

SPIDER SCENES

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. A HOLLYWOOD STREET - DAY - 1932 - TRAVELLING

SUPER: HOLLYWOOD 1932

We ride with a spiffy convertible roadster as it tools along a sunlit avenue. MERIAN C. COOPER drives. His partner ERNEST B. SCHOEDSACK sits beside him. These two dynamic individuals are the producer-directors of *King Kong*. Cooper puffs mightily on a pipe, but its smoke can't conceal the scowl his face is cultivating.

SCHOEDSACK

Obie's not gonna like this one bit.

COOPER

You're forgetting something, Ernie. Willis works for us, not the other way around.

SCHOEDSACK

Maybe it should be the other way around.

COOPER

Tell you what. Keep up that attitude and you, me, and Obie will be standing on the same bread line together.

SCHOEDSACK

There you go again. You are so harsh on the man. Maybe it hasn't sunk into that hard skull of yours the extent of Obie's talent.

Cooper taps his empty pipe against the dashboard.

COOPER

Talent schmalent. There's a studio about to go bankrupt breathing down my neck. Artists don't get paid to be objective. I do. We're gonna pull the scene, and that's that. I'll break the news to him lunchtime.

SCHOEDSACK

Obie skips lunch.

COOPER

Obie skips lunch. And why is he working alone? Kong's deadline is so close it's about to ream my ass.

SCHOEDSACK

Because he drives Marcel nuts.

COOPER

O'Brien's slowing down. He needs the help.

SCHOEDSACK

Well--they didn't rush Michaelangelo to finish the Sistine Chapel.

COOPER

The Vatican was rich, Ernie! RKO's flat broke!

SCHOEDSACK

At least you acknowledge Obie as an artist. We have in our employ-- unquestionably and without a shred of doubt--an absolute genius. I'm amazed at the amount of detail he packs into a shot.

COOPER

Never have I doubted the man's abilities. Correct me if I have.

SHOEDSACK

And did you catch the audience at the test screening? I could hear jaws hitting the carpet when Kong tossed the sailors off that log.

COOPER

Maybe we weren't in the same theater. A lot of those people got up and left. And they took their jaws with them.

The roadster approaches the RKO Radio Pictures studio gates. A GUARD steps out of a booth and greets them with a salute and a friendly smile.

GUARD

Good morning, Mr. Cooper. And to you, Mr. Schoedsack.

COOPER

Morning, Frank.

The guard opens the gate. The roadster enters the grounds, passing costumed EXTRAS and GRIPS going about their business.

SCHOEDSACK

Seventeen. I counted them. Out of a packed theater of three hundred.

COOPER

Seventeen too many! Kong was supposed to thrill and entertain that crowd, not send them running for cover!

SCHOEDSACK

Good publicity for a great movie.

COOPER

Ernie, you were so busy admiring Obie's handiwork, you never overheard the jabber that went on after those sailors bought the farm.

SCHOEDSACK

In the middle of the picture?

COOPER

Yes, Ernie! After those pit spiders made a gory meal of them! Half the audience wouldn't stop bellyaching about it!

SCHOEDSACK

It's a terrific scene! Why?

The roadster brakes to a stop in front of a studio building. Cooper turns to Schoedsack.

COOPER

It stopped the picture cold. I'm cutting it.

SCHOEDSACK

You'll do no such thing!

Cooper gestures in disgust.

INSIDE THE STUDIO

They walk briskly past *King Kong* jungle sets and a large tabletop cliff in miniature occupied by a pterodactyl model.

SCHOEDSACK

It took Obie and Delgado over a month to film that sequence! Do you realize the labor that went into it?

COOPER

It was a fine bit of work. But it's too gruesome. Crowds will flee the theaters in droves. We'll bomb!

SCHOEDSACK

We're making a monster movie. Did you forget? The monsters are *supposed* to be gruesome!

COOPER

Oversized lizards and snakes the crowds can accept. Even a giant ape, who happens to be our star. But there's something about those spiders. Maybe it's the way Obie moved them. All legs and black fur coming up on you fast, dragging that plump sack of a body...

Cooper turns to Schoedsack, emphasizing with his pipe.

COOPER

Ernie, here's what I believe. The good Lord created the reptiles and the birds and the mammals and I can look at every one of 'em and say they've got a right to be alive. But spiders? Whole 'nother story.

SHOEDSACK

Coop--

COOPER

Maybe the Lord God was sick that day. Maybe He had a bad fever when he dreamed them up.

SCHOEDSACK

Coop--we oughta think about it.

COOPER

I've made up my mind. Someday you're gonna realize I did the right thing.

They stop in front of a tabletop set. Two GRIPS pass behind them carrying a large pane of jungle-painted glass. Cooper puts an arm around his partner's shoulder.

COOPER

I want you to know this. Obie's gonna save this studio. Every kid from Brooklyn to San Diego's gonna be gripping their armrests from the first scene of Kong to the last. A lot of grownups too. Think I don't see what a wizard we hired? But you gotta trust me on this.

SCHOEDSACK

(turns to Cooper)

I've seen you stand off a lion at twenty yards, picking your teeth and moaning about Dempsey's latest fight. But you're afraid of spiders, friend.

COOPER

No more than the next guy.

SCHOEDSACK

You're afraid of spiders!

Cooper doesn't respond for a beat. He sighs.

COOPER

I'm not doing it for me.

SCHOEDSACK

Say it!

COOPER

I'm afraid of spiders. Happy?

SCHOEDSACK

I'll let you know. When are you gonna tell Obie?

COOPER

I'm not.
(points with pipe)
You are.

SCHOEDSACK

What? But you said--

COOPER

Maybe I'm afraid of Obie too. I'll be in my office if you need me.

Cooper walks away, revealing WILLIS O'BRIEN in deep concentration manipulating a model of King Kong in his tabletop jungle. He turns to Schoedsack.

Schoedsack smiles sheepishly back.

O'Brien barely acknowledges him. The animator signals to a GAFFER. Suddenly the set is flooded with bright light.

A CAMERAMAN steps behind a tripod-mounted movie camera, peers carefully into the viewfinder and gently snaps a frame.

COOPER'S OFFICE DOOR

His name stenciled on the frosted glass pane. As we move toward it we hear a woman's giggles. The door swings open. FAY WRAY and BRUCE CABOT enter, in costume for *King Kong*.

Cooper looks up from his desk. He greets them with an amused frown and lights his pipe as they approach him.

COOPER

If you two are here for a raise,
you've come to the wrong place.

FAY

Oh hush, Coopie. Look what we
brought you.

COOPER

Ah, not again, Fay!

Fay sets a bakery box on Cooper's desk and daintily undoes the string. She opens the lid with a flourish. Brownies!

We move away from the desk toward the wall, favoring a large framed poster from *The Most Dangerous Game*.

COOPER (O.S.)

Oh my Lord. You know, the way to
a producer's heart is straight
through his stomach.

CABOT (O.S.)

That one in front looks good.

The sound of a hand getting slapped.

COOPER (O.S.)

Hands off, Cabot!

FAY (O.S.)

Mmmm!

Munching and fingerlicking. Beyond the poster, an open wall safe. Inside, a small 35mm film canister. A handwritten label taped onto the rim:

Spider Scenes

COOPER (O.S.)

That's enough, you two! Aren't
you due in makeup?

FAY (O.S.)

You'll save one for my tall, dark
and handsome co-star, won't you?

COOPER (O.S.)

Not on your life! Kong's getting
too fat!

Fay giggles again as she leaves with Cabot.

COOPER (O.S.)

And both of you, brush the chocolate
out of your teeth!

(to himself)

Damn these desserts. I'm starting to
look a bit like old man Kong myself.

Cooper's hand shuts the safe and spins the dial. He heads
for the door and we hear it close behind him.

TIMELAPSE RIPPLE:

The safe door gradually ages to a rusted, decrepit state.
Decades have passed. FAST MOTION. Unseen carpenters install
a sheetrock wall over the old safe, concealing it from view.

TIMELAPSE RIPPLE: FAST MOTION. Another team of workers lay
a cement block wall up over the sheetrock. TO BLACK.

A long silent beat...

Smashing, ripping and tearing. The wall is violently
demolished by futuristic power equipment. SOLDIERS clothed
in sleek protective gear claw away old sheetrock and wall
studs, revealing the safe.

SUPER: 250 YEARS LATER

A SOLDIER places a futuristic safecracking device over the
dial. It magnetically attaches itself to the door with a
loud clank. He activates the controls and withdraws.

LEDs wink. A small LCD screen displays thousands of
combinations of numbers. A protruding knob whirrs rapidly
forward and back as the screen retains each correct number
detected until a series of beeps indicates success.

The device is snatched away and the safe yanked open.
The canister is revealed, rusted, label yellowed and peeling.

The soldier's gloved hand reaches in, pulls out the canister.
Slips it into a hermetic plastic bag. Seals the seam.

The soldier hands off the bag to the COMMANDO FORCE LEADER, who turns and exits quickly from the cavernous boiler room this squad has broken into. COMMANDOS turn and follow, their advanced weapons drawn and ready.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER FOUNDATION - DAY

The entire squad exits the bowels of a huge building into murky daylight. A massive Hollywood skyscraper perched on gigantic coiled earthquake springs towers above the commando force as they rush toward a waiting military hovercraft.

Commandos survey the squalid neighborhood constantly for danger as they approach the craft. Everyone boards. The hovercraft's antigravs scream as it takes off.

A STREET GANG emerges from an alley and hurls rocks at the ascending military craft. One of these youths aims a handgun sideways at the ship. He fires off several shots.

The bullets impact the hull harmlessly. A belly gun pivots toward the ground and fires off a sizzling ray blast--

--searing through the hapless youth, incinerating him as he gawks upward, melting the weapon in his hand into dripping slag. We rise up several feet above the youth as his lifeless body collapses onto the rubble.

His helpless companions circle around him. They throw furious glances and middle fingers skyward.

Higher, higher, until we see the vast, unbelievable sprawl of a future Los Angeles, clustered with massive skyscrapers from Santa Monica to Pasadena towering above a thick layer of smog...

FADE OUT.