

THE EXPANSE

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"THE EXPANSE"

TIGHT ON:

JULIE MAO-KWIKOWSKI (20s), her exotic face tight in the dimness as she listens to someone's MUFFLED SCREAMING.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
No -- please, God -- no...

Julie's eyes flick back-and-forth, fear screaming up in her. Strangely, a droplet of water floats UPWARDS past her face.

HYDRAULICS WHINE. LOCKING BOLTS DISENGAGE.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(screaming in full terror)
NO -- PLEASE -- DON'T --!

Julie jerks as the AIR-LOCK SLAMS SHUT, and a FRIGHTENING SILENCE pervades. We PULL BACK a little now and see:

Her dark hair flowing around her like Medusa. And we get some more context as we go a little WIDER:

Julie -- with the word "SCOPULI" stitched onto her flight suit -- is in a dim, cramped storage-locker, floating at a bizarre angle. Pearls of water levitate around her.

METAL BOOTS approach outside. Her turn to be 'spaced'? She clamps her breath, as the HEAVY BOOTS CRESCENDO...and stop.

Someone's WHEEZY breathing outside. Christ, here it comes!

No. The CLUNKING BOOTS continue on...fading away. Julie is still too terrified to breathe.

TIME CUT TO:

Julie jerks back to consciousness. The SILENCE all-consuming now -- even the thrum of the ship's reactor is gone.

How many hours in here? How many days? Time has ceased.

She tears open her suit's long-empty water-bladder, licking at its dry innards. She's going to die of thirst.

The door is her only salvation, or at least the path to a quicker death. She pushes over to it, listening.

JULIE
 (a raspy croak)
 Hello! Anyone there?

Silence. She pounds on the metal door.

JULIE (CONT'D)
 HELLO? HELLO? ANYONE HEAR ME?

A new fear grips her; this place has become her coffin.

She jams her shoulders against the back-wall and plants her hands against the sides. Then she kicks out with both legs, the pain of her atrophied muscles making her scream --

BOOM! BOOM!

She kicks again. And again. Until light shows through the edges of the door. And again until the door is so bent, the hinges and locking bolt are the only contacts to the frame.

And with one final kick that almost makes her faint with agony, the door rips free, and stinging light floods in.

INT. UTILITY DECK CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Julie crabs down from the locker, her GRAVITY BOOTS CLICKING on the deck as they anchor her.

To her left: an orphaned glove floats. Strings of blood drift. And finally the AIR-LOCK -- smeared with the crimson palm print of the last man shoved through it.

To her right: a long, unfamiliar corridor and the staircase to the decks above. Cautiously, she starts...

NEW ANGLE - JULIE - MINUTES LATER

Entering from the top of the frame, pausing.

JULIE
 Wan? Captain Darren?

Silence. Then...a strange bioluminescence flickers from within the vent near her head. What the hell? It builds...

And now a COAL BLACK DUST curls out of the duct, oddly glowing as it hovers in a beautiful nebula in front of Julie.

She's never seen anything like it. It's as if it's looking at her. She dares a finger towards it...piercing the nebula.

THE DUST REACTS! Dispersing...re-grouping into a pair of floating 'snakes', which then wind into a DOUBLE-HELIX STRAND. Julie's DNA?

Now the double-helix breaks apart, multiplying into smaller helixes, then again, smaller and smaller, until they're back to dust and --

Transfixed by the impossible sight, Julie fails to notice an out-of-focus SILHOUETTE drifting up behind her...closer...

...almost on her now. Turn for chrissakes! Finally, she senses it and whirls and --

Off Julie's WIDE EYES and TERRIFIED SCREAM --

SMASH CUT TO:

THE VAST EXPANSE OF SPACE

Cold. Remorseless. Terribly silent.

REVEAL: EXT. OFF THE SHOULDER OF SATURN

Stunning, with its rings of orbiting dust and ice. And like God's jewel, a titanic chunk of ancient ice tumbles past us.

...and towards a massive steel maw, revolving at the exact rate of the glacier. We're peering into the business end of--

THE CANTERBURY FREIGHTER

A kilometer long, half a kilometer wide, and about as beautiful as a fire-hydrant. What the Canterbury is after is the 'crude oil' of space -- water in the form of ice.

TITLE: **THE FREIGHTER "CANTERBURY". SATURN.**

In a 'leviathan ballet,' the vast iceberg is guided into the ship's open bow, where a RING OF BLINDING TORCHES fire up, sculpting the ice to fit perfectly into --

INT. THE CANTERBURY'S HOLD - CONTINUOUS

Now containing close to a billion tons of ice, secured by LOADING CREWS in filthy space suits. They look like gnats, floating in zero-G, between the glacial mountains.

CAMERON PAJ (26), rough-and-tumble as they come, goes in to secure the new catch with his partner, RIKER (25).

RIKER
Gettin' anywhere with Charlize?

PAJ
Not yet, but I'll drag my balls
across broken glass to dog her.

RIKER
Good luck, 'cause she don't roll
with anything born West of Mars.

PAJ
Am I smellin' a wager?

The stanchion Paj is tightening down suddenly snaps...

PAJ (CONT'D)
WATCHOUT --!

...the mountain of ice cants. Paj shoves Riker, saving his
ass, but his own arm is pinned by the shifting glacier.

INSIDE PAJ'S SUIT

The CRUNCH OF BONE SPLINTERING. Then Paj is SCREAMING.

NEW ANGLE - WIDE

Against the black sea of stars, something comes pinwheeling
into frame, moving through space in balletic slo-mo. Like
Kubrick's 'bone-becoming-spaceship' image from 2001 --

It's Paj's severed arm, still encased in its space suit,
spiraling towards infinity. His muffled SCREAM becomes --

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICER'S CABIN - SAME TIME

Another kind of human scream. Navigation officer ADE ("Ah-
day") TUKUNBO (28), finds herself at this very moment pinned
beneath officer JAMES HOLDEN, (36). They collapse onto his
bunk, trying to catch their breath --

Ade holds her mouth and laughs, embarrassed at her outburst.
She has East African features with Nordic eyes.

ADE
You're altogether too good at that.

He smiles and in the half-light, you could picture him around
a plains campfire -- the dominant part of his genes from
ancient Wyoming pioneer stock.

HOLDEN
Told you, I have no power to get
you promoted on this ship --

ADE
(punching him)
Then I take it back.

He goes to roll her on top of him, and they both fall off the
skinny bunk. And from this vantage point, they see the
INTERCOM BLINKING. Faintly CHIRPING. They regard it. Shit.

HOLDEN
We never saw it.

ADE
(swatting him away)
Sorry cowboy, but we did.

Holden sighs and as he rises we get a look at his crib: warm
and charming as a prison cell. He taps the intercom.

HOLDEN
Holden.

VOICE ON INTERCOM
We got a sixty-six in cargo bay and
the XO's M.I.A.

HOLDEN
Okay, I'll hunt him down.

Holden regards Ade's curves in the tangled sheets.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
Back in five. (then) God, you are
beautiful...

INT. MESS HALL - TEN MINUTES LATER

Holden enters, eyes sweeping: the wan crew, dozens of them,
picking at powdered eggs and fake bacon, could pass for
convicts. Beards, crazy tattoos, muscles, scars.

It is also a snapshot of the pan-ethnic state of humanity.
Gene-pools and races, cultures and religions, all fused
together and blown into space.

A Deck Cadet mops the floor. Since the birth of civilization
someone has been mopping, and till humanity's dying day,
there will be someone pushing a mop.

HOLDEN
Lucky -- you seen XO?

DECK CADET
No, Sir.

HOLDEN
What'd I say about 'Sir'? I'm --

DECK CADET
Holden.

Holden cocks a gun-finger, *atta boy*, and pours coffee from a machine nozzle. He sips it and cringes.

HOLDEN
Criminal.

Lucky shrugs. Holden departs.

INT. MAIN CAGE ELEVATOR - MINUTES LATER

Battered -- everything in this ship is. Holden rides down, sipping that coffee with hatred. The elevator stops and --

Chief Engineer NAOMI NAGATA (30), and her right-hand AMOS BURTON (24), step on. Both wear overalls covered in old hydraulic fluid, but that's where the similarities end.

Naomi is exceptionally lithe, well over six feet tall, with startling pale blue eyes -- the identifying marks of "Belters". Her ocean of black curls (African genes mixed with her Asian predominance way back when) are tied into a tail.

(* "Belters": the term for humans born in reduced gravity on the asteroid-belt colonies. Hence many of them have elongated body forms, but ALL have a distinct cerulean eye color -- the result of a dearth of natural sunlight. *)

Amos, who looks part Boy Scout, part mugger, is Earth-born, short, and stocky as a Marine. He wears a pin on his overalls -- a smiley face with devil horns.

HOLDEN
Seen XO?

NAOMI
Sure haven't, sa-sa.

AMOS
Just follow the reek of whiskey.

HOLDEN
That's not nice.

AMOS
The truth never is.

Amos shrugs, as Naomi holds up a comms-unit screen at him.

NAOMI
You didn't sign the petition.

Holden looks suspiciously at the phone-sized device.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Are you kidding? You were at the
officers meeting.

HOLDEN
Right.

He struggles to remember. She sighs with an accompanying hand-flip gesture signaling casual disgust (the hand gestures are a cultural trait of Belters, left over from the days of space suits with poor comms).

NAOMI
A petition to overhaul this rust-
bucket before it breaks apart.

AMOS
If Naomi says it will, you can take
it to the bank --

HOLDEN
Listen kids, I've been here a bit
longer than you. It's way cheaper
for the company to settle up with a
few widows, than to overhaul this
old barge. (at Amos) The truth.

The cage elevator grinds closed. Lights fritz.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
Besides, the 'Cant' is a legend for
her scars. Badges of endurance.
She's seen it all -- and she'll see
it all again before she's done.

Naomi rolls her eyes. The elevator sputters, and Holden messes with the control panel. Now it goes totally dead.

NAOMI
One day...

She bangs on the panel once, in just the right spot, and the elevator instantly returns to life.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

...you must tell me the amazing story of how you managed to become a second officer.

HOLDEN

My biggest failure in life.

He smiles and steps through the gaping doors. She shakes her head. Fuckwad.

INT. CONTROL DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Nothing shiny here. Beaten up old tech in grays and greens.

Pilot ALEX KAMAL (40s, Mars-born), a strong South-Indian influence to his features, sits in the hot seat, earphones skewed and leaking a peculiar mix of angry bhangra and doom rap. He moves a joystick expertly, but without joy. Bored stiff. Behind him --

Load Master REBECCA BYERS (30s), frizzy hair in a crude bun, looking as ruffled as Alex, controls the jib-arm that guides the titanic slabs of glacier to their places in the hold.

