

Final Fantasy Screenplay
(version 2)

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ALIEN LANDSCAPE

An alien creature, obviously a soldier, is walking in a strange landscape. Above, two suns are shining. He is ragged and tired. He walks over a hill and below, we see a village. As he walks to the village, a small alien, perhaps a child, rushes to meet him. They greet and he lifts up the child. Just then, there is a loud roar. The soldier turns around to see flying machines pass overhead. The village disintegrates in a ball of white flame, taking the soldier and child with it.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - LIFE FIELD RESEARCH LABORATORY

We see an LCD-type screen on which the words "Another nightmare?" appear.

The camera pulls back, revealing that the screen runs along the lower edge of an aquarium, in which a dolphin (Fred) floats.

There is a woman (Aki) leaning her head against the glass.

Aki
Yeah.

Fred squeals, and new words appear on the screen. This is how he communicates with humans.

Fred
The city being destroyed?

Aki
No, it was a small village or something this time. With a child. Two suns in the sky, like always.

Fred
But still death and destruction?

Aki
Yeah. Some kind of aircraft flew

overhead and destroyed the village.

Fred
You should lay off the midnight snacks.

Aki
(mirthlessly)
Ha ha.

Fred
You humans have an irrational, not to mention unhealthy, fixation on death. And on sex too, I might add. But then again, I guess you can't help it: you're caught up in the creation/destruction cycle.

Aki
Oh, I don't know why I talk to you!

Fred
Because I'm the best conversationalist within 10,000 kilometers.

Aki says nothing, just gently bounces her head against the glass.

Fred
Or maybe you talk to me because you're afraid to mention it to your grandfather?

Aki
Cid? Why would I be afraid to talk to him about it?

Fred
Have you?

Aki
No, not really.

Fred
You don't think you'll ever live up

to his expectations, so you don't think you can afford to show any weakness in front of him.

Aki
You watch too many soap operas.

Fred
I understand how humans think. Quite simple and rather blunt. You want subtle and intricate thoughts, you should try whales sometime. But you, you are simple creatures with simple needs. Needs which you like to spend your lives denying. I might add.

Aki
(sighing)
I'm going to miss you.

Fred
Does Cid know why you're going?

Aki
No. I mean, just the presentation part.

Fred
Not about the girl?

Aki
No. Maybe later.

Fred
Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...

Aki reaches into the tank and pets the Fred, who splashes her a little.

Aki
Keep well, old friend. I'll be back soon.

Fred

Hey, do I look like I'm going anywhere?

Aki turns and walk away. Fred squeals and she turns back.

On the screen is written:

"May the currents take you where you want to go."

Aki fights back her tears and leaves.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - ACCESS SHAFT

We follow Aki as she climbs up a ladder into a shaft and then lets go and pushes off the ladder as if she is flying. She floats to another shaft and pushes her way along. A warning sign indicates she has entered the zero-G area.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - SHUTTLE DOCKING AREA

Aki floats to a chamber where her grandfather Cid is talking to a legless technician, Joshua.

Cid
... and this morning I received a message they're sending up some engineers to commandeer Barney. They want to hook it up to some classified equipment they're bringing up with them.

Joshua
You knew the day would come. You knew there would be strings attached to military funding.

Cid
I know, I know, but we're so close to having the scanner online. It's a damn shame, is what it is.

They notice Aki.

Cid
You're late. The shuttle's leaving

in four minutes.

Aki
I'm here.

Joshua
Hey, kiddo. Been saying goodbyes
to Fred?

Aki
Yeah.

Joshua
You take care down there, you
hear?

He floats to her and gives her a big hug.

Joshua
You been exercising enough? You
don't want to break a bone down
there.

Aki
I've been doing my exercises. I
can handle the gravity for a couple
of days.

Joshua
Remember, it's not just your body,
it's your mind. You've got to think
differently down there. Let go of a
cup of tea and it doesn't wait for
you to take it again, it falls and
gives you a mess.

Aki kisses him on the cheek.

Aki
Gotta go. Look after yourself. I'll
be back soon.

Cid
Remember, you've got to convince
them we need more time to study
the meteor. The scanner will be

ready to go online very soon.
Remember: General Lebedowicz is
the one to convince.

Aki
I'll do my best.

Cid
Let's hope your best is good
enough. Don't embarrass me
down there.

Aki
Gotta go, grandpa.

Aki gives him a quick hug and a peck on the cheek, then floats through the
shuttle hatch. The hatch closes behind her.

Joshua
You know, you've got the damnest
way of expressing your love for
her.

Cid
Come on, maybe we can get the
scanner online before they get
here.

Joshua
Yes, boss.

They float out through another hatch, Joshua doing a confident flipping
maneuver as he goes out.

SPACE STATION - EXTERIOR

We see Aki through a porthole. The camera pulls back and we realize she is
aboard a space shuttle docked to a vast space station orbiting Earth.

We see the launch process, as the shuttle leaves the space station and enters the
atmosphere.

SPACE SHUTTLE - INTERIOR - PASSENGER CABIN

Inside the shuttle, in free fall, Aki is looking over a child's drawings. They show an alien world with two suns and strange creatures fighting. She places a call, and a young girl (Meg) answers.

Aki
Good day. May I speak with
Captain Gray, please?

Meg
My father's not home right now.
He's away on an operation.

Aki
Are you Margaret?

Meg
Yeah. Meg.

Aki
Do you know where your father is,
and how I can reach him?

Meg
He just said he was going
somewhere cold.

MONTREAL - EXTERIOR - HILLTOP

We see a tree in winter, covered with snow. At the base of the tree a soldier (Gray) is lying on the ground, looking through binoculars. He sees an abandoned city spread out below him. He and others are on top of a hill overlooking the city.

He crawls back to another of the pathfinders, his Lieutenant, Carlos.

Gray
What do you think?

Carlos
If we can see a half dozen, there's
probably eight, ten times as many
scattered around the city. Maybe
even a "tiger" or two.

Gray
Yeah. Let's see if they listen to us

for a change.

Gray gets on the radio.

Gray
Echo Two, this is Pathfinder One.
Do you read?

A voice responds.

Radio Operator
Pathfinder One, this is Echo Two.
Go ahead.

Gray
We have some phantom activity in
the city. Recommend abort
mission.

Another voice, more forceful, breaks in.

Hein
This is Brigadier Hein speaking.

Carlos rolls his eyes.

Hein
(CONT'D)
What's going on down there?
What is the situation?

Gray
Sir, we have some activity in the
city.

Hein
How many?

Gray
A half dozen or so sighted so far.

Hein
What class?

Gray
Only "cats" so far.

Hein
Don't be ridiculous. We are not aborting the mission because of a handful of cats! Are the beacons in place?

Gray
Sir, if we can see six, there may be up to a hundred scattered through the city.

Hein
Are the beacons in place, Captain.

Gray
Yes, sir.

Hein
Activate them at once. We're coming in. Echo Two out.

Gray nods at Carlos. Carlos activates the beacons.

Carlos
Okay people, we have a show!

DROPSHIP - INTERIOR

Aboard a dropship, we see several blips appear on a scanner.

DROPSHIPS - EXTERIOR

Five dropships begin their descent.

MONTREAL - EXTERIOR - HILLTOP

A pathfinder sergeant, a woman (Alice) lowers her binoculars.

Alice
Incoming sector five! Six cats!
Range three hundred meters and closing!

Gray
Carlos, Lou, go to her sector.
Hussein, prep the mines.
Everyone else keep a lookout at your sectors.

Carlos and Lou run to where Alice is and take positions. Hussein arms the controls for triggering the mines in Alice's sector. They wait.

Gray climbs on a rock behind them and looks over the scene. We see from his POV: nothing but snow. He taps his left temple twice. His POV changes as everything takes on an orange tint. The pathfinders are outlined by a yellow glow. Beyond them are six greenish glowing shapes, darting back and forth, getting closer. They seem to float, moving in jerky movements like small fish in water, presenting difficult targets.

Alice
Two hundred meters!

DROPSHIPS - EXTERIOR

The dropships are getting closer.

MONTREAL - EXTERIOR - HILLTOP

Gray
Open fire at one hundred.
Hussein, dusters at fifty. I want the troops to be able to see them far enough away. Shredders at twenty.

Alice, Carlos, and Lou open fire.

We see Gray's POV: bright yellow/white streaks shoot towards the green glows, like tracer bullets, arcing slightly. One of the glows is hit and dissipates in a silent explosion. The others approach.

DROPSHIP - INTERIOR

The dropships approach. Hein is giving orders from his ship.

Hein
Squad one cover sector five. Squad
two sector six. Squad three fan out
and cover sectors one through
four. Squad four in reserve.

MONTREAL - EXTERIOR - HILLTOP

The first dropship lands vertically in the central clearing and the first Squad pours out. One of the first ones out is Brigadier Hein, who strides into the clearing while soldiers run past him.

The soldiers rush to Alice's sector and take position behind the pathfinders, but do not fire. We can see from their POV that they only see snow.

Hussein
Sixty meters!

Gray
Fall back!

The three pathfinders stop firing and run behind the soldiers.

The second dropship lands and unloads its squad, then takes off.

Hussein
Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!
Fire in the hole!

Hussein triggers the dusters. Several large billows of what appears to be dust explode out from the perimeter. The clouds are made up of bacteria, with enough Life Field to make the phantoms visible when they run into the cloud.

The third dropship lands.

The soldiers are awaiting anxiously.

Suddenly nebulous greenish shapes take form as the phantoms intersect the cloud of bacteria and become visible.

The soldiers open fire, and several phantoms are hit.

Gray sends Alice and Lou to help the other pathfinders scan the remaining sectors.

The fourth dropship lands.

Lou
Incoming sector one! Thirty, forty
phantoms! Range five hundred
meters and closing!

