

Them!

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Based on a treatment by George Worthing Yates

Sequence 1

New Mexico. A small plane flies over the desert. A police car drives along below. The pilot spots a young girl walking alone. The two policemen, Peterson and Blackburn, stop and call to her, but she doesn't respond. "It looks like she's in shock," says Peterson. The pilot spots a car and trailer further up the road, and the policemen, with the girl, drive up to check it out. One side of the trailer is completely torn away and inside the place is a mess. The police find some clothing, covered in blood, and cash. "No footprints or tire marks," says Blackburn, who notices several sugar cubes scattered outside the trailer. The only clue is a print – made by an unknown animal – in the sand. More police and an ambulance arrive. Suddenly, from the desert, comes a high-pitched noise. The girl instantly comes out of her trance. It's clear that she has heard this upsetting noise before.

Sequence 2

Peterson and Blackburn drive to Gramps Johnson's store to see if he has any clues, but find that the store has been torn apart. Inside is a rifle twisted out of shape and Gramps' body. No money has been taken. "This wasn't pushed in," says Peterson of the store's missing wall. "It was pulled out, just like at the trailer." They find a barrel of sugar broken open, swarming with ants. Peterson leaves because he wants to be around when the girl comes out of her trance again, and Blackburn, alone, hears the high-pitched noise. He goes outside. Gunshots and screams are heard.

Sequence 3

Police HQ. A search is on for the killers of Gramps, the family who owned the trailer, and Blackburn. No one yet knows who or what made the print outside the trailer. Are they looking for a homicidal maniac on the loose? "There's no money stolen," says Peterson, "just sugar taken." Graham, an FBI agent, is sent down to investigate. He and Peterson return to police HQ after having visited the trailer. He asks permission to send the plaster cast of the print found outside the trailer to Washington. It still hasn't been identified, and the girl is still unavailable to be interviewed. The coroner shows up with a report on Gramps Johnson: "His neck and back were broken, his chest was crushed, his skull was fractured, and there was enough formic acid in him to kill twenty men."

Sequence 4

Dr. Harold Medford and his daughter Dr. Pat Medford, both of the Department of Agriculture, arrive to assist with the investigation. Medford wants to know the precise location of an atomic bomb test in the area that took place nine years ago. He has a theory about what is going on but won't reveal anything until he is absolutely certain.

Sequence 5

Graham, Peterson and the Medfords visit the girl. Medford puts some formic acid into a glass and has the girl smell it. She immediately comes out of her trance and screams "Them! Them!"

Sequence 6

Graham, Peterson and the Medfords visit the trailer in the desert. "Rather slim pickings for food," Pat says to her father. "They turn carnivorous for lack of a habitual diet." Graham asks Pat what she is talking about, but is again told that Medford won't reveal his theory until he is certain. Medford finds another print, and based on its size determines that the creature that made it is "over eight feet." Everyone hears the high-pitched noise from the desert. Suddenly an enormous ant attacks them. Peterson and Graham shoot and kill it. "A fantastic mutation," says Medford, "probably caused by lingering radiation from the first atomic bomb." Medford insists that it is vital the colony be immediately located.

Sequence 7

Next day. Peterson and Medford in a plane, Graham and Pat in a helicopter, all searching for the nest. Pat sees a huge hole in the ground. They see a huge ant and Blackburn's remains.

Sequence 8

Police HQ. Medford explains that the ants don't like the heat of the desert and so forage at night. He says the best time to destroy the nest is at noon tomorrow, during the hottest part of the day, when all the ants will be inside. Medford suggests that dropping cyanide into the tunnels is the best way to kill the creatures.

Sequence 9

Phosphorous is fired into the entrance of the nest to keep it hot and the ants inside. Cyanide is thrown in. Medford is sure all the ants are dead. Pat, Graham and Peterson go down into the nest and find the bodies of many ants, but not all the creatures are dead. They find the queen ant's chamber, which is full of eggs. Pat takes photos. Graham and Peterson burn everything.

Sequence 10

Medford looks at the photos Pat has taken. They conclude that two newborn queen ants, with wings, have escaped the nest. “We haven’t seen the end of this,” says Medford. “We’ve only had a close view of the beginning of what may be the end of us. You better inform Washington.”

Sequence 11

Washington. Medford lectures a group on ants. “Unless these queens are located and destroyed,” he says, “before they have established thriving colonies and can produce heaven alone knows how many more queen ants, man – as the dominant species of life on earth – will probably be extinct within a year.”

Sequence 12

The press wants to know what is going on. The army is monitoring all news reports for things like missing persons, unsolved murders, thefts of sugar, syrups and sweets, and high-pitched sounds. Alan Crotty in Brownsville, Texas, has crashed his plane because he spotted a UFO shaped like an ant. Graham and Pat leave for Brownsville and talk to Crotty, who insists he saw three flying ants. Graham tells Crotty’s doctor that he is not to allow Crotty to leave or permit anyone to speak with him. A general panic must be prevented. Back in Washington, a report comes through of a nest having hatched aboard a ship at sea. The ants attack and there are only two survivors. The ship is sunk by the navy.

Sequence 13

Graham and Peterson are in Los Angeles, investigating the theft of forty tonnes of sugar. The body of a man, missing an arm, is found. His two children have vanished. While investigating, Graham and Peterson talk to a drunk arrested the night before who says that from his hospital window he saw “big ants” in the storm drain of the Los Angeles River. Graham and Peterson drive down to the concrete riverbed and find a toy plane belonging to the missing children and a print that matches the one found at the trailer.

Sequence 14

The President of the United States declares martial law in Los Angeles. The public is told about the mutated ants and that they are in the city’s storm drain.

Sequence 15

Graham insists that the ants cannot be burned out of the storm drain until it is determined whether the two children are still alive. Search units – including Pat, Graham and Peterson – drive into the drain. Peterson rescues the two children but dies in the process. Graham is trapped when a tunnel collapses and is rescued at the last minute by army troops, who wipe out the nest. Proclaims Medford: “When man entered the atomic age, he opened a door into a new world. What we eventually find in that new world, nobody can predict.”