HOLDEN

How are we looking?

Alex pops his head-phones off and speaks with an incongruous Texas drawl (a story for another day).

ALEX

As much fun as picklin' eggs.

HOLDEN

We had a sixty-six?

BYERS

Cameron Paj. He only lost an arm.

HOLDEN

Still got to get XO on it. Have you seen him?

ALEX

If I said I had, I'd be lyin'.

Holden climbs a staircase to...

INT. THE COMMAND DECK - CONTINUOUS

...and knocks on a door.

HOLDEN

Hey, XO. HEY! (nothing) All
right, I'm coming in and I don't
want to see anything hairy, okay?

Holden picks the lock and enters --

A SMALL OFFICE

Littered with half-done sketches and a display rack of
antique guns. And there, up on a 'rafter' of old pipes sits:

The XO. White haired, 50s or 60s, hard to tell. And stark
naked, a bottle clutched in one hand. He is staring out a
tiny porthole to the vastness of space.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

-- guess you didn't hear me, then--
about the 'hairy' -- never mind --

XO meets Holden's eyes from up there, affectionately.

XO

Finally figured it out, my
boy...what we're looking for...out
there, in all that darkness --

HOLDEN

(no answer forthcoming)
What's that, 'Ex'?

XO smiles and nods, like he's got a Moses-caliber message to
convey. Rises and now Holden sees --

He's got an antique Colt-45 in his other hand. XO begins
laughing -- building to a mad cackle --

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Hey come on down now, 'Ex' --

XO suddenly points the gun at the porthole.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

WOAH, WOAH, WOAH--!

CLICK! CLICK! Empty. And now XO's cackling turns to
inconsolable crying. He staggers along the edge of his
perch, gun and bottle dangling and we --

CUT TO:

INT. THE SHIP'S BRIG - OUTER HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

CAPTAIN MCDOWELL (58) -- ancient by space standards -- clenches his jaw, hearing the XO ranting and shrieking as he's subdued in the brig. Holden and a few others stand by.

CLANG! The distant door slams with finality. Then silence.

CAPTAIN MCDOWELL
Should've pulled him six months ago, when he started talkin' funny. Thought maybe he'd come around...

BYERS
Plus, he owed us all at poker.

CAPTAIN MCDOWELL
(a fond smile)
That, he did. (then to Byers)
Prepare the ship for departure.

Byers nods, exits. McDowell turns sternly to face Holden.

CAPTAIN MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Holden. My office. Now.

INT. SHIP'S BRIDGE/CAPTAIN MCDOWELL'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

If not for the impressive, over-sized display MONITOR in the wall -- and a strange row of glass CAT FIGURINES on a shelf -- this could be an accounting firm's back room.

McDowell sits behind his desk, flinty-eyed. He has a Belter's lankiness, but with none of the grace we saw in Naomi.

MCDOWELL
Sit down. (Holden sits) This has been awhile comin' anyway.

He pushes the XO INSIGNIA across the desk to Holden, who is at first stunned -- then busts out laughing.

HOLDEN
You joking? I thought you were going to can me.

MCDOWELL
What for?

HOLDEN
Fraternizing with our navigator, for starters.

McDowell waves a dismissive hand.

MCDOWELL

People like you. You get things done. You'll make a good XO.

HOLDEN

Got me pegged wrong, Captain.

MCDOWELL

The Captain is never wrong. First lesson, free.

McDowell grins, a face of deep lines and weary eyes. In eons past he'd be at the helm of an Aleutian fishing trawler.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

I see through your bullshit, Holden. Guy who doesn't give a damn about anyone. But you love this tin can, and the people on it--

HOLDEN

What have I done to give you that impression, Sir?

MCDOWELL

You been on the 'Cant' five years now. Turned down two-dozen transfers. Face it. This is your home now -- your family.

HOLDEN

Is this where we hug?

MCDOWELL

So why haven't you moved on?

HOLDEN

Because no one tried to push an XO badge on me. Look, I like things the way they are.

MCDOWELL

Evolve or die.

HOLDEN

Then at least I'll die grinning.

MCDOWELL

C'mon, don't be stupid.

He points to the MONITOR showing a delayed feed of a U.N. Council session. A striking older woman, of Anglo-Indian origin, is speaking at the podium. We'll get back to her.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

Earth and Mars are going to bury the cold-war hatchet and hammer out a treaty.

HOLDEN

Never happen.

MCDOWELL

This time it will. Too much money on the table. Means we might finally get out of the ice-hauling business and into the Earth-Mars business. Less risk, way better rewards. Maybe a chance to see Earth again.

HOLDEN

What makes you think I want to see Earth again?

McDowell, a bit surprised. His eyes plumb Holden's.

MCDOWELL

You a "wanted man" back in Montana?

HOLDEN

Maybe I am.

MCDOWELL

Someday you'll tell me that story.

HOLDEN

Right after you tell me the story about *those* --

He points to the row of glass cat figurines on the shelf. McDowell cracks a tiny enigmatic smile. One day.

MCDOWELL

Look, I don't give a damn about your past. Everyone on the 'Cant' is running from something. Makes us kin.

Holden pushes the XO badge back across the table.

HOLDEN

Appreciate the offer, Cap. (long beat) Truth told, I got my eye on a little G-6 class freighter -- put down some money to have her refurbished. Thinkin' of setting up my own livestock run from Ganymede, one of these days --

MCDOWELL

Dreamer, huh? (shakes his head) If I was twenty years younger...

VOICE OVER INTERCOM

Captain, the ship is ready to depart for Ceres...

McDowell rises, flipping Holden the badge, which he catches.

MCDOWELL

Hang onto it a day or two. It might feel good in your pocket.

INT. CONTROL DECK - THE CANTERBURY FREIGHTER

McDowell looks over the cargo logs, the flight plan and nods.

Holden flicks a switch and a KLAXON sounds through the ship, warning of imminent gravity shift. Everyone buckles in.

ALEX

(cracking his fingers)
You're ridin' with the best and handsomest, folks, so I invite you to sit back and --

BYERS

Shut up and fly, wouldya?

ALEX

Hey Byers, is it true you offed your ex-husband on Luna?

BYERS

He annoyed me -- like you.

Alex grins, makes a 'sign of the cross'. Pushes the throttle.

The ship SHUDDERS down to its metal bones, as the EPSTEIN DRIVE -- another zip code behind them -- puts out 82 million pounds of thrust.

Tense faces as the crew is pressed back into their chairs. If the ship is going to bust apart, this is when it will happen. Screens and gauges spool reams of raw data.

ALEX

V1.

And they start checking off.

BYERS

Hold's green.

ADE

Nav's green.

NAOMI

Core's...shit!

All eyes flit to Naomi, banging her knuckle on a gauge.

HOLDEN

Could you be any more specific?

NAOMI

Core temp is a 'no joy'. Let's hope it's just a fuse.

Amos is already on it, tearing open a panel.

AMOS

Can you hold this fucker in place, Boss, while I get the spare?

Naomi grumbles, 'this fucking ship'. Holden smiles.

HOLDEN

Think of it as job security.

NAOMI

(the employment ad)
Travel the stars. Meet exciting people. See exotic places...

CUT TO:

EXT. CERES ASTEROID STATION - SPACE

"**WELCOME TO CERES**": in letters a hundred feet high, and in dire need of re-painting, on the lip of the massive station.

TITLE: CERES STATION. THE ASTEROID BELT BETWEEN MARS AND JUPITER.

Spacecraft arriving from the ocean of darkness, lining up to dock at the station's port -- it's like "stacking hour" at L.A.X. Dock crews in space suits unload freighters. Huge cranes stack cargo containers. Arclights sweep.

(* Ceres is the port city of the Asteroid Belt and the outer planets, two hundred and fifty kilometers in diameter, tens of thousands of kilometers of tunnels, layer upon layer...)

Six million permanent residents, a thousand ships docking on any given day. Metals and minerals arriving from the Belt, water glaciers from Saturn, vegetables and beef from the big mirror-fed greenhouses on Ganymede and Europa, organics from Earth and Mars. A river of wealth and commerce and human traffic, unrivaled in history, pass through here. And where there is commerce, there is crime. *)

INT. RENT-HOLE - CERES ASTEROID STATION - SAME TIME

Greasy little digs with opium den lighting, and twisted in a pool of his own blood is Bomie Chatterjee. Ex-local wiseguy. Present homicide statistic.

Sitting, smiling gentle encouragements at a low-rent BELTER WHORE with a black eye, is Detective JOE MILLER, (40).

Man of the street, shrewd and gut-wise to the darker side of humanity. His clothes are loose, but stylish. And he wears a porkpie hat replete with a little feather -- a relic good-luck charm that hasn't brought Miller much luck at all (other than still being alive at forty in this place).

A Belter by birth, Miller doesn't possess much of the lankiness -- but the cerulean eye color gives him away.

BELTER WOMAN

(sniffling)

And then it was all pow! Room full with bladeboys howling and humping shank. Look like a dance number 'cept Bomie's got this look, didn't know nothing never and ever, Amen.

She 'talks' wildly with her hands -- a Belter trait that would put certain Europeans to shame.

MILLER

So Bomie, no see. Forgotten arm.

Miller mimics the woman's rhythm and twang, his hands move similarly, full of matching expression.

BELTER WOMAN
 Forgotten fucking arm, yeah.

She flicks eyes to Miller's partner, DMITRI HAVELOCK (42), and can tell he's not following a whole lot of this.

Miller traces her black eye, ever so gently with his thumb.

MILLER
 They shouldn't have done that.

A glint of violent promise. He pours her a quick belt from a bottle on the table -- the liquor coming out at a twenty-degree skew, as if gravity in here was a bit "off".

MILLER (CONT'D)
 Any of them sees, and I asked, que si?

BELTER WOMAN
 (drinking, sniffing)
 Come si.

EXT. GRIMY TUNNEL - SECONDS LATER

Wide as a city avenue and several stories high. The ceiling is blue to mimic Earth's summer sky, but with the artificial lighting, it just looks cheap and eerie.

Milling by their electric cars (more like glorified 'carts') are several homicide dicks wearing STAR HELIX logos on their uniforms (the company contracted to provide cops on Ceres).

Miller gives them the nod, and his fellow detectives take over the scene. Havelock is testy --

HAVELOCK
 What was she goin' on about?