Hein
Squad four to sector one.

The soldiers rush to take positions.

Hussein
Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!
Fire in the hole!

He triggers the shredders, and a series of explosions fan out from the perimeter of sector five. The remaining phantoms are destroyed in the blasts.

Gray
Sector five secure! Hussein, keep
watch and re-mine the sector.
Carlos, with me.

Gray and Carlos run over to Lou in sector one.

Lou
Sector one! Range four hundred
meters and closing!

Hein
Squad Two to sector one. Squad
One to reserve. Where the hell is
heavy weapons?

Soldiers rush to their new positions.

Gray
Alice, you got the mines. The rest
of you, hold your fire, let them stay
bunched up. Dusters at fifty;
shredders at twenty. Nice and
easy.

The final dropship lands, and the heavy weapons squad debarks. Two tripod-mounted autoguns are carried by four soldiers each.

Lou
Sector one! Range three hundred
meters and closing!

Hein
Heavy weapons to sector one.

The autoguns are carried to the sector and set up in front of the line of soldiers.
The heavy weapons squad brings the guns online then joins the other soldiers.

Heavy Weapons Sergeant
Autoguns online!

Lou
Sector one! Range two hundred
meters and closing!

Everyone waits. We see POV the pathfinders as a swarm of green glows
approaches.

Lou
Sector one! Range one hundred
meters and closing!

Everyone waits. We see POV the pathfinders as a swarm of green glows
approaches.

Lou
Sector one! Range fifty meters and
closing!

Alice
Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!
Fire in the hole!

Alice triggers the dusters. Nothing happens.

Alice
I have duster failure! I have
duster failure!

Gray
Shredders at forty meters! All
pathfinders to sector one. Fire at
will! I need some dusters up here!

Hein
Squads four and two fall back ten
meters. Autoguns to scatter
patterns and open fire.

The soldiers fall back while the pathfinders run past them to stand behind the
autoguns. They form a line and begin firing. The autoguns rev up and begin
firing in a random scatter pattern.

Alice
Fire in the hole! Fire in the hole!
Fire in the hole!

She triggers the shredders and the explosions destroy many phantoms, but there
are many left. The pathfinders keep on firing, but the phantoms are getting
closer.

Two combat engineers run up with armfuls of dusters and plant them in front of
the line of squads.

Combat Engineer
Dusters primed!

Gray
Fall back!

The pathfinders get up and back away rapidly from the phantoms, who are
almost close enough to touch. In doing so, Lou falls and a phantom is on him
before he can react. The phantom spears him through the chest, like a dolphin
ramming a shark. Lou mouths a voiceless scream and goes limp.

We see from Gray's POV: Lou's life energy, still holding its human form, is
drawn out of his body by the phantom. "He" is writhing in silent agony as he is
absorbed into the phantom.

The other pathfinders reach the line of squads.

Hein
Fire dusters!

The dusters fire, and suddenly the soldiers are faced with phantoms an arms
length away. A furious close quarters firefight ensues.

Gray
Pathfinders to your original posts.

Keep watch.

Several soldiers are killed in the melee. The combat engineers are busy planting shredders behind the line of soldiers.

The firefight continues.

Combat Engineer
Shredders primed!

Hein
Fall back! Fall back!

The soldiers try to fall back, but several are too closely engaged to be able to do so. When almost all have cleared the line of shredders, Hein gives the order.

Hein
Trigger Shredders!

One of the engineers triggers the mines, and the explosions catch most of the phantoms, as well as a few soldiers who were not able to fall back. The remaining phantoms are destroyed, and suddenly everything is unnaturally quiet.

Hein
Commence carrier descent.

Gray walks up to Hein.

Gray
The phantoms will be back! More of them and maybe "Tigers". Get your people out of here now!

Hein
You're out of line, Captain. Get back to your post!

Everyone keeps a nervous lookout, when suddenly a huge Carrier ship breaks through the cloud cover over the landing zone and touches down.

Alice is looking through her binoculars.

Alice
Incoming sector five! Twenty, twenty-five phantoms! Range one thousand meters and closing!

Gray goes to her sector and looks through his binoculars. We see a swarm of glows in the distance.

Combat Engineers emerge from the carrier and a large tracked vehicle emerges. It is carrying the barrier generator.

Gray looks again. There seems to be one glow in the center much larger than the others.

Gray
Do you see what I see?

Alice
Oh shit. Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!
Sector five!

Hein comes over.

Hein
What's the ETA?

Gray
Two minutes, maybe a little more.

Hein
Plenty of time to set up the generator.

Gray
Goddamnit! We don't know if the barrier will hold against a tiger so soon after being generated.

Hein
Captain, we will speak about your conduct at a more appropriate time: at a disciplinary hearing. For the time being, carry on.

He walks away. Alice blows him a kiss behind his back.

Carlos walks up and looks through his binoculars, as the other two are doing.

Carlos
The shredders are in place, not

that they'll do much against that.

The glows are approaching, and the large one – the tiger class phantom – looks as large as a T-Rex dinosaur.

Carlos
(CONT'D)
All in all, I'd rather be in Philadelphia.

Alice
You and me both, brother. You and me both.

The tracked vehicle comes to a halt and the engineers begin the power up procedure. They have to wait several seconds for the contents to settle.

The phantoms approach.

Engineer
Power up process commencing.
Thirty seconds to barrier.

Gray, Alice, and Carlos are watching.

Alice
It's going to be close.

It is a race between the power up process and the approaching phantoms.

Engineer
Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five,
four, three, two, one.

A barrier forms around the landing zone.

The tiger crashes into the barrier, but it holds. The soldiers cheer.

Gray goes to Lou's body, and kneels. The pathfinders gather around him.

GRAY'S APARTMENT - ENTRANCE

Aki rings the doorbell to Gray's apartment. Meg answers via the intercom.

Meg

Who is it?

Aki
This is Aki Kohara. I called you earlier?

Meg
Oh, yeah. Okay, come on up.

The buzzer sounds and the door slides open.

GRAY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Aki is seated in the living room, and Meg brings a tray with tea. She pours for Aki.

Aki
When does your father get back?

Meg
Sometime later tonight.

Aki
Aren't you going out to meet him?

Meg
No, I don't do that anymore.

Aki
Since when?

Meg
Since... my mother died.

Aki
I'm sorry. You must miss her a lot.

Meg nods. She sits down.

Meg
So what did you want to see me about?

Aki slides a computer pad (a kind of electronic note pad) across the coffee table. It

shows an image of a child's drawing.

Meg operates the pad and scans through several drawings. We recognize them as the same drawings Aki was looking at aboard the Shuttle.

Aki
You drew those, didn't you?

Meg
Yes. Where did you get them?

Aki
The doctor you were seeing about your nightmares sent them to my grandfather.

Meg
How come?

Aki
Because of these.

Aki leans over and operates the pad, a new set of drawings appear. They also show an alien landscape with two suns, but are different in style.

Meg
Those aren't mine. I didn't do those.

Aki
They're mine. I painted them thirty years ago.

Meg looks up, eyes wide in wonder.

Meg
You saw them, too?

Aki
In my nightmares, yes.

Meg
You're a DeepEye?

Aki
Kind of. My grandfather

performed the operation on me when I was quite young. But in addition to the visual cortex, he wired up other parts of my brain as well.

Meg
Wow. What parts?

Aki
A lot of them. Basically it gives me a sort of empathic ability. I perceive the phantoms not just visually, but also emotionally.

Meg
Just like me!

Aki
I thought you might be a DeepEye, but I don't see the marks. When was your operation?

Meg
I haven't had one. My dad's told me not to tell anyone, but I guess it's okay to tell you, since, you know.

She gestures at the drawings.

Meg
(CONT'D)
I'm like a natural DeepEye.

Aki is shocked.

Aki
A genetic DeepEye? How can that be?

Meg
I dunno. Maybe 'cause both of my parents were DeepEyes. Maybe.

Aki

Why wasn't anyone told? A genetic DeepEye! My God, there's so much we have to study! Cid will want to run a battery of tests --

She stops, seeing that her words are scaring Meg.

Aki
(CONT'D)

Oh, I'm sorry, Meg. I didn't mean to upset you. I just got carried away. Look, it'll be our secret, okay? I promise not to tell anyone. Okay?

Meg
Okay.

Aki
Tell me, what do you feel in your nightmares? Can you feel what the phantoms feel?

Meg
I'm scared. I'm scared because, you know, they're scared.

Aki
They're scared?

Meg
Even the ones doing the killing. Especially them. They're most scared of all.

Aki mumbles to herself.

Aki
Fear. Maybe...

She looks up.

Aki
(CONT'D)
Listen, I have to go now. I have to prepare some things for my presentation at the Academy

tomorrow.

She stands and puts two invitations on the table.

Aki
If you and your father have time, why don't you come to my presentation tomorrow afternoon?

Meg
Okay.

Aki leaves.

AKI'S HOTEL ROOM

Aki is in her hotel room, working at her computer. On the holographic screen are displayed various animated graphs. These are Life Field Signatures (LFS), which are a graphical representation of the life field of a living creature.

She remembers Meg's statement about the creatures being afraid, and gets an idea.

She works at the computer through the night. At dawn, she calls Cid, excited.

Cid
Yes?

Aki
Grandpa? I found it. I found the isomorphism.

Cid
With the human LFS?

Aki
Yes. And guess what? It's not hatred: it's fear.

Cid
Fear? Very interesting. Well, we almost have the scanner online here. We should be able to get some readings before they take Barney from us.

Aki
That's great. Anyway, I just
wanted to tell you. Also, I met...

Cid
What?

Aki
Nothing. I have to redo my
presentation now. I'll call you
when it's done. Bye.

She hangs up.

