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SCENE

[CHICAGO/ O'HARE AIRPORT. WE HEAR THE FAMILIAR NOISES OF AN AIRPORT - THE WHINE OF PLANE ENGINES SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE, THE LOW RUMBLE OF AN AIRPLANE TAKING OFF, PAGING ANNOUNCEMENTS, PEOPLE MOVING TO AND FRO, ETC. WHIT AND CONNIE HAVE COME OFF THE SHUTTLE PLANE FROM ODYSSEY AND ARE MAKING THEIR WAY TO BAGGAGE CLAIM.]

WHIT:

The baggage claim is over this way, Connie.

CONNIE:

(DISTRACTED BY LOOKING AROUND) Oh -uh, yeah.

WHIT:

Are you all right? You're not sick from the flight, are you? The turbulence is always bad coming into Chicago.

CONNIE:

No ... I'm just looking at the size of this airport. I've been to the one in Los Angeles, but this -

WHIT:

O'Hare is one of the biggest airports in the world.

CONNIE:

I can believe it.

WHIT:

All the biggest airlines fly here. The terminal covers miles. It's

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

so big, baggage claim is in a
different time zone.

CONNIE:

(BEAT) You're kidding.

WHIT:

(CHUCKLES) I'm kidding.

CONNIE:

It's just so enormous.

WHIT:

Wait'll you see the Sears Tower.

CONNIE:

Thanks for asking me to come with you, Whit. I've always wanted to see Chicago from somewhere other than a bus window.

WHIT:

Eugene came with me on one of these trips, it seemed only fair that you should come on one, too. (BEAT) At least, that's what you kept telling me.

CONNIE:

Well . . . (DEFENSIVELY) It's just that you keep having these meetings here about writing your encyclopedia and I . . . I thought it'd be interesting to see what happens, that's all.

WHIT:

(CHUCKLES) I'm not writing an encyclopedia. I'm just one of a number of people who compile the information.

CONNIE:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

And you also happen to be the man
who owns the company that
publishes it

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WHIT:

(GENTLY CHANGING THE SUBJECT)
Well . . . I'll try to make the
trip as exciting for you as I can-
-

SECURITY GUARD:

Excuse me, sir.

WHIT:

Yes, Officer?

SECURITY GUARD:

Step over to this table, please.

WHIT:

Huh?

SECURITY GUARD:

This way.

CONNIE:

Whit?

WHIT:

What's going on?

SECURITY GUARD:

Random security check. May I ask
you what's in that bag you're
carrying?

WHIT:

It's my lap top computer. I write
on it when I travel.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

SECURITY GUARD:

Uh huh. Would you place it on the
table and open it up, please?

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CONNIE:

(CONCERNED) Whit, what's -- ?

WHIT:

Just relax, Connie . . . (PUTS LAP
TOP ON TABLE AND OPENS ZIPPER ON
LAP TOP CASE) Of course, Officer.
There.

SECURITY GUARD:

Is it battery-operated?

WHIT:

It has both AC and DC.

SECURITY GUARD:

Would you turn it on so I can see
something on the screen, please?

WHIT:

Sure . . .

[WHIT TURNS ON THE COMPUTER, AND WE HEAR THE WHIR OF THE MOTOR
AND RESPECTIVE BEEPS.]

CONNIE:

What are you checking for --
bombs? Drugs? Bootleg tapes of
'The Praise Kids In Concert'?

WHIT:

Connie.

SECURITY GUARD:

This is your lap top? No one
asked you to carry it for them?

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WHIT:

That's correct. I've had it by my side since leaving my house in Odyssey this morning.

SECURITY GUARD:

All right, you can close it up now.

[WHIT DOES WITH ALL THE CORRESPONDING SNAPS AND ZIPS.]

SECURITY GUARD:

(WRITING) I'm going to give you pass so you won't be stopped again . . . (TEARS IT OFF A PAD) There you go. I'm sorry for the inconvenience.

WHIT:

That's quite all right.

CONNIE:

Don't you want to look in my purse, too?

SECURITY GUARD:

No, ma'am. What we're looking for is too big to fit in your purse.

WHIT:

What are you looking for, Officer?

SECURITY GUARD:

As I said, sir, it's just a random security check.

WHIT:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

(KNOWINGLY) On in-coming
passengers? I don't think so . .
. What's really going on here?

(A

BEAT)

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SECURITY GUARD:

(HESITANT) I probably shouldn't--
(BEAT) Ah -- you'll hear it on the
news anyway. We're searching for
a stolen computer -- one that
looks exactly like yours.