They stroll along the drab, low-rent residential complexes. Miller seems to need to be in perpetual motion, like a shark.

MILLER
 How long you been here Havelock?

HAVELOCK
 Not long enough to pick up that 'gutter gab'.

MILLER
 You wanna work this beat, you're gonna have to tune your ears.

HAVELOCK
(irritated)
What am I, some rookie now?

Miller shrugs with his hands in that way Belters do.

HAVELOCK (CONT'D)
I worked homicide in Terrytown.
Did three years vice at L-5. They
were shipping little kids out of
there, and I'm one of the guys who
stopped it. I'm a good cop.

MILLER
A damn good one. But when people
look at you, they don't see Dmitri
Havelock, good cop. They see Earth.

HAVELOCK
Load of crap. I was eight years in
the orbitals, and three on Mars
before I shipped out here. I
worked on Earth maybe six months.

MILLER
Earth, Mars, what's the difference?

HAVELOCK
Tell that to a Martian -- they'll
feed you your teeth.

MILLER
Look, I'm sure there's all kinds of
differences. Earth hates Mars for
having a better fleet, Mars hates
Earth for not having to live under
domes. Maybe soccer's better in
full-G, maybe it ain't. I'm just
saying, anyone this far out from
the sun doesn't give a good goddamn
what planet you're from. If you
grew up with a real sky over your
head, real gravity holding you on
the ground -- they don't trust you.

HAVELOCK
Well, I'm not the enemy. Just a
guy trying to make a living.

MILLER
Good. That means you have
something in common with every
Belter on this rock.

The residential structures give way to a jungle of LED signs and neons, advertising brothels, fighting galleries, strip bars, noodle joints, coffin hotels and tacky mini-casinos.

They buck the tide of Belter flotsam and jetsam. Ship crews in varied flight-suits, itching to blow their hard-earned pay before staggering back to their vessels, to face the expanse.

In front of one casino, a gaunt, impassioned Belter with a shaved head and burning blue eyes. Soap-boxing to anyone who'll listen. Behind him on the wall --

GRAFFITI. A SPLIT CIRCLE LOGO, AND THE INITIALS O.P.A.

GAUNT GUY

Slaves -- that's all we are to the Earthers and Dusters. They built their solar system on our backs, spilled the blood of a million of our brothers -- but in their eyes, we're not even *human* anymore. So when you look in the mirror, say the word: SLAVE.

A decent-sized group of listeners has gathered.

GAUNT GUY (CONT'D)

Every time we demand to be heard, they hold back our water, ration our air -- until we go back to our holes and do as we're told.

Miller and Havelock hover a moment, this is heating up.

GAUNT GUY (CONT'D)

So when the next ice shipment from Saturn doesn't show, they'll tell us it's delayed. When it arrives, it'll be half what they promised. And as they lie -- our people die!

Some in the crowd being shouting in solidarity.

GAUNT GUY (CONT'D)

Make no mistake. Scarcity is their power over us. Fear is their power.

Havelock nudges Miller, now, having spotted --

Two Belters in gray uniforms, guarding the speaker. They wear the same split-circle insignias of the O.P.A. (Outer Planet Alliance: think of them as the ' Hamas', or the 'I.R.A' of the future).

Miller steps in front of Havelock, blocking his view.

MILLER

Watch your damn eyes, partner.
People get killed over a wrong look
down here.

HAVELOCK

We can run 'em in for 'inciting --

MILLER

Is it worth getting your teeth
kicked in? We'll deal with the
O.P.A. from on high, soon enough --

The Gaunt Guy has 'made' the two cops in his midst.

GAUNT GUY

Hey, you. Badge.

Miller looks over.

GAUNT GUY (CONT'D)

Day's comin' soon, eh? And when
the blood's on the wall, you gonna
know which side you're on?

MILLER

(steely smile)
Yeah. I'll know...

He gives the man his back and nudges Havelock --

MILLER (CONT'D)

C'mon. Let's get lunch.

INT. BLUE FROG CASINO - A MINUTE LATER

An exact replica of the one in Mumbai, complete with piped-in
artificial smog. At the bar, Miller accepts two glasses of
red-hued Scotch, and a short stack of casino chips -- to
leave commerce alone -- which he tucks into his jacket.

He turns and hands Havelock his "lunch".

MILLER

Yam sing!

They clink glasses, Miller shoots his. Signals for a reload.

HAVELOCK

You knew that dead thug?

MILLER

Bomie was a 'Golden Bough' purse
boy. Low-level collector.

All around are scantily clad "hostesses", inebriated Johns,
dope-slingers and gamblers. Every strain of misfit, bumping
to the Bhangra-fusion MUSIC that thumps like mortars.

HAVELOCK

So who gave him 'the good news'?
Loca Greiga? Sohiro's crew--?

MILLER

Nah, that's just it. All the crews
are being hit -- and no one's
retaliating.

HAVELOCK

Hell, I'll drink to that --

MILLER

I don't like it. Say what you will
about organized crime -- at least
it's organized.

HAVELOCK

You think the O.P.A. is moving in?

MILLER

Damn right. When I'm back on the
task force --

He catches himself. Too late, Havelock is on it.

HAVELOCK

So those whispers in the squad room
are true -- I.A. sidelined you?

Miller just grins, evasive. Then his comms CHIMES and a
woman's stern voice snaps.

CAPTAIN SHADDID (ON COMMS)

Miller? You there?

MILLER

Here, Captain.

CAPTAIN SHADDID (ON COMMS)

My office.

Her anger management training reluctantly kicks in --

CAPTAIN SHADDID (ON COMMS) (CONT'D)

Please.

INT. ELECTRIC CAR - MINUTES LATER

Miller driving, nursing a 'to-go' cup of liquor. The higher up in the tunnels you get, the nicer the living. Corporate buildings, better residential complexes. (And the farther you get from the asteroid's core, the more normal the gravity.)

HAVELOCK

So your little internal thing...you getting a raw deal?

Miller sips his drink. Silence, then --

MILLER

Contractor on Level Thirty, he'd been faking replacing the air filters for a year. Pocketing the money. Dirt-poor district, so who's gonna care? Until a dozen school kids suffocated one day, when the system died.

Miller rolls the cup, as if swirling a fine brandy.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Angry mob pulled this guy out of his nice office, they were gonna off him right in the street. He was terrified -- until I showed up. The law. Then he got smug. Rich guy. Good lawyers. He *knew* he was gonna get away with it.

Havelock, riveted.

MILLER (CONT'D)

I gave this guy back to the mob, took a slow ride around the block. They dragged him to an airlock and 'spaced' him. (meets his eyes) Here, you don't ask "right or wrong?" You ask: "is it justified?"

EXT. STAR HELIX SECURITY HQ

Miller pulls in among scores of other police carts. The station house is two kilometers square and dug into the rock.

Cops head out on patrol, others drag street-scum inside. Nothing ever changes in the world of crime and punishment.

Miller downs his 'cocktail' and hangs on the sight of --

A female Detective, CANDACE (30s), banged up, with a bloody rag pressed to her nose. The perp who hit her -- a smirking Dirt Bag -- is cuffed in the back of her cruiser.

CANDACE

Get out!

He just sits there, grinning. Suddenly, Miller appears, yanking the Dirt Bag out, smashing his nose with an elbow and pounding him into the pavement.

Candace yells, trying to pull Miller back, but it's Havelock who has to drag him off the perp, who's no longer grinning.

HAVELOCK

YOU LOST YOUR MIND--?

Miller comes down from his rage. Cops turn away, they 'didn't see anything'. Candace checks on the bloody perp.

MILLER

You okay?

CANDACE

Am I okay?! You need help, Miller.

MILLER

You're welcome.

She looks at him, shaking her head.

CANDACE

Wild West days of Ceres are over. You're a relic, Miller. What are you gonna do when they pull your creds?

He breathes hard, his face setting.

MILLER

Did 'Internal' call you in?

CANDACE

What'd you expect? I was a witness.

MILLER

You going to testify against me?

A long beat. Miller stares. She returns it, then finally turns to Havelock.

CANDACE

Get him out of here.

Havelock shoves Miller along. He knocks Havelock's hand away and they square off.

HAVELOCK

Do what you want, Miller. But
you're not taking me down with you.

Miller heads into the station. Havelock doesn't join him.

INT. CAPTAIN SHADDID'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Decorated in a soft, feminine style. Real cloth tapestries. A coffee and cinnamon insert sits in the air filter.

CAPTAIN SHADDID (37), wears her uniform casually, her hair down around her shoulders in violation of corporate regulations. She is a woman of...*deceptive coloration*.

She nods Miller to a chair. A beat of silence unnerves him.

CAPTAIN SHADDID

I have something. New contract.
Just you. Not Havelock.

Miller leans back, apprehensive. Is he being canned?

MILLER

New contract? Meaning?

CAPTAIN SHADDID

Meaning Star Helix Security has
accepted a contract for services
separate from the Ceres security
assignment, and in my role as
manager, I am assigning you to it.

MILLER

(put off by her tone)
Look...am I being fired?

CAPTAIN SHADDID

It's additional duty. You'll still
have your Ceres assignments. This
is a favor someone down on Earth is
doing for a shareholder.

MILLER

We're groveling to the shareholders
now?

Her eyes go dark as wet stone.

CAPTAIN SHADDID

You are, yes. (then) I need a top man. And a successful outcome will bode well for your upcoming hearing...

MILLER

And get me back on the task force.

CAPTAIN SHADDID

One thing at a time, Miller.

MILLER

(leaning closer)

Captain, the O.P.A. is making a move, things are happenin' out there. I can't figure out the strategy yet, but they've been systematically --

CAPTAIN SHADDID

One thing at a time, Detective.

He gets it. Shaddid grabs her comms, taps on the screen.

CAPTAIN SHADDID (CONT'D)

I linked you to all the files. A little lost-daughter case. Ariadne and Jules-Pierre Mao.

MILLER

Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile?

CAPTAIN SHADDID

The same.

Miller whistles low.

CAPTAIN SHADDID (CONT'D)

They're Luna-based, but they do a lot of shipping through here.

MILLER

And they misplaced a daughter?

CAPTAIN SHADDID

Black sheep. Went to college, got involved with a group called the Far Horizons Foundation.

MILLER

O.P.A. front, right?

CAPTAIN SHADDID

Associated. Mostly just students with big mouths and big ideas. Most won't become O.P.A. terrorists once they grow up a little.

MILLER

And now they want her found. Wonder what changed?

CAPTAIN SHADDID

They didn't share that information. Probably just want her to stop embarrassing the old man. Last records indicate she was employed on Tycho, but kept an apartment here. All in the file.

