THE EXPANSE

Written by

Mark Fergus & Hawk Ostby

Based on the novel "Leviathan Wakes" by James S.A. Corey
"THE EXPANSE"

TIGHT ON:

JULIE MAO-KWIUKOWSKI (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 rumpled 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 -- clutches 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)

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
(sniffing)
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, sniffling)
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), bashed 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**


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’ nd th ir magic Jell-O. Rather have a go d Belter-built fake, any day ( h ops) No offense Holden

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

SHED
Bee cleaned out for two weeks. onn 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 breaks off a few crumbs.

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

Holden taps on the console screen checking personal messages. Isolates one. Fe beeps, 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, the 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: ar 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's 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 lonely beer 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 belt in jiujitsu, bowing solemnly.

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

Miller oasts 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 salv ge’, or whatever we’re calling it. Put a shuttle team togethe -- we can’t risk docking the Canterbury.

Off Holden’s uh m ?’ reaction.

MCDOWELL (CONT’D)
No 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 Tukunbo --
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 to 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 arts 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 syrpy 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 r cogn ze as the attractive Anglo-Indian addressing the U.N. Cou cil n 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 orang e s ri is the only splash of color in a room of suits and milit ry canvas.

TITLE: UNITED NATIONS. NEW YORK CITY. EARTH.

It’s tense. The heads of the respective branches of the U.N. (Earth’s central gove ing 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 ERRINWRIGHT
Perhaps.

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

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. U.N. BACK OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Avasarala slams the door and kicks it, furious. She has frightening energy 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
Sieher? 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 pil into a limo.

INT. LIMO - MOMENTS LATER

They gaze intently at the Martian contingent, boarding their respectful 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?

AVASARALA
Kidnapping you

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

AVASARALA (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: Avasarala and Basia in a dim booth, nursing pints of porter.

BASI
Come here of n?

AVASARALA
Onl when I feel myself turning pessimist.

Basia’s eye drift 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 came 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 recapture a reality, 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 the 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 maintain internal gravity.

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

INT. THE KNIGHT’ 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 rash-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 chummy 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 this done fast, and
get the Cant back on course.

ALEX
That’s a big oger, chief.

NAOMI
(climbing up)
We’re locked.

They buckle to adjacent crash-couches. Ade appears on a
small screen 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, in white cones of superheated steam (flying tea-kettle)... ...and slips out into the void to find the Scopuli.

INT. THE KNIGHT - TWO HOURS LATER

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

Everyone sits in tense quiet, locked within themselves.

ALEX
Target in sight.

Holden unbuckles and climbs up to Alex.

MAIN CREE the 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)
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.

AL X
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 ha e more experience entering host le r oms.

True. Okay, she nods.

AMOS (ONT 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. He’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
Cogi eering first. I want to know why that reactor’s offline.

SUBJECTIVE 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 hiding.

NAOMI (ON RADIO)
We’re coming in.

HOLDEN
Meet us in OPS.

Holden and Amos start out...

AMOS
Three o’clock

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

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

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. It’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 a these angles, with gravity
boots. Naomi tangles up on the ladder. Holden gets her free.

And as they scramble clumsily up the ladder, 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 it 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)
DISSOLVE, 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 stealth tech that?

NAOMI
Mars.

ALEX
Dammit -- we can’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 he 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)
hre ...

Holde 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 a 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 --

**SHED**
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 sat in statues. The shock of it just starting to descend. A ‘fatline’ 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 a few years back. She is grinning in a tailored vacu 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, 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 cmms-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
We 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 cumms. 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 t 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, batten ed down in their crash-coaches. 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 a 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. CREEAAAAAK...

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!


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 horriby -- METAL SCREAMS, as an engine below explodes and disintegrates. THIS IS IT --!

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


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 --

**SHED**
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. Th Scop li was a trap --

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

**HO DEN**
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 mod

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-KWKOWSKI: 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. His 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 blust 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 athedral-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 SCREAM that never materializes, and we --

**CUT TO BLACK:**

**THE END**