CONNIE:

All this hassle for a computer?
What was it made of -- gold?

SECURITY GUARD:

Uh -- I really can't say anything
more. If you'll excuse me . . .

[HE WALKS OFF.]

CONNIE:

Do things like this always happen
to you when you come on these
trips?

WHIT:

(BEMUSED) No, this is the first
time . . .

CONNIE:

Oh, great! Make me feel welcome,
why don'tcha . . .

[WHIT CHUCKLES, AS THE:]
[MUSIC: BRIDGES LIGHTLY TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

SCENE

[BAGGAGE CLAIM. WHIT AND CONNIE ARE GETTING THE LAST OF THE
LUGGAGE. CONNIE'S IS COMING AROUND ON THE CONVEYOR BELT.]

CONNIE:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

Here it comes, Whit. That's my
suitcase -- the one with the
wheels.

WHIT:

Step aside and I'll grab it.

CONNIE:

There it is. Don't miss it.

WHIT:

(GROANING AS HE YANKS THE
OVERSIZED SUITCASE FROM THE BELT
AND SETS IT DOWN) Oooff. What
did you pack in here? We're only
staying a couple of days.

CONNIE:

I just brought a few things.

WHIT:

A few? Thank goodness this thing
is on rollers -- it weighs like
you stuffed everything you own in
it!

CONNIE:

Not everything . . . (BEAT) I
didn't bring my stereo . . .

WHIT:

Good thinking.

CONNIE:

What now?

WHIT:

We go out front and find the van
to our Hotel.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

CONNIE:

The hotel sends a van for us?

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WHIT:

It's the world-famous Excelsior Hotel. Service is their first priority -- or whatever the ads say. They have a shuttle every fifteen minutes. Come on.

[THEY BEGIN TO WALK TO THE EXIT, PASSING THROUGH TO THE OUTSIDE
-- WHERE THE AMBIANCE IS NOW FULL OF CARS AND STREET NOISE.]

WHIT:

(BEAT, PERPLEXED) This is really something.

CONNIE:

What?

WHIT:

All the police. Whatever was on that stolen computer must've been pretty important. (BEAT) There's our shuttle, Connie. Let's hurry. (CALLS OUT AS THEY RUSH FOR IT) Hold that van! Oh -- we're going to miss it.

[THE VAN BEGINS TO PULL AWAY.]

CONNIE:

(WHISTLES THROUGH HER TEETH AND SCREAMS LOUDLY) Hey! Wait for us!

[THE VAN SCREECHES TO A HALT.]

WHIT:

(BEMUSED) I knew I brought you along for a good reason . . .

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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[MUSIC BRIDGES US TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

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SCENE

[WE'RE IN THE VAN TO THE HOTEL. THE HUM OF THE MOTOR IS DISTINCT. THE DRIVER IS TALKING PLEASANTLY. THERE IS A THIRD PASSENGER. A YOUNG MAN, VERY INNER-CITY IN EXPRESSION, WHO IS VERY NERVOUS.]

DRIVER:

Are all three of you going to the
Excelsior?

WHIT:

We are.

CONNIE:

All three? There's only two of --
(BEAT, SEES THE THIRD PASSENGER IN
THE BACK) Oh, I'm sorry. I
didn't see you hiding back there.

YOUNG MAN:

Hiding? Who's hiding?

CONNIE:

(UNEASY CHUCKLE) I was just
kidding. Did you just come in to
Chicago?

YOUNG MAN:

(NOT WANTING TO TALK) Something
like that.

DRIVER:

I guess you missed your flight
after all, huh, kid? You going
back to the Excelsior?

YOUNG MAN:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

Yeah. Fine. Anywhere.

CONNIE:

This is my first time.

YOUNG MAN:

(RUDELY) I'm thrilled for you.
(LOOKS AWAY) Do you mind? I'm not
big on small talk.

CONNIE:

Well, excuse me. (UNDER HER
BREATH) I was just trying to be
friendly. Nice town.

WHIT:

Driver, do you know anything about
why they have all the police at
the airport?

DRIVER:

Just heard about it on the news.
Turns out a courier for the
Department of Defense had his car
broken into last night. Whoever
did it swiped some money, papers
and one of those lap top computer
thingamajigs. Guess it had a
bunch of top secrets on it.

WHIT:

Department of Defense, huh?