MILLER

Okay. What's my contract exactly?

CAPTAIN SHADDID

Find Julie Mao, detain her, and ship her home.

Miller chews on that.

MILLER

A...kidnap job then.

CAPTAIN SHADDID

Any problem with that?

MILLER

No, Sir. I'll take care of it.

Miller nods, rises to head out.

CAPTAIN SHADDID

Miller!

He turns: she's holding out a tissue. Her eyes dip to his shoes, which still have blood on them. Ah! He accepts it.

CAPTAIN SHADDID (CONT'D)

How's the new partner?

MILLER

Havelock's all right. Having him around makes people like me better by contrast. Nice, for a change.

CAPTAIN SHADDID

Fucking Earthers.

Nothing like a little racism to bond over. Her smile becomes half a degree more genuine, and Miller sails with it.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL DECK - **THE CANTERBURY FREIGHTER** - SPACE

Holden and other officers, waiting to reach final velocity, are lulled by the low rumble of the ship's drive.

Alex, however, looks perturbed at the controls.

ALEX

Shit, I'm pickin' up a 'Mayday'.

HOLDEN

(pricking up)

You sure?

ALEX

Transponder verification just bounced back from Callisto.

They all begin unbuckling.

MCDOWELL

Anyone else in the vicinity?

ALEX

We're the only ship within a few million clicks, Sir.

HOLDEN

Of course we are.

Ade, at the nav-station, consults her screen.

ADE

There. Got it. Next to a charted non-Belt asteroid.

They cluster around Ade's screen: a BLIP pulses way out there on a star-chart. Repeating the same pattern over and over.

HOLDEN

Hell were they doing way out there?

BYERS

Maybe they pulled over 'cause someone had to go potty.

NAOMI

We're obligated to check it out.

MCDOWELL

I'm aware of the statute, Ms.
Nagata.

McDowell stares at the blip on the scope. Eyes flit amongst the crew members. A shitty dilemma, from any angle.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

Pirate bait.

NAOMI

That far from the shipping lanes?

BYERS

The Fitz got jacked near Callisto.
Killed almost every soul onboard.

NAOMI

The Fitz was an inside job.

ADE

It's not far out of our way,
Captain. Two days at most.

NAOMI

Given the state of this ship, that
distress signal could be ours.
What comes around goes around.

McDowell grinds his teeth. Hates this part of the job.

MCDOWELL

A delay might mean we lose our
berth at Ceres. Kiss our on-time
bonus goodbye. Besides, six
million people on Ceres are
depending on this ice. (now more
firm) No, we keep moving and let
the good God Darwin sort it out.

This stirs more heated exchanges, until Holden barks --

HOLDEN

What's the damn problem, people?
Captain gave an order.

And that seems to settle it. McDowell nods, bolstered.

MCDOWELL

Purge the logs. We never received
that signal.

His hard squint drifts over his officers. Most of them
relieved, except Naomi and Amos. And maybe Ade...

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Set the watch and proceed.

He departs with Holden and leans close --

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
That was real XO shit there.

HOLDEN
No, that was *me* wanting to get to Ceres worse than you. We're out of liquor, low on toilet paper. And I need a decent cup of coffee.

INT. HOLDEN'S CABIN - AN HOUR LATER

Ade flops back onto his bunk, pulling off her boots. Damn, does she look good. He goes to kiss her, gets the hand --

ADE
Are you out of your skull? Turning down XO? You'd be on the short path to Captain!

HOLDEN
Exactly.

ADE
Exactly! Twice the pay, a bunk we could both actually sleep on. A private head. We'd be set.

The word 'we' gives him pause. Too much pause.

HOLDEN
Ade, you know I like you. *Really* like you. I mean I -- I thoroughly enjoy your company.

It suddenly dawns on her where this is going.

ADE
Do you? "Enjoy my company"...

HOLDEN
It's just...I thought we were straight on things.

He stares at her, she ain't gonna make this easy.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Two people living in the moment, no plans. You always said another run or two, you'd be moving on.

ADE

That was a couple of weeks ago, Jim, before we...before certain words were spoken.

More pregnant silence, then --

HOLDEN

Can't imagine anyone else I'd rather spend time with...

ADE

But...

Silence. She smiles sadly.

ADE (CONT'D)

Might've been beautiful, you know.

He watches as she sits up, pulls her boots back on. Stands and heads for the door.

HOLDEN

It *was* beautiful. It is. (stops her) Hey. You don't need to leave.

ADE

Yeah, Jim. I do...

And she's gone.

EXT. SPACE - HOURS LATER

The colossal Canterbury a tiny speck inching across infinity.

INT. MED-BAY - SAME TIME

Med-Tech SHED GARVEY (48), is hunched at his table, debriding the stump of a left arm belonging to Cameron Paj. Shed's blonde hair hangs in his face. A long time ago he might have been mistaken for a hippie surfer.

HOLDEN

(entering)

What's the word?

PAJ

Lookin' good. Still got a few nerves. Shed's been tellin' me how the prosthetic's gonna hook up.

Shed adds MEDICAL MAGGOTS to the raw tissue to slow necrosis.

SHED

Naturally the company'll try to screw you out of a good one.

PAJ

I've been signed on long enough to get one with force feedback, pressure and temp sensors -- the whole package.

SHED

What you should have, brother is the new bio-gel they developed on the inner-planets. Regrows the limb perfectly.

PAJ

Screw the 'Inners' and their magic Jell-O. Rather have a good Belter-built fake, any day (hops) No offense Holden

HOLDEN

No worries, Paj (to Shed) I need some Z-pro.

SHED

Bee cleaned out for two weeks. You'll have to count sheep.

PAJ

Seriously Holden, you got stripes, you won't let them screw me on the arm, will you?

HOLDEN

(a moment, then --)
I'm just a clock-puncher like you, Paj.

Paj hangs on that, then Holden walks out.

INT. CONTROL DECK - MINUTES LATER

Holden saunters in with a coffee. Byers is on watch.

BYERS
You're way early.

HOLDEN
Can't sleep. I'll take over.

Byers gathers her things, elated.

BYERS
Buy you a drink on Ceres.

HOLDEN
I'll take a good cup of coffee.

He settles in as she departs, sips his acidic brew with a grimace. Unwraps a protein bar. He perks at a sound...

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
Evenin', Lord Bellamy.

He turns to a vent nozzle where a tiny mouse appears, drawn by the scent of food. Holden breathes off a few crumbs.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
How's things in the Underworld?

Holden taps on the console screen checking personal messages. Isolates one. A few beats, then he taps on it.

SCREEN: A Woman (60s), appears, dressed in jeans and a heavy flannel, surrounded by a forest of WIND TOWERS. In the distance, a classic American house, and what looks more or less like a Montana farm -- because it is.

MOTHER ELISE speaks haltingly, not a big fan of cameras.

MOTHER ELISE (ON SCREEN)
Bab-zephyr finally went to horse heaven, but the foals are lovely and strong, you ought to see them. It's...just about autumn here, and the cottonwoods are turning, Lord knows they haven't done that in years, so...(long pause) Well, I just miss you, Jimmy, all your mothers miss you, Father Barnes too, and we'd sure love to hear from you...to know when, maybe, you'd be coming home again...

He CLICKS OFF. Heavy sigh, he'd been dreading that message with good reason. He notices the mouse Bellamy staring.

HOLDEN

What? Don't you start guilt-trippin' me too.

Holden shuts his personal files, taps the console and scans the systems. All green. He stacks his feet on the desk. The silence, the loneliness of the witching hours.

A tiny filament of curiosity tugs at him. He taps into the console again, going deeper into the comms system.

ON SCREEN: the DISTRESS BEACON comes up. A little blip way out there. Repeating its pattern endlessly.

Holden spots something now -- a second "sub-blip" out there too -- so faint it could be a pixel glitch; he starts playing with the controls, with the fervor of an old am-radio geek.

ON SCREEN: the wave-form graph of the phantom signal. There is STATIC NOISE in it, which Holden tries to isolate.

He adds filters, adjusts the signal volume. Just STATIC, but wait...something in it. A rhythm? He strains to listen.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Hear that, Bellamy?

The mouse watches Holden play with more controls, getting sucked deeper into that static.

CLOSE ON - HOLDEN: ear to the speaker, riveted.

VOICE IN THE STATIC

...please. (lost)...please...

Gone. Holy shit, he tries to re-tune the signal. Static. More static. Then, again, a fraction clearer -- desperation.

WOMAN'S VOICE IN STATIC

Please...(lost)

She's gone now and he can't bring her back. Was she ever even there? Holden leans back, staring intently at --

The distress blip on that star-chart, taking over the screen as we PUSH IN ON IT...CLOSER, CLOSER, then --

CUT TO:

INT. JULIE MAO'S APARTMENT - **CERES STATION** - SAME TIME

We're BEHIND Detective Miller, standing in the dim foyer. When he speaks his VOICE is that of a twenty year-old female.

MILLER

'Bother, father poured hot coffee
in the parking lot.'

WE MOVE AROUND to the front of Miller, who 'tunes' a tiny dial on a CLAMP-LIKE DEVICE, and presses it back to his larynx. More feminine now --

MILLER (CONT'D)

'Bother, father poured hot coffee'--

Suddenly, the voice-activated apartment springs to life: lights come on, air handlers spool up, a coffee maker coughs.

Miller's cop eyes sweep. An upper-scale residence. Not over the top, but way above his means. Clearly, Julie is a slob. Sparse furnishings, nothing on the walls.

He drifts over to the kitchen faucet and turns it on: the water comes out straight.

Miller opens her fridge, sees a few lonely beers in there. Takes one out and pops it. Drinks, while watching --

PHOTOS Julie has taken cycle on an LED SCREEN that takes up a whole wall. Beautiful and interesting things from her many travels. Julie's striking face is some of them, as if staring directly back at Miller

There she is, standing between Ariadne and Jules-Pierre Mao at a corporate event, parents beaming (faces smooth and natural and perfect), their daughter pasting on a smile.

Being awarded her brother's belt in jiu-jitsu, bowing solemnly.

Planting her flag atop some mountain, on a planet or moon we don't recognize...

Miller toasts his lovely young quarry, takes a swig of beer.

His eyes drop to a hamster, running on a wheel atop an empty desk. He's drawn to it, something about that rodent forever running and getting nowhere...

NEW ANGLE - THE FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

As Miller crouches on all fours, eye-level with the carpet fibers. Makes his way over to --

A specific area of tread-wear. He stands up over it, as if occupying Julie Mao's shoes for a moment.

