

ABDUCTED

by

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"ABDUCTED"

FADE IN:

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - DAY

We open on a grey expanse of rocks and craters, a vast stretch of lonely nothing as far as the eye can see. CREDITS APPEAR as we drift along this otherworldly sea of granite and granule, and we wonder just exactly which part of the galaxy we might be in as the last CREDIT slowly fades away.

Then there's a noise like an earthquake as the giant head of a jackhammer slams down, breaking apart the surface of this alien world, and we realize that we're not in outer space at all but in the quarry of a copper mine just outside Tucson, Arizona.

EXT. COPPER MINE - DAY

The jackhammer is held by a man with a pair of arms as big as most people's legs, ripped and tanned with veins that stand out like cables. There's a Marine Recon tattoo on one of his biceps, a black skull with a dagger through it. Even more intimidating is the long, jagged scar that runs along the left side of his head just below the hairline.

This is BIG JIM SLADE, one-time soldier and full-time badass, the kind of guy that never has to step aside on a crowded sidewalk. The kind of guy, in fact, that you would probably switch sidewalks just to avoid. Everything about him is large.

FOREMAN (V.O.)

Slade!! I thought I told you to work the south field today! The south field, dumbass!

SLADE clenches his jaw. Everything about him is large, all right... everything except his bank book. That's why he's out here balling a jack and taking shit from college-boys. Life, it would seem, is the baddest ass of all. He points at a big backhoe with a pile-driver attachment that's sitting there, idle.

SLADE

The south field's six feet of packed earth. Why the hell don't you use the backhoe?

FOREMAN

'Cause under the packed earth is a cave roof made of limestone and silt.

(MORE)

FOREMAN (cont'd)

You hit the wrong spot an' it's
five hundred feet straight down.
The backhoe's worth half a mil and
we're paying you twenty bucks an
hour. You do the math, hotshot.

SLADE grumbles and heads off towards the south field. An old
miner named KOWALSKI trudges out of the mine entrance, his
face covered with soot.

KOWALSKI

How's it hangin', Slade?

SLADE

Hot and sweaty, just like every
other day in this stinkin' hole.

KOWALSKI

Yeah, hot and sweaty and stinkin'
holes usually go together real
swell...

He turns to look at the foreman, who is now busy screaming
and shaking a crumpled-up blueprint at a structural engineer.

KOWALSKI

... but not on a Landetta job at
noon in Arizona.

SLADE nods in agreement. The foreman is JAKE LANDETTA, and to
judge by all the signs around the mine that bear his name,
he's someone important. Or at least his father is; JAKE's
just another rich prick in a hardhat and tie, the kind of guy
who drives a pickup truck with leather seats.

KOWALSKI

Hey, you know how many Landettas it
takes to change a lightbulb?

SLADE

How many?

KOWALSKI

Five. One to hire you to change it
for him, and all four of his kids
to tell you how you're doing it
wrong.

SLADE

I wonder how many pounds of
concrete it takes to bury a
Landetta under one of his father's
buildings?

KOWALSKI

Probably one of those questions in life that's best left unanswered.

LANDETTA throws his hardhat at the engineer, who ducks away, cowering.

KOWALSKI

Then again, I do love a good mystery.

The noon whistle blows and they start heading back to their trucks for lunch. LANDETTA stomps up to them, fuming.

LANDETTA

Where the hell do you two fuckjobs think you're going?

KOWALSKI

It's noon, Mr. Landetta. You know, when you look down at your watch and the big hand and the little hand are all together in a line?

LANDETTA

Not for you it isn't. I'm a couple guys short in the number six tunnel and I need it cleared out by sundown.

SLADE and KOWALSKI look at each other.

KOWALSKI

Number six tunnel hasn't been buttressed yet. Nobody's supposed to go down there 'til the crew reinforces the walls.

LANDETTA

Yeah, well, nobody's supposed to shit on the sidewalk either but every once in a while you still gotta scrape off your shoe. Now get down there or I'll take your time-and-a-half away.

SLADE and KOWALSKI shake their heads and make their way down the slope to the mine.

INT. MINESHAFT - DAY

The elevator cab descends through the earth as the two miners adjust their helmets.

KOWALSKI

Damn, his disposition just gets a little sweeter every day, don't it?

He spits over the side of the cab and frowns.

KOWALSKI

We don't hafta take this shit, Jimmy. Must be half a dozen outfits in the Southwest'd be happy to have a couple of experienced diggers like us on the team.

SLADE

Yeah, and how many of 'em'll pay ya time-and-a-half for hazardous duty you're not rated to perform?

KOWALSKI

Money ain't everything, man.

SLADE

It is when you missed your kid's birthday for the past three years 'cause you couldn't pay your child support on time.

KOWALSKI

She finally lettin' you see him again, huh?

SLADE

Yeah.

He pulls a photo of his son out of his wallet, a beautiful kid with blonde hair and big blue eyes. Then he pulls out a roll of bills.

SLADE

Been saving this up for the last two months. Come Saturday, I'm gonna take him down to the bike shop and buy him the best damn bike they got.

The elevator stops and they switch their helmet-lights on, illuminating the yawning chasm before them.

KOWALSKI

Well, let's get to it.

INT. NUMBER SIX TUNNEL - DAY

The tunnel is dark and dank and claustrophobic, the heat radiating off of the close rock walls pressing in all around them. SLADE mans the hydraulic drill while KOWALSKI clears away the rubble. Suddenly, a low rumble is heard.

KOWALSKI
Jimmy, you hear that?

SLADE
Hear what?

KOWALSKI
Forget it. Prob'ly nothin.

They resume drilling, KOWALSKI mopping his steaming brow.

KOWALSKI
Christ, I'm so thirsty I could
drink the sweat from a bull's
balls.

O'NEILL
(sneaking up from behind)
Moo moo, big fella.

KOWALSKI spins, startled, then groans as he sees the two guys in coveralls giggling behind him.

KOWALSKI
Aw, shit, I thought I smelled
something.

PETERSON
Prob'ly the load you just dropped
in your pants. Whassamatter,
Kowalski, scared of workin' the
six?

KOWALSKI
(snorts)
I was digging wildcat tunnels while
you guys were still stealin'
playboys from your daddy's dresser
drawer. Now get over here and give
me a hand.

The new miners gear up and start working the far side of the wall. It's hard work but they make good progress, delving deeper and deeper into the earth.

O'NEILL

You all hear about them lights they saw over the Flagstaff range last night?

KOWALSKI

Flyin' saucers, the TV guy said.

PETERSON

Buncha kids with meth labs in their basements, that's what *I* say.

SLADE

I don't know, man... I seen plenty of things in this world that can't be so easily explained.

PETERSON snorts in contempt. He elbows O'NEILL and smiles.

PETERSON

Watch this.

(to SLADE)

Hey Slade, I got one of these metric bits here and I need to convert it to inches. If I'm drillin' a 9/12mm pilot hole, what size bit do I use?

SLADE shakes his head and keeps drilling.

SLADE

I'm not sure. I'd have to look at the chart.

PETERSON

Got it right here. Just can't read it without my glasses.

He hands SLADE a piece of paper and smiles. SLADE looks at it, slowly... but the numbers and letters are blurred together, as if he had a dyslexia of some extreme kind. He hands it back to PETERSON and frowns.

SLADE

Ask Kowalski. I gotta unravel this line.

SLADE trudges back to the elevator cab and KOWALSKI grabs the grinning PETERSON by his shirt.

KOWALSKI

What the hell's wrong with you, Peterson?

PETERSON

What? I asked the guy a simple question.

KOWALSKI

Lemme tell you something, dipshit. The reason Slade has a tough time with math and reading is the landmine he stepped on while clearing out towelhead caves in the Afghan mountains. An' all they gave him was an honorable discharge and a plate in his head the size of a frisbee for his troubles.

PETERSON

Whoa, take it easy, Kowalski. So the guy ain't that smart, I still like him and all.

KOWALSKI

There's booksmarts and streetsmarts, shit-for-brains, and I'd be willing to bet that you two rocket scientists weren't born with neither. And if god forbid anything ever happened down here in the shit, I'd take Jim Slade over you guys any day of the week.

SLADE returns, and the miners go back to their drilling.

KOWALSKI

You get that line sorted out, Jimmy?

SLADE

Yeah, it was just hung up on the cab pulley.

He presses the bit into the rock face and turns on the power. A beat later, a jagged rock chip flies out from the wall and slices SLADE's arm, cutting it open. Blood starts to drip from the wound, but SLADE doesn't seem to notice.

KOWALSKI

Hey! Hey, your arm!

SLADE

What?

He looks down and notices the cut.

SLADE

Aw, shit.

SLADE pulls a clean bandanna from his pocket and wraps it around the wound. KOWALSKI looks at him, puzzled.

KOWALSKI

You're tellin' me you didn't feel that?

SLADE

No, man, I didn't.

He frowns.

SLADE

That ain't exactly the first time, either.

He takes off his glove and shows KOWALSKI notices a bright red burn scar on the back of his hand.

SLADE

I was in the kitchen the other day, and I guess I musta leaned on the stove or something. I didn't know anything was wrong until I smelled my hand burning.

KOWALSKI

You think it's that plate they put in your head?

SLADE fingers the scar that runs beneath his hairline.

SLADE

It's gotta be somethin'. An' whatever it is, I don't like it.

There's another low rumble that shakes the cave walls and makes the floor tremble beneath them.

KOWALSKI

That's it, this time I *know* I heard it. We gotta get topside, pronto.

PETERSON

Jesus, Kowalski, would you stop bein' such a pussy? I heard the six rumble like that a million--

BOOM!! PETERSON doesn't get a chance to finish his sentence as the roof caves in on top of him.

O'NEILL
SHIT!!

SLADE
PETERSON!!

Rocks tumble down from all sides, burying him in a black rubble of stone and earth. He claws at the cave floor with his one free hand, managing to drag his head away from the worst of it.

PETERSON
Help... me....

The cave-in subsides, and the miners look at each other, scared. SLADE's walkie-talkie squawks from his belt.

LANDETTA (V.O.)
Tunnel Six team, what the hell's going on down there?!

SLADE
(into radio)
Roof collapsed!! Peterson's stuck underneath it!!

LANDETTA (V.O.)
It *collapsed*?! Get the hell outta there!!

PETERSON gasps for air, the heavy rocks crushing his ribs.

PETERSON
Can't... breathe...

LANDETTA (V.O.)
Slade?! Did you hear me?! Get out!!

SLADE looks out down the shaft towards the safety of the elevator cab, then back at PETERSON and his desperately grasping hand.

SLADE
Not without Peterson.

LANDETTA (V.O.)
What?! Slade, goddammit--

SLADE turns off his radio and starts picking up rocks.

SLADE
Kowalski!! Help me get him out!!

KOWALSKI and O'NEILL run over to join him, grabbing up pieces of the rubble and tossing it aside. Then the rumbling starts again and the walls start shaking ominously all around them.

SLADE
C'mon!! Faster!!

They haul away the biggest pieces of rock and clear a space around PETERSON's body. Then they grab him by the arms and pull, sweating and straining to free him.

SLADE
(grunts)
That's it... keep pulling...

The rocks finally shift and they pull PETERSON free. He sits there, panting and wincing.

PETERSON
Guys... my leg... I think it's
broken...

SLADE and KOWALSKI grab him up by the arms as O'NEILL makes a run for the elevator. They've almost made it... when the mineshaft caves in from above. Huge boulders rain down, smashing the elevator cab and burying all the equipment.

KOWALSKI
Oh no...

O'NEILL
(terrified)
What the hell are we gonna do now?!

SLADE
First of all, we're gonna stay
calm. Right?

The other miners nod, but the panic shows in their eyes. SLADE looks around, trying to keep his head, but it's hard to think with the earth breaking up all around you. He inches his way forward into a high-roofed cave apart from the main tunnel and cocks his head, listening.

SLADE
You hear that?

O'NEILL
Yeah. It's getting worse.

SLADE
Not that. Somethin' sounds maybe
like... water.

They listen, and sure enough the faint sound of rushing water can be heard from the other side of the wall.

SLADE
Kowalski, you got that blueprint?

KOWALSKI
Yeah.

SLADE
Well, where the hell are we?

KOWALSKI
(looking at blueprint)
Beneath the South field.

SLADE
We're in that cave Landetta was talkin' about. Must be underground water beneath the South field. That's why there's all the limestone.

He looks around, thinking fast.

SLADE
O'Neill, your drill still work?

O'NEILL tests the power. The bit spins, slowly.

SLADE
(excited)
Guys, we can get out of here. If we drill through this wall we can flood the whole chamber. It'll spit us out the soft earth at the top of the cave.

O'NEILL
Yeah, or drown us all down here in the dark. They know where we are, Slade, they can have us out in a couple of hours.

The mine quakes violently around them, and a crack in the cave roof appears.

SLADE
We don't have a couple of hours.
Gimme your drill.

O'NEILL hesitates... then finally hands it over.

KOWALSKI

Jimmy, are you sure about this?

SLADE

No... but I'm sure we're all gonna die if we just sit here and do nothin.

He turns on the drill and starts boring through the wall. The vibrations shake up and down the mine corridor, starting more cave-ins all around them.

SLADE

C'mon... c'mon...

He puts his back into it, pressing down on the drill as hard as he can. The other miners look on in nervous anticipation. Then the bit pokes through, and water starts spraying from the hole, splitting and cracking it open.

O'NEILL

Aw, shit... here it comes...

KA-BOOM!! The cave wall explodes as the underground river tears through the rock, rushing in like a flood through the opening. The miners are swept off the floor and tossed head over heels as the water pushes them upwards. SLADE fights to hold his breath and swim towards the roof, kicking and thrashing as the flood bears him upwards. Then the cave fills completely and the roof starts to break, the soft spots in the earth giving way.

EXT. COPPER MINE - DAY

Above ground in the South field, everyone turns to look as the ground starts shaking beneath them. The earth starts to erupt as geysers of water spurt up through the dirt, spraying high into the air.

Then the biggest one breaks, a great gushing column a hundred feet high, pumping gallons of water skyward. SLADE is shot up through the ground, the others right behind him, and they collapse half-drowned and gasping onto the quarry floor. They lie there for a moment, recovering, as the whole work crew comes running up with LANDETTA in the lead.

LANDETTA

Motherfuckers!! Motherfuckers!!
Look what you've fucking done!!

KOWALSKI

(slowly)
Is that an angel?

LANDETTA

You cocksucking son of a bitch! You flooded my mine! You wrecked my equipment! You put me two months behind schedule, you retarded dumb fuck!!

SLADE sits up, angry.

SLADE

What the fuck was I supposed to do, just leave him there?!

LANDETTA

YES!!

SLADE gets up and brushes off his pants.

SLADE

You ever been in the service, Mr. Landetta?

LANDETTA

No, dickface, I haven't.

SLADE

Well, the first thing they teach is you is you never leave a man behind. 'Cause next time it might be your ass that's hanging on the line.

LANDETTA

Well, that's real interesting, Sergeant Slade, considering that according to your employment file you got a dishonorable discharge for busting your commanding officer's jaw. What were you thinking then, G.I. Joe?

SLADE's face darkens. LANDETTA steps closer, furious.

LANDETTA

That's your problem, isn't it, numbnuts? You don't think. That's why your wife left you. That's why you keep missing your kid's birthday. You're just a big dumb goon without a high school diploma whose only marketable skill is swinging a hammer up and down.

SLADE looks down for a moment, then looks up again.

SLADE

That ain't the only thing I can
swing, you rich spoiled fuck.

He reaches back and drops LANDETTA like a bag of dirt. One of LANDETTA's flunkies runs up and punches SLADE in the chin, and SLADE slams his elbow into the guy's throat, sending him gasping to the ground. Then three more guys jump on top of SLADE, and KOWALSKI sighs.

KOWALSKI

Here we go...

He jumps on top of the pile and starts swinging. Then the whole crew joins in as the teeth and knuckles fly.

INT. PIMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S STATION/CELL - NIGHT

SLADE sits in a holding cell, his head hung low. A Sheriff's Deputy appears at the door.

DEPUTY

James Slade?

SLADE nods, and the door opens. SLADE is led to the front desk.

INT. PIMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S STATION/FRONT DESK

The DESK SERGEANT opens a file on the desk in front of SLADE.

DESK SERGEANT

Jake Landetta wants to charge you with everything from criminal assault to inciting a riot. But we got about thirty other guys that say you were just trying to save the life of your co-worker. So we're going to let you out on bail while we conduct an investigation.

SLADE

How much is bail?

DESK SERGEANT

Five hundred dollars.

SLADE

(surprised)

That's it?

DESK SERGEANT

The only guys who were with you at the time of the collapse aren't saying anything. So all we got on you is punching Landetta.

He leans across the desk and lowers his voice.

DESK SERGEANT

And between you and me...
Landetta's an asshole.

He hands SLADE a pen.

DESK SERGEANT

Now if you'll just read this and sign at the bottom.

He pushes a release towards SLADE. SLADE looks at it, holding it close to his face. He puts his finger under each word, sounding it out quietly as he goes. The DESK SERGEANT and the DEPUTY look at each other.

DESK SERGEANT

What's the matter? Can't you read?

SLADE

Yeah, I can read.

(beat)

Just takes me a while.

DESK SERGEANT

Look, all it says is that you're aware of the charges and you're not going to leave town anytime soon. You're not leaving town, are you?

SLADE

Nope.

DESK SERGEANT

Then sign the paper.

SLADE signs.

DESK SERGEANT

That'll be five hundred dollars.

SLADE takes the roll of bills out of his pocket. The roll of bills he'd been saving for his kid's bike. He sighs and hands it to the SERGEANT.

DESK SERGEANT
All right, you're free to go.

SLADE puts on his jacket and heads for the door.

DESK SERGEANT
Hey, Slade.

SLADE turns.

DESK SERGEANT
Semper Fi.

SLADE nods and exits.

EXT. PIMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S STATION - NIGHT

KOWALSKI is waiting for him outside.

KOWALSKI
So they let you off easy.

SLADE
I guess. Sorry I got you fired.

KOWALSKI
What the hell do I care? Like I
said, plenty of outfits around here
be happy to have us.