DRIVER:

Yeah. Courier stopped to go to
the can, and what-do-you-know? He
gets his car broke into. Anyway,
the police are at the airports and
stations trying to snag whoever in
case they try to get outta town.
Sounds like a lost cause to me.
Probably some kid looking to steal
the car stereo. I'll bet he's
scared out of his--

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

YOUNG MAN:

Does the conversation come with
the cost of the shuttle or what?

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DRIVER:

The man asked me a question.

YOUNG MAN:

Pull over, will ya?

DRIVER:

What?

YOUNG MAN:

I changed my mind. I don't wanna
go back to the hotel. Just pull
over and get my stuff out of the
back!

DRIVER:

All right, all right . . .

[WITH SOME HONKING OF HORNS, THE DRIVER PULLS THE VAN OVER AND
GETS OUT. HE GOES TO THE BACK OF THE VAN, OPENS THE DOOR AND
PULLS OUT THE YOUNG MAN'S LUGGAGE.]

WHIT:

Uh, I'm sorry if we were talking
too much.

CONNIE:

Yeah, we were just trying to make
conversation.

YOUNG MAN:

Nothin' personal. I just want
out, that's all . . . `scuse me .
. . .

[THE YOUNG MAN SLIDES THE VAN DOOR OPEN, GETS OUT AND SLAMS IT
SHUT.]

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

CONNIE:

Whoa . . . what's his problem?

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WHIT:

No telling. He seemed awfully nervous.

CONNIE:

Yeah . . . y'know, I think he really was hiding back there . . .

WHIT:

(THINKING) Yeah . . . (SHRUGS IT OFF) Well, you meet all types at the airport.

[THE DRIVER GETS BACK INTO THE VAN AND STARTS DRIVING OFF.]

DRIVER:

Sorry 'bout that. Strange kid.

WHIT:

Did you bring him from the hotel?

DRIVER:

Sort of. He met me out front. But when we got to the airport, he didn't get out. Kinda slumped in the seat and watched as we drove 'round. Pretty suspicious.

WHIT:

Didn't he have a flight to catch?

DRIVER:

I don't think he knew what he was doing. Like I said: strange kid. Only had the two shoulderbags, too. I was half-tempted to get a cop but, hey, I got a schedule to

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keep. Guess we'll never know,
huh?

WHIT:

I guess not.

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[MUSIC: BRIDGES TO THE NEXT SCENE]

SCENE

[THE EXCELSIOR HOTEL, IN WHIT'S ROOM. HE'S FINISHING UP A PHONE CONVERSATION.]

WHIT:

(ON THE PHONE) That's right, Bill
-- I'm in room 512, and Connie is
next door in 514 . . . No, we're
gonna do some sightseeing today
and then I'll come in tomorrow
morning for the meetings . . .
Right . . . Yes, I remember about
the trip to Latin America. I can
make time for it as soon as I'm
needed to . . . Okay . . . See you
tomorrow. No, no -- the agenda
today is to relax . . . Uh huh.
Bye.

[HE HANGS UP THE PHONE. CONNIE IS SUDDENLY BANGING ON THE DOOR.]

CONNIE:

(FROM BEHIND THE DOOR) Whit!
Whit!

WHIT:

Good grief! What's wrong,
Connie?

[WHIT OPENS THE DOOR.]

CONNIE:

(RUSHING IN) Turn on your TV --
quick!!

WHIT:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====
(CROSSES OVER AND TURNS IT ON)
All right, all right -- but, why?
What's so--?

CONNIE:

(EXCITED) The news! Look! Maybe
they'll show another picture!

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[OUR PERSPECTIVE IS WITH WHIT AND CONNIE WATCHING TV.]

TV REPORTER:

(FROM THE TV) . . . police say their informant has indicated that the break-in of the unmarked Department of Defense car was intended as a petty theft and that suspect Greg Kelly had no idea of what he was stealing. (Kelly, 18, has been convicted of petty theft on two previous occasions.)

CONNIE:

There he is! See the picture?

WHIT:

I see, I see.

TV REPORTER:

Authorities are asking Greg Kelly, or anyone who has seen him, to call one of the numbers on the screen immediately. Because of the top secret nature of the missing lap top computer, authorities fear Kelly's life may be in danger. (Turning to other news, the Secretary of State announced today that a new plan for peace initiatives in the Middle East have taken steps forward as leaders of the Arab, Israeli and Palestinian factions agreed to meet for a summit in Bahrain.)