Stares at the walls. Taps them. Runs his finger inside an air duct. Is about to pop the grate when he stops and --

Walks back to the energetic hamster and picks it up. He flips the 'OFF' switch on its belly. Cracks the battery cover off the critter, and gently shakes out --

A TINY DATA-NODE, which drops to his palm. Bingo!

He plugs the node into his comms-unit, and it begins downloading...

NEW ANGLE - MINUTES LATER

Miller heads for the exit, when the door opens and the Building Manager stands there, all stink-eyes.

MANAGER

What are you doing? Who let you in here?!

Miller hands the Man his unfinished beer, tucks a Blue Frog casino chip into his pocket. His eyes say, let it lie.

MILLER

Police work.

And he walks the hell out

EXT. JULIE MAO'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Miller steps into the courtyard, humming a tune. All in a day's work. Second later -

A bald, MUSCULAR MAN enters frame and heads after Miller. He's picked up a tail

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDEN'S CABIN - **THE CANTERBURY FREIGHTER** - HOURS LATER

As Holden jars awake. His intercom FLASHING and BEEPING. Holden stares at it, then swings his legs out.

INT. COMMAND AND CONTROL DECK - MINUTES LATER

Holden arrives and finds the other officers simmering under McDowell's glare. All traces of the Captain's jovial demeanor have vanished.

HOLDEN

What'd I miss?

BYERS

We've got a rat in our ranks.

MCDOWELL

That distress call we never received, it was logged with HQ by some 'do-gooder' aboard this ship.

McDowell's eyes drift over his officers...

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

Now we're forced to divert, or the firm's legally on the hook.

BYERS

I swear, I find out who it was, I don't care I'll space 'em --

NAOMI

Quit lookin' at me Byers, or I'll put your lights out.

BYERS

Any ol' time, string-be n -

Byers steps forward. McDowell steps between them.

MCDOWELL

Holden, you'll head up this 'rescue', or salvage', or whatever we're calling it. Put a shuttle team together -- we can't risk docking the Canterbury.

Off Holden's 'uh m?' reaction.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

Is there a problem, officer?

HOLDEN

No problem. Sir.

McDowell storms out. The officers regard Holden.

BYERS

I ain't goin'. No way, no how.

HOLDEN

You ain't invited. Alex, send a message to the beacon that we're on our way. And let Ceres know we're going to be late. Miss Tukuranbo --

ADE

(already ahead of him)
If we flip the ship and burn like
hell for two days, I can get us
within fifty-thousand clicks.

BYERS

Great, we'll all be puking in our
crash-couches, while the cargo
busts loose and scuttles the ship.

HOLDEN

Then make double-sure that ice
stays put. Naomi, where does the
'Knight' stand?

NAOMI

She's one leaky lifeboat, but she
should be able to manage fifty
thousand clicks of vacuum.

Holden goes to the intercom, lingers a moment, then --

HOLDEN

This is second officer Holden,
we've logged a distress call near
CA-2216862 and are obliged to
respond. Everyone get their crash-
couches for a 'flip and burn'.

FLASH ON - CREW QUARTERS: where the ice-buckers and
maintenance people groan and curse and kick furniture.

COMMAND AND CONTROL DECK

Byers does a little chair-kick of her own.

BYERS

Un-fucking believable.

Everyone starts buckling in. The Klaxon blares.

HOLDEN

What have we got on our drifter?

ALEX

Light freighter. Registered on
Mars, shows Eros as home port.
Calls herself...the Scopuli.

HOLDEN

(under his breath)
Thanks for nothing..."Scopuli".

QUICK SHOTS: crew strapping into their gimbaled "crash-couch" chairs -- biting down on rubber mouth-guards -- palms hitting buttons, activating --

Multiple syringe-needles from the chairs, penetrating their flight suits and injecting the "juice" -- the syrupy drug cocktail that keeps them conscious at high-g, when a human body weighs over 500 kilos. (There is no hyper-space button!)

EXT. THE CANTERBURY - SAME TIME

The colossal ship flips tail-to-nose and we're staring into the dark, cavernous main engine nozzle, that suddenly blooms white-hot, FLARING OUT THE SCREEN.

BURN IN ON:

INT. U.N. HIGH-CONFERENCE ROOM - **NEW YORK CITY** - NIGHT

CHRISJEN AVASARALA (58), whom we recognize as the attractive Anglo-Indian addressing the U.N. Council on McDowell's screen earlier. And if we don't recognize her that's okay too.

She's Assistant to the Undersecretary of Executive Administration, which means she's the one who actually knows what's going on. Her orange sari is the only splash of color in a room of suits and military canvas.

TITLE: UNITED NATIONS. NEW YORK CITY. EARTH.

It's tense. The heads of the respective branches of the U.N. (Earth's central governing body now) and officials from the Martian government, trying to overcome a century of mistrust.

U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL ERRINWRIGHT (60s), has the floor.

SECRETARY ERRINWRIGHT

We have made every concession you asked for with regards to Ganymede--

MARTIAN OFFICIAL

Not concession, Secretary General, concurrence. Ganymede was forged by the blood of those who colonized Mars, and we appreciate you recognizing that.

Under the conference table, Avasarala discreetly picks a pistachio from her purse, cracks the shell and surreptitiously slips the salty nut in her mouth.

SECRETARY ERRINWRIGHT

And we would 'appreciate' you recognizing our claim to the Valhallan Threshold.

MARTIAN OFFICIAL

It was our understanding that the Jupiter settlements would not be covered by this treaty.

SECRETARY ERRINWRIGHT

Then let's take Ganymede off the table too.

The room cools a few degrees, Avasarala stops chewing. The two leaders stare each other down.

MARTIAN OFFICIAL

Perhaps we should take some time and consider our positions again.

SECRETARY ERRI WRIGHT

Perhaps.

The Mars delegation begins gatherin its papers. Avasarala grits, her eyes lingering o th youngest Martian official BASIA, (40s), her counterpart on he other side of the table. He is the last to rise. C early disappointed.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. U.N. BACK OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Avasarala slams the door and kicks it, furious. She has frightening en rgy for a woman her size.

AVARSARALA

Two years to get them to the table, and it falls apart over a useless piece of dirt no one gives a shit about!

Her assistant SOREN COTTWALD (20s), all khaki and white-shirt efficiency, shakes his head in sympathy.

AVARSARALA (CONT'D)

How the hell did the 'Valhallan Threshold' get on the agenda?

SOREN

General Souther talked him into it.

AVARSARALA

Souther?! That goat-fucker!

Her eyes turn slits, her mind racing through counter-moves.

AVSARALA

Soren, bring up the car. Quick!

He nods and pulls out his comms. She empties her purse over the recycler and a flood of pistachio shells pour out.

EXT. U.N. - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Avasarala and Soren rush for a line of limos waiting to ferry dignitaries away. We finally get a glimpse of New York --

THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, cocooned in scaffolding. No flying cars or Vangelis music. New York has just gotten taller, and deeper;

200-story buildings of photovoltaic glass are de rigueur, and tunnels carry all the traffic now, leaving surface streets to bicycles and pedestrians. And between the buildings --

A half-moon hangs in the clear October sky. Strangely, the dark side of the moon is no longer dark, but spider-webbed with lights from the two billion people who call "Luna" home.

Avasarala and Soren pile into a limo.

INT. LIMO - MOMENTS LATER

They gaze intently at the Martian contingent, boarding their respective limos outside.

AVASARALA

Do you see him?

Soren shakes his head. Their eyes scan, frantic.

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

Got him!

It's Basia she's after -- the earnest young diplomat.

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

Follow that limo!

The Driver looks at her: really? He pulls out after Basia's limo, following it down the spiral ramp that will put them on the sub-streets of Manhattan.

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

Hit him!

DRIVER

SOREN

M'am?

M'am?

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

You heard me, HIT HIM!

The Driver speeds up and bumps the limo from behind, shattering a tail-light. Basia's limo pulls over to a parking level, followed by Avasarala's.

INT. PARKING LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

Avasarala hops out, as does Basia's body-guar -- a tall, deadly Martian Marine, hand resting on a gun in her jacket.

AVASARALA

Basia!

BASIA

(emerging, stern)

What do you think y u're doing?

AVASARAL

Kidnapping you

He doesn't know how to read her. She grins.

AV SARALA (CONT'D)

In the room, with all that dick-wagging we' e never going to get any hing done. But you and me, ver a beer, we might move mountains. What do you say?

Basia, tunned, is at a loss.

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

What is the absolute worst that can happen? (grins) Don't worry, you're far too young for me.

Basia cracks a tiny smile. Who is this lady?

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

Good. You ride with me, and Soren can ride with your guard.

BASIA

Very well, madam.

AVASARALA

I've been accused of many things,
but 'madam' isn't one of them.

Soren is left with the towering Marine.

SOREN

Hello. (hand out) Soren.

She regards Soren as if he were a poodle turd on her shoe.

EXT. THE WHITE HORSE TAVERN - LOWER NEW YORK - NIGHT

Declared a landmark eons ago, it remains untouched and looking like the 'little engine that could' shoehorned between skyscrapers. A huge sea wall holds the Hudson River back, along what was once Greenwich Street

INT. WHITE HORSE TAVERN - SAME TIME

Still sawdust on the floor, tin roof above -- not a plank has changed. Pabst and Guinness still among the beer taps. Even the huge portrait of Dylan Thomas continues to hold court.

We DRIFT PAST students and bohemians to find two gray-haired flies in the ointment: Avsarala and Basia in a dim booth, nursing pints of porter

BASIA

Come here often?

AVASARALA

Only when I feel myself turning pessimist.

Basia slowly drifts over the youthful crowd.

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

Now imagine if they ran things.

BASIA

I can. It would be chaos.

AVASARALA

Everything great we have come from chaos. The friend of creativity.

BASIA

And more than a few wars...

AVARSARALA

I don't agree. War is the providence of old leaders, clinging to the past, terrified of what's coming. Raging against the dying of the light --

Basia rolls his pint glass, pondering that.

AVASARALA

The same leaders who still insist we should have humbled Mars in the early days, crushed the colonists when we had the chance --

Her tone has some bite to it. Basia meets her eyes.

BASIA

The same leaders who say Earth is garbage heap of 30 billion souls, all on welfare, drowning in their own filth --

AVASARALA

Yes -- you see? To our elders, peace is an esoteric exercise. But you and I, we see that they can't. If we don't reach a treaty, our worlds will soon be at war. After that war, there will be nothing left for anyone. My grandchildren.