SLADE forces a smile.

KOWALSKI
'Sides, I think you made somebody
really happy.

He points to PETERSON's wife, who sits nervously behind the wheel of a station wagon. PETERSON emerges from the Police Station doors, his leg in a cast, and his wife jumps out of the car and runs up to him, crying. He hugs her gently, then turns to SLADE and nods, thanking him. SLADE nods back. PETERSON gets into his car with his wife and they drive away.

Behind them, the Police Station doors open again and this time it's LANDETTA, flanked by three lawyers. LANDETTA sees SLADE and shouts through the gauze wrapped around his nose.

LANDETTA
You! You are a dead man, asshole.
Just wait 'til my dad gets through
with you. We're gonna sue you for
everything you've got!

SLADE
Go ahead. Oughtta take about five
minutes.

LANDETTA's lawyers warn him not to say anything more and they pile into a car and drive off. KOWALSKI shakes his head and turns to SLADE.

KOWALSKI
Where're you parked?

SLADE
Back by the site.

KOWALSKI
You need a lift?

SLADE
Naw. I think I'll just walk for a
while.

KOWALSKI nods and gets into his truck.

KOWALSKI
You need anything, you call me.

SLADE nods and KOWALSKI drives away. SLADE watches until the lights disappear and then walks off down the road alone along the edge of the desert.

EXT. COPPER MINE - NIGHT

An hour later he's back at the quarry, looking down at the flooded mine. All of it wrecked. All his fault. He trudges over to his pickup truck, a beat-up old Ford with more rust on it than paint, and opens the door.

INT. TRUCK CAB - NIGHT

SLADE sits there for a moment in silence, then takes the photo of his son out of his pocket and stares at it.

SLADE
(softly)
I'm sorry, buddy, but it looks like
that bike is gonna have to wait.

He starts up his truck and slowly drives away.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

The truck rumbles along under the starry Mojave night, out past the rock mesas and cactus.

It's quiet and peaceful, and SLADE turns on the radio to the high lonesome sound of a bluegrass song about love and loss. He can relate.

Suddenly, the radio station changes. SLADE reaches down and changes it back. A few moments later, it changes again. He curses and turns it off. He drives along in silence for a moment... then the radio turns back on again all by itself.

He reaches for the dial, then yelps and yanks his hand back as he receives an electric shock. The radio glows an eerie blue, as does the instrument panel. Then there's a small explosion as smoke rises up from the fuse box beneath the passenger footwell.

SLADE

Ah, fuck!

He pulls over to the side of the road and takes off his jacket, beating out the flames.

SLADE

Goddamn piece of shit...

He stamps out the last of the electrical fire, and holds up his jacket. Smoke rises from burned-out holes. He tosses it in back, and turns the key in the ignition. Now the truck won't start. SLADE looks up at the sky.

SLADE

You're mockin' me, lord.

He sighs and pops the hood, and soon identifies the problem: the distributor is fried, the wires blackened by a power surge far more intense than any 9-volt car battery should supply.

He trudges around to the back of the truck and opens the toolbox in the bed, grabbing a flashlight and a long-handled wrench. He puts the flashlight in his mouth and slides the wrench down the asscrack of his jeans, and leans down over the engine bay when suddenly the flashlight gets really bright-- and really hot. He spits it out, his lips burned.

And then it happens.

A series of beams of light, passing into him, through him, stretching him out in a prismatic illusion of time and space. He screams in silence as he feels a million tiny hooks in every cell in his body pulling him upward. And then, just like that, he's gone.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The Arizona night is as big and clear as it was just a moment ago, and all we can see are the bright shining stars that make up the constellations of the northern sky.

Then, slowly, one of the constellations separates itself from the rest and begins to move. As it turns, we realize that it's not part of the night sky at all but rather the camouflaged skin of some large craft that makes an impossible turn at an impossible speed and disappears in the direction of the moon.

Far below, the radio turns back on again to the sounds of bluegrass singing.

INT. CRUISER/HOLD - NIGHT

SLADE materializes on the floor of a small black room, frozen in the same screaming position in which we last saw him. He's freezing cold, his body shivering, his breath appearing in short bursts. Suddenly a thin crack appears on the seemingly smooth wall behind him and spirals out into a membrane-like opening.

SLADE's vision is cloudy and dim, but through the doorway he can make out two figures coming towards him: thin grey beings with big heads and black eyes, ALIEN CREATURES of the standard X-Files variety. Taller than you might imagine, but otherwise exactly the way Whit Streiber described them. SLADE stares at them, paralyzed, as the ALIENS pick him up by the arms and drag him through the doorway.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/AIRLOCK

SLADE is carried into a chamber made of the same rough black material as the room he was just in. One of the ALIENS waves its hand over a lighted square on the wall, and two nozzles descend from the ceiling, spraying an icy cold mist all over SLADE's clothing. Then another door opens and the ALIENS drag him through. What's on the other side isn't like anything we've ever seen before, on the X-Files or anywhere else.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LABORATORY - NIGHT

This is the ship's lab, an enormous enclosure filled with alien machines and technology. The place is as intricate as it is awe-inspiring, like something out of H.R. Giger's worst industrial nightmares. But not everything about it is alien. Strapped to a series of machines are *human* men and women, staring off into space as machines of unknown function hover and hum all around them.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LABORATORY CONTROL ROOM

There's a window on the far side of the room where SLADE can see a group of CREATURES monitoring the proceedings. They're hideous, bulbous things, half-amphibious and half-reptilian, with strange translucent skin that reveals their vital organs pulsating beneath. One of them looks at SLADE and its head ripples with a weird shimmy that makes it appear almost liquid, like a pond with a stone thrown into its center.

One in particular stands out from the rest. He's bigger, taller, and meaner-looking than the others, with a reticulated fin that extends from his head back down to his massive shoulders. This is the ALIEN COMMANDER, and he looks at SLADE with a cold disinterest as he's carried in through the door.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LABORATORY

The ALIENS holding SLADE stop and wave their hands over their chests, and SLADE's eyes widen as their skin opens up, "unzipping" down from the neck to the groin and then falling away. We realize that their grey "skin" isn't their true skin at all, but rather some kind of elaborate space suit.

Underneath, they're just like the creatures in the control room. They look at SLADE hungrily, their lizard-like eyes glowing a pale yellow in the middle of a head that is mostly mouth, with twin rows of jagged teeth.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LABORATORY

From somewhere else in the room, someone starts screaming. SLADE strains to turn his head towards a man that lies strapped down on a table with his eyelids clamped open. A needle-like probe has just been activated and slides along a long mechanical arm towards his retina.

SCREAMING MAN

What is this? Where the hell am I?

There is a stir of activity among the ALIENS as the man keeps shouting; obviously, this is not what's supposed to happen. The other humans keep staring ahead, unaware, as the man struggles to pull free of his restraints.

SCREAMING MAN

Hey!! You can't do this to me! I'm Frank Barnes!

The ALIEN COMMANDER steps out from the control room and calmly walks over towards the examination table where the hysterical man is screaming.

SCREAMING MAN

Frank Barnes! Do you hear me?!

Frank--

The COMMANDER puts his foot on the man's chest and reaches into his mouth, grabbing his tongue with scaly fingers. Then he yanks, pulling out not only the tongue but the entire organ that the tongue is connected to along with it. FRANK BARNES dies, and his body is carried off by two alien guards, business once again returning to normal.

SLADE starts to panic. Whatever's happening here, he wants no part of it. He struggles to regain control of his body, and slowly his fingers start to twitch as he manages to free his hands from the paralyzing effects of the tractor beam. But then the ALIENS grab him again, dragging him to a service cart that floats along a track on the floor. There's a tray full of scalpels inside.

They hold his arms aloft, tearing his shirt from his body. Desperate now, SLADE manages to move his toes, wiggling his foot inside his workboot until the stab of pins and needles subsides. Then, when the ALIENS look away, he slips his hand behind his back towards the waistband of his jeans where his wrench is still hidden. The two aliens look back, noticing the gleam of metal, but it's too late: SLADE is free.

SLADE

Get... the hell... *off of me!!*

He slams his head into the leftmost ALIEN'S face, creating an indentation in the soft skin that remains even after the alien falls. The other ALIEN reaches for him but SLADE slams his wrench into its forehead, the metal plunging halfway through its skull and imbedding there. SLADE yanks it out with a fluid sucking sound and the ALIEN drops twitching to the floor.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LABORATORY CONTROL ROOM

The ALIENS in the control room see what's happening and grab a series of hand weapons from a rack along the wall. SLADE hits the deck as the ALIENS aim the weapons and fire. Their blasts are amazingly lethal; not visible beams of light, but bursts of heat that split the air above SLADE'S head and impact with devastating effect on the wall just behind him.

SLADE stares in awe as the wall starts to disintegrate from the spots where the gunblasts were fired. He backs away, frightened... then spins back around as the ALIEN GUARDS leap from the control room and come running straight for him.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LABORATORY

SLADE grabs the ALIEN he'd just headbutted and hauls him up with the wrench around its throat.

SLADE

Tell them to back off.

The ALIEN mutters something and the guards hesitate for a moment. SLADE hauls his prisoner back towards the doorway, tightening his grip on the wrench.

SLADE

Now get us out of here.

The ALIEN holds its hand over a square of light on the wall, and behind SLADE, a door opens. The GUARDS take another step towards him, ready to pounce.

SLADE carefully steps back towards the door. To his left is a big machine with a series of razor arms, its blades stained with human blood. He reaches behind it and yanks it free from the wall as he slides through, and the big machine crashes to the ground, blades spinning and blocking the door behind him.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

Outside, SLADE breaks into a run, yanking the ALIEN to its feet.

SLADE

Get up. Now!!

The ALIEN groans as SLADE drags it along with the wrench against its rubbery neck. There's a sudden noise behind him, and SLADE whirls, but it's just a laboratory cart hovering along above the ground. SLADE follows it down the corridor to a long reticulated chute that runs from floor to ceiling.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/INCINERATION CHUTE

The chute puckers open and the cart empties its contents into it. There's a whoosh of what sounds like flames from far below.

SLADE

What the hell...

The ALIEN mutters something unintelligible.

SLADE

Shut up.

SLADE peers down the chute into the darkness, but can't make out what's at the bottom, or if there even *is* a bottom. The ALIEN gurgles again... then suddenly collapses, limp.

SLADE looks down, and as soon as he's off-balance, one of the ALIEN'S fingers extends like a tendril and jabs SLADE in the eye, its apparent collapse just a ruse. SLADE falls back, and the ALIEN gets up, angry, its head rippling with that strange liquid shimmy.

ALIEN
(growls)
Giirt rhizzak do.

SLADE
(growling back)
Bring it on, motherfucker.

The ALIEN rushes SLADE. It's faster than it looks, much faster, and has a fluid motion that allows it to elongate its body at will. SLADE is thrown through the air and slammed back against the rough-ridged wall.

He gets up and swings with his wrench, but the ALIEN twists its body to avoid the blow, wrapping its tendrils around SLADE'S arm and forcing him to drop the weapon. SLADE tries to stick and move, but it's impossible; the ALIEN is preternaturally fast and seems to anticipate SLADE'S moves before he makes them. The ALIEN wraps him up like an octopus, applying pressure with its fluid-filled limbs and squeezing.

SLADE
Ooof!!

SLADE groans as his body is crushed. Then, at the far side of the room, another cart appears and the incineration chute opens again. SLADE pushes off with his legs, lunging across the floor with the ALIEN wrapped around him. He spins around and slams the ALIEN back against the chute's hot surface.

The ALIEN howls as its flesh sizzles, and SLADE breaks its grip and flings it over his shoulder into the chute's opening. The ALIEN shoots out its hand as it falls, wrapping its fingers around SLADE'S throat.

SLADE
(gasps)
No... you... don't...

SLADE strains with all his might against the ALIEN'S grip... and then the chute doors slide shut, slicing off the ALIEN'S hand at the wrist.

SLADE staggers back against the wall, prying the fingers of the severed hand from his neck as the ALIEN falls down into the flames, screaming. SLADE wheezes, but he's got no time to recover; he can hear the shouts of GUARDS running towards him from off down the corridor.

There are three lighted access squares along the far wall, and SLADE holds his hand in front of them as the ALIEN did, but this time, nothing happens. Meanwhile, the sounds of the GUARDS are getting louder and closer. SLADE looks around, desperate... then gets an idea. He runs back to the chute, picks up the severed alien hand, and holds it up to the light square. As if by magic a door spirals open, and SLADE picks up his wrench and jumps through.

INT. SHIP/CORRIDOR

A beat later a phalanx of GUARDS appears from around the corner, led by the ALIEN COMMANDER. He crouches down and touches the puddle of the dead alien's blood with his finger. Then he stands, angry. He barks an order and one of his GUARDS waves his hand over a strange-looking control panel.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP/DRONE STATION

In another part of the ship, a door slides open. Behind the door is total darkness. And then, in the darkness, something moves. Something big and scary. There's the sound of machinery as a huge mechanical paw steps out, extending six-inch metal claws into the black floor below.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ANOTHER CORRIDOR

SLADE hobbles along through the ship, breathing hard, the severed alien hand hanging out of his pocket.

SLADE

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Where the hell am I?

One corridor looks just like the next, and there are no signs or markings. The walls pulse and flex around him as he runs, as if the entire ship was somehow alive and breathing. Finally he finds another access square, and holds the alien hand up to it. The door puckers open and SLADE's eyes go wide.

SLADE

Holy shit.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

Behind the door is a diagnostic center of some outlandish kind, with instruments and mechanics light years beyond our most far-reaching technology. The room consists of hundreds of points of light floating freely in the air that open into holographic windows at the approach of SLADE's presence. He looks around wide-eyed at the displays, trying to get some idea of where he is and where he might go, but it's too much to take in. The ship is unimaginably massive.

Then something catches his eye. He walks up to a bright blue lightpoint and it expands into a 10-foot-high diagnostic, hovering there in front of him. It shows what appears to be a honeycomb of thousands of interlocking cells. And inside the cells are what appear to be humans. SLADE stares at it, wide-eyed.

Suddenly there's a noise from somewhere nearby, like the thump of a heavy foot. Then another one, closer. SLADE grips his wrench tightly and peeks around the corner. And oh, Jesus, he does not like what he sees.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

TIGHT on the huge metal paw we saw earlier, its claws gripping and flexing as it walks. Behind it are three more paws just like it. TILT UP to reveal four six-foot metal legs powered by hydraulic pistons and cables, seated beneath an armored, muscular torso as intricate as it is lethal. And at the top is the gleaming head of what looks for all the world like a snarling robotic panther. This is a HUNTER-KILLER DRONE, and its only purpose in life is to find you and make you suffer.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

The DRONE spots SLADE and growls, charging forward and swiping at SLADE's head as he screams in terror.

SLADE

AAAHHH!!

He ducks just in time, shredded metal filings from the wall flying into his face. If those claws tore through metal that easily, just think what they could do to his skin. SLADE does what any sane person would do: he runs.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

SLADE hauls ass down the corridor as the metal beast gallops behind him.

The DRONE is as fast as it is deadly, and SLADE can hear it closing in. There's a hissing sound as the pistons in its legs compress, and SLADE hits the deck.

The DRONE leaps over him, turning in mid-air then touching down, skidding along until its motorized claws enact and dig into the floor, stopping it instantly. Then it comes back again twice as hard. SLADE gets up and runs in the other direction. The DRONE chases after him, its streamlined head inches from the floor, its long metal tail swishing out behind it.

DRONE'S POV

We see SLADE as the DRONE sees him, his bioelectric aura rippling across his body. We can also see the electric auras of all the access panels and control units in the walls all around as SLADE rushes past them.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/ANOTHER CORRIDOR

SLADE rounds a corner but the DRONE is faster, swinging around in front and blocking his path. Its head lunges back and whips forward, going directly for SLADE's throat.

SLADE spins and jams his wrench between the DRONE'S jaws, which clamp down and bend the forged-iron wrench along its axis. Then he yanks the wrench free and slams it into the DRONE'S metal face, scrambling its sensors momentarily. He gets up and takes off again, running.

The DRONE recovers and starts chasing him again, but by now it has calculated the logarithms of SLADE'S motion and can anticipate his movements before he makes them. SLADE fakes left and jumps right, but the DRONE isn't fooled. It's right behind SLADE, and its body makes that horrible noise again as it coils up, ready to jump.

SLADE comes to a dead end and presses up against the wall. The DRONE crouches down... and then the wall behind SLADE spirals open from the proximity of the severed alien hand in his pocket.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POWER TRANSFER STATION

The DRONE suddenly stops, confused. SLADE is lying in the middle of some kind of power station, and there are coils and conduits radiating energy all around him.

DRONE'S POV

We shift to the drone's POV, and we see the reason for its hesitation: it can't find SLADE. There's too much electrical interference.

It walks into the room, and SLADE holds his breath as the DRONE steps over him, sniffing, its razor-sharp claws missing him by millimeters. Then it turns around and exits the room, scampering off down the hallway.

SLADE lies there, breathing hard, trying to figure out what to do next. All around him are organic-looking circuits and coils with holographic control panels that he has no idea how to operate or identify. But there's one thing he does recognize: an air vent under the central power station.

He tries to open it, but it's stuck fast. Then he takes the alien hand out of his pocket and holds it up to the grate. As he does so, the grate shrinks and recoils into the wall. SLADE makes himself as narrow as he can and squeezes through.

Behind him, two alien sentries appear with incineration guns in their hands. SLADE holds his breath until they finally move on, and crawls ahead into the darkness.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/VENTILATION DUCT

The ventway opens up into a larger network of tunnels and conduits. Up ahead SLADE can feel a hot wind blowing stronger and harder, and he moves towards it. Then the vent dead-ends at a huge open space which drops off into darkness thousands of feet below. We can hear the thrum of a large power source down there in the oblivion, the ship's heartbeat.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/REACTOR CORE

There's a narrow ledge a few feet away, and SLADE jumps for it. He pulls himself up and makes his way along the wall, only a few thin feet separating himself and the half-mile drop below. Carefully, cautiously, he inches along... then he hears something up ahead, a quiet, skittering sound from just around the corner.