CONNIE:

That was him, right? I'm not seeing things.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

WHIT:

No, you're not. Greg Kelly was
the young man in the van . . .

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[MUSIC: BRIDGE TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

SCENE

[THE YOUNG MAN IN THE VAN. HE IS IN A FUNCTIONAL, WAREHOUSE-TYPE OFFICE, SITTING IN A CHAIR. HE IS NERVOUS, FAR MORE NERVOUS THAN BEFORE. SO NERVOUS, HIS VOICE IS SWEATING. HE IS UNDER PRESSURE. AN UNKNOWN PERSON IS INTERROGATING HIM.]

YOUNG MAN:

Don't just sit there -- say something!

[THERE'S A PAUSE, AND WE HEAR A CAT MEOW.]

BLACKGAARD:

Cats are amazing creatures, aren't they, Gregory? So sleek and gentle, and yet when they're angry
. . .

[THE CAT HISSES AND SPITS. WE HEAR THE CAT MEOW AND PURR PERIODICALLY THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE SCENE.]

YOUNG MAN:

(VERY NERVOUS) L-look, you know me. I'm no spy. The car had a nice looking radio. That's what you pay me to do, right? Snatch radios and junk . . . Well, the other thing also looked good so I grabbed it, too. I didn't know it was some kinda top secret military gizmo until I turned it on.

BLACKGAARD:

It's a lap top computer, Gregory, not a gizmo . . . Why didn't you come to me right away?

YOUNG MAN:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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It was a normal heist. I was
gonna meet you tonight as usual.

BLACKGAARD:

You went to the airport.

YOUNG MAN:

I got scared! I didn't know what
to do!

BLACKGAARD:

You went to the airport, Gregory.
You were going to leave . . .
weren't you?

YOUNG MAN:

(SCARED) I - I . . . (GIVING UP)
I was scared . . .

BLACKGAARD:

Of me? But, why? I've always
taken good care of you, haven't I?

YOUNG MAN:

Yeah, but . . . this was something
different. I mean, it's hot . . .
I've got friends in Cincinnati. I
thought I could lay low for
awhile.

BLACKGAARD:

And you weren't trying to sneak
out of town to sell the computer
to someone else?

YOUNG MAN:

No! No! I don't know people like
that. Man, right now, I wish I
never touched the thing. The

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====
police are swarming all over the
place.

BLACKGAARD:

Did anyone see you at the airport?

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YOUNG MAN:

I never got out of the hotel van.

BLACKGAARD:

Which hotel?

YOUNG MAN:

I dunno . . . Excalibur or
Excelsior -- one of those "ex's."

BLACKGAARD:

So, the driver saw you.

YOUNG MAN:

Yeah, I guess. Him and two other
people -- an old man and a girl.
But I got out before the van got
to the hotel and came straight
here . . . I'm telling you, I'm
scared!

BLACKGAARD:

No need to be, Gregory. I'll take
care of you. Just like always.
Your little "find" could serve me
very, very well. And you know how
I reward those who serve me well
. . .

[A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.]

BLACKGAARD:

Come in.

[PINKY ENTERS WITH THE LAP TOP AND DROPS IT ON THE TABLE. BY
THE WAY, HIS VOICE SHOULD SOUND UNLIKE SOMEONE CALLED "PINKY" --
GRAVELLY AND THREATENING -- WITH AN ACCENT LIKE ARNOLD
SCHWARTZENEGGER.]

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BLACKGAARD:

Ah, Pinky. Is it the right
machine?

PINKY:

(SHOULD SOUND LIKE ARNOLD
SCHWARTZENEGGER) No. It's just a
regular lap top.

YOUNG MAN:

(PANICKED) But . . . it's the one
I got out of the car! I swear!

BLACKGAARD:

Are you sure it's the wrong one,
Pinky?

PINKY:

Yes. The owner's name is engraved
on the bottom. I've checked
through all the files on the hard
disk. Boring. Academic material.
No military secrets.

[A DEADLY PAUSE.]

BLACKGAARD:

Gregory?

YOUNG MAN:

I don't know what happened!
That's it, I tell you! That's the
one I got! And this morning it
had all kinds of military
technical junk on it! You've
gotta believe me!!

BLACKGAARD:

You wouldn't be foolish enough to
try and double-cross me, would
you?

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

YOUNG MAN:

No! No! Never! Really! Please
. . .

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BLACKGAARD:

(CALMING HIM) All right, all right . . . Calm down . . . I believe you . . . (A BEAT) Pinky, I think Gregory needs some fresh air and food. Are you hungry, Gregory?

