

Zero Hour

Based on a short story by Ray Bradbury
Teleplay by Bob Francis

Characters:

Brigitte
Jennifer
Boyfriend
Friend 1
Friend 2
Cris
John Collins
Pete Britz
Dale Jarrick

FADE IN: Kids playing outdoors: opening credits. BRIGITTE runs in house and rummages through the kitchen cabinets. JENNIFER comes in and stands behind her, hands on hips.

JENNIFER
(clears her throat)
Brigitte, what are you doing?

BRIGITTE
I need the flashlight - and a cookie sheet.

JENNIFER
What for?

BRIGITTE
A game! Can I take the stuff? Please?

JENNIFER
I don't know. What would your mom say?

BRIGITTE
(begging)
Oh, come on Jennifer! Please? We won't break it - I promise! And Mom won't be home till five -

JENNIFER
Oh, all right. Just be careful.

BRIGITTE
(brightens)
Thanks! I won't break anything!

BRIGITTE runs to the back door with the stuff under her arm. JENNIFER stops her.

JENNIFER

Wait a minute. What kind of game are you playing?

BRIGITTE

Invasion!

BRIGITTE rushes outside and meets two of her friends. Both of them are carrying stuff as well.

BRIGITTE

Okay, I got my stuff.

FRIEND 1

(holding an old radio)

Me too.

BRIGITTE

Did you get the transformers?

FRIEND 2

Yeah, in my brother's science kit. He'll kill me if he finds out I took it.

FRIEND 1

What's a transformer?

FRIEND 2

I don't know. I guess we'll find out.

BRIGITTE

This is gonna be the best game ever!

Inside the house, JENNIFER walks into the living room and turns on the television. She flips through a number of channels and finds "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street". She watches for a moment then the picture disappears in a flood of static. Despite her efforts, JENNIFER can't fix the picture. She looks at the clock; it's 1:30 pm.

CUT TO EXT. SHOT. BRIGITTE is standing over one of her friends.

BRIGITTE

No! I said put that one over there! Now connect it with the wire -

An older boy, JOHN COLLINS, walks up and stands beside BRIGITTE.

COLLINS
Hey, what are you doing?

BRIGITTE
(turning angrily)
Go away!

COLLINS
Come on, let me help -

BRIGITTE
You can't!

COLLINS
Why not?

BRIGITTE
We know you - you'll make fun of us!

COLLINS
No I won't! I promise!

Two other boys, DALE JARRICK and PETE BRITZ, ride up on their bikes.

BRITZ
Hey! John! Let the little kids play!

COLLINS
But this looks like fun! You should see what they've got -

BRIGITTE
You can't help! You're too old!

COLLINS
I'm not that old -

BRIGITTE
Get out of here or I'll kick you!

JARRICK
(laughing)
Oh, boy! I think you're in trouble now!

BRITZ

Come on, John! Let the little babies play with their
Martians! Who cares?

COLLINS looks from one to the other and finally decides to
go with the older boys.

BRIGITTE

(softly to herself)
I hate them.

FRIEND 2

Okay, I got it connected. Now what?

BRIGITTE

I don't know. We'll have to ask Drill.

All three of them get up and walk to a large woodsy bush.
BRIGITTE closes her eyes and FRIEND 1 prepares to write.
BRIGITTE'S face relaxes and lights up. She slowly opens her
eyes.

BRIGITTE

Triangle.

FRIEND 1

What's that for?

BRIGITTE

Nevermind. Just write it down. Four, nine, seven. A, B and
X. For beam, add a hexagonal -

FRIEND 1

Wait a minute! I'm still trying to spell 'triangle'! It's
still t- r- i-

JENNIFER

a- n- g- l- e.

FRIEND 1

Thanks, Jennifer.

JENNIFER

Come on, Brigitte, it's time for lunch.

Inside BRIGITTE sits impatiently. Her leg furiously taps at the floor while JENNIFER microwaves their soup.

BRIGITTE

Come on, Jennifer! This is an emergency!

JENNIFER

(stifling a smile)
Of course it is.

JENNIFER sets down the bowls of soup and BRIGITTE gulps it down.

JENNIFER

Careful! Don't eat so fast!

BRIGITTE

I've got to. Drill's waiting for us!

JENNIFER

Is Drill a new kid in the neighborhood?

BRIGITTE

He's new all right!

JENNIFER

Is he that blond boy who lives down the street?

BRIGITTE

No that's Billy. I've gotta go, or we won't be ready for the Invasion!

JENNIFER

Who's invading who?

BRIGITTE

Mars invading the Earth - well, not Mars... I don't know -
from up there...
(turns angrily)
You're laughing!

JENNIFER

(swallowing her smile)

I'm sorry. I won't do it again. So, Drill's a Martian.

BRIGITTE

Well, I don't know if he's from Mars exactly, but he's had a long trip.

JENNIFER
I can imagine.

BRIGITTE
You see, they couldn't think of a way to attack the Earth.

JENNIFER
(nods)
We're impregnable.

BRIGITTE
Right. And Drill says in order to have a good fight, you've got to surprise them - to win anyway. And you need help from the enemy.

JENNIFER
You mean a fifth column?

BRIGITTE
(brightens)
That's what Drill called it! Because they couldn't think of a way to surprise us enough to win!

JENNIFER
Well, we Earthlings are pretty tough customers.

BRIGITTE
Yeah, then they thought of children!
(frowns in concentration)
It's something to do with dimensions - twelve of 'em! And quantized space with kids under ten and imagination... it's real funny to hear Drill talk!

JENNIFER
It sounds like a good game, but you'll have to wrap it up soon. You have to take a bath before your mother gets home.

BRIGITTE
Oh, I don't want to take a bath.

JENNIFER
(in mock bewilderment)
Why is it that all kids hate water?

BRIGITTE

Drill says after the invasion, I won't have to take baths.

JENNIFER

(frowns)

Oh, he did, did he?

BRIGITTE

Yeah, and we can stay up as late as we want and watch television and no school and -

JENNIFER

And Mr. Drill better watch what he says, or he'll get some trouble, fifth column or no.

BRIGITTE stands up and looks out the window. PETE BRITZ and DALE JARRICK are taunting her two FRIENDS.

BRIGITTE

We're having trouble with guys like Pete Britz and Dale Jarrick. They're grown up - they laugh at us. We'll kill them first.

JENNIFER

You're going to kill them just because they're growing up?

BRIGITTE

Yeah. We have to get rid of all the grown-ups.

JENNIFER

(a little hurt)

What about me?

BRIGITTE

Hmm. Well, you'll be last.

(she smiles)

Don't worry! It won't hurt!

BRIGITTE runs out the back door leaving JENNIFER a little lost.

JENNIFER

Terrific.

The phone rings behind her. She walks over and answers it.

JENNIFER

Hello?

Hi, Cris! How's you're adventure in babysitting?

CRIS

The usual. It wouldn't be so bad if the children weren't underfoot... and with this super-invasion going on -

JENNIFER

Your kids are playing that too?

CRIS

Well, you know kids' games. They move so fast and spread like wildfire. I wouldn't be surprised if every kid in the world wasn't playing Invasion by now.

JENNIFER

Were we ever like that?

CRIS

I think we were probably worse. Remember that time when...

JENNIFER

(waits for a moment)

Hello?

CRIS

I'm sorry.

JENNIFER

What's wrong?

CRIS

Oh, nothing. Jamie just came in and showed me a trick with a yo-yo. It went down the string and disappeared!

BRIGITTE

(comes in with a frog in a box)

Hey, Jennifer, watch this!

BRIGITTE sets the frog down on the table and pulls out a little box. She aims the box at the frog and it vanishes. JENNIFER puts down the phone slowly. BRIGITTE looks up at her grinning.

JENNIFER

(seriously)

How did you do that?

BRIGITTE
(giggling)
Can't tell you. It's not Zero Hour yet!

JENNIFER
Zero Hour? What -

BRIGITTE is already outside. JENNIFER stands silently for a moment then realizes CRIS is still on the phone.

JENNIFER
Cris, are you still there?

CRIS
For a moment I thought we lost the connection.

JENNIFER
I don't understand kids. I just don't understand them. I thought I did, but not anymore.

CRIS
We're all grown up now. Adults close their eyes and ears to the world of make-believe. We don't have Martians because they're just not practical.

CUT TO EXT. SHOT. A flash of light appears by the bushes. FRIEND 2 screams and runs away. JENNIFER runs outside.

JENNIFER
What's going on?

BRIGITTE
Oh, she's just a chicken.

JENNIFER
You didn't hit her, did you?

BRIGITTE
No, she must've grown up fast when Drill came.

JENNIFER
(looks around)
Drill's here?

BRIGITTE

Not exactly. He's stuck halfway. If we can get him all the way through then the others can come and help him.

JENNIFER
Anything I can do to help?

BRIGITTE
Not really.

JENNIFER
Are you sure?

BRIGITTE
(busy with other things with FRIEND 1)
Yeah, we've got it under control. Thanks anyway.

JENNIFER
(takes a step toward the bush)
Can I just watch then?

BRIGITTE
Sorry, Jennifer, you're too old.

JENNIFER
(slowly walks closer to the bush)
I promise I won't laugh.

BRIGITTE
Please don't come any closer.

JENNIFER stops and notices FRIEND 1 is flanking her, holding a box in her hand. She looks over at BRIGITTE.

BRIGITTE
Why don't you go in and relax? It won't be long now.

JENNIFER
(backs up slowly)
I - uh - just thought I could help...

She turns and almost-runs back into the house. The grandfather's clock chimes five o'clock. JENNIFER sits in a chair, waiting. The doorbell rings and she slowly gets up to answer it. It's her BOYFRIEND at the door.

JENNIFER
(relieved)

It's you!

BOYFRIEND

I told you I'd pick you up at five. Who were you expecting?

JENNIFER

I -

(smiles to herself and shakes her head)

You wouldn't believe me if I told you. It's just been one of those days.

BOYFRIEND

I'll carry your stuff out to the car and you can tell me all about it.

JENNIFER

Thanks. Let me call Brigitte.

She walks to the back door and stops. Smoke is pouring out of the bush and bright lights are flashing on and off. BRIGITTE and her FRIEND are dancing around the smoke.

BRIGITTE and FRIEND

He's through! Drill's through! The others are coming!

JENNIFER

(to herself)

Oh my God.

She backs up as a low pitched hum begins. BOYFRIEND meets her in the kitchen.

BOYFRIEND

What's that noise? Jennifer?

The hum grows louder then there's an explosion outside.

BOYFRIEND

(starts to go outside)

What the hell?

JENNIFER

The attic!

BOYFRIEND

Jennifer, that explosion was outside -

JENNIFER
(grabs BOYFRIEND)

Nevermind! The attic! It's our only hope! Come on!

Another explosion rocks the house. JENNIFER and BOYFRIEND are up in the attic. JENNIFER waits until it's over then breathes a sigh of relief.

JENNIFER
We're safe.

BOYFRIEND
This is crazy! You've locked us in here!

Smoke begins to cover the front door, bright lights pour into the foyer.

BRIGITTE
(calling from downstairs)
Jennifer?

BOYFRIEND
(calls out loudly)
Who's there?

JENNIFER
(trying to quiet him)
No! We have to hide! Don't let them find us!

Smoke comes into the house. All the appliances go on as the bright lights hit them. A bright light comes under the attic door and the doorknob rattles.

BRIGITTE
(outside the door)
Jennifer, are you in here? Oilie, Oilie, oxen free.

JENNIFER
(very softly)
Oh please... don't let them...

A bright flash dazzles their eyes then smoke fills the attic. JENNIFER is curled up in a corner. Her BOYFRIEND stares silently and slowly puts his arm around JENNIFER without his eyes ever leaving the doorway. There is no door and thick smoke fills the hallway. BRIGITTE steps out of the smoke. There are strange tall shadows behind her and bright lights in the smoke. She is holding one of the boxes and she aims it at the couple.

BRIGITTE
Game's over.

FREEZE FRAME. FADE OUT.