He stops, holding his breath, and waits to hear it again, but the noise doesn't repeat. It could be any number of things on this strange alien craft, but SLADE's not about to take any chances. He pulls the wrench from the waistband of his jeans and holds it out in front of him, pressing himself flat against the wall. He takes a deep breath, grips the wrench, and jumps out around the corner, when...

INT. ALIEN SHIP/PASSAGEWAY

BLAM!! There's an intense blast of light and heat and SLADE gasps in pain as his wrench is incinerated, its molecules superheating and exploding between his fingers. SLADE shakes off his hand and backs up a step, sure that he's going to die.

Then his vision clears and his jaw drops in astonishment as he sees the source of the blast: an incineration gun gripped tightly in the hand of a filthy, ragged, *human* woman. SLADE looks at her in disbelief, and she looks back at him the same way.

SLADE
You're human!

MALLOY
You're human!

She gets up and runs over to him, throwing her arms around him.

MALLOY
Oh my god oh my god oh my god... I didn't know if I was ever going to see another human being again ever...

SLADE rubs her matted hair cautiously. She looks like a refugee from some horrible war.

SLADE
It's, uh... it's OK.

Suddenly she jumps back, pointing her gun at him.

MALLOY
No. You're not real. You're some kind of new drone, a decoy...

SLADE
Whoa. I ain't no drone and I ain't no decoy.

The woman looks him over, trying to make up her mind.

SLADE
Look, why don't you just--

Then she jabs the gun at him again, whispering.

MALLOY
Shut up! They'll hear you! They're everywhere.

SLADE shuts up as she eyes him warily.

MALLOY
(slowly)
If you're really human, then how did you get out?

SLADE

Get out?

MALLOY

From the pods.

SLADE

What pods?

MALLOY

What... pods...?

SLADE

I was never in any pod, lady. I just got here.

She puts the gun down and looks at him, amazed.

MALLOY

Oh my God. You don't know.

She puts her hands gently on his shoulders.

MALLOY

Listen. You need to prepare yourself for something that might be difficult to get your mind around. You've been... abducted. By aliens.

SLADE

No fuckin' shit.

MALLOY

You're... you're not surprised?

SLADE

Well, what else could it be? One minute I'm fixing my truck, the next thing I know a bunch of talking lizards are lookin' to go drilling for oil in my colon. Kinda narrows the possibilities.

MALLOY

That's an... interesting reaction.

SLADE

Look, I don't how the hell I got up here, but I damn sure know that I want to get back. I'm guessing you feel the same way. So why don't you put the gun down.

He holds out his hand, slowly.

SLADE
Name's Jim Slade.

She takes his hand, cautiously.

MALLOY
Jenny. Jenny Malloy.

SLADE
How long you been hidin' out for?

She stares down at her filthy clothes and skin.

MALLOY
Almost fifteen days.

SLADE
Jesus...

Suddenly she looks at her wrist. There's an oversized men's wristwatch on it.

MALLOY
Come on, we can't stay in one place
for too long.

SLADE
Wait, I just... Hey!

But she's already gone. SLADE curses and runs after her, nearly losing her in the twisting tunnels. A few beats later, a patrol squadron of alien guards walks down the gangplank. They peer down the passageway where SLADE and MALLOY were standing, then continue searching down the reactor core.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/TUNNELS

The tunnels branch out in innumerable tributaries from the main reactor, and SLADE soon becomes lost in the looping maze. But MALLOY knows the routes like the back of her hand, crossing through hatchways and corridors and air ducts.

Most of the conduits are on a complicated time schedule, but MALLOY has all the patterns memorized and she knows exactly when to duck and scramble to navigate the route. SLADE does his best to keep up, slamming his head on the low ceilings and almost losing her several times in the darkness.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/VENTILATION HATCH

Finally she stops below a small ventilation hatch, and stands there, waiting.

MALLOY
You gotta move faster.

SLADE
Where does this lead?

MALLOY
Shhh. Get ready.

She looks at the watch on her wrist, counting the ticks of the second hand.

SLADE
(whispers)
Where'd you get the watch?

MALLOY
(ignoring him)
Go!

Above them, the hatch puckers open. MALLOY and SLADE pull themselves up, and the hatch sucks closed behind them just as another alien patrol passes by underneath. They sit there in silence, not daring to breathe, as the guards stop beneath them. Finally, they disappear.

MALLOY
Come on.

SLADE
Where are we going?

MALLOY doesn't answer. She wriggles through a peeled-away opening in the duct and scampers off on her hands and knees. SLADE crawls after her.

SLADE
Hey. Malloy.

MALLOY
(not stopping)
What?

SLADE grabs her by the ankle, pulling her back.

MALLOY
What the--

She goes for the incineration gun tucked into the waistband of her too-big pants but SLADE presses his hand over hers. She glares at him as he crawls up closer.

SLADE

Listen, maybe you been used to playing tunnel rat all by yourself up here, but in case you didn't notice, my skin ain't green and I speak the same damn language you do. So you want me to keep following you through this oversized alien sewer, you better start talking to me.

She stares at him, her hard look softening slightly.

SLADE

First of all, where the hell are we going? And where'd you get that watch? And if you really been up here for fifteen days, what the hell have you been eating? Or drinking? Or--

Suddenly her eyes go wide.

MALLOY

Shut up.

SLADE

What?! Listen, you goddamn--

She slaps her hand over SLADE's mouth as she cocks her head, listening. There's a faint sound coming from the corridor above. Then the sound gets louder, and we recognize it. It's the sound of big metal paws.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR - ABOVE THEM

In the corridor directly above, the HUNTER-KILLER DRONE is searching. It walks towards them, swinging its head towards the sounds it has picked up: human sounds, with human voiceprints.

DRONE'S POV

There's a number of electric images glowing faintly all around, and it's impossible to differentiate them. But this DRONE is a learner, and it's gotten smarter since its last human encounter. It switches its tracking protocol from bioelectric to infra-red.

Below, SLADE and MALLOY lie still as the DRONE scans the space all around them. In the eyes of the DRONE, everything glows in a random blur of reds and purples. It refines its scan rate, limiting the temperature that it sees, and the heat sources clarify, indicating what look like two humanoid shapes below.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/VENTILATION DUCT

Ever so slowly, MALLOY reaches out with her free hand and peels away a strip of metallic skin from one of the duct couplings. She rolls it up into a ball between her fingers.

The DRONE's sensors begin to lock on to the two humanoid shapes, which clarify further into blurry human outlines. It rears up, extracting its claws... when MALLOY tosses the rolled-up ball down the ventway, where it bounces away loudly. The DRONE hears it and chases after it down the corridor.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/VENTILATION DUCT

When the DRONE is gone, SLADE and MALLOY finally allow themselves to start breathing again.

MALLOY

When I tell you to shut up... shut
the fuck up.

SLADE nods, and they crawl away as quietly as they can.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HEATING TUNNELS

Time passes as they traverse a wide expanse of the immense ship, heading down into its central plumbing. SLADE is having trouble keeping up with her, his lips starting to crack.

MALLOY

You need something to drink. The
heat and recycled oxygen can
dehydrate you really quickly.

She pulls aside an insulation baffle and there behind it is a makeshift catchwater that catches runoff from a leaking tube. SLADE drinks from it greedily, then spits it out, disgusted.

SLADE

Tastes horrible.

MALLOY

You wanted to know what I've been
drinking, right? Well, this is it.
You better get used to it.

SLADE grimaces. As he bends down for more, he notices what looks like a small pile of bones on the floor. MALLOY pushes them out of sight with her foot.

SLADE
(slowly)
You still haven't told me what
you've been eating.

She looks away, guilty.

MALLOY
Follow me.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/EXHAUST CHUTE

They descend through a hot, damp chute and crouch on the rigid black floor. MALLOY looks at her watch again and counts down. At the count of three an opening in the floor spirals open, wafting out exhaust air, and SLADE and MALLOY slide down it. When they emerge, they find themselves on the edge of a vast processing facility.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/PROCESSING FACILITY

Containers filled with unknown substances are shuttled down along a long beltway towards spinning blades in the distance. The blades slice up what's inside, dumping the remains into a larger container that heads past them on its way to the incinerators beyond. SLADE watches as a container rolls past. Inside are articles of clothing, shoes, wristwatches, and jewelry.

MALLOY
That's where I got the watch.

Then a second container rolls past. Inside are piles of severed human arms, legs, and feet.

MALLOY
And that's where I get my...

She trails off, unable to continue. SLADE looks away, revolted at the thought of what MALLOY's been eating. He forces himself not to think about it.

SLADE
Where are the people that these
belonged to?

MALLOY
I'll show you.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CONVEYOR BELT

They drop down onto the beltway, riding along it until they are directly beneath one of the incinerator exhaust tubes. Then they swing up and crawl inside.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/EXHAUST TUBE

MALLOY grips the inside of the tube's reticulated lining and climbs up it, pulling her shirt over her mouth to block the noxious fumes. SLADE does the same, pulling himself up until they reach a small slit along the tube's side. They slip through, unnoticed.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CRAWLSPACE

They make their way through a narrow crawlspace and then MALLOY pulls aside a clear flat membrane and tells SLADE to look behind it. What he sees takes his breath away.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

It's the same honeycomb structure he saw on display in the diagnostic center, but on a far grander and more horrifying scale. These are the pain pods, a vast array of strange organic coffins stacked as high and wide as the eye can see, stretching all the way along the inside of the ship in a stadium-sized amphitheater.

Inside are people of all ages and sizes with mechanical octopus attachments latched onto their foreheads. At first they seem unconscious and unaware... but every few seconds the octopus arms tighten and their victims begin to scream.

With every scream, the pods transmit a strange blue energy to a 200-foot dish mounted on the ceiling via an intricate network of tubes and wires. The dish's surface resonates in time to the screaming and MALLOY looks up at it with hatred and horror, remembering.

SLADE

(whispers)

What are they doing to them?

MALLOY

Torturing them.

SLADE

Why?

MALLOY

I have no idea.

SLADE looks at her, angry.

SLADE

Malloy... what the hell do they want with us?

MALLOY

I don't know. All I can tell you is what happened after they grabbed me.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SMALL PLANE ABOVE PUGET SOUND - DAY

We see the past events unfold as MALLOY describes them in voiceover; it's two weeks ago and she's dressed in a leather jacket and aviator glasses at the controls of a small high-wing Cessna.

MALLOY (V.O.)

I was a charter pilot for this outfit in Seattle and I had taken these photographers up in the Piper for a trip over Puget Sound. We were only at about three thousand feet when the stall warning came on... and the next thing I know we were in a tailspin heading straight for the whitecaps. I couldn't move. None of us could. The last thing I remember was one of the guys calling me a stupid bitch before we hit. Then this light appeared.

Off the Cessna's starboard wing, a massive craft appears, similar to the one that abducted SLADE. The passengers freeze in place as the cabin is washed in a blue phosphorescence.

MALLOY (V.O.)

I couldn't move. I saw the guys behind me... stretched out... I don't know how to describe it. I woke up in this cold room, frozen. Then they took us to the laboratory.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LABORATORY

MALLOY (V.O.)

They did such terrible things...

We see MALLOY as she's brought in, her limbs paralyzed, the three photographers behind her. A razor arm swings down, slicing off her clothing, and she is strapped to a machine that pokes a series of needles into her gums and teeth.

MALLOY (V.O.)

They hooked us up to these machines
to see how much we could endure.

MALLOY is shuttled from one machine to another as she is probed and prodded by one machine after another, each with numerous invasive attachments seemingly designed for the sole purpose of eliciting pain. Electrodes attached to her head measure and record her levels of endurance until they hit maximum. Then her body goes rigid as a long steel hypodermic spike is inserted into the back of her neck.

MALLOY (V.O.)

They injected us with this fluid to
make us super-sensitive...

Her flesh stands up in goosebumps. Two aliens lift her up by the arms and drag her, still paralyzed, down a corridor.

MALLOY (V.O.)

And then they took us to the pods.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

TIGHT on MALLOY's pod. MALLOY is propped up rigid inside, an octopus attachment wrapped around her forehead, its needle-like prongs digging into her temples.

MALLOY (V.O.)

I remember just standing there,
paralyzed. For the first few
minutes, there was nothing.

Suddenly the attachment glows and her pupils contract.

MALLOY (V.O.)

Then they turned on the pain.

She screams in silence as a blue light flows out all around her.

SLADE (V.O.)

How did you get out?

MALLOY (V.O.)

My pod had a leak.

ANGLE: MALLOY'S POD

TIGHT on the mucous membrane that holds the pod's skin together. There is faint hissing sound as the paralyzing atmosphere inside MALLOY's pod slowly escapes, and her fingers begin to twitch... then slowly close into a fist.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM - LATER

MALLOY stands inside her pod, seemingly frozen, as an alien guard makes his rounds. As he walks by MALLOY, we see her eyes follow him.

MALLOY (V.O.)

I waited for my moment...

When the guard is past, MALLOY slowly pushes through the pod's membrane door. She crouches down next to it, twisting loose one of the oxygen hoses from the rear. Then she pounces, twisting the hose around the guard's throat and strangling him with it.

MALLOY (V.O.)

And then I made my move.

She grabs the guard's incineration gun and disappears into the darkness.

FADE TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM - PRESENT

MALLOY

I've been hiding out ever since.

SLADE looks at her with a mix of fascination and revulsion. She looks back at him, curious.

MALLOY

But you broke free even before they threw you in the pod room. Weren't you paralyzed?

SLADE

Yeah. I was.

MALLOY

But you got away. How did you do it?

SLADE

I'm not sure.

He touches the scar on his forehead, thinking.

SLADE

The guys in the plane with you.
What happened to them?

A dark look crosses MALLOY's face.

MALLOY

They're down there...

She points out along the pods, then freezes as she notices a platform descending from the ceiling, carrying four passengers atop it. As the platform lowers, its passengers become visible: three alien guards armed with incineration guns. And out in front is the ALIEN COMMANDER. MALLOY's face goes pale.

MALLOY

(trembling)

Oh no...

SLADE

What is it? What's wrong?

MALLOY

Oh God... it's *him*.

SLADE watches her, frightened, as she starts to shake uncontrollably, lost in a nightmare that hasn't yet faded and probably never will.

The COMMANDER barks at his subordinates in his strange guttural language, and every so often his head ripples in time to the glowing of the dish overhead. He stalks off the platform and makes his way along the row of pods, inspecting them with a look of cold calculation, and stops in front of one containing a YOUNG MAN inside.

The COMMANDER raises his hands, pressing them through the skin of the pod and digging his claws into the sides of the MAN's head. As he does so, the MAN starts screaming... and doesn't stop. The veins bulge out on his neck and blood trickles out from around his eyes and ears.

COMMANDER

Guuuraakk...

The dish overhead throbs with energy and the COMMANDER's head ripples dramatically, his body swelling up and glowing a bright blue that illuminates the organs inside his translucent skin. Finally, the MAN stops screaming, and the blue light inside the pod fades to a dull red.

The pod's membrane door opens and the MAN looks out, his eyes blank and staring. The alien GUARDS grab him by the arms and lead him off down the corridor.

SLADE stares in disbelief at what's he's just seen. His legs start shaking and he stumbles forward, knocking loose a small tubular partition. It falls to the floor ten stories below, making a loud noise that echoes like thunder in the silence.

MALLOY
(terrified)

no...

The COMMANDER spins in the direction of the noise, and SLADE crouches there, motionless, not daring to move lest he be detected. The COMMANDER's gaze swivels up to SLADE's position, and SLADE is sure he'll be seen by the searching yellow eyes as they narrow in suspicion.

It's a tense, interminable beat as they both stand there unmoving... then finally the COMMANDER looks away. He climbs back onto the platform and rises slowly up into the darkness. SLADE grabs MALLOY gently, and she looks up at him with the frightened eyes of a lost child.

SLADE

It's OK. They didn't see us. But we gotta get out of here.

MALLOY can't respond-- she's frozen with fear. SLADE picks her up and carries her back the way they came, his heart racing.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CRAWLSPACE

Later, MALLOY slowly recovers as SLADE feeds her water from the catchtube. She looks up at him, embarrassed.

MALLOY

So what do you think of the tunnel rat now? Real tough chick, huh?

SLADE

Hey. You been up here all alone in the shit for two weeks now. I been there, all right? It ain't about being tough. It's about making sure you keep breathin' for one more day.

She looks up at him, grateful, and slides a little closer.

SLADE
'Sides, that Commander fuck scares
me too. What he did to that guy...
the way he screamed...

MALLOY
It's what they do.

SLADE
But why?

MALLOY
I don't know.

She takes a deep breath, calming herself.

MALLOY
Those things that they put on your
head look inside your mind. Any
pain you can imagine, any fear...
they'll make you see it. Over and
over. And your body will feel it
just like it's real. But the
Commander... he can put things in
your head that make you want to
die.

SLADE stares down the crawlspace into the darkness.

SLADE
We gotta get them out of there.

MALLOY looks up, alarmed.

MALLOY
What are you saying?

SLADE
Those people. We can't just leave
'em in there to be tortured and
killed and... processed...

She grabs his arms, calming him.

MALLOY
Slade, listen to me. They're not
alive anymore, not really. After I
escaped, I went looking for my
passengers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM - FLASHBACK

We see a slightly less filthy MALLOY creep through the darkened pod room of two weeks ago. She makes her way along the rows and columns, looking in at the faces beneath. Then she stops, gasping, as she sees one of the PHOTOGRAPHERS she was abducted with. His pod is glowing a dull red.

MALLOY (V.O.)

I tried to wake him up, but he just stood there. I knew he wasn't dead, because I could see him breathing, but...

She feels around, searching for some kind of button or device to open it. Then she jumps back, startled, as the pod skin pulls back with a hissing sound.

MALLOY (V.O.)

I managed to get one of them open. The guy inside...

The pod opens and the PHOTOGRAPHER stirs slightly. His eyes flutter... then he collapses out onto the floor. His eyes are blank grey orbs inside his sockets, and drool runs slowly down his chin.

MALLOY (V.O.)