Basia remains silent -- knows she's right.

AVARSARALA

We're going to make this treaty happen.

BASIA

I admire your spirit, Madam. But I don't see how.

AVASARALA

For some time, I've been sitting on an important trump card. It will probably scuttle my chances at future advancement, but I'm prepared to play it. (then) I think I can get the Bobble-head back to the negotiating table --

BASIA

Excuse me... "bobble-head--"?

AVASARALA

Sorry -- Secretary Errinwright --
term of endearment --

BASIA

And you would like me to...find a
concession from my side.

AVASARALA

'Build your opponent a golden
bridge to retreat across'...yes?

He looks deep into her. Still skeptical, guarded --

AVASARALA (CONT'D)

Trust between our worlds has to
begin somewhere. Why not right
here, between you and me?

She raises her glass, offering up a toast. Basia stares at
his glass, considering whether to echo th gesture.

AVASARALA (CONT D)

You better drink that. Or I will.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CANTERBURY FREIGHTER - SPACE

Ice-hauler Canterbury, no longer under propulsion, but
rotating slowly to mai ain internal gravity.

PUSH IN ON: a tin em yo attached to its side -- THE KNIGHT,
the shuttle that will take them to the beleaguered Scopuli.

INT. THE K IGH T' SHUTTLE - SAME TIME

Holden steps through the crew hatch, rubbing his neck,
aching from the ship's high-G braking of the past two days.

Naomi, climbing up from cargo bay, is no worse for the wear.

NAOMI

Can't quite figure out why you're
leading this little excursion.

HOLDEN

Cap' still thinks he's grooming me
for bigger things.

NAOMI

He's wasting his time.

HOLDEN
That's what I keep telling him.

She smiles a little. Holden organizes his gear.

NAOMI
So who do you suppose called in the
Scopuli?

He works in silence for a few moments, then --

HOLDEN
I did. (beat) Probably should have
my head examined...

She's stunned. Holden hefts his pack and turns -

NAOMI
See, that's really irritating No
I'm forced to re-evaluate you

HOLDEN
I won't make it a habit.

She grins as they climb up the ladder to --

INT. KNIGHT'S COCKPIT AND OPS - CONTINUOUS

Holden straps into the crash-couch, letting out a small groan
as the foamy-material conforms to his body. Moments later --

Alex Kamal, his flight suit stretched across his expanding
middle appears, all chery and loud.

ALEX
How's the ol' warhorse today?

HOLDEN
We'll find out, won't we?

Alex grins, climbs into the cramped cockpit and flicks
switches. The Knight comes alive.

ALEX
Nothin' to it. When I flew with
the Martian Navy we'd do twelve
rotations a cycle...

He kisses his lucky talisman -- a pic of a wife and kid.

HOLDEN
Still carryin' that thing around?

ALEX
 Couldn't get up in the mornin'
 without 'em.

HOLDEN
 When'd you see them last?

ALEX
 Five years. No, six. But after
 this run, I'm homeward bound...
 home, home on the range...

Holden rolls his eyes, how many times has he heard that line?
 Shed (the med-tech from earlier) and Amos climb up. Glaring.

SHED
 Thanks for inviting me along.

HOLDEN
 If it's any consolation, I don't
 want to be here either.

AMOS
 But here we all are, on big happy
 unit.

HOLDEN
 Let's just get t is done fast, and
 get the Cant back n course.

ALEX
 That's a big oger, chief.

NAOMI
 (climbing up)
 We'r locked.

They buckl to adjacent crash-couches. Ade appears on a
 small s reen next to Holden.

ADE (ON SCREEN)
 Second Officer Holden, your flight
 plan is set. Be a two-hour trip to
 the tango, flyin' tea-kettle.

HOLDEN
 Thank you, Navigator Tukunbo.

ADE (ON SCREEN)
 Welcome.

A moment passes between them. She's about to say something
 when she's replaced by McDowell, wearing a hard gaze.

MCDOWELL (ON SCREEN)
See *anything* that seems off, you
pack up the toys and come home.

HOLDEN
No heroes in here, Captain.

MCDOWELL
Clear to leave the barn. Good luck.

The screen goes dead. Holden signals Alex, who nods back.

Locking bolts disengage. The grinding of metal and ceramic
plates, like the planks of an old sailing ship.

EXT. THE CANTERBURY - SAME TIME

The Knight leaves the safe haven of its mother, n white
cones of superheated steam (flying tea-kettle")...

...and slips out into the void to f nd he Scopuli.

INT. THE KNIGHT - TWO HOURS LATER

Shed stares out the small porthol at their target drawing
closer (the porthole is th only actual window in the
shuttle; the larger vie s ar screens mimicking windows.)

Everyone sits in tense quiet, locked within themselves.

ALEX
Target n sight.

Holden unb ckl s and climbs up to Alex.

MAIN CREE he Scopuli a few kilometers away, resting
against asteroid CA-2216862. Held by its micro-gravity.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Couldn't have drifted there by
accident. Someone 'parked' it.

HOLDEN
Hold us at two clicks out. (yells
down) Naomi, what've you got?

Naomi operates the Knight's scopes and lasers with a
joystick, giving her a close-up view of the ship.

NAOMI
Hull config matches the registry
information.

(MORE)

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 It's definitely the Scopuli. No IR
 or electro-mag, other than the
 distress beacon.

She toggles views on her scope, Shed and Amos craning to see.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 Looks like the reactor's shut down.
 But no radiation leakage.

HOLDEN

Face furrowed. Eyeing the scope images on Alex's screen.

HOLDEN
 What about that thing that looks
 like a big hole in the side?

NAOMI (O.S.)
 Uh, LADAR says...it's a big hole in
 the side.

A brief pause. Everyone waiting for Holden's next move, and
 right now he wishes he didn't have to make one.

HOLDEN
 Let's wait here for a minute and
 recheck the neighborhood.

Alex listens to a transmission coming over his headphones.

ALEX
 The big array on The Cant's reading
 no one within a million clicks.
 (turns to Holden) Looks like we're
 the only game in town...

He observes Holden's fingers tapping a complicated rhythm on
 the armrest of his chair. Nervous tic.

SHED
 We came, we looked. Who's going to
 know if we set foot on that thing?

NAOMI
We're gonna know.

All eyes are on Holden, waiting...

HOLDEN
 Take us in. And, Alex, if
 something nasty is hiding in that
 ship, we bolt like hell and melt
 anything behind us into slag.

ALEX

Good plan.

They hoof down the ladder to...

THE CARGO BAY

...and start pulling on grungy vac-suits. Sleeker and more functional than present day ones, but same principle. They keep one eye on a screen showing the Scopuli, a growing shadow outside.

HOLDEN

Amos and I'll go in first and poke around --

NAOMI

Amos can stay, I'll go.

AMOS

All due respect, Boss, I have more experience entering host le r oms.

True. Okay, she nods.

AMOS (CONT'D)

Maybe we oughta be arm d

HOLDEN

If it makes y u feel better...

Holden uses his of ice s key to open the weapons locker and Amos grins like a kid at Christmas. He selects a high-caliber automatic de igned for zero-G conditions, and slams in a clip of self-p opelled (recoilless) rounds.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

H on.

They help each other don and secure their helmets.

CLOSE ON - HOLDEN: helmet sealing with a HISS. His breathing loud and hermetic in here. Not for the claustrophobic, this.

They gaze out the small porthole at the Scopuli air-lock, bearing the ship's name, filling their world. The CLANG of metal. LOCKING BOLTS engage.

ALEX (O.S.)

We're docked.

Lights on the air-lock turn green. Holden braces and pulls the lever. A HISS as the pressure equalizes, then --

Holden is staring at the dark hole waiting for them.

HOLDEN
Good times...

Holden and Amos advance into the docking tunnel, gravity boots THUNKING with each step. Toward the black abyss.

INT. THE SCOPULI - CONTINUOUS

SUBJECTIVE ANGLE: Holden and Amos, upside down, flashlights sweeping the dark corridor. They advance, THUNK-THUNK-THUNK.

NEW ANGLE - CORRIDOR WALL

Broken glimpses. A gaping hole in the wall. Twist d metal.

AMOS (OVER RADIO)
Wasn't a torpedo. A breaching charge did that.

HOLDEN
Amos, keep that gun out

INT. GALLEY - THE SCOPULI - MOMENTS LATER

Holden's eyes flick. H s BREATHING the only sound. He's standing on the wall of the galley. Murky here. Everything at crazy angles. Bits of flash-frozen food drift about.

Amos enters, gun in one hand, flashlight in the other.

HOLDEN
ngi eering first. I want to know why that reactor's offline.

SUBJECTI E ANGLE: Holden and Amos climbing along the crew ladder towards the aft, their lights shrinking...

INT. ENGINEERING ROOM - THE SCOPULI - MINUTES LATER

Holden and Amos enter the cathedral-like space, and against the colossal reactor with its tentacles of vent hoses and tubes, they look like tiny pilgrims in some foreign realm.

Amos stops at the core's control panel.

AMOS

Reactor wasn't killed by the blast.
Someone went through the shutdown
procedures. (it hits him) So if
everyone's dead, who turned it off?

HOLDEN

It wasn't pirates. They wouldn't
have left all *that* behind --

He gestures to a wall of expensive tech, supplies and space
gear -- nothing touched.

AMOS

And they left all the pressure
doors open. Why would they do that?

Holden stares ahead, a thought taking hold .

HOLDEN

To make sure no one was hid ng.

NAOMI (ON RADIO)

We're coming in.

HOLDEN

Meet us in OPS.

Holden and Amos start out...

AMOS

Three o'clock

Holden whirls: somethi g revolves at them in the darkness.
Amos drops, swingin his gun and light onto the form --

A white shoe, in orbit around the reactor, laces straight up
like nten

INT. OPS DECK - MINUTES LATER

Holden and the others moving along a corridor, peering into
frozen rooms. Bits of debris and personal items floating.

SHED

Where are all the bodies at?

INT. CONTROL DECK - THE SCOPULI - MINUTES LATER

Holden taps the screen. Dead. Tries the emergency battery.
Dead. Naomi studies the panel.

HOLDEN
Amos, cut the core out. We'll take
it with us.

He moves on to the COMMUNICATIONS CONSOLE. It's completely
dead too, and now Holden's face sets --

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
Wait -- how are they sending a
distress beacon with dead comms?

That stops everyone. Holden bends, probing under the stacks.
And he sees it --

A SMALL BLACK BOX NOT CONNECTED TO ANYTHING!

