

"PILGRIM"

by
Ken Gulley

Fade In:

EXT. SURFACE OF MARS - DAY

Tan pinkish sky hangs blankly over a sprawl of salmon colored, sticky ground cover. Large rugged boulders here and there. Football sized rocks strewn about; intermixed with small patches of black sand.

A lonely tourist's ROVER, makes its way across an open plane. The rover is a large insect-like vehicle with large wheels attached to the ends of its six legs. The wheels react violently against the rugged surface as they travel at 35 kph. It is made up of three main components: The HEAD (cockpit), BODY (living habitat), and TAIL (engines and storage compartments). The two seats of the COCKPIT are empty. The vehicle is on autopilot.

SUPER: "MARS - GREAT ADVENTURE TOURS - 2083"

INT. ROVER - DAY

Inside the habitat of the rover, four tourists, two men, two women; in their mid-twenties, ride in shirt-sleeve comfort. Large windows provide clear views of their surroundings. The constant rocking motion and uninteresting view outside feed tensions inside.

Short Female Tourist is the shorter of two women.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST

God, how did I ever let you talk me into this?

Lanky male tourist is her rich boyfriend.

LANKY MALE TOURIST

You know you wanted this trip.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST

No I didn't. I wanted it and then I told you I didn't want it - you never hear the part you don't want.

Handsome Male Tourist is the other male passenger.

HANDSOME MALE TOURIST

I love being right.

Tall Female Tourist is the taller attractive female companion.

TALL FEMALE TOURIST

Right about what would that be exactly?

HANDSOME MALE TOURIST

That we're wasting our time out here
ON nothing.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST

At least we know who to blame. We're
lucky we don't get killed.

LANKY MALE TOURIST

Enough! Drop it! We're the third
group of people ever to get a chance
to come out here - and that doesn't
mean anything to you.

Silence is replaced with a question.

HANDSOME MALE TOURIST

Who remembers the third group of
people to walk on the moon?

Silence again.

Inside the habitat of the rover is a sturdy, rectangular, brushed metal surface consisting of a square door with a small square window in its center. To the right of this square door is a panel containing a hexadecimal keypad with two rectangular buttons, labeled: XMIT and OPEN. Resembling a standard-sized micro-wave oven; this device is actually a MATTER TRANSMITTER - commonly referred to as an M-WAVE.

A sound CHIMES announcing the arrival of an item.

INSERT:

At the square metal door of the M-wave the small window glows blue. There is second bright flash of blue, a second CHIME.

RETURN:

TALL FEMALE TOURIST

Mail call! *This* is what I've been
waiting for.

Handsome Male Tourist presses a button under the hexadecimal keypad and the square door yawns open. She reaches inside and pulls out a black plastic tri-fold DOCUMENT and GOLD PEN.

TALL FEMALE TOURIST (CONT'D)

Gimme that.

Tall Female Tourist takes the folder...opens it in her lap.

INSERT - TRI-FOLD IN HER LAP

Illuminated text is visible against the black plastic on the left and middle panels. It is a CONTRACT. The right panel has two flowery signatures etched into plastic with room for two more. Along the bottom of the right panel are four squares for thumb prints; two of the four squares glow green.

RETURN:

TALL FEMALE TOURIST (CONT'D)

This, is *the* deal of the century.

Eagerly she takes the PEN and scrawls her signature on the plastic under the other two signatures.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST

Another deal?

TALL FEMALE TOURIST

There's always room for another deal.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST

To what end?

Tall Female Tourist presses her thumb in the third square. Her fingerprint is scanned; that square turns green. The signature flashes once; remaining etched like the others.

She closes the FOLDER and tosses it and the pen back into the M-wave.

TALL FEMALE TOURIST

Well, Gert Hustman, Nakito Maia, and I, are buying out none other than the Asteroid Mining Corporation.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST

AMC! My god! You don't lack balls; that's for damn sure.

Tall Female Tourist pulls a slim plastic card from her crew-suit sleeve pocket and inserts it in a slot on the M-wave.

TALL FEMALE TOURIST

So I've been told. And why not?

The ROVER lurches forward as it comes over the top of a ridge. Involuntarily, they grasp their armrests.

TALL FEMALE TOURIST (CONT'D)

You would.

EXT. SURFACE OF MARS - DAY

The ROVER crests an abrupt ridge and starts down a long sloping expanse. MARS BASE ONE is now within sight.

LANKY MALE TOURIST (V.O.)
I wouldn't. I know what's enough.

Over the horizon in the distance great clouds of DUST are arching into the pale sky, suggesting a dust Storm.

Lanky male tourist, bored, gazes out a window staring at nothing in particular. High in the thin Martian atmosphere however, a thin SILVERY RIBBON catches his eye.

LANKY MALE TOURIST (CONT'D)
Hey, look at that. What is that?

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST
What?

Tall Female Tourist is focused on the M-wave. She types a nine-digit hexadecimal code into the M-wave's keypad with her gloved hand; a barely audible humming noise indicates the M-wave is energized and warming up. She presses the button labeled: XMIT. The buzzing noise increases. The small square window in the middle of the square door flashes blue.

INSERT: M-WAVE INTERIOR'S CUBICAL SPACE - DAY

The GOLD PEN and BLACK FOLDER lay on the bottom of the cubical chamber. A blue light quickly saturates this space. FLASH, CHIME, pen and document disappear.

RETURN:

TALL FEMALE TOURIST
That's it. Hustman gets it, I know he's going to sign it, and another deal makes history.

HANDSOME MALE TOURIST
Must be a meteorite or something.

TALL FEMALE TOURIST
What are you looking at?

Tall Female Tourist joins the others. They all gaze out the same window at the object entering the Martian atmosphere.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST
Look at that. Is it supposed to be so slow?

LANKY MALE TOURIST

See what I'm saying? That right there is worth the price of admission. Who do you know witnesses a meteorite from the surface of Mars?

TALL FEMALE TOURIST

You're easily impressed.

The silvery ribbon continues down and strikes the surface in the distance beyond the horizon-line. The dust from a previous strike in that area is still slowly drifting away.

Immediately, a great cloud of Mars dirt expands up and into the thin atmosphere. Definitely closer than the other one. They can see the shock wave racing toward them. The sound of the impact reaches them, rattling the rover's windows.

SHORT FEMALE TOURIST

Wow.

LANKY MALE TOURIST

Hey! Hang on!

A huge wave of dust and grit race toward them. It hits. The entire rover, all six wheels, gets tossed a few feet into the air. The low gravity of Mars pulls it back down. The women and one of the men scream for dear life.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOW MARS ORBIT - ROCK DROPPER -- DAY

A black, mostly cylindrical object, slapped together with a variety of trusses and external chemical rocketry, hangs above Mars. Out of one end of the ROCK DROPPER emerges a large chunk of solid iron as big as a bus. Girdling the misshapen mass are steel straps with maneuvering jets attached to them. A spit of fire from one of the jets stops its soft rolling; stabilizing the ugly thing.

Suddenly, a girdling steel belt of jets fire "up" - sending the mass of iron "down." Quickly picking up speed, its skin builds up heat. Now, hot enough to burn off its straps and jets, it continues heating up; becoming a glowing ball of light which soon grows a long tail.

INT. ROCK DROPPER - DAY

The rock dropper is operated by two people: ROCK DROPPER OPERATOR and ROCK DROPPER HELPER. ROCK DROPPER OPERATOR is wearing a space suit with his helmet off. He is strapped into a makeshift COCKPIT. The grimy, aged, crazed man, tweaks instrumentation in front of him.

ROCK DROPPER OPERATOR
How many is that?

INT. ROCK DROPPER STORAGE BAY

The main storage bay is a huge cylindrical balloon. A rubber container crowded with huge chunks of solid asteroid.

House-sized boulders held in place with carbon-fiber netting and straps. ROCK DROPPER HELPER ia a space-suited figure navigates this chamber like a spider in a web.

ROCK DROPPER HELPER
(Into helmet mic)
Five? You can't remember five?

ROCK DROPPER OPERATOR
Mind your tongue! Get it, dammit!
They've gotta know what's up by now.
They're gonna take us out any second.

Rock Dropper Helper attaches a final steel clamp to a strap girdling a beautiful chunk of solid nickel as big as an oak tree. A pneumatic plunger pushes the huge chunk away from the other nested chunks of raw metals. It drifts out into the hard vacuum.

ROCK DROPPER HELPER
There you go. All yours.

INT. ROCK DROPPER COCKPIT -- DAY

Rock Dropper Operator taps a large joystick to the left, then to the right.

EXT. LOW MARS ORBIT - ROCK DROPPER - DAY

The huge chunk of nickel moves away from the opening of the storage tank.

Strap-jets fire in spurts; rotating this way, stopping. Fire again to rotate on another axis, getting the girdle strap with its jets into position.

INT. ROCK DROPPER COCKPIT

Bent over the joy stick, he decides the gloves on his hands are in the way; he disconnects them and continues.

ROCK DROPPER OPERATOR
Come on, settle up. Six. Number
six. Like the hand of God I smite
thee. Go home. Go home. Go home.
Or - die.

He squeezes the trigger on the joy stick.

INSERT: Greasy MONITOR reveals another rock heading down.

EXT. LOW MARS ORBIT - DAY

A SECURITY SATELLITE rises above the horizon and targets the Rock Dropper. Fires. A bright ball of white light flashes one time on the target.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARS BASE ONE - DAY

MARS BASE ONE, on the surface, is a cluster of domes covered with Martian dirt. Lookouts. Four hangars, four landing zones. Antennae. Most of Mars Base One is underground.

INT. MARS BASE ONE - SECURITY

The SECURITY DIVISION is a small compartment populated with a variety of surveillance monitors. Warning ALARMS alert the inhabitants to take cover in lower levels and stay clear of the surface. It is apparent this is no natural phenomenon. People are rushing around haphazardly, never thinking the base could be attacked from orbit by dropping stuff on it.

FEATHER HALL is a medical technician who is helping evacuate people to the sub-surface habitats. She's cool, professional, young, bright-eyed; a black woman in her mid-thirties. She comes through the door in a big hurry.

FEATHER

What's happening? What's going on?

MARS ONE SECURITY CHIEF

(Looking away from
the monitors)

There's a vessel in orbit dropping asteroids or something on us. It's gotta be the "Chain." I don't know anyone else with the nerve to pull off a stunt like this?

FEATHER

From orbit?

MARS ONE SECURITY CHIEF

Some sort of craft. Folded our radar. Just slipped right in. Can't say how long its been there. He may be on a single pass and never was in orbit to begin with. Kamikaze. Some "Hail Mary" or something.

(MORE)

MARS ONE SECURITY CHIEF (CONT'D)

Just walking asteroids right onto us? And here comes another.

(steals a look in her direction)

What the hell are you doing? Get the hell outta here.

Feather doesn't have to be told twice. She bolts out the door.

INT. MARS BASE ONE - ADMIN - DAY

She blows through the doors looking for stragglers when a shock wave tosses everything, including her, off her feet.

CRASHING earthquake RUMBLING noise, accompanied by the CREAKING of the habitat being stressed and buckled. She recovers getting back to her feet. ADMIN is empty. A light is flashing at one of the COMM PANELS. Focusing, she rushes up to the instrumentation.

LANKY MALE TOURIST (V.O.)

Mars One. Mars One. Do You copy?
We need immediate assistance. Mars
One come in. Do you copy...?

Feather punches an icon on the comm panel.

FEATHER

(into mic)
Identify yourself.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARS TERRAIN - ROVER -- DAY

The rover is on its side unable to go anywhere. The cockpit section is ripped off from the body laying in a heap a short distance from the habitat section.

INT. ROVER - DAY

Lanky male tourist is in shock; the only one able to talk.

LANKY MALE TOURIST

We need help. I think one of us is dead. He was in the cockpit and it ripped off. Emergency seals activated, rolled down a hill.

FEATHER (V.O.)

We're taking cover. Suggest you do same. No one can help you at this time. You're on your own.

LANKY MALE TOURIST

That's unacceptable. You gotta get us out of here. You're really good spending our money, but when we...

CUT TO:

INT. MARS BASE ONE - ADMIN

Feather checks some of the readouts.

FEATHER (O.S.)

You're a "Great Adventures" tourist Rover?! Listen!

(separating words)

You - are on - your own!

LANKY MALE TOURIST (V.O.)

(shouting)

I'll have your job!

FEATHER

Not if I'm dead you won't. Hear this! - Next time go to Yosemite. Mars base one - admin - out!

She fingers a panel and doesn't look back as she exits. Clutching herself, air freezing now, toxic. On her way out she stops and pulls a COMM-WAND out of her tunic, thumbs it, and yells into it.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

(into comm-wand)

Steve! This is Feather! Mars One is under attack! Someone's dropping rocks, asteroids, from orbit, onto the base! Must be the Chain. Haven't heard from them for a while. We're taking cover below.

She waves the comm card around the compartment and view outside, recording video so he can see what's going on.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

Do you know what's going on? I figure this is what you do now. Chase goons? Try a sub-level access M-wave address for Mars Base One and get back to me. Send it "my eyes only." I don't expect you to come to the rescue. Just get back to me.

She bolts over to the closest M-wave, tosses in the comm-wand. Keys in a number and punches XMIT. She is gone before the transmit is complete.

INT. MARS BASE ONE - SECURITY DIVISION COMM CENTER

MARS ONE SECURITY CHIEF fingers panels in front of him. A second shot fires from the orbiting security satellite.

MARS ONE SECURITY CHIEF

(into mic)

All personnel - take shelter below
until attack is neutralized. Standby
for updates. Security One - out.

EXT. LOW MARS ORBIT - ROCK DROPPER

There is already a large hole in the midsection of the ROCK DROPPER. A second hole appears and spreads, the Rock Dropper at this point dissolves into a million separate particles.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARS TERRAIN - ROVE

All four TOURISTS lay motionless amidst the tossed remains of their ROVER.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ASTEROID BELT

Infinite blackness is specked with billions of pinpoints of indifferent unblinking stars; forever distant. A very lonely minor asteroid bears witness to a passing spacecraft.

SUPER: "ASTEROID BELT"

The spacecraft: USS (United Space systems) BELT PATROL INTERCEPTOR is a small, highly maneuverable armed vehicle. Mostly globular, very articulated; the exterior is a collection of rotating BANDS that very quickly reorient as needed. One band has maneuvering engines mounted on it. Another band has intimidating weapons installed on it. The outermost and largest band has massive thrusters and fuel tanks mounted on it.

Currently, it is riding a great plume of light, plunging them in one direction.

Emblazoned on the stationary inner sphere habitat, the words: BELT PATROL remind everyone within sight and sensor, that this machine is the law, and it can catch you. Nothing is as maneuverable or carries the most bang for its size than an INTERCEPTOR.

It is performing a course change. The main thrusters shutdown, the thruster ring rotates, aiming forward. Thrusters fire to slow down. They rotate to a new vector.

Fires, and takes off in that direction.

INT. INTERCEPTOR - ASTEROID BELT

Inside the CREW HABITAT of an interceptor, three crew members are laid out in couches forming a three-petaled flower. Under tremendous Gs, this is the only way they can stay alive and do what they need to do: Get to places in a big hurry.

CAPTAIN STEVE ARCHER is the commander of a three man crew, including himself. NAV is their (navigator). STO is (storage), which includes weapons and ammo.

STEVE
 (He can only speak
 commands in high-G)
 Thrusters off.

Immediately the G-forces let up and allows them to move around the cabin. To interact with the ship systems, the *heads* of their couches pull up so the three men are facing away from each other. Their couches transform into seats. In this sitting position each man has a WRAP AROUND holographic display that allows them to work in a more normal manner.

NAV
 (into radio)
 Vessel designate Kansas City come
 in. Do you copy?

No response.

NAV (CONT'D)
 Vessel designate Kansas City come
 in. This is AMC Patrol Six. You
 are in violation of flight plan
 protocol. Do you copy?

Silence.

STEVE
 Pinheads don't give a damn. I'm
 gonna love shutting these ass-holes
 down. Hopefully they're too stupid
 to try anything. They must know
 they can't hide out here.

STO
 They're having a party or something.
 I'm resolving a second craft on
 approach from the far side.

STEVE
 What is it?

STO

One sec...yep, it's a yacht. No
less than *Sidereal* herself.

A crackling SIGNAL draws Steve's attention to the comm.

STEVE

(to comm)

Patrol Six copy.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Patrol Six this is Regional Director -
Mason Land. Do you copy?

EXT. ASTEROID BELT - MINING PLACER

Extending in all directions, bulbous, sausage-like ducts, transport raw ore to various smelters and/or long term storage. Globular tents, trusses, airlocks, observation decks all wrapped haphazardly around a sizable asteroid, resembles a fever-dream of mechanical activity. This loose *octopus* has ensnared an asteroid to process.

CLOSER IN: Men in space suits carry hand-held POWER CARVERS that spit out tongues of plasma, cutting through solid rock.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR (V.O.)

I see you found the party.

EXT. MINING PLACER - ROTATIONAL

A large circular rotating habitat: ROTATIONAL, is anchored firmly into a large crater, providing centrifugal stability for the asteroid and sufficient gravity for living and working.

INT. REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE is too small for all the stuff he has. Overweight from inactivity. He monitors readouts.

STEVE (V.O.)

I see you're still sucking on that
synthetic dildo you call a cigar.

LAND removes the fake cigar from between tongue and cheek with V'd fingers and moves it across to the other cheek.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Copy that Patrol Six.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERCEPTOR - STEVE'S WRAP-AROUND

His display is alive with charts and graphs superimposed over a real-time telescopic image of USS KANSAS CITY.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR (V.O.)

I see you've spotted the freighter.

STEVE

Couldn't miss it. Big maroon blip just slid right off the grid, never even looked back. And there's a "yacht" vectoring on them. Looks like SIDEREAL. Regular soiree.

INSERT - STEVE'S WRAP AROUND

Data jumps in and out of view.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR (V.O.)