He was a zombie. I don't know if he could see, or hear, or even think anymore. It's like they sucked the life right out of his skin.

Suddenly she hears footsteps nearby. Two alien GUARDS appear, hoisting the PHOTOGRAPHER up by the arms and leading him off down the corridor. MALLOY runs off into the darkness.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM - PRESENT

MALLOY looks up at SLADE, slowly.

MALLOY

Who knows what they want with us, Slade. Maybe we're guinea pigs, maybe we're lab rats. Maybe we're food and those horrible pods are just one big meat tenderizer. I don't know. But one thing I do know is that if they catch us, they're gonna put us back in there. And we're gonna die slow and painful.

SLADE is silent for a moment. Finally he looks back at her, resolved.

SLADE
That's not gonna happen. We're getting out of here.

She closes her eyes, relieved, as SLADE stands up and paces the floor.

SLADE
When they grabbed me, I remember seeing something in the sky up above me. It was big, but not as big as this.

MALLOY
The raiding cruisers. That's what they use to hunt is down and transport us back here. I've been looking all over the ship to see where they hangar them, but I haven't been able to find anything.

SLADE
Have you been everywhere?

MALLOY
Just about... except the lower levels. The doors there aren't on timers; the aliens have to put their hands on them in order to get through.

SLADE reaches back under his shirt and pulls the severed alien hand out of his pocket.

SLADE
Hands... like this?

MALLOY looks at it and smiles.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/VENTILATION DUCT

They make their way through the bowels of the ship until they reach the bottommost levels. There's an opening there, and MALLOY points out the door that she's never been able to get through. But now there's a GUARD stationed in front of it.

MALLOY
Shit. He's never been here before.

SLADE

Probably never been two humans
loose on the ship before.

He stares for a moment, thinking.

SLADE

I got an idea. Come on.

They scurry down the ventway.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

In front of the blocked door, the alien GUARD stands sentry. Suddenly he hears the sounds of a struggle from around the far corner.

MALLOY (V.O.)

NO! NO! LET ME GO!!

There's the sound of a blast from an incineration gun, and the GUARD reacts, alarmed, as he sees an ALIEN hand appear from behind the corner, gripping the wall as if wounded and slowly sliding down it. The GUARD abandons his post, running to help his beleaguered comrade.

He spins around the corner, gun held high... only to see a crouching SLADE holding the "wounded" alien hand against the wall, and MALLOY pointing an incineration gun of her own right at him.

SLADE

Surprise, asshole.

MALLOY squeezes the trigger. The blast hits the GUARD dead-center in his chest, which begins to demolecularize. He quickly disintegrates from the inside out and SLADE yanks the incineration gun out of his hand before he disappears completely.

SLADE

Let's go.

MALLOY covers him as he approaches the door and places the alien hand against it, opening a passage to the large room beyond.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/REGENERATION ROOM

Inside are three rows of tanks filled with a blue phosphorous fluid. Two ALIENS emerge from one of the tanks, hissing, and SLADE blasts them. Then he bends down to examine the tanks themselves.

MALLOY

What is it?

SLADE

I don't know...

He dips in his finger, and the fluid clings, tendril-like, to its surface. He shakes it off, disgusted. Then, in the corner of the frame, we see what SLADE and MALLOY do not: a small burst of air bubbles rising from the bottom of one of the tanks behind them. Oblivious, SLADE and MALLOY walk deeper into the room, wide-eyed.

SLADE

(awed)

What the hell is all this shit?

Beyond the tanks are rows of what appears to be medical equipment... but for what physiology or application is anyone's guess. At the far end is an UPRIGHT CHAMBER that somewhat resembles the pods in the pod room, but is seemingly shaped for more alien dimensions. SLADE sticks his head in... when MALLOY screams!

MALLOY

AAAAHH!

There's a horrible splash from the tank where we saw the air bubbles rise, and now we see what caused them: an ALIEN that had been hiding there, watching them, from just below the surface! It leaps from the tank with crocodilian speed, its amphibious skin glistening. MALLOY goes for her gun, but the ALIEN backhands her, knocking the gun from her hand and sending her flying.

SLADE raises his own gun, but the ALIEN moves with incredible speed and disappears behind one of the tanks. SLADE steps cautiously towards it. When he spins around it, the ALIEN is gone.

SLADE makes his way down the row of tanks, looking for any sign of the creature. He ducks behind one tank, then another, but there's no sign of it anywhere... then he hears the sound of dripping behind him. There's a puddle on the floor that wasn't there before. He bends down to examine it... and a drip falls into it from above.

SLADE looks up, but too late: the ALIEN roars and drops down from where it had been clinging to the ceiling. It slashes SLADE across the face with its claws, knocking him backward into the UPRIGHT CHAMBER. SLADE yelps as the chamber door shuts, sealing him in!

INT. UPRIGHT CHAMBER

Through the frosted glass, SLADE sees the ALIEN look in at him and smile. Then it turns away, searching for MALLOY. SLADE pounds on the glass of the chamber door, but it's no use, he's stuck fast. Then he looks up, scared, as he hears the noise of a panel opening above him.

Behind the panel is a small, dark, hole, and from out of the hole a CRAWLER appears, a two-inch metal robot with the long, spindly legs of a spider. It clings to the side of the chamber, making its way quickly down to the level of SLADE's face.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/REGENERATION ROOM

Meanwhile, the ALIEN picks up MALLOY's dropped weapon and stalks after her. There's a trail of her blood on the floor, and the ALIEN follows it slowly along to one of the fluid-filled tanks, sure that MALLOY is hiding inside. The ALIEN snarls, his face rippling, as he points the gun at its surface...

When suddenly MALLOY jumps out from the tank right behind him! The ALIEN spins around, snarling, furious at having been tricked. But it's too late, MALLOY is upon him. She wraps the sleeve of her shirt around the ALIEN's neck and holds his head down under the viscous fluid until he stops moving. Then she runs to the chamber where SLADE is imprisoned.

MALLOY

SLADE!!

She pounds on the glass, but to no avail. She steps back and shoots the door, but still nothing happens. Meanwhile, inside, the CRAWLER crawls closer.

INT. UPRIGHT CHAMBER

SLADE freezes as the CRAWLER's prickly metal legs step across his head and face. It peers around at the side of his skull, as if trying to find an access point. Then it finds his ear... and wiggles its way inside.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/REGENERATION ROOM

MALLOY watches in terror as the CRAWLER's legs disappear into SLADE's ear canal. She can see it in there, under the skin, making its way towards his brain. SLADE clenches his jaw as his head starts to shake, his eyes rolling back, the veins in his scalp bulging. Then he shudders and falls silent and still.

MALLOY

Oh my God... no...

MALLOY sinks to the floor sobbing, her tears creating small rivers in the layer of grime on her face.

INT. UPRIGHT CHAMBER

SLADE stands in the chamber, still as death, unmoving. He looks the very portrait of the fallen hero, his muscular arms hanging limp at his sides. Then, suddenly, his face twitches. It's a small thing, possibly just a leftover nervous reflex. Then it twitches again. And then his eyes open.

SLADE'S POV

SLADE looks out through the glass at the regeneration room, his vision dim and blurry. But it's not just cloudy vision that is interfering with his sight, it's something else. Something... different.

Strange patterns and symbols dance across his eyeline, alien glyphs and letters flashing like a readout across his visual reference. Windows of a strange graphic interface open and close in front of him, like a heads-up display in three dimensions that only he can see.

Finally it all disappears and a line of text in an alien language appears in its place. As we look at it, the alien text morphs into English. It reads: "IMPLANTATION COMPLETE".

SLADE

Malloy?

She looks up from where she's been crying and squints through the tears.

MALLOY

(whispers)

Slade...?

Suddenly the chamber door opens and she jumps into the chamber with him, hugging him.

MALLOY

YOU'RE ALIVE!!

SLADE

I KNOW!!

They both start screaming and laughing and hugging each other. Then she looks at him, concerned.

MALLOY

But what was that thing?

SLADE

I got no fuckin' idea.

He steps out of the chamber and examines the alien text scrawled across the outside, running his finger under it.

SLADE

(reading)

"IMPLANTATION CHAMBER".

MALLOY looks at him incredulously.

MALLOY

You can read alien?!

SLADE

I can barely read English.

He looks around at the room, and in his POV, all the alien writings and markings appear as easily understandable English text.

SLADE

But somehow, all this stuff makes sense to me now.

He points to a sign by the door.

SLADE

This says we're in the "Regeneration Room". The aliens need to bathe in here daily to keep their skin from drying out in the reduced humidity of the rest of the ship.

She stares at him, bewildered.

SLADE

Don't ask me how the hell I know that.

MALLOY

Um... does it say anything about how to get back to Earth?

SLADE

No, but--

Suddenly a window appears before SLADE's eyes, opening into a complete and detailed blueprint of the ship's gargantuan structure.

SLADE

Whoa.

MALLOY

What? What is it?

SLADE

I got a map in front of my eyes. The hangar is ten levels beneath us... and there's three cruisers parked inside.

He grins, excited.

SLADE

C'mon, we're gettin' out of here!

He grabs her and they run for the door. Then suddenly SLADE's head does the liquid shimmy that we've seen the aliens' heads do before.

SLADE

EEAAAGHH!!

He collapses to the floor in pain.

SLADE'S POV

Inside SLADE's mind is an image of one of the pain pods. There's a woman inside... and she's on fire. Bright blue flames rise up from under her skin, melting and bubbling her flesh away, and she screams and screams until the vision finally disappears. MALLOY stands over SLADE, shaking him.

MALLOY

Slade? Slade, are you OK?

SLADE

(sitting up)

What... what the hell just happened?

MALLOY

Your head started rippling, like the aliens do. Then you started screaming.

SLADE puts his hands to his head, cradling his still-ringing skull.

SLADE

I saw something... someone in one
the pods. It was horrible.

MALLOY looks at him, not understanding. SLADE starts to get
up... then freezes, standing perfectly still.

SLADE'S POV

In his mind's eye, SLADE is looking out onto the ship's
laboratory. In the center of the frame is the ALIEN
COMMANDER. He stands there, as evil and imposing as ever...
then suddenly he turns around into camera and stares at us,
looking through time and space directly into SLADE's mind.
SLADE grabs MALLOY, scared.

SLADE

They're coming. They can feel me.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - SERIES OF SHOTS

The COMMANDER barks orders, and all over the ship alien
guards grab incineration guns from the armory rooms, sealing
off doorways and closing the humans in.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

SLADE and MALLOY run through the corridors. They can hear
alarms blaring and the voices of alien guards all around
them. In his mind, SLADE can see the positions of the aliens
in the corridors and he pulls MALLOY down a narrow hallway.

SLADE

This way!

They reach a freight elevator at the end of the hallway with
a lighted access square next to the door.

MALLOY

The hand! We left it back there!

SLADE

We don't need it anymore.

He places his own hand atop the access square and the
elevator doors slide open. They climb inside, and the doors
close behind them, just as an armed phalanx of alien GUARDS
runs past them down the corridor.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/LOWER LEVEL

Another set of elevator doors open up one level below, and
SLADE pokes his head out, making sure it's all clear.

SLADE

Come on. There's a platform on the far side of this hallway that'll take us all the way down to the hangar.

They squeeze out of the elevator and run down the hallway. Then SLADE stops short.

MALLOY

What's wrong?

SLADE

I don't know. Something's wrong, I can feel it.

He grabs her hand and turns to run in the other direction, but then he stops again. MALLOY looks around, seeing nothing.

MALLOY

What is it?

SLADE

They're boxing us in.

He looks around, feverishly. Then his eyes go wide and he hits the deck, pulling MALLOY down with him.

SLADE

GET DOWN!!

A split-second later, doors on both sides of the corridor open and two squadrons of ALIEN GUARDS rush in with incineration guns blazing. SLADE pulls MALLOY behind a power coupling as the concentrated energy of the alien weapons heats the air into a firestorm of heat and wind, and SLADE and MALLOY hold their breath to keep their lungs from searing. Finally the blast relents and they start breathing again, but they're pinned down and outnumbered.

MALLOY

There's too many of them!

A blast ricochets off the wall, setting SLADE's shirtsleeve on fire. He rips his shirt from his body as it demolecularizes.

SLADE

Fuck. We need some kind of...

SLADE'S POV

No sooner does SLADE speak than a window opens in his mind, titled "FORCE MULTIPLICATION SCENARIOS".

SLADE
... force multiplier...

Suddenly, dozens of other windows open up within his POV, displaying probable outcomes of possible reaction scenarios. In one window, SLADE sees himself standing up and shooting the lead ALIEN between the eyes. The success probability factor is displayed at 10%. In another, he sees himself crawling prone under the heat blasts and shooting out the ALIENS' legs. Success probability: 24%.

Numerous other probability windows cycle through his mind at the speed of thought until he finds the one he's looking for: a bank shot that figures at 99% probability. The window enlarges, displaying the trigonometry needed to accomplish the shot in his visual reference.

SLADE stands up and shoots the corner of one of the corridor's octagonal walls at the point where his holographic sighting system indicates. The incineration bolt hits the wall and bounces off of it, ripping through one ALIEN and bouncing off the wall behind it, then ripping through another ALIEN and another in spectacular fashion until all of the creatures behind them are dead.

MALLOY
(awed)
How the hell did you do that.

SLADE
The walls are magnetically shielded. The disruption angle of the incineration pattern is a coefficient of the construction angle of the corridor shielding.

MALLOY
What?

SLADE
I don't know. Just keep shooting.

They turn around and keep blasting, SLADE taking out two and three ALIENS at a time until the corridor is clear. MALLOY looks at him in wonder as they run through the pile of disintegrating alien corpses and out onto the engineering platform beyond.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/ELEVATOR PLATFORM

The platform is like a big elevator cab, designed to carry spacecraft components. SLADE reads its controls, the Alien language transforming to English in his eyes, and waves his hand over the lettering marked "HANGAR BAY". The platform swiftly descends.

MALLOY

Do you think they'll be waiting for us at the bottom?

SLADE

I'm sure of it. We're gonna have to shoot our way through.

Suddenly a small smile crosses MALLOY's face. SLADE looks at her curiously.

SLADE

What's so funny?

MALLOY

I was just thinking... if we can make it out of here... I'm gonna get to fly a spaceship.

SLADE thinks about it for a minute, and then he starts smiling, too.

SLADE

Kinda cool, huh?

Suddenly there's a crash from up above and the elevator jerks and darkens. Then it lights up again and starts descending again smoothly.

MALLOY

(whispers)

What was that?

SLADE

I don't know, I'm not--

Suddenly the top of the cab is ripped away by a set of gigantic metal claws, and replaced by the snarling face of the HUNTER-KILLER DRONE. It hasn't forgotten them. It never forgets. It rips the cab roof back father and lunges in with its big paw, reaching for them.

MALLOY

YAAAHHH!!!

SLADE
GET TO THE CORNERS!!!

They dive for the opposite corners of the platform, shooting up at the DRONE, but it's no use; its heat-shielded armor repels their blasts. Meanwhile, the DRONE is ripping the hole in the roof wider and wider, trying to get in.

SLADE
The floor! Shoot out the floor!

They start blasting away at the tiles beneath their feet, and the floor begins to disintegrate in a widening hole, revealing the elevator shaft rushing up around them at high velocity.

SLADE
Get underneath!!

MALLOY clutches the edges of the hole and dangles down beneath the elevator cab as SLADE drops down behind her. The DRONE, meanwhile, has ripped the roof away and leaps down onto the platform just above them.

SLADE
There's a gangplank down there! We gotta swing out to it!

ANGLE: GANGPLANK

which can be seen fast approaching.

SLADE
Wait for it... wait for it... NOW!!

They swing out across space and onto the gangplank as the cab falls away below them. The DRONE looks up through the ripped-away roof and starts to climb back up, but SLADE shoots the runners along the edges of the platform and the cab loses its traction, plummeting down to the bottom of the shaft with the DRONE still inside. There's a gut-wrenching screech as it crashes to pieces hundreds of feet below.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

SLADE and MALLOY wrench apart the doors of the shaft and wriggle out into the main body of the ship's lower levels.

MALLOY
Do you think it's dead?

SLADE
I sure fuckin' hope so...

He looks around at their strange new surroundings.

SLADE

But now where the hell are we?

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CAVERN

This part of the ship is the strangest yet, a dark yawning cavern with a thick layer of grime and filth all over its ridged black walls. The floor is covered with a layer of vile-smelling liquid that sticks to their feet as they trudge through. There's a dim light up ahead and they move towards it.

SLADE

You hear that?

MALLOY

Yeah...

From a corridor ahead the sound of footsteps can be heard; two pairs of feet walking, and another pair being dragged along. SLADE and MALLOY get as low as they can, hugging the walls and peeking out around the corner.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CAVERN/CORRIDOR

Up ahead in the dim light are two alien GUARDS, holding a semi-paralyzed human tightly between them. His face is pale, a shock of black hair falling into his eyes. He's just a kid, early twenties if even that, but how much longer he'll live in the care of his rough captors is an open question.

SLADE

(whispers)

Stay here.

MALLOY

Where are you--

But SLADE's already gone. He steps forward brazenly into the corridor, incineration gun held high. The two GUARDS stop short in alarm, but the kid just looks at him, puzzled.

SLADE

You might want to duck.

The kid doesn't need to be told twice. He collapses to the floor as the GUARDS go for their guns. SLADE shoots them before they can draw, their bodies evaporating into nothing. Then he crouches down by their gaunt young captive.

SLADE
(shaking him gently)
Hey. Hey, kid. Can you hear me?

The kid looks up, his face pale and drawn.

KYLE
Please... don't hurt me...

SLADE
I ain't gonna hurt you. What's your name?

KYLE
Kyle. Kyle Smith. I think.

MALLOY appears from around the corner, looking down at the thin young man and helping him up.

MALLOY
Are you hurt?

KYLE
No... I'm just really, really...
tired. Who are you people?

SLADE
We're friends. Name's Jim Slade;
this is Malloy. How long they been
holdin' you for?

KYLE
I don't know. Couple of weeks this
time, I think. Could be longer.
Could be a year for all I know.

SLADE
Wait a minute, *this* time? You mean
they've brought you up here before?