YOUNG MAN:

Yeah, kinda . . .

BLACKGAARD:

Arrange for something to eat.

PINKY:

(CONFUSED) Eat?

BLACKGAARD:

Yes . . . take care of Gregory, all right?

[A BEAT]

PINKY:

Sure . . . Come on, Gregory.

YOUNG MAN:

(GETS UP TO LEAVE; PANICKED AGAIN)
Wait a minute -- you can help me get outta Chicago, right? I can't afford to get caught. Not again.

BLACKGAARD:

Trust me. The police will never find you.

YOUNG MAN:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

(RELIEVED) Thanks. You won't
regret this. I mean it.

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BLACKGAARD:

(SINCERELY) I know . . . I know

. . .

[THE DOOR CLOSSES. BLACKGAARD PONDERES THE COMPUTER.]

BLACKGAARD:

(A SIGH) Bunglers . . . I'm surrounded by bunglers! (THE CAT MEOWS) Oh, Sasha . . . It was all going to be so easy, wasn't it? Disguise Pinky as the courier, have him pick up the computer and bring it directly back here . . . only, he makes a pit stop and Kelly steals the computer from him! And then he grabs the wrong one out of a hotel van! . . . Sounds like a Marx Brothers movie -- if I believe Kelly actually made an honest mistake . . . (A BEAT) He doesn't have the brains for anything else . . . But the chances of their being two identical computers in the back of the same hotel van are . . . (ANOTHER SIGH) Still . . . (LIFTS UP THE LAP TOP) Let's see who's name is on the bottom of this one. A little chat with him might -- (READING, BEGINS TO LAUGH) "Property of John A. Whittaker, Whit's End, Odyssey." (ANOTHER LAUGH) It truly is a small world

. . .

[HIS LAUGH GROWS IN INTENSITY -- LOUD AND ROBUST -- ECHOING INTO THE COMMERCIAL BREAK.]

CHRIS:

Uh oh, who is this stranger and why does his laugh sound so

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====
familiar? We'll find out when our
Adventure continues, right after
this.

[COMMERCIAL

BREAK]

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SCENE

[A DETECTIVE'S CUBICLE AT THE POLICE STATION. TYPING, RINGING PHONES, TALKING, ARGUING -- THE NOISES ONE WOULD EXPECT TO HEAR IN SUCH A BUSY PLACE. WHIT AND CONNIE ARE SITTING. WAITING.]

CONNIE:

How much longer do you think we'll have to wait?

WHIT:

I don't know. I'm sure the police are doing their best.

CONNIE:

Do you think we'll still have time to see the Sears Tower before it closes?

WHIT:

We'll try.

[THE DOOR OPENS AND SPECIAL AGENT FRANK PHILLIPS ENTERS. HE'S A ROOKIE-TYPE, STAR-STRUCK WITH HIS POSITION BUT LACKING THE ABILITY TO DO IT WITH ANY DEGREE OF FINESSE.]

AGENT PHILLIPS:

I'm terribly sorry about the wait, Mr. Whittaker, Miss Kendall. I'm Special Agent Frank Phillips from an investigative unit in the Department of Defense.

WHIT:

So they've pulled in the special branch for this.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====
This is very serious, Mr.
Whittaker. That computer has to
be found. Now, I've been reading
over the statements and
description of Greg Kelly you gave
Detective Baker a few minutes ago.

CONNIE:

(LOW) A few hours, you mean.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Yes, well, as I said: I'm sorry for the wait. Normally you would've been out of here by now, but your position, Mr. Whittaker, required an additional security check.

CONNIE:

You had to double-check Whit? Why?

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Mr. Whittaker knows the answer to that, I think.

WHIT:

Remember Applesauce, Connie?

CONNIE:

The computer program? How could I forget it?! It made Whit's End go crazy!! (DAWNS ON HER) You made that for the Department of Defense?!

WHIT:

(SHRUGS) Among others . . .

AGENT PHILLIPS:

She knows about Applesauce?

WHIT:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====
Nothing that would breach
security.

CONNIE:

But, you destroyed Applesauce!

WHIT:

It's not the only program I've worked on, Connie.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Once an agent, always an agent, eh, Whittaker?

CONNIE:

(STUNNED) An agent?!

WHIT:

(QUICKLY) That was a very, very long time ago -- Uh, can we get on with this, please? I don't think you've kept us here because you want to review my past.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

You're right. You're still here because now that I know who you really are, I'd like to establish your connection with all this.