We've been trying to establish contact. They're ignoring us. You are hereby authorized to shut them down. Admin agrees; they've had it with these clowns. Time to set some examples.

RETURN:

STEVE

Copy that. Been looking to throw a little daylight up their skirts for a long time.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Copy that Six. Keep us in the loop.

STEVE

Patrol Six out.

(to Nav)

Negotiate a lock on their number two docking platform.

(to Sto)

Go ahead and warm everything up, just in case.

Sto's wraparound displays weapons systems coming on-line.

STO

Already on it.

STEVE

(to Nav)

Anything else?

NAV

Good to go.

STEVE

(to Sto)

Sto?

STO

That's a go.

STEVE

All right then. Buckle up. Secure
for thrusters. At your discretion.

Nav taps a glowing icon on the display in front of him. Their seat-couches assume thrusting postures; flattening out into the three-petal star.

EXT. INTERCEPTOR - SPACE

All three THRUSTERS fire, increasing in intensity as the Interceptor effortlessly pulls away. Absolutely silent.

EXT. YACHT SIDEREAL - SPACE

SIDEREAL is a 400 foot long privately owned space vessel. Built for tourists and high-rollers. Essentially a space-yacht. The habitat ring around the middle provides the crew with a certain level of comfort and functionality.

Compared to all the other utilitarian equipment operated by the Asteroid Mining Corporation (AMC) and USS (UNITED SPACE SYSTEMS) SIDEREAL is the exact opposite. She has useless flowing lines, attractive paint job, a joke by any reasonable standard of a space vehicle...and for the hyper-rich; a luxuriant toy.

Best engines. Best quarters. Best technology. Vulnerable technology. At present she is drifting slowly toward the Kanas City's DOCKING PLATFORM ONE, starboard side. The freighter's only other landing platform is on the opposite port side. Sidereal's maneuvering jets fire.

INT. YACHT - SIDEREAL

The evidence of opulence is everywhere. Padded bulkheads, pastel colors, touch screens and eight men in black flight suits; unshaven, smelly, and not opulent.

The COCKPIT has been taken over by three CHAIN operatives. They are monitoring Sidereal's docking with KANSAS CITY. The large habitat wheel of the freighter rotates slowly, spokes of the wheel create great sweeps of shadow as SIDEREAL approaches DOCKING PLATFORM ONE near the hub.

SIDEREAL PILOT - CHAIN
Initiating auto-dock.

SIDEREAL CO-PILOT - CHAIN (V.O.)
(into comm)
This is it. Saddle up.

Eight black-garbed men check each other's equipment. Guns, flares, tools, devices of all sort they believe can get them into Kansas City. The yacht has a belly storage bay that opens into space. Two men in black spacesuits, nurse a large gun-like device as big as a refrigerator.

BLACK SPACE SUIT ONE
(muffled through helmet)
This is gonna blow their mind.

BLACK SPACE SUIT TWO
You're having too much fun.
(into helmet radio)
We're ready down here.

SIDEREAL PILOT - CHAIN (V.O.)
Blowing cargo bay. Doors opening.

Lights in the storage bay turn red. The sound of rushing air is soon replaced with the sound of their BREATHING; HEARTS BEATING. Small jets firing from their shoulders help them maneuver in the weightlessness.

They drop, gun in tow, onto the SPINE of the freighter, which holds long rows of cargo canisters. They find a roomy shadowed area to hide and anchor the gun in the shadows.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - KANSAS CITY

CAPTAIN CROSS is a tall white woman in her mid-thirties. She is in uniform watching a view of Sidereal connecting gently with DOCKING PORT ONE on a monitor.

Behind her, GUSTAV HUSTMAN sits in a large seat with his right hand hanging stupidly in the air.

HUSTMAN
...and its the same with your big fish and little fish...

CAPTAIN CROSS
Looks like Sidereal here's almost docked.
(feigning interest)
What's a fish?

HUSTMAN
 (ignoring the question)
 Fish feed the bottom line.

Captain Cross loses interest in Hustman when the bridge calls.

HELM (V.O.)
 Captain. Helm. Sidereal is docked.
 Our "guests" should be collecting
 Hustman within the hour.

INSERT:

CAPTAIN CROSS' PRIVATE M-WAVE

Captain Cross' private M-wave is identical to the one in the tourist's rover. The distinctive CHIME announces the arrival of an item.

CAPTAIN CROSS
 Now what?

HUSTMAN
 That should be for me.

Captain Cross throws him a disbelieving glare.

CAPTAIN CROSS
 What the hell? Are you getting a
 transmission on my M-wave?

HUSTMAN
 Owning the ship helps.
 (pausing for effect)
 Your thumb would be appreciated.

Knowing protesting does no good, she slips off a glove and thumbs the ID button on the M-wave. Blue flash from square window. Heavy door opens slowly. Black tri-fold document and gold pen inside. Captain Cross removes items.

CAPTAIN CROSS
 What the hell is this?

Hustman extends his fat hand.

HUSTMAN
 Business deal.

CAPTAIN CROSS
 What? It never ends with you
 bastards.

HUSTMAN

Without us *bastards* none of this would be possible. No mining. No future.

She hands him the document and pen and turns to watch Sidereal on the monitor.

CAPTAIN CROSS

Your future.

Hustman signs the document on the remaining space for his signature. The signature etches itself into black plastic. He closes the tri-fold and hands it back to Cross. He pulls a memory stick from a pocket; hands it to Cross. She takes it and inserts it in the appropriate slot.

HUSTMAN

You've got nothing to worry about, you know I've got your back.

Hustman manages to get up out of his seat and goes over to the M-wave to type in a code on the keypad. He taps the button that reads XMIT - backs away pleased with himself but nothing happens.

The absence of inactivity forces Hustman and Cross to turn their focus on the M-wave in unison.

HUSTMAN (CONT'D)

Is there something wrong with your M-wave?

CAPTAIN CROSS

Not at all.

HUSTMAN

But the code is a simple return...

CAPTAIN CROSS

You did it wrong.

HUSTMAN

You might think I'm a fat bastard - but I do know how to mail a letter.

Cross focuses on the M-wave, eye-balling the door and keyboard. She presses two keys and the door opens, tri-fold and pen resting peacefully.

CAPTAIN CROSS

You did it wrong. You're "return to sender?"

HUSTMAN

That's right.

She closes the door and types in a code for return to sender.
Taps: XMIT - Nothing.

CAPTAIN CROSS

Your memory ID is wrong.

HUSTMAN

Been using it for a couple years.
The ID is correct.

She types in a sequence of key strokes, numbers display on a readout.

INSERT:

Readout on the M-wave indicates the numerals: 0046-09.

CAPTAIN CROSS

Well there it is. A four-six-zero-nine is a receiver fail. There's nothing on the other side.

HUSTMAN

Horse shit. 'Just came from there. These things are a pair - you know that.

CAPTAIN CROSS

And you know these things don't lie. They're like granite.

HUSTMAN

So what the hell?

CAPTAIN CROSS

Give it some time.

HUSTMAN

Time?

CAPTAIN CROSS

I need some air.

Captain Cross strides to her cabin door. Opens it, steps through, leaving Hustman to sit alone. In the passageway she shakes him off and speaks into her tunic mic.

CAPTAIN CROSS (CONT'D)

(nervously)

Where the hell is that interceptor?

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR (V.O.)
 Braking. Five minutes out - more or
 less. Computers are in handshake
 for DOCKING PLATFORM TWO.

INT. SIDEREAL COCKPIT

The Chain operatives watch the gun being installed on the
 freighter on a monitor.

BLACK SPACE SUIT ONE (V.O.)
 Primary Gun's secure.

SIDEREAL CO-PILOT - CHAIN
 Copy that. Be advised approaching
 INTERCEPTOR is armed, weapons hot.

SIDEREAL PILOT - CHAIN
 Gun. Do not fire directly at the
 INTERCEPTOR it can trace back onto
 you. Take out landing port two.
 Make 'em suit up if they want to get
 involved.

EXT. USS KANSAS CITY

Bracing the gun to fire is problematic in zero gravity, but
 they've managed to fasten it. They turn the gun onto the
 bottom edge of number two, port side, landing port COUPLING
 RING. Black Spacesuit One pushes a button. No light, No
 sound, only debris spreading out in all directions from an
 area that used to be a functional docking port.

A very large piece of the coupling ring cart-wheels end over
 end, heading straight for the port side engine cowling on
 Sidereal's main thruster array. The two space-suited men at
 the gun, watch, helpless. The scythe-like chunk of metal
 cuts into the cowling, severing a fuel line. A gray mist
 spreads out from somewhere inside the engine cowling.

Sure enough, something is hot enough to ignite the fuel.
 Almost in slow motion, the gray mist flames into a white hot
 blob of short-lived, but very intense heat. The explosion
 sends reverberations throughout the length of Kansas City.

INT. INTERCEPTOR

All three: Steve, Sto, Nav, watch their respective wrap-
 arounds with cool interest, as things go terribly wrong.

STEVE
 (On mic)
 Kansas City come in.
 (MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

We've detected an explosive event on Sidereal's port engine assembly. Do you copy? We are unable to dock with platform two.

(off mic)

These bastards are so dead. Suit up. Anyone forces me to suit up - they have to die.

(to Nav)

Nav, you've got the conn. Do that magic you do and get us close in on that centerline spine catwalk.

INT. INTERCEPTOR AIRLOCK

Steve and Sto are suited up in the airlock of the Interceptor. Helmets on, waiting.

INT. KANSAS CITY BRIDGE

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR and KANSAS CITY HELM are watching the displays on the BRIDGE of the Kansas City.

MONTAGE - MONITORS:

- A cluster of black-colored militants storm the opening airlock between Sidereal and Kansas City.
- Flurry of black-suited, ugly individuals are pulling themselves along in the zero-G of the freighter's hub.
- Port engine assembly of Sidereal is an expanding cloud of debris.

RETURN:

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR punches a colored square on the display in front of him.

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR

(ship-wide - intercom)

Now Hear this. Intruder alert.
Sealing ship, material condition zebra will be set in one minute.
This is not a drill.

Doors all over the freighter start slamming shut, air tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. KANSAS CITY - SPINE - CARGO CANISTERS

CLOSER IN: BETWEEN CANISTERS

Nav shows off the interceptor's maneuvering capability, snuggling in between two cargo cylinders and reaches one of the spine passageway access doors.

STEVE
(into helmet mic)
Nav.

NAV (V.O.)
Go for Nav.

STEVE
Secure line?

NAV (V.O.)
Go ahead.

STEVE
Something smells and it ain't me,
keep a line open.

Steve opens a door accessing the spine catwalk. He and Sto enter and proceed forward, pulling and coasting, toward the slowly rotating habitat wheel.

CUT TO:

INT. SIDEREAL COCKPIT

The CHAIN PILOT and CHAIN CO-PILOT, remain behind, and watch the black-suited invasion of Kansas City on their monitors. They get through door after door, but are stopped at the large door to the ROTATIONAL'S spoke elevators.

CUT TO:

INT. KANSAS CITY PASSAGEWAY

Black-suited invaders pull themselves along but forget if the guy in front can't open the door, everyone behind will continue to pile into the ones in front. This pile-up of testosterone infuriates them.

This door is different. It is a key security point between the stationary container side of the freighter and the rotating habitat wheel.

Making room, they get to work. Among the tools they brought with them to break into Kansas City is a POWER CARVER. Miners use them to cleave rock. The plasma torch spitting out one end can cut through anything.

Triggering the POWER CARVER, an intense blinding beam of blue/white light shoots out the front end. The air heats up very fast.

The torch easily sinks into the bulkhead and cuts out one of the heavy hinges. Starting on a second hinge, the operator's foot slips; he rotates away with the POWER CARVER in tow and slices a huge GASH along one side of the door; ripping through the bulkhead, and some of the ship's primary control conduits. He cuts the power too late. The damage is done.

INT. KANSAS CITY BRIDGE

Kansas City's Navigator stares at the readout to the engine control. Half his panel goes dark.

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR
What the hell just happened?

KANSAS CITY HELM
Where's engine firing control?

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR
It's down? It's a thirty minute
trek to manual override. We're
fucked.

INSERT:

Kansas City Helm keys up a view of the problem compartment and sees the black space-suited apes milling around the mess they made of the passageway to the hub.

RETURN:

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR (CONT'D)
This is all wrong.

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)
What's going on?

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR
(into ship's comm)
Captain, right about...now. We were
supposed to perform a course
correction. Nudge us into a
slingshot. Thrusters never got the
message. These stupid apes cut
through a control conduit.

CUT TO:

INT. KANSAS CITY PASSAGEWAY

CAPTAIN CROSS

What are you saying?

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR (V.O.)

We're falling headlong into an uncharted rock. If we get lucky and miss it - we go forever.

CAPTAIN CROSS

What?!

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR (V.O.)

Or maybe Jupiter will pull us in, say two hundred fifty years or so. Either way, we're dead.

(suddenly tired)

It was just a matter of time. We got no reason being out here. We're too stupid to be out here doing this, now we pay. Maybe they're right.

CAPTAIN CROSS

Stow that. What happened?

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR (V.O.)

Sidereal was a Trojan horse. We've been boarded by hostile forces.

INT. PASSAGEWAY - CAPTAIN CROSS

Cross is standing at the intercom, helpless. Steve is monitoring ship's communications.

STEVE (V.O.)

Captain Cross, this is Archer, Patrol Six. We're monitoring your comm. Do you copy?

CAPTAIN CROSS

(under her breath)

Shit.

(giving in)

Go ahead Patrol Six.

STEVE (V.O.)

So now you feel like talking?

CAPTAIN CROSS

We're in trouble.

STEVE (V.O.)

Copy that. Wanna be more specific?

CAPTAIN CROSS

Helm?

KANSAS CITY HELM (V.O.)

We've been boarded. Probably the fucking Chain. Idiots cut through a major data trunk to the engines and aft section maneuvering thrusters. Real mess. Checked it five times already...by our numbers, within two hours, we're gonna smack head-on into a wandering asteroid.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREIGHTER CONTAINER ASSEMBLY

Steve and Sto pull themselves along a seemingly endless catwalk nestled within huge cargo canisters.

STEVE

(no sympathy)

That's why we have maps, keep you outta places like this. That's why you can't go radio silent. What's so important you gotta sail into this shit in the first place?

Steve and Sto are coasting along at a pretty good clip through the long spine of the ship.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What's in these containers?

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)

(cutting in)

Unknown.

STEVE (V.O.)

Let me get this straight. You're running radio silent. Out of bounds. Unscheduled docking event. No flight plan. No inspection logs, no knowledge of cargo?... Suicide would be a better option.

CAPTAIN CROSS

Its Gustaf Hustman.

STEVE (V.O.)

(understanding
instantly)

These guys. They think they're above everything. Dammit. This guy is getting the book thrown at him.

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR (V.O.)

(interrupting)

You don't understand sir. We can't change course. You should get as far away as possible. The nuclear engine cores will guarantee no one bothers the crater we're gonna make for thousands of years.

STEVE

Stand by.

(keys off radio)

Shit. What's in these containers?

Steve slows his movement down the catwalk. He signals to Sto to join him by one of the access lids to a storage canister. A canister is roughly seventy feet long and fifty feet in diameter.

Steve looks up the access code from his suit PAD. A heavy door cycles open.

Inside the containers, straps and nets hold cargo in place, for transport. Steve and Sto drift in weightlessness.

Turning on a flood light, large *golden* surfaces reflect against each other. With the light moving, it creates undulating waves of shimmering light in all directions; reflections peaking out from the suspension straps.

Veins of gold from a failed planet. Cubic yards of nuggets picked from the remains of an proto-planet that became the asteroid belt.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Gold? This is insane. What the hell do you do hoarding gold?

(to NAV)

Nav are you getting this?

NAV (V.O.)

How much can you guess is in here?

STEVE

You can't add this shit up. I'm looking at a solid chunk of gold, at least ten feet long, six feet wide.

NAV (V.O.)

Their conn is flagging me, they're looking for help.

STEVE

Too late. I'm not in the mood.

This can't be happening.

(pregnant silence)

Can we fire their engines manually?

NAV (V.O.)

I'd evacuate if I were you.

Steve sees his distorted, helmeted face reflected in a sheet of solid gold.

STEVE

How much time do we have?

NAV (V.O.)

Couple hours to impact. But there is no safe zone. You have to be gone long before that. One hour.

STEVE

We're gonna check out the next one down. Get some video if this ever goes to trial.

INT. KANSAS CITY BRIDGE

Captain Cross, her Navigator and Helm, are scanning readouts.

CAPTAIN CROSS

Navigation. Where's that interceptor?

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR

Parked off stack twenty-two. Two are EVA coming down the spine.

CAPTAIN CROSS

What the hell are they doing? Can't they dock on TWO.

KANSAS CITY NAVIGATOR

Its down.

HELM

I assumed you knew we lost the port docking platform. Sidereal may be down too. Collateral damage from losing dock two?

CAPTAIN CROSS

I did. I did. Sound abandon ship.

Repetitive ALARM signal alerts the crew to an official emergency.

CAPTAIN CROSS (CONT'D)
 (into ship-wide comm)
 Crew, this is Captain Cross. Abandon ship. I repeat, abandon ship. We've lost thrusters and main engines and are on a collision course with an asteroid. I repeat - abandon ship.

INT. STORAGE CONTAINER

Options were few. Steve is positioned over the next canister access door. He works the code-reader, the heavy door opens. With torch in hand he drifts into the canister. Again, massive straps, tightly holding boulders of solid gold.

STEVE (V.O.)
 This is about greed?

STO
 I was just thinking the same thing. Gold is used in manufacturing, but this...

STEVE
 Talk about cornering a market.

STO
 Where'd they find all this?

STEVE
 Asteroid belt is forever. Almost anything can be found out here. The hard part is knowing where to look, and then how to get to it.

STO
 Someone got lucky. Found a mother load somewhere. Cut it up and stashed it away for a rainy day. Hoarding? Greed? Sad.

STEVE
 The level of... its overwhelming.

STO
 People with power...they're all fucked up.