GENERAL LEBEDOWICZ'S OFFICE

General Lebedowicz is perusing a file. Seated across the desk is Hein. Standing to one side, behind the General is his aide, an Internal Security Forces Officer (Wilkins).

Lebedowicz
Impressive record this Captain
Gray of yours has. Twelve combat
missions, including the command
of seven pathfinder operations.
Quite impressive.

His wife was also a DeepEye,
member of his unit in fact. KIA
Brasilia Operation, two years ago.
One daughter. Tragic.

You should send this to
propaganda. They could whip up
a wonderful tear jerker base on
this.

Am I to understand, Brigadier,
that you wish to bring this man up
on charges?

Hein
Yes sir. He proved himself
untrustworthy of command

during the Montreal Operation.
Furthermore his attitude bordered
on the seditious.

Lebedowicz closes the file and leans back in his chair.

Lebedowicz
Brigadier, I have no doubt what
you say is true. However, this
man is a hero. These are difficult
times: people need heroes. I must
deny your request for a
disciplinary hearing. Thank you,
Brigadier.

Hein
Sir.

Hein leaves. Lebedowicz addresses Wilkins.

Lebedowicz
Yes, a very impressive record
indeed. Perhaps what we've been
looking for. Lieutenant, see to it
that the Captain and his unit are
invited to the reception for the EU
Ambassador. We should have a
talk with him.

SPACE STATION - EXTERIOR

A shuttle docks with the space station.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - SHUTTLE DOCKING AREA

Inside Cid and Joshua float, waiting.

Joshua
Time to pay the piper.

The hatch opens and several engineers float in. Among them is the Chief Engineer Phan. Phan presents a computer pad to Cid.

Phan

Doctor Cid, it is an honor to meet you. I am Alphonse Phan, Chief Engineer of this project. I have the duty of assuming command of the Super Cell project effective immediately.

Cid

And what are your intentions with regards the cell?

Phan

We have brought with us a newly developed cannon, a very powerful cannon. My orders are to couple it with the Supercell for a power source.

Joshua

And what do you intend to do with this super cannon of yours?

Phan

We intend to destroy the meteor and end the war.

FUNERAL PARLOR

Gray and his unit, along with others are gathered at the funeral ceremony for Lou.

Hein is giving a speech.

Hein

It is not an easy thing to lose a soldier in your command. It does not become easier to accept with time nor with age. Rather it tempers your actions in following operations. That this man, others like him, died following your orders creates a burden which you carry with you at all times, on the field and off. And we can only hope, it makes you better able to

balance the opposed needs of protecting your soldiers and destroying the enemy.

War requires sacrifice. Sacrifice on the field. Sacrifice back home. We should look to this soldier's ultimate sacrifice to make us stronger, to steel our will to win, to take back our planet.

We ask that everyone do his part in this effort, hard though it may be, that we may achieve final and lasting peace: peace through victory.

He steps down and presents his condolences to Lou's widow. Gray steps up to the podium.

Gray

Lou was a friend, and I'm sorry he's gone. In the field, a soldier's first priority is to stay alive, and his second is to keep the others in his unit alive. I failed on that count, and Lou is dead.

We will not forget Lou, but we will carry on. So that one day I will not have to face his replacement, who will put in me the same trust Lou did.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - ENHANCED LIFE FIELD GENERATOR

This is a large hangar-like area. In the center, surrounded by wires and tubing, is the Supercell, a large pillar-like structure reaching from floor to ceiling.

Someone has placed a handwritten sign on the pillar. It reads: "Barney".

Cid and Joshua have brought Phan to see Barney.

Phan

Impressive.

Cid
Joshua, why don't you open up
Barney?

Joshua floats over to a console and presses some buttons. The lights go out.

Cid
Joshua has a sense of theatrics.

The shutters around the pillar begin lifting. A green-yellow light pours out.

Cid
One hundred times as powerful as
all the New York barrier
generators put together.

Phan
And this is made of dolphin DNA?

Cid
Yes. An order of magnitude more
powerful life field than human
DNA. Given its size, the Supercell
would collapse under its own
weight back on Earth.

Phan
Totally awesome.

LECTURE HALL

Aki is on a podium, a projection screen behind her. She is making a presentation of her research into the nature of the phantoms. In the audience are politicians, high-ranking military officers, and scientists.

Gray and Meg enter, and take seats in the back.

The image behind Aki shows a three dimensional animated graph.

Aki
It has been known for a while now
that all living creatures emit a Life
Field. While over the course of
history there have been those who

have been able to see these fields --
in the form of auras or chakras --
it is only relatively recently that we
have scientific proof of their
existence.

The so-called DeepEye
Modification can give individuals
the ability to "see" this energy field.
And we now have the ability to
record this field. The field itself is
highly susceptible to emotion. The
emotional state of the creature
clearly manifests itself in the field.

On the screen is a map of the world appears, showing Gaia field strength contours. There are concentrations of energy in Bear Butte, Jerusalem, Stonehenge, and other sites which have been traditionally considered sacred. Furthermore, lines of high energy run along the "lie lines" of the druids.

Aki
(CONT'D)

What is less accepted is the notion
that every creature's energy field
is part of a larger energy field,
what Doctor Cid refers to as Gaia:
in Greek mythology the mother of
the Titans, ancestor of the Gods.

We have conducted scans of the
planet's surface for this Gaia
energy, which you are all familiar
with.

An overlay appears on top of the world map, showing a different field, but with the areas of high energy overlapping.

Aki
(CONT'D)

Note the extremely strong field at
the site of the meteor itself, as well
as the clustering of individual
phantoms at areas of high Gaia
energy.

The individual phantoms, too,

exhibit Life Energy, and we have recently managed to make scans of their energy fields.

The screen changes to show a field similar to the human field shown earlier, yet different.

Aki
(CONT'D)

We assume that the phantoms' field is also affected by emotional state, or its equivalent. What I am here to tell you is that we have decoded an isomorphism between the human field and the phantom field.

This isomorphism leads me to believe that the phantoms exist in a state of fear. That they are acting out of fear.

There are murmurs of skepticism through the audience. Hein especially seems disbelieving.

Aki
(CONT'D)

Now what we need to do at this stage is study the meteor itself. The meteor is the source of the phantoms, and as we are part of Gaia, the phantoms must be part of the meteor.

The screen zooms in to the meteor, showing a blocky low-res image of the meteor's field strength.

Aki
(CONT'D)

Doctor Cid's development of the Supercell project will enable him to conduct the first ever detailed scans of the meteor itself. It is very important that he be allowed to conduct his tests. The timing of the decision to remove the

Supercell from his control and place it under direct military supervision is an unfortunate one. We would like to take this opportunity to request that it be delayed, in order to allow the scans to be made.

Hein stands up.

Hein
I have been fighting the phantoms for years, Doctor, and I have never seen a phantom run away. They always attack, and always keep attacking until they have been destroyed. How can you claim they are afraid? They are extremely aggressive and definitely show no fear.

Aki
It is well known that the underlying emotion in aggression is fear in some form or other, everything from insecurity to paranoia to hysteria can cause aggressive behaviour.

Tell me, what is your primary emotion when you confront the phantoms?

Hein
What?

Aki
Are you not afraid?

Hein
Of course. Every soldier feels fear when going into battle. Fear keeps you alive.

Aki
Yes, but fear also feeds on fear. If

anything, I suspect your fear feeds that of the phantoms, driving them to attack you.

Hein
That is the biggest load of crap I have ever heard! We are attacked, we defend ourselves. This nonsense about the "emotional makeup" of the phantoms is just armchair theorizing! It has no bearing on what my men must face on the battlefield!

A Politician speaks up.

Politician
I don't see the point in rushing into a potentially hazardous military operation. As long as we have the barriers, we are safe in the cities.

Hein
Do you remember what happened in Tangiers? Does the term "Catastrophic Barrier Failure" ring any bells? You people have lived with this time bomb so long you have managed to delude yourselves there's nothing to worry about!

Hein storms out of the meeting.

CORRIDOR

After the presentation, Aki walks towards Meg and Gray, who are waiting.

Meg
Hi. Aki, this is my dad.

Aki
How do you do.

Something about Aki's smile triggers in Gray a momentary flash back to his wife's face.

Gray
Thank you for the passes. It was a very interesting presentation.

Aki
Unfortunately, I don't think it has the desired effect. It doesn't look like they'll delay whatever they have in mind.

Meg
I'm hungry, could we go out for dinner?

NOODLE SHOP

The three of them are seated in a small noodle shop. They are eating.

Aki
Mmmm. I really missed real food. Everything on the station is monitored, measured, and recycled.

Meg
You've studied the meteor, right?

Aki
Yes. Mainly back when I was my grandfather's research assistant.

Meg
So what exactly is it?

Aki
There are various schools of thought regarding that.

What's clear is that it's not really a meteor, in the classical sense. It's not a chunk of rock.

Pretty much everyone agrees that it is not made up of matter as we understand it. Some think it's purely spiritual energy, while others think it is a state of energy unknown to us: not solid matter, not free energy.

There's no question in my mind though that it is energy very much like the energy of Gaia. The meteor emits a powerful life field, a significant fraction of that of Gaia.

Meg
So where it comes from?

Aki
As for the origin and purpose of the meteor, we're on less firm ground.

There are those who believe that it is Judgment Day: the meteor has been sent by God to punish us. It takes peoples' souls to Hell.

Meg
My mom used to say that we make our own Hells right in our minds.

Aki
I'll agree with that.

Others believe the meteor is a malevolent life form which is attacking Gaia.

At any rate, it is here for a reason. It didn't just happen to fall onto Earth. Everything happens for a reason.

Meg and Gray start.

Aki
What's wrong?

Gray looks down at his plate.

Gray
That was an expression my wife was fond of using.

Aki
Oh, I see.