WHIT:

There is no connection beyond what I've already told you.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Come now. A government computer gets stolen and I'm supposed to believe that you -- a man who spends a lot of time working on government computer projects -- just "happened" to be in the same van with the suspected thief?

WHIT:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

It may sound odd, but that's what
happened.

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AGENT PHILLIPS:

(SKEPTICAL) Uh-huh . . . Who are you working for, Mr. Whittaker?

WHIT:

I'm not working for anyone, Mr. Phillips, and I don't believe you have security clearance to ask me these questions.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

I'm cleared to ask whatever I need to ask to find this computer before it falls into the wrong hands -- if it hasn't already.

WHIT:

And I assure you that the account of what we've done and who we've seen since arriving in Chicago is the truth. That's as much as I can do to help you find that computer.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(PAUSE) All right . . . But I will be in touch again.

WHIT:

I look forward to it. Can we go now?

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Of course. I don't want to hold up your visit to the Sears Tower. Have a nice day.

[MUSIC: BRIDGES TO THE NEXT SCENE]

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SCENE

[THE FRONT OF THE HOTEL. THE POLICE HAVE JUST DROPPED WHIT AND CONNIE OFF. STREET NOISES.]

WHIT:

Thanks for the lift, Officer.

OFFICER:

(CALLING FROM INSIDE THE CAR) No problem.

[WHIT CLOSSES THE DOOR AND STEPS BACK FROM THE CURB AS THE POLICE CAR PULLS AWAY.]

CONNIE:

I'm gonna tell you right up front that I don't like that Agent Phillips. He's too nosy.

WHIT:

He's just doing his job.

CONNIE:

Maybe, but there was a point there where it almost sounded like he thought you stole that computer!

WHIT:

I'm sure he considers that a distinct possibility.

CONNIE:

What?! But, why?!

WHIT:

When you're dealing with the kind of information that's on that

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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computer, Connie, you have to
suspect everyone -- especially
people who may have had access to
that information.

=====

CONNIE:

(GRUDGINGLY) Well, I guess that's
true . . . (A BEAT) But, now that
he . . . well . . .

WHIT:

"Knows who I am?"

CONNIE:

Yeah!

WHIT:

Believe me, Connie, that's not as
big of a deal as you think it is.

CONNIE:

Yeah, well, it's not everyday you
find out your boss is a Special
Agent!

WHIT:

Was -- and it was a long time ago
-- and I don't wanna talk about
it!

CONNIE:

But--

[THEY'RE AT THEY DOOR.]

DOORMAN:

May I get the door for you, ma'am?

CONNIE:

(NICER TONE) Oh -- uh, thank you.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

WHIT:

Thanks . . .

[THEY ENTER THE HOTEL LOBBY. APPROPRIATE AMBIENT CHANGES.]

=====

WHIT:

(LOWER) I mean it, Connie.

CONNIE:

Okay, okay -- we won't talk about
it . . . But do you think Phillips
trusts you now?

WHIT:

No. I'm sure he doesn't.

CONNIE:

Why not?

WHIT:

Didn't you wonder how he knew we
wanted to see the Sears Tower
today?

CONNIE:

I figured we said something about
it.

WHIT:

We did. Before he came in.

CONNIE:

You mean --

WHIT:

The office was bugged. They were
listening in on our conversation
while we were waiting. That's how
they work.

CONNIE:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

Oh brother. This is starting to
give me the creeps.

=====

WHIT:

Don't let it spook you. As far as I'm concerned, we've done our duty and should get on with our sight-seeing--

[HOTEL MANAGER VICTOR HERMAN INTERCEPTS THEM.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

Pardon me. You're John Whittaker and Connie Kendall, correct?

WHIT:

That's right.

HOTEL MANAGER:

I'm Victor Herman, the manager of this hotel. Would you be so kind as to come to my office? It's rather an emergency.

CONNIE:

An emergency?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Yes. Please follow me.

[MUSIC: STINGER BRIDGE TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

SCENE

[MINUTES LATER, IN THE HOTEL MANAGER'S OFFICE. THE DOOR OPENS AND THEY ALL ENTER.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

(ENTERING) In the twenty-five years that I've been working for the Excelsior, we've only had this sort of thing happen three times.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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WHIT:

What sort of thing?

HOTEL MANAGER:

(CLOSES THE DOOR; LOWERS HIS
VOICE; NERVOUS) An attempted
break-in.