Steve drops the subject.

STEVE
 How much time do we have?

STO
Forty five, fifty minutes?

STEVE
We're not going to make it.

STO
What are we going to do?

STEVE
Get these people off the freighter.

STO
How exactly?

STEVE
(to NAV)
Nav? Patch me through to the Captain.

NAV (V.O.)
Go ahead.

STEVE
Captain. This is Captain Steve
Archer. Belt patrol six. Do you
copy?

INT. KANSAS CITY BRIDGE

Captain Cross, Kansas City Helm, and Kansas city navigator,
are huddled around the conn.

CAPTAIN CROSS
(into mic)
Copy Archer. I've ordered abandon
ship.

STEVE (V.O.)
What was your plan? With this cargo?

CAPTAIN CROSS
We've been contracted by Gustav
Hustman. Owner of Megastar;
SuperDyne?

STEVE (V.O.)
I know who he is.

CAPTAIN CROSS
The plan was to disappear and retire.
We followed the buck.

STEVE (V.O.)
Bad plan.

CAPTAIN CROSS

That qualifies as an understatement
Patrol Six.

STEVE (V.O.)

The Chain may have been after your
cargo. Do you know what is in your
containers?

CAPTAIN CROSS

Sealed cargo. No questions
asked...restricted access. Didn't
care what it was, as long as it wasn't
toxic. Why?

STEVE (V.O.)

I can access - *restricted*.

He lets his authority sink in for a moment.

STEVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

How about gold?

EXT. KANSAS CITY - CANISTERS SPINE

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)

(somewhat crest-fallen)

Gold? Ridiculous.

STEVE

I really don't want to believe all
these containers hold gold. You're
sitting on top of the richest time-
bomb in history.

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)

I don't believe it.

STEVE

(nods to Sto)

Sending you vids.

INT. KANSAS CITY BRIDGE

They all look to a monitor and see the signature gleaming
warmth of yellow metal illuminated from Steve and Sto's helmet
lights.

STEVE (V.O.)

Your belief is not required. And if
you don't get your ass off this ship,
you're gonna vaporize against a
wanderer mountain of rock in

(MORE)

STEVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
roughly...thirty-five minutes, and
counting.

(pause)

What was your destination?

CAPTAIN CROSS

Again...sealed. We'd get coordinates
later. Everything was hush hush.
Does it matter now? We missed the
key burn. It was a tricky manoeuvre,
but doable. It's all a moot point
now.

STEVE (V.O.)

We'll get you out of there.

CAPTAIN CROSS

Negative. If you had a couple days -
maybe. We're sealed off from the
hub in the rotational. We're
finished.

(pause)

This has been a long time coming.
If I have to go, I can't think of a
better way. Get yourselves the hell
out of here.

EXT. STORAGE CONTAINER SPINE

Steve and Sto are hanging impotently outside the Interceptor.

STEVE

Can you get to the hub?

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)

What are you! Stupid!? Shit happens -
get out of there.

STEVE

Yes, but in the rotational Side, the
gravity is lower near the hub, get
out through a service hatch, we can
catch you.

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)

You are stupid?! You catch me, where
you gonna put me? Sidewinder only
holds three. I'm pretty sure. There
are twelve souls on this crate, not
to mention our guests.

STEVE
 (acknowledging his
 stupidity)
 Dammit. There has to be a way.
 (thinking)
 There is a common area under the
 cockpit where we eat, change gear.
 We can get six people in there.

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)
 If I didn't know better I'd say I'd
 found myself a *boyfriend* - all the
 way out here in the middle of nowhere.

STEVE
 This isn't happening.

NAV (V.O.)
 Steve. Nav. Yes it is. We have to
 walk away from this or no one gets
 out.

CAPTAIN CROSS (V.O.)
 Come on "boyfriend" get the hell
 outta here. I'm gonna cheat on you.
 I've got a fat bastard I want to
 make sure is paying attention when
 his little plan goes up in smoke.
 (pause)
 Captain Regina Cross, United Space
 Systems freighter Kansas City -
 signing off and going dark.

EXT. KANSAS CITY

Sto fires suit thrusters to connect with Steve, grabbing him
 and dragging him into the Interceptor's air-lock.

INT. INTERCEPTOR COCKPIT

Steve, Sto, and Nav scan their readouts. Sweating. Cocked
 like bear-traps, feeling helpless. Sto is silent, in his
 flight suit, helmet off. Nav is waiting for Steve to give
 the word. Steve is thinking and coming up dry. With
 paralysis encroaching, he gives Nav the go ahead.

STEVE
 All right. Go. God dammit!

CUT TO:

EXT. ASTEROID BELT

The interceptor's thrusters are firing opposite its direction
 of travel, braking, slowing to a halt.

They turn on recording devices to catch the biggest show in the solar system.

And here comes the Kansas City. She's an impressive container ship. Old school freighter; twenty-two hundred feet long. The wayward asteroid is fourteen and a quarter miles in diameter. Everything was over in six-tenths of a second. A great plume of debris radiating outward in a large bowl-shape from a brand new crater, on an uncharted asteroid. Insignificant against the backdrop of infinity.

INT. INTERCEPTOR

The Interceptor and crew of three are all that remain of humanity in this sector of the asteroid belt. Freighter - Chain Operatives - Sidereal - all gone. They sit speechless.

INSERT:

Steve's M-wave is part of his workstation. The familiar CHIME sounds. The small square window, in the square door, of the M-wave flashes blue. Steve pushes a button on the front of the thing; the door opens obediently revealing Feather's comm stick.

RETURN:

STEVE

What is this? No ID.

Steve inserts the card in the instrumentation in front of him. The image on his wraparound flickers away and he can see the admin offices of Mars Base One jumping around in smooth swipes. Feather is yelling.

FEATHER (V.O.)

(out of breath)

Steve! This is Feather.

Steve offers up a crooked smile.

STEVE

(to himself)

Feather? What the hell?

FEATHER (V.O.)

Mars One is under attack!...

STEVE

(to the other two)

Check this out.

The recorded video of her environment jumps onto their wrap-arounds.

FEATHER (V.O.)

...Someone's dropping rocks, asteroids, from orbit, onto the base. Must be the Chain. Haven't heard from them in a while. We're taking cover below. Do you know what's going on? I figure this is what you do now - chase goons? Try a sub-level access M-wave address for Mars Base One to get back to me. Our surface may be gone when you get this. Send it "my eyes only." I don't expect you to come to the rescue. Just get back to me.

Steve falls back in his seat.

STEVE

This isn't happening. There's no way this is coordinated. Kansas City was a cluster-fuck.

STO

(matter-of-factly)

We're not supposed to be out here. All this? We're not ready. Its imploding all around us and we just don't know it yet.

STEVE

I can't accept that. What we're doing *is* right. We have to get off Earth to save it. How can we be so stupid? What's going on?

NAV

It's more fun being stupid. It's easy.

STEVE

No.

He grabs the comm card and shouts into it.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Release lock on Feather Hall's eyes only.

(taking a second)

I don't know what's going on. You'll be the first to know we just lost the Kansas City; a freighter smack up against an asteroid. I'm attaching video and specs.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

(pause)

Listen, we go way back. When I was your lab rat...you put me through the mill, its true. I know I told you I was through with clinical trials. I know you're working on this M-wave problem.

(pause)

If you still want me I'm yours. Maybe if I'm lucky you'll put me out of my misery once and for all.

(pause)

This has to stop, or we have to give up. We can't "do" *this*, this "space" shit. The Chain may be right after all: "We don't belong out here." Never meant to be out here. Could be we were never meant to be anywhere. Let me know what you need.

NAV

What the hell are you talking about?

STEVE

She's a medical physicist. She helped develop your enhancements. This shit doesn't fall off trees you know. There's always someone has to take the first step, and for along time that first step was me.

STO

Just like that? You're leaving?

STEVE

Why not, I can't do any good out here. Gotta do something. I just know I can't do this.

(Still recording - to Feather)

Its good to hear from you. Too bad it has to be like this. It'll take me all of eighteen months plus to get to you from here. Good luck in the meantime. If you're still around when you get this, tell me what you think; whatever it is. Archer out.

He thumbs the comm stick and the visuals on the wraparounds go dark. He tosses the card comm inside the M-wave and closes the door. He punches "XMIT" and the card disappears in a flash of blue light.

EXT. ASTEROID BELT

The debris field from the collision has blossomed into a hazy dust cloud. Large and small chunks drifting away from a sizable crater with several glowing nuclear embers imbedded in the crater floor. Surrounding a radiating mound of metals, in the walls of the new crater, spectacular slivers of gold glint against the dim sun.

This calamity recedes into the distance. Asteroid. Crater. Interceptor, reduced to tiny points of light; eventually becoming one with the billions of other points of light

Among these stars can be heard the sound of a submarine's PINGING sonar. PINGING continues.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 150 FEET BELOW SURFACE OF PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

Dense gray replaces star field. The SONAR continues, then fades. Faint bubbles suggest sea water as the blunt nose of an attack sub emerges from the murky light.

INT. SUB CAPTAIN'S STATE ROOM

The Captain and Executive officer, in uniform, sit across from Steve. Steve is wearing para-military garb.

SUB EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Yeah, we got us a real man of few words.

Steve stares at the deck, silent.

SUB CAPTAIN

Yeah,
(takes a sip of coffee)
Man whose got ropes. Pluck 'im outta the middle of the ocean like he fell from the sky. Take 'im wherever he wants to go - give 'im all this shit. No questions. What kinda man gets treatment like that?

Steve hears this but ignores it.

SUB EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Few words man.

SUB CAPTAIN

Yeah, man don't talk must be some kinda big secret soldier super spy or some shit.

SUB EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Maybe some village people we ain't
heard about.

STEVE
(calmly, directly)
I'm some shit.

Steve speaking suddenly partially startles both of them,
embarrassing themselves.

STEVE (CONT'D)
I'm the disposable no-name that gets
sent fuck anywhere pinheads like you
manage to fuck things up. I'm the
one everyone forgets about - until
it's too late; when things have
already shit its pants. I go in
afterwards and fix it or break it.
What I'm not, is a poet.
(looking up but not
at them)
Talking time is over.

They sit in uneasy silence.

INTERCOM (V.O.)
Captain. Bridge. We're there.

They rise from their seats and exit without ceremony.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE OCEAN CONNING TOWER - DAY

The water is calm, sky grey, conning tower a few feet above
the waves. The sub slows but does not stop.

The SUB EXECUTIVE OFFICER and the SUB CAPTAIN climb out of
the conning tower's hatch. They take a quick look around
the horizon and sky. The SUB EXECUTIVE OFFICER reaches down
and lifts a large bag from the hatch and sets it on the deck.

Steve climbs out of the hatch dressed in a wet suit. He
unzips the bag and pulls a PROPULSION BACKPACK from it. He
stuffs his arms into the straps of the backpack while the
SUB CAPTAIN and SUB EXECUTIVE OFFICER scan the horizon with
binoculars.

The coast of Baja California is a faint pale line lying over
the Eastern horizon.

Steve tossed the bag in the water and takes an awkward seat
on the edge of the conning tower. He locks eyes with the
SUB CAPTAIN for a long moment, then the SUB EXECUTIVE
OFFICER'S for the first time in hours and drops himself into
he water out of sight.

SUB EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Man of few words.

SUB CAPTAIN
Get us the hell outta here.

EXT. UNDER WATER - DAY

Steve is moving quickly through the water with the propulsion pack on his back. The bag fitted between his legs minimizes resistance. He's making good time.

CUT TO:

EXT. FEATHER'S BAJA APARTMENT - DAY

Feather takes a long drink from a bottle of water. Throwing water on a towel, she wipes her face and under her shirt to cool herself off. She puts the cloth in a bag and picks up some folders as she reaches for the remote to turn off the TV.

INSERT:

A paper-thin display appears to float in the dusty air above a dilapidated bedside table. Images of violence, fires, people running.

TV NEWSREPORTER (V.O.)
...reports pouring in from around
the world of bombings and major
disruption...one hundred dead, One
hundred thirty wounded...
(changes channels)
Death tolls from the sinking of the
Ionian Sea this morning rise as
rescuers...

RETURN:

Feather taps the pen again and the sound is silenced, she watches for a moment, taps the pen one more time turning off the image in disgust. She picks up a small metallic cube from the table and tosses it in shoulder bag.

Looks one last time around the dusty room she exits.

EXT. FEATHER'S MOTEL - DAY

Stepping into a blast-furnace of Baja heat, she locks the door behind her and rushes into a small solar/hydrogen hybrid vehicle.

INT. FEATHER'S CAR - DAY

Feather starts her car and gets the air-conditioner on as soon as she can. Habitually, she taps the flat panel and classical guitar fills the air. She taps again and the reports keeping coming in.

CAR RADIO (V.O.)

...fires burn out of control in London as the uprisings continue...

(taps panel again)

...just in. Massive explosions rock Denver. The "Chain" have somehow sparked sympathetic revolts worldwide.

(taps again to silence audio)

Stupid, stupid.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

The car reaches solid pavement and moves more quickly out of the scrap of a town. The road curves down toward the beach and heads South. Electric motor buzzing contentedly. Wind WHISTLES over the windshield. Ocean almost blue. Sky hazy and cloudless. She thumbs a button on her steering wheel.

FEATHER

Doctor Randall please.

CUT TO:

EXT. PUNTA PRIETA OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE - DAY

Nestled along a rugged coastline is a tan and beige stuccoed complex trying to fit in with the desert environment. Three circular pools reflect sky.

There is a small parking lot to one side. A driveway circles the entire installation. Cacti and boulders dot the surrounding area.

A SIGN greeting visitors where they turn off the road.

INSERT:

Punta Preita Oceanographic Institute.

Smaller print in the lower left corners reads: America's Development Corporation.

RETURN:

Just beyond the parking lot is a heliport. Small support buildings are all else there is between here and miles of rugged desert and rolling hills to the East.

INT. OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE - DAY

Carpeted hallways in some areas, linoleum in others, exhibits of ocean life include large vistas behind tempered plastic walls for observing the pools of marine life.

Hallways have small windowed doors looking very institutional.

Some rooms have people in white lab coats referencing notepads and looking into microscopes.

CUT TO:

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - DAY

DOCTOR RANDALL MARTEN is a white, mid-fifties male. Athletic and graying. He's standing in front of electronic equipment in a technologically exotic work area. All around him is a hand-built, cutting edge laboratory.

His communicator goes off in his pocket to the tune of Anchors Away. He lifts it out and taps it once, answering it.

IN HIS HAND:

The flat surface comes alive and Feather's image of her in her car snaps into view.

RANDALL (O.S.)

Randall here. Hi Feather. I see you're on your way. We're still a go. See you soon.

Feather waves two fingers in the air. The phone goes dark.

RETURN:

He tucks his communicator back in his breast pocket and turns to MARY COREY.

Mary Corey is a petite, mid-thirties, white woman. She is seated at a computer display console. Numerous displays reveal rows of streaming numbers and text. She is typing onto a flat-panel keypad.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Feather's off.

(to himself)

I know Steve's gonna be ready.

MARY

You've worked with him before?

RANDALL

It's been a while. He's a fabulous test subject. Smart, objective. Feather's recommendation, and I couldn't agree more. We're lucky to have him.

MARY

We'll see.

RANDALL

Yup. You bet.

Surrounding them is a laboratory crammed with exotic high tech equipment. On one side of this laboratory is a large 8' by 8' wire-frame cube. It sticks out from the rest of the equipment by its cubical symmetry, looking out of place among the other technologies.

The opposite side of the lab is dominated by a large couch-like area the size of a over-sized coffin. The couch has a cover, not unlike a tanning couch. Out of the top, bottom and sides are tubes, conduits, and machinery that can only be guessed at as to their function.

Behind Randell and Mary, STANLEY WANG comes from the other side of the lab. Stanley is Asian, male, mid-thirties, dressed in one of the ubiquitous lab coats everyone's wearing.

STANLEY

I'm going up to take one last look around.

RANDALL

Good. Keep in touch.

Stanley looks at the back of Mary's head, waiting for her to make a comment. Nothing. Stanley grabs a PDA (personal data assistant). He waves his hand over a black plastic square and one of the heavy lab doors, gears and hydraulics gnashing. It opens slowly.

Looking back to Randall anticipating his words.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(to Stanley)

This is as close as we're ever gonna get you know that.

STANLEY

Yeah...little worried about the "Something going wrong part."

MARTEN
(sarcastic)
What could possibly go wrong?

MARY
(Finally commenting)
You guys are funny in the morning.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAJA BEACH - DAY

Steve breaks the surface as a shiny black rubber hemisphere, a pair of goggled eyes scan the coastline.

Leaving the surf, he makes his way up the beach and in between two large rocks above the tidal line.

Stripping down, he discards his wet suit and gear, throwing everything but one bag into a pile on the sand.

Opening the bag he saved; he takes out a t-shirt, jeans, sun glasses, tennis shoes, ID and backpack. Emptying the bag on the sand, he tosses the bag in with the other gear in a pile.

Dressed in the t-shirt and jeans, he stoops down to remove a small VIAL from the shoulder strap of his backpack. He twists the vial once and tosses it into the pile of equipment.

The vial releases a white vapor that crawls over the pile of equipment. A hissing noise cues Steve to look away as the pile ignites into a white-hot combustion that consumes everything. A white powder remains that drifts away in the wind, leaving only a depression in the sand.

Steve faces inland and hikes to the coastal highway.

CUT TO:

EXT. COAST OF BAJA - DAY

100 feet above sea level, a sleek, high-tech, privately owned HOVER-CRAFT (HOPPER) hugs the coastline.

INT. HOVER-CRAFT PASSENGER COMPARTMENT - DAY

CONRAD MILLER, an elderly, white, healthy, well fed billionaire sits next to his beautiful daughter JANICE MILLER. Janice is in her mid-twenties. The PILOT is the third person on the craft, he's wearing a flight suit and helmet minding his own business.

CONRAD

(to Janice)

You're absolutely certain. I don't want to go in there, half-cocked.