Meg, Gaia made you a natural DeepEye. There must be a reason for that, too; she must have a purpose in mind for you.

As she watches Aki, Meg's mind drifts to the past...

GRAY'S APARTMENT -- LIVING ROOM -- (FIVE YEARS AGO)

A nine-year-old Meg is crying. Helen is holding her, comforting her.

Helen
It's okay now, honey. It's all right.

Meg
I was so scared!

Helen
I know, but you're not lost anymore. I'm here.

Meg
Jackie didn't know where we were, either. I was worried, but when I saw how scared she was, I got even more scared!

Helen
Shhh. Fear is contagious. I've told you that before. If you see someone scared, it's important to

try not to get scared yourself,
because that will only make them
more scared.

Meg
I couldn't help it. I was so scared!
I thought I'd never find you again.

Helen
Hush, baby. Shhh.

She gently rocks Meg.

NOODLE SHOP

Gray
Meg? Hello, Meg?

Meg snaps out of her reverie.

Meg
Oh, sorry.

Gray
It's late, and you have school
tomorrow.

Aki
Yes, I should be getting back to the
hotel, too. I have some meetings
tomorrow morning.

Meg
Will you be at the reception
tomorrow night?

Aki
I received an invitation, but I was
thinking of heading upside
tomorrow.

Meg
Oh, please come. It'll be fun to
have you there.

Gray
Please do. You can't have too
many formal receptions on the
station.

Aki
All right, I guess can stay one
more day. This means I'll have to
go shopping tomorrow; I didn't
exactly pack any evening wear.

Well, thank you both for a
wonderful evening.

GRAY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Meg goes to bed while Gray stays in the living room. He pours himself a glass
and contemplates a picture showing his squad, including the dead soldier. It is
an older photo, also showing Helen, who was one of the pathfinders.

He then picks up a framed picture of Helen in a summer dress.

He thinks back to her...

GRAY'S APARTMENT - MASTER BEDROOM - (FOURTEEN YEARS AGO)

Gray and Helen are lying in bed, talking.

Helen
What are you afraid of?

Gray
I'm afraid of leaving behind an
orphan. That's what I'm afraid
of.

Helen
Then nobody should have kids.

Gray
Oh come on, we do have a slightly
higher chance of dying
prematurely than the average
couple.

Helen
Probability doesn't come into it.
You're either alive or dead. One
or the other. Everything happens
for a reason. If we have a child
and then die, there will be a
purpose to it.

Gray
Oh man. Sometimes I can't tell if
your fearless or just cynical as
hell.

Helen
I try to be honest in my life.
Especially towards myself.

Gray
What's the rush? We can wait.

Helen
Well dear, despite my good looks,
I'm not getting any younger. But
seriously, if there's a good reason
to wait, okay. But no waiting just
to postpone. No waiting out of
fear. You know how I think: I
won't live in fear.

Gray
I know: "Do one thing you fear
every day." And you're right.
There's no real reason not to,
except that I'm afraid of the
enormity of the idea. I mean, a
kid...

Helen
You know, it's not a new thing.
People have been raising children
for a long time. Our grandparents
managed, our parents managed -

Gray
Mine barely.

Helen
- and we'll manage somehow.
Now enough talk. Come over
here.

She pulls him to her.

GRAY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Gray is looking at the photograph.

GRAY'S APARTMENT - MEG'S BEDROOM

In her bedroom, we see Meg lying in bed. She is curled up, staring at nothing.
She is thinking back to her mother...

LANDING FIELD - (TWO YEARS AGO)

A young Meg is standing on a balcony overlooking the tarmac. She is holding a
bouquet of flowers, and is smiling. The DeepEyes flyer has landed, and the door is
being opened.

The pathfinders file out, one by one. They look down and subdued, showing none
of the playfulness they usually exhibit when they return from a mission.

There is a pause as the last DeepEye debarks. Meg is waiting for her parents to
debark. After a moment, Gray steps out of the flyer. His expression is sad, and as
he looks up at Meg on the balcony, realization floods over her.

A high-pitched keening sound escapes from Meg's lips. The bouquet falls. The
keening builds up to a wailing as Meg grabs the railing and begins to pull and
push against it with all her might, as if she is trying to dislodge it.

Gray looks down at the ground.

GRAY'S APARTMENT - MEG'S BEDROOM

Meg is crying silently.

GRAY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

In the living room, a tear rolls down Gray's cheek.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Cid, Joshua, and Phan are talking.

Joshua

How can you attempt to destroy something without understanding it first?

Phan

I don't need to understand an ant to step on it.

Joshua

Yes, but what about a porcupine?

Phan

We know what we need to know.

Cid

Really, what do we know, exactly? What is it made of? Where does it come from? Is it intelligent? What is its purpose?

All we know is that a sufficiently strong life field will stop them - the barriers - and that if a sufficiently strong life field intersects theirs, it will dissipate it - the weapons we have. Note I didn't say destroy, I said dissipate. I know the military like to think they're destroying phantoms, but all they're doing is sending them back to the meteor, from which they emerge all over again.

BRIEFING ROOM

Hein briefs the operation commanders, including Gray and Carlos. Also present are Eurasian Union (E.U.) commanders.

Hein

Our objective is nothing less than the destruction of the meteor itself, and the ending of the war.

A large cannon has been constructed and lifted into orbit, where it is currently being connected to the Supercell energy source aboard Doctor Cid's space laboratory.

Coupled with new tight-focusing circuitry, we will be able to fire directly at the meteor from orbit. In order to weaken the meteor prior to firing, we will set up a base of operations nearby, at the ruins of the ancient city of Ur. In addition to engaging the phantoms, the base will provide fire control and forward observer functions.

Pathfinder duties will be performed by the Twenty-Third DeepEye Squad under the command of Captain Gray. The first wave of troops will consist of NorthAm forces which I will lead personally. Our staging area will be Tehran.

The second wave will consist of EU troops led by General Singh, from their staging area of Cairo.

We begin departing for our staging areas tomorrow. Enjoy your final nights in New York.

BALLROOM

An extravagant ballroom, like something out of an old period movie, is the gathering place for a celebration of the Montreal operation. All the rich and powerful people in the city, as well as distinguished guests such as the Eurasian Union Ambassador and Military leaders, are present.

The civilians are dressed in all their finery, men in tuxedo-like outfits and women in elaborate evening gowns. The military are sporting their dress uniforms, with variations indicating service branch.

Gray enters with Meg.

Presenter
Captain and Miss Margaret Gray.

They go to where Gray's pathfinders are standing, off to one side. The troops greet Meg joyfully. Within themselves, the pathfinders behave like one happy family, but they don't mix much with the others.

General Lebedowicz and the Eurasian Ambassador and Commander, a tall Sikh named Singh, stop by and the Lebedowicz introduces Gray to the Ambassador.

Ambassador
It is a pleasure to meet you Captain. We have been hearing many tales of your bravery in Montreal. May I introduce General Singh, who will be commanding our forces in the upcoming Ur Operation.

Gray shakes hands and bows.

Lebedowicz
You have a bright future ahead of you Captain. You must begin to think in larger terms. The battlefield is sometimes larger than meets the eye. Perhaps you would join us for a chat later in the evening?

Gray
Thank you, sir.

Lebedowicz, the Ambassador, and Singh leave.

Hussein
What do you suppose he meant by the battlefield being larger than meets the eye?

Carlos
It means you don't know who your enemies are. I take it Hein wants your head on a platter, boss?

Gray
The General turned down his request for a hearing.

Carlos
Friends in high places.

Alice
I didn't know the EU had DeepEye Generals.

Carlos
They believe in integration; they have DeepEyes in all branches. And unlike our system, they promote DeepEyes to high positions all the time.

Alice
Cool. Where do I sign up?

One of the pathfinders who missed the meeting comes over from the buffet, with a full plate.

Pathfinder
I gotta hand it to them, they know how to lay out a buffet.

Hussein
Looks good. See y'all later.

He and a couple of pathfinders head off in the direction of the buffet.

Hein and an aide stand to one side, away from the crowds. Hein looks around the room in barely restrained disgust.

Hein

These people have the enviable ability to ignore anything that doesn't fit into their world image. People are living in squalid conditions in the lower city, but they don't let that affect them.

As long as they are sitting pretty, these people couldn't give a rat's ass about anybody else, about the war, or the people who are dying fighting it.

At the buffet, a pretty young woman accosts Hussein, who is alternately piling food onto his plate and eating.

Woman

Excuse me.

Hussein

(swallows with some difficulty)

Mmmph. Sorry. Yes?

Woman

You're going to think me very forward, but are you a DeepEye?

One of the pathfinders nudges Carlos, indicating the exchange. The pathfinders watch from across the room.

Hussein

Yes, I am.

Woman

Oh my, how exciting! What exactly do they do to you? Some kind of implant, isn't it?

Hussein

Not simply an implant, but an interweaving of electronics into our visual sensory centers.

Woman

That sounds fascinating. And this gives you special powers? I mean, you can see the phantoms, right?

Hussein

That's correct. But not many people know the full extent of our abilities. If you'd care to accompany me to a more quiet spot, I'd be delighted to show you the extent of my... special powers.

He offers her his arm. Giggling, she takes it, and they head for a door. Hussein is still holding a plate of food.

Hussein

I'll just bring this plate along. Demonstrating my powers can be very draining, you know.

The woman giggles again, and they pass through the doorway.

The pathfinders watch them leave.

Alice

Oh please, give me a break.

Carlos

What about you and that fellow from Acapulco last time? You were gone for quite a while. A junior aide or something, wasn't he? Barely legal age, as I recall.

Alice

That was different.

Carlos

How so?

Alice

It was a cultural thing.

They all laugh at this.

Aki enters, looking stunning in an evening gown and is announced.