KYLE
(nods)
Since I was little.

MALLOY
Did they put you in the pods?

KYLE shakes his head slowly.

KYLE

No. Not all of us go to the pods.
Some of us are... special.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP/EUGENICS LABORATORY

We see a semi-conscious KYLE being dragged down a dark corridor to a GUARDED door.

KYLE (V.O.)

When they first took me, I went to that same big room as everyone else. The one with all the needles. But then they took me someplace different.

The door swings open on a small, dark room filled with arcane alien medical equipment. There are several men and women strapped to tables there, gazing off into space with the pacified stare of barnyard animals. And suspended in the walls all around them are tanks containing hundreds of human fetuses.

KYLE (V.O.)

At first I didn't know what was going on. But they keep you here long enough, you start putting it together. See, they've been coming to Earth for years, hunting us. Never enough for people to really notice. Just enough for the bullshit alien abduction shows on the Sci-Fi channel. Except it's not bullshit.

As we look on, the men and women begin to be led from the room in their semi-paralyzed state. But KYLE and a few others remain.

KYLE (V.O.)

Most of us go to the pods for reconditioning. But a few of us fit a certain profile. We've got the characteristics they're looking for. So they blank our minds and send us back.

As KYLE looks on, we see a pair of ALIENS place an octopus attachment on the forehead of the man beside him. He screams as it glows a bright blue... then he goes silent as the light fades and his eyes glaze over.

He passes out, his memory gone. Then they put an identical attachment on KYLE. He screams and everything goes black.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CAVERN/CORRIDOR - PRESENT

SLADE and MALLOY listen in rapt attention.

SLADE

They send you back where? To Earth?

KYLE

Yeah. But not without one of these.

He lifts his hair in the back, revealing an incision in his neck with what appears to be a small, dark object beneath it.

MALLOY

What is it?

KYLE

It's a tracking device. They use it to keep tabs on us back home. We go back to our daily lives never fully remembering what happened... but when we breed, we pass on the same genetic traits that these bastards find desirable in us.

SLADE

Desirable... for what?

KYLE

(darkly)

I'll show you.

He catches his breath and struggles slowly to his feet, then leads SLADE and MALLOY further down the corridor to a large dark opening in the distance. There's a strange sound that gets louder and louder the further they go, a metallic rattling that echoes off of the cavern's rough surface. KYLE stops just short of the opening and points.

KYLE

There.

SLADE peeks around the corner... and his face goes pale.

SLADE

(whispers)

God...

MALLOY

What is it?

SLADE

Look.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/DUNGEON

Beyond the mouth of the cavern is a vast room with metal benches that run the length of the floor. And seated on the benches are humans, thousands of them. But whatever they once shared is now long gone. Their eyes are blank and staring, stained linen diapers wrapped around their thin waists. And down around their feet are long chains that bolt through the benches, their ankles locked up in its shackles.

SLADE

Jesus. They're slavers.

The scene is horrific, like lithographs of slave ships from the triangular trade. But oh, so much bigger. Not just dozens of humans here but thousands, docile and unmoving, bound up together like chattel.

Suddenly a horn blares, and all the slaves look up in unison. A container above tips downward, pouring a river of gruel onto their upturned faces. They open their mouths as the sludge fills their throats, spilling up over their lips and around the edges. They lick at their chins, uncaring. Then MALLOY sees something and whispers.

MALLOY

(pointing)

Slade...

He turns. There's a line of zombified humans being led in, fresh from the pods. And behind them is a fierce-looking creature who serves as a SLAVEDRIVER. It's a bigger alien than the others, possibly a different race or species. In its hand is a wicked electrified prod that it uses to herd the humans that trudge along before it.

SLADE

(whispers)

Nasty-looking son of a bitch.

One of the humans is moving too slowly, and the SLAVEDRIVER jabs the prod between his shoulders, zapping him with a burst of blue energy. The human speeds up but soon slows down again, and the SLAVEDRIVER rips off the human's arm and beats him over the head with it, killing him.

SLADE and MALLOY watch, horrified, as the human falls and a lab cart rushes up and hovers there, waiting. The SLAVEDRIVER throws the armless corpse into it, and the cart speeds off towards the processing facility where the whine of saw blades can be heard in the distance. SLADE steps out from behind the cavern mouth, his face twisted in rage.

SLADE

Hey. Tough guy. Over here.

The SLAVEDRIVER sees SLADE and looks at him, confused, his head tilting to the side like a curious dog. But a loose human is a loose human. The SLAVEDRIVER growls and swings at SLADE with his prod. SLADE fires and the creature demolecularizes instantly, a stunned look on its face. SLADE grabs KYLE and MALLOY and pulls them deeper into the cavern.

SLADE

C'mon, we gotta get these chains off of them.

MALLOY

Slade, I don't think--

SLADE

C'MON!!

He runs up to the slave bench and goes to work on the chains, slamming the shackles against the bench to break them open.

SLADE

There's thousands of them in here, Malloy! You know what that is? That's a fuckin' army!

He slams the shackle again and again until it finally busts open. The SLAVE it was attached to looks up at SLADE and gurgles happily.

SLADE

C'mon, man, get up! You're free!!

The SLAVE gurgles again, uncomprehending. SLADE shakes him.

SLADE

C'mon, stand up! We gotta break these guys loose and get the hell out of here!

The SLAVE grins. Half of its teeth are missing.

MALLOY

Slade... he can't hear you.

SLADE
 Shut up, Malloy, yes he can! C'mon,
 man!! Wake up!

The SLAVE looks at him... and stops grinning. A look of fear comes over his face.

SLADE
 (excited)
 See, he... he... oh, shit.

SLADE turns around, slowly... only to see another hulking SLAVEDRIVER looming over him. It roars and swings his cattle prod at SLADE, making him drop his gun into the sludge. Then it grabs him up in its gargantuan arms and starts squeezing. MALLOY raises her own weapon to fire, but KYLE grabs her arm.

KYLE
 No! You'll kill them both!!

SLADE bites down on the creature's wrist, and it drops him down into the mud, howling. SLADE gets up again but the SLAVEDRIVER is faster, backhanding SLADE with the prod and knocking him ten feet back, his skin smouldering.

The SLAVEDRIVER runs at him, prod held high, and is about to bring it down... when SLADE grabs up a handful of filth and flings it into the SLAVEDRIVER's eyes. The SLAVEDRIVER bellows as SLADE attacks, sweeping its knees out from under it and wrapping one of the bench-chains around its thick neck.

The beast roars and fights to break free, when suddenly the gruel-horn sounds from above. SLADE digs in with his knees and tightens the chain, forcing the beast's mouth open. The gruel pours down in a thick brown stream, filling the SLAVEDRIVER's gaping maw and choking it to death.

SLADE flings aside its carcass as KYLE and MALLOY run up to him.

MALLOY
 There's more where he came from.
 Slade, we gotta get out of here.

SLADE
 But Malloy, all these people...

MALLOY
 They aren't people anymore! When
 are you gonna wake up and realize
 that?

SLADE

I don't know. Probably never.

MALLOY

Jesus Christ, you stubborn--

She stops as she hears a sound from somewhere deep in the caverns.

KYLE

What was that?

Then they hear it again, louder. SLADE and MALLOY go pale; by now, this sound is all too familiar.

MALLOY

No...

From the mouth of the cavern, the DRONE appears, glaring at them with glowing red eyes. Its face has been mangled from its steep fall down the elevator shaft, and man, it looks pissed.

SLADE

RUN!!!

They tear ass through the cavern towards the doorway on the far side, but the sludge beneath their feet slows them down. Behind them, the DRONE is gaining.

SLADE

Faster!! Come on!!

They run past bench after bench of human slaves but the distance is too far to cover. Meanwhile, they can hear the pistons in the DRONE's legs firing right behind them.

DRONE'S POV

The glowing human shapes get larger and larger in the DRONE's infra-red eyes... then suddenly, they disappear.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/DUNGEON - UNDER THE BENCHES

KYLE and MALLOY lie shaking beside SLADE underneath one of the slave benches where they've hidden. The DRONE stands above them, only a few feet away, but the proximity of all the humans bunched together makes it impossible to isolate SLADE and MALLOY. Its big head swivels back and forth, trying to locate its quarry.

SLADE puts his finger to his lips and signals to KYLE and MALLOY to move forward.

They crawl along, quietly, slowly, under the benches towards the doorway. It's a terrifying sequence of filth and shadow as they make their way on their bellies through the sludge. But it's dark and it's warm and the DRONE can't make them out as they move silently through the forest of human legs beneath the benches.

DRONE'S POV

The DRONE moves slowly down the aisle, refining its scan rate continuously to acquire its target. It peers around, cycling through infra-red, ultra-violet, electromagnetic... then finally it picks up on something, a signal from under one of the benches broadcasting in a subspace frequency that only the DRONE can see. It locks on, its eyes narrowing... and sees KYLE crawling along, the implant in his neck throbbing dimly. The DRONE roars and attacks.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/DUNGEON - UNDER THE BENCHES

KYLE and MALLOY scream as the DRONE pounces, ripping the benches above them to splinters.

SLADE
RUN!! GET TO THE DOOR!!

They jump to their feet and start sprinting, giving up the last of their strength in a mad dash to get to the doorway. Behind them, the DRONE leaps, clearing the benches, and hits the ground running. MALLOY slips and falls, but KYLE grabs her wrist and pulls her up again just as the DRONE's claws come down.

The DRONE's swipe causes it to lose its balance on the slick floor. It starts to slide sideways, then digs in and rights itself, spinning around to resume chase. But by now, SLADE has reached the door.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

On the other side of the doorway, SLADE rips the access square from the wall, revealing a complex cluster of wires behind it. KYLE and MALLOY run up to him, panting.

MALLOY
Can you lock it?

SLADE
I think so.

SLADE'S POV

He examines the wires and the correct locking sequence appears before his eyes, but it's tedious and complicated. Meanwhile, the DRONE is running straight at them.

SLADE

Come on... come on...

He rips and splices the wires together, trying to find the correct order. The DRONE's glowing eyes are only a few feet away. The beast lunges forward, its gleaming teeth shining... and just then the door spirals shut. The DRONE slams into it from the other side, creating a huge dent that almost rips the metal from its casing.

SLADE

Let's go.

They run down the corridor as the DRONE tears into the locked door from the far side, its frustrated thrashes echoing loudly off the cavernous walls. The three humans collapse to the floor, exhausted.

KYLE

Jesus, that was close.

MALLOY

Yeah... but how did it find us again so quickly?

SLADE shakes his head, then looks at KYLE slowly.

SLADE

I know how.

He brushes back KYLE's hair and squints. In his POV, the faint subspace throbbing of the implant can be seen.

KYLE

(scared)

Wait, what are you--

SLADE

Hold still.

SLADE closes his eyes and holds his hand over the back of KYLE's neck. Under the skin, the mecha-organic implant twists and squirms... then burrows up to the surface and pokes through. SLADE grabs it with his fingers and tosses it to the floor, where it skitters and squeals.

MALLOY

What the...

SLADE
Give me your gun.

She hands it over and SLADE blasts the implant, which gives a final hiss before it's vaporized into nothingness. KYLE looks up at SLADE in wonder.

KYLE
How did you...

SLADE
I got one of their bugs in my head, allows me to see what they see. They were using that thing to track you down.

MALLOY
So we're safe now?

SLADE
Near as I can figure.

MALLOY
Then let's get the hell out of here. Which way to the hangar?

SLADE points off down the corridor, which disappears into darkness in the distance.

SLADE
Straight shot down that tunnel. But it's a long way to go with no cover.

KYLE
I know a shortcut. They brought me through here once before.

SLADE
Lead the way, kid.

KYLE brings them to a small membrane door at the edge of the wall. SLADE waves it open and they crawl inside.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/ABANDONED TUNNEL

The tunnel is dark and close, the air musty and dry like it hasn't been used in a while. The humans crawl through on their hands and knees, feeling their way through the darkness.

MALLOY
(shivering)
Oh god, what *is* that? That smell,
it smells like...

KYLE
Death.

MALLOY nods, agreeing.

KYLE
This used to lead to the breeding
rooms. At least, that's what
somebody told me before he...
before...

He trails off, frowning.

KYLE
Not everyone makes it through.

SLADE
What the hell are the breeding
rooms?

KYLE
It's what they used to use to run
tests on us, back when they first
found Earth. They started with
cattle, then moved up to monkeys.
And we were the next ones in line.

SLADE
Next for what?

KYLE
You saw what they do. They abduct
us and enslave us, then take us off-
world and unload us. The pods blank
the brain, torturing the senses
until the lobes are lobotomized.
Then you'll do whatever they say.
But before they could develop the
technology, they needed to figure
us out. Our anatomy, from birth to
adulthood. They needed a maternity
ward.

MALLOY
(horrified)
So the breeding rooms were...

KYLE nods, sullen.

KYLE

They made us mate. Then they took
the babies away.

SLADE shakes his head and crawls on as the tunnel heads
deeper and deeper.

SLADE

I've been seeing these visions...
of people trapped in the pods. I've
been feeling what they're feeling.
Their pain.

KYLE

(nods)

The aliens... they use it somehow.
The pain, I mean. It's like a drug
or something for them, they get off
on it. They harness distressed
brainwaves as energy and broadcast
it all over the ship. When their
heads ripple, it means they're
receiving the signal. Whatever
you've got in your head must have
plugged you into their network.

SLADE

Well, I gotta get unplugged, buddy.
I don't know how much more of that
shit I can take.

KYLE points to a dim light a few meters ahead.

KYLE

The exit's down there. It empties
out onto the ship's bottom level.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

They emerge from the tunnel into a narrow walkway that opens
up onto a flat black expanse. And at the end of this expanse
are two gargantuan metal doors, a thousand feet wide and
three stories high floor to ceiling.

MALLOY

Is that...?

SLADE

Yup. The hangar.

MALLOY rushes towards it, her anticipation of freedom getting
the better of her. SLADE grabs her arm, yanking her back.

SLADE

Wait.

He looks at the door, frowning.

SLADE

Something's not right.

SLADE'S POV

SLADE narrows his eyes and looks not at the door, but through it, the implant in his head registering the presence of aliens on the other side. And not just two, or four, or even fifty; there's a whole *army* of guards that stretch wall to wall, heads rippling, their blue-green skin covering the floor of the hangar like the tides of an angry sea.

SLADE

We can't go in.

MALLOY

Why not?!

SLADE

It's an ambush. They're waiting for us inside.

KYLE

How many?

SLADE

You don't want to know.

MALLOY collapses back against the wall, holding her head in her hands.

MALLOY

How?! How did they know where we were headed?

She looks at KYLE, suspicious.

MALLOY

(advancing on him)
Are you sure you got the whole thing out of his neck?

KYLE

Hey, wait a minute...!

He jumps back as MALLOY lunges at him, yanking his hair up.

KYLE
Get off of me!!

MALLOY
Where is it?! Where is the little
bastard?!

KYLE
(struggling)
I said get off!!

They fall to the floor, grappling at one another. SLADE moves in to break them up, then stops, hearing something.

SLADE
Hey. Knock it off.

KYLE and MALLOY keep fighting, and SLADE reaches down, pulling them apart like misbehaving children.

SLADE
I said knock it off!!

KYLE and MALLOY glare at one another, each of them breathing heavy. Then they stop, hearing it too. A metal clank, followed by a long, scraping drag. Then another clank. Then another. MALLOY's jaw drops as she backs up against the wall.

MALLOY
Oh my God...

KYLE
Oh shit...

SLADE
I don't believe it...

From out of the darkness, the HUNTER-KILLER DRONE appears. It's limping slightly, the hydraulics in one of its legs damaged. It growls as it sights its human prey, all three of them trapped neatly between the hangar doors and its gleaming metal clutches.

SLADE
God damn... can anything stop that
thing?

MALLOY edges along the wall, terrified.

MALLOY
Come on...we gotta run...

She gets up, and KYLE gets up right behind her. Then they stop, realizing their predicament.

SLADE

No use. There's nowhere to run to.

They're stuck there, the hangar doors and the aliens on one side, and the HUNTER-KILLER DRONE on the other.

The DRONE advances slowly as KYLE and MALLOY press back against the walls. But strangely, SLADE just stands there, watching. The DRONE stares at him and SLADE stares back, each of them sizing up the other. The DRONE takes a step forward, extending its claws. SLADE clenches his fists... and then he does the unthinkable: he takes a run at it.

MALLOY

SLADE!! NO!!

KYLE

Is he *crazy*?!

The DRONE charges SLADE, but SLADE ducks and comes around on the DRONE's wounded side, forcing the beast to spin around to stay on top of him. The DRONE swings again but again SLADE is faster, jumping over the razor-sharp claws and keeping the DRONE off-balance.

SLADE'S POV

In SLADE's eyes we can see the windows of probability appear, anticipating the moves of the DRONE and allowing him to dodge them a split-second before they impact. He stares up at the beast and the display in his head finally indicates the DRONE's Achilles heel: an access panel on the back of its neck.

SLADE ducks a furious barrage of swipes and blows and comes in closer, slamming the DRONE on the nose and scrambling its sensors. Then he stands perfectly still, giving the metal monster a perfect target.

The DRONE rears up on its hind legs, extracting its claws to their deadliest length and driving them down like a pile-driver at SLADE's head. SLADE waits until the last possible moment and then slides underneath them.

The big metal claws slam into the floor, imbedding in the steel and trapping the beast momentarily. SLADE climbs up the back of the monster's hydraulic arms and swings himself onto its neck.

The DRONE bucks and rears, but SLADE hangs on like a bullrider and climbs slowly up to the access panel. Then he opens it and starts yanking at the wires beneath. The implant tells SLADE what he needs to know and he works fast, disconnecting electrodes and then reconnecting them, reconfiguring the programming protocols.

The DRONE writhes and twists, its servos and pistons straining, and finally it rips its claws free, reaching behind its head and picking SLADE up and slamming him down. Then it rears up again, going in for the kill. SLADE looks up at the monstrous claws hurtling down at him and barely has time to open his mouth and say:

SLADE

Stop.

The DRONE stops in mid-swing.