JANICE

(staring at nothing)

Invar, Helium-3, plutonium...there's no question; received and signed for by a doctor Randall Martin.

CONRAD

(eyes on the coastline)

I'm gonna have his balls.

JANICE

I can't find any practical applications in marine biology...

CONRAD

And you won't. He's a fringe physicist and busted. Embezzle me? Your implant has already paid for itself. Well done.

OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE'S AIRSPACE

Hover-craft swings wide around the complex in a full circle before positioning itself over the center of the landing area; dropping down, hovering a moment, then lowering and settling on the landing-pad.

INT. OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

A clean, carpeted, conservative looking area greets visitors to the institute. A few fake ficas, and a sitting area.

RECEPTIONIST

(into intercom)

Security? We've got a hopper on the landing pad. Anyone we should know about?

EXT. INSTITUTE FRONT DOORS - DAY

The receptionist steps out to greet Conrad and Janice who are now wearing sun glasses and hurrying to get inside out of the heat. The Receptionist squints involuntarily, raising both hands to her face to protect it from the heat.

Once inside, they drink in the cooler air of the vestibule, Janice looks back and sees the pilot connecting the hopper to the service receptacles.

RECEPTIONIST
Welcome to Punta Prieta Oceanographic.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

They shake off the sticky heat.

CONRAD
(to Receptionist)
I'd like to speak with a Doctor
Randall Marten please. Is he here?

RECEPTIONIST
Doctor Marten. Yes sir. And who
may I say is calling?

CONRAD
(ignoring Janice)
Conrad Miller. He knows who I am.

RECEPTIONIST
(gesturing)
Please. Have a seat.

Janice and Receptionist scan each other. Too angry to sit.
Conrad looks around, restlessly appraising the environment.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
(fingers intercom)
Admin. Reception. Doctor Marten
has guests.

INTERCOM (V.O.)
Doctor Marten left specific
instructions not to be disturbed.

CONRAD
(Conrad hears this)
Wrong answer.

Conrad pushes past the receptionist and disappears through
the double doors with Janice in tow.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - DAY

Randall is seated, focused on an array of flat panels when
his communicator goes off. He slips it out of his pocket.
Checks caller ID.

RANDALL
Go ahead Stanley.
(listening)
Do I know Conrad Miller? Hell yes,
I know Conrad Miller. He's the guy
who's money we've been burning.

Randall leaps to his feet, startling Mary.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Here?! Where? Is he alone? His daughter? Get back down here and keep them away from here. We're locked in on this; can't stop now!

MARY

Jesus Christ. What the hell?

RANDALL

Conrad Miller is upstairs.

MARY

And?

RANDALL

The cow? Its his money we've embezzled to pull this off.

MARY

Are they coming down here?

RANDALL

Listen. Nothing can stop this now. Wrinkles. Exactly how this damn universe operates.

(pointing to the huge
metal doors)

Those doors, when sealed, no one gets through. Once Stanley gets back, we lock down.

MARY

The universe doesn't have wrinkles...those are called laugh lines.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAJA COAST ROAD - DAY

Feather's little car races along as best it can.

INT. FEATHER'S CAR - DAY

Feather is driving. The radio is off and she is looking out to a scene on the beach.

FEATHER'S POV

A CLAM FISHER and his SON, large shaded hats, wading in the water, working their nets. Timeless; except for a row of antique oil rigs in the distance.

BACK TO SCENE

Tranquillity is interrupted by a bright yellow light reflecting off the interior of her car like a sunrise from the wrong direction. Then, a loud RUMBLE snaps her back to the present.

She pulls to the side of the road and stops. The fishers are pointing to something on the horizon.

Feather sees an oil rig, gigantic flames feeding a column of black smoke rising high into an already sick atmosphere.

Secondary explosions tear the rig apart. The sound coming out of sync with the visuals.

FEATHER (O.S.)
Those poor people. My god.

EXT. BAJA COASTLINE - STEVE - DAY

He takes a long drink of water, as he watches the black smoke rising.

STEVE
Morons.

He stuffs the water bottle in his bag. Faintly, he hears the sound of an ENGINE from an oil-burning pickup truck.

After a moment of hiking, he looks down and sees a SCORPION in the middle of the road.

CLOSE IN:

Nearby a LIZARD watches, still as concrete. Steve watches them closely.

SCORPION:

As big as a house - the scorpion looks alien and monstrous - as it has for millions of years: Defending its existence, silently, patiently, deadly.

LIZARD:

A monument to patience, dead eyes. Tongue slowly flicking one time. One eye sees the scorpion. The sun racing across the sky. The other eye sees a dark figure that is Steve. Like lava it moves into the tire rut in the road.

TRUCK: Steve shakes his head free of a trance.

Visible now, the truck crests the ridge and careens down the road, scattering gravel. A tremendous cloud of Baja dirt, choking dust, and noise, crash down on Steve's little drama.

FARMER DRIVER
 (yelling from the
 driver's seat)
 No quieres un aventon?

Steve shakes his head unable to understand Spanish.

FARMER DRIVER (CONT'D)
 Pos estaras loco, seta haciendo un
 caloran.

Steve is blank. The farmer throws the truck into gear and leaves Steve in another cloud of noise and dirt.

Steve looks to where the scorpion and lizard faced off; they're gone.

He removes his sunglasses, squinting in the harsh sunlight and wipes sweat from his forehead and his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SURFACE OF THE MOON - NIGHT

Stark shadows carve huge gashes in a collapsed jumble of crater wall. The bright surfaces wash out the faint stars of the moon's airless sky.

Movement detected near the floor of a crater becomes THREE SPACE-SUITED shadows. They stride rhythmically toward a wiry vehicle. Slowly, they mount and skim the moon's surface, disappearing into shadows.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAJA ROAD - DAY

Steve looks for the scorpion and lizard but are nowhere. He finds them a short distance from each other and picks up a stick and slowly advances. He stops and tosses the stick away letting nature take its course. Soon however, Feather's electric engine on her car can be heard shortly before she comes into view over the same crest the truck came from.

Again, the drama in the sand is interrupted by a vehicle.

STEVE
 Here we go again.

Feather brakes, the light weight vehicle slides right over the top of the two combatants.

Steve comes up to the side of the car, drops to his knees and survey's under her car.

Feather watches him drop from view, slow to respond, she opens her door and the heat slaps her in the face.

FEATHER

Steve! What are you doing?

She dashes around the front of the car.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Dust settling.

STEVE

(standing)

They're gone again.

(scanning area)

Disappeared.

FEATHER

Steve! Let's move...Think you need to get out of the sun. We don't have time for this.

Steve straightens, opens passenger door and climbs inside. Feather, watching her feet, rushes in to the driver's seat.

She turns the air conditioner on full. Her face relaxes from the circulating air. The car lurches forward.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

What on earth are you looking for?

STEVE

Dumb shit lizard was about to get zapped by a scorpion . . . I think.

(staring ahead)

Both times they disappeared.

FEATHER

Both times?

STEVE

How do they move so fast? Damn it's good to see you. I'm sorry. Maybe the sun was starting to get to me.

FEATHER

You haven't change a bit.

STEVE

Probably your molecules still at work.

FEATHER

Apparently.
 (changing the subject)
 Did you see the fire?

STEVE

Atmosphere is dead enough. Bastards.

FEATHER

Have you had a chance to hear the news?

STEVE

I avoid it if possible.

Feather fingers a panel on the dashboard.

CAR RADIO (V.O.)

. . . number of dead rising in Kowloon tramway bombing.

(a moment of silence)

This just in . . . there are now conformations coming in from our late-braking drama in space. . . It has been confirmed that the United Space Systems ore carrier, New Orleans, has been destroyed. Fifty six lost.

(pause)

Also, this just in . . . Large explosions rock the heavily populated Newbury Towers Complex in West Chicago. Thousands feared dead.

FEATHER (O.S.)

(fingers off the radio)
 I can't listen anymore.

STEVE

What the hell is going on?

FEATHER

It's far worse than I thought. When I got up this morning, I turned on the news and it is wall to wall. Like the world has finally decided to blow up. Riots, bombings, shootings.

STEVE

Is it all related? The Chain?

FEATHER

Chain is probably the match that lit the fuse. All the sympathetic lunatics see this as a rallying call to action.

STEVE

Not having family left may be a good thing.

FEATHER

You're the only "family" I've ever had...not to put you on the spot.

STEVE

Same here Feather. What's up your sleeve this time?

FEATHER

M-waves.

STEVE

Shit. I was afraid of that.

FEATHER

We're going to field you into an m-wave buffer and try to break the life-force barrier.

STEVE

I thought that was impossible

FEATHER

It is.

STEVE

I don't understand.

FEATHER

We think we've been doing it wrong all these years. We're going through the back door. Cheat.

STEVE

Whatever. I trust you to do the right thing.

FEATHER

You're the only one I think can pull this off. Everything we've ever done together brings us to this.

STEVE

I'm all yours...but you know...we really gotta stop meeting like this.

She takes her hands off the steering wheel, the car goes into auto-pilot. She reaches into her bag and pulls out a vial of liquid and a small metal box and hands them to Steve.

FEATHER

Here take these.

Steve opens the box and sees four small capsules. He tosses two in his mouth, drinks some of the fluid washing them down. He takes the other two, drinks the rest of the fluid and hands the box and vial back to Feather.

STEVE

What was that?

FEATHER

Muscle relaxant.

STEVE

I'm all for relaxed muscles.

(breathing steady)

How does one get into an M-wave field?

FEATHER

Electro-magnetic stasis. I really don't know how they do it, but it's a new idea. I'm here to monitor your biologics. They really don't talk about it. We're almost there.

CUT TO:

INT. INSTITUTE HALLWAY - DAY

Conrad is standing next to an M-wave when the familiar CHIME indicates a transmission incoming. Conrad opens the door and a comm-wand and master-key lay inside. He scoops them up and closes the door. They exit.

They skulk down a dark passageway. Conrad fingers the wand. An image of his corporate LOGO projects on the wall.

CONRAD

Project floor plan and elevation of
Puenta Prieta Oceanographic..

A flickering, 3D image reveals the entire institute: compartments, passageways, the entire layout of the surface, parking lots, fish tanks, hopper on the landing pad. Rows of offices and the subterranean passageways.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

GPS, confirm location.

COMM WAND (V.O.)
 Location, orientation, altitude
 correct.

Confirm registration with current location. A blue flashing light designates their current location.

CONRAD
 I thought so.
 (peering down the
 dark passageway)
 This isn't here...not according to
 this. Last time I was here this
 lunchroom was the end of this leg,
 and there was an elevator.
 (looks at Janice)
 These guys are up to something.
 (to Janice)
 Can you access this passageway in
 your data link?

JANICE
 (stares at nothing)
 No data of an extension on this
 passageway for these coordinates.

CONRAD
 You wanted adventure, right?

JANICE
 I know, be careful what I ask for?

EXT. PUNTA PRIETA OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE - DAY

Feather's car circles around to the back of the institute. A driveway ends at a garage door protruding from a mound of desert. The door opens and she drives into a down sloping ramp to subterranean areas below the institute.

She drives into a dimly lit area, stopping in front of one of the ubiquitous steel doors. They get out of her car. She gives Steve the once over.

FEATHER
 You should be feeling the effects.

STEVE
 Yeah, copy that.

Feather waves her wand in front of a steel door which slides to the side. They step inside and there is a table, bench, a few lockers, toilet and shower. On the bench is a metal box. Waving her hand over the box, one side pops open. Reaching in and pulls out a gold/copper metallic body suit.

FEATHER

Take a shower. Get into this. You've got ten minutes.

STEVE

Copy.

FEATHER

Its really good to see you again.

STEVE

Arr. Miss that *funny* face.

Feather smiles hearing his pet name for her and leaves.

INT. INSTITUTE PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Conrad and Janice still exploring. A door has a sign on it: No Access - Restricted. Conrad tries his key-reader. Noises inside the door release locks. Door yawns open. They step in and make their way into a storage area. He throws a light on some fiberglass containers.

CONRAD

What is all this stuff? Maxon Industries. Tricondrite. Invar? This is expensive stuff. I'm sure it has nothing to do with fish.

He scans a couple more boxes and continues on.

JANICE

(reporting)

These materials accommodate M-wave research. Some of this is quantum processing support material.

CONRAD

No way I authorized this. Somebody's in deep trouble.

They continue into the dimly lit storage area.

CUT TO:

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - DAY

Mary and Randall are focused on displays in front of them.

RANDALL

(to Mary)

Call 'em up.

Mary takes a deep breath. Taps a flat panel.

INSERT:

Various renditions of Earth's moon flash across her monitors. A cross-hairs focuses on a point almost dead center on the moon. Target is known as BRUCE CRATER.

MARY

(into her mic)

Bruce; Punta Prieta, do you copy?

MOON TECH ONE (V.O.)

Copy, Prieta; We are go and standing by.

MARY

(into mic)

Copy that, stand by for synchronization.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOON BASE - BRUCE CRATER - NIGHT

The moon is a study in contrasts. Bright sunlight reflecting off regolith. Dark shadows, chaotic, cold.

Quonset hut-shaped mounds are buried half-under the lunar dust and rock; suggesting there's more under-ground. A few lunar vehicles parked outside. One large radio dish is pointing straight up to the blue/green marble called Earth.

INT. MOON BASE - BRUCE

Two technicians, MOON TECH ONE and MOON TECH TWO sit among a wide variety of undecipherable lab equipment. Dominating the lab is an eight by eight foot cubical frame, identical to the one on in the sub-basement lab on Earth.

INSERT - FLAT SCREEN

IMAGE of Mary at her station on Earth. Her face shares space with other readout and displays. Animated graphics hint at calculations taking place.

Another monitor nearby displays cycling views from security cameras mounted around the exterior of the Moon Base.

There is also a timer: 00:50:12:00 - numbers counting down.

CUT TO:

INT. SUB BASEMENT LAB - DAY

MOON TECH ONE (V.O.)
We're at fifty minutes, twelve
seconds, and counting.

MARY
Copy that, Bruce. Stand by.

RANDALL
(on mic and to the
room)
Good morning all. There's a good
chance humanity is going to be taking
a giant leap forward today. We all
have a lot to be proud of. Your
work has been top notch. Well done.
So, to all, good luck, and don't
screw things up if we can help it.
See you on the other side.

MOON TECH ONE (V.O.)
Thank you Doctor Randall. Bruce
out.

RANDALL
Well, we're committed now...I gave a
speech.

MARY
Hah, where's Stanley?

MARTEN
Let see.

Holographic display reveals the passageways and layout of
the entire Oceanographic Institute in three-D. The surface,
where Stanley is, also indicates the heliport, frontage road,
driveways, the hovercraft sitting on the landing pad.

All the passageways are rendered in a three-dimensional
translucent blue. A flashing blue-green square, represents
Stanley. Maroon squares represent the other personnel.

Two unknown yellow-orange blips wander where they're not
supposed to.

RANDALL
(tapping the display)
He can't come snooping around down
here. Not today.

The three-dimensional hologram rotates. A locker room shows
two green figures. One is sitting on a table, one standing.

He taps the image and the room's surveillance camera reveals Feather and Steve prepping for the experiment.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Steve is sitting on the edge of a table. The drug Feather gave him is starting to take effect. He's wearing a full body suit. Gold/copper mesh enveloping everything. His face will eventually be covered over by the mesh, but right now he can still speak.

FEATHER

Okay, go over it again.

STEVE

(sluggish)

I go unconscious. Hear Doctor Randall's voice, from inside my mind?

FEATHER

Yep. We've done all this before. First time with you.

STEVE

Not quite like this. Right?

FEATHER

If I didn't think you were up to it...listen, I can't think of anyone else I can trust to do better.

STEVE

You've been trying to kill me for years.

FEATHER

Best guinea pig 'ever had.

STEVE

Yup. Light those candles.

FEATHER

You've always been the best.

He props himself upright and lets Feather guide him out.

They make their way out of the locker room. Walk a short distance down a passageway and come to a set of metal doors. She waves her ID over a metal plate, unlocks, door opens.

Another small room is full of medial looking tools. Sets Steve on a stainless steel table and starts clipping electronic devices onto Steve's metallic suit.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

(close to him)
Again.

STEVE

(sluggish, to himself)
Key is disk...in my chest.
(memorizing)
Follow flashing light.
(repeating)
The key in my chest. Follow the
yellow brick road.
(pause)
Kidding.

FEATHER

Light should be a rainbow.

INT. SUB BASEMENT LAB - RANDALL'S STATION - DAY

Randall is leaning over a desk full of displays.

RANDALL

(into intercom)
Stanley, get back here. I can see
Conrad and daughter headed this way.
Steve is being prepped. If you can
get down here before they do. They'll
be sealed out till we're done. His
key won't open this door.

STANLEY (V.O.)

Copy that. I'm at the elevator.

RANDALL

That's good, real good.
(to Mary)
Mary, go ahead, lets get warmed up.

The laboratory comes alive. The large eight foot square cubicle frame installed at one end of the lab, lights up. Resting in the middle of this eight foot square space is a mechanical assemblage of four vertical legs attached to a collection of metal boxes. Marten circles the thing waving an electronic device over it. Steps off the M-wave platform.

Mary fingers display in front of her.

MARY

(into mic)
Bruce. Stand by.

MOON TECH ONE (V.O.)

Copy that.

RANDALL
 (to Mary)
 Standing wave-form nominal.

MOON TECH TWO (V.O.)
 Go ahead. M-wave platform is clear.

Marten gives Mary a thumbs up.

MARY
 On my mark then...firing in...Three-
 two-one...mark.

She fingers a display. In the next moment, blue glow, test object, gone. Yellow after-image.

CUT TO:

INT. MOON BASE LAB - NIGHT

The cubical M-wave space in the moon base lab flashes blue very quickly a couple times. The four-legged test mechanism materializes where there where was nothing before.

MOON TECH TWO
 (to moon base one)
 My god. This is really major. Huge.
 Can you smell that? Fish. The
 aquarium. If this works...if this
 works its gonna change everything.