Presenter
Doctor Aki Kohara.

Meg rushes over and takes her hand.

Meg
Here, here, we're over here!

She brings Aki to where Gray's pathfinders are.

They talk for a while. Finally, quite contrary to protocol, Aki asks Gray if he would like to dance. Gray accepts, to the bemusement of the soldiers. Meg beams with pride. Her family is whole again.

Aki and Gray waltz.

MEETING ROOM

General Lebedowicz, Wilkins, and two senior officers, followed by the EU Ambassador, leave the ballroom and pass through a hallway. They are escorted by ISF soldiers to a meeting room. The soldiers wait outside.

Inside is a richly decorated room, more like an old-fashioned smoking lounge than a meeting room. The participants sit around a low table in comfortable leather antique chairs. The walls are covered in old paintings. Everything about the room suggests wealth and power.

Lebedowicz
Not many people realize how well off the world currently is. We have a stable, ordered society. Very little crime, no real poverty to speak of.

Officer 1
Rather than count their blessings, they only think of the war.

Officer 2
We are retaking the cities, but some people will never be happy.

Lebedowicz

Hein is narrow minded and tenacious, a bulldog. He is very popular with a certain class of the population. There are those who need a hero to worship, and in Hein they have found that hero. But he is dangerous. His latest harebrained scheme can destroy all we've built over the past decades.

Officer 1
One final operation, to end the war.

Officer 2
Some people are unable to grasp the big picture.

Lebedowicz
Should he succeed, he will set back the cause of world peace and unity a hundred years. We have a government which rules from Montreal to Buenos Aires, and we are close, very close, to having a unified world government for the first time in human history. The fool would see all this destroyed.

Ambassador
The threat of the phantoms serves to unite the people.

Lebedowicz
Precisely. With that threat removed, the people will go back to their fractious, divisive ways. The world will be once again balkanized into dozens of squabbling governments, constantly at each others' throats.

Ambassador
The people need purpose.

Lebedowicz
Purpose which the war provides.
People have something to live for,
something to strive for. This
forms a common sense of bonding,
of unity, a sense of discipline
which allows them to achieve
things, great things.

Hein is popular. Not everyone is
able to see the larger picture; they
are too caught up in their own
little lives.

The operation must fail, and Hein
must be disgraced in the eyes of
the people. I have taken steps to
ensure that this will come to be.

Lebedowicz speaks into the intercom.

Lebedowicz
Will you ask Captain Gray to join
us?

Officer 2
Captain Gray has had several
altercations with the Brigadier
over the past few years. He seems
to be of our view that the Brigadier
is too reckless, and should be
stopped.

BALLROOM

Wilkins interrupts Gray's dance with Aki. Another ISF officer presents himself to take Gray's place. Aki dances with him while Gray follows Wilkins to the meeting room.

MEETING ROOM

Gray enters, and Wilkins closes the door behind them, standing by the door while Gray steps into the room.

Gray
Sir.

Officer 2
Captain Gray, you remember the
ambassador?

Gray bows to the Ambassador.

Gray
Your excellency.

Officer 1
Your troops performed in an
excellent manner during the
Montreal operation, Captain.

Gray
Thank you, sir.

Officer 2
Tell me Captain, what is your
assessment of the Brigadier's
actions during that operation?

Gray
Sir?

Officer 1
Please Captain, speak frankly.

Gray
I believe the Brigadier did what he
thought best, sir.

Officer 2
But it was not what you would
have done, was it?

Gray
I'm sure the Brigadier had access
to intelligence which I did not, sir.

Officer 2
What is your opinion of the
proposed Ur operation, Captain?

Gray
I believe it is a bold move, which
may indeed destroy the meteor,
however...

Officer 2
Yes?

Gray appears to come to a decision.

Gray
Sir, this is a very high risk
operation, using untested
technology and calling for the
deployment of troops very close to
the meteor. I do not believe we
have enough information
regarding the nature of the meteor
or an accurate estimate of how
many phantoms we may have to
face in the field, that close to the
meteor itself.

Lebedowicz
I assume you would be in favor of
postponing the operation and
conducting more research into the
origins of the meteor?

Gray
That would appear to be more
prudent, sir.

Lebedowicz
I agree with you in this, Captain.
It would indeed be the prudent
thing to do. But things are never
so simple, are they? I may
outrank the Brigadier, but he is a
resourceful man with much
influence and many powerful
friends. I fear any attempt to
postpone the operation would do
little good.

Lebedowicz pauses, as if thinking. There is a sense that the real purpose of this
meeting is about to be revealed.

Lebedowicz
Though it may sound callous,
Captain, when they put these stars
on your shoulder, you have to
think of the larger picture first,
even though it may go against
what you may think is right in the
short term.

There is a pause. Everyone is tense. Lebedowicz looks into his drink.

Officer 2
You will be leading the pathfinder
squad for the Fire Control Base,
Captain.

Officer 1
And the Brigadier always goes
into battle on the first dropship,
once your pathfinders have
designated the landing zone, does
he not?

Gray is beginning to have an idea of what is going on.

Gray
Yes, sir. He does.

Officer 2
An error – an understandable
human error, given the extreme
danger of this operation – in
placement of the homing beacons
could cause a dropship to crash.

Officer 1
In such a case, the operation
would have to be aborted, and
hundreds of lives, the lives of
soldiers with families and
children – children such as your
own daughter, Captain – could
potentially be spared.

Officer 2
And there would be ample time in the aftermath to conduct a thorough scientific study of the meteor before proceeding with any other operations. Don't you agree?

The tension in Gray is visible to all. He knows the next thing he says will alter his life forever.

Gray
I believe more study would be a good thing, sir.

Lebedowicz observes him for a moment.

Lebedowicz
Thank you, Captain. Please enjoy the reception.

Gray
Sir.

Gray bows to the Ambassador.

Gray
(CONT'D)
Your excellency.

Wilkins holds the door open for Gray, then shuts it behind him, remaining in the room.

There is a moment of silence after Gray leaves. Lebedowicz looks like he has an unpleasant taste in his mouth.

Ambassador
Unfortunate. He seems like a very capable officer.

Lebedowicz addresses his Aide.

Lebedowicz
Lieutenant, please address the matter, and invoke contingency Bravo.

Wilkins nods and leaves.

HALLWAY

In the hallway, Wilkins collects two other ISF soldiers and they follow Gray.

BALLROOM

A soldier walks hurriedly into the ballroom. Looking around he spots Carlos, and walks to him. They talk urgently for a few seconds, then Carlos turns to the others.

Carlos
Phantoms. In the City. Where's the Captain?

As Gray approaches the doorway to the ballroom, two other ISF soldiers block his way. Wilkins and his escort catch up to them.

Aide
Captain, would you come with me, please?

At that moment, a very large Tiger-class phantom rises through the ballroom floor, and everyone rushes to the corners of the room. The phantom is as large as a T-Rex dinosaur. It's proximity to so much Life Field makes it visible to all. It shimmers and glows, it's surface alive with swirling patterns of indigo-on-green.

People are frozen in terror. There is absolute silence, and no one moves.

The phantom turns around. We see the scene through its eyes. Each person is a dull red glow, the DeepEyes are brighter yellow glows. There is one very bright, blue-white glow: Meg.

The phantom slides towards Meg.

In the doorway, Gray has drawn his pistol. He fires at the phantom. The phantom looks in Gray's direction, and lunges at him. Gray dives to one side, and the phantom charges into the ISF soldiers.

Pandemonium break out as everyone tries to leave at once.

COURTYARD

Gray takes Aki and Meg and ushers them out to the courtyard where his air car is waiting.

Gray
When are you going upside?

Aki
There's a shuttle in forty-five minutes. I can be on it.

Gray
Go, and take Meg with you.

Meg
What?

Gray
It's not safe for you here right now.

Meg
I don't want to go!

Gray
I have to do some things, and I can't worry about you. Get in the car, both of you.

Meg
I want us all to be together!

Aki
Come on, Meg.

She gets into the car and starts the engine.

An ISF soldier approaches Gray, his sidearm drawn.

Soldier
Excuse me sir, will you please come with me?

The pathfinders have emerged into the courtyard, and one of them indicates to the others to check out what is going on with Gray, in the distance.

Gray disarms the soldier and throws him to the ground. He gets into the car and Aki takes off. Other ISF soldiers rush to the fallen one.

Hussein joins them from the side of the building, hastily buttoning up his shirt.

Hussein
What's going on?

UPPER CITY

There is furious chase through the city as Gray's car is pursued by ISF flyers. There are phantoms flying around, being engaged by automated defenses and fighter aircraft.

LOWER CITY

Gray's vehicle is hit by fire from a flyer, and is forced to land in a street, low in the city, in the poor section. The three of them debark and continue on foot, pursued by ISF soldiers on foot and in flyers. They go through crowded Bladerunner-like streets, lit by neon. Holograms cast garish light on them as they turn into a narrow alley.

ALLEY

They find themselves surrounded as ISF soldiers follow them and a flyer lands at the end of the alley, cutting them off.

Wilkins debarks from the flyer.

Wilkins
Captain Gray, you are under arrest. Please accompany me, sir.

Gray
May I know the charges?

Wilkins
Conspiracy to commit treason.
Please lay down your sidearm and step away from the ladies, sir.

Aki

I am a representative of Dr. Cid,
with the rank of visiting diplomat.
I demand that you not interfere
with us.

Wilkins
You are free to leave, madam, as
is the young lady. My orders
pertain only to Captain Gray.

Gray
(to Aki)
Go, and take Meg.

Meg
No, I want us all to be together! I
don't want -

A series of concussive explosions rack the alley. Everyone staggers, holding their ears. Through the smoke, several masked figures slide down ropes, grab Gray, Aki, and Meg, and are whisked upward.

UPPER CITY

We see they are hanging from a flyer, which speeds away. The ropes are winched in one by one. Gray is the last one up. As he is drawn into the flyer, he sees they have been rescued by his pathfinders.

Carlos
Where to, sir?

Gray
Spaceport.

SPACEPORT - EXTERIOR - LAUNCH PLATFORM

The flyer lands at the spaceport, near the base of the launch platform. Aki talks to one of the technicians, who knows her well. She walks back to the others.

Aki
Even though it's a cargo run, he'll
take us. No questions asked.

Gray

Good.
(to Meg)
Now you have to get on board.

Meg
Why can't you come with us?

Carlos
Sir, in light of what you've told us,
that might not be a bad idea.

Gray
No, I have to face this.

Gray hugs Meg to him, his back to the platform, looking out over the launch field.

Gray
Look, I know... we haven't been
talking much. Not since your
mother died. When all this is
over, we'll have a chance to spend
some time together. We'll --

He sees something in the distance, and turns around, shielding Meg.

Gray
I love you Meg.

There is the sound of two shots and Gray shudders. He releases Meg and takes a step back.

Gray
Meg, I...

He falls to the ground as the pathfinders shield Meg and Aki and hustle them aboard the shuttle. Meg struggles to see Gray, who is lying on the ground, being attended by the pathfinders, his eyes open, obviously dead.

Carlos hands the struggling Meg to Aki through the shuttle hatch.

Carlos
Take care of her.

He slams the hatch shut. Meg screams.

Meg

Nooo...

ROOFTOP

On a rooftop far away, Wilkins lowers his binoculars as an ISF sniper dismantles the stand from his rifle. Wilkins does not look happy.

Wilkins

Let's go.

As they walk to the flyer, Wilkins calls Lebedowicz.

Wilkins

The situation has been addressed, sir. We will set into motion contingency Bravo presently.

The flyer takes off, turns, and flies away from the spaceport.

SPACEPORT - EXTERIOR - LAUNCH PLATFORM

On the launch pad, Gray's pathfinders are standing in a circle around his body.

SPACE SHUTTLE - INTERIOR - COCKPIT

The Pilot and Copilot are at the controls. Aki floats in.

Copilot

How's she doing?

Aki

About as well as can be expected, I guess. She's withdrawn into herself. Kept saying it's not fair.

SPACE SHUTTLE - INTERIOR - CARGO CABIN

Meg is strapped into a hammock-like web. Her eyes are open, but are glazed over.

CHAMBER - EXTERIOR

We are in the desert, near the entrance to an old tunnel. We move towards the entrance. The tunnel is dark.

SPACE SHUTTLE - INTERIOR - CARGO CABIN

Meg's eyes dart around, as if she is seeing a vision.

CHAMBER - INTERIOR

We move through the tunnel. There is light at the end. We enter an underground chamber with rough rock walls.

In the chamber is a woman, glowing strangely. We see her from the back. We move to one side and see that she is holding a child in her arms, comforting her.

She looks up at us, and we recognize the woman as Meg's mother.

SPACE STATION - EXTERIOR

Space shuttle docks.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Aki floats in to where Cid and Joshua are.

Aki

She's asleep.

Joshua

You look like you could use some sleep yourself.

Aki

Later. Let me fill you in on what's going on down there.

SPACE STATION - EXTERIOR

The sun rises over Earth.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - LIFE FIELD RESEARCH LABORATORY

Aki brings Meg to meet Fred. Meg follows Aki quietly, looking subdued.

Aki
Meg, this is Fred. He's an old friend.

Fred
Howdy.

Meg looks at Aki.

Aki
He can hear you.

Meg faces Fred.

Meg
Hi.

Fred
Did you throw up?

Meg
What?

Fred
Zero gravity. Did you throw up?

Meg
No!

Fred
Impressive. Most adults do, you know. Especially the fat ones. Big mess.

Aki
Meg, I have to go take care of some things. I'll leave you to talk to Fred, okay?

Meg
(whispering)
He's weird.

Fred splashes her.

Fred
I heard that!

Aki smiles.

Aki
I'll be back later.

She leaves.

Fred
You don't look happy.

Meg
I'm not.

Fred
So your father died?

Meg
Yeah.

Fred
When one of us dies, we Dolphins feel happy for him.

Meg
Happy?

Fred
Happy.

Meg
Why?

Fred
Because he finished what he had to do in this life, and moved on. The rest of us still have something we need to do here, but he's gone to rejoin the Mother.

Meg

My mom?

Fred
Gaia. The Mother of all of us.

Meg
Then what?

Fred
That depends on what he needs. If he needs to, Gaia will send him back in another body so he can go through another cycle.

Meg
What's a cycle?

Fred
Each time you come back in a new body, that's a cycle. Every living being has something to learn in each cycle.

Meg
"There's a reason for everything."

Fred
Exactly.

PARK

Carlos and Alice are walking along a path.

Carlos
They say they'll treat it as murder, and they'll do a full investigation.

Alice
Sure they will.

Carlos
I don't know what to do. Hussein and some of the others want to kill Wilkins. Maybe even Lebedowicz.

Alice
A lot of good that will do.

Carlos
I don't know what to do. Things are a lot clearer out in the field. The good guys are human, the bad guys aren't.

Alice
There's nothing to do for the time being. We have to prepare for the Ur Op; we're leaving for Tehran tonight. We'll have to put a damper on Hussein's blood lust until after the op.

Carlos
And afterwards?

Alice
Afterwards, we'll see.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Phan and the technicians are busy setting up the controls for the cannon. To one side, Cid and Joshua are showing Aki LFS images on the computer display.

Joshua
We made these just before the boy scouts back there took over Barney.

Aki
This is the meteor?

Cid
Yes. Look at this.

Cid operates the computer and the images alter.

Cid
See here? These patterns? This is fine detail we've only been able to make out using Barney.

Aki
What are they?

Cid
I was hoping you could tell me.

Aki
Let me run the human mapping
onto it. Maybe the isomorphism
will show something.

She begins operating the computer. Lines of LISP code roll across the display.

Aki
Okay, we've got to make an inverse
of the mapping function... we
want to go from the meteor
signature back to a human one...
okay, let's see.

A new image appears on the screen.

Aki
(CONT'D)
Okay, so this is the output of the
inverse function... now we need to
run a comparison with the human
signatures we have in the
library... but first I've got to
normalize this... okay.

A "search-in-progress" indicator appears on the screen.

Cid looks at Aki with pride in his eyes, but she is busy concentrating on the screen.

The screen displays data.

Aki
Okay. Let's see... The best match
by far is this one here...

The screen displays an LFS superimposed on the meteor's normalized LFS. The caption underneath reads: "LFS 28732 'nightmare'".

Aki

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The meteor is having nightmares.
It's sleeping! We've got to call
Lebedowicz, if the attack "wakes
up" the meteor, no telling what
shape the signature will take, or
what the physical consequences
would be.

Cid
I'll get on the line to him.

Cid moves to a phone.

Aki works the console, and further information about the signature appears on the screen: "LFS 28732 'nightmare' - subject Aki Kohara."

Aki
(to herself)
Oh jeez.

She clears the screen before Cid can see it.

STAGING AREA

The pathfinders are getting ready to board their dropship.

Hussein
I can't believe this. We have to do
something!

Carlos
Right now, you will obey orders,
Corporal. We will address the
matter after this operation.

Hussein
I say we just waste the bastard!

Carlos
You try that, and I'll have you up
on charges myself.

Hussein
Damn it, the Captain's dead,
doesn't that mean anything to you?

64

Alice
Look, you're not the only one
feeling pretty miserable right now.
But we have a job to do, and you
will not, I repeat not, allow your
feelings to endanger your squad or
the mission. Do you have any
questions?

Hussein turns away and resumes packing his equipment.

Alice and Carlos exchange a glance, then get back to their tasks.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Cid and Aki are still at the computer. An aide's face is on the phone screen.

Cid
This is extremely urgent. We have
new information regarding the
attack on the meteor. We must
speak to General Lebedowicz right
away!

Aide
As I mentioned, the General is
currently unavailable. If you
would care to leave -

Cid angrily cuts the connection.

Cid
Military mind set! No flexibility at
all. I'm going to talk to Phan,
maybe he can see reason.

Cid leans over Aki and works the computer.

Cid
Oh yeah, there's also this.

The screen shows a map of Earth with life field iso-contours. Cid zooms in to Ur in the Arabian Peninsula.

Cid
This is Ur. The new scan shows a
very strong spike just outside the
ruins. The old scans weren't
high-res enough to make out its
tightness. See? Here?

Aki
Yes. Let me get a reference to the
image bank.

Cid
You do that, I'm going to talk to
Phan.

Cid leaves.

DROPSHIP - EXTERIOR

The pathfinder dropship is flying Nap-of-Earth (treetop height) at great speed, across the desert.

DROPSHIP - EXTERIOR

Inside, a Jump Master watches over the DeepEyes.

Jump Master
Thirty seconds to drop.

The ship flies towards the ruins. The crater formed by the unsuccessful nuclear attack on the meteor is looming over the horizon. Inside, the troops prepare for the drop.

Jump Master
On my mark. Five, four -

The dropship comes to a turning halt.

Jump Master
(CONTD)
- three, two, one.

A light turns from red to green inside the cabin.

Jump Master
(CONT'D)
Drop!

UR

The pathfinders drop through the floor of the dropship, gas explosions cushioning their landings. The dropship gains altitude and speeds away.

Carlos
To your positions! Go, go, go!

They disperse to their preassigned posts and begin scanning the area for phantoms while installing homing beacons.

Hein calls in over the radio.

Hein
Pathfinder 1, this is Echo Two.
Status report.

Alice
Christ, we've barely hit the dirt.

A New Soldier is nervously scanning the horizon with binoculars.

New Soldier
I have some light activity in sector
3, and, uh, it's approaching.

Carlos looks through his binoculars and gets on the radio to Hein.

Carlos
Echo Two, this is Pathfinder 1. We
have approaching cats from sector
3. Approximately half a dozen.
(to the soldier)
Range?

New Soldier
Six hundred meters and closing.

Carlos gets back on the radio.

Carlos

67

ETA twelve seconds.

Hein
Activate the beacons. We will be
arriving in sixty seconds.

Carlos
Sir, the perimeter has not been
mined yet.

Hein
Sixty seconds. Out.

Carlos
Alice! Hussein! With me to sector
three! The rest of you keep watch
on your sectors and get those
mines planted!

They run to to one edge of the perimeter. Alice and Hussein unfold the bipods on their rifles and assume a prone position. The New Soldier looks nervous. Carlos kneels, looking through his binoculars.

Carlos
Let them come a little closer. I
don't want them spreading out too
much yet.

There is tension in the air and they wait.

Carlos
Fire at will.

Alice and Hussein open fire. The new soldier looks paralyzed. Carlos prods him.

Carlos
Anytime you're ready, soldier.

The new soldier catches himself.

New Soldier
Uh, yes, sir.

He begins firing.

After a while, there are no more phantoms left.

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Carlos
All right soldier, plant your mines
and resume watch.

New Soldier
Yes, sir.

Carlos
(to Alice and Hussein)
Let's go.

They run back to the center of the landing zone in time to see Hein's dropship
approaching, leading the first wave.

There is lots of energy and movement as the first wave lands, dropships touching
down, unloading troops, and then departing.

Hein looks around, then consults Carlos.

Hein
Any activity, Lieutenant?

Carlos gets on his radio.

Carlos
Perimeter report.

He listens for a while, then turn to Hein.

Carlos
All clear, sir.

Hein
Very good.
(to his Radioman)
Call in the carrier.

The Radioman gets on his radio.

The pathfinders keep scanning their perimeters.

Radioman
The carrier is on its way, sir. ETA
six minutes.

Hein
Excellent.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - ENHANCED LIFE FIELD GENERATOR

Cid and Phan are engaged in a heated argument.

Cid
We have new data!

Phan
It doesn't matter any more! I have
my orders, there is a major
military operation going on down
there, and my part in it is pivotal.
I can't just take the cannon offline
because you have doubts.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - LIFE FIELD RESEARCH LABORATORY

Aki enters to find Meg sitting on the floor in front of the tank. Meg is laughing,
much to Aki's surprise.

Aki
Hi. Is everything okay?

Meg
Oh yeah. Just talking to Fred.

Aki
Is that so, Fred?

Fred
Best conversationalist within
10,000 kilometers.

Aki
Meg, can you come up? I want to
show you something.

Meg stands.

Meg

Okay. See you later, Fred.

Fred
So long.

Meg leaves.

Aki addresses Fred.

Aki
I don't know what you did, but
thank you. Thank you.

Fred
Take care of her. I'd like to meet
her when she's grown up.

Aki nods and leaves.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Aki, Cid, and Meg are at the computer.

Cid
Phan has his orders, and as far as
he's concerned, that's the end of it.

Aki
Here look at these. This is the
location of the life field spike.

Aki works the computer, and several images of the desert appear. One shows
some ruins with a doorway.

Meg
Wait. Go back. That one. That's
the place.

Aki
What place?

Meg
From my dream. The one I told
you about on the shuttle. That's
the place. I have to go there. I'm

supposed to go there.

Cid
That's hardly wise. That's close to
the main ruins, where the
military base is being set up. The
whole area will be crawling with
phantoms.

Meg looks at Aki.

Meg
I've got to go there. I'm supposed
to. I can feel it.

UR

The carrier lands in the middle of the landing zone, kicking up clouds of sand.

Combat engineers debark and the barrier generator is unloaded. It is anchored
and powered up.

The pathfinders retire to a corner and relax. Alice notices Wilkins and other ISF
soldiers debarking the carrier.

Alice
What's he doing here?

Hussein
This is our chance.

Carlos
Hussein, you try anything without
my permission and I'll crucify
you.

SPACE FLYER - EXTERIOR - LOW EARTH ATMOSPHERE

Meg and Aki enter atmosphere in their small space flyer craft.

SPACE FLYER - INTERIOR - COCKPIT

Aki is at the controls.

Aki
We processed some new scans of
the meteor while you were with
Fred. And guess what? It's
sleeping. The meteor is sleeping.

Meg stares out the canopy at the clouds and remembers a scene involving her
mother:

GRAY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - (TWO YEARS AGO)

Meg is angry; she is crying. Helen, dressed in fatigues and obviously leaving, is
trying to reason with her.

Helen
Meg, don't be that way.

Meg
It's my birthday and you're not
even going to be there!

Helen
Honey, it's not like we don't want
to be there, but we have orders.

Meg runs to her room.

Meg
I hate you! I hate you! I hope you
die!

We hear the door slam.

Helen looks tired. Gray, also dressed in fatigues, walks in with their duffel bags.

Gray
She'll get over it. Come on, let's
go.

They leave, closing the door behind them.

SPACE FLYER - INTERIOR

Meg's expression is unreadable.

UR

Large swarms of phantoms begin emerging from the meteor. They flock together
and fly to the barrier. When they are near the barrier or in contact with it, they
become visible.

Autoguns equipped with video cameras fire on the phantoms, destroying them.

A tiger-class phantom appears and is targeted by the autoguns. It takes many
shots, but it is finally destroyed.

An aide comes up to Hein, who is standing in the open watching the phantoms
being destroyed.

Aide
Sir, the Eurasian forces are on
their way. ETA is thirty minutes.

Hein
Good, good.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Cid, Joshua, and Phan, as well as other technicians are in the laboratory, which
is being used as the control center for the cannon.

Cid is monitoring the meteor's field strength.

Cid
Field strength is down to ninety
percent of nominal.

Technician
The Cannon is online and ready to
fire.

UR

The pathfinders are relaxing, watching the action. Hussein looks up to one side.

Hussein
Here come the EU forces.

DESERT

EU bombers are flying over the desert, approaching the barrier. They release clusters of bombs, which explode behind them, destroying and dispersing any phantoms in the way. This clears a corridor through which the the EU dropships and carriers fly.

UR

One by one, the dropships land and troops pour out.

The pathfinders watch as General Singh debarks from a dropship and is met by Hein.

CHAMBER - EXTERIOR

Meg and Aki's flyer lands near the entrance to an old tunnel. They debark.

Aki
Is this the place?

Meg
Yes, I can feel it.

She enters the tunnel, and after a moment's hesitation, Aki follows.

CHAMBER - INTERIOR

Meg and Aki enter the chamber. It seems to be glowing with a golden light of its own.

Meg sees strange moving patterns on the walls. She hears a voice.

Voice
What do you want?

Meg
(in a small girl voice)
I want to be with mommy.

Voice
Where is your mommy?

Meg
The phantoms took her.

Voice
What do you want?

Meg
I want to be with her.

Image of Gray falling away from her.

Voice
What do you want?

Meg
I want to be safe.

Image of Aki: "Fear feeds on fear."

Voice
What are you afraid of?

Meg
I don't want to be alone.

Image of Helen: "Fear is a contagious thing."

Voice
Are you lost?

Meg
No. Yes, my mommy and daddy
are gone.

Voice
What does a lost child want?

Image of Aki: "It's sleeping. The meteor is sleeping."

Meg
To find its mommy.

Voice
Where is your mommy?

Meg
The phantoms took her... to the meteor.

Aki is shaking Meg, who seems passed out.

Aki
Meg! Meg!

Meg moans and comes to.

Aki
What happened?

Meg
What?

Aki
You looked dazed. Like you were about to pass out. Are you all right?

Meg
Yeah, I'm OK.

Meg stands up on her own.

Meg
I know what I'm supposed to do.

She looks at Aki with a supernatural-seeming sense of calm.

Meg
(CONT'D)
You should go to the Base. You'll be safe there.

Aki is still kneeling. She looks on uncomprehendingly. Meg walks over and hugs her in a role-reversal gesture, acting like the adult to a child.

Aki starts to speak.

Meg

(CONT'D)
Shhh. It's OK. I know what I have to do.

Meg kisses Aki on the forehead and leaves.

Meg emerges from the chamber and walks towards the meteor in the distance.

Still uncomprehending, but realizing that something profound has changed in Meg, Aki watches her go, then gets into the flyer and takes off.

UR

Wilkins nods to one of the ISF soldiers, who presses a button on a remote control. There is an explosion on one side of the barrier generator. The barrier disappears.

Phantoms swarm into the base. Chaos ensues as a wild firefight ensues.

FIRE CONTROL STATION - EXTERIOR

Wilkins and other ISF soldiers enter the Fire Control Station.

Hussein notices this and motions to Alice.

FIRE CONTROL STATION - INTERIOR

The ISF soldiers shoot the technicians with stun guns and assume command of the station.

Several of them begin planting explosives on the consoles.

UR

A tiger-class phantom makes for where Hein and his aides are standing. The aides run for cover, but Hein stands his ground and draws his gun. As the phantom approaches, Hein fires at it, but his shots do little good against the massive phantom. The phantom descends on Hein and kills him.

FIRE CONTROL STATION - INTERIOR

An ISF soldier operates the controls. He turns to Wilkins.

ISF Soldier
Target is unlocked.

Wilkins
Set it to automatic and let's get out
of here.

ISF Soldier
Yes, sir.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Technician
We've lost the lock. The aim point
is drifting over the base!

Phan
What the hell is going on down
there? Get me fire control.

Technician
Charge building up! The cannon
is on autofire!

Phan
Goddamnit! Take it offline! Now!

