT MOUND - DAY

Some guard ants are looking out across the sandy main

entrance to the hive.

GUARD ANT

Look! They're back! The army's
back! Alert the colony!

The other ant starts ringing a bell, rushing down into the colony.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

A huge crowd is forming, eager to welcome the army back. A band is striking up a triumphant victory song, confetti and streamers are being thrown, as General Formica strides in, followed by Carpenter.

EXCITED ANTS

The army's returned! Our brave boys
are back! (etc.)

Everyone waves little flags as the tuba player Oompah-oompah-oompahs...

...and Z walks into the hall, looking bedraggled and exhausted, his helmet hanging over his ears.

The band slows to a halt.

At the edge of the crowd, Azteca, sitting on Weaver's shoulders, can just about see over the crowd.

AZTECA

It looks like only one soldier made
it back!

Weaver looks distraught.

WEAVER

(to himself)

Poor Z -- I should never have let you
go!

Far down the hall, Z is describing the battle.

Z

It was horrible...a massacre, a
massacre upon a massacre. First we
massacred them, then they massacred
us, then it was halftime. I've never

seen such violence, such
bloodthirstiness, such bad
manners...I'm the only one that made
it!

The atmosphere is somber. This is a tough one to try and put
a spin on...but that doesn't stop Formica from trying.

FORMICA
ONE TO NOTHING! WE WIN!

The band strikes up again, and everyone cheers.

Z
No -- you -- you don't understand!

FORMICA
Damn, I'm proud of you, boy. I wish
I had a hundred ants of your caliber.
The world would tremble. Now, time
for some R and R. You're invited to
the royal victory party!

Z
Royal victory party? Will...will
Princess Bala be there?

FORMICA
Of course. The entire royal family
will be there to honor you.

Z
(thinks)
ONE TO NOTHING!

Renewed CHEERS, as Z is lifted onto the shoulder of some of
the soldiers who stayed behind.

AZTECA
Wait a minute, that's no soldier --
that's Z!

WEAVER
Z? Our Z? The little guy made it!

Z is following Formica away from the cheering crowd.

EXT. ABOVE TOWN CENTER - DAY

Z and Formica are going up the royal "stairway" together.

FORMICA

Son, you're an ant after my own heart. A warrior. An ant that looks death right in the face and laughs.

Z

Well, I generally just make belittling comments and snicker behind death's back. So, tell me, fellow war-monger...do you think Princess Bala likes men in uniform?

FORMICA

Well she better -- she's engaged to one. Me!

Z

Engaged? As in you're getting married?

FORMICA

Affirmative.

Z

So...you two are in love?

FORMICA

In love?

(shakes his head)

I'm just a plain old soldier at heart. I'll tell you what I love -- the field -- blood -- death -- orders...and the company of other warriors.

Formica gives Z a manly slap on the back. Z looks a little uncomfortable as we...

CUT TO:

INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY

Z follows Formica and Carpenter into the throne room. At the end of the hall, a society band is playing. The room is full of courtier ants and officers.

Waiters are gliding around holding trays of hors d'oeuvres.

Z

Wow, what a spread -- you know, there's a food shortage in the rest

of the colony.

FORMICA

Yes, and do you know why there's a food shortage?

Z

...Not enough food?

FORMICA

Negatory. Too many ants. And while we soldiers go out there, and fight, and bleed, and die for the colony, the namby-pamby workers live it up back home.

Feeling a little hot, Z wipes his brow.

Z

Well I, I don't think "living it up" is the right term -- how about "working themselves to death"?

FORMICA

I tell you son, sometimes, at night, I see myself in battle, fighting a horrible, faceless enemy, with the future of our whole species at stake. And always, the dream ends with each of us plunging his sword into the other's heart...

Z

(spooked)

Oh, hey, that's great, I think I see an old war buddy over there, it's been fun chatting. Good luck with the hallucinations.

Z escapes from Formica, who gazes after him suspiciously.

Z mingles in with the crowd, then he sees Princess Bala standing with a group of officers who are eating hors d'oeuvres.

OFFICER

(telling a joke)

What do you call it when 10,000 workers are killed in a tunnel cave-in?

(a beat)

Who cares? They're workers!

The officers laugh, but Bala looks bored in this stuffy social scene.

Z

But...don't you think the worker class is the very foundation of the colony --

(realizes he's
getting odd looks)

I mean, uh, without them, who would we stand on?

More laughter.

BALA

You're the hero of the recent termite campaign, aren't you?

Z

Well, if single-handedly vanquishing the enemy and slaughtering a whole nestful of termites makes someone a hero, yes I am.

Z reaches for a tray of canapes that a waiter is carrying by, and KNOCKS the whole thing CLATTERING to the ground.

Z

(feigning nonchalance)

And you are...?

BALA

I'm Princess Bala.

Z

Ah, yes.

(affected)

Well, charmed, I'm sure. So, Princess, have you ever danced with a hero?

BALA

Yes.

Z

(deflated)

Oh...oh well then, one more won't matter.

She moves towards the dance floor. Z spit-combs his antennae, struts after her -- until he trips on his sword. He tumbles, falls, but hops to his feet just as Bala turns toward him, turning it into a ballet plies.

Z

Just warming up...

She frowns...there's something familiar about this guy. But then they start dancing.

ACROSS THE ROOM: The Queen and General Formica watch the party.

QUEEN

All these parties are so marvellously alike.

FORMICA

They should be...

(suspicious)

But there's something funny about that soldier.

Formica strides over to where Z and Bala are dancing.

FORMICA

(glowering)

May I cut in?

Z

(intimidated)

Oh, of course --

BALA

(pulling Z back)

No, General. I'm dancing with the war hero.

Z

(trying to placate
Formica)

Uh, sorry, General, I...I've always had this animal magnetism, it --

Bala YANKS Z back onto the dance floor, dancing away from Formica.

BALA

You dance...

Z

Divinely?

BALA

No weirdly...You remind me of
someone...

Formica catches Bala's eye. She frowns at him, and decides to get a little shocking.

BALA

He was swarthy...primitive...
earthy...sensual.

As she says these things, Z tries to act accordingly.

BALA

He was a worker. I danced with him
at a worker's bar just the other day.
I'm not shocking you, am I?

Z

(proudly)

No...as a matter of fact...

BALA

(shocked)

OH MY GOD, IT'S YOU! YOU'RE A
WORKER!!! A filthy, stupid,
disgusting WORKER!

Everybody gasps. The dancing stops cold.

Z

Gee, uh, could you say it a little
louder, I think there are some ants
in the next colony who didn't hear
you.

BALA

I CAN'T DANCE WITH A WORKER!

Z

(offended)

That's not what you said the other
night --

BALA

(now she's panicked)

Quiet -- sshhh!!

Z

(digging it in)

-- At the worker bar! You were pretty hot to trot then!

BALA

SSHH!!! SSHH!!!

A livid Formica is stalking over towards them.

FORMICA

(furious)

What's this? A worker has been masquerading as a war hero?!

Z

Well it wasn't a masquerade, really, it was more what I'd call a clever ruse --

FORMICA

ARREST HIM!

Z

Can't we all settle this like adults -- we're not larvae anymore --

Angry officers begin to surround Z, who hides behind Bala in fear, using her as a shield.

QUEEN

Oh my god! He's taking her hostage!

Z

No I'm not -- I mean -- nobody move! Or the Princess gets it!

People shout and scream, as Z backs up with the Princess...into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Z backs up into the kitchen, still pulling Bala along with him. Here, ant chefs are preparing food for the party, vomiting little florets onto a platter. Formica and the soldiers follow them in.

Z

(to Formica)

Stay back, you lunatic! Do you think I don't know how to use this?

Z realizes that he's pointing his finger at them.

Z

Uh-oh.

The officers rush for...and Z, with Bala in tow, falls backwards into an opening marked, "GARBAGE".

EXT. ANT MOUND - DAY

HOLD ON: the GARBAGE CHUTE EXIT. Nothing happens for a moment. Then --

From a distance, we hear the faint sound of SCREAMING, dopplering closer --

-- and then Z and Bala come flying out of the exit, right into the mud, cutting off the scream abruptly.

Bala sits up, coated in mud. Z is nowhere to be seen. Because she's on top of him.

PRINCESS

This is thoroughly unacceptable!

Z

You're telling me...

She gets up and runs back towards the colony entrance, where soldiers are already issuing to get her...

BALA

I'm coming! I'm coming!

But...just as Bala's about to be rescued...what looks like a gigantic LASER BEAM sweeps along the rim of the colony, sizzling the ground as it moves along...and IGNITES the lead soldier into FLAMES! Bala looks stunned.

Z watches in horror as another soldier ant is FRIED, and we look up to see a GIGANTIC MAGNIFYING GLASS casting the beam...we can just about make out the huge, grotesque figure (a seven year old kid) holding it.

Bala, who has no idea what's really going on, turns from the colony and runs the other way.

BALA

I'm going! I'm going!

...unfortunately, this draws the fire of the laser, which follows after her in what looks like a strafing run, SIZZLING in her footsteps.

Z, who's running towards the princess, suddenly realizes that he's running towards certain doom...and joins Bala in legging it away from the colony; under a brown leaf, which bursts into flames...between the redwood-like stalks of some flowers...and finally into the relative safety of some grass...where they throw themselves on the ground, exhausted.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEED CLUMP - DAY

Z and Bala dust themselves off.

BALA

What was that thing?

Z

How should I know?

BALA

I order you to find out where we are!

Z

Alright, alright, I'll try to get directions from one of the locals.

Z tries to flag down some passing bees.

Z

Excuse me, I --

(it passes him by;
he tries the next)

Pardon me --

(same response)

And they call them social insects.

BALA

Climb up that tree and get a better view!

Bala points to a thin blade of grass. Gingerly, Z tests the grass and starts climbing up it...but his weight bends it, so that he's lowered back to the ground, face to upside-down face with Bala.

BALA

I've been kidnapped by the village

idiot.

Z

Who's the bigger idiot -- the idiot who gets kidnapped, or the idiot who lets herself get kidnapped by the idiot?

BALA

How dare you speak to me like that?
I'm the Princess!

Z squares up with her.

Z

Theoretically, yes. But is the monarchical hierarchy applicable without the underlying social structure to support it?

BALA

Of course! It defines society! To deny the precept is to say that order is an arbitrary distinction applied by the society itself!

Z

But can there be a society composed of just two ants?

BALA

No! There's no such thing as "just two ants." You never see just two ants -- you see a million ants!

Z

Look around, sweetheart.

She looks around. She doesn't like what she sees. She glowers at Z.

BALA

I -- hate -- you.

Z

Well I guess that makes us even.

BALA

Ha! Don't make me laugh. You're crazy about me! That's why you lied and cheated to get near me!

Z

Oh come on, you're the one who came after me -- the swarthy, earthy, sensual worker!

BALA

(repulsed)

I was slumming it! I danced with you because you were the most pathetic specimen in the place!

Z

Is that the same standard you used to choose General Formica?

BALA

I didn't choose him. What kind of idiot would...

(unconvincingly)

...choose who she wanted to marry?

She shakes herself out of it.

BALA

Now, worker, you shall take me back to the colony, and have your head cut off and stuck on a sharp pole!

Z

Well, that's an appealing offer, but...considering the options...

(he decides)

You go back. Me, I'm going to Insectopia.

BALA

Insectopia? You stupid worker, that's just a fairy tale!

Z

Yeah, well I have it on a reliable source...

(he knows that was

maybe stretching it)

that it exists. Now you follow the yellow egg...

(looking around)

That direction.

BALA

Worker! Come back here now!

Z

I've got a name. It's Z.

BALA

That's not a name! That's just a letter!

Z, meanwhile, hits the road. Bala has no idea of where to go. Just then, the scariness of the outside world comes through to her.

We start hearing NOISES -- the equivalent of scary jungle sounds in a Tarzan movie -- the HISSING, CROAKING, CHIRRUPING... Bala sees eyes looking out at her from all directions...and spots a colossal monster (a sparrow) fixing her with his beady gaze.

BALA

(clears her throat)

Worker?

(no response...louder now)

Oh WORKER? Where are you?

(getting desperate)

Z? Z? Wait for me!!!

Bala heads off after Z.

INT. MEGA-TUNNEL - DAY

The mass of worker ants are swinging pick-axes in the tunnel. The foreman moves up the line, BERATING the workers, yelling at them to dig faster.

AZTECA

I tell ya, I'm gettin' sick of bein' yelled at.

WORKER #1

What do you want, we're just workers.

WEAVER

You know, you're not just workers -- you can be whatever you want to be! Look at Z! He started as a worker -- then he became a soldier!

AZTECA

That's right! He slaughtered

hundreds of termites single-handedly!

WORKER #2

I heard about this guy.

(turning to the other
workers)

He crashed a party at the palace.
Then he took a hike with one of the
royal babes! And when they tried to
stop him, he just looked at a
couple'a guards, and they burst into
flames!

WORKER ANT #1

You're nuts, how could a worker do
all that?

WEAVER

Well, because he's more than a
worker...he's a...what did he call
it, Azteca...

AZTECA

Invisible!

WEAVER

No -- an individual!

WORKER #2

What's that?

WEAVER

Well, it's...someone with his own
point of view...someone who does what
he wants, not whatever he's told to
do!

AZTECA

(eyes lit up,
watching Weaver)

Someone who follows his heart!

WEAVER

(taking Azteca's hand)

Right...because every ant's important!

WORKER #2

(scoffs)

But that would mean I'm important.

WORKER #1

I'm outta here, this sounds like trouble to me.

But more ants are gathering 'round.

WEAVER

We can all be individuals! Just like Z!

Weaver and Azteca hold hands. More ants are gathering around, dropping their tools...

EXT. BIKE PATH - DAY

LONG SHOT. A glimmering desert landscape (think of "The Sun's Anvil" in Lawrence of Arabia). Two small figures can be seen, tiny dots moving across the arid whiteness.

They're Bala and Z, who are crossing a concrete path in the park, which they perceive to be a "desert".

BALA

Water...water...

Z

Water...water -- oh, you already said that.

BALA

(walking along)

My skin's dry, my exoskeleton is cracking...I wish I'd never met you, you ruined my life.

Z

I ruined your life? Look, I was perfectly happy until I met you -- alright, I was miserable, but I was happily miserable.

Over Z's line, we can see a GIGANTIC WHEEL, getting larger and larger and heading right towards them, a GIGANTIC WHEEL (the front wheel of a bicycle which is heading right towards them).

BALA

Look out!

Bala pushes Z out of the way just as the wheel rolls past with a cacophonous CRUNCHING, GRINDING noise -- like a gigantic millwheel.

BALA

We're going to die!

Z

Come on -- it's gone! What are the chances of that happening again?

No sooner has he said it than the rear wheel of the bike thunders past.

Z

Well I'll be.

Bala notices that they're clutching one another in fear; she pushes him away.

BALA

Why didn't I listen to my mother
...why'd I have to go looking for
trouble? Any ant would have given
their left legs to be in my
position...what's wrong with me?

Z

Want a list?

BALA

(urgent)

Wait, I hear something!

We can, in fact, hear a low, musical PLUNK.. there's a pause and then we can hear it again...

Z and Bala walk over a rocky "dune" (the soft shoulder of the path). Beyond, the grass starts up again. They have come to the end of the "desert" (i.e. the other side of the path) Through the blades of grass, we can see...

Z

It's...it's...

BALA

WATER!!!

EXT. LAKE - DAY

A LAKE (a puddle) stretches before them. It is, in fact, the overflow of a drinking-fountain whose drain is jammed...as Z and Bala run to the lake, water dribbles from the fountain

and into one edge of the pool (to the ants, it's a waterfall).

Bala and Z run to the edge of the water and start slurping. They smile at each other, until they remember that they don't like each other.

Z

This lake is huge! And so close to the colony! Think of the vacation potential!

BALA

Cut me down a soft leaf so I can take a nap.

Z

Listen, "Princess", you can't order me around. Out here, you're not the boss anymore -- out here, you're just --

-- But before he can finish, a water droplet from the fountain falls on him. It may not sound like much, but to Z it's as though a ten-foot diameter sphere of jello had engulfed him.

Z's stuck inside because of the surface tension of the droplet, which doesn't burst, just quivers up and down. Inside, Z is slowly, frantically drowning and screaming for help. But his screams are muffled in the water.

BALA

(annoyed)

Out here I'm just what?

Z

(through the water)

Hlllllllp!

BALA

(hands on hips)

Stop fooling around in there.

By now the droplet has started rolling, and Z is being turned upside-down. He manages to get one foreleg out of the droplet, and, in a frantic attempt to pull himself out, pulls Bala in by the leg.

BALA

Let me go!!!

But it's too late -- they're now both stuck in the droplet, and, as Z continues to drown, he also has to deal with Bala yelling at him -- though we can't hear exactly what it is she's yelling through the water.

Then, having run out of air, she too starts thrashing, alternately trying to swim and trying to slap him as Z tries to defend himself. Finally all this commotion is enough to make the droplet burst, spilling the two coughing, sputtering, drenched ants onto the ground.

They both lie there, miserable, wet, and cold.

BALA

(chants to herself)

I'm going to be rescued soon. I'm going to be rescued soon. I'm going to be rescued soon.

Z watches her incredulously.

Z

Princess, has it ever occurred to you that they're not going to rescue you?

BALA

General Formica won't let me die out here. I'm his fiancée.

Z

Look. How many other Princesses are there?

BALA

Five thousand three hundred and ninety -- no. About five thousand four hundred by now.

Z

And only you can become a Queen?

BALA

Well...no, but --

Z

So what makes you so special?

BALA

(hesitates)

Well...I am the oldest.

Bala turns from Z. She's thinking things over, realization dawning on her.

BALA
By three seconds...

She looks out into the grass forest.

BALA
(to herself)
You're right. There are as many Princesses...as there are blades of grass.

Z, overhearing her, slowly puts his hand on her shoulder.

INT. MEGA-TUNNEL - DAY

Formica and Carpenter are walking into the entrance of the tunnel with a squad of soldiers.

FORMICA
Dammit, this tunnel is priority A-1!
We can't afford any delays on this project!

CARPENTER
I've never seen anything like it,
General, they're they're...well, look!

Ahead of them, a group of a few hundred workers have stopped work and are sitting down, chanting...

WORKER ANTS
Z! Z! Z! Z!

A worker moves forward to join the strikers, tossing down his tool.

FOREMAN
(yelling at him)
Where do ya think you're going? Get back to work!

WORKER #1
Buzz off, I'm important!
(joining the others)
Z! Z! Z! Z!

At the center of the group, Weaver and Azteca are holding

hands, leading the chant.

FORMICA

Notice the big one, holding hands
with the female?

CARPENTER

Well, uh, who notices workers, sir?

FORMICA

(calculating)

No one should have to. Have him
brought to me.

INT. FORMICA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

A nervous Weaver is sitting across from Formica, flanked by a couple of stoic guards. Carpenter stands smiling by the side door. There is no obvious threat to Weaver, but the atmosphere is truly intimidating.

FORMICA

So this Z...he fancies himself an
individual?

WEAVER

Yeah...I mean...well...I don't know,
really, sir.

FORMICA

(patronizing)

Well now you haven't fallen for this
silly idea of individuality, have
you?

WEAVER

Oh, no, sir!

FORMICA

Good. You're a good soldier.

WEAVER

Thank you, sir.

Weaver begins to relax a bit.

FORMICA

So tell me. Where's Z?

WEAVER

I...I have no idea, sir.

FORMICA

Okay, son.

He pats Weaver on the shoulder.

FORMICA

We know what makes an ant colony strong, don't we? We know that no ant can be an individual. No single ant matters, right?

WEAVER

(enthusiastically)

That's correct, sir!

FORMICA

(points at a guard)

Not that one.

(another guard)

Or that one.

WEAVER

No, sir!

Formica nods at Carpenter, who smiles and opens a door. Two soldiers walk in, holding Azteca. The color drains from Weaver's face.

FORMICA

(calmly, with satisfaction)

Or that one? Her life doesn't matter, does it?

AZTECA

Don't tell that tightass anything, Weaver!

Weaver starts to get up, but the guards behind him hold him down.

WEAVER

Wait! Just let her go! Z's long gone anyway, following some golden egg to Insectopia! You'll never catch him!

Formica's face lights up.

FORMICA

Insectopia, hunh?...See why individuality is so dangerous? It can always be used against you.

(to the guards)

If this sissy here wants to dig, he'll dig. Send them both back to the tunnel project. Double their workload.

The guards exit with Weaver and Azteca.

FORMICA

What do we have on this "Insectopia"?

CARPENTER

Scattered reports, sir. Rumors. Nothing reliable.

FORMICA

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Get me Ant Team Six.

CARPENTER

(frightened)

Ant Team Six...

EXT. GRASS JUNGLE - DAY

Z and Bala are lost, wandering through the grass

BALA

(looking hopeless)

I swear, we've passed this blade of grass three times.

Z keeps marching on.

BALA

Face it, Z, we're lost! We must have walked halfway across the world by now! How did I get into this mess...

Z

(too shy to look at her)

Come on...tell me there wasn't just a little...something between us that first night at the bar. The night we danced.

BALA

(sadly)
What difference does it make...we're
both going to starve to death, or get
squished, or set on fire...

But Z is just gawking. The shot expands to show that they
have stumbled onto...

Z
...The land of red and white...

EXT. FALSE INSECTOPIA - DAY

A PICNICGROUNDS...A red and white picnic blanket, which to
the ants looks like a vast, undulating pavilion, stretches
before them. They gaze up at two obelisks: a salt and pepper
shaker.

Behind that is a gigantic tupperware jar full of potato
salad, and sandwiches stacked high. It all looks perfect,
with the clean lines and monumental proportions of fascist
architecture. In fact, it looks a little too perfect.

Z
We've found it! Insectopia! Look at
all this food'

BALA
(amazed)
You were right...you were right!
(smiling happily)
Z, it's beautiful!

Z
Let's dig in!

Z goes over to a gigantic sandwich, but -- BOOIIING! -- he's
prevented from getting at it by the saran wrap covering it.

Z
There's - there's some kind of force
field!

Bala joins him, laboring against the saran wrap. Then both
of them hear laughter from above.

MALE WASP (O.S.)
(lockjawed accent)
Muffy, look, party-crashers.

FEMALE WASP (O.S.)

(laughing)
They're simply too much, Chip!

Bala and Z look up to see two large, yellow WASPS hovering in the air above them. The husband and wife wasps have lockjawed, William F. Buckleyesque accents.

MALE WASP
(to Z and Bala)
You down there, haven't you ever been to a picnic?

Z
Hunh?

FEMALE WASP
Habla Ingles?
(to Male Wasp)
Well I really don't know who they are.

Z
We're ants!

The Male Wasp zooms in closer.

MALE WASP
Poopsie, we know some ants, don't we?
(to Z)
Are you related to the Fifth Avenue ants?

FEMALE WASP
Darling, do you have to talk to any insect from off the street?

MALE WASP
Just being friendly, Poopsie.

BALA
Hello? I'm not just "any insect".
My mother is the Queen.
(momentously)
I'm Princess Bala!

MALE WASP
(under his breath)
They're Eurotrash, dear.

We hear a loud RUMBLING noise -- the family is about to sit down for their picnic lunch. Gigantic hands reach down and pull away the "force fields".

MALE WASP

Lunch!

(to Z)

A little piece of advice, sport --
bob and weave! Bob and weave!

BALA

What do you mean?

MALE WASP

Well -- like my father used to say --
there's no such thing as a free meal!

The wasps dive in to the picnic, darting in for a bite, and then dashing away again...

THE WASPS

Excuse me -- I'll have some potato
salad -- thank-you! -- don't mind if
I do! After you! (etc.)

-- But all is not well. We pull back to reveal that Z and Bala are standing in front of a giant sneaker logo, which is attached to a giant sneaker. Which moves.

Z

I sort of imagined Insectopia a
little differently --

Just at that moment, we hear a whistling in the air -- and the female wasp is crushed by a huge swatter that sweeps out of the sky, sending the picnic blanket billowing up in an aftershock that throws Bala and Z to the ground.

BALA

Oh...my...God.

MALE WASP

(shaking her)

Muffy! Muffy! Wake up!

But she doesn't move. The Male Wasp stares up at the sky.

MALE WASP

(heartbroken)

WHYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY????

But Z, also looking up, has no time to commiserate.

Z

Bala, look out!!

They are only saved by the fact that they are so small - .the holes of the swatter pass over them.

The woman, realizing that the swatter won't work on ants, throws it to the side and tries stomping on them...

Before Bala can get away, a sneaker falls on her with a thunderous BOOM that shakes the ground.

BALA
MMMffllmmm...

The shoe rises, as the person wearing it steps away...and we see that Bala is stuck in one of the ridges of the waffle-soled sneaker, adhering to a big piece of bubblegum!

BALA
Z! Help me!!!

But Bala is carried off on the sneaker in a huge, looping, ferris-wheel-like motion. BOOM. The sneaker on which Bala is stuck falls again, as the woman tries to step on Z, too --

Z
Bala!
(mournfully)
I'll never see her again...

-- But he does, instantly, as the shoe rises again, showing Bala stuck deeper in the bubblegum --

BALA
Z!!! Get me out of heeeere!

-- The woman has decided to walk away from the picnic to get the bubblegum off her shoe...Z heart sinks as the shoe Bala's stuck on lopes off into the distance...

Z
(thinks)
These things always come in twos...

He sees a SECOND SHOE starting to rise --

Z
Take me to your leader!

Z runs towards the shoe as it rises... and at the last moment catches on to the snaky, swinging shoe-lace.

Z

Whooooooooaaaa!!!

The sneaker lifts off into the air, with Z holding on for dear life to the lace, and getting further and further away from Bala as he's drawn to a vertiginous height...the landscape can be seen rolling and pitching crazily in the background...

Z

Bala! Come back here!

For a moment, the sneaker seems to pause in the air...then it descends again, in a stomach-churning, roller-coaster free-fall as the sneaker on which Bala is stuck rises up again...

BALA

Z!!!!!!! I'm stuck!

-- But Z is trying to keep his lunch down as he descends. The sneaker hits the ground, and Z can feel himself again...it's now or never.

Z

(Tarzan whoop)

Aa-ee-ya-ee-yaaaaaaaaah!!!!!!!!!!

As the sneaker rises again, he swings off the lace, hurtling through the air and catching one of the laces of Bala's sneaker...the momentum swings him up and under the sole...

BALA

Z! You're here!

Z gets smashed into the bubblegum next to Bala. Now he's stuck too.

Z

(ruefully)

Yeah. I'm here.

The sneaker descends again. Z and Bala hold hands and SCREAM as they see the ground rise to meet them...

THUD! They're squished deeper into the bubblegum. The sneaker rises again...

BALA

(emotional)

Z...if we don't make it...I just want

you to know....

Z

(touched)

Yes?

BALA

This is all your fault!!!

The sneaker rises, and seems ready to fall again...but instead it just hovers there. (The person wearing it is balancing on one leg and about to scrape off the bubblegum with a penny).

Z

We're safe...

Just then, the hand holding the penny looms up...the penny is, by ant standards, about sixty feet high. The huge image of Abraham Lincoln stares down at them.

Z

Who the hell is that?!!!

The penny starts scrapes the bubblegum off the sneaker, bringing Bala and Z along with it. They're carried through the air as the penny gets thrown away...turning over and over in a lopsided orbit as Bala and Z SCREAM...

...and land with a CRASH in total darkness.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

The "lake" where Z and Bala were nearly drowned by the water droplet.

The earth shakes as a HUGE, MONSTROUS creature approaches the lake - and begins to drink from it. The creature seems to hear something, and, growling, turns its ugly head. It's a Pomeranian, one of those yappy little lap-dogs -- but seen from ant perspective, it's something out of a horror movie.

TOUGH VOICE (O.S.)

Ant Team Six -- take him out!

The monster bears its huge fangs at the approaching intruders -- a bunch of flying ants who look as though they're attacking the Death Star!

The monster rears and snaps at two of the ants, who are making a diversionary run...

and then gets it from the rest of the ants, who land on his soft, wet nose and start stinging away like crazy.

The monster rears back in pain -- and runs away, YIPPING!

The members of ANT TEAM SIX, a crack team of hardcore flying-ant commandoes a la Seal Team Six, break off the attack and land.

MAJOR MANDIBLE

And don't come back, you sissy!

MAJOR MANDIBLE, Ant Team Six's lethal commander, steps into frame. He's the one-eyed killer we met in the bar earlier. The rest of his team fan out to search the area.

MANDIBLE

Talk to me.

COMMANDO ANT

Z and the Princess were here, sir.
Signs of a struggle.

MANDIBLE

Let's get a read on that feremone track.

COMMANDO ANT #1

(to the others)

Get the sniffer!

Two other commandoes come running up with what looks like a piece of machinery on a tripod -- only it's an ant -- a highly specialized, blind ant with an incredibly acute sense of smell.

TRACKER ANT

Bala...find Bala...

The tracker, drool running out of its long proboscis, sniffs the air and starts signalling like a geiger counter...

TRACKER ANT

(as he's swivelled)

Nnonononononoyeahyeahnononononono
no...

Finally the tracker stops swivelling, pointing in one direction and saying, "Yeahyeahyeah..."

COMMANDO ANT #3

Got 'em! Ten clicks from here!

MANDIBLE

Z -- you dirt-digging, fancy-dancing,
wisecracking, royalty-grabbing, rebel
SCUM!

(yelling into the
distance)

I AM COMING FOR YOU! YOU ARE ONE
DEAD ANT, MISTER!

Mandible's muscles bulge. The veins in his head throb. This is one ass-kicking ant. Even Mandible's troops look scared of him.

MANDIBLE

Let's MOVE! GO, people! GO! GO!
GO! GO! GO!

Ant Team Six takes to the air, heading in the direction indicated by the tracker ant.

INT. TRASH BAG - DAY

Darkness. Out of it we hear the voices of Z and Bala.

BALA

Come on, Z.

Z

Forget it. You go ahead, I give up.
I...I don't know what I was thinking.
"Insectopia".

In one corner of the screen, we can see an irregular little hole through which a shaft of light is falling. Bala proceeds towards it, the hole appears to get bigger and bigger...

Z

(defeated)

There's only one thing worse than an ant who goes around mindlessly following orders, and that's an ant who's too dumb to go around mindlessly following orders.

Bala stops...she notices that they're being watched. She's emerging from a tied off garbage bag -- the yellow ties loop away gracefully. Bala and Z have been tossed into a garbage

area. And above them and below them, peering from garbage cans, recycling containers, bags, etc., a multi-cultural assortment of insects are regarding them.

A laid-back FLY voices their thoughts.

FLY

What's with the bummer attitude?

A nearby BUTTERFLY joins in.

BUTTERFLY

Yeah -- nobody stresses out in
Insectopia!

BALA

Did you say...

Z

(joining Bala)

...Insectopia?

Z and Bala look around. Just to get things straight, the garbage dump doesn't look disgusting -- that would be seeing it through human eyes. Instead, we're looking at it through ant eyes -- and, reimagined this way, it's Paradise. Not the ordered, sterile, paradise of the picnic, but an earthly land of plenty.

The sides of the plastic garbage bags are sheer, reflective walls of smoothest obsidian...the garbage cans are gigantic, thick metal columns put there by the gods (think the pyramids); a coke bottle, refracting the sunlight into a gorgeous rainbow, trickles a fountain of sweet nectar into the pink, bittersweet flesh of a grapefruit half, which appears as a multi-chambered concave dome. Everywhere, insects are disporting themselves -- a multi-species love-in that's like an insect version of Woodstock.

Bala and Z are awe-struck. Bala turns to Z.

BALA

(happily)

Z, we made it!

FLY

(alighting on the
grapefruit)

C'mon in! The nectar's fine!

Like a kid at an amusement park, Z slides down the smooth

side of the garbage bag, whooshing this way and that until he slides into one end of a straw (a red and white striped tunnel), and is shot out...

Z
Yippeeeeeee!

...into a bottle-cap filled with lemonade, which he alternately drinks and swims through...

Down at the bottlecap, Z is drying himself off. Then he sees, emerging from behind a lemon peel, a gigantic TERMITE.

Z
(terrified)
AAAAAGH!!!

Surprisingly, the termite seems equally terrified...

FLY
(to Z)
Hey, take it easy! There's nothin'
to be afraid of!

Z
Yeah, well, I make it a practice not
to trust anyone who shoots acid out
of their forehead.

CRICKET
Dude, here in Insectopia, we don't
judge people by how many arms and
legs we've got.

FLY
Yeah, back home, they called me a
fruitfly. But here, I'm known
as...
(with attitude)
Superfly.

CRICKET
Anyway, big Gus is mellow.

The termite sticks his hand out. A drop of acid drips from his head and splashes at Z's feet.

Z
(taking his hand,
disgusted)
Charmed.

Z reaches out and shakes the termite's hand, as Bala watches, smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSECTOPIA - NIGHT

The insects are having a cookout, their faces illuminated by the still-red ember of a match. Platters heaped with food lie untouched as they pat their bellies...

Z and Bala sit next to one another, smiling shyly as if they had just met for the first time.

Z

So...you never did tell me...what made you come out to the worker bar that night?

BALA

Just looking for fun, adventure, trouble, I guess.

Z

Well, "trouble" is my middle name. Actually, my middle name is .985, but I don't tell people. Hey, Bala, I...I actually have something of yours...you left it at the bar that night.

Z takes out Bala's scarf, which he's been keeping folded in a pocket.

Z

Sorry, it's been through a war, not to mention everything else...

BALA

You held onto this all that time?

Z

Well, I...I know it's a little strange, but...I thought it might come in handy if I...needed a scarf someday.

(embarrassed)

Well, to be honest, I just liked having it.

He hands it back to her. Bala looks at Z, frankly, openly. For a moment Z is shy. Then he looks at her too. They're two lovers, leaning closer, about to have their first kiss, when --

BEEBLE

Hey Z!

The moment is wrecked. Z looks up. A chubby beetle stands there with Gus the termite.

BEEBLE

Wanna bring back dessert? There's a thirty foot long blimp in the next can, made completely of chocolate!

Z

(annoyed)

Sure. I wasn't busy or anything.

Z gets up to go with them.

Z

Great timing, guys. Ever wonder why they call you "pests"?

EXT. INSECTOPIA, TOP OF CAN - NIGHT

As Ant Team Six lands and takes up position above the feast. The tracker ant is going nuts.

TRACKER ANT

Yesyesyesyesyes --

One of the commandoes puts his hand over the tracker's mouth to shut him up. Mandible communicates with his troops by pulling down his one functional antenna and gruffly whispering into it, as though it were one of those commando headsets. His troops do likewise.

MANDIBLE

Talk to me.

COMMANDO #1

I've got a read on the Princess -- but target Z isn't accounted for.

MANDIBLE

Let's move in.

EXT. INSECTOPIA - NIGHT

Back at the feast, a cricket strums on his legs like a guitar, opining about life and the universe to a bunch of other chilled-out, hippyesque insects...Bala taps her feet to the song.

CRICKET

What if, like...we're just these tiny little things, and we're just like part of this whole other huge universe, that's like, so big we don't even know it exists?

LADYBUG

Man...that's so deep...

At that moment Ant Team Six rapels down from the top of the garbage bin, landing amongst the insects.

MANDIBLE

EVERYBODY DOWN!

The cricket gets up to confront Mandible, but Mandible cold cocks him with a right to the jaw. The other insects, too surprised to fight, just do as they're told.

MANDIBLE

Alright, you hippy scum! Make one move and I'll exterminate you!

A couple of commandoes grab Bala by the arms and heave her up.

BALA

Stop! You don't understand!

MANDIBLE

I don't have to understand, Missy -- I've got orders. Now where's Z?

CUT TO:

INT. INSECTOPIA - NIGHT

Z, the termite, the beetle and the fly are happily carrying a huge M&M back to the feast.

FLY

Man, your girl is fly, know what I'm saying?

Z

(overdoing it)

Oh, Bala? I guess she's okay, you know, for a princess. I mean, I usually date queens, or you know, empresses, because sometimes the lesser nobility are too much in awe of my smouldering sensuality. Please stop me if I'm making you feel inadequate.

They throw down the M&M, which lands with a THUD. Z notices that the rest of the insects look spooked.

Z

What's the matter? This place is as cheery as a Roach Motel at check-out time.

Z looks around.

LADYBUG

Bala's been kidnapped! Some flying ants took her back to the colony!

Z

She's been kidnapped?! But I can't live without her!

Z just stands there, heartbroken.

Z

(determined)

I'm going back. I've got to get her. Who'll come with me?

Z looks around. Nobody's volunteering. Nothing but sheepish looks and shuffling from the insects of Insectopia.

Z looks disheartened. He's about to leave when --

MALE WASP (O.S.)

I'll go.

The male wasp is hovering nearby.

Z

(surprised)

You?!

MALE WASP

I know what it's like to lose

someone...I keep hearing the sound of Muffy's flapping wings...so I'll take you.

Z hops on the wasp's back.

Z
Let's go, pal!

The wasp takes off, leaving the other insects looking a little chastized.

FLY
Geez. I feel like a real stinkbug.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY ABOVE COLONY - MORNING

The wasp and Z fly high above the colony...

Z
Wow...I never saw things this way...

From here, we can see the whole layout of the land around the colony...the "desert" (an asphalt path) and across it, the "lake" (the overflowing water fountain)

Z
Things look so close together from up here...there's the desert...and the lake...
(thinking about something)
it's not far from the colony at all...

Suddenly, the wasp bounces up and down in the air.

MALE WASP
Sorry. Turbulence.

INT. FORMICA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Formica sits at his desk, going over some plans. Formica's chambers are located inside a snake skull, with the eye sockets serving as windows, and the mouth serving as a door. The walls are hung with trophies -- the heads of other insects.

Ant Team Six burst in the doors of Formica's office, carrying the struggling and kicking Bala. One of the commandoes sets

the tracker ant one the floor...then Formica gets up from his desk as the commandoes bring the princess to him.

FORMICA

Princess Bala. Good.
(with urgency)
Where's Z?

Bala replies warily.

BALA

He's...he's dead.
(covering for Z)
You don't have to look for him anymore. He was eaten by a praying mantis.

FORMICA

(regretfully)
It's a shame he died prematurely...I was hoping to kill him myself.

BALA

Well you'll never be able to hurt him where he is now.
(sadly)
I miss him already.

FORMICA

(surprised)
You miss him? Why?

BALA

(angry)
Because...because he's twice the ant that you are. I could never go through with marrying you. I'm -- I'm an individual, and when I get married, it'll be to someone I choose.

The soldiers look shocked. For a moment, Formica looks furious. Then he just shrugs.

FORMICA

(shaking his head)
Princess Bala, I'm just a simple old soldier, and the ways of the feminine mind are a little too complex for me. But one thing I do know is, there are more Princesses where you came from. I just hope they're not all like you.

In the meantime, maybe we can arrange
for you to see Z again after all.

He gestures to the commandoes, who drag her out the door. We
notice that the tracker ant has been left behind.

EXT. ANT MOUND - DAY

Z hops down from the wasp, who has landed near the entrance
to the colony.

MALE WASP

Good luck, Z. For a wingless insect,
you're alright by me.

Z

Thanks, Chip.

They shake hands and the wasp flies off.

Z

(to himself)

How am I going to get in? The place
is crawling with soldiers!

Z starts for the nearest entrance -- but he's spotted by a
couple of SOLDIER ANTS.

SOLDIER ANT

You there! Worker!

Z's caught -- it's over. He turns around with his hands up.

Z

Don't bite! I surrender!

SOLDIER ANT

What are you doing out here! All
workers are to remain inside the
colony, by orders of General Formica!

Z can't believe his luck -- and his curiosity is piqued.

Z

(heading inside)

Well...if you insist...

INT. MEGATUNNEL - DAY

The Queen, with Formica striding at her side, is carried by
a personal escort of fifty or so struggling workers to the

bottom end of the Mega Tunnel, where a red ribbon waits to be cut.

QUEEN

Very impressive, General.

Behind her, hundreds of thousands of workers are crowded, looking confused and expectant. Some of them clutch little flags and noisemakers...

MANDIBLE

Wave that flag, you maggot!

...which we see are being handed out to them by Ant Team Six.

FORMICA

Is there anything wrong, your majesty?

The Queen is looking around unhappily.

QUEEN

It's just...How I miss Bala. I wish she were here for this special moment.

Formica warmly places his hand on the Queen's shoulder.

FORMICA

(falsely supportive)

She is, your majesty. She is.

The CAMERA heads up the long, long tunnel, where we see...

INT. MID SKYLIGHT TUNNEL

Bala, tied and gagged. She's at the point in the Megatunnel where it begins to curve upwards towards the surface. She struggles against her bonds, but can't get loose.

CUT TO:

INT. ANT MOUND - DAY

Elsewhere in the colony, a column of soldiers marches by, and we hear the TROMP-TROMP-TROMP of their boots. When they've gone, Z pokes his head out from behind a pile of dirt...he heads in the opposite direction of the soldiers...

INT. OUTSIDE FORMICA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Z creeps around the outside of Formica's chambers. This part of the colony seems to be deserted.

Z

Geez, this place really empties out
in August. Where is everybody?

Z walks up to the skull that houses Formica's chambers and
peeks in the eye socket.

INT. FORMICA'S CHAMBERS

Inside, the Tracker Ant, who's been left behind, switches
"on", eyes glowing. Z enters the chamber cautiously.

TRACKER ANT

(sniffing)

Z! Z! I smell Z!

For a moment, Z's afraid. Then he sees the small Tracker Ant
doesn't seem hostile.

Z

You "smell" me? Well look, I -- I've
been out in the wilderness for a
while, and --

The tracker ant keeps sniffing. Z waves his hand in front of
the blind ant's eyes.

Z

(getting it)

Hey, wait, you're...you're one of
those pheromone sniffers, aren't you?
Maybe you can help me...I'm looking
for a friend of mine, Princess Bala.

TRACKER ANT

(enthusiastic)

Bala! Yeahyeahyeahyeah! Find
Bala! Yeahyeahyeahyeah!

Z picks up the tracker ant.

Z

Just remember, I met her first.

Z, carrying the little tracker ant, heads out, following its
lead...

Through this and that passage, as the Tracker Ant gets more
and more insistent...And finally straight to a blank wall.

TRACKER ANT
Yeahyeahyeahyeahyeahyeah...

Z
Bala's through there?

TRACKER ANT
Bala...Yeahyeahyeahyeahyeah...

Z
Great. More digging. This is why I
left in the first place.

Z can answer his own question. He puts down the tracker ant, with a look on his face like a kid forced to eat broccoli, starts digging through the wall...

INT. SKYLIGHT APEX - DAY

Meanwhile, A member of Ant Team Six -- the stupidest member, in fact, waits at the very top of the tunnel, where it narrows almost to a point. He's hanging from a winch, and has a little hammer and chisel in his hand. He's WHISTLING, awaiting instructions.

INT. MEGA-TUNNEL - DAY

Z emerges from the tunnel he's dug, spits a load of dirt out of his mouth and wipes his hands off. Nearby, Bala lies there, bound and gagged.

Z
Bala!

Z unties Bala and undoes her gag.

BALA
Z! You came back!

They HUG.

Z
Why do they have you tied up here?

BALA
There's something going on, Z --

From here, Z can see far down the tunnel to where the crowd is gathering.

BALA

They're having a ceremony to open the
Megatunnel...

We can hear the sound of WATER SHIFTING somewhere above. He
looks up the tunnel...in the distance, we can make out the
silhouette of the commando set to break open the wall...

Z

Bala, that -- that lake we found --
I think the tunnel's right underneath
it!

(horrified)

-- Formica's going to flood the
colony!!! That's what he meant when
said there were too many ants!

BALA

Oh no...

Bala looks too shocked to move. Z starts pushing her into
the tunnel he made, and starts heading down towards the crowd.

BALA

Z! what are you doing?

Z

I know it's crazy, but -- I can't
just leave. Don't argue with me. If
I've learned anything, it's that the
problems of two people don't add up
to a hill of ants in this world. Or
beans. Something like that. Anyway,
I've got to warn the others.

Z looks into Bala's eyes.

Z

Head for the surface, Bala. If I
don't make it, well...we'll always
have Insectopia.

Z kisses Bala. Then he starts running down the tunnel
towards the crowd...

BALA

(following him)

Z!!! Wait for me!

INT. ANT MOUND - DAY

All the SOLDIERS are filtering out of the assembly area,

leaving the workers behind. As his troops march by, Formica steps to the side and hands the Queen a pair of scissors to cut the ribbon strung across the Megatunnel.

FORMICA

Your majesty, I'm afraid matters of state keep me from attending the ceremony.

QUEEN

But General -- this tunnel is your baby! You're sure you can't stay ?

FORMICA

'Fraid not, your majesty.
(with regret)
Goodbye, your majesty.

QUEEN

Very well, General -- I know you -- all work and no play!

FORMICA

Alright, let's move out!

Formica, surrounded by his bodyguards, hurries off as the Queen readies to cut the ribbon...

QUEEN

In the name of the colony, I declare this tunnel open!

INT. MEGA-TUNNEL - DAY

Z and Bala sprint towards the bottom end of the tunnel...

Z

Stoooooop!

-- and then pull back to see Queen cut the ribbon -- she looks up and sees --

QUEEN

Bala!

BALA

Mom!

Z calls out to the crowd.

Z

Listen up! We've all got to get out of here! This place is going to flood!

The workers are unconvinced.

WORKER #1

Are you nuts?

Z

You've got to believe me!

WORKER #2

Oh yeah? What makes you so special, Mr. Know-It-All?

Z

I'm Z.

The workers are even more sceptical. A laugh goes up from the crowd.

WORKER #3

You're Z? Gimme a break! Z's ten milimeters tall!

WORKER #4

-- and he can kill termites with his bare hands! You're just some scrawny worker with a mental problem!

Z

I am Z!

WORKER #1

No you're not!

WEAVER

Yes he is.

Weaver steps out of the crowd.

Z

Weaver!

Weaver runs up to Z and hugs him, starting to cry.

WORKERS

Hey...it is Z...listen to what he says! [etc].

WEAVER

Z...I'm so sorry! I --

Z

Don't worry about it, pal.

Nearby, Bala and the Queen hug. The Queen looks over at Z.

QUEEN

(distastefully)

Oh...it's that social-climbing worker again -- what does he want?

Z

(in response)

To save you all! Now we've got to go!

CUT TO:

EXT. ANT MOUND - DAY

Outside of the colony, where Formica, surrounded by the army, gives a signal to Mandible by drawing his finger across his throat...

MANDIBLE

(talking into his antenna)

Let 'er rip!

INT. SKYLIGHT APEX - DAY

AT THE TOP OF THE TUNNEL, the commando starts chiseling away furiously at the wall...and nothing but dust falls down. The commando looks at the dust as it falls down, down the long tunnel...he looks up at the dry wall...Hmmm...

Then...

THE WALL BURSTS OPEN.

And a TORRENT starts pouring out -- swallowing the terrified commando as if he were a crumb and heading down the tunnel like a freight train, ripping up the walls as it goes...

INT. EARLY MEGA-TUNNEL - DAY

Everyone turns to hear the rumbling sound coming down the tunnel --

AZTECA

Listen!

WORKER #1

He's right!!!

From here, we can see deep into the tunnel, at the point where it levels out...and the torrent can be seen rushing down at them...

Z

LET'S MOVE IT!

All of a sudden there's panic as every ant tries to scramble away from the oncoming water...in the confusion, the Queen's bearers drop her and scramble over her.

QUEEN

You there! Stop! I say!

The Queen turns, and for a brief moment is silhouetted against the white-capped torrent of water...

...and then she picks her abdomen up like a skirt and high tails it away from the torrent, running so fast that she passes some of her bearers on the way...

And then the torrent spits out of the mouth of the Megatunnel, quickly filling up the chamber and branching into all of its side tunnels, as we see:

A group of workers RUNNING up a side tunnel and getting consumed by a wave, which crashes down on them like a hand slapping a table...

Another group, the members of which are getting swallowed up one by one; one of the ants runs up on the ceiling of the tunnel and keeps on going, upside-down...it works for a while but eventually he, too is swallowed up...

-- In the Nursery, nurses are evacuating stacks of crying ant babies...

In one of the larger access-tunnels, down which thousands of workers are fleeing, a group of ants turns and decides to make a stand for it -- they link up in a mass and form a LIVING DAM. It holds for a while but then BURSTS scattering and smashing ants along the sides of the tunnel before eating them up...

And we...

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

The huge main chamber of the colony, where most of the workers -- as well as Z, Bala, Weaver, Azteca, and the Queen -- have run to.

The chamber is rapidly flooding from all sides. Water flows out of every escape tunnel the workers try...and the crowd is becoming more and more closely packed together as the waters rise around them.

AZTECA

There's no way out!

QUEEN

We're all going to drown!!!

BALA

Z...what can we do?

Z clenches his fist...he feels utterly powerless...then he shouts...

Z

Dig!

The workers turn to look at him questioningly.

Z

We've got to dig a trench around us!

-- But one of the workers raises his hands.

WORKER #1

Uh...we don't dig any more. We're individuals.

WORKER #2

Yeah. We're too important to dig. You taught us that, Z. You hate digging!

Z

(at his wits end)

Yeah, but I hate drowning more! Now dig!

WEAVER

You heard the ant -- DIG!!!

The workers start to dig a circular moat around themselves, passing the dirt back into the middle of what remains of the dry ground.

-- But they seems to be making little headway against the water as it continues to rush in...

The ant labor we saw up to now were nothing compared to this. As the moat gets deeper, the pile grows higher and higher...Weaver is digging up huge chunks of earth...nearby, Azteca is digging like crazy too...Z runs around, directing traffic and encouraging the workers...

Z

That's it! Pass the dirt back to the center! Go on!

Nearby the Queen stands there, looking squeamish.

Z

Your highness...time to get your hands dirty!

Gingerly, the Queen reaches out for a clod of dirt...and passes it along. Next thing you know, she's practically crushed by a huge load thrown up by Weaver.

The water keeps rushing in...but now we notice that...

...the pile of dirt in the middle of the "island" created by the digging of the moat is growing higher and higher, reaching up towards the ceiling of the chamber...

...And the water is getting swallowed up by the moat, swirling around angrily.

Now Z looks up, and sees that with a little more effort they can reach the top --

Z

We need to form a scaffolding around this mound -- let's DO IT!

The workers start to cluster around the mound, covering it, forming a tight network of living bodies around the mound up towards the ceiling...

Z

Now climb!

The ants start to scale the scaffolding, up towards the top of the chamber...it's a swarming mass of ants, hauling each other up, giving each other legs up, climbing ever and ever higher towards the top...

Where they start to dig through the very ceiling...

...as, at the bottom of the mound, Z starts to organize the hauling away of the Queen, as though she were a big cargo container...

Z

Okay boys -- take her up!

Z slaps the Queen on the butt, and she's winched away on a cable composed entirely of ants linked arm in arm like those plastic toy monkeys...

EXT. ANT MOUND - DAY

...And Azteca's head pokes through the ground...she hauls herself up, and hundreds of ants pour up from the ground, widening the hole...

INT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

The water is rising...but almost all of the ants have escaped...Z clammers up the mound, as the scaffolding of ants rolls up from the bottom....

And the rushing water finally wears down the earthen core of the structure. As Z hauls himself through the hole in the ceiling.

The entire structure collapses into the angry waters below, which seem furious to have missed their prey...

EXT. ANT MOUND - DAY

WORKER

He did it! Z! Z! Z! Z! Z!

The "Z" cheer goes up, with everyone joining in. But the jubilation is short-lived, for, appearing on the ridge, surrounding the workers, is FORMICA'S ARMY, circling the mass of workers, backing them in towards the roiling water behind them. Formica himself appears in the front lines, with Carpenter and Mandible at his side.

FORMICA

Z. I should have known. All that

work, all that preparation, come to nothing. All because of one stinking ant.

He steps forward to address the surrounded, trapped workers.

FORMICA

ALRIGHT. WHICH ONE OF YOU IS Z?

The workers, trembling but silent, cower inside the unbroken circle of soldiers.

FORMICA

WHAT ARE YOU, DEAF? I ASKED YOU, WHERE'S Z?

Formica laughs, shaking his head.

FORMICA

Folks, you may have survived that flood, but there's no way you're gonna escape from me. I'll make you a deal. Hand over the rebel leader Z, and you survive.

This sends a ripple of murmurs through the workers.

FORMICA

But if you don't hand him over, you're all going to die, each and every single..."individual" one of you.

The workers all look at each other.

FORMICA

What shall it be, workers?

The workers remain frightened but silent. Z trembles, terrified.

FORMICA

Have it your way.

As Formica raises his swagger stick to order the attack, a lone figure steps out from the crowd.

Z

Wait...

Z stands there, shivering with fear.

Z

...I'm Z.

For a moment, Z stands alone, under the glare of Formica's gaze.

Then another figure steps out from the throng of workers.

WEAVER

No, I'm Z.

Z turns, astonished, to see Weaver, still and unwavering, bravely risking his life for his friend. Then, AZTECA also steps forward.

AZTECA

I'm Z!

Next, Bala comes forward.

BALA

No, I'm Z.

More and more ants step forward.

WORKERS

I'm Z! I'm Z! I'm Z and so is my brother! I've been Z for weeks now!

QUEEN

(regally)

We are Z.

Now, the workers are all shouting the same declaration.

ALL

I am Z! I am Z! I am Z!

Z is plainly flabbergasted. Formica is outraged. He gives the signal.

FORMICA

ATTACK!

The army swells forward on all sides, pushing the workers towards the swirling water. Some workers surround the Queen to protect her. All seems lost, when THE FLY from Insectopia alights on the rim of the horizon.

FLY

Hey, guys!

THE WASP appears on the other side of the horizon.

WASP

It's them!

Suddenly, on all sides, A MASSIVE INSECT ARMY appears on the ridge, looking not unlike ambushing Indians in a John Ford film. Formica's soldiers stop in their tracks, awed by the unfolding spectacle. It looks like all of Insectopia has turned out: spiders, caterpillars, rhinoceros beetles, all manner of creatures crawling and flying have shown up, and now surround the army, dwarfing them.

WASP

Are these hooligans giving you trouble, Z?

FLY

Say the word, Z, and we kick their butts.

The ant army remains frozen, unsure of what to do next. Formica is furious. If ants had veins, Formica's would be bulging out of his face.

FORMICA

What are you doing?! ATTACK!!
(berating his army)
Come on, you yellow-bellies!
(turning on Carpenter)
Don't just stand there, Carpenter!
Make an example of yourself!

CARPENTER

Uh, actually, we are outnumbered sir...

Formica turns towards the insects gathered against him. With his chin raised pridefully, Formica steps forward, and CHARGES Z!

FORMICA

AHHHHHHH!!

Formica runs so quickly and with such force that his helmet blows off his head. Z's eyes get big, he stumbles backwards, slipping, and Formica goes flying over him, toward the whirlpool behind. He scrabbles at the edge of the water, and then tumbles over.

For a moment, it looks as if he's gone.

FORMICA (O.S.)

Help...help me...

Z goes to the edge of the precipice and looks over. Formica is struggling in the waters of the very flood he created, which are roiling not far below. He looks up into Z's eyes, a new expression crossing his features: fear.

FORMICA

Please...I...I can't swim...Help me...

Formica goes under for a bit, then his head comes up again -- but he's not going to be able to stay afloat for long...

Suddenly he sees a line dropped down. Above, Z looks down on him.

Z

I thought you said that the life of one ant doesn't matter.

Formica looks at the line...and in that moment seems to realize his error...

FORMICA

I guess it does...to the ant.

Formica reaches up and takes the line, and is pulled up by Z and a bunch of other ants (the line, we see, extends from a nearby spider, one of the cavalry from Insectopia).

Formica is left, broken and alone, by the precipice, while HORDES OF ANTS surround Z to congratulate him. Bala fights her way to his side and the two of them embrace. Then the ants pick up Z and Bala, and, CHEERING, bear them away.

Only Carpenter stays behind. He walks up to Formica, carrying his dented and dusty helmet. He cleans it the best he can with his jacket sleeve and hands it to his fallen general.

CARPENTER

Sir, if it's any consolation, I still think you're completely worthless as an individual.

FADE TO:

CLOSE UP OF Z

As he addresses the audience, stand-up style.

Z

So, uh, that's pretty much it. Just your basic "simple worker overthrows the government and winds up with the princess" kind of a story. You know: there was the big parade and everything...

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

A HUGE ASSEMBLY OF ANTS applauds as Z who is given a medal by the Queen.

CUT TO:

GENERAL FORMICA'S FACE, looking extremely dispeptic.

Z (V.O.)

General Formica was almost unemployable. He eventually got a gig as a honeydew keg.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Formica clinging to a wall, his belly hideously distended with honeydew.

Z (V.O.)

The Queen asked me to take over his job, but I said "Sorry, but I'm really not the general type. I'm more the specific type." So they gave the job to Weaver instead.

CUT TO:

WEAVER, in Formica's old office, in a general's uniform, his feet up on Formica's desk, smoking a cigar. Carpenter is on his hands and knees scrubbing the floor.

Z (V.O.)

Weaver cut the defense budget in half. Now we only have an army of five million.

cut back to

Z, ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE.

Z

And me, I guess you could say that I lived happily ever after.

Bala enters the frame, embraces and kisses him.

Z

I mean, I've got the whole package, right? A great life, a beautiful wife, and a few kids.

BALA

A few?

WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL

INT. Z'S HOUSE - DAY

Z and Bala stand in the midst of their living room, up to their knees in THOUSANDS OF CHILD ANTS. The children cover every horizontal surface. They run around, cry, laugh, and tease each other. Z looks around the room, looks back at us, and shrugs.

Z

Well, so nothing's perfect. But you know? I wouldn't change a thing.

The camera pulls up...and away from the ground...to reveal that this whole story has been taking place in a small area of CENTRAL PARK. We pull back and back, and see all the familiar landmarks from the story: the bike path, the drinking fountain, etc. We tilt up into the NEW YORK SKYLINE. BIG MUSICAL FLOURISH.

FADE OUT.

THE END