EXT. SURFACE OF THE MOON - DAY

Three space-suited figures saunter across the moon's surface in low gravity. Through their helmets: RED PAWN ONE is a white female. She's attractive, strong; a little bit Viking. RED PAWN TWO is a strong looking white male of indeterminate lineage. RED PAWN THREE is a full-sized black male. They scan the area in silence.

They're identically dressed in the signature black space-suit of the CHAIN operatives. She checks a readout from her forearm PDA.

CLOSE IN - RED PAWN ONE - HELMET

RED PAWN ONE
 (into helmet mic)
 What the hell? Just got an M-wave
 spike off the charts.
 There's nothing out here.

RED PAWN TWO (V.O.)

Actually, not too far from here is where Surveyors Four and Six came down back in 1967. People generally leave it alone. Shrine.

RED PAWN THREE (V.O.)

Right. Practically a default no-fly zone. Good a place as any to hide in plain sight.

(focusing)

Actually...its Bruce.

RED PAWN TWO (V.O.)

Willis.

RED PAWN THREE (V.O.)

Bruce...Crater, four kilometer diameter, depressed center. You'd have to be on top of it to see inside.

RED PAWN ONE (V.O.)

Some damn storage unit fuel depot or something? Manned utility shack maybe. How far from here to Bruce?

RED PAWN TWO (V.O.)

We can make it to East rim in thirty, forty minutes. Good rhythm going.

RED PAWN ONE (V.O.)

Lets go for it. Something's up for sure. We'll form up on that Eastern crater wall.

CUT TO:

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB

Stanley appears at the massive main doors to the sub-basement laboratory. Closing them behind him.

STANLEY

What are we gonna do about this guy?

RANDALL

Where is he?

Stanley watches graphic representations of Conrad and Janice huddled at the lock of another door.

STANLEY

"T" by the power bays.

INSERT - FLAT SCREEN

On a view panel: The door opens for them and they slip into another dimly lit passageway that leads down to the main doors of the secret lab.

BACK TO SCENE

STANLEY (CONT'D)

They're heading down the passageway outside the lab.

RANDALL

Keep an eye them.

(to Mary)

Spectral beacon?

MARY

Good to go...all we need is Steve.

Stanley watches Conrad and Janice at the laboratory double doors on a flat screen.

STANLEY

He's trying his key. Can't foil the dead bolts. Wait a minute. He's activated his comm-wand, he's making a call.

RANDALL

To who?

STANLEY

If he goes over air, anyone can pick it up.

RANDALL

Dammit. Shit...Open the door.

STANLEY

But...

RANDALL

Open it. We have to sit on him till its over. Also, we're shielded in here. Won't be able to radio in or out.

MARY

Is that a good idea?

RANDALL

Its a horrible idea. I know we can't stop the "moon" now, can we? We're coming up on our "window" real fast.

Stanley works a combination on the main doors to the lab.

INT. PASSAGEWAY - MAIN LABORATORY DOORS

Hidden metal slides away as gears gnash - the heavy doors part at the center for Conrad and Janice. They enter.

CONRAD

What's going on here?

Randall gestures Mary to keep on course as he walks over to greet Conrad and Janice. He signals to Stanley to seal the doors behind them.

RANDALL

Conrad Miller. I am Doctor Randall Marten. This is Stanley Wang. Mary Corey.

(regretfully)

To what do we owe this honor?

CONRAD

You know my name. My daughter Janice. I asked you, what the hell's going on in here?

RANDALL

Classified experiment. Its already underway and cannot be stopped. Make yourself at comfortable, you're going to be here a while. The can be no outside communication at this time.

CONRAD

Marten? Doctor Randall Marten? I know you. What the hell are you doing here? You don't do fish. If I remember correctly you were into that quantum kinetic, theoretical metaphysical, lunatic fringe crap, as I recall.

RANDALL

Not funny. This is for real and very important. You're going to stay here and cooperate or be locked away and cooperate...your choice.

(gesturing to Stanley)

And without your toys.

Conrad reluctantly gives up his comm-wand and the key-reader.

Stanley takes Janice and Conrad's PDAs as well, and hides them in a drawer.

CONRAD

So this is the financial black hole
I've been speculating about. You're
a common thief.

(collar heating up)

I'm gonna lock you away forever.

RANDALL

After we're done. Until then sit
down...and shut up.

CONRAD

Now see here! You'll let us out of
here now! I'm going to have you
placed under arrest.

RANDALL

No, you're not! We didn't invite
you. You broke into several secured
areas. You're jeopardizing a
dangerous and vital experiment. If
we throw you out of here you'll have
the world at our door. And that
cannot happen. Not today. Not now.

(to Stanley)

Stanley. You've got tranquilizers
in your bag, right?

STANLEY

Of course. Feather's gonna be here
in a minute, she can deal with 'em.

CONRAD

Now see here! I will not be "*dealt
with*" you clown.

(raising is voice)

I demand to be let out of here.

Randall strides up to Conrad and Janice, facing Conrad square
on.

RANDALL

You're gonna find a seat and shut up -
until we're done. Do you copy?

JANICE

(to Conrad)

Father. We've got to get out of here.

CONRAD

(trying to relax)

You've sealed your fate Marten.

(to Janice)

Record this.

JANICE

Have been.

CONRAD

(quietly to Janice)

Evidence. What's so damn important down here? Can you make any sense of this stuff?

JANICE

(whispering)

This is where the money is. Quantum processors. If I didn't know better, I'd say *that* is an M-wave transceiver.

CONRAD

(controlled whisper)

Impossible. The biggest I've ever seen was about 14" on a side. This thing is too big to be M-wave. There are no crystal linings.

JANICE

(quietly)

Possible. M-wave doesn't send objects; they swap spaces.

CONRAD

(to Randall)

What are you trying to do here?

ANGLE ON LAB

At that moment Feather comes through a set of double doors with Steve. His gold and copper mesh garment shoots flashes of yellow and orange light at odd angles.

He's being steered by Feather to the STASIS COUCH.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

Doctor Randall. What the hell?

INT. SUB BASE LAB - STASIS COUCH

Feather steadies Steve, who is getting his groove on, becoming really relaxed. Marten comes over to her.

FEATHER

Who's that?

RANDALL

(loudly)

Un-invited guests.

(MORE)

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(moving in to whisper)

They were snooping around upstairs and actually got all the way down here. Turns out he owns the place.

FEATHER

I told you, you'd get busted.

RANDALL

Keep an eye on them when you can. Sedate them if you have to. You can do that right? Right now, I have to keep them close or unconscious. I've already threatened to tranquilize 'em.

FEATHER

My god. If it comes to that, I suppose I can, but...

RANDALL

(under his voice)

If you have to scare 'em or something, feel free. He already thinks I'm crazy. May as well take you with me, right?

FEATHER

Thanks a lot.

Stanley strides over to a locker and takes out a handgun. He makes sure Conrad and Janice see him doing this. Its the only weapon in the lab. He walks over to Conrad and Janice with the gun in hand, leaving them no doubt.

STANLEY

(feigning resolve)

Stay over here out of the way and be quiet. Maybe you'll learn something.

RANDALL

Now see here!

Feather helps Steve lay down in the tanning-booth/stasis-couch. Randall is watching Feather.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

He's been briefed on everything?

FEATHER

As well as I can.

RANDALL

Can I talk to him?

FEATHER

Yes, but he'll go under at any moment.

RANDALL

(to Steve)

Steve, this is Doctor Marten. I'm here with Feather and we're about to get started. How you feeling?

STEVE

Weak. Misty.

RANDALL

I just want to go over protocol once more.

STEVE

Key...In my chest. Follow the light.

RANDALL

Yeah, you've got it. We'll be able to communicate more clearly in a moment - and, you're right...get into the light. Multi-colored light. We're calling it a "spectral beacon."

STEVE

Spectral Beacon...nice.

FEATHER

That's it. I should put him under.

RANDALL

(finally exhaling)

Okay then. ..this is it.

Marten backs away as Feather picks up the cover for Steve's face. The material he's laying in is a blue gel which fits his form perfectly.

Taking a long final look at Steve, she gently attaches the gold/copper mesh to cover his face. He is now entirely hooked up to the couch encased in a gold/copper conductive mesh.

Feather taps a flat panel and the heavy upper section of the STASIS COUCH lowers over his body, closing tight.

Narrow thick windows in the upper section let Feather see inside the chamber. Sound of rushing air and electrostatic discharges become noticeable. The lab comes alive.

CONRAD

Randall, what the hell are you doing?

Randall stands erect, walks over to Stanley and takes the gun from the cabinet, turns and points it straight at Conrad's head. This startles everyone.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

Now see here!

RANDALL

One of two things are going to happen:
One...you sit here, quiet, and shut
up that pie hole. Or, two...we lock
you up in storage, unconscious.

Seeing Conrad and Janice imitate deer caught in a headlight, Marten hands the gun over to Stanley. The weapon is heavier for Stanley. But he stuffs it into one of his coat pockets.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(whispers to Stanley)

Don't be afraid to use it. You know
what's at stake.

(to Conrad)

We're not critical right now and can
talk. What we're doing, is fielding
Steve's mind/body slash spirit into
an M-wave. We want to quantify
organic energy levels, and then send
living material finally over M-waves.

CONRAD

Christ! My god! What?!

RANDALL

(waving in Mary's
direction)

Mary may be smart; but even she can't
program M-wave. It's quantum
holographic. No Heisenberg principle,
no frame dragging...or string theory.

Conrad is listening, Janice is sitting at attention,
recording.

MARY

(volunteering)

Computers are stupid. There is no
AI. Not yet. There's no *God* computer
mind we can ask to figure this out.
We are too *stupid* to figure this
out; so the best we can do is cheat.

RANDALL

We may not have the smarts, but what
we do have is *memory*.

Feather is watching her readouts on the COUCH, waiting to reach the TRIGGER POINT. Randall steps over to a set of black steel doors.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Behind here is enough computing power to practically model infinity.

(lecturing)

Infinity may or may not be forever, the cycle from one black-hole to another for example. We don't need all *that*.

MARY

(picking up the ball)

Just enough to model consciousness. It wasn't hard once we could identify it. It's a wave-form; an infinitely variable wave-form.

Mary's workstation comes alive. Displays rendering avalanches of data. A signal draws Mary's attention.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's Bruce for the return test.

Prominent at Randall's work station is a GOOSENECK MICROPHONE.

RANDALL

This is a microphone. Open mic... directly into Steve's mind. The interface is tuned to only *my* voice, so only I can communicate with him through this system. That's just how the system happened to pan out.

(focusing on Conrad)

Saving money. That's why we can't have extra people in here that might say something errant when we go on-line with Steve. We don't know the consequences of him getting mixed messages.

CONRAD

I'm not stupid. What are you saying?

STANLEY

(sharing exposition)

We've been able to bottle the energy which is or what we believe to be what you might call: "life-force energy." With Steve here, we can halt all molecular activity in his body with the stasis couch. His *spirit* - for lack of a better word...

STANLEY

The electromagnet medium left over,
"soul," or "mind," the thing that
dreams; remembers; contemplates.

(pinching his arm)

It's all beyond physical. We can
direct him from within this "mind"
to carry that bottled "energy,"

(pointing down)

Under the lab, to a receptacle on
the moon, via essentially, an astral
projection.

CONRAD

Horse-shit! You're insane!

RANDALL

Once connected to a receptacle on
the moon, we've essentially primed
the "pump" - we only have to do this
once. Close the loop. We believe
anything bio-electromagnetic should
then be able to jump across, as easily
as we send paper clips today.

(pause)

Its quite a mouthful. We don't talk
about it very much.

Marten comes back beside Feather who is watching readouts.

FEATHER

Soon now.

MARY

(to Randall)

Coming down now.

RANDALL

(straightening)

Go for it.

The eight cubic foot framework at the one end of the lab
comes alive. The square deck is awash in blue light. There
is a POP, the deck's platform goes dark, and the spidery,
four-legged test bed they sent up before, reappears on the
Pad.

CONRAD

Good god! What the hell...?

Janice steps back, speechless.

RANDALL

Everybody stand back.

Stanley grabs a device from a nearby shelf and cautiously steps onto the M-wave pad. He waves the device in circles and around the object. Everything checks out. He steps back.

STANLEY

It's all good. The standard signal is in place and operating. Its good.

RANDALL

(to Mary)

Tell 'em we're five by five and ready to go dark.

Stanley helps Randall fold up the legs of the test device and remove it from the platform.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(continuing his lecture)

We reanimate him. Instantly. His body will not have missed a beat. He'll be back in where he belongs and can go on living. We only have to do this *once!* Once we have the code, up-load it to any M-wave matrix and hopefully...send life.

CONRAD

Absolutely incredible. If it works we'll all be rich.

RANDALL

If it works...that's the end of starvation! If it works we get crowd control. The right people where they're needed. We save a world from tearing itself apart.

CONRAD

Well. That too.

MARY

(to Randall)

Bruce.

RANDALL

Everyone quiet. Put 'em on.

Mary fingers a panel.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(into mic)

Randall here, go ahead.

MOON TECH ONE (V.O.)

This is Bruce, copy successful reception of test bed. Standing by for two minute count-down to dark.

RANDALL

Very good.
(to Feather)
How long?

FEATHER

Go ahead. I can fire stasis at any time. He's ready. We shouldn't wait now.

RANDALL

Bruce. Doctor Randall. We are hereby synchronized and ready to fire stasis and systems utilities. We are synchronized on your two minute count-down.

MARY

We are at activation "stand-by" for primary run.

CUT TO:

INT. MOON BASE - BRUCE

Equipment flutters to life. Moon Tech One and Moon Tech Two, sit on the edge of their seats, looking on.

MOON TECH ONE

Copy that Prieta, and we have hand shake. Activating spectral beacon in three...two...one...beacon activated. Verify beacon activation.

Part of the laboratory equipment is devoted to the generation of the SPECTRAL BEACON. A vessel under the floor of the M-wave now awaits the energy field carried from Earth via Steve's hyper-realized astral projection.

INSERT:

Behind them a bank of security camera monitors view the exterior surroundings. A dark shadow crosses a patch of light on one of the monitors, but it goes unnoticed.

RETURN:

MARY (V.O.)

Five by five on spectral beacon.
(MORE)

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Catch you on the flip-side, Prieta
 out...and dark.

MOON TECH ONE
 Flip-side. We are out. We are dark.

CUT TO:

INT. SUB BASE LAB - DAY

Randall stands upright. Scans the lab one last time. Janice opens her eyes but she remains still, sitting upright.

JANICE
 (to Conrad)
 This is not searchable. There is no
 background. Furious debates. No
 funding. Underground. Discredited.

RANDALL
 (looks quizzically at
 Janice - to Mary)
 Is she mind-tapped?

JANICE
 (overhearing)
 I've had a chip-link installed.
 "Mind-tap" is a derogatory expression.

STANLEY
 (stepping closer as
 if looking at a
 trinket)
 Of course. Why waste time going to
 school? Just install a link to the
 the Library of Congress direct through
 your brain. I thought those were
 illegal.

CONRAD
 (unapologetic)
 They are.

Stanley stoops in closer to her to take a closer look, as if she was a robot or something. This annoys her.

JANICE
 Do you mind getting out of my face.

STANLEY
 Sorry.

Marten steps over to a bank of equipment and fingers a panel.

RANDALL

Recorders engaged. This is March 10, 2087. Time is 10:20 AM. This is the Punta Prieta Lab site and we are conducting an M-wave experiment for the eight foot by eight foot wave grid. Specific goal: Electromagnetic biological organisms. In attendance: Lead scientist, myself: Dr Randall A. Marten. Quantum computer specialist: Mary Corey with associate Stanley H. Wang; Dr. Feather Hall is medical officer monitoring test subject - Captain Steven Archer. Two unscheduled and untrained witnesses are present, basically because their noses are too big for their own good.

He dictates and saunters near Conrad and Janice.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Mister Conrad Miller, was basically embezzled by myself and others to make sure this experiment happens. He's accompanied by his daughter Janice; who, as it turns out, is chip-linked, of all things. Hopefully their presence will not become a problem.

He gestures for everyone to find a seat.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(to Feather)

It's on you. When you're ready -

INT. STASIS COUCH

Steve's chest slowly rises and falls. He is breathing very shallow. The gold/copper mesh suit flashes yellow light over its surface at the slightest movement. Feather takes a deep breath. Fingering a flat panel. The movement and flashing light of his suit ceases.

FEATHER

Okay, go for it.

Marten pulls over the goose-neck microphone. He taps a panel. Lights indicate something's been activated.

RANDALL

Listen everyone - this is it.
(MORE)

RANDALL (CONT'D)

This microphone takes my voice, and directly translates it into Steve's consciousness. I'm leaving it off for the moment. We will now access his signal and listen in.

He presses an icon on the flat plain.

Speakers in the laboratory blare with a cacophony of WHITE NOISE, BROKEN UP WORDS, WARBLING. There were words, but there were *hundreds*, all jammed together.

Marten taps a panel to turn off the mic.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

What the hell is that?

She lowers the volume a bit.

MARY

That's it. His mind. You're hearing his present moment thoughts.

RANDALL

But shit. I can't work with that.

MARY

No. We have to filter out everything that isn't part of a linear present moment thought process. I have a couple filters. Should take a sec.

CONRAD

(raising a hand)
We can talk?

RANDALL

For the present moment.

CONRAD

What the hell are you doing?

The tidal wave of NOISE, becoming less already.

RANDALL

We are trying to communicate with Steve's energy-self. The part outside flesh. I like to think of it as an astral energy. No one can *program* that. But that's exactly what we have to get hold of.

The NOISE has quieted down greatly.

CONRAD

But...

RANDALL

We have to talk him through this -
in real time.

(to Mary)

And what?

Mary watches displays for a moment.

MARY

Try it now.

Marten looks to everyone to stay silent. He taps a panel to turn on his microphone.

RANDALL

Steve, this is Doctor Martin. Can
you hear me?