DRONE'S POV

In the DRONE's visual display, SLADE's designation switches from PREY to MASTER. The DRONE hovers there motionless, its claws mere inches from SLADE's throat.

SLADE wipes the sweat from his eyes and slowly gets up from beneath the beast's giant arms as KYLE and MALLOY run over.

KYLE

I do not believe that just happened.

MALLOY

Slade!! Are you all right?!

He pulls himself up on his elbows, woozy.

SLADE

I think so...

He rolls out from beneath the metal monster and crouches there, breathing hard. KYLE looks up at the DRONE, nervous.

MALLOY

What, uh... what's it doing?

SLADE

Waiting for my orders.

MALLOY looks at him in wonder, then notices the pool of blood on the floor.

MALLOY

Oh my God, you're hurt!

SLADE

What?

MALLOY pulls up his shirt, revealing an ugly gash that the DRONE had ripped into his side.

MALLOY

You can't feel that?!

SLADE

No.

MALLOY

But... I mean, Jesus, your side's ripped open!

SLADE rubs the scar on his forehead, his fingers touching the edges of the metal plate beneath.

SLADE

It's kind of a long story. Has the bleeding stopped?

MALLOY

I think so...

SLADE

Then I guess I'll survive.

MALLOY

What about him?

SLADE walks around the DRONE, inspecting it.

SLADE

Sit down.

The DRONE sits down. SLADE looks at it thoughtfully.

SLADE

Roll over.

The giant beast rolls. KYLE gets up from where he'd been hiding and looks at SLADE, amazed.

KYLE

Ho-ly shit. Does it know any other tricks?

SLADE

Yeah.

He narrows his eyes and points to the hangar.

SLADE

Rip down those doors and kill
everything on the other side.

The DRONE stands up and snarls.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

In the hangar, the ALIENS take up positions. They've set up perimeters around the three raiding cruisers docked there, their guns trained on the door. One by one they ripple and twitch, ready to fry the humans as soon as they come through.

Then, from the other side of the doors, a loud metal knocking can be heard. The ALIENS stand there, webbed fingers gripping itchy triggers, waiting for the doors to open.

There's a grinding noise of metal on metal as the doors are slowly pried apart. The ALIENS raise their guns in unison, ready to shoot... then stop as they see the doors being ripped from their hinges by the giant claws of the reprogrammed DRONE!

The DRONE rips through its former alien masters like a chainsaw through an old-growth forest, splattering their fluorescent blue blood everywhere. They try desperately to return fire but the blast-shielded DRONE tosses around them like pygmies, ripping them in two. SLADE and MALLOY follow close in its wake, blasting any ALIEN soldier the DRONE might have missed.

SLADE

(yells)

Head for that cruiser!

SLADE and MALLOY make a run for the nearest triangular vessel and duck beneath its hull, looking for a point of entry along the outside. KYLE follows them, shielding his head with his hands as alien body parts fly around him.

MALLOY

Slade! Over here!

SLADE lays his hand on the access square MALLOY'S found and the cruiser's hull spirals open, lowering a ramp that extends to the floor.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

The three humans make their way to the cockpit, marveling at the advanced technology. The controls are unlike anything they've ever seen, and MALLOY sits down in the pilot's seat with eyes full of wonder.

SLADE
Think you can fly this thing?

MALLOY
Think you can stop me?

She grins.

MALLOY
Just point me to the stick and
throttle.

SLADE'S POV

The cruiser's diagnostics open up in a window within SLADE's POV, and he quickly goes through the controls.

SLADE
OK, we got the fore and aft
thrusters, ascension nacelles,
hyperdrive accelerator...

MALLOY
(smiling slyly)
Hyperdrive accelerator?

SLADE
Let's not touch that one just yet.

Suddenly his eyes light up.

SLADE
But this one...

MALLOY
What is it?

He wraps his hand around a targeting joystick.

SLADE
Particle beam cannon.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

Outside, more and more ALIENS keep rushing in through the hangar doors.

The DRONE rips through them as fast as they come, but there are hundreds of them and they eventually surround it, pushing it back. A few of them jump up on its back, screaming in triumph. Then their shouts turn to fear as the hijacked raiding cruiser slowly lifts off the ground... and opens fire.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE

(snarls)

Burn, you little green fucks.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

The particle beam cannon makes the ALIENS' incineration gun blasts look like bursts of silly string as its white-hot streams of superaccelerated plasma are fired throughout the hangar. The ALIEN soldiers take off running in all directions, but there's nowhere to hide and they die screaming as their bodies are reduced to subatomic components before our eyes.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

MALLOY swings the ship around as SLADE hits everything in sight, clearing a path to the wall in the distance.

SLADE

Can you get us closer to that wall?

MALLOY

What's on the wall?

SLADE

It ain't what's on it, it's what's on the other side.

He looks out the windscreen and smiles.

SLADE

Home.

MALLOY grins. SLADE's finger wraps around the trigger, ready to blast his way to freedom... when suddenly his head ripples.

SLADE'S POV

SLADE receives another horrible pod vision, this one of a man standing in a pile of long metal worms with sharp needle-noses. The worms crawl up his legs and under his skin, where we can see them working their way deep inside.

Other visions follow, jump-cutted images of people with their fingernails pulled out, their flesh flayed off, their limbs torn from their sockets. All in their minds, all terrifying. SLADE howls and falls out of his chair, clutching his head as the visions bombard his senses.

MALLOY

Kyle! Take the controls!

KYLE

But I--

MALLOY

Just do it!

KYLE slowly sits down as MALLOY runs to SLADE, crouching down by his trembling form as the veins in his forehead throb and swell and then finally recede.

MALLOY

Slade? Slade, you OK?

SLADE

(gasping for breath)

The things... the things they do to them...

MALLOY grabs his arms, helping him up from the floor.

MALLOY

I know. I was in there. But you have to remember... it's not real. It's all in their heads. It's just what they're making them see.

SLADE

That don't make it feel any better.

MALLOY

(looking at him intently)
Listen to me. There's nothing we can do for them now. This is our only chance to get home.

SLADE gets up and looks at her, stern.

SLADE

At least we got a chance. What the hell do they got, Malloy? Another few hours and the people locked up in them long glass coffins won't even be people any more.

(MORE)

SLADE (cont'd)
 They'll lose their minds and join
 the rest of those poor bastards
 shitting themselves back there on
 the benches.

Through the windscreen the ALIENS can be seen regrouping.
 More and more of them pour through the hangar bay doors,
 growling and snarling and surrounding the cruiser once more.

KYLE
 (nervous)
 Uh, guys...

MALLOY looks out at the ALIENS filling the hangar and curses.

MALLOY
 Take a look outside, Slade. They're
 still coming. No matter how many we
 kill, they just keep coming.

SLADE
 Then we'll just have to kill a few
 more.

MALLOY
 (exasperated)
 Jesus Christ!! Even if you could go
 back and bust everyone out of the
 pods, what the hell would you do
 with them?! We got one goddamn
 cruiser, that's it! There's no way
 to get them all home!

SLADE
 (slowly)
 Maybe there is.

He heads to the rear of the small ship and waves opens a
 door. Behind it is the cruiser's hold, the same small
 stainless steel room we saw when SLADE was first abducted. He
 steps inside, examining the smooth walls.

SLADE
 After they grabbed us, this is
 where we woke up, remember?

He crouches down by the floor and slides his hand over it.
 The floor opens and a two-foot cylindrical device rises up
 out of it.

SLADE
 And this is how they brought us
 here.

MALLOY

What is it?

SLADE

A teleportation engine. It pulls your molecules through space and time.

MALLOY

And, uh, what are you planning to do with it?

SLADE touches a circle on the underside of the engine and it powers up, glowing a pale blue.

SLADE

I'm gonna use it to send them back home.

MALLOY

Slade... think for a minute...

SLADE

Fuck thinking about it, I can feel it, Malloy, I can feel it all! All the people in the pods, all that they're suffering, I'm suffering too! This thing's in my head and it's never coming out and I'll be seeing that horrible nightmare shit forever!

He stands up, his face flushed.

SLADE

But that ain't the worst of it.

He takes his son's photo from his pocket and shows it to her.

SLADE

This is my son, Jamie. Only thing I want in the world right now is to see him just one more time. But those people in the pods, they got kids too, Malloy. And they're never gonna see them again, ever.

He looks up at her, slowly.

SLADE

But you might. Remember those guys in the plane you took up?

(MORE)

SLADE (cont'd)

For all you know, two of them might still be alive and conscious. What if their kids asked you what happened to them, what would you say? That their dad's being tortured to death a million miles away, and you had the chance to help him, but you were too worried about your own sorry ass to do anything about it?

She looks away, guilty.

MALLOY

It doesn't matter what I say. Nobody down there will ever believe me.

SLADE

No. They won't. But we can make sure that this won't happen to anybody else ever, no matter what the hell they believe.

He puts the photo back in his pocket and looks out at the hangar, where more alien reinforcements are already starting to arrive. MALLOY looks out at the hangar bay doors, knowing that the bright blue ball of the Earth is just on the other side.

MALLOY

Slade... we're so close...

SLADE

(quietly)

First thing they teach you is you never leave a man behind.

He tucks the teleportation engine under his arm and heads for the exit.

SLADE

I'm gonna use this engine to send them back to Earth, then I'm gonna bring it back here and send us home, too. All I need is for you guys to hold the fort until I return. I don't come back and you get into trouble, you blow those hull doors and head for the first little blue planet you see.

He looks at KYLE and MALLOY, deadly serious.

SLADE

You two want to get out of here now, I ain't gonna hold it against you. But I'm going back in there, and I'm sending them home. And I'm taking this whole fucking ship down behind me.

MALLOY looks down at the rags that the people in the pods once wore, at her fingers that fed of their flesh, at the hard-won alien blood that stains her hands. She looks at KYLE and he nods, wrapping his hand around the targeting joystick.

KYLE

We'll keep the meter running.

SLADE looks at him and smiles... then turns and heads for the exit. MALLOY grabs his arm gently.

MALLOY

(quietly)
Slade?

SLADE

Yeah?

MALLOY

Just come back, OK?

SLADE nods. Then he jumps out the hatch and into the combat zone.

MALLOY

(taking the controls)
OK... let's light up the walkway.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

MALLOY lays down covering fire with the particle beam cannon as SLADE jumps to the floor. The cruiser's blasters erupt like supercharged lightning, blasting the attacking ALIENS away. SLADE crawls along on the ground beneath the fire until he reaches his waiting DRONE, then he pries an incineration gun from a dead ALIEN's hand and climbs up on the metal beast's back, his eyes burning red with rage.

SLADE

You like pain, motherfuckers? Well you just bought yourselves first-class tickets on the asskick express... and I'm driving.

He lunges forward, the white-hot fury of the plasma cannons licking out like the fires of Hell behind him. The alien armada falls like wheat before a scythe as the DRONE rips through them, its teeth and claws gleaming and SLADE's guns blazing from its back. They ride out of the hangar and back into the main body of the ship, leaving a trail of swift death and unspeakable anger behind them.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/SERIES OF CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

They fly through the corridors of the massive ship, SLADE clinging tightly to the neck of the raging DRONE. He charges imperviously through group after group of firing ALIENS, not stopping at doors or walls but ripping through them like so much paper.

Finally, SLADE slows his mount to a walk, the surroundings becoming familiar. Then his head ripples and he nearly falls from the DRONE's back as he receives another vision, the strongest one yet. The pod room must be near.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE POD ROOM

The DRONE's claws echo loudly off the hard metal floor, perhaps a little too loudly. SLADE rounds a corner and stops. The pod room doors are just ahead, tall frightening monoliths etched with the foul scrawl of the ALIEN markings. Frightening, but strangely, unguarded. SLADE waves his hand over the entrance square, and the doors slowly open before him.

He peers inside, his eyes adjusting to the darkness. And then up ahead he sees it, the horrible blue glow of the pain pods and the humans being tormented inside. His lip curls back, his anger getting the better of him as he nudges the DRONE forward. The doors shut behind them the moment they step inside.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

It's quiet at first, nothing but the low hum of machinery in the darkness. But then SLADE hears something, a mechanical snarl from somewhere behind him. Then another. And another. Four sets of glowing red eyes appear as four DRONES identical to his own step out of from the darkness. Identical except for their loyalty to their alien masters. They close in, teeth gleaming, as SLADE's own DRONE starts to growl.

SLADE

(slowly)

Drone... I think we just been
ambushed.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

Ten levels down, MALLOY squeezes the trigger on the targeting joystick and doesn't let go. Slowly, the ALIEN force is being driven back away from the cruiser.

MALLOY
(excited)
Look. We got 'em on the run.

KYLE looks out the windscreen and nods.

KYLE
Yeah. So what's the plan now?

MALLOY
Just what Slade said. We clear a path to the wall and wait for him to get back. And then we go home.

KYLE looks at her and smiles.

KYLE
That Slade's something else, isn't he?

MALLOY
Yeah. He really is.

KYLE
(grins)
Remember when you guys were back up in the core and you almost shot him, 'cause you thought he was some kind of new human decoy?

MALLOY
(laughs)
Yeah... Oh man, how could I have--

Then she stops laughing. Her smile fades as she turns slowly towards KYLE, who is still watching her, grinning.

MALLOY
Wait, how did you... how did you know about that? We never mentioned it to you.

KYLE
The ship knows about it, Jenny. The ship knows about everything.

He stands up, still grinning, and narrows his eyes. He looks more imposing now, and far more sinister. Gone is the malnourished victim from the dungeons... replaced by something far different. And far deadlier.

KYLE

You had the right idea, Jen. You just had the wrong guy.

He takes a step towards her, and she reaches for her gun. But he moves like lightning, and before she knows what her she's been backhanded out of her seat and thrown into the wall.

MALLOY

(gasps)

You're... one of them...

KYLE

Yeah. Well, yes and no. I'm not an alien, if that's what you mean.

MALLOY

But... how...?

KYLE

(smiles)

Remember the breeding rooms? Well, what do you think they did with all those babies?

A look of horror crosses MALLOY's face. She reaches for her gun again, and KYLE kicks her in the chin, lifting her body up off the floor. She collapses back down again, blood dripping from her mouth.

MALLOY

You... traitorous fuck...

KYLE

Naw. Not a traitor. My skin might be pink, but I grew up playing for a different team. There's others like me, each of us educated and trained in a different earth language and culture. Lucky me... I got to be an American.

He crouches down beside her, picks up her gun and tucks it into his belt. Then he starts stroking her hair.

KYLE

It ain't a bad gig, Jenny. I live here on the ship, and they wait on me hand and foot. I spend my days keeping tabs on the abductees, and I get my own slaves at night. And when we finally stop dicking around with you guys and take over-- and believe me, we *will* take over-- guess who's the king of the mountain?

MALLOY manages to lift up her head, and stares at him with hate-filled eyes.

MALLOY

When Slade gets back--

KYLE

(laughs)

Gets *back*?! Oh, no, I don't think so. See, I've been transmitting our position back to the Commander ever since I started running with you guys. You were right, by the way. That bug in my neck wasn't the only one.

He jerks her head up by the hair and stares at her cruelly.

KYLE

Right now, Slade is being attacked by four of the same HK drone's that've been chasing you all over the ship. And if he somehow survives that, he's going into the pods with the same lame fucks he was trying to save. Guy like that oughtta give the Commander and his boys quite a ripple.

MALLOY looks at him, her spirit crushed.

MALLOY

(quietly)

What about me?

KYLE

(smiles)

You? Oh, I've got something special in mind for you.

(MORE)

KYLE (cont'd)

See, another perk of this gig is that I get my choice of any of the abductees that catches my fancy. Believe me, we get some hot ones. And you know those breeding rooms?

He puts his lips to her ear and whispers.

KYLE

They still work.

INT. SHIP/POD ROOM

SLADE hunkers down, muscles tense, as the four enemy DRONES surround him. There's half a beat of charged stillness as their nanoreceptors whir inside their metal skulls, formulating their attack strategy. Then they leap in, ripping and clawing. SLADE slides to the floor and hits the deck.

His own re-programmed DRONE fights well, holding back the attackers and giving SLADE the time he needs to make a run for the pods. He hurdles the low rail that runs along the lowest level, the sounds of pitched battle ringing out behind him. When he reaches the pods he stops, seeing the people inside up close for the first time.

It's a horrible tableau of cruelty and pain: men and women, skin pale, eyes wide and staring, lips moving in unconscious pleas for mercy. SLADE stares at them, determined.

SLADE

Don't worry, guys. You're all goin' home.

He untucks the teleportation engine from under his arm and positions it on the floor in the room's center. Then he waves his hand along its side, activating a display panel that appears holographically beside it.

Using his finger as a pointer, SLADE scrolls through the interactive display, which is set up like some intergalactic GPS system. He moves from the hub of the Milky Way galaxy towards its center, zooming past planets and stars until he finds what he's looking for: the Sol system. Then he points to the Earth and enters the desired transport destination.

ANGLE: THE TELEPORTATION ENGINE

which starts glowing a bright blue. SLADE steps back from it as a warp bubble is generated around the engine and begins folding the space around it, expanding spherically outward.

Then, inside the bubble, the people in the pods start to disappear, broken down into component data and streamed out into space.

CUT TO:

INT. CEDARS-SINAI HOSPITAL/EMERGENCY ROOM RECEIVING - NIGHT

Down below on the blue planet of Earth, the red and blue lights of an ambulance flash as a young gunshot victim is rushed in by paramedics. A young DOCTOR runs up with a clipboard.

ER DOCTOR
Where'd you find him?

PARAMEDIC
Corner of Wilshire and Alvarado.
Took six hollow-points to the back.

ER DOCTOR
Let's open him up.
(to NURSE)
I need 50 CCs of digoxin, stat.

The NURSE rushes off through the hospital corridor. Suddenly the ceiling lights flicker as one of the men from the pods materializes in front of her. The NURSE stops and stares at him, frozen.

NURSE
Uh... Doctor...?

More pod people start materializing all around her, pale and naked and lying on the floor.

NURSE
Doctor...?

One of them grabs the NURSE's ankle and looks up at her, pleading.

POD MAN
Help me...