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
(reeling back)
Amos! Does that look like a bomb
to you?!

The room freezes. Amos kicks into gear and hurries over. He
studies the device, its tiny pulsing red light, reaches --

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
Jesus, don't touch it -!

Amos raises a hand, 'calm

AMOS
If it was a bomb -

He YANKS the device free making Holden jump. Christ!

AMOS (CONT'D)
We'd already be toast. (checking it
out) It s some kind of transmitter.
e's a battery taped to it --

The others crowd around it.

AMOS (CONT'D)
Don't ask me what it's doing here.

Holden takes the device. It dawns --

HOLDEN
That's the beacon that called us.
Someone made a fake one out of that
transmitter.

AMOS
That don't make no kind of sense.

HOLDEN
 Unless...this thing had a second
 signal, triggered to go when
 someone found it.

The first bloom of panic. Naomi pulls a tool and cracks open the transmitter casing, poking around in the guts of it.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
 Pirate bait -- McDowell was right.

NAOMI
 I don't think so. (holds it up)
 This is top-grade stuff. Military
 grade.

AMOS
 (a beat, then)
 Well this has been fun --

HOLDEN
 BACK TO THE SHUTTLE -- NOW!

They mobilize and it's not easy at these angles, with gravity boots. Naomi tangles up on the ladder. Holden gets her free.

And as they scramble clumsily upwards, possessions of the missing Scopuli crew revolve in their wake...

CLOSE ON - A VAC-SUIT HELMET: as it slowly floats past us, and stenciled on its side "SCOPULI - JULIE MAO."

Ahead of them, at last.. THE KNIGHT'S AIR-LOCK. They clamber in, slamming the thick door shut.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
 DISENGAGE, ALEX!

The ship lurches as it separates from the Scopuli. They buckle in quickly, as the Knight shudders from the heavy-G burn. But, relief. They're safely away.

ALEX (ON RADIO)
 Forwarding an A-1 tight beam from
 the Canterbury --

McDowell's URGENT VOICE bursts from the ceiling speakers.

MCDOWELL (ON SPEAKER)
 Holden, a ship just appeared near
your location.

HOLDEN
WHAT? How's that possible? You
cleared us out to a million clicks--

MCDOWELL
Just get out of there! We're
working on a rendezvous trajectory.

INT. KNIGHT'S COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

Holden and the others clamber up. And there is the BLIP of
the mystery ship on Alex's screen.

HOLDEN
Where did that thing come from?

ALEX
Dunno. Suddenly it was there

NAOMI
Stealth tech.

AMOS
Who the hell has st alth ike that?

NAOMI
Mars.

ALEX
Dammit -- we c n't outrun her.

ADE (ON RADIO)
Knight, we have your rendezvous --

HOLDEN
Negative. Unable.

ADE (ON RADIO)
Advise.

Holden punches his chair. This burgeoning clusterfuck is on
his shoulders.

ALEX
Bogey twelve clicks and closing.

ADE (ON RADIO)
Holden, advise --!

HOLDEN
We're gonna take them for a ride.
Alex, go around the asteroid --

Then --

ALEX
TORPEDO LAUNCH!

Fuck!

ON SCOPE: two lethal dots closing fast on their position.

MCDOWELL (ON RADIO)
 Run them, goddammit!

HOLDEN
 Alex, run 'em! Now!

They dive into the crash couches, as Alex cranks the ship around and they head towards the torpedoes!

NAOMI
 If those are Martian torpedoes,
 running 'em won't work.

HOLDEN
 Then let's hope they're not

Holden, tight as wire, watching that scope. The distance between them and the torpedoes closing fast.

ALEX
 Six clicks...five. .four...

Shed closes his eyes. Mos settles back, takes a long exhale. He always figured he'd die young in space.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 here ...

Holden bit g down...and here it comes --

A FLASH outside the porthole...as the torpedoes bend around the Knight and continue out into space.

Confusion. Brief relief, then the realization --

ALEX (CONT'D)
 Jesus. They weren't meant for us.

What?! Holden unbuckles, racing to the scope. The torpedoes continuing towards the Canterbury -- their real target.

HOLDEN
 CANTERBURY! BURN LIKE HELL, YOU'VE
 GOT INCOMING --

The transmission from the Canterbury is a garble, as frantic voices shout, trying to coordinate...

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

ADE! CAPTAIN! Eject the ice as a shield --

MCDOWELL

(cool, steady)

We're on it, Holden. Stay off this channel.

The torpedoes go off the edge of the scope. Tense seconds. Holden stares at the main view-screen, then crosses to the porthole -- peering in the direction of the Cant somewhere out in the darkness. He clicks on a channel.

HOLDEN

Ade? ADE...

He knows she's there, he can hear her sharp breathing.

ADE

Jim...

HOLDEN

Ade, did you eject the ice?
Listen, if you take hit, stay calm -- they just want the cargo. We'll SOS, start negotiations for prisoner release okay? Just --

Her breathing faster now she's scared.

ADE (ON RADIO)

Jim, there's something you should know...

THROUGH PORTHOLE: two pops like distant flashbulbs...giving birth to a SEARING BALL OF LIGHT...

The Knight's SCREENS FLARE OUT, the radio suddenly fills with SCREAMING STATIC...as all the ship's SENSORS OVERLOAD --

AMOS

Oh, shit -- what the hell was that?

NAOMI

LADAR'S all over the place --

ALEX

Canterbury -- respond, please --

Holden is frozen, staring at the comms speaker, hanging on Ade's last sentence --

SLED
Alex, what's her status --?

ALEX
CANTERBURY, PLEASE RESPOND --

Holden looks out the porthole, the glow bathing his face:

POV: The WHITE HOT BALL blooms into an immense orb --
stunning, beautiful, silent --

AMOS (O.S.)
ALEX! STATUS!?

ALEX (O.S.)
(voice breaking)
I'm looking at her, but I don't
know what I'm seein'...

HOLDEN
(low, to himself)
She's gone...

POV: the Canterbury, and fifty souls aboard, being scattered
to the stars. A nebula cloud the size of Mt. Olympus.

He turns to face the others now.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
She's gone. They nuked her...

Everyone suddenly statues. The shock of it just starting to
descend. A 'fateful' moment, suspended in time, then --

ALEX
Boss! BOSS!!

Holden blankly looks to Alex, who's staring at a scope.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Debris field's headin' our way!
Boss! ARE YOU HEARIN' ME?!

As bad as it is, it's not over yet.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DISTINGUISHED HYACINTH LOUNGE - **CERES STATION**

A cop bar a few levels above the ports. The decor is pure Belt: old-style ships' folding tables, chairs set into the walls, as if the false gravity might shut off at any moment.

A lot of STAR HELIX uniforms. Other security forces, rotating through Ceres, bear corporate insignias like "PROTOGEN", "AL ABBIQ", "PINKWATER"...

ANGLE ON - DETECTIVE MILLER

Arriving at his usual spot. He winks to JAVIER THE 3RD, his faithful barman, who delivers a drink on cue. He catches sight of --

Havelock, across the room, drowning his day. They meet eyes, Havelock picks up his bottle and skulks to another booth. And not far from Havelock's new table --

POV: there's Candace (the cop from earlier), sitting with another Star Helix colleague, a co boy type with a Mustache. They're laughing together -- touching hands.

MINUTES LATER

Miller's engrossed reading Julie Mao's electronic files on his comms screen.

CLOSE ON - SCREEN: as he flicks past communiques, to arrive at a picture of Julie taken some years back. She is grinning in a tailored vacuum-suit and posing with a sleek racing ship, "The Razorback." The headline: "JULIETTE MAO - WINNER PARISH/DORN 500K. A ace -- for rich people.

Her helmet off reveals rivers of dark hair spilling around her shoulders, smiling like the Universe just gave her a kiss...

Something about the photo grips Miller. He zooms in on it, until Julie's face fills the screen.

There is a prominent scar on her chin...a little flaw, and somehow it is everything to Miller. Like finding a crack in reality. A window into something behind Julie Mao's mask.

And her eyes, up close, are not actually smiling. They're defiant. Hunter's eyes.

Miller sits mesmerized, staring at his Mona Lisa...

NEW ANGLE - HALF HOUR LATER

Miller, a few drinks in, ambles up to Candace's table.

MUSTACHE
 (glaring up at him)
 She doesn't want to talk to you.

Miller spreads his hands, like Jesus dispensing peace.

MILLER
 Then she can tell me that.

Candace meets her friend's eyes. 'It's okay'. Mustache skulks for the loo, Miller sits without acknowledging him.

MILLER (CONT'D)
 Sorry. About today.

CANDACE
 Par for the course.

MILLER
 Always promised to protect you.

CANDACE
 That was when we were married. I
 hereby free you from th burd n...

He pushes a stray drift of air back over her ear. She doesn't stop him, but her eyes wa , 'don't do that again'.

Miller reaches, clicks his c mms-unit and holds it up.

MILLER
 Need a woman intuition. Tell me:
 what's wrong with this picture?

Julie Mao on the sc een. Candace cocks her eye --

CANDACE
 W e do I begin? She's a bit
 'green' -- even for you, Miller.

MILLER
 -- always the quick wit --

CANDACE
 Who is she?

MILLER
 Some missing girl case I'm not
 permitted to discuss. Bullshit side-
 show, to keep me out of trouble.

CANDACE
 She looks familiar.

MILLER

Juliette Andromeda Mao, richest bachelorette in the system. (leans closer) Let me ask you...why does a girl like her not get that scar fixed?

CANDACE

(gazes a moment, then)
Badge of honor. A way to tell her folks to go 'fuck themselves.'

MILLER

Yep. Daddy tried hard to bribe her to come home, threatened to cut her off. She told him to shove it --

Candace raises her glass, 'atta girl'. Takes a second look.

CANDACE

But it's more than that. She's proud of that scar...and how she got it. She believes in something. It reminds her to keep fighting...

She hands Miller back his comm. He's impressed.

MILLER

Last message in her files...she was shipping out with some rinky-dink transport belonging to the O.P.A. The 'Scopuli

CANDACE

Ah, she's O.P.A. And I thought you were just sweet on her...

Their eyes meet. This woman knows him all too well.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

And I bet, you see connections. Between this lovely young thing, the O.P.A., and nefarious goings-on around Ceres. How far off am I?

He smiles, and takes Mustache's drink. Clinks Candace's glass and downs it.

MILLER

Admit it. You miss these chats.

CANDACE

Good night, Miller. (as he rises)
Eat something, for God's sake --
you look like shit.

