

Synopsis of *THE ORCHID LOVERS*
(a full length comic drama in one act; sixteen scenes)

TIME:

The near future

PLACE:

The Mojave Desert near the fictitious town of Mescalina, California, at RIDELF: the Research Institute for the Discovery of Extraterrestrial Life Forms. The scenery suggests a laboratory for scientific analysis, a conference room, office, and greenhouse.

CHARACTERS:

NELLA KIMANJANO: an African research chemist; born in Kenya and educated at Oxford, she has a British accent; age mid 20s

HOWARD GOLDEN: an American molecular biologist; age late 20s

JUDITH AMBERS: an American astrophysicist and galactic mapmaker; age 40s

ARMANDO AMARILLO: Judith's estranged husband; a Mexican-American orchidologist; age 40s

AURORA AMBERS: the daughter of Judith and Armando; age 16

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Nella Kimanjano, a research chemist from Kenya, becomes the first human being to endure an infectious change of skin color. Nella resides on the Mojave Desert where she works at a laboratory managed by an renowned astrophysicist and her daughter, Aurora, who are offering a reward to anyone supplying definitive proof of extraterrestrial life. They have employed Nella and a molecular biologist, Howard Golden, to analyze the hundreds of objects, photographs, and videos of abduction testimonials that pass by their microscopes and computers every day. After several futile months, the appearance of a single whisker reveals the presence of an alien microorganism. The whisker is followed by a hand, and soon Nella observes her own dark flesh turning a jaundiced yellow, then later a bilious green. At first she is devastated, isolated, and forced to reflect on her place in the world and her future as a scientist. But greenness brings new insights that make Nella more sensual and sentient, and soon she is devising grandiose schemes for solving the problems of climate change, genocidal wars, and rendering obsolete the assumptions of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious world.

Although *The Orchid Lovers* is a work of science fiction, it is also a parable about race that attempts to touch upon political, scientific, and spiritual issues.