STANLEY

(very weak)

Is anybody there? There, there.
Anybody there? Can't wake up.

RANDALL

I'm right here Steve. Can you hear
me?

STEVE

Steve hear me. Hear me...me.

Mary encourages Marty to continue with a gesture of her head.

RANDALL

Steve...

STEVE

Yes...

RANDALL

Do you hear me?

STEVE

Hear me - yes.

RANDALL

(hand over mic, to
the room)

My god, its working.

Feather is almost in tears.

Mary is nodding "yes" dumbly to herself repeatedly.

Stanley is on the edge of his seat, watching, keeping quiet.

Conrad is focused and frustrated.

Janice doesn't realize her mouth is hanging open.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve, its Randall. The experiment.
Do you remember?

INT. STEVE'S MIND - SUBSPACE

Steve feels nothing. He isn't sure which way is up. Dark grey blankness in all directions. In the center of his vision he can make out a fuzzy dark spot. Slowly the spot becomes larger until it is obviously an immense hole. A rapidly approaching hole. He falls into it - weightless.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Steve.
(metallic in his head)
Can you hear me? This is Marten.
(pause)
I can hear you.

STEVE

(lips unmoving)
Hear you, hear me.

The entire area is a dark hole but he can barely make out walls on the sides, they're moving at great speed, suggesting he's falling. Slowly he rotates like a human target for a knife thrower in a circus.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Where the hell am I?

RANDALL (V.O.)

The experiment? Remember? Feather?

STEVE

Feather.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Do you remember the disk in your chest?

STEVE

The key is a disk in my chest.
(pause)
Follow the flashing light.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - STASIS COUCH

Steve is motionless.

RANDALL

You got it buddy, you got it.
Spectral beacon Steve.

(pause)

I'm going to activate a device now,
and we want you to move to it. Do
you understand?

STEVE (V.O.)

(over lab speakers)

Activate. Move.

Randall taps another flat screen.

RANDALL

There it is. You should be able to
detect a light or concentration of
energy.

INT. STEVE'S MIND - SUBSPACE

Steve notices a disturbance in the distance.

STEVE

I can concentrate.

RANDALL (V.O.)

That's right Steve, concentrate.

STEVE

I hear you.

RANDALL (V.O.)

That's good. Do you see a light
anywhere around you?

Steve discovers he is able to rotate and sure enough there
is a small red light in the distance.

STEVE

I see...Red light.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Keep that light in your sights. We
are going to switch on final stasis.
We're not sure what will happen. Do
you understand?

STEVE

Do it.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - STASIS COUCH

Feather is out of her seat standing in front of the stasis
couch, watching displays. She looks over to Randall.

Randall nods his head in agreement. Feather steps back from the couch, she touches one of her panels.

Suddenly, and loudly, jets of water vapor shoot out the bottom of the couch. A metallic echo. Steve is frozen in time. If anything is left of Steve's still body, its no longer a physical body in time.

INT. STEVE'S MIND - SUBSPACE

Steve explodes, if only for a moment. All around him whatever was dark before becomes less dark. Instead of blackness and shadows, now he can see indigo and maroon. He looks at his hands and arms. He can see right through them. But they are still illuminated somehow from an unseen light source. Rotating around, he is awe struck, by an intense spewing of colors in his direction from out of a tiny ball in the distance. It could be an infinity away, there was no way to gauge distance or scale.

STEVE

My god.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Go into it Steve. You may experience an energy boost, or surge when you connect.

Slowly he leans his head forward and is able to imagine flying like "Superman."

RANDALL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It is raw life force. The key in your chest needs to connect to that.

His Superman idea seems to work, making the red light very slightly larger.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

The big question we don't have an answer to is if or when you do link up with this energy. What exactly you will experience.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - DAY

Everyone is riveted. Randall is standing at his microphone.

STEVE (V.O.)

(over lab speakers)

Lets find out.

Everyone sits quiet, waiting. Seconds tick away. Marten reaches for the mic.

Suddenly they feel the lab shake and wobble briefly.

MARY

Earthquake?

RANDALL

What the hell is that?

INT. STEVE'S MIND - SUBSPACE

Steve has the disk in his chest dead center on the red light he was keeping his eye (mind's eye) on. In reality it is a laboratory receptacle, or urn, buried safely beneath the lab.

Inside the urn is the rarest material known to science; an actual bio-plasmic energy, the stuff that enables life. The problem has always been, it doesn't interact with the real world.

His upper torso is a radiating red star, but in moments the brilliance dies down and as it dies away, what's left behind is an infinite Payne's grey sky. High in this crystalline (mind's) sky, an intense point of light dominates his (mind's) eye. A million brilliant colors all at the same time fighting for space.

STEVE

Jesus.

RANDALL (V.O.)

(feeling stupid)

Steve. Was that you just now? What's happening?

STEVE

My god. I think I can see forever. Absolutely empty...sky. A light - all colors - flashing. Is that it? The beacon?

RANDALL (V.O.)

That's it. Spectral beacon. You will astral project, whatever you can manage, yourself, to the source of that light. That is the matter ballast/spectral beacon on the moon. Once you're at that ballast, insert the astral energy in your chest into those colored lights.

STEVE

Moon. Astral. I'm thinking speed, speed. Trying to think speed.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

Don't know where else to start. Its almost like, if I can project and then follow the projection, repeating, faster and faster, maybe. How long is this supposed to take?

RANDALL (V.O.)

My five minutes should be your five minutes. For you, without a frame of reference its hard to say.

INSERT:

Graphic animation on a monitors depicts the Earth and moon within range "window of opportunity."

RETURN:

RANDALL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Beyond physical restraint, will-power may pull you through. Stick with it. Mary, my associate, will keep monitoring you. We're right here. I am going off mic now.

INT. STEVE'S MIND - SUB-SPACE

Steve has no gold mesh suit, no blue gel, no stasis couch. From his perspective, he exists in his mind's image of himself, which is a face being warmed by a multicolored sphere of radiance.

OVER HIS VIRTUAL SHOULDER: however: An intense GREEN light dissolves into BLUE, dissolves into PURPLE, VIOLET, RED...he does not "see" this light.

INT. SUB BASEMENT LAB

Randall taps a panel to turn off his mic.

RANDALL

Okay, off mic. Absolutely astonishing. What we have done already rewrites science.

CONRAD

What's going on?

(to Janice, but loud
enough for the others
to hear)

I keep asking what the hell's going on? But I can't get any answers.

JANICE
 (afraid to look at
 the stasis couch)
 What are you doing to that poor man?

FEATHER
 He may be poor; but not where it
 counts.

RANDALL
 Right now he is no longer one moment
 to the next. When we bring him back
 to his body, that's when time takes
 over again, and its all downhill
 from there.

JANICE
 You're saying its better to be frozen
 between time?

RANDALL
 Not at all.

STEVE
 (to Conrad, answering
 his question)
 What's going on? We're on our way.
 All this? This is: "desperation on
 parade." We *have* to crack this life/
 M-wave thing. It can't be only big
 enough for a bag of cat litter...dead
 cat litter at that.

CONRAD
 I must be going senile. This huge
 cubical is for what? Hippopotamuses?

Stanley suppresses laughing like an idiot.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
 I mean come on. Try a cat. A
 Dandello or something.

RANDALL
 (explaining again)
 It can only be a perfect cube. It
 doesn't work in any other size.

CONRAD
 (pointing to Steve)
 What does he have to do with it?
 Its a little too Frankenstein, if
 you ask me.

RANDALL

(being patient)

We took Steve out of his body, we're talking to his spirit, his mind, life force, ...astral projection...

(pauses to take a look at readouts)

We need to talk directly to him in real time. No one has done this before. In stasis, the spirit is the only thing left behind. We're tapping into *that*.

MARY

Something's wrong.

RANDALL

What is it?

MARY

Some sort of static, distortion in the way. Wasn't there before.

RANDALL

Put it on.

A rustling, white noise sound fills the air.

STANLEY

What is that?

RANDALL

Listen everybody, I'm going back on open mic. Everyone stay silent.

Randall taps a flat screen and brings his microphone back on-line.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve? This is Randall. Can you hear me?

No Response.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve. This is Dr. Marten, can you hear me?

Randall looks at Mary. Mary listens. Stanley looks on. Conrad and Janice are listening, still for a change.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve, this is Randall, do you copy?

Suddenly Steve's voice fills the room with phase-shifting static. His words can be heard clearly enough.

STEVE (V.O.)

Yeah. Where the hell've you been?
I think I'm making progress...but
don't know. I feel like I've been
slip-streamed into a long narrow
tube, or something. I'm thinking,
"get this over with." I'm going a
long time and too far getting nowhere.
How long is this supposed to take?

Randall keys off mic.

RANDALL

(to the room)
What the hell?

STATIC hisses through the speakers. People are forgetting to breath.

STEVE (V.O.)

Doctor Marten? Steve. I thought I
just heard you say "Can you hear
me?" The first voice I've heard in
months? I know what you said. I
know I heard you.

(static)

Can anybody hear me?

(static)

Can hear me?

Everyone jumps to their feet - mouths open.

MARY

Oh my dear god.

RANDALL

What the hell?

JANICE

What's happening?

STANLEY

What is this?...Some kind of time-
shift? Temporal distortion?

CONRAD

Have you thought this through?
(stepping toward Steve)
This guy. What's going on?

FEATHER

I'm not certain...

CONRAD

Randall, congratulations. Lose a man in a machine?

(pause)

The best you are...a murderer?

FEATHER

(in Randall's defense)

Steve volunteered for this. He *does* that. He's smart. He pays attention. He's *not* suicidal. He's just damn fearless.

(pause)

Curious. Objective. Trainable. A survivor. He'll find a way.

(to Conrad)

But that doesn't make Doctor Marten a murder.

(looks to Steve in couch)

If anyone's going to be accused of murder here, its me.

INT. SUB BASE LAB STASIS COUCH

Peering through one of the thick view ports, Steve is a golden mummy, imbedded in blue gel, frozen, out of time and space.

FEATHER

(thinking to herself)

I'm still here.

Mary calls up some other information on her holograms and flat panels. She taps away on a display and turns white.

MARY

(to Randall)

Oh my god. I've got it.

RANDALL

Mary? What? What is it?

MARY

The Sun! He's taken the *Sun* for the spectral beacon. We're losing him because he too far away! He's going the wrong way!

RANDALL

He's going into the Sun?

MARY

And trying like hell.

(shakes her head)

We've got to get him back here.

RANDALL

Listen up. I have to agree with Mary's assessment, his consciousness has somehow headed into the sun and not the target we wanted on moon...the spectral beacon. He doesn't know he's gone the wrong way. Off course.

Everyone tries to settle down, breath again. Randall taps a display in front of him; activating the microphone.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(into mic)

Steve. We have our first problem here. Listen very closely. You're going the wrong way! Somehow you're putting more distance and time in than we are experiencing here. We received your response delayed by almost a minute or more.

(he pauses expecting a response and nothing comes)

For us, the experiment has been running for about ten minutes, Stop...and return, immediately. There is another light you did not see activated.

(pause)

Steve. What you're going into is the Sun. *Turn around.*

Everyone is speechless. The speakers are silent except for a slowly increasing HISS. The hiss, comforting in a manner allows everyone to take another breath. Quiet. Listening.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve, if you can hear this. Turn around and come back. You are going the wrong way. You're going into the Sun.

Randall taps off the mic.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(to everyone)

We wait.

No wise cracks. He taps the mic on.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve. If you can hear this. Turn around and come back. You are going the wrong way. You're going into the SUN.

Taps the mic off. Combs his fingers through his hair.

INT. STEVE'S MIND - SUBSPACE

Steve is racing toward oblivion and doesn't even know it. Behind him, below him, all around and within him he hears Randall's voice. Its clear, but far away, racing, hissing.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Steve. We have our first problem. You're taking the wrong direction... Somehow you're putting more distance and time in than we are. We received your response delayed by almost a minute. We have to wait to respond. Do you copy?

(pause)

For us, the experiment has been running for about ten minutes, Stop...and return, immediately. There is another light you did not see activated.

(pause)

Steve. What you're going into is the Sun. *Turn around.*

STEVE

Ten minutes? Impossible. I feel like I've been in here forever.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Stop and return immediately. There is another light you didn't see. What you're going into, is the *Sun*. Turn around. Get your ass out of there.

He's been rationalizing: *reduce resistance*, minimize skin area, at least going forward. His body no longer resembled a human's. More like a rubbery chop stick that stretches on forever, hollowed out inside. A straw moving at close to the speed of light. When suddenly it smacks against a wall.

As soon as he screamed in his mind - Stop!! - it happened: Whatever strung out from Steve had become, all of it, collides into a big pile which quickly becomes an expanding pie-pan of astral goo.

Unable to tell up from down. The sun winks out of his awareness, leaving behind a hazy celestial light. Looking down at his hands, they flow away like smoke in a breeze.

STEVE

Guys. What did you do?
(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

Is anybody there?

(to himself)

I've got to calm down. Is anybody there?

He thinks to himself "green." Make everything "green." The sky becomes a cosmic kaleidoscope of green, turning in on itself. Peaceful TOO, he adds quickly. Forms reorient into animated sculptures, slowly taking the shape of a kaleidoscope becoming larger, turning in on itself, extending above him from horizon to horizon in all directions.

Steve becomes more and more solid. The kaleidoscope turns half into an intricate mandala. Looking at his hands again, he can actually see the hairs on their backs. His veins turning into writhing snakes.

Rejecting that from his mind, he turns rigid and then to stone, unable to move. His eyes, fixed on the backs of his hands, are frozen solid. The kaleidoscopic - grinding sky - getting closer by the second.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB

The equipment pulling all this off is raging.

MARY

(to Randall)

The processor.

A display array is monitoring the holographic quantum computer. The indicators reveal it's topping out.

MARY (CONT'D)

I didn't know a quantum processor could possibly, is it crashing?

RANDALL

Its not crashing its crunching numbers.

MARY

Its providing his consciousness whatever fuel it needs to realize itself.

INT. SUB BASEMENT LAB - STASIS COUCH

Feather is seated in front of the couch, standing by. Stanley is over with Mary and Randall. Steve, in his couch, is frozen outside of time and space, not of this Earth.

STEVE (V.O.)
 (over the lab speakers)
 Guys. What did you do? Is anybody
 out there? Something's changed.

Marten reaches for the mic. Taps a flat-panel.

RANDALL
 Steve. We hear you. What's going
 on?

STEVE (V.O.)
 Yes. I can hear you, but I'm stuck.
 I'm staring at my hands, and I can't
 seem to look away.

INT. STEVE'S MIND SUB-SPACE

He tries to look away and cannot. His hands are morphing,
 from sandstone, to granite, to marble, to quartz, to jasper,
 but his hands are strangely drying out in addition, becoming
 brittle. Small flecks becoming chips, becoming chunks;
 falling apart in front of his eyes.

With his hands gone he's free to look to the "sky," and he's
 sorry he did. From horizon to horizon, an angry churning
 green mandala, grinding, gnashing; lowering down on top of
 him.

STEVE
 (looking up)
 I can see a sky, different. I thought
 to myself: *green*, and the sky became
 green, turning in on itself, a
 kaleidoscope of knives.

More and more detail in his green sky, more movement, sharper,
 larger chunks of green, tearing itself apart. Getting closer.
 And he's right in its path.

STEVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 If I'm made of stone...can a sky
 kill me?

BACK IN THE LAB:

Janice can't take it anymore.

JANICE
 Stop it! Stop it!

Randall Dives for the microphone to turn it off.

CONRAD
 Janice. Please.

RANDALL

Its okay. I agree with her. We have to stop this.

STANLEY

How?

MARY

Good question.

STEVE (V.O.)

Guys? Shit, Is anybody there? Guys?

Randall taps on the mic.

RANDALL

We're on it. We're working on it. It appears the main processor is using whatever it needs to feed your consciousness. It has nearly infinite bandwidth. You have to be careful what you ask for.

STEVE (V.O.)

I can't control my thoughts. I tried "centering" and I created a rock eating, green, mandala, kaleidoscope thing, that's blocked up the sky to take me out. I don't think I can think very clearly right now.

RANDALL

Can you see the spectral beacon? It should be all colors - but one at a time, slow cycling. Can you see it?

STEVE (V.O.)

I don't see no colored lights. I can't focus on anything. It's too much. Get me the hell outta here!

RANDALL

We're working on it. I'll be right here, I'm going off mic...stand by.

He turns to the others, palms up, accepting any and all suggestions.

STANLEY

So what do we do? Just unplug the thing?

MARY

He said it was too much.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

We can't slow down the processor,
but we can diminish it.

RANDALL

Go on?

MARY

Pull memory ingots. What else?

Knowing thinking too long about it is not an option, Randall and Stanley rush to the double doors of the main processor room and fling them open.

Inside is a fifty foot long passageway. Down either side, plastic walls, seven feet high, run the length of the passageway.

Down the middle between these walls are eight narrow tables.

Barely perceptible square buttons have to be physically pushed in to eject long glowing rods of memory core.

As ingots are extracted, and laid on the narrow table.

RANDALL

(to compartment mic)
Mary, can you hear me?

MARY (V.O.)

(from wall speaker)
Go ahead.

RANDALL

We've removed six - anything?

MARY (V.O.)

Can't tell yet. This may not help
at all but keep going.

RANDALL

I'm coming out to talk to Steve.
Stanley will continue pulling ingots.

Randall hurries out from the processor bay and gets back to the mic at his station. He taps a panel for the mic to activate. Everyone is on-line with this procedure by now and stays quiet.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve come in. It's Randall, are
you there, can you hear me?

STEVE (V.O.)

Yes.

RANDALL
We are backing down our processor.

STEVE (V.O.)
Yes.

RANDALL
What's going on? Anything happening
on your side?

INT. STEVE'S MIND

STEVE
The sky is not coming down. I don't
know what could happen.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB

Marten cups his hand over the mic and fingers a panel for
the lab intercom.

RANDALL
(into lab intercom)
How many?