NURSE
(screaming)
DOCTOR!!!

The ER DOCTOR turns around, irritated.

ER DOCTOR
What the hell is... oh my God.

He runs back to the receiving area, where there are now hundreds of pod people lying on the floor.

ER DOCTOR
Where did they all come from?!

NURSE
I have no idea!!

The DOCTOR leans down and checks a pod child's pulse. It's beating, barely. The DOCTOR picks up an intercom phone and yells into it.

ER DOCTOR
(into phone)
I need all available emergency
personnel to ER immediately!

He slams down the phone, and then he notices one of the missing child posters tacked up on the bulletin board behind it. His eyes go wide as he realizes that the kid on the floor is the kid in the poster. Then they go wider still as he realizes that nearly all the people in the missing persons posters are right there on the floor in front of him.

ER DOCTOR
Holy...

He bends down and picks up the pod child, who stares up helplessly into his eyes.

ER DOCTOR
Hang on, kid. You're gonna be OK.

He rushes him off down the hall.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

Thousands of miles above Earth orbit, SLADE's DRONE is losing its battle. The beast fights valiantly, but the odds are against it and it slowly falls. The other DRONES seize the advantage, ripping it limb from limb. Its eyes go dim as its power cells die. Then they turn their attention to SLADE.

SLADE is watching the pod people disappear one by one when hears the metal footsteps behind him. He slowly turns, seeing the four DRONES standing there, staring at him. He sets his jaw and takes a step forward, knowing that there's no sense left in taking a step back.

SLADE
All right, motherfuckers. You want
some? Then here we go.

He clenches his fists, ready to die... when suddenly the DRONES step aside, parting their line at the center. And standing behind them is the ALIEN COMMANDER. He looks at SLADE coolly, then bends down and switches off the teleportation engine. The warp bubble disappears, leaving half of the pod people untransported and trapped in their pods.

SLADE

NO!!

SLADE runs at the COMMANDER, ready to rip him apart with his bare hands, but the COMMANDER calmly holds up a handheld device and presses a button on it. Overhead, the big dish thrums with energy and inside SLADE's head the white noise of a thousand visions fire at once, overwhelming him.

SLADE collapses. The COMMANDER strides up and takes his gun away as if taking a toy from a child. Two ALIEN GUARDS appear and hoist him into the air.

SLADE

(gasps)

Put me down, you suitcase-skinned
son of a bitch.

The COMMANDER grabs SLADE's chin with sharpened claws and twists his head to the side.

ANGLE: SLADE'S EAR

We can see a glimmer of metal and a dim red light from the crawler implanted inside.

The COMMANDER smirks, a toothy reptilian snarl that reveals twin rows of teeth. He fingers the handheld again and SLADE screams in agony, concentrated torment of a hundred souls blasting through his cranium. The COMMANDER barks an order in his guttural language and the alien GUARDS drag SLADE back towards a pain pod that stands open and waiting.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

All around MALLOY's cruiser, ALIEN forces have gathered. They drool and snarl as they surround the craft, endless numbers filing in from the hangar bay doors.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

KYLE looks at them and smiles. He hits a switch on the instrument panel and the force field around the small ship dies.

KYLE

Come on in.

With nothing to stop them, the ALIENS advance. They move in quickly, their heads rippling, the sounds of their clawed footfalls echoing throughout the hangar like the vulgar soundtrack to some horrible dream. MALLOY shudders as KYLE grabs her arm.

KYLE

Come on, Jenny. It's time to go back.

MALLOY hangs her head, weeping. She was close, so close. KYLE picks her up under one arm and keys a release switch, opening the cockpit door. The cruiser's hull spirals open and the ALIENS growl eagerly as they see their prey bleeding inside. KYLE raises his fist in victory and grins as he drags MALLOY towards the door.

Half-conscious with blood in her eyes, MALLOY feels herself being carried away. She's about to let her body go limp... then she sees it, the piloting joystick. It juts out from the control cluster, inviting... and with her last ounce of strength, she kicks it.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

The ALIENS yelp as the cruiser spins onto its side and hovers up into the air. They back away from the ship, weapons raised.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

KYLE loses his balance and tumbles, losing his grip on MALLOY. She grabs for the seatback, holding on with both hands as KYLE slides down the smooth black floor.

KYLE

You little bitch!

He snarls and snatches her foot, yanking her down towards the door. MALLOY gasps and reaches for the control stick again, and the cruiser crashes back down to the hangar bay floor. Still on its side, the ship lies there, with MALLOY hanging on for dear life as KYLE dangles from her foot, pulling himself up on her ankle.

KYLE

C'mere... I got somethin' for you...

He reaches for her neck, eyes wild, and she elbows him, breaking his nose. He howls in pain and slips, now hanging on with only one hand. Summoning all of her strength, MALLOY pulls herself up one-handed and kicks KYLE in the face with her boot.

MALLOY

Get... OFF!!

She kicks him again and he loses his grip, sliding down the floor and out through the doorway. He catches himself with his fingers, pulling himself up once again, and MALLOY hits the switch that closes the door.

KYLE

(screams)

NO!!!

The door spirals shut, cutting off his hand, and KYLE falls screaming to the floor below.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

KYLE stands, cradling his wounded stump, and shouts to the ALIENS around him.

KYLE

Get her!! While the force field's
still down!!

The ALIENS rush forward, leaping up onto the ship. They clamber up its sides and onto its roof, slamming their fists on the metal. We can see MALLOY through the windshield, looking around in horror... then cruiser's surface is covered by the ALIEN horde, their green skin twisting and writhing.

INT. SHIP/POD ROOM

SLADE wakes up inside the pod that the ALIEN COMMANDER imprisoned him in. He peers around inside the pod's membrane skin only to find his arms and legs forcefully restrained. The COMMANDER looks in at him, and waves his hand in front of the pod. There's a terrifying hiss as one of the cybernetic octopus attachments drops down from above and wraps itself around SLADE's head, its prongs clamping down one by one onto his temples.

The COMMANDER presses a button on his handheld device, and the cold metal octopus begins to glow a bright blue. There's no sensation at first, just a dull throbbing. Then SLADE's pupils constrict and his jaw clenches involuntarily as the pod powers up.

This is raw pain, true pain, pain that even SLADE with his limited sensitivity can feel. The COMMANDER twists the dial, increasing the output.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD CONTROL ROOM

In a control room nearby, two alien TECHNICIANS monitor SLADE's pod on a holographic display. They see the increased power demand from the COMMANDER's device and make adjustments to the room's energy grid accordingly.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/REACTOR CORE

Deep within its titanium core, the ship's main reactor begins glowing a dull blue as it revs up its output, harnessing raw fusion to fulfill the pod's increased power needs.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

SLADE twitches and shakes as his body is lit up by the pod's horrible machinery. He looks down at his body, shocked to see the skin on his hand melting. He fights it, bracing himself against the pain.

SLADE

(shuts his eyes tight)

Not real. It's not real.

He opens his eyes and when he down again his hand is intact and the image is gone. The COMMANDER stares at him, coldly. He twists the dial on the handheld again, and SLADE's body goes rigid. The broadcast dish above hums with energy as it redirects SLADE's agony to the implant inside the COMMANDER's head, which ripples as he's fed a rush of raw pain.

SLADE's brain is wracked with image after horrible image as the octopus attachment clamps down tighter on his scalp. He looks down at his body and sees unspeakable things growing out of it, burrowing into it, separating skin from bone.

SLADE

It's all in my head... all in my head.

He looks down again and sees his ribs separate and pull apart of their own accord, exposing the organs beneath.

SLADE

IT'S ALL IN MY FUCKING HEAD!!!

CUT TO:

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

A bruised and battered MALLOY backs away from the cruiser's windshield, which is now covered with leering, snarling ALIEN soldiers. They gnash their multiple teeth together loudly as they smash against the glass, eager to get in.

MALLOY

Oh, Jesus...

The ALIENS' heads start rippling as they are fed by SLADE's pain, which is now being broadcast all over the ship. Their implants can be seen glowing inside their heads, igniting them, connecting them, driving them on. They smash against the cruiser's hull with their fists, and we hear the low groan of metal tiles being ripped away.

ANGLE: INSTRUMENT PANEL

where a display revealing the cruiser's damage status can be seen. It's easy enough to read, even to MALLOY's human eyes: an icon of the ship with three concentric blue rings around it. As she looks on, one of the rings disappears.

MALLOY

Shit. Not good.

She looks around the hangar bay, looking for anything that might help her, but there's nothing.

MALLOY

(whispers)

Come on, Slade...

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

Back in the pod, SLADE twists and writhes as his synapses burn beneath his skin.

SLADE

(gasping)

AAAH!! AAHH!!

The COMMANDER stares at him, his yellow eyes aglow.

COMMANDER

Guuurak...

He turns the device up to the next excruciating level and his head ripples again, making his scaly body shiver. SLADE rallies against it, trying to keep the horrible visions from his mind.

COMMANDER

Grag guuuurak...

SLADE

(screams)

FUCK YOU!!!

SLADE screams as every nerve ending in his body ignites.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

The ALIENS surrounding MALLOY's cruiser begin to glow as SLADE'S pain ramps their energy and aggression to their highest levels.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

ANGLE: THE SHIELD STATUS INDICATOR

which indicates the shield power dropping once more. MALLOY struggles to get to her feet inside the overturned cruiser, its hull rocking back and forth. She pulls herself up by the seat and reaches out for the control panel... when one of the ALIENS cracks the glass with its claw!!

MALLOY

(jumping back)

Shit!!

The crack widens, spiderwebbing out across the windshield. Behind it, the ALIEN faces press in, drooling.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

Below, KYLE watches in anger as the ALIENS step up their efforts to break through.

KYLE

That's right. Get in there. Bring her to me.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

MALLOY steels herself and attempts to stand up again. The ALIENS rock the ship back and forth but somehow she keeps her balance as the windshield cracks and splinters. She stretches her hand towards the control panel and the ALIENS hiss and howl, but then... finally... her fingertips reach the button.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

KYLE smiles as the ALIENS slam at the glass, about to get in... when suddenly the cruiser's force field engages.

The ALIENS on the ship's hull are fried as a bright blue bubble engulfs them, realigning their molecules within its EM phase. Then, to KYLE's horror, the cruiser starts to rise.

KYLE

No...

The small craft lifts up into the air, a few dents in its hull, but still flyable. The ALIENS in the hangar fall back, trying to get out of its shadow.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

Inside, MALLOY looks down at KYLE and narrows her eyes as she pivots the cruiser's nose downwards and powers up its guns.

MALLOY

C'mere, Kyle... I got something for you, too.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/HANGAR BAY

KYLE sees the guns glowing and throws his arms in front of his face. The cannons fire... but the energy surge passes not through him, but over him, scorching the hull wall behind. The cannons fire again, and the blast-shielded wall starts to warp, its structural integrity giving way.

The ALIENS run for the exit, but the hangar has been sealed off from the rest of the ship in case of a breach. MALLOY's guns fire once more... and this time the wall gives way. There's a rush of air as the atmosphere in the pressurized hangar is sucked out through the hole in the hull.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

MALLOY watches as KYLE is sucked out into space. His body expands as his insides press out against his skin, no external pressure to keep them in place. He takes one last horrified look at MALLOY... then his body splits open, exploding from the inside out.

MALLOY presses gently forward on the control stick, easing the cruiser out into space as the bodies of the ALIENS pop open in little green bursts all around her. Then the cruiser clears the outer hull, and her eyes go wide as she sees the alien ship in its entirety for the first time.

EXT. DEEP SPACE - THE MOTHERSHIP

It is unbelievably massive, five miles across and hovering in a low orbit on the dark side of Earth's moon. There are very few apertures or windows, just impenetrably dark grey metal as far as the eye can see.

MALLOY marvels at its girth, wondering how she's ever going to find one person in all that bigness.

MALLOY
(whispers)
Slade... where the hell are you?

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

Within the ship's dark walls, SLADE writhes in agony as the pod bathes him in a blue wash of fresh torment. The COMMANDER watches him through the pod membrane, his head rippling. SLADE's face is a roadmap of veins, blood running freely from his ears and nose and trickling from his eyes.

COMMANDER
Guurak...

The sadistic alien increases the pain output once more. Then he puts his scaly hands through the pod skin and lies them flat against SLADE's skull.

SLADE
No... what are you...

The COMMANDER's clawed fingers dig in through the top of SLADE's scalp, drawing SLADE's pain into his body directly.

SLADE
NNAAAGGHHH!!!

The COMMANDER's head ripples dramatically as he licks his dry lips with his forked purple tongue. SLADE strains against the invasion, spitting the blood from his mouth. The COMMANDER grins horribly and squeezes SLADE's scalp tighter. SLADE glares up at him through the agony...

...then swivels his head and bites the COMMANDER's hand. The COMMANDER howls, pulling his bleeding hand back. SLADE laughs. The COMMANDER glares at him angrily... then he starts to laugh too, a dry reptilian hiss that makes our skin crawl. Then he increases the pain once more and SLADE screams.

EXT. DEEP SPACE

Outside, MALLOY hovers in space a thousand yards above the ship's outer deck. Suddenly a blast rips across the cruiser's bow as a cannon mounted on the mothership's hull acquires her and opens fire.

She swings the cruiser around, avoiding the blast. But now the mothership's targeting system has a lock on her and launches a barrage of firepower in her direction. She brings the cruiser in low and tight over the mothership's hull...

and for the first time sees Earth, a shining blue beacon that rises slowly over the ship's dark horizon.

MALLOY stares at it longingly, the outline of its clouds and continents welcoming and familiar. There's nothing between her and it now, literally nothing, and she moves her hand unconsciously to the control stick, edging the cruiser's nose towards her homeworld. Then she edges it back, firmly.

MALLOY

I'm not leaving you, Slade.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

Far below, SLADE keeps screaming and doesn't stop. His skin is raw, his eyes and ears bleeding, his muscles are bruised and knotted, but still he keeps fighting. And maybe, he's starting to win.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD CONTROL ROOM

Nearby, the two alien TECHNICIANS start to glance nervously at the pod control display. All the levels are at maximum and are now starting to redline. The system was never meant to handle an extended duration of this amount of pain.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

The COMMANDER steps back, caught off guard for an instant. Of the thousands of humans he's tortured, none have lasted nearly this long, and he's starting to feel the strain. He needs a quicker approach. He fingers his device once again, then leans in close to SLADE's ear and whispers in his horrible gurgling voice.

COMMANDER

Look...

SLADE stops struggling for a moment, shocked to hear a word of English escape the alien's lips. Then the pain stops and SLADE finds himself floating high above the Earth, staring down at the Rocky Mountains.

EXT. BACKYARD IN ARIZONA - NIGHT

We hover there in space, seeing the surface of our world through SLADE's eyes. He stares for a moment as he drifts closer and closer to the Earth's surface... and then his body goes rigid as he sees a screen door open and a boy run out into the night. *His* boy. His son.

SLADE
 (whispers)
 No...

His son runs along, happy... then a wind blows back his hair. He looks up, slowly, and a bright light appears.

SLADE
 NO!! JAMIE!! GET BACK INSIDE!!

But of course his son can't hear him. The boy freezes, caught in the energy field of a raiding cruiser's tractor beam, and is drawn up into the night.

EXT. ALIEN SHIP - CONTINUOUS

SLADE fights against his restraints, every muscle in his body bulging.

SLADE
 No... let him go...

The COMMANDER leans in and whispers again, his lips almost touching SLADE's own.

COMMANDER
 Beg...

He lifts up his device and triggers it again despite the redline warnings, increasing the pain once more.

COMMANDER
 Beg...

And again, bringing the level near maximum.

COMMANDER
 (screams)
 BEG!!!

SLADE's body spasms like an electroshock patient, his tortured face slamming back and forth against the inside of the pod. Smoke rises from his skin beneath the restraints and blood flows freely from his wounds. No human being in history has ever endured this kind of punishment, and not one of us would blame him for asking the COMMANDER to end it.

Finally, his body goes limp. He hangs his head and whispers something that we can't hear. The COMMANDER leans in closer as SLADE parts his cracked lips.

SLADE
 (whispers)
 I... beg...

The COMMANDER's face lights up.

SLADE
 I... beg you...

The COMMANDER grins, his sharp teeth shining. With a monumental effort, SLADE lifts his head and looks directly into the COMMANDER's glowing eyes.

SLADE
 I beg you to kiss my ass... you
 purple-tongued piece of shit.

The COMMANDER screams in fury and revs the pod up to maximum pain.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD CONTROL ROOM

The TECHNICIANS look at each other, frightened, as the system moves towards overload. Alarms start sounding and red lights flash all over the displays.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN SHIP/REACTOR CORE

At the bottom of the core, the reactor is pulsing and throbbing, and glowing a dangerous shade of blue. As we watch, a hairline crack begins to form along its swollen side.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

The COMMANDER jabs his finger against the button of his device, demanding more and more power into the already overloaded system, but the power isn't there. SLADE looks at him and giggles, breathless.

SLADE
 What's... the matter... suitcase?
 Your duracells... go dry?

The COMMANDER glares. He rips his hands through the pod skin again and drives his claws into SLADE's forehead. Then his body begins to glow blue as he absorbs the energy from SLADE's nervous system directly into his own.

SLADE throws his head back, grimacing. It's the worst pain yet, the only pain left, and the COMMANDER knows it.

Then SLADE opens his bloodied mouth again, forcing himself to laugh through the pain.

SLADE

(gasping)

Is that... all you got? You fucking... pussy! You dragged a whole ship full of salamanders halfway across the universe... and this is the best you can do?

The COMMANDER's head is now rippling at furious speed, and his body is burning with such intensity that we can see his translucent organs glowing inside.

COMMANDER

Kill you... huuuuman... rip off your skull...

The COMMANDER lunges, ready to tear SLADE apart. SLADE grins through his bloodstained lips... and finally rips through his restraints. He clamps his hands over the COMMANDER's, pressing them tight against his skull.

SLADE

Give it your best shot.

The COMMANDER snarls... and then lurches as if receiving a shock. He digs his claws in deeper, then lurches again violently. He tries to pull his hands away, but SLADE holds them down tight.