CONNIE:

Break-in!

HOTEL MANAGER:

Not your room, Miss Kendall -- Mr.
Whittaker's.

CONNIE:

Whit!

WHIT:

You said an "attempted" break-in?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Yes. It happened about an hour
ago. Thelma, one of our cleaning
staff, came upon the culprits just
as they tried to break into your
room.

WHIT:

Culprits -- there was more than
one?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Two very sharply dressed,
professional men. They ran when
Thelma screamed. We didn't catch
them, unfortunately . . . I put
your things in the hotel safe,
just in case.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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WHIT:

I see. Mind if I have a look?

HOTEL MANAGER:

No, of course not! (STARTS OFF)
It's right over here--

CONNIE:

(STARTING OFF) I'm going up to
check my stuff.

HOTEL MANAGER:

(COMING BACK ON) Uh, I'm positive
they didn't touch your room, Miss
Kendall. Our hotel detectives
have already been in.

CONNIE:

I still wanna check it. Whit?

WHIT:

I think you should. But, Mr.
Herman, would you please have one
of your people let her in the
room?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Certainly. I'll ring the boy on
your floor . . . (PICKS UP THE
PHONE; UNDER THE NEXT FEW LINES)
(Yes, this is Mr. Herman. One of
our guests will be coming up
momentarily. Would you meet her
at the elevator and let her into
her room, please . . . thank you.)
(HANGS UP)

CONNIE:

(TO WHIT) I don't need anybody to
let me in, Whit.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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WHIT:

I know, but I don't want you
walking in toe room by yourself.

CONNIE:

(SIGHS) This is unbelievable!

WHIT:

Life in the big city, kiddo.

CONNIE:

Then I'm glad I live in Odyssey!

WHIT:

(CHUCKLES)

HOTEL MANAGER:

(HANGS UP THE PHONE) The boy on
that floor will meet you at the
elevator, Miss. Kendall.

CONNIE:

Thanks. (SHE STARTS OFF)

WHIT:

I'll be up in a few minutes,
Connie.

CONNIE:

Okay, Whit. (OPENS THE DOOR;
GOING OFF) They better not've
touched my hair dryer . . .

[SHE CLOSSES THE DOOR, LEAVING WHIT WITH THE HOTEL MANAGER.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

If you'll have a seat while I open
the safe?

WHIT:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

(SITTING) Of course . . .

=====

HOTEL MANAGER:

(DIALING THE COMBINATION;
NERVOUSLY) I just want you to
know how very sorry we are for the
whole incident, Mr. Whittaker. As
I said, this has rarely happened.
We would be honored if you would
have dinner here tonight at our
expense.

WHIT:

Thank you, but that won't be
necessary . . . (THINKING) I just
can't imagine what I would have
that anybody would want to steal
. . .

HOTEL MANAGER:

(FINISHING) Ah -- here we are . .
. (OPENS THE SAFE) I believe
you'll find everything in order --
your suitcase and your computer.

WHIT:

(IT HITS HIM) Computer . . .?

[MUSIC: A SUSPENSE THEME STARTS UNDER, LOW.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

Yes. I have a lap top of my own
-- that's how I knew what it was
. . . although my carry bag is not
as nice as this one . . .

WHIT:

(TO HIMSELF) Is it possible . . .?

HOTEL MANAGER:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

Something wrong?

WHIT:

Perhaps . . . I need to look my
computer. May I use your desk?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Of course.

WHIT:

Thank you. (HE UNZIPS THE CASE,
TAKES OUT THE COMPUTER, AND
EXAMINES IT) Mm-hm -- my
identification plate is gone.

HOTEL MANAGER:

This is the computer we brought
down from your room, Mr.
Whittaker, I assure you!

WHIT:

I have no doubt of that, Mr.
Herman . . . could you leave me
alone for just a moment, please?

HOTEL MANAGER:

(HIS NERVES AREN'T USED TO THIS)
Well, yes, of course, anything you
like . . .

[THE HOTEL MANAGER EXITS]

WHIT:

(LIFTS THE SCREEN AND TURNS THE
COMPUTER ON) The only way to be
sure is to check the programs . .
. (HE TYPES IN A FEW COMMANDS.
THERE IS A BEEP.) I don't believe
it . . . (READS THE SCREEN)
"This computer and its contents
are the property of the United
States Department of Defense . .
." The stolen computer. (A BEAT,
HE MUSES) Now, the question is:
did those men put it in my room or

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

=====

. . . (REALIZING AS HE SPEAKS) was
it . . . accidentally switched in
the hotel van!