STANLEY (V.O.)
Twelve. Keep going? There's two
hundred and forty of these.

RANDALL
Keep pulling till I tell you to stop.

Fingers mic back to Steve.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
(on mic)
Steve, the spectral beacon is still
transmitting. Can you see it around
you anywhere? Can you make it out?

INT. STEVE'S MIND

Steve notices that his fleshy hands have returned.

STEVE
My hands are back. I guess that's
something.
(he's able rotate and
look behind him)
I see a blue light. Way over there.

A spark of intense BLUE is obvious. Now changing to purple.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Yeah. I see it. Changing to purple.

RANDALL

You got it! Make your way *into* that light. You're looking at a signal from the moon. What's a hundred and eighty six thousand miles for a ghost?

INT. SUB BASEMENT LAB - PROCESSOR BAY

Stanley is getting into a rhythm. Three of the eight rows of narrow tables have thirty-two memory ingots removed.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - RANDALL'S STATION

STEVE (V.O.)

Been feeling like a ghost for years. I guess now it's official.

Cupping the mic again and fingering the comm to Stanley.

RANDALL

How many Stanley?

STEVE (V.O.)

Thirty two.

RANDALL

Hold it there for a moment, he's acquired the spectral beacon.

STANLEY (V.O.)

Copy that.

INT. STEVE'S MIND - SUBSPACE

The sky has quieted down. The kaleidoscope is almost beautiful. Suddenly the kaleidoscope comes apart. Green shards falling all around him, but where they land, shoots start to sprout. Growing rapidly. Shooting up into a steel-gray sky, the shoots become trees. Trees become backdrop for a continuously expanding sky. And still they grow. At the center of it all is the spectral beacon. A bright orange now.

STEVE

I wish you could see this. The sky fell apart and its pieces are creating plants that turn into trees and they're so high.

Almost beyond sight, there is a canopy of leaves going on forever.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Wait a minute.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

There's something fuzzy in the way.
My god. That's stars, galaxies, how
can trees grow larger than space
itself?

RANDALL (V.O.)

Steve I wish I could see it. I really
do. Can you get to the light, the
beacon? Can you fly to it? Move
yourself along to it to get the key
in your chest into the matter ballast
on the moon.

STEVE

I'm trying. I seem to be moving.
I'm figuring this out. I've had
time to figure this out.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Usually how it works, you figure it
all out right before you're done.

STEVE

The light is under the canopy of
trees, but it looks like galaxies
are in the way. Is that right?

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - RANDALL'S STATION

Everyone hangs on every word. For them, only thirty- five
minutes have past, it feels like a lifetime.

RANDALL

(into mic)

Focus on getting to the beacon, I'm
going off air for a minute.

STEVE (V.O.)

Copy that.

RANDALL

(taps off mic)

If we pull this off...

MARY

This a a big day. Maybe the biggest
ever.

CONRAD

I'll give you this. You guys are
absolutely "out there" to even come
up with this. But if it works, I'll
back you with whatever you need.

(MORE)

CONRAD (CONT'D)

I want in. But you fail, you're on your own and go to jail.

RANDALL

Wow. Harsh. Don't put anyone under any pressure while you're at it.

(he gives Conrad a sour look)

Do what you have to. This is too important, whatever you think.

STEVE (V.O.)

No! No! I can't. I can't.

RANDALL

(taps on mic)

Steve. It's Randall. What's going on? Talk to me.

STEVE (V.O.)

There's something in the way. Water? Some barrier...

INT. STEVE'S MIND SUB-SPACE

The floor of his forest is out of sight. Below him are tremendous tree trunks that seem to go on forever. He can almost see his reflection in the water above him. He reaches into the water with his hand and bubbles stream through and around his fingers.

In slow motion the bubbles around his hand become spheres of light. Going into one bubble he sees there is nothing but stars, galaxies.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Steve. Do you hear me?

STEVE

I can't do this. I see the light but its too far away.

RANDALL

Have you tried walking?

STEVE

Insane. Get me out of here now. I've had it. I can't navigate this shit.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Stand by. We're going to relieve the processor more. Hang on.

STEVE

You hang on.

INT. SUB BASEMENT LAB - RANDALL'S STATION

Marten finger's off the mic.

RANDALL

(on the lab intercom)
Stanley, keep pulling ingots, he's still too hot. There has to be an appropriate level, but we don't know what it is. Take out another thirty or so. If it's too much, maybe we can put some back.

STEVE (V.O.)

Copy, pulling ingots now.

RANDALL

(to Mary)
Do we have a chance? How long can he put up with this?
(to Feather)
Anything? Any ideas?

FEATHER

(placing a hand on the couch)
None. From here. Until he comes out of stasis, I can do nothing.

STANLEY (V.O.)

(over intercom)
That's another ten...continuing.

RANDALL

(to the room)
Everyone quiet.

He fingers back "on" the mic.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve. Any changes? Talk to me buddy.

INT. STEVE'S MIND SUB-SPACE

He is moving forward still. The endless stars have given up on him. The trees are gone, he's falling, faster and faster. He looks down and the spectral beacon is below him now. He believes this has suddenly become much easier.

STEVE

Don't call me buddy, buddy. If I make it outta here I'm gonna wring your neck.

RANDALL

I'll help you wring it, just get your ass back here. Get into that light and get back here.

STEVE

Something's changed. Everything is thinning out. No its leaking, or something.

The light from the beacon that was below him has shot out in front of him as he lands ankle deep in soft sand. The sky - is blue, dark and endless. The stars and space are gone.

STEVE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm in sand. Some kind of soft sand. What are you doing to me?

INT. SUB BASE LAB

Randall ignores Steve and calls to Stanley on the lab intercom.

RANDALL

(taps off mic)
Stop pulling ingots. We may have gone too far now. How many is that?

STANLEY (V.O.)

Forty-six.

RANDALL

Yeah, hold it there for a while. My god.

Randall taps back on to his mic to Steve.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

Steve. We're holding here. How you doing?

INT. STEVE'S MIND

Steve is making slow progress through the sand. This is compounded by the fact that with each step he takes, that leg turns to sand and collapses, to be restored in time for him to take the next step. The absolute worst way to take a hike. The sky is casting a sharp shadow of him on the sand but there is no sun in the sky to make it.

STEVE

They don't pay me enough for this
shit.

The revolving colors of the spectral beacon cease and hold on red. Continuing forward there is a big red sphere floating in front of him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

What's going on? I'm standing in front of a large sphere. Red sphere. Suddenly the beacon went dark and left this red sphere behind.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Dammit you did it. Steve. The key in your chest has to be inserted into the middle of that sphere.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB

Everyone is on their feet, patting each other on the back. Ridiculous grinning taking place. Stanley exits the processor and joins everyone, who are right on the edge of tears.

INT. STEVE'S MIND SUB-SPACE

Steve is standing motionless before a large glowing red sphere.

He has both arms outstretched in front of him, palms against the sphere. He is pushing but nothing is happening.

RANDALL (V.O.)

. . . with that red zone. Can you surround the disk . . .

STEVE

I can't. Something's in the way. I can't get in.

RANDALL (V.O.)

Keep trying, you're right there, come on for god's sake, do it.

Steve leans into the red glowing ball but it won't give way.

STEVE

I can't. Something's wrong.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB

Randall says nothing but is praying that Mary pulls out a solution. She shakes her head, morose, she can't see a problem. She's drained.

RANDALL

(into mic)

Try to relax . . . take a minute or
two . . .

STEVE (V.O.)

I don't know what is a minute. I
can't relax.

RANDALL

We're on it.

STEVE (V.O.)

You're on it - I'm IN it. How do
you know I'm not stuck in here, for
all time, you bastard.

RANDALL

No!

STEVE (V.O.)

What if there's something else going
on here you don't know anything about,
something doesn't want us to do this,
some unknown barrier or, God! Wait!
What if it's fucking aliens or
something. I've put up with a lot,
but I'm not yet ready for goddam
aliens!

RANDALL

No Steve! Think what you're saying.

STEVE (V.O.)

You don't know!

Mary shakes her head sadly.

RANDALL

(grasping at straws)

Try to clear your thoughts, settle
down...

STEVE (V.O.)

Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Everyone stops breathing.

INT. STEVE'S MIND SUB-SPACE

He slowly passes through the outer skin of the glowing red
sphere. The portion of his arms that are inside the sphere
pulsate and change colors.

STEVE

It's going. I can feel it. I'm
going in. Everything's dark...
What's going on?

He's in a slightly bent over posture, arms outstretched.
The disk on his chest centering on the glowing red sphere.
At last, the disk is dead center inside the sphere. He is
frozen, unable to move, at the end of his journey. Concentric
waves of intense light burst from the disk on his chest.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - MARY

Mary's face is unreadable. Raising the remote in her left
hand she thumbs it several times, watches graphics on the
flat panels rotate information.

MARY

We're there. Its working. Auto-
sequencing is initiating...
(straightening in her
seat)
If he, you, didn't do it. We should
have a code imprint ready to compile.
Dammit.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - STASIS COUCH - STEVE

Steve is frozen in stasis. The light bathing him flickers
quickly, his chest begins to move again. His shoulders move
slightly, he cautiously tests his body. Feather taps a flat-
panel and the massive lid covering his body slowly yawns
open. Feather reaches in and peels back the cover over his
face.

He has a relaxed peaceful expression, eyes closed, as he was
when he went in. On the flip-side, coming back into his
body, he quickly collides with the reality of - now.

Startling Feather, he lashes out, flailing arms; running
legs going nowhere. He bucks against the connections to his
metallic suit. He struggles although he is weak.

STEVE

(weakly)
What the fuck's going on?

INT. STEVE'S MIND

Flashes of intense color radiate outward into nothing. Way
in the distance a horizontal sliver of orange light separates
a dome above him and blackness below him and in that sliver
it gets dark then light and a fiery blast of light, a solar
flare tries to fill up this empty space.

The solar flare turns into a crack which widens and reveals hard-edges, metallic surfaces, lights - dim and bright, colors, cold. A flash of blinding pain, for Steve, is an intense light, shooting through his head.

RETURN

FEATHER

My god!

Throwing his legs out he tries to stand up but he's still connected to the interface of the couch.

RANDALL

Feather!

FEATHER (V.O.)

(to herself, bracing
Steve by the shoulders)

Steve! You did it. . . My god are
you all right?

Feather grabs him under his armpits to hoist him up to a more sitting posture along the front edge of the couch. He helps enough that she doesn't have to lift all of him. She reaches behind him and starts unsnapping conductors.

STEVE (V.O.)

(to himself)

What?

FEATHER (V.O.)

(to herself)

You did it. You really did it.

STEVE (V.O.)

(lips not moving)

Get me out of this.

Feather freezes in shock. She holds Steve as best she can, trying to recollect what just happened.

FEATHER (V.O.)

(not moving her lips)

Can you hear me?

STEVE (V.O.)

Yes. Feather.

FEATHER (V.O.)

The others?

STEVE (V.O.)

Yes, fading. Help Randall. I'm
dying.

FEATHER

(out loud)

No Steve - we're bringing you back.

He stumbles trying to stand up. This does not reflect what's going on in his head.

STEVE (V.O.)

I can feel it fading away. I love -

FEATHER (V.O.)

Steve. Steve. Its gone.

A tear appears from nowhere and rolls down her cheek. Feather bows her head as if in prayer, trying to retain the moment. Frozen, trying to hear. It may never come again. No. Its gone.

FEATHER - CLOSE UP

Her face is losing color. She turns to MARTEN, who's standing next to the table where the memory ingots lay exposed.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

What have we done?

INT. SUB BASEMENT LAB - MARY'S STATION

Mary, entirely out of character, assumes total panic. Leaps out of her chair. Stands fast in place, scared, angry. All without a word.

RANDALL

(borderline moronic)

What's going to happen?

FEATHER

(back to business)

Unknown.

RANDALL

He's already out of stasis.

(looks to the couch)

My god. All the voltages are different, the extensions are gone. The whole thing is finished.

MARY

(speculating)

I hope he comes out of it. He's back in his body, the hard part is done. He's alive. And then again, maybe all his personality is laying out, in there, on the table.

Randall looks dark, disgust mixed with food-poisoning. Embarrassed by his apparent complete failure to think anymore. He turns away speechless.

After a moment he turns back to Mary. She speaks first.

MARY (CONT'D)
 (to Randall)
 Do you believe in God?

RANDALL
 I believe I don't know what to think.

Mary thinks this is funny, or she needed to laugh. She embarrasses herself with a maniacal outburst of LAUGHTER. She rotates back to her instrumentation.

MARY
 We're all going to hell.

RANDALL
 We got the recordings?

MARY
 (focusing)
 Everything, all five channels.
 Holographic, tape, optical, magnetic,
 square-wave. Its a gold mine.

RANDALL
 Shut down and reboot.

MARY
 (disbelieving)
 Doctor Marten?!

Watching Steve struggling with the knot he wrangled himself into; Feather starts disconnecting conductors. Mostly letting him sit on the edge of the couch.

MARY (CONT'D)
 But Steve!

RANDALL
 (to Feather)
 Feather! Keep him plugged in.
 (pause)
 We're going to reload the beginning
 with the primary recorded M-wave
 scan, - Reload *that*.
 (pause)
 Get me the moon.

MARY

I've been trying to establish a comm-link with Bruce; there's nothing there.

RANDALL

What d'you mean, nothing there?

MARY

No carrier wave, nothing.

RANDALL

(to Stanley)

Microwave?

MARY

(answering for Stanley)

Microwave's down.

RANDALL

Reboot. From the top.

CUT TO:

EXT. SURFACE OF THE MOON - BRUCE CRATER - NIGHT

Three black space-suited figures hop off a SKIMMER and move into the shadows. Lights flood the crater rim wall and the abandoned station, code named: MOON BASE (BRUCE). MOON BASE BRUCE is a cluster of partially buried quonset huts and silos. Satellite and communication dishes; one pointing straight up to Earth.

RED PAWN ONE

There's someone home all right.
Dish pointed straight up. Talking
to Earth.

She cranes her head around to look above her and sees a gibbous blue Earth glimmering silently. She can hear her breathing. Earth-light blankets the environs of Bruce crater with a pale-blue glow.

RED PAWN THREE

(into radio)

Occupants of the outpost inside Bruce crater...please respond. Occupants, Bruce facility do you copy? We could use some O2. Can you help us out? Do you copy?

Three dark figures linger outside the facility's main airlock.

INT. MOON BASE BRUCE

Two uniformed lab workers LABTECH ONE and LABTECH TWO, huddle around crowded machinery and lab equipment. At one end of this space however, is a duplicate framed eight foot square cube. Identical to the one in Baja.

Among the wide variety of display screens, an outside view of the exterior airlock door, shows three space-suited individuals.

They choose to not respond to the radio.

MOON BASE RADIO (V.O.)

We're coming in there. I have a key, Chain technology; opens nearly any of this moon stuff. We're not looking for a fight. Really don't want to ruin any perfectly good door seal activators.

Labtech One has his hand on the mic, frozen, panicked expression on his face. He taps a spot on the display to turn on the mic.

LAB TECH ONE

(into mic)

We're not open for business.

RED PAWN ONE (V.O.)

Come on - its cold out here. We won't stay very long. You gotta have a can'o Dinty Moore around there somewhere? Been surveyin' long time, what'ya say.

Labtech One touches a pad and turns off the microphone.

LAB TECH TWO

This is all fucked up. We can't let them in here.

EXT. MOON BASE BRUCE

The surface of the moon outside the habitat is a study in black and white. At an airlock as big as a garage; Red Pawn One takes a box from Red Pawn Two. She presses the device against an access panel.

A few moments later the door comes alive, disconnects and slides to the side.

The black space-suited figures walk in. The large airlock door closes behind them.

INT. MOON BASE BRUCE

Lab Tech One grabs the microphone.

LAB TECH ONE

I repeat, stay out from here, we cannot assist you. We're conducting an experiment and cannot be interrupted.

INT. MOON BASE AIRLOCK

RED PAWN ONE

Wrong answer sunshine. I told you we're coming in.

(to the other two)

Why is it nobody ever listens to me?

(to the inhabitants)

We can give you a hand with your experiment.

INSERT

Remote camera view of the vestibule-side of the internal airlock door. The door detaches from the bulkhead, then moves under hydraulics to the side, out of the way. Three black space-suited intruders step out of the airlock. Once they clear the heavy door, it shuts behind them.

RETURN

LAB TECH ONE

(off mic)

A fucking comedian.

Looks at the eight-foot square M-wave rigging; there is nowhere to hide it. He makes an executive decision.

LAB TECH ONE (CONT'D)

Shut it down. Kill the power to the M-wave. Shut everything down.

The sound of RUSHING AIR can be heard from the pressurizing of the airlock not too far away.

LAB TECH TWO

What about Prieta? What happens to the buffer? We don't know where we are.

LAB TECH ONE

The buffer will pick up where it left off.

Lights on the M-wave test bed go out. Half the displays in the room go dark. Displays show the three sauntering under the low gravity down a passageway to the lab.

There are two doors between them and the lab.

Both lab technicians scramble to shut down the experiment. They rush about turning things off.

LAB TECH TWO

I hope you know what you're doing.

LAB TECH ONE

I barely knew what I was already doing - I just know our friends out there weren't invited.

The large door at one end of the compartment springs open with no effort. The three space-suited individuals come through, helmets still on. The one in front of the others is the woman. She's holding a threatening looking weapon.

RED PAWN ONE

(tapping her helmet)

Air guarantee, you understand. Its too easy to vent a compartment. And yes, we are Chain, and yes, damn suspicious.

(scanning curious equipment)

What the hell's going on in here?

RED PAWN TWO

Which one of you two is in charge?

LAB TECH ONE

(slowly raising a hand)

Me, I guess.

RED PAWN ONE

You - you guess.

(scans area)

You two sit there and shut up.

(to Red Pawn three)

Preliminary?

Red Pawn Three is the black male.

RED PAWN THREE

Its M-wave - but Christ! This field generator, if that's what it is; its nearly 8 feet square!