SLADE

Oops.

The COMMANDER yanks at his hands again, but he's not going anywhere. He looks down, horrified, as he realizes he's closed the circuit of SLADE's flowing pain.

SLADE

What's the matter, suitcase? Eyes... a little too big for your stomach? Bite off a little more... than you can chew?

The COMMANDER shakes and thrashes, trying to rip his hands free, but he's stuck fast. Meanwhile his body is swelling up with blue energy and threatening to rip at the seams. He looks at SLADE, afraid, and SLADE smiles.

SLADE

You want me to make it stop?

The COMMANDER stares at him, frightened.

SLADE

Beg me.

The COMMANDER looks around in terror, his body puffed up like a glowing blue tick. He shivers and whispers.

COMMANDER

Pleeease...

SLADE's bloodied lip curls in a sneer as he concentrates all his hatred and fury at the face of the COMMANDER.

SLADE

No.

The COMMANDER looks back at him with horror on his face.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD CONTROL ROOM

The alien TECHNICIANS scramble to shut down the power to SLADE's pod, but it's too late, the connections are fused. They bring up a holographic CATscan of SLADE's body, looking for any way to terminate him and stop the output of pain...

And then they notice his brain. They rotate the image, seeing for the first time the metal plate nestled deep in SLADE's frontal lobe, blocking his sensory receptors and all but eliminating his ability to feel his own pain.

They look at each other, realizing. Then they get up and run.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

The ALIEN COMMANDER screams as SLADE directs all his focus right at him. We can see the COMMANDER's own crawler implant glowing inside his head, superheating as it overloads the COMMANDER with pain. Then his face melts and explodes in a blinding light and finally he bursts in a giant ball of energy and blue plasma, splattering against the skin of the pods all around him.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/REACTOR CORE

At the center of the ship the reactor explodes, the shockwave ripping up through the reactor core and out into the ship's main body.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/POD ROOM

There's a thunderous crash as the giant transmitter dish shakes loose from its supports and falls to the floor. All around, the empty pods start to malfunction and open, revealing the humans remaining inside.

SLADE's restraints unlatch and he falls to the floor, his body scarred and burned. The four HUNTER-KILLER DRONES jump up from where they'd been standing, instinctively moving towards him, but then the ceiling caves in, burying them under a ton of debris.

SLADE drags himself towards the teleportation engine, pulling himself along on his arms. He collapses, almost passes out, then pulls himself forward again. He steels his will, the three feet between himself and the engine becoming his entire existence. He falls forward... and his hand lands on the activation switch.

Immediately the warp bubble appears once again, bathing the pods in its glow. One by one the abductees start disappearing, winking out of existence in this space only to reappear thousands of miles away back home.

SLADE manages to open one of his eyes, and it could be our imagination but it seems that one of the pod people smiles at him. Then the shockwave from the reactor rips through the room and SLADE disappears from our view, engulfed by the light and the heat.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

Outside, MALLOY fidgets, knowing that something is wrong. The big ship's guns have stopped firing and she maneuvers the cruiser closer, nervous.

MALLOY

C'mon, Slade... give me a sign...

Suddenly the ship's hull ripples like the surface of a stormy sea as the shockwave rips through the outer rim of the ship ruptures it, blowing a gigantic hole in its center.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/CORRIDOR

Inside the ship is collapsing in on itself. Mound after mound of ALIEN corpses lie scattered down the corridor the ship's atmosphere is sucked out through the hull.

On the black floor outside the wrecked pod room a heap of ALIEN CORPSES are piled three deep. One of them starts to move, perhaps a survivor of the explosion... but then its head lolls and we see that it's not the alien that's moving but something beneath it. A bruised and bloodied bicep with a Marine Recon tattoo. It's SLADE.

He pulls himself up put of the mound of corpses and lunges to a protected corner as a wave of blue energy rips out from the door behind him and out into the hall, frying whole groups of fleeing ALIENS where they stand.

Then, the aftershock gone, he waves his hand over an access square and pulls himself in through the doorway.

INT. ALIEN SHIP/EVACUATION ROOM

SLADE ducks inside and presses flat against the wall. It's some sort of locker room, equipped with emergency equipment. Evacuation alarms sound as the ship's system overloads and ALIENS rush to a row of octagonal compartments, grabbing the grey-skin spacesuits and zipping themselves in. SLADE waits for the last alien to flee, then waves his hand over one of the compartments and pulls out the spacesuit inside.

EXT. DEEP SPACE - THE MOTHERSHIP

The hull of the ship is rocked by a series of explosions, and hundreds of ALIENS are sucked out through the hole in its center. The ones in spacesuits hover there, waiting for a rescue that will never arrive, while the unsuited ones explode in the depressurized black vacuum of space.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

MALLOY watches with growing dread as she watches the big ship disintegrate. She brings the cruiser in closer, pushing through the sea of grey-suited ALIENS who grasp and clutch at the cruiser's hull, desperately trying to get in. She watches the explosions in the distance, knowing that SLADE is the cause, but not knowing if he's alive or dead. Meanwhile, the Earth beckons from the distance.

MALLOY

Come on, Slade. I know you're still down there.

She moves in even closer, until she's almost touching the big ship's hull... and a huge blast rips out from beneath her, launching platings like shrapnel into the cruiser's protective bubble. The shields drop once more, and an alarm sounds, but still MALLOY presses on through the exploding rubble.

MALLOY

(whispers)

Come on, Slade. Please.

She brings the cruiser down further through the debris, tears rolling down her cheeks. The control stick fights her, making it difficult to steer, and the alarm is blaring incessantly, but she keeps going in, closer, closer...

When suddenly one of the ALIENS crashes into the windshield! It's still alive, and it clutches the glass, trying to swing around to the cockpit door.

MALLOY jumps back, frightened, and pulls back on the stick to maneuver away... when suddenly the ALIEN stops and starts waving its arms at her.

MALLOY looks at the ALIEN... there's something familiar about it. Suddenly, the arm-waving ALIEN grabs another ALIEN floating nearby and punches it in the face. Then it gives it the finger.

MALLOY
(her eyes lighting up)
Slade...?

The ALIEN nods furiously.

MALLOY
SLADE!!

She swings the cruiser to a stop with glee. The spacelock doors open and SLADE crawls in, unzipping his suit and collapsing on the floor. MALLOY runs up to him.

MALLOY
YOU DID IT!!

She rips the black-eyed spacesuit hood back from his face and pulls his mouth up to hers, kissing him deep. When she finally lets go, he looks up at her, breathless.

SLADE
What was that?

She bites her lip, shyly.

MALLOY
Well, it's a long ride back to Earth. And it's been kinda lonely up here.

SLADE grins... then looks around, puzzled.

SLADE
Where's Kyle?

As if on cue, KYLE's ruptured corpse bounces up against the windshield of the cruiser, his body ripped neatly in half.

MALLOY
He had to split.

SLADE
What the--?

MALLOY

He was one of them, Slade. A decoy.
He tried to kill me.

SLADE

Then good job killing him first.

Outside, another huge explosion rocks the mothership.

SLADE

Let's get the hell out of here. The
whole goddamn ship is gonna blow.

They get up and run to the controls.

EXT. DEEP SPACE

The mothership rumbles and shakes. A mere hundred yards away, MALLOY brings the cruiser around and powers up the engines. We watch the glow of the aft nacelles as the small craft banks, ready to bring the two humans back home. But neither of them notice the four pairs of glowing red eyes watching them too, from a rift in the ship's hull just below them.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE holds his hand over the instrument panel, setting the controls for Earth's western hemisphere. The cruiser rocks as it navigates the debris field, finally clearing the wreckage and rising up into free space.

SLADE

Punch it, Malloy.

She pushes the throttle and the warp thrusters fire, blasting away over the surface of the Moon. Suddenly, all around them, the blackness of space is lit up a fiery blue.

MALLOY

What's happening?

SLADE

The reactor's melting down. When it
finally collapses, it'll explode.

MALLOY

Is it gonna be big?

SLADE

It's gonna fuck shit up.

The blue outside gets brighter and hotter, a precursor for what is to follow. The cruiser shakes as space heats up around it.

MALLOY
Slade, we've got no more shields.

SLADE
Then we gotta outrun it.

MALLOY
But we're already at full speed.

They pause for a beat, frustrated... then turn and look at each other.

SLADE
Hyperdrive Accelerator.

MALLOY
Hyperdrive Accelerator.

MALLOY opens the plastic housing containing a bright red glowing button.

MALLOY
Now?

SLADE
Now.

She hits it. Time seems to stand still as the cruiser's engines fold space-time around it. Then it takes off, firing its thrusters in a cold fusion blast that bends light and space around each other, opening a self-propelled gravity well that moves them a million times faster than Einstein's most liberal equations.

EXT. DEEP SPACE

There's a blinding flash as the ship's core explodes. The reaction is unspeakably enormous, creating a blast field of energy that destroys everything it touches and expands infinitely outward, hungry for more.

SLADE and MALLOY's cruiser trembles as the shockwave behind it grows larger and larger, threatening to overtake and consume it, but the thrusters keep firing and eventually the explosion recedes, its fuel supply exhausted in the vacuum of space.

Whatever is left of the massive alien ship is sucked back in, imploding into a naked singularity and then collapsing in on itself and winking out of existence.

EXT. HIGH EARTH ORBIT

The hyperdrive quits and the cruiser slows down, having crossed the 240,000 mile distance from the Earth to the Moon in just under a second, and cruises on inertia towards the glowing blue planet ahead.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE and MALLOY let their breath out slowly and look at the Earth, which hangs like a bright shining marble before them. It's big, and it's beautiful, and it's home.

MALLOY

Looks peaceful, doesn't it?

SLADE

Yeah.

MALLOY

You think if everyone down there could see it from up here, maybe we'd start acting different?

SLADE

I don't know. Maybe.

She looks at him softly.

MALLOY

You know something? You talk too much.

They lean in to one another, their faces lighting up, their lips almost touching and then before they know it-- they freeze, as they hear a clank on the roof overhead.

MALLOY

What the hell was that?

SLADE

I don't know... prob'ly just--

Then they scream as one of the four DRONES from the pod room appears upside down in the windshield.

EXT. CRUISER - ON THE ROOF.

The DRONES cling to the hull of the cruiser, having leapt on to it just before the ship blew. Their long claws extend from their battlescarred limbs, tearing into the cruiser's hull plating.

They're programmed to seek and destroy humans, and even though the alien ship is long gone, that's just what they're going to do.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

MALLOY looks around frenzied as the DRONES climb to different parts of the cruiser's hull.

MALLOY

Oh Jesus, they're trying to get in.

The sounds get louder, from above, from below, from behind them. SLADE looks around, weighing their options.

SLADE'S POV

Through the windshield, a field of space junk can be seen. Space stations and satellites, flotsam and jetsam from Earth's forty-year adventure in space. SLADE shuts his eyes and concentrates. The probability windows open in front of him, framing a booster rocket from the Gemini program that floats in the distance. Success factor: 80%.

SLADE

Head for that rocket.

MALLOY guns the throttle and the cruiser zips through the field of debris, the Gemini rocket spinning towards them at high speed.

SLADE

Now shake 'em loose.

MALLOY maneuvers the cruiser low and tight underneath the rocket's main stage.

EXT. CRUISER

The DRONE on the roof looks up just in time to see the rocket slam into its head, knocking it off of the hull.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE scans the junk field and locates another target, an old Russian probe that spins on its grey metal axis. Success factor: 95%.

SLADE

(pointing)

There.

MALLOY jerks the stick hard right.

EXT. DEEP SPACE

The cruiser inverts itself so that its belly is facing up. We see the DRONE on its surface rip a hull plating away and is reaching to tear off another one when it gets knocked loose by the incoming probe and spins off into space behind it.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE
(pointing again)
There.

EXT. DEEP SPACE

The cruiser spins into a barrel roll, speeding along on its side towards a weather satellite off in the distance. The third DRONE sees it coming and presses itself flat to avoid being knocked off. It gets up again, cocky... and is knocked off by a second, larger DirectTV satellite that it didn't see coming.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE slaps MALLOY on the back.

SLADE
Nice flyin'. Only one left to go.

An alarm suddenly sounds. SLADE looks down at the control panel then looks up, concerned.

SLADE
What is it?

MALLOY
We're entering Earth's
atmosphere... and our shields are
all gone.

She looks at him, nervous.

MALLOY
It's gonna get hot.

EXT. EARTH'S THERMOSPHERE - DAY

The cruiser skips along the outside of Earth's atmosphere, its hull glowing a dull orange that quickly heats up to a bright red. The last remaining DRONE struggles against the buffeting pressures of the thermospheric winds, climbing with its claws to the nose of the cruiser.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

MALLOY sees the DRONE through the windshield and goes pale as it rips into the nose, pulling out avionic circuits.

MALLOY
Oh my God, what is it doing?!

SLADE
Making sure we don't land. It's programmed not to stop until we're dead.

Another alarm sounds and the cruiser starts spinning in a wild spiral.

MALLOY
The stabilizers are gone! I can't control it! If we don't enter the atmosphere at exactly the right angle, we're gonna fry!

SLADE dives underneath the control panel, the wiring sequences diagramming holographically in his mind-view.

SLADE
There's gotta be a way to rewire it.

EXT. EARTH'S THERMOSPHERE - DAY

They hurtle nose-first through the atmosphere with unspeakable speed, the DRONE ripping away at the hull as its body heats up from red to blue to hot bright white as the temperature increases exponentially. Satisfied with its sabotage work, it leaves the cruiser's nosecone and climbs up to the outside of the cockpit.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

MALLOY screams as the DRONE eyes her through the cracked windshield, wanting nothing more than to tear her limb from limb. It slams the windshield with its paw, and the crack begins to grow.

MALLOY
IT'S BREAKING THROUGH!!

SLADE curses and works faster.

EXT. SALT LAKE CITY - DAY

Thousands of miles below, the residents of Salt Lake City are going about their daily lives, blissfully unaware of the battle that is being waged just above them, or the fact that they lie directly in the plummeting cruiser's path. Two guys on a park bench look up and notice the bright orange spark in the sky.

GUY #1

You see that? What *is* that?

GUY #2

(squinting up at it)

I don't know...

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

Alarms wail as the spinning ship falls faster and faster towards Earth, but the DRONE takes no notice. Parts of its superheated metal body start breaking off as it begins to disintegrate, but still it slams, cracking the windshield deeper and wider.

MALLOY

(terrified)

Slade...

SLADE

Almost there...

Suddenly the DRONE's body breaks in half so that only its top portion remains: head, torso, and two giant claws, one to hold on and one to keep slamming.

EXT. SALT LAKE CITY - DAY

In the streets below, more and more people start looking up at the sky and at the bright orange ball that's getting bigger and closer. Their expressions range from curiosity to interest to confusion. Then slowly they start to run as they realize that whatever it is, it's gonna hit. And they're all in the impact zone.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

Miles above them, the DRONE is almost through. It punches away at a softball sized hole in the glass, making it bigger and bigger.

MALLOY

Slade...

SLADE
Almost there...

The DRONE sticks its head in, its jaws inches from MALLOY's screaming face. Under the control panel, SLADE twists together two wires. They spark and engage... and suddenly the ship stops spinning.

SLADE
Got it.

He jumps up and runs to the windshield. The DRONE sees him and growls, hauling its big metal arm back for the final blow.

SLADE
(snarls)
Guess what, you chrome-plated don-
of-a-bitch? You ain't the only one
with a metal head.

SLADE hauls off and headbutts the DRONE, slamming the plate in his scalp into the DRONE's metal skull. The beast is knocked back through the glass and off of the cruiser, where it breaks apart into a hundred pieces and scatters in the wind. SLADE and MALLOY cheer... then go silent. With the DRONE no longer blocking their view, they can see just how close to the ground they really are. And here's no way to pull up in time.

EXT. SALT LAKE CITY - DAY

The terrified residents flee as the glowing orange meteor that is the cruiser bears down on them, so big it now blocks out the sun.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE and MALLOY throw their arms in front of their faces, sure they're going to die. The city hurtles up at them... when suddenly, a light comes on the instrument panel and the ship pulls up, making a ninety-degree bank that no earthborn aircraft could ever achieve.

SLADE'S POV

A message text flashes across the instrument panel: PROXIMITY SAFEGUARDS ENGAGED. ACTIVATING STEALTH SYSTEM.

EXT. SALT LAKE CITY - DAY

The people below all cover their heads in fear... and then gasp as the plummeting UFO falling directly at them disappears, its hull fading away and blending seamlessly into the backdrop of the clear blue sky. They look at each other, laughing and relieved. Then they're all knocked to the ground as something loud and invisible whooshes over their heads at five thousand miles per hour.

INT. CRUISER/COCKPIT

SLADE and MALLOY slowly take their hands from their eyes. They look out the windshield of the invisible cruiser as the prairies of the Great Plains glide along quickly beneath.

SLADE

(awed)

Holy shit. We made it.

MALLOY

(equally awed)

We're home.

They look at each other and grin like two kids on Christmas morning.

SLADE

We're free.

MALLOY

We're free.

SLADE and MALLOY fall into one another's arms and kiss long and deep. Finally, MALLOY pulls away and stares out the windshield.

MALLOY

Slade. Look.

He looks where she's pointing; down on the ground, crop circles are forming in the wheatfields due to the proximity of the cruiser's anti-grav drives.

SLADE

Damn. So that's how those happen.

MALLOY looks at him and smiles.

MALLOY

So what are you gonna do now, Slade?

SLADE

First thing I'm doing is to go see my friend Kowalski and borrow enough money to buy my kid's bike.

She looks at him, hopefully.

MALLOY

And then?

SLADE looks through the windshield, probability windows cycling through his implant-assisted vision.

SLADE

Well, you know, this thing I got in my head. It lets me see things, you follow? Figure out probabilities of likely outcomes.

MALLOY

Yeah, so...?

SLADE

So I'm thinking, soon as we get home, we buy the bike, turn right back around... and fly our asses to Vegas!

MALLOY

Whatever you say, baby.

She throws her arms around him in delight as the cruiser speeds westward over the Rocky Mountains, chasing the setting sun through the Arizona sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END