He tips his hat to her, turns and walks out.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL TUNNEL/SUBWAY 'TUBE' STATION - CERES

Night indistinguishable from day here. Miller, spent, steps from a windowless subway tube-car, passing --

A NEWSFEED SCREEN by a kiosk, scrolling: EARTH AND MARS IN TENSE STANDOFF ON GANYMEDE TALKS, and on the screen, behind all the military blowhards, we glimpse...Chri jen Avasarala.

Late night crews blast grunge from the AIR RECYCLER VENTS embedded in the vaulted tunnel ceilings.

NEW ANGLE - MINUTES LATER

Miller cuts into his working-class h using complex, passing a woman hanging laundry on a tiny terrace He stops momentarily to watch a wonder fille Little Belter Girl, tall and thin-boned and pink-flushed tossing beans up to --

A tiny sparrow, hovering u nat rally, with barely a wing-flutter, held aloft by the a teroid's artificial gravity.

MILLER

(to her d)
How old?

FATHER

wo nd a half.

MILLER

Good age.

FATHER

(smiles)
Kids?

MILLER

No...missed that boat.

They drift apart as Miller heads inside, pauses to look back out at the curving street -- as if dreading the terrible silence that awaits him inside. And --

Melding out of the pedestrian traffic: the Muscular Man who tailed him from Julie's apartment.

HOLD ON: that bird, hovering, snatching a bean from the air.

SMASH CUT TO:

BAM! THE 'KNIGHT' IS POUNDED BY THE FIRST PIECE OF DEBRIS--

REVEAL: INT. **KNIGHT SHUTTLE** - SPACE - SAME TIME

Holden and the crew are tight, battened down in their crash-couches. Amos's face is wet with tears -- mirroring how they're all feeling -- but no time for grief because --

-- here it comes...

ALEX

Gonna catch the pinky-toe of that debris field in...T-minus 20 --

HOLDEN

How nasty?

ALEX

Sure gonna find out.

And now here it is, a HAILSTORM OF DEBRIS from the 'Cant', travelling at 50K miles an hour, hammering the Knight.

The sound is horrendous Like CHAINS DRAGGED ACROSS METAL.

A LOUD CRASH from the cargo bay as something perforates the hull. ALARMS SHRIEK. Screens light up.

The ship is depressurizing through the rift below. The rushing air deafening CALLIOPE HOWL.

The craft SHUDDERING, like it might come apart any second. Alex struggling like hell to keep control --

Holden unbuckles and is sucked towards the ladder. He manages to grab the submarine hatch there and flick the latch.

The hatch slams shut and he spins it, sealing the cargo bay off from the control deck. Safe, for a moment. CREAAAAAK...

Naomi's eyes snap to the wall. Rivets are straining... POPPING. One rivet whizzes a hair past Holden's nose, and he rolls to avoid the path of more.

Naomi unbuckles, Amos and Shed right behind her.

AMOS

PATCH PANEL -- THAT ONE!

NAOMI

Too soft -- deck plate -- go!

Holden and the others dive and start unscrewing a deck plate.

More rivets POP LIKE BULLETS -- everyone ducking like it's machine-gun fire -- equipment sparking and shredding as it's pelted. There's not going to be enough time...

Naomi rips out the emergency kit, pulls a patch gun and squirts sealing foam into the hull cracks. Ain't gonna hold!

Lights fritz. Instruments wink out. Oxygen waning.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

MOVE IT!

Fire drips from the overhead duct -- spreading fast. Alex busts out the extinguisher, clambering everywhere to kill the flames. They're all hacking on toxic smoke --

The deck plate is loose. It takes all of them to heft it and slam it in place as Naomi rivet-guns it down. But now --

The ship lurches and rattles horribly -- METAL SCREAMS, as an engine below explodes and disintegrates. THIS IS IT --!

But, no -- the ship settles -- holds together. Finally --

They all collapse. Oxygen starved. Coughing. Bleeding.

The dim glow of emergency lights. KLAXONS still howling. A dead ship.

CUT TO:

THE KNIGHT LATER

Post-traumatic silence, no more alarms. Holden is pressed against the bulkhead, locked within himself. Staring at --

That XO BADGE Captain McDowell foisted on him earlier.

He avoids Naomi's eyes. She and Amos have the whole control deck gutted, exposing miles of wires and hoses and tech.

Alex tries in vain to re-boot the ship's dead systems.

AMOS

Paj said he was gonna kick my ass at ping-pong, with that fancy new arm. (beat) He would've, too...

Shed laughs sadly, Naomi wipes tears. At least someone's broken the agonizing quiet. They continue working --

SLED

I don't get it. Why would pirates
blow up a civilian Earth ship --
and then not steal the cargo?

Amos picks up the gutted transmitter, stares at it.

AMOS

When was the last time you saw two-
bit pirates nuking an ice hauler?
Or the O.P.A.? Best they got is
rocks and slingshots --

ALEX

Okay, then why are we breathing?
Whoever hit us -- why didn't they
finish us off?

Nobody's got that answer.

NAOMI

We were baited. The Scop li was a
trap --

SLED

But WHY? Someone always gets paid,
right? Who gets paid here?

HOLDEN

Shut up.

Holden's finally broken his silence. Looks to Naomi.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

How much oxygen?

NAOMI

Four hours.

HOLDEN

Do we have any control of this
ship? Eyes, comms?

AMOS

We're a tumbleweed.

The grim implications sink in; all eyes settle on Holden.

NAOMI

What do we do...Captain?

That word -- 'Captain' -- settles like an icy shower on Holden. His eyes raking over the four other survivors, waiting on his word...

And we PULL BACK...through the porthole, and out into --

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The Knight, dark and beaten to shit, drifting out in the cold infinity like a coffin...

...vanishing into the expanse.

CUT TO:

INT. MILLER'S RESIDENTIAL 'HOLE' - **CERES STATION**

Miller jars awake on his small bed, still dressed, sending an empty glass shattering on the floor. An URGENT MESSAGE IS CHIRPING. He taps his comms to receive it and --

CENTRAL SCREEN: Julie Mao's file is displayed, Miller's newfound muse smiling with that scar and those defiant eyes.

Her face is replaced by Captain Shaddid, in uniform, austere, hair pulled back -- battle mode

CAPTAIN HADDID (ON SCREEN)
Ladies and gentlemen, drop whatever
you're doing and report to your
stations for emergency orders.

Miller, avoiding the broken glass, finds his shoes.

CAPTAIN SHADDID (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Ice freighter, The Canterbury,
vanished from the grid twelve hours
ago, and tonight failed to make its
delivery to Ceres; citizens are
panicking, fueled by irresponsible
rumors that the ship was destroyed
en route, to quell Belter unrest.
Air and water rationing have
already begun. You can expect the
violence to follow shortly.

Miller throws on his jacket and hat with one hand, dialing his comms with the other. He gets Candace's VOICEMAIL --

MILLER
Hey...things are lookin' ugly out
there, so...be careful, okay?

INT. RESIDENTIAL TUNNEL - CERES - SECONDS LATER

Miller hurries along. The streets are like the L.A. riots just before the flash point. A thrum of nerves and violent energy. People coagulating. Shouting. "No water, no peace!"

In the distance, an explosion. Smoke. KLAXONS BLARE...

Earther and Martian flight crews evacuate bars and casinos, scurrying back to their ships.

Glass explodes in front of Miller as a woman in a Martian Commercial flight suit is thrown through a bar window. She crashes to the pavement, pursued by a mob of Belters --

Miller yanks her to her feet and she runs like hell. He pulls his pistol, makes it visible. A thrown wrench hits his face, drawing blood. He fires warning shots into the air --

The tinderbox has been lit. And off the flames and smoke --

CUT TO BLACK:

WE HEAR PANICKED BREATHING, THEN --

SLAM INTO:

JULIE MAO-KWIKOWSKI: breathing hard, just where we left her at the beginning of our story. Very much shaken, but alive.

A SPACE-SUIT (the shadow that drifted up behind her) holds the body of a man whose black-charred face stiff with death. One of his eyes floating on a stalk.

Julie pushes the suit and it pinwheels slowly away. The bizarre black dust that beguiled her earlier, has vanished. Julie looks down the deserted corridor, beckoning her...

INT. UTILITY DECK CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER

Julie skulks around a corner, cocking a foot-long pipe ideal for skull-cracking.

This is a sleek, high-tech craft from the looks of it. A sharp contrast to the vessels we've seen thus far.

But the silence is deafening. Julie turns into --

INT. COMMUNICATIONS DECK - CONTINUOUS

Not a soul. Or a sound.

THE COMMS CONSOLE

All instruments at rest. All warning lights green. She spins a dial and images of the ship cycle on the CENTRAL SCREEN:

Corridors, cargo bays, crew quarters, labs -- all devoid of a human presence.

She toggles through views of the ship's exterior. Nothing unusual. Finds its MAST-HEAD name on the hull: 'THE ANUBIS'.

JULIE

(a whisper)

Anubis. Who the hell are you?

Julie's eyes are now drawn to a message on a small INTERCOM SCREEN: "LOCKED IN ENG. BAY. S.O S." Repeating endlessly.

INT. ENGINEERING BAY HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Julie finishes blow-torching the lock with an emergency kit, then cranking the sub hatch open by hand. Steps in, slowly --

ENGINEERING BAY - CONTINUOUS

It's dark in here, darker than it should be as the red-filtered emergency lights are mere orbs, coated by the same black-luminescent substance she saw in the opener.

Careful steps towards the giant fusion reactor, at the center of the cathedral-vaulted space.

JULIE

Wan?...Mike?...Captain Darren?

She treads deeper, a faint limbic premonition of danger burgeoning. Her eyes flick...

That blackness is also on the walls, trailing all the way to the reactor, where it's thickly caked -- like hoarfrost.

She looks closer...it isn't frost, it's something warm...veined. Interconnected! It seems to contract when she touches it.

She rears back when there's a WET SOUND from the darkness.

Julie whirls: a glimpse of movement in the inky shadows --

Frozen, she white-knuckles that pipe...holding her breath...

A gurgle. A strangled cry? One more taut step back and...

An OUTCROPPING ripples from within the black mass, shifting towards her. Oh, fuck -- a human face?

JULIE (CONT'D)

Wan?!

Yes, half-masticated by the massive carbon-black substrate.

His mouth gapes a plea for help, but instead of words, he vomits a mass of BLACK STRING that wriggles and separates, and seems to reach out to Julie with its 'fingers'.

Julie staggers back. Her mouth gapes in a SC EAM t at never materializes, and we --

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END