(MORE)

RED PAWN THREE (CONT'D)
 (partially rhetorical)
 What are you going to send through
 an eight foot square M-wave?
 (realizing that's a
 stupid question)
 My god, you could build worlds with
 a tool like this.

LAB TECH ONE
 We don't answer to you.

RED PAWN ONE
 United Space's sense of duty is
 entertaining, isn't it?
 (gesturing to Red
 Pawn Three)
 Evaluate that.

Red Pawn Three moves over to a bank of strange machinery.
 Waves a device over custom made equipment.

RED PAWN ONE (CONT'D)
 (to the other two)
 These two don't add up. This should
 be a big operation. Or, you haven't
 sent anything yet. We fucked you
 up. Its a prototype or something.

RED PAWN TWO
 Damn experiment.

Behind some lockers Red Pawn Three spots an animal cage.

RED PAWN THREE
 No fucking way!

RED PAWN ONE
 What is it?

RED PAWN THREE
 A cage for an animal?

Red Pawn One gets it instantly.

RED PAWN ONE
 (to Lab Tech One)
 A goat or something...right?

RED PAWN THREE
 Goat?

RED PAWN ONE
 Sure.

(MORE)

RED PAWN ONE (CONT'D)
Eats anything, makes great fertilizer,
low maintenance. Ideal creature for
space habitats.

RED PAWN TWO
You have got to be "kidding" me.

RED PAWN ONE
(letting the pun pass)
This is bigger than anything. If we
weren't out here tooling around,
this would have gotten right past
us.
(pausing for effect)
Boots on the ground. Cops, soldiers,
equipment, crowd control,
cheeseburgers. They're all gonna go
nuts.
(to Red Pawn Three)
Three!

RED PAWN THREE
I'm on it. Down-loaded executables
for the ballast key. There's the
execute line. Got it, copied and
saved. Untested.
(looking up)
Ha. Don't know if it works.

RED PAWN ONE
What's your plan on this? The goat
or something first?

LAB TECH TWO
Of course.

LAB TECH ONE
But that can't happen now. Without
the radio, without the security key?
We can't synchronize.

LAB TECH TWO
Its all in the program.
Communications, everything.

RED PAWN ONE
Three. Can you get in this?

Red Pawn Three hits a few keys on his hand-held device.

RED PAWN THREE
I can break it. Stand by.

RED PAWN ONE
OK, shoot the goofy looking one.

The two lab techs look at each other to see which one looks the goofiest.

RED PAWN ONE (CONT'D)
Relax. Just having fun with 'ya.

LAB TECH ONE
You can't do that. Both sides need to be synchronized.

RED PAWN ONE
The other thing I like about United Space is their stupidity.

LAB TECH ONE
Fine. Perfect. Bite me.

RED PAWN ONE
Three. Can you interface with what's going on in here?

RED PAWN THREE
Yeah, I've got layer routines, dna mappers. Organic materials sensors.
(Reaches for a touch screen bringing it to life)
The core processor is behind that hatch.

Red Pawn Two moves forward ready to take on the hatch.

LAB TECH ONE
Get off it. I'll do it.

Red Pawn Three fingers his hand-held remote device. The base of the M-wave flickers alive, emitting a powder blue, warm, glowing light.

RED PAWN THREE
Time to go to school.

CUT TO:

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - STASIS COUCH

Steve pushes against Feather but she can easily keep him subdued. The others look on scared. Steve is struggling to either sit up, or lay down, and keeping Feather busy trying to get him back into the couch, while he manages to do both.

FEATHER

Steve wait, you're still connected.

Steve does not hear her. She hears grunts and shouting and its all coming from him.

STEVE'S POV

Steve sees his arms and legs being pulled in all directions, unable to move. Like a fly in a web but he is the web. He is grasping the edge of the stasis couch for dear life and doesn't know it.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

You've got to stay still so we can fix you. Can you hear me?

Steve dimly sees the lab. Details, flowing, like seaweed. The deck heaving under his feet. The couch shifting slowly. Lab equipment and walls swimming.

INSERT

He gazes at the faces of each person in the lab, one after the other, one blending into another. The few becoming millions of faces - blending together into two eyes, one nose, one mouth, the universal human.

RETURN TO SCENE

Feather tries to get him to his feet.

STEVE (V.O.)

Am I getting back?

FEATHER (V.O.)

(thinking to herself)

You did it. You're historic.

STEVE (V.O.)

What?

FEATHER

Historic.

Feather quakes at the realization that Steve is communicating telepathically.

FEATHER (CONT'D)

(thinking to herself)

Steve! . . . Can you hear my thoughts?

STEVE (V.O.)

My thoughts?

FEATHER (V.O.)

The others?

STEVE (V.O.)

Yes. Fading. Help Randall. I think I'm dying.

FEATHER (V.O.)

No! We're gonna bring you back. Just hang on.

STEVE (V.O.)

Feather, I...love...

FEATHER (V.O.)

No. Its gone.

She tries to save the moment. Stilling herself, bring back what happened, but its gone.

Janice, which has been an observer up till now, lets out with a blood-shaking scream as she leaps to her feet.

JANICE

I can't take it. Father. Get me out of here. Make them stop it.

Conrad grabs Janice and pulls her to him signaling her to shut up.

CONRAD

Janice. Randall. What the hell? Is he some kind of zombie now?

RANDALL

Unknown. You're not supposed to be in here. Stand aside or we'll lock you away.

(to Mary)

Never show a stupid person the middle of a job.

CONRAD

(out of character)

Fuck you! I'm sick of you.

Steve persists in wrestling with Feather.

RANDALL

Mary. Can we re-initialize the couch or not?

MARY

I don't know.

CONRAD

Is he dangerous?

RANDALL

(looking to Steve)

No. I'd say if we can't restore him fully, he may be three or four days in this fugue.

CONRAD

Three or four days!?

RANDALL

(ignoring Randall)

Feather!

FEATHER

(backing away from
Steve letting him
move on his own)

He's in shock or something. I can't reach him. He's not all here. Doctor. For a moment I thought I could hear his thoughts?

RANDALL

What? Jesus Christ.

The large M-wave chamber at the other end of the lab. Is at full power and in stand-by.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

(to Stanley)

Help her get Steve re-connected.

Stanley and Feather seem to make progress pushing him down into the couch and reconnecting terminals attached to his metallic knit suit.

Trying to get his legs into the couch, Steve's survival instinct forces him to involuntarily kick out against the couch. Throwing him on top of Stanley, both of them in a tangled heap on the deck.

Steve lunges again snapping a last connector and flings him into a wall, collapsing, sitting on the deck with his back to the wall. Feather rushes to his side. Holding him to catch his breath.

Randall is distracted by display activity on the main control station to the lab M-wave.

RANDALL (CONT'D)

What the hell is going on?

MARY

I see it. I don't know.

RANDALL

They're running the initiator we just coded. They're sending something.

The large M-wave steps up a notch in brightness.

MARY

Dammit. We're not ready for this. Why are they breaking from procedure? We've got tests to run. What are they thinking?

RANDALL

You still can't raise them?

MARY

Nothing. Something's wrong.

An electrical popping noise gives way to a loud SNAP. A tectonic rumbling can be felt as they sit staring at the M-wave platform. Steve is the only one gazing into nothingness.

Randall steps cautiously toward the M-wave. Sheets of light flash from one end of the cubical space to the other.

For a moment there is a suggestion of three human forms trying to take shape.

RANDALL

Shit, what the hell? We're not ready!

INT. STEVE'S MIND - MONTAGE

LAB DISSOLVES, moving in jerks and flows all around him. Bright colors dance randomly.

HIS MIND'S EYE, he sees a pair of women's green eyes. Clear and piercing. Leathered crow's feet reveal a life lived hard. He looks down in his mind's eye and sees an assault rifle in his hands.

GREEN EYES are replaced by the dark brown eyes of a man. He looks down at his hands and he sees a recording tech device, held in his right hand.

HAZEL EYES, tired eyes. He dares to look down again and he is holding another weapon of some sort. He turns it over in his hands, feeling its weight.

RETURN:

He fights to open his eyes but instead gets out *one* word:

STEVE
(loud enough)
Chain.

FEATHER
(hearing Steve)
What's that?

STEVE
Chain.

FEATHER
(to Randall)
The Chain Randall! Steve says its
the Chain!

RANDALL
What?! Impossible!
(to Mary)
Record this.

MARY
I'm on it.

RANDALL
That's right. They wanna raid the
game? They just became guinea pigs.
Make sure we get *everything*.
(to Stanley)
Got that gun?

Stanley reluctantly grasps the handgun.

Another loud electrical SNAP draws everyone's attention to
the platform of the M-wave.

CONRAD
Randall? What the hell's happening?

RANDALL
Bastards found the lab on the moon.
They're already onto us? Its
unbelievable. I didn't think they
were this stupid though.

CONRAD
This can't be happening.

The image of three space-suited figures, flickers two times.
Randall and Conrad saw through the visors of their helmets
enough to make out a woman and two men, one of them black.

They are holding something in their hands.

RANDALL

They're wearing space suits?

MARY

There are only two guys in Bruce.

RANDALL

(angry)

These bastards...

A final blue flash, a flicker and three hulking, black space-suited militants, appear on the M-wave platform. There is a crash of light, and silence.

Background noises of the lab equipment slowly return.

They react with effort to the heavier Gs; the sudden weight making them barely able to stand upright. The man and woman in front carry assault rifles. The big black guy in the back has electronic devices in pouches on his space suit. In his right hand a black box is held in front of him.

Conrad and Randall back away from the M-wave. Janice screams, startling everyone except for the three space-apes and Steve.

Feather pulls her eyes away from the M-wave and looks at Steve. He is oblivious. Awe-struck by something unseen.

M-WAVE PLATFORM:

The woman in front pointed her weapon at the oldest lab coat there.

RED PAWN ONE

What in God's creation was that!
What just happened?

They remain motionless, unsure to move. The black guy with the sensors cautiously waves his instrumentation around.

RED PAWN THREE

Gravitation 1.0 - 65 feet below sea level. Breathable atmosphere. We're on Earth baby!

RED PAWN TWO

It's not possible!

RED PAWN ONE

This is a subterranean lab, we're off the Pacific, Baja, Punta Prieta Oceanographic.

Randall and Mary look on defenseless; and mortified.

Conrad is paying close attention but trying to not draw attention to himself.

Janice is sitting upright again, taking in everything, trying to be invisible.

Feather is kneeling next to Steve. Steve is relaxed and out-of-body.

INT. STEVE'S CONSCIOUSNESS

Like a fly on the wall Steve visits Red pawn one.

RED PAWN ONE (V.O.)

(to herself)

My god. What the hell? I'm here.
I'm here. What just happen? My god
where am I? What's going on?

Steve could visit the space between Red Pawn Two's ears, through his helmet, eaves dropping.

RED PAWN TWO

(to himself)

I'm getting too old for this shit.
If this is Earth, lets get outta
here.

Steve hovers over Red Pawn Three.

RED PAWN THREE

(to himself)

God damn...almost threw up in my
helmet. Shit. Is this real? What's
going on? This ain't Earth!

Steve checks out the young woman with the old man.

JANICE (V.O.)

(thinking to herself)

Dad's going to go nuts. This is a
gold mine. Huge mistake. If they
don't kill us. Record this...as
best I can. What's this world come
to? Where did they get that color?

Steve visits the fat guy in the suit who has no reason whatsoever to be there.

CONRAD (V.O.)
 (thinking to himself)
 This has to be controlled, its too big for anybody. Its too much. But God, the growth margin. It'll fuel the economy for decades. Do they have any idea?

Steve visits Mary who is quiet. Spent.

MARY (V.O.)
 (thinking to herself)
 Nothing. It's not fair. What was I thinking? Name it after me maybe? The Mary? Mary's an okay name.

Stanley was off to the side, but Steve was more interested in Randall.

Steve visiting Randall.

RANDALL (V.O.)
 (to himself)
 Sons o' bitches. Squirming fucking rats. Into everything. Why can't you just leave us alone. You do nothing for fixing the problem. All you can do is break shit. Cavemen.

Steve folds back into himself. With Feather's help, he tries to get up on two feet. He may very well qualify as a zombie at this point.

RED PAWN ONE
 (muffled through her helmet)
 I'm at pressure, I'm removing my helmet. Two?...Three?...Keep yours on.

RED PAWN TWO
 10-4.

RED PAWN THREE
 Copy that.

She releases a clamp holding her helmet to her torso shell. Once she gets it over her head, the bulky weight takes it away from her. It drops loudly onto the m-wave platform.

RED PAWN ONE
 Not used to gravity.

Randall is standing closest to the woman in front with her head sticking out the top of a spacesuit.

RANDALL

Who the hell are you?

RED PAWN ONE

Chain. Patrol. God what's that fish smell? Trying to figure out what's going on outta the East Bruce crater wall. You may be outta the way, but not invisible.

RANDALL

I asked you who you are?

RED PAWN ONE

What?! What my mother called me? Late for supper? Susan! What the fuck difference does it make what my name is?

(changing subject)

Any decay detector can pick up M-wave activity. Stick's out like a sore thumb. We find people pulling all kinds of stunts out here. But this, this is a prize winner.

RANDALL

What do you want? A piece of the pie? Stock options?

RED PAWN ONE

No. Maybe no one profits. How about that?

RANDALL

We destroyed Earth. We hide from the weather.

RED PAWN ONE

(changing the subject)

Three. What've we got?

RED PAWN THREE

Quantum holo-memory and processors. Yep, here's the ballast. Good, its holo-scripted. Can take the whole thing on the crystals.

RED PAWN ONE

(looking at Mary)

Very exotic. Quantum holographic processors. This...

(gesturing)

Does it have A.I.?

MARY

No one has A.I. - never will. A.I.
is a myth.

RED PAWN ONE

You gotta get out more often.

MARY

What are you saying?

RED PAWN ONE

Join us. You're cute. We can show
you all sorts of stuff.

Mary was not offended by the thought.

RED PAWN ONE (CONT'D)

Three?!

RED PAWN THREE

Almost there. Beautiful stuff.

RED PAWN ONE

You know what I want to do?

RANDALL

What do you want to do?

RED PAWN ONE

Distribute the execute code, ballast
specs. United Space doesn't profit
from this. Make all this public
domain. I think things 'ill be
speeding up real fast around here.

Something catches her eye on a stool a short distance away.
The older man in a suit. Red Pawn One takes one step toward
Conrad. Conrad is looking down, trying to be innocuous.

RED PAWN ONE (CONT'D)

(looking down at Conrad)

Who are you?

(looks at Janice)

You two related?

(recognizing Conrad)

I know who this is. What are the
odds? Of course, you're the one who
bankrolled this. Miller. Yeah,
Conrad Miller.

(to Janice)

You can't be a hooker.

JANICE

I'm his daughter.

RED PAWN THREE

Way to go, One.

RED PAWN ONE

Grab him.

Chorus of "Whats!"

RANDALL

Come on, the moon? What will you do with him on the moon?

RED PAWN ONE

Who gives a shit where we take a hostage?

JANICE

(volunteering)

Take me instead.

CONRAD

No!!

RED PAWN THREE

Why?

RED PAWN TWO

Now you're talking.

RED PAWN ONE

Two, shut up. Done. Grab her.

RANDALL

That's crazy. You don't want her.

RED PAWN ONE

Wrong. If you're concerned about her welfare, you'll supply us on the other side - "The other side" - till we get set up on our own.

Red pawn Two is dragging Janice onto the M-wave platform in her sun dress. Her first impulse was adventure, but quickly things begin to terrify her, she's surprised by her scream.

Red Pawn One picks up her helmet and reattaches it. Janice is acutely aware that she has no helmet.

RED PAWN THREE

(off topic)

I'm ready, I think I can send us back. We've got everything we need.

Janice is held tightly by Red Pawn Two, eyes darting around, too terrified to scream.

INSERT:

Memory ingots lay exposed, glowing on the workbench.

RETURN:

Three space-suited militants. Janice - stand within the eight foot square platform of the M-wave field cubical.

Steve's on his feet; taking one ragged step, then another, toward the M-wave. Ghost-like, moving closer. Red Pawn Three spots him, does a double-takes on his scanning device.

RED PAWN THREE (CONT'D)

Who the hell is that?

RED PAWN ONE

Where?

RED PAWN THREE

Twelve o'clock. Doesn't register on the bio-scan?

RANDALL

Steve. Part of the experiment.

Steve is striding slowly toward the M-wave from the dimly lit area of the lab.

RED PAWN ONE

Zombie at twelve o'clock? Three; get us the hell out of here.

(to Randall and Mary)

This is why you'll never win. You guys come up with this shit all the time never thinking twice for the consequences.

Red Pawn Three activates the controller in his gloved hand and the M-wave comes alive. SOUND and LIGHT fill the platform, everyone backs away from the massive M-wave.

No one can interact with Steve. All eyes are on him, now an apparition, slowly reaching into the M-wave's energy field with his right hand extended in front of him.

Time freezes. Everyone is incapable of moving on until these words are spoken from within Steve's thoughts.

STEVE (V.O.)

(echoing)

We...are not the answer.

Time resumes.

The large cube of blue light flashes once. After-image of three space-suited figures, and a beautiful hostage frozen in terror - disappear into thin air.

The light levels in the m-wave fade away. Steve fades away into nothing. Gone forever. Feather is spent; and takes a seat. She looks over to Randall with empty eyes. Randall is focused on nothing. Mary sits quietly, breathing shallow.

RANDALL

We are not the answer?

(beat)

What...? Was there a question?

INT. SUB-BASEMENT LAB - M-WAVE

The eight foot cube comes alive. SHADOWS of two figures flash briefly. A final flash of blue light and the two lab technicians from Moon Base Bruce appear, standing on the deck of the M-wave. Knees buckling, they collapse to the deck not used to the pressure and sudden weight gain of Earth's gravity.

The taller one faints dead away, the second one quickly growing catatonic. All he can say is:

LAB TECH ONE

(gasping)

What? What just happened?

FADE OUT: