

THE MONSTERS ARE DUE ON MAPLE STREET, ACT ONE

by Rod Serling

BACKGROUND

Rod Serling created *The Twilight Zone*, a hit television series that first aired in 1959. Reruns of the show can still be seen today. Serling wrote the teleplays for many episodes, including "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street."

A LANGUAGE COACH

Teleplay and *screenplay* both include the word *play*, meaning "a type of performance." What do you think the **prefixes** *tele-* and *screen-* mean?

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Teleplay Terms

Scripts written for television or the movies are different from scripts written for the stage. A **teleplay** is a script written for TV; a **screenplay** is a script written for movies. Both kinds of scripts may contain these camera directions: **A**

fade in: The picture gradually appears on the screen.

10 **pan:** a swiveling movement of the camera, from one side to the other.

fade to black: The picture gradually disappears until all that remains is a black screen.

cut to: a sudden change from one scene or character to another.

outside shot: a camera shot of an exterior.

long shot: a camera shot from far off.

Characters

Narrator

Figure One

Figure Two

Residents of Maple Street

Steve Brand

Mrs. Brand

Don Martin

Pete Van Horn

Charlie

Charlie's wife

Tommy

Sally, Tommy's mother

Les Goodman

Mrs. Goodman

Woman Next Door

Woman One

Man One

Man Two

- 20 **close-up:** a camera shot that is very close to its subject.
opening shot: the first scene of the production.
dissolve: A new scene is blended with a scene that is fading out. **B**

Act One

Fade in on a shot of the night sky. The various nebulae and planets stand out in sharp, sparkling relief. As the camera begins a slow pan across the heavens, we hear the narrator offscreen.

- Narrator’s Voice.** There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow—
 30 between science and superstition. And it lies between the pit of man’s fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call The Twilight Zone. **C D**

- [The camera pans down past the horizon, stopping on a sign which reads “Maple Street.” Then it moves on to the street below. It is daytime. We see a quiet, tree-lined street, typical of small-town America. People sit and swing on gliders on their front porches, chatting across from house to house. STEVE BRAND polishes his car, while his neighbor, DON MARTIN, leans against the fender watching him. A Good Humor man on a bicycle stops to sell some ice cream to a couple of kids. Two women gossip on a front lawn. Another man waters his lawn.]*
- 40

Maple Street, U.S.A., late summer. A tree-lined little world of front-porch gliders, hopscotch, the laughter of children, and the bell of an ice-cream vendor.

[The camera moves back to the Good Humor man and the two boys who are standing alongside him, buying ice cream.]

At the sound of the roar and the flash of light, it will be precisely 6:43 P.M. on Maple Street.

- 50 *[One of the boys, TOMMY, looks up to listen to a tremendous screeching roar from overhead. A flash of light plays on the boys’ faces. It moves down the street, past lawns and porches and*

B VOCABULARY

Word Study

Identify two pairs of terms in this list that mean the opposite of each other.

C READ AND DISCUSS

Comprehension

What’s the narrator sharing with you?

D READING FOCUS

What does this description of the *Twilight Zone* suggest to you about the author’s **purpose**? Is it light-hearted or serious?

A VOCABULARY

Selection Vocabulary

The suffix *-ed* is part of the word *transfixed*. What is the base word of *transfixed*? What does it mean? What does *-ed* do the meaning of the word?

B READ AND DISCUSS

Comprehension

What do the stage directions lead you to think about the roaring sound and the flashing light?

rooftops, and disappears. People leave their porches or stop what they're doing to stare up at the sky. STEVE BRAND stops polishing his car and stands transfixed, staring upward. **A** He looks at DON MARTIN, his neighbor from across the street.]

Steve. What was that? A meteor?

Don (*nods*). That's what it looked like. I didn't hear any crash, though, did you?

60 **Steve** (*shakes his head*). Nope. I didn't hear anything except a roar.

Mrs. Brand (*from her porch*). Steve? What was that?

Steve (*raising his voice and looking toward porch*). Guess it was a meteor, honey. Came awful close, didn't it?

Mrs. Brand. Too close for my money! Much too close.

[*People stand on their porches, watching and talking in low tones.*] **B**

Narrator's Voice. Maple Street. 6:44 P.M., on a late September evening. (*A pause*) Maple Street in the last calm and reflective moments . . . before the monsters came!

70 [*The camera pans across the porches again. A man is screwing in a lightbulb on a front porch. He gets down off the stool and flicks the switch, only to find that nothing happens. Another man is working on an electric power mower. He plugs in the plug and flicks the switch of the power mower, off and on, but nothing happens. Through the window of a front porch we see a woman at a telephone, pushing her finger back and forth on the dial hook. Her voice is indistinct and distant, but intelligible and repetitive.*]

Woman Next Door. Operator, operator, something's wrong on the phone, operator!

80 [MRS. BRAND comes out on the porch and calls to STEVE.]

Mrs. Brand (*calling*). Steve, the power's off. I had the soup on the stove, and the stove just stopped working.

Woman Next Door. Same thing over here. I can't get anybody on the phone either. The phone seems to be dead.

[*The camera looks down on the street. Small, mildly disturbed voices creep up from below.*]

Voices.

Electricity's off.

Phone won't work.

90 Can't get a thing on the radio.

My power mower won't move, won't work at all.

Radio's gone dead. **C**

[PETE VAN HORN, *a tall, thin man, is standing in front of his house.*]

Van Horn. I'll cut through the backyard. . . . See if the power's still on on Floral Street. I'll be right back.

[*He walks past the side of his house and disappears into the backyard. We see the hammer on his hip as he walks. The camera pans down slowly until we're looking at ten or eleven people*

100 *standing around the street and overflowing to the curb and sidewalk. In the background is STEVE BRAND'S car.*] **D**

Steve. Doesn't make sense. Why should the power go off all of a sudden, and the phone line?

Don. Maybe some sort of an electrical storm or something.

Charlie. That don't seem likely. Sky's just as blue as anything.

Not a cloud. No lightning. No thunder. No nothing. How could it be a storm?

Woman One. I can't get a thing on the radio. Not even the portable.

[*The people again murmur softly in wonderment and question.*] **E**

110 **Charlie.** Well, why don't you go downtown and check with the police, though they'll probably think we're crazy or something. A little power failure and right away we get all flustered and everything.

Steve. It isn't just the power failure, Charlie. If it was, we'd still be able to get a broadcast on the portable.

[*There's a murmur of reaction to this. Steve looks from face to face and then over to his car.*]

I'll run downtown. We'll get this all straightened out.

120 [STEVE walks over to the car, gets in it, and turns the key. Through the open car door we see the crowd watching him from the other side. STEVE starts the engine. It turns over sluggishly and then just stops dead. He tries it again, and this time he can't even get it to turn over. Then, very slowly and reflectively, he turns the key

C VOCABULARY

Word Study

Some words have multiple meanings. *Dead* can mean "no longer living" as well as "no longer operating or functioning." Which definition of the word *dead* is used here?

D LANGUAGE COACH

The word *disappears* has the prefix *dis-*. A prefix is a group of letters added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. Based on how the meaning of *appears* changes when this prefix is added, what do you think *dis-* means?

E LITERARY FOCUS

How do the people of Maple Street react to this **plot complication**?

A VOCABULARY

Word Study

When the suffix, or word ending, *-ly* is added to an adjective, it turns the word into an adverb. *Reflective* means “thoughtful.” What do you think *reflectively* means?

B READ AND DISCUSS

Comprehension

What has happened?



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back to “off” and slowly gets out of the car. **A** Everyone stares at STEVE. He stands for a moment by the car, then walks toward the group.]

I don’t understand it. It was working fine before. . . .

Don. Out of gas?

Steve (*shakes his head*). I just had it filled up.

130 **Woman One.** What’s it mean?

Charlie. It’s just as if . . . as if everything had stopped. . . . (*Then he turns toward Steve.*) We’d better walk downtown.

[*Another murmur of assent at this.*]

Steve. The two of us can go, Charlie. (*He turns to look back at the car.*) It couldn’t be the meteor. A meteor couldn’t do this. **B**

[*He and CHARLIE exchange a look, then they start to walk away from the group. We see TOMMY, a serious-faced fourteen-year-old in spectacles, standing a few feet away from the group. He is halfway between them and the two men, who start to walk down the sidewalk.*]

140 **Tommy.** Mr. Brand . . . you better not!

Steve. Why not?

Tommy. They don't want you to.

[STEVE and CHARLIE exchange a grin, and STEVE looks back toward the boy.]

Steve. Who doesn't want us to?

Tommy (jerks his head in the general direction of the distant horizon). Them!

Steve. Them?

150 **Charlie.** Who are them?

Tommy (very intently). Whoever was in that thing that came by overhead.

[STEVE knits his brows for a moment, cocking his head questioningly. His voice is intense.]

Steve. What?

Tommy. Whoever was in the thing that came over. I don't think they want us to leave here.

[STEVE leaves CHARLIE and walks over to the boy. He kneels down in front of him. He forces his voice to remain gentle. He reaches

160 out and holds the boy.]

Steve. What do you mean? What are you talking about? **C**

Tommy. They don't want us to leave. That's why they shut everything off. **D**

Steve. What makes you say that? Whatever gave you that idea?

Woman One (from the crowd). Now isn't that the craziest thing you ever heard?

Tommy (persistently but a little intimidated by the crowd). **E** It's always that way, in every story I ever read about a ship landing from outer space. **F**

170 **Woman One** (to the boy's mother, SALLY, who stands on the fringe of the crowd). From outer space, yet! Sally, you better get that boy of yours up to bed. He's been reading too many comic books or seeing too many movies or something.

Sally. Tommy, come over here and stop that kind of talk.

Steve. Go ahead, Tommy. We'll be right back. And you'll see. That wasn't any ship or anything like it. That was just a . . . a meteor or something. Likely as not— (He turns to the group, now trying to weight his words with an optimism he obviously

C READING FOCUS

What is the author's **purpose** in making Steve a patient, gentle man?

D LITERARY FOCUS

What possible **plot complication** is introduced by Tommy's comments?

E VOCABULARY

Selection Vocabulary

The word *intimidated* means "frightened with threats." Why would Tommy feel intimidated by the crowd?

F READ AND DISCUSS

Comprehension

What does this show you about Tommy?

A**VOCABULARY****Selection Vocabulary**

Defiant comes from the root word *defy*. What does *defy* mean?

B**VOCABULARY****Word Study**

Based on context clues (words surrounding an unfamiliar word), what do you think *antagonism* means? Write down a definition, and then compare your definition to the one in the dictionary.

180 *doesn't feel but is desperately trying to instill in himself, as well as the others.)* No doubt it did have something to do with all this power failure and the rest of it. Meteors can do some crazy things. Like sunspots.

Don (*picking up the cue*). Sure. That's the kind of thing—like sunspots. They raise Cain with radio reception all over the world. And this thing being so close—why, there's no telling the sort of stuff it can do. (*He wets his lips and smiles nervously.*) Go ahead, Charlie. You and Steve go into town and see if that isn't what's causing it all.

[*STEVE and CHARLIE walk away from the group again, down the sidewalk. The people watch silently. TOMMY stares at them, biting his lips, and finally calls out again.*]

190 **Tommy.** Mr. Brand!

[*The two men stop again. TOMMY takes a step toward them.*]

Tommy. Mr. Brand . . . please don't leave here.

[*STEVE and CHARLIE stop once again and turn toward the boy. There's a murmur in the crowd, a murmur of irritation and concern as if the boy were bringing up fears that shouldn't be brought up; words that carried with them a strange kind of validity that came without logic, but nonetheless registered and had meaning and effect. TOMMY is partly frightened and partly defiant.*]

200 **A** You might not even be able to get to town. It was that way in the story. Nobody could leave. Nobody except—

Steve. Except who?

Tommy. Except the people they'd sent down ahead of them. They looked just like humans. And it wasn't until the ship landed that—

[*The boy suddenly stops again, conscious of the parents staring at him and of the sudden hush of the crowd.*]

Sally (*in a whisper, sensing the antagonism of the crowd*). **B**

210 Tommy, please, son . . . honey, don't talk that way—

Man One. That kid shouldn't talk that way . . . and we shouldn't stand here listening to him. Why, this is the craziest thing I ever heard of. The kid tells us a comic book plot, and here we stand listening—

[STEVE walks toward the camera and stops by the boy.]

Steve. Go ahead, Tommy. What kind of story was this? What about the people that they sent out ahead?

Tommy. That was the way they prepared things for the landing. They sent four people. A mother and a father and two kids who
220 looked just like humans . . . but they weren't. **C**

[There's another silence as STEVE looks toward the crowd and then toward TOMMY. He wears a tight grin.]

Steve. Well, I guess what we'd better do then is to run a check on the neighborhood and see which ones of us are really human.

[There's laughter at this, but it's a laughter that comes from a desperate attempt to lighten the atmosphere. CHARLIE laughs nervously, slightly forced. The people look at one another in the middle of their laughter.]

Charlie. There must be somethin' better to do than stand
230 around makin' bum jokes about it. (*Rubs his jaw nervously*) I wonder if Floral Street's got the same deal we got. (*He looks past the houses.*) Where is Pete Van Horn anyway? Didn't he get back yet? **D**

[Suddenly there's the sound of a car's engine starting to turn over. We look across the street toward the driveway of LES GOODMAN'S house. He's at the wheel trying to start the car.]

Sally. Can you get it started, Les?

[LES GOODMAN gets out of the car, shaking his head.]

Goodman. No dice.

[He walks toward the group. He stops suddenly as behind him, inexplicably and with a noise that inserts itself into the silence, the car engine starts up all by itself. **E** GOODMAN whirls around to stare toward it. The car idles roughly, smoke coming from the exhaust, the frame shaking gently. GOODMAN'S eyes go wide, and he runs over to his car. The people stare toward the car.]
240

Man One. He got the car started somehow. He got his car started!

[The camera pans along the faces of the people as they stare, somehow caught up by this revelation and somehow, illogically,
250 wildly, frightened.]

C READ AND DISCUSS

Comprehension

What is on Tommy's mind?

D LITERARY FOCUS

How does not knowing what is happening on other streets add another **plot complication**?

E LANGUAGE COACH

If something is *explicable*, it can be explained. The prefix *in-* gives the word the opposite meaning. What does *inexplicably* mean here?

A**VOCABULARY****Academic Vocabulary**

What is Charlie's *motive*, or reason, for saying this? How do you know?

B**LANGUAGE COACH**

Add the **prefix re-** to the word *start*. What happens to its meaning?

Woman One. How come his car just up and started like that? Sally. All by itself. He wasn't anywheres near it. It started all by itself.

[DON approaches the group. He stops a few feet away to look toward GOODMAN's car, and then back toward the group.]

Don. And he never did come out to look at that thing that flew overhead. He wasn't even interested. (He turns to the faces in the group, his face taut and serious.) Why? Why didn't he come out with the rest of us to look?

260 **Charlie.** He always was an oddball. Him and his whole family. Real oddball. **A**

Don. What do you say we ask him?

[The group suddenly starts toward the house. In this brief fraction of a moment they take the first step toward a metamorphosis from a group into a mob. They begin to head purposefully across the street toward the house at the end. STEVE stands in front of them. For a moment their fear almost turns their walk into a wild stampede, but STEVE's voice, loud, incisive, and commanding, makes them stop.]

270 **Steve.** Wait a minute . . . wait a minute! Let's not be a mob!

[The people stop as a group, seem to pause for a moment, and then much more quietly and slowly start to walk across the street. GOODMAN stands there alone, facing the people.]

Goodman. I just don't understand it. I tried to start it and it wouldn't start. **B** You saw me. All of you saw me.

[And now, just as suddenly as the engine started, it stops. There's a long silence that is gradually intruded upon by the frightened murmuring of the people.]

I don't understand. I swear...I don't understand. What's
280 happening?

Don. Maybe you better tell us. Nothing's working on this street. Nothing. No lights, no power, no radio. (And then meaningfully) Nothing except one car—yours!

[The people pick this up. Now their murmuring becomes a loud chant, filling the air with accusations and demands for action.]

Two of the men pass DON and head toward GOODMAN, who backs away, backing into his car. He is now at bay.]

290 **Goodman.** Wait a minute now. You keep your distance—all of you. So I've got a car that starts by itself—well, that's a freak thing, I admit it. But does that make me some kind of criminal or something? I don't know why the car works—it just does! [This stops the crowd momentarily, and now GOODMAN, still backing away, goes toward his front porch. He goes up the steps and then stops to stand facing the mob. STEVE comes through the crowd.]

300 **Steve** (quietly) We're all on a monster kick, Les. Seems that the general impression holds that maybe one family isn't what we think they are. Monsters from outer space or something. Different than us. Fifth columnists¹ from the vast beyond. (He chuckles.) You know anybody that might fit that description around here on Maple Street?

Goodman. What is this, a gag or something? This a practical joke or something?

[The spotlight on his porch suddenly goes out. There's a murmur from the group.]

310 Now, I suppose that's supposed to incriminate me! The light goes on and off. That really does it, doesn't it? (He looks around the faces of the people.) I just don't understand this— (He wets his lips, looking from face to face.) Look, you all know me. We've lived here five years. Right in this house. We're no different than any of the rest of you! We're no different at all. Really . . . this whole thing is just . . . just weird— **C**

Woman One. Well, if that's the case, Les Goodman, explain why— (She stops suddenly, clamping her mouth shut.)

Goodman (softly). Explain what?

Steve (interjecting). Look, let's forget this—

Charlie (overlapping him). Go ahead, let her talk. What about it? Explain what?



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C READING FOCUS

What is the author's **purpose** in this part of the story?

1. **fifth columnists:** people who aid an enemy from within their own country.

A LITERARY FOCUS

What makes the crowd's suspicion of Mr. Goodman an interesting **plot complication**?

B READ AND DISCUSS

Comprehension

What is the author getting at?

320 **Woman One** (*a little reluctantly*). Well . . . sometimes I go to bed late at night. A couple of times . . . a couple of times I'd come out on the porch and I'd see Mr. Goodman here in the wee hours of the morning standing out in front of his house . . . looking up at the sky. (*She looks around the circle of faces.*) That's right. Looking up at the sky as if . . . as if he were waiting for something. (*A pause*) As if he were looking for something. [*There's a murmur of reaction from the crowd again. As GOODMAN starts toward them, they back away, frightened.*]

330 **Goodman**. You know really . . . this is for laughs. You know what I'm guilty of? (*He laughs.*) I'm guilty of insomnia. Now what's the penalty for insomnia? (*At this point the laugh, the humor, leaves his voice.*) Did you hear what I said? I said it was insomnia. (*A pause as he looks around, then shouts.*) I said it was insomnia! You fools. You scared, frightened rabbits, you. You're sick people, do you know that? You're sick people—all of you! And you don't even know what you're starting because let me tell you . . . let me tell you—this thing you're starting—that should frighten you. As God is my witness . . . you're letting something begin here that's a nightmare! **A B**

340 [*Fade to black.*]