[DRAMATIC MUSIC TAKES US TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

=====

SCENE

[THE ELEVATOR. CONNIE IS RIDING UP TO HER ROOM.]

CONNIE:

(TO HERSELF) This is unbelievable
. . . First we get stopped at the
airport, then we spend all morning
at the police station, and now
somebody tries to break into our
rooms . . . (A SIGH) What next?

[THE BELL DINGS AS THE ELEVATOR STOPS AND THE DOORS OPEN.]

PINKY:

(SUDDENLY) Are you Miss Kendall?

CONNIE:

Yeah-- (ALARMED) You're not the
bellboy-- (HE GRABS HER) Hey-
mmfff!

[HE CLAMPS HIS HAND OVER HER MOUTH, AS THE:]

[MUSIC: STINGS BACK TO WHIT PICKING UP THE PHONE, PUNCHES
BUTTON.]

VOICE:

(FILTERED) Hotel operator.

WHIT:

Hello? Get me the police.

VOICE:

Right away, sir.

HOTEL MANAGER:

(COMING IN) Mr. Whittaker? Is
everything all right?

WHIT:

No. (HE TURNS OFF THE COMPUTER
AND PUTS IT BACK IN THE BACK AS HE
SPEAKS) Will you please put this
back in the safe and keep it there
for me?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Of course.

WHIT:

And I'm the only one who has
access to it, right?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Absolutely -- except for myself,
of course.

WHIT:

Under any circumstances?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Sir, we treat our hotel safe like
a Swiss bank.

WHIT:

Good enough.

POLICE VOICE:

(FILTERED) Chicago Police.

WHIT:

(INTO PHONE) Yes, Special Agent
Frank Phillips, please.

HOTEL MANAGER:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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(NERVOUSLY) "Special Agent?"
You're not calling the police, Mr.
Whittaker?!

=====

WHIT:

Don't worry, Mr. Herbert. We
won't cause a scene.

HOTEL MANAGER:

(AGHAST) A scene!

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Agent Phillips.

WHIT:

(INTO THE PHONE) John Whittaker
here. You were right and you were
wrong.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) What are you talking
about?

WHIT:

I wasn't involved in this case
before, but I am now.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Oh?

WHIT:

Yes. I have the computer you're
looking for. It must've been
accidentally switched by the
driver when Greg Kelly got out.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Where are you?

WHIT:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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The hotel -- the manager's office.

=====

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Where's the computer?

WHIT:

The hotel safe.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) All right, don't move, Whittaker! Stay right where you are. And don't take your eyes off that safe. I'll be right there. And, for heaven's sake, don't talk to anyone. Don't even open the door! You could be in great danger!

WHIT:

Danger. (BEAT, ALARMED) Connie!

[MUSIC: STING TO THE NEXT SCENE]

SCENE

[CONNIE IS WITH PINKY ON A SERVICE ELEVATOR.]

CONNIE:

I take it you don't work for the hotel . . .

PINKY:

(GRUNTS)

CONNIE:

You didn't have to drag me to a different elevator, you know. The one I came up in also goes down.

PINKY:

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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Too many people.

=====

CONNIE:

Uh huh . . . (A BEAT) Just out of
curiosity: where does this
elevator take us to?

PINKY:

Parking garage.

CONNIE:

Oh . . .

PINKY:

Relax. Everything will be all
right. No one wants to hurt you.

[WE HEAR THE TELL-TALE `DING' OF THE ELEVATOR BELL AND THE DOORS
OPEN.]

CONNIE:

Yeah? Well, you better watch it,
bub, because I know John Avery
Whittaker--

BLACKGAARD:

What a coincidence -- so do I . . .
.

CONNIE:

Huh? Who said that?

BLACKGAARD:

(STEPS IN FRONT OF ELEVATOR) I
did.

CONNIE:

(GASPS)

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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BLACKGAARD:

(WARMLY) Hello, Miss Kendall.

ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY, EPISODE #188 PAGE
"Waylaid in the Windy City, Pt. I" by P.McCusker
AirDate:6.22.91

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CONNIE:

(STUNNED) Y-you?!

BLACKGAARD:

(WITH A SMILE) Yes -- Dr. Regis
Blackgaard, at your service . . .

[MUSIC: RISES UP DRAMATICALLY AND TAKES US TO . . .

. . . THE END OF PART
ONE.]