Joshua
Too late.

SPACE STATION - EXTERIOR - CANNON

The cannon fires.

UR

The beam hits part of the base, destroying a parked carrier. A huge explosion
ensues in which many soldiers are killed.

General Singh yells something to an officer, who gathers some troops and makes
for the Fire Control Station.

DESERT

Meg walks through the ruins. As she climbs a mound, she sees a tiger-class
phantom, surrounded by cats, congregated around the smoking wreckage of a
flyer. They become aware of her and turn to face her. One of the smaller
phantoms moves towards her, then backs away. The large phantom comes to
investigate. She walks towards it, unconcerned, and comes to a stop a few steps
away from it. The phantom leans towards her, examining her, then moves to one
side to let her pass.

Meg walks by the smoking wreck of a flyer without glancing at it.

FIRE CONTROL STATION - INTERIOR

The fire control station explodes.

FIRE CONTROL STATION - EXTERIOR

The EU troops coming to investigate are knocked down by the blast.

UR

The ISF troops disperse. Wilkins and an ISF pilot board a flyer and take off.

Hussein and Alice see this. Carlos is talking to an EU officer and doesn't notice.
Hussein and Alice run to a flyer and pursue Wilkins.

EU combat engineers debark and power up a backup generator. The barrier is
restored and the phantoms inside the barrier are eventually destroyed.

DESERT

Aki's flyer arrives at the base and lands. Carlos comes to meet her.

UR

Singh is talking to his radioman.

Singh

Tell them to target the meteor
from the station and fire
immediately!

METEOR - EXTERIOR

The meteor is swirling and writhing with colors and patterns.

Meg walks into the meteor, disappearing inside.

METEOR - INTERIOR

Meg stands on an alien landscape. It appears to be night, though there are no stars. Ambient light seems to come from all directions, giving everything a ghostly feeling.

There is sound of crying.

Meg walks towards the sound, and sees a small child sitting on the ground, crying.

Meg kneels next to the child.

Meg
Hey, what's wrong? Are you lost?

The child looks up at her with pleading eyes.

Over Meg's shoulder, her mother -- or an image of her mother -- appears and picks up the child and talks to it. Helen appears to be made of some dark/indigo material, as if she was part of the meteor now.

Helen
Shhh, baby. It's all right.

Meg looks on in amazement.

Meg
Mom?

Helen keeps talking to the child.

Helen
It's time to go home now. This

isn't your home. It's time to go
now.

The child seems to calm down.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Technician
Cannon back online.

Phan
Prepare to fire.

Technician
Coordinates set. We have a lock.

Joshua quietly addresses Phan.

Joshua
Are you sure you know what
you're doing?

Phan hesitates.

Phan
I have my orders.
(louder)
Firing cannon.

He presses a button.

SPACE STATION - EXTERIOR - CANNON

The cannon fires.

METEOR - EXTERIOR

The beam strikes the meteor.

METEOR - INTERIOR

The child cries out and pushes Helen away. It begins a piercing wailing.

Meg covers her ears.

The landscape seems to writhe and contort into itself.

METEOR - EXTERIOR

A giant black/indigo dragon emerges from meteor. It is five times longer than a 747 Jumbo Jet, and much more massive. It rises into the sky.

Swarm after swarm of phantoms fly into the dragon, joining with it.

The dragon rises higher and higher.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

The display shows a sudden surge of the meteor's field strength by a factor of ten.

Joshua
Holy shit!

UR

The phantoms at the barrier peel off and fly away.

The soldiers look on, wondering where the phantoms are going.

General Singh is looking through his binoculars. He sees the form of the dragon in the distance.

Singh
Bloody Hell.

Carlos also sees it.

Carlos
Oh my God. No way the barrier
will hold up against that.

Singh turns to his aide.

Singh
Give the evacuation order.

NorthAm forces first, then we
follow.

The Aide nods and runs off.

Singh turns to Carlos.

Singh
You did fine work today,
Lieutenant. Now please see to the
safety of your people.

Carlos salutes, and Sing returns the salute. Carlos runs off.

SKY

The black dragon rolls over in the sky. It heads for the barrier.

UR

Soldiers run left and right, boarding jumpships which take off at high speed.

Singh watches the dragon.

SKY

The black dragon heads for the barrier.

UR

The dragon approaches at great speed.

Singh
Here we go.

The dragon crashes into the barrier, destroying it. The barrier generator overloads and explodes.

Singh ducks as the dragon flies overhead.

Soldiers run for cover.

DESERT

Wilkins and his ISF Pilot are in the flyer.

Suddenly a phantom appears above the canopy.

The pilot veers wildly away from the phantom and the flyer locks into a tailspin. The pilot manages to make a crash landing.

Wilkins crawls out of the wreckage, and turns in time to see the phantom kill the trapped pilot.

Wilkins pulls out his gun and shoots the flyer's fuel cell, killing the phantom in the resultant explosion, but is blinded by the explosion.

He crawls to his knees and then stands, unable to see. He sets off into the desert with an unsteady gait.

UR

Chaos reigns at the base as the dragon passes overhead again. Dropships are taking off left and right, some with soldiers hanging off the skids.

The dragon runs right through a dropship, killing everyone. Out of control, the dropship flies into the ground and explodes.

Singh watches all this.

An aide runs up to him.

Aide
Sir, time to leave, I'd say. Nothing
more we can do.

Singh
Yes, I suppose you're right.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Cid is monitoring the readings on his scanner. Joshua and Phan watch.

Cid
Something's happening. There's

another build-up. Near the
meteor.

Phan
The meteor?

Cid
No, Gaia energy.

METEOR - INTERIOR

Helen is still holding the baby, who is fighting to get away.

A glow appears inside Meg. She begins to shine with inner light.

Meg
What's going on?

Helen
You're part of Gaia. Now she will
try to calm the baby.

Meg
Oh, wow.

CHAMBER - INTERIOR

The chamber walls, floor, and ceiling begin glowing with a golden light. The light fills the chamber and washes everything out in a glare of white.

METEOR - INTERIOR

Meg is now a shape of pure white light.

CHAMBER - EXTERIOR

Light builds up in the tunnel leading to the chamber.

Suddenly a giant white/gold dragon emerges from the tunnel and flies up into the sky.

METEOR - INTERIOR

Out of the white outline of Meg steps Gray. He is glowing with golden light, contrasting with the dark Helen.

DESERT

The dragons collide in a spiraling motion.

METEOR - INTERIOR

The glow in Meg fades, and she watches as Gray walks over to Helen. Together, they soothe the child, who is looking up at Gray.

Gray hugs Helen, the child between them. They stand that way, not moving, the gold Gray and Indigo Helen forming a whole, with the child in the center.

Tears of joy fall from Meg's eyes.

DESERT

Wilkins is walking in the desert, blind. He is tired, his uniform torn, and he stumbles as he walks.

A flyer lands in front of him and Alice and Hussein step out. Hussein unholsters his sidearm.

Wilkins
Hello? I need help. I can't see.
Can you help, please?

Alice looks at Hussein.

Alice
This is what you wanted.

Hussein is pointing his gun at Wilkins. He doesn't move.

Alice
(CONT'D)
What are you waiting for?

Hussein comes to a decision and reholsters the gun. He walks up to Wilkins and

takes his arm.

Hussein
This way. We have a flyer. We'll
get you back home.

Alice watches as they walk towards the flyer.

DESERT SKY

The two dragons spin around each other and merge, forming a swirling shape not unlike the yin/yang symbol.

METEOR - INTERIOR

Gray and Helen are holding each other.

DESERT

The black dragon flies off into the night sky, where it seems to dissipate into a cloud of stardust.

The white dragon crashes back into the ground and disappears.

Suddenly, everything is calm.

SPACE STATION - INTERIOR - CID'S RESEARCH LABORATORY

Cid is monitoring the readings on his scanner. Joshua, Phan and the technicians watch.

Cid
It's gone.

METEOR - INTERIOR

Gray and Helen pull apart. The child is gone.

Meg reaches out to them. She appears to be receding in the distance.

Meg

Mom, dad.

She disappears in the blackness.

SPACE STATION - EXTERIOR

A field of stars. The camera pans to the space station and Earth below it.

JUMPSHIP - EXTERIOR

It is night.

A jumpship flies over the desert.

JUMPSHIP - INTERIOR

Inside are Aki, Alice, and Hussein. Carlos is in the cockpit, along with the pilot.

Alice has her arm over Aki's shoulders. Aki is holding her head in her hands, concentrating.

Aki
I can feel her.

Carlos is scanning the desert.

DESERT

We see POV Carlos. A bright white spot stands out of the darkness at the horizon.

JUMPSHIP - INTERIOR

Carlos
I see her! God, she's bright.

METEOR CRATER

The jumpship lands at the center of the meteor crater.

Meg is sitting on ground, hugging her knees. There are traces of tears on her face.

Aki and the others run up to her.

Aki
Meg? Meg? Are you all right?

Meg looks up at them, taking her time to look at each face in turn.

Meg
Hi.

She stands up.

Meg
Let's go home. I'm getting cold.

She heads for the jumpship.

HOSPITAL GARDEN

It is dawn.

Meg and Aki are sitting on a bench in a hospital garden. Aki is listening intently as Meg speaks. Something deep inside Meg has changed.

Meg
There will be others born like me, you know. Others who can see people as part of Gaia, all connected to each other.

This is the beginning of the end. The beginning of the end of the... final fantasy that people are just individuals, separate from each other.

People are going to grow up. It should be interesting.

Meg looks over her shoulder and sees an image of Gray & Helen standing on a dune, holding hands and looking back at her, before dissolving in the light of the rising sun. She smiles and turns back.

METEOR - EXTERIOR

There is a small plant budding from the crater wall.

- End -