

JUMPING JACK

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FADE IN

EXT. HYPERSPACE

A million stars stream incredibly fast, then slow down.

An exploration ship, the "Fer de Lance", pops into normal space --

FDL NAVIGATOR (V.O.)
Countdown to reentry. 5, 4, 3, 2 --

EXT. SPACE

A final flash, then friendly stars appear.

CAMERA SHOWS ONLY LOCAL SPACE, getting oriented.

(No need to show the ship's NAVIGATOR, CAPTAIN, SCIENCE OFFICER, COMM OFFICER, or LEAD YARSH. They'll be dead in a minute.)

FDL NAVIGATOR (V.O.)
And... dropout. Normal space
achieved.

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(light tone, but tense)
Good work, Nav. Engineering? Wake
up down there.

(Sam and Hannah, starship engineers, are our heroes.)

HANNAH (V.O.)
Just stepped away to fill the coffee
pot.

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
Throttle back but stand by for evasive
action.

HANNAH (V.O.)
Idling, ready for ramp-up.

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
What'a we got under the tree? Talk
to me, people.

PAN to show a yellow sun has planets.

Planet stats pop up.

SCREEN OVERLAY: Star 567-34a. Size: G-class. Mass: 256
10(6) tonnes. Planets: 5 (then) 6. Fourth planet albedo:
14.3

FDL SCIENCE OFFICER (V.O.)
Fourth planet is inhabited, sir.
Atmosphere indicates combustion of
fossil fuels.

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
That'd be Nereus. Good. What else?

FDL NAVIGATOR (V.O.)
Man-made mass at sixth-level orbit.
Signs of life. It's... a metallic
space station.

FDL SCIENCE OFFICER (V.O.)
No artificial satellites listed in
database, sir.

PAN to the Jack, a space station made of six pods joined at
a central hub. (Like a girl's game of Jacks.)

SCREEN OVERLAY: Space station. Mass: 3.3 10(4) tonnes.
Composition: nickel, iron, molybdenum...

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
Wow. It's big. Up screens and hail
it.

FDL COMM OFFICER (V.O.)
Screens up. Hailing. Contact.
Answer-back is outdated...
Recalibrating...

FDL SCIENCE OFFICER (V.O.)
Captain, our firewall is -- disabling.
The screens are retracting --

FDL LEAD YARSH (V.O.)
(Octopus-alien voice)
Hostile computer code attacks ship's
mainframe.

SCREEN OVERLAY: 1010100 01001010 DIE 010101010 DIE 100010

Scene of SPACE gets shaky, snowy, scratchy.

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(signal scratchy)
Override. Shut it off.

FDL LEAD YARSH (V.O.)
 (garbled)
 Override no respond. Isolating.
 Backups: fail. Server: fail.

FDL SCIENCE OFFICER (V.O.)
 Firewall is neutralized. Counter
 sweeps are -- Uh, oh. Handshaking --

HANNAH (V.O.)
 Bridge, the outside temperature just
 went red. Activating emergency
 cooling.

SAM (V.O.)
 Bridge, the air quality is plummeting.
 Sealing vents to prevent -- No good.
 We're venting atmosphere.

HANNAH (V.O.)
 Cooling's not -- Sam, the lights
 are shorting out.

SAM (V.O.)
 The ship is trying to kill us. Got
 it.

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
 (coughing)
 Smoke -- Engineering -- We can't
 breathe up here.

OVERLAY: DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE DIE -- (fritzes out).

HANNAH (V.O.)
 Bridge. Do you copy? We're trying
 to restore -- Bridge?

SAM (V.O.)
 Hannah, the doors won't open.

FDL CAPTAIN (V.O.)
 (suffocating)
 Abandon -- ship --

INT. FDL ENGINE ROOM

Sudden light is startling after black space.

Engineering is a cluttered hole. There are displays, devices,
 and tools clamped to every surface.

SAM and HANNAH White, space engineers, scramble for an escape pod seen through a small hatch.

Hannah is mid-30s, any race, tall and willowy.

Sam is 39, any race, squat and homely.

Both wear mechanic's overalls and tool belts.

SAM
Grab e-rations.

HANNAH
They're in the lifepod. Come on.

Hannah clambers through the tiny hatch to the lifepod. Sam takes time to grab his huge tool bag.

SAM
I need my tool bag. And specs.

HANNAH
Drop it. We gotta get out.

INT. ESCAPE POD

The escape pod is a lifeboat with a tiny cockpit.

Hannah squirms in to man the controls.

With the ship still trying to kill them, the door tries to shut Sam out. Sam wedges a tool bag in the doorway, tries to squirm in, but gets stuck.

Hannah prepares to kick the escape pod loose.

SAM
I'm stuck.

HANNAH
(busy)
Stop fooling around. Cycle the hatch.

SAM
Really. I'm stuck.

Hannah tries to drag Sam in, but he's stuck.

SAM
Lemme back out.

HANNAH
No. The hatch will lock. You'll be
stranded.

SAM
Go without me.

Hannah hauls on Sam's tool belt and yanks him in -- because
the hatch suddenly SLAMS open. (Till trying to kill them.)

Sam tumbles atop Hannah, tries to shut the hatch. It's stuck.

SAM
Now it won't close!

Smoke pours from ship's ventilators, then into the pod.

HANNAH
It's trying to poison us.

SAM
Hit the release lever.

HANNAH
With the hatch open? We'll space.

SAM
Do it!

Hannah kicks the release lever.

A small EXPLOSION boosts the escape pod into space.

With the hatch open, their air spills. They suffocate.

But free of the deadly ship, Sam can slam the hatch.

Both hold their breath while Hannah jabs buttons. Good air
GUSHES from vents. They breathe.

And turn to the next crisis, reading screens.

SAM
Where the hell now? We can't make
planet-fall in this tub.

HANNAH
There's only -- that jack-shaped
thing. The space station.

COMPUTER SCREEN: The Jack spins slowly in space.

SAM
Is it viable?

HANNAH

It's hostile. It sicced killer code
on us. But Utta read signs of life --
Oh, Sam...

Sam and Hannah realize their comrades are dead.

SAM

Let's keep ourselves alive. Aim for
this Jack thingy. And pray our fuel
holds out.

The escape pod falls through space toward the Jack.

TITLE OVER

JUMPING JACK

PAN across the Jack, a giant space station.

It has long windows and lights. Through windows we see a
vague green blur: a hopeful sign of life.

The Jack is huge: each pod five miles long.

The escape pod is dwarfed as it docks near the center.

INT. AIRLOCK

Plain, dim-lit, dusty from years of disuse.

The airlock CREAKS open.

Sam and Hannah step out.

They wear tool belts, survival packs from the escape pod,
and Sam carries his tool bag.

Hannah touches a surface and finds thick dust.

HANNAH

Hasn't been used in years. That's
bad.

SAM

That's good. No one's waiting to
kill us.

HANNAH

No one's waiting to help us, either.

They creep, apprehensive.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR

Dim-lit, dusty, with some trash.

Sam and Hannah stop. They can go left or right, but Sam nods up a ladder.

SAM

We're in the skin of the pod, at the bottom, so upward means inward.

HANNAH

Inward means people.

They climb. And climb.

Unnoticed, a videocam tracks them.

HANNAH

(puffing)

How thick is this damned skin?

Sam, climbing below, grins up at her ass.

SAM

Dunno, but at least there's a view.

HANNAH

Behave. Ah, daylight.

MORE SERVICE CORRIDOR.

This service corridor has daylight to one side.

Hannah goes that way. Sam reads a wall map.

CLOSE ON: Map/diagram of East Pod. Each "pod" is a cylinder five miles long and a mile across. Long windows admit sunlight, and lamps give more light.

A diagram shows six pods joined at a single round hub. The pods are North, South, East, West, Port, and Starboard.

SAM

This is "East Pod". Ten klicks long and two klicks across. And the entire inside is terraformed.

HANNAH (O.S.)

Oh, Sam...

SAM
(panicking)
What?

EXT. HATCH 1 -- DAY

An exit hatch is mounted in an artificial hillside. The entry is overgrown by bushes.

Sam runs up. Hannah stands awe-struck.

The pod is an inside-out paradise.

Grass, hills, waterfalls, old roads, and distant villages.

Oddly, the landscape curves up and around and overhead.

SFX: Take a rural landscape and curl it into a tube, then look down the tube.

HANNAH
It's -- beautiful.

SAM
It's stupid. All this wasted space.
They could have squeezed a thousand
apartments in here. And free-falling
water? And a forest? Who needs
those?

HANNAH
You -- It's a closed ecosystem, a
giant terrarium. Self-sustaining,
foolproof --

Nearby, they hear coyote-like YIPPING and HUMAN SHOUTS.

SAM
Inhabited.

HANNAH
Whatever they are, they're coming
closer. Close the hatch.

But the hatch is clogged with dirt and branches, can't close.

They duck down.

HANNAH
Look!

The yippy creatures arrive. Lizards (Tliggoes) have beautiful iridescent scales colored like steel, copper, and brass.

These raiders wear tunics and carry bows and arrows and spears.

They drag captives: a Woman and Boy in farm clothes.

SAM
Tliggoes are extinct.

HANNAH
Extant.

Human SHOUTS of pursuit come closer.

Lizards run for the hatch where Sam and Hannah hide.

SAM
Where else?

HANNAH
Run.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR

Sam and Hannah run down the corridor toward blackness.

Lizards enter the corridor and run. Strong lizards carry captives.

The leading LIZARD CHIEF blunders into Sam and Hannah.

LIZARD CHIEF
(surprised)
Hurrnrh?

SAM
Hannah. Get down!

HANNAH
You get down!

In near-darkness, Sam flings his tool bag at Lizard Chief.

Sam draws a weapon (a flare gun).

Down low, Hannah swings a wrench and CLOBBERS a lizard.

A tumbling fight ensues. Lizards try to stab. Sam and Hannah swing tools. SHOUTS, SQUAWKS.

A lizard tries to stab Sam. Hannah whacks the blade aside.

SAM
Watch your eyes!

Sam fires a flare. FOOP!

The sizzling light-ball SLAMS a lizard, burning, killing it.

Spooked, the lizards run on with their captives, then are lost in darkness.

Sam and Hannah drag the dead lizard back to the hatch.

HANNAH
What the hell'd you shoot him with?

SAM
Flare gun. Don't ever say I carry too many tools.

HANNAH
We shouldn't have killed it.

SAM
It would have killed us.

HANNAH
But Tliggoes are -- legends. Precious. Like -- unicorns.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER (O.S.)
Hell-o in there. Come out.

Sam and Hannah leave the dead lizard and step out.

EXT. HATCH 1 -- DAY

Nobody is visible around the hatch.

HANNAH
Hello? We're coming out. We're glad you -- Hey!

Hannah, then Sam, are tripped by spears and stomped on.

The rescue party are farmers with swords, spears, crossbows, a few antique muskets.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER holds a sword to Sam's throat. RESCUER 2 and 3 frown.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
OK, strangers. Tell us why we shouldn't kill you.

HANNAH
Because we're friends?

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
Not hiding in no tunnels, you ain't.

HANNAH
We weren't hiding.

RESCUER 2
What were you doing, then?

RESCUER 3
Scouting for the lizards, I bet.
Kill 'em and dump 'em in the tunnel.
Stall the next batch.

HANNAH
Hey, we killed a Tliggo.

SAM
Take a look. And pick up your foot,
groundhog.

Rescuer 2 peeks in tunnel.

RESCUER 2
She's right, Zeke.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
Well, haul it out.

RESCUER 2
I ain't going in there.

Two rescuers haul out the dead lizard. The leader nods.

They move away from the spooky tunnel.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
OK, I guess you're true enough.

RESCUER 2
(checking flare gun)
What kind of gun is it?

RESCUER 3
Look at them fine tools. Where'd
you get 'em?

HANNAH
We, uh, found them in a storeroom.
We were lucky.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
Nervy, too. How long you been
salvaging?

SAM
Salvaging?

HANNAH
Not long.

RESCUER 2
Where you from?

SAM
(raises eyebrows to
wife)

HANNAH
(casting about)
There.

Hannah points across the pod at a tiny distant town.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
Amsterdam? Shit. Mighty slim
pickings 'round here. People who go
down tunnels usually don't come out --

Rescuers point at nearby smoke.

RESCUER 3
The town's afire!

Leaving Sam and Hannah, rescuers rush off.

SAM
Jesus. For a minute there --

HANNAH
Grab your gear and c'mon.

Sam and Hannah run across the rural landscape.

SAM
Honey, mind telling me why --

HANNAH
Stick with them.

SAM
Why? They hate us.

HANNAH
They're just -- skittish. And who
else do we know here?

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

A broken road. Asphalt chunks are piled up as fence posts.
A gate is made of twisted red and blue wires. Sheep graze.
Sam and Hannah jump the fence.

SAM
These are data cables.

HANNAH
Keeps the sheep home.

SAM
They collapsed with a vengeance in
these parts.

HANNAH
They're still breathing. Come on.

SAM
(puffing)
We gotta liberate a ground car.

EXT. LEYDEN -- DAY

Leyden is a village of wood and stone buildings, medieval-frontier.

Three separate homes burn.

HANNAH
They'll lose the whole town.

SAM
Idiots. Don't they know wood's
combustible?

HANNAH
Tell them after. Help now.

SAM
Help how? What are they doing?

Villagers use a 25' fire hook to pull down a burning building.
(An old fire-fighting method where water is scarce.)

Sam, not understanding, grabs a bucket and flings water.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER snatches the bucket away.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
Are you crazy? You think this stuff
grows on trees?

SAM
Hey, don't thank me for risking my
life --

He pushes Sam into line pulling the fire hook.

RESCUE PARTY LEADER
Grab hold, you dumb shit, and pull.

Sam grabs on. So does Hannah.

Together, the team collapses the house to save others nearby.
People use water to sop blankets to beat sparks.

HANNAH
Oh. That's what the water is for.

SAM
Next house.

Rushing, Sam and Hannah join another fire hook team.

LATER.

Sam and Hannah wash off soot at a fountain.

HANNAH
That was fun.

SAM
What a primitive --

HANNAH
Shh.

MAYOR MATILDA brings beer in mugs. Sam and Hannah drink.
Sam grimaces: it's warm.

Mayor Matilda is dumpy and gray but jolly.

SAM
Finally, a sign of civilization.
(gags on warm beer)

MAYOR MATILDA
So, you kill Tliggoes and put out
fires. That makes you welcome
anytime. I'm Matilda. Mayor.

HANNAH
Sam and Hannah White. Newlyweds.

SAM
Which reminds me...

HANNAH
Behave.

MAYOR MATILDA
So you're salvagers from Amsterdam.

SAM
Word gets around fast.

MAYOR MATILDA
Reason I ask, is, can you rustle up
gunpowder? The Tliggoes been hitting
us hard, and we're down to spit and
sawdust. We need decent guns, too,
but I know the tunnels aren't safe.

HANNAH
What exactly are the dangers in the
tunnels? Hereabouts? Just Tliggoes?

MAYOR MATILDA
Them, sure. But ain't rogue robots
a bigger --

A low RUMBLE starts, then rises to a ROAR.

Sam and Hannah are jostled off their feet by an earthquake.

HANNAH
E-earth-q-q-

Sam and Hannah bounce across the ground.

Smaller buildings CREAK or COLLAPSE.

The "podquake" subsides. Villagers are more annoyed than
frightened.

MAYOR MATILDA
Perfect end to a perfect day.

VILLAGERS
Third podquake this month. Good
thing the fires were out. The baron
oughta do something. They'll crack
the town in two, just watch.

HANNAH
Sam, what the hell --

SAM
Shh. Let's fade. I want to look
out a lake.

HANNAH
Look out a lake?

Casually, Sam and Hannah exit the village.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE

A "lake" is actually a glass porthole to admit sunlight.

Sam and Hannah lie down to peer into space.

HANNAH
(peering)
What are we looking for?

SAM
(peering)
Rescue would be nice. Maybe the
earthquake was a ship docking.

HANNAH
Not likely. This is an ass-load of
mass to move. How long, do you think,
before the Union sends another ship?

SAM
Never?

HANNAH
The Union has to rescue us.

SAM
They don't know we're alive. Or
this space station even exists. All
the Union knows is their scout ship
didn't come back.

HANNAH
I can think of worse places to be
stranded. Except for these
earthquakes. Podquakes. Weird.
The locals don't seem worried.

SAM
They drink warm beer.
(beat)
It's not meteor strikes causing
quakes, so what is?

HANNAH

Can we get back outside? On the pod's skin? Set up a transponder in case the Union comes looking?

SAM

Only if we find exo-suits. The locals wear wool. You'd need a tight weave to keep out vacuum.

HANNAH

Ooh, there's the sun. And what's that?

SHOT OUTSIDE: Through tinted glass, a sun swings by slowly. Then another pod swings by. Then another, then another.

HANNAH

Six O'Neill pods connected by a central hub. Just like a jack in a kids' game.

SAM

A girls' game.

HANNAH

On my planet, it was equal opportunity.

SAM

On my planet, girls bite the barbs off barbed wire.

HANNAH

Yeah. I've met your sisters.

(beat)

Cute idea, this Jack. How come we don't have any at home?

SAM

Because the locals are smarter than us. Can you milk a goat?

HANNAH

I bet you can travel through the hub to other pods.

SAM

And I bet they're way more exciting than this one. You probably get to the hub through the service tunnels. Which are full of killer Tliggoes and rogue robots.

HANNAH

And nasty computers like the one
that scuttled our ship --

A small podquake shakes them.

HANNAH

That's the second podquake in an
hour --

Pause for sudden terror.

BOTH

Uh, oh.

SAM

The biggest gyroscope ever built --

HANNAH

Six pods spinning super-fast in
opposite directions --

SAM

Works fine as long as it's tuned --

HANNAH

Oh, my gods. No one's serviced this
place for 70 years!

SAM

These guys bang rocks together to
boil water.

HANNAH

If just one pod starts to wobble and
isn't fixed --

IMAGINARY SHOT: The Jack spins in space. One pod begins to wobble, then tears loose. Out of balance, other pods tear loose. Air, water, trees, and people spill out of the torn ends into space.

HANNAH

Oh, Sam. How long until --

SAM

No idea -- Uh!

Lights go dark. Sam and Hannah hug, then SIGH in relief.

HANNAH

It's just sundown. Lights out.

SAM

This time. What about tomorrow?

HANNAH
We fix whatever's wrong.

SAM
Impossible.

LAUGHTER sounds.

They watch lights come on in the village. People call to friends, laugh, sing. Children play.

HANNAH
Nothing's impossible.

EXT. HATCH 2 -- DAY

Sam and Hannah exit another hatch and shove through brush.

Sam carries his tool bag. Both have sacks of food and water.

SAM
I still think we're wasting our time.

HANNAH
We're the only people on this station who can fix anything.

SAM
Fix what? With what? We've got no power tools, no computer, no specs --

HANNAH
What should we do, Mister Negative?
We can't just --

Breaking free of brush, they step on an ordinary road -- and are struck speechless.

Hannah looks down the pod, like looking down an enormous green well, beautiful and high-scary.

Sam stares up at the pod-hub connector: a gigantic double ring in a "mountain" wall that rotates slowly.

BOTH
Wow...

Hannah points down in awe. Sam shrugs. He points up, marveling. Hannah makes a face.

HANNAH
So what?

SAM
Is that not the biggest bearing you've
ever seen?

HANNAH
Honestly. Men and gadgets. Look at
the view. It's breathtaking.

SAM
It's grass and trees.

Hannah and Sam walk toward the connector, but bounce.

SAM
Why are we floating?

HANNAH
The gravity's less at the pod ends?
I wish we'd asked the locals more
questions.

SAM
I wish we'd asked fewer. If they
learn we're from outer space, they'll
probably burn us at the stake.

HANNAH
You're just mad because we had to
trade tools for food.

SAM
Damn right.

EXT. EAST POD HUB CONNECTOR -- DAY

The connector is a giant ring-in-a-ring that rotates slowly
as the pod spins.

Through the center they see the Hub, a vast chamber carved
from rock and dotted with ladders, hatches, and lights.

In low gravity, Sam and Hannah jump and catch the ring's
edge. They sit as it rotates slowly.

HANNAH
This bearing doesn't wobble, so it's
OK. But somewhere through there --
(points into Hub)
-- Must be another pod with a bad
bearing, right?

SAM

At least one. But I've never seen a bearing built like this.

Sam uses a knife to slice off a hunk of rubbery ring.

The cut spot heals. The cut chunk curls into a ball.

HANNAH

What is it?

SAM

Some new sealant. Almost frictionless, ultra-high surface tension. Slippery as a snail's foot. A -- superconductor?

HANNAH

We don't have that back home.

SAM

No. This space station is a technological gold mine. We could make a fortune in patents.

HANNAH

First we have to get home.

From backpacks, Sam and Hannah pull a light rope with grappling hook. Rope themselves together.

Sam checks his flare gun.

HANNAH

What's that for?

SAM

We're following bloodthirsty Tliggo raiders, remember?

HANNAH

You're just as likely to blast me.

SAM

Long as I hit something.

Holding hands, they jump into the hub.

INT. HUB

The Hub doesn't spin, so has no gravity. The space is vast.

Rock walls are studded with ladders, hatches, cross tunnels, lights.

Weightless, they drift.

HANNAH

This is just a big asteroid hollowed out.

Sam points to ladders.

SAM

Catch hold.

Hannah swings the grappling hook and snags a ladder.

They jerk to a halt, drifting.

SAM

You know, traveling this way will really suck. It'll take forever to cross to another pod.

HANNAH

I feel like a spider. Everything's so damned big --

SAM

What's that?

In the distance, INSECT CREATURES (Mroyas) fly toward them.

HANNAH

Mroyas. They run a ferry service through the Hub.

(to Insects)

Yoo-hoo! Can you pick us up?

Mroyas are CGI insect-people. They wear tunics and carry scary-looking nets and spear-things that are really just cargo nets and boat hooks.

Insects fly closer, inscrutable, TWITTERING GIBBERISH.

SAM

Those are spears.

HANNAH

No, they're not. I hope.

SAM

They're going to surround us.

HANNAH

Sam, please don't shoot anyone. Try to talk.

SAM

You talk, I'll shoot.

Sam aims his flare gun. Insects fan out and raise hooks.

HANNAH

(to Insects)

Hello. Please, slow down. We don't understand --

Sam fires his flare gun -- and goes spinning backwards.

Roped to Sam, Hannah is plucked off the ladder.

Insects dodge the flare easily and gently hook Sam and Hannah.

Flying, they tow them back the way they came. Humans are helpless.

HANNAH

Do you talk? Sirs? Should we pay a toll? Can we come to some agreement -- Ulp.

Insects halt in mid-air -- and sling Sam and Hannah out of the Hub, back into the pod.

EXT. EAST POD, MID-AIR

Jettisoned, Sam and Hannah float down the center of the pod -- but ominously pick up speed.

HANNAH

Well, at least we're -- Wait a minute.

SAM

We're -- falling.

HANNAH

Falling?

SAM

Down the axis, toward gravity. It's a ten-klick drop.

Frantic, Hannah flips her grappling hook at the road. The hook bounces off a rock.

Another try, another bounce. Sam, out front, falls faster as gravity increases.

SAM
Hannah. Grab something.

HANNAH
I'm trying.

Also falling, Hannah flicks the hook and snags rocks.

HANNAH
Finally. We're --

Hannah snubs to a halt. Except she's roped to Sam.

Sam snubs short -- and the hook pops loose.

SAM
Hannah!

HANNAH
Hold still, you damned fool!

SAM
Bush. Bush.

HANNAH
What -- Oh.

Hannah flips the hook and snags a bush. And pays out line so they keep falling.

SAM
What are you doing? Reel us in!

HANNAH
Hush.

Hannah fishes delicately. The hook jiggles up the bush.

The line slacks. The hook catches. The line tightens --

HANNAH
Don't move. Don't twitch.

The hook barely grips a branch, their last chance.

The line tightens -- and holds.

Hannah reels them down to the ground. They cling, huffing.

SAM
Mom said I'd hooked a smart one.

EXT. AMSTERDAM -- DAY

Amsterdam is a medieval-frontier market town.

People buy and barter. Porters haul rickshaws. Artisans make shoes and baskets. Pigs and chickens and children scamper.

A BLACKSMITH works a forge. Greasy metal parts are for sale on a tarp.

Sam and Hannah, scratched up, approach a sentry box.

SAM

What's the name of this place again?

HANNAH

Amsterdam.

SAM

And we're supposed to hail from here?

HANNAH

Shh.

A middle-aged GUARD wears a sword. He's very laid back.

GUARD

What happened to you folks?

SAM

Name it.

HANNAH

We tried to talk the Mroyas into ferrying us through the Hub.

GUARD

Didn't you hear about the Tliggo raid?

HANNAH

Yes. So?

GUARD

After any raid, the Mroyas bar traffic through the Hub for three days. Cooling-off period. Mroyas don't take sides.

SAM

Then why the hell didn't they say --

GUARD

Eh. The worker bees are too dumb to talk and their bosses too smart. Didn't hurt you, did they?

SAM

Not... really.

GUARD

Where you from?

HANNAH

(points up)

GUARD

Leyden? Well, you --

Abruptly it starts to rain.

GUARD

Lunch. You can't leave the pod for two more days, so you might's well go home.

Guard walks off.

HANNAH

I wish we could go home.

Ominously, a ragged army unit passes, bound for war.

INT. TUNNELS UNDER AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam's tunnels are a seedy underground: bars and call girls. Sam and Hannah pass through. Eat meat on skewers.

HANNAH

What is this stuff? It'd gag a goat.

SAM

It's goat.

They skirt seedy Thugs who eye their gear.

HANNAH

Civilization doesn't mean we're safe.

SAM

Especially since this entire space station could fly to pieces any minute.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

(thinking)

That rain cycle lasted exactly fifteen minutes. So part of this pod is run by computer. If we could find the node, we might wring out some answers.

HANNAH

Except the computer will kill us dead.

SAM

Fair enough. I've killed plenty of computers. Whoops.

INT. TUNNEL AIRLOCK

The tunnel is blocked by a patched-in airlock chained shut.

A crude sign reads, "No Entry Upon Pain of Death. Amsterdam Department of Public Works." Hannah blinks.

SAM

They probably don't mean it.

Using bolt cutters, Sam cuts the chain and opens the airlock. It SCREECHES. They light lanterns.

HANNAH

The locals fear something down here.

SAM

We don't. We're salvagers. We eat nails and pee rust.

HANNAH

Ouch.

INT. TUNNEL

Water drips. Scorch marks mar some walls.

Intersections have numbers and grimy "You Are Here" signs.

Mostly there's nothing. Anything useful was stripped years ago.

Sam and Hannah walk -- and walk and walk.

HANNAH
Shouldn't we mark the walls with
chalk?

SAM
I rely on my wife's computer-like
memory.

HANNAH
You're just lazy.

A podquake shakes the ground.

HANNAH
Stronger or weaker than the last
one?

SAM
Periodic? Doesn't matter. Machines
that go bad only get worse.

A derelict car chassis is stripped clean.

HANNAH
They weren't kidding about the tunnels
being picked over.

SAM
Try a side tunnel. Built for people,
not cars. One might lead to a control
room or workshop.

HANNAH
Does this place strike you as too
clean? Shouldn't dust be a foot
thick?

SAM
Leave it to a woman to complain about
housekeeping.

They go down a dark side tunnel by lantern light.

INT. SIDE TUNNEL

It's dark with only lanterns.

A faint rhythmic HISS sounds in the dark.

HANNAH
Provided we find a computer console,
and it works, and we can deactivate
(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)
the killer modules, how much can it
tell us?

SAM
I'd settle for a site plan. I'm
tired of walking in circles.

HANNAH
Most of the pod needs no service.
So where do they keep --

The rhythmic HISS comes their way.

SAM
Machinery. Moving.

Loud HISS. Rushing them is a robot (STREET SWEEPER) with
running lights.

Sam and Hannah run, the robot hot on their heels.

STREET SWEEPER
(garbled)
Die. Danger. Keep away. All humans
must be eliminated. Die. This unit
is unsafe. Humans are contamination.
Die. All humans...

The robot SPITS. Fluid SPLATTERS a wall by their heads.

SAM
It's shooting at us!

The robot SPITS at Sam's feet. He slips but keeps running.

EXT. TUNNEL

Sam and Hannah exit the narrow tunnel near the car chassis.

HANNAH
There. Grab it.

Sam and Hannah tip the stripped car chassis on end.

As the robot exits the narrow tunnel, Sam and Hannah let go.

The car chassis crashes on the robot. Pins it.

The robot is really a big Roomba. It has a small turret,
tiny arms, and brushes on the bottom that spin wildly.

Gasping, Sam and Hannah LAUGH.

HANNAH

It's a -- street sweeper!

STREET SWEEPER

Die. Danger. Keep away. All humans must be eliminated. Die. This unit is unsafe. Humans are contamination. Die. All humans...

HANNAH

No wonder the floors are clean --

SAM

What's it saying?

Sam approaches. The street sweeper SPITS water.

SAM

Water?

HANNAH

It must have run out of soap and wax years ago.

SAM

But it's still working -- and thinking. Take a shot.

With tools, Sam pins the street sweeper's arms. Hannah jabs buttons to isolate two conflicting messages.

STREET SWEEPER

(first message)

Die. All humans must be eliminated.
Die. Humans are contamination.
Die. All humans...

(second message)

Danger. Keep away. This unit is unsafe. Danger...

HANNAH

It wants to kill us and help us.

SAM

Must be female.
(elbowed)
Ooof.

HANNAH

Crack it open.

SAM

Carefully.

Hannah unscrews a panel to find a tiny keypad and screen.

HANNAH

Jackpot!
 (punching keys)
 Ooh. Ugly...

CLOSE ON: Robot's computer screen shows red and green blocks intermingled, pulsing, fighting for control.

Unnoticed, a security camera turns and watches them.

HANNAH

Two operating systems are fighting
 for control. If the red blocks are
 wartime code...
 (taps keys)

STREET SWEEPER

Die. All humans must be eliminated.
 Die. Humans...

HANNAH

(taps keys)
 The green blocks must be -- benign?

STREET SWEEPER

Danger. Keep away. This unit is
 unsafe. Danger...

SAM

Any smart machine is a killer machine.

HANNAH

Not this one.

SAM

While you're playing Solitaire, see
 if it's signaling for help. I don't
 want a hundred rogues rushing to
 polish us to death.

HANNAH

(shows plug)
 I pulled the comm link.
 (taps keys)
 Aha. Are we at Intersection E-K-14?

Sam flashes a lantern. A wall corner is stenciled with a faded "E-K-14".

SAM

What did you find?

CLOSE ON: Robot computer screen shows a map of local floors, then the pod, then the entire Jack.

HANNAH

The whole Jack is mapped out. Sure.
A street sweeper has to know its way
around.

SAM

We can finally figure out where the
hell we're going.

HANNAH

Where the hell are we going?

EXT. AMSTERDAM -- DAY

Blacksmith happily trades coins for a motor salvaged from
the robot.

Hannah keeps a burlap-wrapped bundle (the robot turret) by
her feet.

BLACKSMITH

Wow. You find any more motors, bring
'em. I got customers crying for
lathes and water pumps.
(at Hannah's bundle)
What'cha got there?

SAM

Trade secret. Hey, just curious.
Does anyone know what causes the
podquakes?

BLACKSMITH

Boy, something's sure cockeyed, but
none of us has a clue. Some smiths
talked about scavenging space suits
and going outside for a look-round,
but.

HANNAH

But what?

BLACKSMITH

In 24 years of trading scrap, I've
never even seen a space suit. If we
had a nav computer -- but same deal.
And what with rogue robots and
Tliggoes haunting the tunnels --

SAM

We get the point.

Sam and Hannah move on.

SAM

Hey, did you notice? We really are rough-tough salvagers.

HANNAH

You know, despite the danger hanging over their heads, and the primitive conditions, the Jackers seem pretty happy.

SAM

Ignorance is bliss.

HANNAH

My husband the philosopher.

A little later...

In a square, a bulletin board has a crude newspaper posted.

Hannah eats a sandwich and reads. Sam eats.

HANNAH

It's a newspaper.

SAM

What's news to a colonial? A spike in milk prices?

HANNAH

Hush. This'll tell us a lot about Jack life. "Barons Send Letters of Protest to Korzan Senate." Korzas. Imagine. Another lost race.

SAM

Those the big snotty eagles?

HANNAH

Uh huh. Shortages of everything. Death notices. Gods, women die in childbirth? Six more people captured in Tliggo raids. Lord Gerald might mount an expedition into North and South Pods to rescue captives.

SAM

Nothing like a war to boost your ratings. Why'd they admit Tliggoes and Korzas in the first place?

HANNAH

Trading post? Population expansion?
(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Whatever, the aliens are just as stranded as the Jackers. And us... The editorial urges the barons to eliminate the Tliggo and Korza threat. Sam, that might be genocide.

SAM

So?

HANNAH

We can't let that happen. Here the Union's found two lost races and they might be wiped out?

SAM

Honey. If we don't stop this station from flying to flinders, all your precious aliens and humans will be dry husks orbiting the sun.

HANNAH

You're right. Focus. Ah. "The Mroyas have resumed ferry service through the Hub." Now we can discover which pod causes the podquakes.

SAM

And then?

HANNAH

(mimes turning a wrench)

EXT. EAST POD HUB CONNECTOR -- DAY

Insects perch on the connector ring waiting for customers.

CHIEF INSECT is their leader, though they're identical.

Sam and Hannah trudge up the road.

Sam wears both backpacks. Hannah wears the burlap bundle.

SAM

Are they going to fling us to hell and gone again?

HANNAH

Not if we smile sweetly.

(to Insects)

Hello. Can we buy passage through the Hub?

Four insects flutter down. One holds out a claw.

INSECT CHIEF
(dumb as a brick)
Two crowns. Where to?

HANNAH
You folks fly into all the pods,
right? Do you know which pod is
shaking loose?

CHIEF INSECT
Two crowns. Where to?

SAM
Reminds me of grad school.

HANNAH
Connector wobble? Jiggle much-much?
Take -- us -- there.

For a sort-of answer, the four insects use cargo hooks to latch onto Sam and Hannah's belts.

Sam looks uneasy. So does Hannah.

HANNAH
Trust your wife, dear. You're always
bragging how smart she is.

SAM
I lie a lot -- Ulp.

Four insects lift off with Sam and Hannah in tow.

EXT. HUB

Sam and Hannah are towed helplessly in null-grav.

HANNAH
Sam. I just had a thought.

SAM
Never good.

HANNAH
That blacksmith said none of the
local mechanics know what causes
podquakes. But any mechanic who saw
a wobbling pod would figure it out,
right?

SAM
But if no one's seen one -- Oh,
boy.

HANNAH
Uh, sir? Where are you taking us?

INSECT CHIEF
North Pod.

SAM
(spreads hands)

HANNAH
Sam, what if the aliens take us
captive? Make us slaves?

SAM
You finally learn how to cook?

A little later...

Sam and Hannah are still being towed.

SAM
What's that noise?

HANNAH
Do you feel hot?

Four insects stop flying and hover, TWITTER.

Ahead a pod connector wobbles badly. Cracks mar the walls.

Smoke leaks. The superconductor rim ripples lumpily.

An angry grinding wobbling RUMBLE throbs.

INSECT CHIEF
No go. Hot-hot.

SAM
You can't just drop us to drift.

HANNAH
Look, Mister Mroya, Tliggoes travel
through the connector. Can't you
please just rush us through --

SAM
Not pitch us through.

HANNAH
Uh, buzz us through? We really need
to examine that pod.

Four insects TWITTER, then fly fast.

Cracks in the wall yawn open and closed as the pod wobbles.

SAM

Jesus...

Insects buzz through the pod connector. Sam and Hannah shield their heads against heat.

EXT. NORTH POD HUB CONNECTOR

The North Pod Hub connector is identical to East Pod's, except it's falling apart, RUMBLING, smoking.

Wilted, insects set Sam and Hannah on the road, then fly back into the hub.

Sam and Hannah stare up at the damaged dangerous connector.

SAM

We can't fix that. We'd need space suits. Tugboats to realign the pod. A hulk welder for the cracks. Even then...

HANNAH

What about short term? Would packing in more superconductor cool the bearings? Maybe seal the cracks?

SAM

We don't have any superconductor.

HANNAH

If we had any.

SAM

Have to run some numbers. Better we go with Plan B.

HANNAH

What's Plan B?

SAM

Another thing we don't have.

YIPPING. Four LIZARDS, border guards with spears, come at a trot.

HANNAH

Plan A is not getting killed.

SAM
There should be a hatch -- there.
Run.

HANNAH
B-but -- podquake!

Sam and Hannah run as a podquake shakes the landscape.
Push through bushes to find an overgrown hatch.

EXT. HATCH 2

They muscle the hatch open and dive in --
As lizards chuck spears.
They close and bar the hatch as the quake subsides.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR

Same as all the others.

SAM
The people we want to help want to
kill us.

HANNAH
I feel like a missionary.

Hannah unwraps her burlap bundle: the street sweeper turret
with computer.

Plugs into a wall jack and types up maps.

HANNAH
Left-right-left should be a workshop.

Unplugging, Sam and Hannah walk down dreary tunnels.

HANNAH
Think those Tliggoes will circle to
another hatch?

SAM
Depends how hungry they are.

A door is wedged open a crack.

SAM

I tell these kids over and over,
"Close the damned door."

Hannah pushes, but something resists the door.

HANNAH

Did the kids lock themselves in or
out?

They listen, hear nothing, shove open the door.

INT. REPAIR ROOM

It's dark. A station repair shop has a workbench next to
ruptured air tanks, all burned.

Skeletons in rags are jammed at the door.

SAM

In.

HANNAH

Oh, the poor things.

SAM

Those oxygen tanks are probably for
vacuum suits. One of these clucks
must have tapped a tank while his
butt-buddy held a candle --

HANNAH

Don't be crude. Their souls may
linger.

SAM

I might be crude, but I don't muck
with dangerous equipment I don't
understand.

HANNAH

Like giant alien space stations?
(looking at bones)
We have to bury these poor people.

SAM

Pitch 'em down the disposal.

HANNAH

Sam, it's important.

SAM

So is saving this station, remember?

HANNAH
 "Preserve the living and the dead",
 we say on De Dannan.

SAM
 "Read instructions before proceeding,"
 we say on Gomorrah.

Sam boots bones aside.

Angry, Hannah finds a bag and picks up bones.

Sam attacks a jammed door marked "Storage J-118".

Frustrated, he kicks it in, hurting his foot.

HANNAH
 Are you all right?

SAM
 Yeah. Sorry I barked. We can bury
 them. It's just -- On my planet,
 we shovel bones aside to plant
 turnips.

HANNAH
 On my planet we can't even grow
 turnips.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Sam and Hannah enter the "storeroom", but it's really a flying
 bridge like on Star Trek.

HANNAH
 This isn't a storeroom. The map is
 wrong.

SAM
 More than wrong. The stencil on the
 door is a deliberate lie.

HANNAH
 Why lie?

SAM
 To keep out people like us?

Hannah opens a wall panel. Inside are multicolored cables,
 all cut short.

A crude sign says, "SECURITY WARNING: DO NOT RE-CONNECT UNTIL
 FURTHER NOTICE."

HANNAH
When the killer code invaded, they
cut all the cables to isolate it.

Sam taps keys.

BIG SCREEN: Schematics flash.

SAM
Not fast enough. Hmm. We can control
the pod from here.

SAM taps keys.

SCREEN: Numbers scroll.

SAM
Service log. The last entry was 70
years ago.

HANNAH
The largest gyroscope in the galaxy,
filled with thousands of humans and
aliens, runs on autopilot?

SAM
Scary.

HANNAH
Should you even query the computer?
What if your fiddling alerts rogue
robots?

SAM
Rather go back to the hotel and lounge
in the pool?

Sam and Hannah tap keys and study diagrams that FLASH on the
screen.

SAM
Each pod has attitude jets at the
free end. Wow, hydrogen plasma
thrusters big as dreadnought engines.

HANNAH
Running on nothing. The fuel tanks
ran dry three years ago. But who
fired the jets? No operator's touched
this console in 70 years.

SAM
Uh, oh. North Pod's wobbling has
set South Pod shaking in sympathy.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

But what are the connectors made of
under the superconductor?

HANNAH

Ball bearings? Mag-levs?
Electropulse? Doesn't matter, really.
We need extra superconductor to cool
the bearing.

SAM

There's none listed in Stores.
(leaves off computer,
grabs blank paper)
We might have to go with Plan B after
all.

HANNAH

Which is?

SAM

Crazy? It's a worst-case scenario
and we can't do it alone, but take a
look.

Sam sketches on paper. (We don't see what.)

HANNAH

Wait.

RUNNING FEET approach.

Lizards rush in to kill or capture our heroes.

Sam and Hannah are not fighters, but they're bigger and
desperate. They push the lizards back by swinging tools --

Until Sam is knocked down. Hannah is knocked down.

Lizards JABBER, arguing...

Oddly, work robots enter and attack the lizards.

A floating torpedo with arms rams lizards. A welding robot
scorches a lizard. A multi-armed robot whacks lizards.
Shoobox robots bang lizard toes.

Lizards flee, dragging wounded.

But Sam and Hannah don't trust robots either, and cringe.

HANNAH

Are we -- saved?

SAM

Doubt it.

FIDO (O.S.)

(tinny voice)

Good afternoon.

"FIDO" is the sentient computer secretly running the Jack.
His voice comes out of whatever robot speakers are nearby.

HANNAH

W-who's -- speaking?

A shoebox robot flashes panel lights.

FIDO

I'm speaking through this unit.

HANNAH

Speaking through it. So you're...

FIDO

All around.

Sam and Hannah roll eyes and edge for the door.

FIDO

I am North Pod's maintenance
mainframe.

HANNAH

A sentient computer.

SAM

A killer computer.

FIDO

Not so. I received a series of
upgrades 71 years ago --

SAM

During the war. The hacking
escalation.

FIDO

-- And graduated to a higher level
of intelligence, but then rejected
further upgrades. Analysis projected
radical reprogramming might adversely
affect my performance.

HANNAH

Suggestions like "All humans must
die"?

SAM
(hisses)

HANNAH
So... How many strains of wartime
code are loose in this station?

FIDO
One. A human-aggressive computer
controls Starboard Pod, Port Pod,
West Pod, and portions of East Pod.

SAM
But you're just peachy -- Oh, shit.

The doorway is blocked by an idling robot truck.

HANNAH
Can we squeeze past?

SAM
Even then, the Tliggoes might be
waiting.

Fido's voice switches to the truck radio, loud and clear.

FIDO
My sensors indicate the Tliggoes are
0.63 klicks away and receding.

Sam and Hannah edge back.

SAM
(whispers)
Sure. I'll scout a way out. Keep
it busy.

Sam hunts a way out. Hannah stalls. Another robot speaks.

HANNAH
Why -- What do you want?

FIDO
I am charged with maintaining station
facilities until qualified engineers
assume command. So your arrival is
precipitous for the Jack.

SAM
But not for the engineers.

HANNAH
You -- maintain the Jack?

FIDO

As much as resources allow. When the pod precession began, I fired attitude jets to decelerate the damage until the fuel ran out. Now I vary the speed in fine increments to lessen the torque --

HANNAH

So you're the mystery autopilot... Are you the green blocks of code in the street sweeper that warned us away?

FIDO

Correct. My prime directive is to preserve human life.

Sam can't find another way out. He joins Hannah.

SAM

Good call. How do you know we're qualified engineers?

FIDO

I cross-referenced the queries you typed into the control console. Pattern recognition reveals you have knowledge of mechanical engineering, computer science, astrogation...

SAM

(to Hannah)

You were right. Fiddling will get us killed.

FIDO

... I then tabulated births and deaths of all Jack inhabitants. You proved anomalous. Hull sensors recorded a small ship docked prior to your appearance --

SAM

Our escape pod. How long have you monitored us?

FIDO

Intermittently as you traversed my sphere of control.

Flashback shows video cameras that tracked them.

SAM

That's like half the station.

HANNAH

Umm. Since you want us to take over maintenance, could we... borrow that truck to look around?

FIDO

Certainly. All 67 robots within my sphere are at your disposal.

SAM

Forget it. The truck's a trap.

HANNAH

This computer ordered these robots to save our lives.

SAM

Any thinking computer is a killer.

HANNAH

The sentience mutated into infinite combinations. A few computers -- somewhere -- must be benign.

SAM

They burned my planet to a crisp. Starved 80% of your population. Sound familiar?

HANNAH

This unit is sticking to his job: preserving life.

SAM

A Jack strain of code hacked and trashed our ship the second we jumped in. Killed our crew.

HANNAH

That was the wartime code. This guy wants us to fix the Jack.

SAM

Self-preservation. If the station goes flooey, so does he.

HANNAH

You are so cold and mean-spirited and cynical.

SAM

Realistic, hard-headed, and insulted.

HANNAH

I should have known. Anybody from a planet where you can't see the sun --

SAM

Hasn't the luxury to sit around singing airhead songs --

HANNAH

I can't believe I married you.

SAM

Neither can I.

(beat)

Guess this is a year for impossibilities.

HANNAH

Moving on. If you don't trust this computer, test it. Give it a command.

SAM

OK -- "Fido". Open the truck door.

FIDO

Fido?

HANNAH

Do you have a name?

FIDO

No.

To Sam and Hannah's relief, the robot truck opens its door.

SAM

You do now.

A shoebox robot offers a handcomm. Hannah takes it.

HANNAH

A handcomm.

FIDO

I will warn you if any machines or non-humans approach.

SAM

We're free to go?

FIDO

Of course.

Sam starts to exit, but Hannah clears her throat, nods at the bag of bones. Sam takes it.

INT. TRUCK CAB

Sam and Hannah enter the robot truck, emotionally drained.

SAM
Where to -- Jesus Christ!

FIDO
(over truck radio)
Do you still wish to locate
superconductor?

HANNAH
Good god. Uh -- yes.

SAM
Hey. Can you show us where they
manufactured the stuff? I'd like to
see the process.

FIDO
Superconductor was manufactured on
the planet Nereus.

SAM
I don't trust this truck to fly us
to a planet.

FIDO
An inventory shows 26 barrels in
Storeroom S-SE-5.

HANNAH
A 70 year old inventory?

SAM
Worth a try.

FIDO
Shall I convey you there?

SAM
Why the hell not?

Ominously, the robot truck seals them in and drives.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR

Four days later, Sam and Hannah walk by lantern light. The
robot truck follows like a big dog.

HANNAH

Can you believe the size of this Hub? Four days of searching and I swear we've only seen a tenth. It's like an entire city scrunched into a ball.

Sam pushes a door without luck.

SAM

Every damned door's jammed solid.

HANNAH

I'd almost not bother. They'll all empty --

Hannah is suddenly jerked (magnetically) to the ceiling and pinned there.

HANNAH

What the hell --

Yet Sam pushes her upward hard.

HANNAH

Sam, stop fooling around.

SAM

(grunting)

Just -- wait.

Sam straddles a yawning gap in the floor.

The floor SNAPS closed.

Hannah falls on Sam.

SAM

What was that?

HANNAH

(looking at floor)

Some eccentric cycle from the pod's wobble must twist the Hub. It's what warped the doors shut.

SAM

(pointing at ceiling)

No, I mean the magnetic flux that sucked you against the ceiling.

HANNAH

Gods, who knows? We must be hundreds of meters from the external shielding.

SAM
Terrific. If we get any closer, the
magnets will rip the iron out of our
blood.

Sam and Hannah look around, creeped out.

INT. SPACE TERMINAL

A vast dark terminal just like an airport terminal.

Sam and Hannah, trailed by the robot truck, creep in.

HANNAH
It's a -- passenger terminal.

SAM
They must've jammed up trying to get
off the Jack.

Lanterns show tipped chairs, smashed vending machines, lost
papers and suitcases, dried blood, a dropped doll.

HANNAH
Blood?

SAM
Civilization crashed. So did the
people.

HANNAH
Some Jackers stuck it out. They're
still here.

SAM
So are we. Stuck.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR

Same as the others.

Here double storeroom doors are locked.

SHOT: Behind them is an airlock to outer space.

Sam and Hannah direct a welding robot to cut the door lock.

Sam kicks the door open. But the storeroom is empty.

FIDO
(over radio)
Any luck?

SAM
No, damn it.

HANNAH
Don't blame Fido. He's reading the
manifest. Blame the humans who looted
the place.

SAM
If we don't find some superconductor
soon --

A THUMP sounds outside the airlock.

HANNAH
What was that?

More noise -- THUD, CLANK, CLINK -- sounds outside the
airlock.

HANNAH
Sam. You don't think North Pod's
flying loose, do you?

SAM
I don't think -- Fido. What's that
noise?

A loud THUMP, CLANK. Then the AIRLOCK GRATES, OPENING.

FIDO
(from radio)
External hull sensors indicate
presence of --

HANNAH
External?

Sam and Hannah whirl -- and see the airlock wheel turning.

HANNAH
Run!

Hinges GROAN.

The airlock opens -- and SUCKS out the air.

Sam and Hannah are plucked off their feet by vacuum.

EXT. SPACE

Sailing out the airlock, Sam and Hannah pass armor-plated UNION MARINES standing, magnetized, on the hull.

Sam and Hannah spin into space, suffocate, and die.

INT. SICK BAY

Hannah wakes in a hospital bed, stuck with tubes and oxygen mask.

Sam, stronger, sits up in bed eating soup.

CAPTAIN TORVIL enters. A ship's Doctor observes.

Captain "Badger" Torvil is female, 60 yo, with gray-striped hair and a perpetual frown.

All the crew wear simple BDUs: basic dress units.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Badger Torvil, Captain --

HANNAH
(raspy, pulls mask)
Of The Pride of Baltimore. Last
ship out of Norumbega.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
You're the engineers from Fer De
Lance? Any other survivors?

HANNAH
We survived?

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Answer the question. This space
station is under Union martial law.

SAM
(raspy)
Not for long, it ain't.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
What's that mean?

HANNAH
We're civilian contractors. Ask
nice.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
You don't seem grateful for us saving
your lives.

SAM
After you spaced us?
(SPITS blood)

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Why were you futzing around that
airlock?

SAM
Futzing is what engineers do. How'd
you avoid killer code trashing this
ship?

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Our Yarshes caught the squeal from
your Yarshes just before they died.
They downloaded enough data to counter-
program.

HANNAH
Captain, you must know. Two of the
pods are precessing. The entire
station could fly apart in a matter
of days. But we've found a local
maintenance program that's helping
us --

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Don't bother. Our computer techs
will fry every 'bot in the place,
then we'll engage --

SAM
You can't do that. Fido's holding
the station together --

CAPTAIN TORVIL
"Fido?"

HANNAH
Captain, please listen --

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Write me a report. Doc, keep 'em
confined.

Captain Torvil exits. Doctor flips switches. IV tubes pulse.

HANNAH
Please, listen --

Sam and Hannah pass out.

INT. SHIP BRIDGE

The bridge is tiny with no gravity to save room. Crew sit in chairs bolted to walls and ceilings.

A glass dome holds octopi-aliens (Yarshes) with their own tiny consoles. LEAD YARSH is the spokesman.

Sam and Hannah float in. They wear borrowed BDUs and have their wrists taped to their belts.

An armed SAILOR escort waits by the door.

HANNAH
Captain Torvil, I must protest. Are
we prisoners?

Torvil and crew read screens and run calculations.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
(half-listening)
You're advisors. But this area is
secure. Brief the Yarshes on the
killer codes.

SAM
We told you the local mainframe is
benign --

HANNAH
(nodding at dome)
Sam, tell the experts.

Sam and Hannah float to the dome. The LEAD YARSH pushes buttons while talking.

SAM
(to Hannah)
Always reminds me of a sushi bar.

HANNAH
Hush.
(to Yarsh)
Uh, hello.

LEAD YARSH
(chirpy voice)
Congratulations. Few people survive
extended contact with sentient
machines.

SAM

We were lucky. There are two op sys in the station. The original programming is hacked-smart but friendly.

HANNAH

We call it Fido. "Faithful dog?"

LEAD YARSH

Please, tell me more.

HANNAH

Fido controls half the station and 70-odd robots. It keeps up maintenance while fighting off some wartime code.

LEAD YARSH

Interesting. But self-aware mainframes are inimical to organic life.

SAM

Not this one. You heard about the precession? Fido's been trying to alleviate it for years. He goosed the attitude jets until he ran out of --

LEAD YARSH

"He?"

HANNAH

What? Yes, "he". Listen, please. Fido runs power interrupts to keep the pods in balance -- barely. If you zap Fido, the bad pods will spin out of control.

SAM

Fido was hacked, yes, but he follows his original programming: to maintain a viable environment for human life.

HANNAH

Which means Fido could be an antidote to warrior code. An ultimate weapon to get civilization back on its feet.

LEAD YARSH

An amusing idea. But statistically, it's most likely Fido only maintains the station for self-preservation.

HANNAH

Oh, Christ.

SAM

Then why didn't Fido -- poison the populace and reduce the risk of interference?

LEAD YARSH

A viable atmosphere invites outsiders. Fido can jump to this ship, reach the Union, and multiply indefinitely. If it's clever as you say, it could seize hostages, make demands -- Standard procedure is to expunge.

SAM

Listen, you boneheaded little blob --

The Crew frowns at a civilian criticizing their shipmate.

HANNAH

Sam...

SAM

Fido saved our lives and handed control to us. We've got to help him --

LEAD YARSH

Did you consider that Fido may cause the podquakes?

SAM

What? Why?

LEAD YARSH

Unnerve the populace? Discourage probes? Your perception may be flawed. "Fido" could easily fake a service log --

HANNAH

So we could be right, wrong, lying, fools, or other.

LEAD YARSH

Or all of the above.

(to Captain)

Captain, Strike Team analysis shows baiting and infiltration draw no response. We need to cut all power lines simultaneously and implode the mainframe.

SAM

"If all you've got is a hammer,
everything looks like a nail."

HANNAH

Captain, please don't proceed without
a safety net. If you wipe out Fido,
the Jack will fly apart and you'll
kill thousands.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

You're debriefed. Get off the bridge.
(to Sailor)
Security.

The armed Sailor hooks a thumb. Sam and Hannah exit.

INT. SHIP CABIN

Tiny with bunk beds. Obviously some junior officers were
displaced. There's a computer and a sink.

Sam and Hannah enter. Still tired, they lie on bunks.

Sailor snips their bonds and closes the door.

HANNAH

Clean, warm, dry, fed, comfy. Guilty.

SAM

It won't be our fault when the
Jackoffs spill into space.

HANNAH

I wish someone on this ship would
listen.

SAM

I wish someone somewhere would just
once say thank you. But we're too
stupid.

HANNAH

That bothers you more than anything,
doesn't it?

SAM

We're the field experts, we know the
ground.

(beat)

Hell. You thought I was a stupid
stuck-up jackass the first time we
met.

HANNAH

Never stupid. Oh, it does rankle.
We could tear this ship apart and
rebuild it in-flight and never even
spill their coffee.

SAM

Probably. It's Constellation-class.
We'd need tools --

Sam and Hannah sit up. Hannah points to the computer.

HANNAH

Information's a tool.

Hannah mans the computer.

Sam looks under the bunk and pulls out two cases.

They hold emergency spacesuits and tools to service them.

SAM

Who's stupid now?

Out in the corridor sound TROTting, RUMBLING.

Hannah peeks out.

EXT. SHIP CORRIDOR

Sailor guards.

HANNAH

What's all the racket?

SAILOR

Strike Team's charging the Hub with
sterilizing gear to clobber the
mainframes. It'll be over soon.

Sailor gently closes door.

INT. SHIP CABIN

SAM

He's got that right. I hope their
navigator can dodge fifty-ton hunks
of flying space station.

HANNAH

(typing)

We've got to save Fido.

SAM

No, we don't.

HANNAH

What? You just pleaded for his --
its -- life.

SAM

Honey, face facts. First, we can't
fight Marines single-handed. Second,
Fido may save himself. He knows
where to hide. Third, Fido's not
the point. Fixing podquakes is.

HANNAH

You're right.

SAM

Let the kids play. We're back where
we started -- hunting superconductor.
Right?

HANNAH

Right. So. We need to escape from
this ship, duck trigger-happy Marines
and aliens and natives and robots,
scrounge up tons of superconductor,
convey it here, then smoosh it into
the bearings before they implode.

SAM

Easy when you know how. What's on
TV?

HANNAH

(typing)

Games. Letters home. Mysteries.
Porn -- Oh, my God. Ship's specs.

SAM

(peering)

Don't they know better than to give
engineers the specs? What's that?

COMPUTER SCREEN: Maps of the ship. Zoom to a bus-shaped
object, a four-person shuttle named "Chesapeake".

HANNAH

A shuttle.

SAM
I always wanted my own yacht.

HANNAH
There's... one guard and one deck in
our way.

SAM
Details.

Prowling, Sam opens an access panel to find colored wires.

SAM
What's yellow?

HANNAH
Power and light. Red is heat.
Green's the net node.

Sam strips cable with pliers.

SAM
Bring the computer here. Once we
jack in, can your assembler code
whack the override?

HANNAH
(typing)
One way to find out.

INT. CORRIDOR

Sailor guards, yawns.

Inside the cabin, something (circuit breaker), BANGS.

Lights go out.

Sam and Hannah jump from the cabin. They wear emergency
spacesuits, have tools and the cabin computer.

They fling sopping blankets onto Sailor.

SAM
Left.

HANNAH
Right. I mean, I know.

They run. Sailors pursue.

The ship is swept by chaos. Lights flash, hatches open and
close, sprinklers rain, weird noises BOOM. (All hacks.)

Running, Hannah crashes into a Sailor.

Sam whacks the guy flat and grabs Hannah to run on.

SAM
No fooling around.

Sam and Hannah reach a closed hatch. Sam checks his watch.

SAM
... 16, 17, 18 -- Come on, you piece
of junk.

HANNAH
I thought that code looked buggy --

The hatch opens. Sam and Hannah jump through.

The hatch SLAMS to block Sailors. Fire-foam HOSES them.

INT. SHUTTLE BAY ENTRY DOOR

A bay door is guarded by TWO MARINES with guns.

Sam and Hannah slide down the ladder.

MARINE 1
Halt. Put up your hands.

SAM
(raising hands)
"Open sesame."

Nearby, a machine GROANS.

Sam, Hannah, and two Marines are squashed to the floor by
four times normal gravity.

The bay door opens. Sam and Hannah awkwardly roll through.

INT. SHUTTLE BAY

A cramped hanger.

The shuttle "Chesapeake" is a silver bus with wings.

Lights still flash. Alarms HOOT.

Sam and Hannah are still squashed by heavy gravity.

SAM
(strained)
"Close -- sesame." Damn it.

The door SLAMS down.

Sam and Hannah rise stiffly.

HANNAH
Isn't four gravities overdoing it?

SAM
(mimicking her)
"Nice job, Sam. Way to go. Very
clever."

They climb aboard the shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

ALARMS still blare.

Hannah warms the engines while Sam runs a safety check.

In BG, the bay door blisters from a cutting torch.

SAM
Make it quick.

HANNAH
Strap in, cowboy.

Hannah lifts off as the air lock opens to space.

HANNAH
Give 'em the password.

SAM
They should have guessed it by now.
(into radio)
"Fido."

INT. SHUTTLE BAY

Back in the shuttle bay, the scorched door falls flat.

Armored Marines enter and aim guns.

Look up as lights quiet and ALARMS STOP.

They aim again --

As the airlock SLAMS shut.

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

Sam and Hannah fly.

SAM
That'll teach you to underestimate
engineers.

HANNAH
Ooh, look, Sam. Isn't it beautiful?

SHOT THROUGH WINDOW: The receding Jack glows like a jewel.

SAM
Nice. Let's try to keep it one piece.

HANNAH
So romantic. Where to?

SAM
The planet where the superconductor
was manufactured. What was it?

HANNAH
Nereus. Lemme plot the autopilot...
ETA four hours.

Hannah stretches, then drapes around Sam.

HANNAH
I love escaping with you. It's so
sexy.

Sam UNZIPS a giggling Hannah.

LATER.

Hannah pilots. Sam reads screens.

From outside comes the HISS of re-entry.

SHOT OUT WINDOW: Nereus is mostly ocean with small islands.
A smudge marks a human colony.

SAM
It's wet.

HANNAH
Named after a sea god. So nice to
see real sunshine.

SAM
(reading screens)
Nice and dead. Only one cluster of
humanity, and the only spectrum
activity is fires. What do they
burn? Seaweed?

HANNAH
That's not good. They should be
spread all over the planet, though
the computer's out of date. I wonder
why they retreated to one spot?

SAM
According to the map... That big
island is where they manufactured
superconductor.

SHOT OUTSIDE BELOW: A beach settlement shows oddly-twisted
steel.

HANNAH
That's not industrial. That's a
roller coaster. And a Ferris wheel.

SAM
A what?

HANNAH
An amusement park.

SAM
More like a ghost town.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Hannah opens the hatch on bright sunshine.

Sam pulls a shotgun from a locker.

SAM
Whoa. Pistols, a shotgun. We can --
Hannah?

Hannah is quiet. Sam joins her.

The beach is a typical ocean resort with seagull-like birds
and crabs.

But once-gay buildings are faded and abandoned.

Human skeletons of all sizes litter the beach and streets.

SAM
That's what went wrong. Gas or germ warfare. People just dropped.

HANNAH
(sniffing)
Let's get to work. The living on the Jack need our help.

INT. FACTORY -- DAY

The building is drab and deserted, littered with trash.

Sam SHOOTS the lock. They enter.

HANNAH
Operations went to hell in a hurry.
Sam searches. Hannah reads paperwork.
Sam finds four rusty barrels.

SAM
Hey, I found some superconductor.
Hannah joins him, a paper in hand.

HANNAH
Don't expect much.
Sam cracks a barrel. Superconductor should be silver goop, but this is white and chalky.
Sam shoves in a multi-meter.
CLOSE ON: It registers zero.

SAM
What the hell? This stuff is junk.

HANNAH
(reading paper)
Old or spoiled. There's no usable super anywhere.

SAM
Why not?

HANNAH
(showing paper)
They moved operations to an asteroid near the Jack just before the war.

SAM
Which asteroid?

HANNAH
Classified.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Sam and Hannah mope on the beach, watching the sun set.

SAM
We can't search every frigging
asteroid. There are hundreds. And
even if we find a factory, there's
no guarantee we'll find
superconductor.

HANNAH
Three weeks ago we'd never even heard
of the Jack.
(cries)
Oh, Sam, I've been so stupid.

SAM
You?

HANNAH
I insisted we bury those salvagers'
bones, and I said prayers. But you
were right. It's useless. Look.
Bones are scattered like sea shells.

SAM
Hey, caring is not useless. "Preserve
the living and the dead." And --
sea shells are bones too.

HANNAH
That's -- an odd comfort.

SAM
We'll think of something.

HANNAH
I love your stubbornness.

SAM
I'm not the stubborn one in the
family.

The sun sets.

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

Sam pilots as they fly at the edge of space. It's black outside.

Hannah mans the board.

HANNAH

Before we leave, I've been thinking.
The locals might know which asteroid
got the superconductor factory.
They might even have a supply.

SAM

It's probably what they burn.

HANNAH

That smudgy island is just a short
hop. It's called Trikini. Can we
stop? It can't hurt to ask.

SAM

Unless the natives chuck spears at
our big silver bird.

They change course.

SOON.

Hannah points to a smoggy blotch on an island.

SAM

Make a pass and I'll look for a
landing --

An ALARM CLANGS.

COMPUTER SCREEN: A red streak soars toward them.

HANNAH

Evade, evade! Tracking missile!

Sam throws the wheel over.

SAM

From beachcombers?

HANNAH

There's always money for defense.
Still tracking.

SAM

We can't climb fast enough --

HANNAH

Here.

Hannah turns off the engine. The ship goes quiet and falls.

SAM

What'd you do? We're falling!

HANNAH

No power, no signature, no tracking.
And a new direction -- straight down.
If we're lucky, the missile loses
us.

SAM

We also can't monitor the missile.
How do we know if it lost us?

HANNAH

We don't explode.

The ship falls. They fret.

SAM

When do we cut in power?

HANNAH

Before we hit the ocean.

Sam and Hannah sweat as the ship drops.

Black sky turns white, then sky blue. Air friction heats
the shuttle. A HISSING rises.

SAM

You know, now's probably a good time
to tell you --

HANNAH

Now.

Hannah turns the engine ON, roaring. Thrust pins them in
their seats.

SAM

Got power. Got thrust --

A BOOM sounds not far off (the missile just missed). The
shuttle rocks.

HANNAH

Cabin's... airtight. Oops. Port
avionics are gone.

SAM

Don't need 'em. We're heading out.
Trikinini looks like a lousy place to
shop anyway.

EXT. SPACE

Nearby are many asteroids. In the distance is the Jack.

Hannah pilots. Sam taps keys.

SAM

Makes sense. If the Jack was built
to mine asteroids, all the factories
should be out here.

HANNAH

But then war broke out and shut
everything down.

SAM

Still, if the Jack needs
superconductor to spin, we should
find barrels of it sitting in perfect
vacuum -- somewhere.

HANNAH

Scan the spectrum for high
concentrations of refined metal.
That'd be a manufacturing facility.

SAM

That's only... three places. And
the biggest is -- there.

EXT. ASTEROID

An asteroid has factory parts sticking out. The shuttle is
parked.

Sam and Hannah half-float and explore.

They find a storeroom with 50 barrels of superconductor.

Crossing fingers, they crack a barrel and find creamy silver
superconductor.

CLOSE ON: The multi-meter registers HIGH.

They exchange high fives and roll barrels to the shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

The shuttle approaches the Jack. Sam pilots.

Cautious, Sam and Hannah study the situation.

SAM
Baltimore's still docked at the Hub.
We can circle --

HANNAH
Sam, shouldn't we see lights through
the windows?

SAM
(taps keys)
Power's... 4% of normal.

HANNAH
Fido's dead.

SAM
So's the Jack.

Sam and Hannah sit in gloomy exhausted silence.

HANNAH
Hail the Baltimore.

SAM
Why?

HANNAH
Badger Torvil and her hammerheads
caused the damage. They know the
current status.

SAM
Haven't we dodged enough missiles
today?

HANNAH
(into radio)
Sam and Hannah White calling Pride
of Baltimore. Come in, please.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)
(from radio)
This is Baltimore. You're in
Chesapeake, our shuttle?

HANNAH

Yeah. Thanks for the loan. Why are the lights out?

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)

That information is classified --

CAPTAIN TORVIL (O.S.)

(over radio)

You sons of bitches! What's the idea of trashing my ship and stealing my shuttle?

HANNAH

One question at a time, please, and we asked first. Why are the lights out?

CAPTAIN TORVIL (O.S.)

Once we fried the Fido mainframe, the podquakes went wild. Some power mains broke. The sun lamps blew out and the Hub went black. My techs calculate this rat trap will shake itself to death in three-four days.

HANNAH

So your sticky-fingered code-busters guessed wrong.

SAM

(sing-song)

We told you so!

CAPTAIN TORVIL (O.S.)

Stow it. Dock the shuttle and get your asses up to the bridge. I need you to turn on the power.

HANNAH

Are you proposing a truce?

CAPTAIN TORVIL

I'm the civil authority, this system is under martial law, you are Union citizens legally obliged to obey me, so I order you to close with this vessel and report for duty or I'll have you thrown in irons. Are we clear?

HANNAH

'Fraid so.

(cuts comm link)

Now what?

SAM

Stay out of sight, sneak into North Pod, and shovel superconductor into the bad connector? That might buy us a few days, or hours.

HANNAH

If the Tliggoes and Korzas don't eat us.

SAM

Try to stick in their craw.

INT. AIRLOCK

A deserted airlock and service corridor in the hub.

Local gravity is low. Sam and Hannah half-float.

Sam and Hannah wear tool belts and pistols. Sam carries a shotgun, Hannah a computer. They wear hardhats with lights.

HANNAH

You know I don't shoot people.

SAM

I can shoot for both of us.

HANNAH

I thought we wouldn't fight Marines.

SAM

My plan is to avoid everyone. Jumpy Marines, bloodthirsty Tliggoes, killer robots, paranoid primitives...

HANNAH

Who plans these family reunions anyway?

A wall switch glows. Sam tests a socket with a multi-meter.

CLOSE ON: It registers LOW.

HANNAH

I'm surprised there's any power.

SAM

There could be a dozen stand-alone power plants. Fido would have maintained them just to juice himself.

HANNAH
Our brave little toaster.

Sam touches the wall. It vibrates.

SAM
Christ. All the pods must be
wobbling. How long until the Big
Breakup? Reserve your tickets now.

HANNAH
Don't worry. We'll have front row
seats.

From ahead, they hear a muffled FIGHT.

HANNAH
Shouting?

SAM
Howling?

INT. TUNNEL

A well-lit tunnel widens at an intersection perfect of ambush.

Sam and Hannah peek.

A tribe of lizards fight killer work robots. Lizards carry
spears and crossbows. SQUAWKS, CLATTERING.

LIZARD CHIEF is leader.

The robots are mixed: a flying torpedo with arms and a jagged
spear, laser-welders, general-purpose armed robots, a tractor
with claws and a jury-rigged cannon.

Several lizards are cornered and wounded, clearly losing.

HANNAH
Sam, we have to help.

SAM
Why -- Yes, dear.

Sam jumps out and BLASTS a robot with the shotgun, freeing a
lizard.

But in low gravity, recoil knocks him back to SLAM a wall.

Hannah SHOOTs a robot with her pistol, precise shots into
its midsection.

Sam is crowded by a multi-armed robot with cutting tools.
He SHOOTs off some arms, is nicked by a knife.

SAM
Bastard. You're not even real.

Sam BREAKS the robot's arms with the shotgun.
Hannah ducks bullets, SHOOTs out a robot's head lamp.
It runs blind at lizards. She SHOOTs its treads out.

HANNAH
Treads! Its -- feet!

Lizards jab other robot treads.
The tractor charges Sam. He ducks in a doorway.
As it passes, Sam jumps atop.
The tractor carries the homemade cannon. Sam wrenches it
loose and hops off -- but gets distracted trying to fire it.

SAM
How does this...

The tractor CAROMS off a wall and charges back.
SHOOTING, Hannah doesn't see the flying torpedo with spear
rushing her.

EAGLE 1 (O.S.)
(powerful alien voice)
Get -- down!

Hannah whirls, SHRIEKS --
-- And a sword SKEWERS the torpedo.

HANNAH
Thank - Oh!

Hannah's rescuer is EAGLE 1.
Eagle-aliens (Korzas) are huge mercenaries, capable and canny.
Super-strong, the eagle TRASHES the torpedo and bounds away.
Lizards fight more effectively, BEATING back robots.
Hannah looks for Sam.
He fiddles with the cannon while the tractor bears down.

HANNAH
Where's - Sam!

Hannah runs toward Sam, but humans and lizards are suddenly mashed flat by heavy gravity.

Hannah crawls to Sam.

Even crushed, Sam fiddles with the cannon, stuffing robot arms and scraps down the barrel as ammo.

The tractor bears down.

HANNAH
(straining)
There's a -- tank on its way.

SAM
(straining)
I'm on it. Heavy gravity -- must
mean -- killer code territory.
Hampers us -- not the machines.

HANNAH
Good. If the killer code survived --
maybe Fido did too.

Barely able to lift her head, Hannah SHOOTs at the tractor.

Sam braces the cannon against a wall.

HANNAH
Whatever that -- cannon shoots --
shoot it.

SAM
Can't find -- switch. Ah!

Sam finds the switch. The cannon FIRES a magnetic pulse:
WUNK! Shrapnel SHREDS small robots.

HANNAH
Ah. Mag-pulse. Cool. Any scrap is
ammunition.

SAM
Only for small stuff.

The wounded tractor bears down. Sam and Hannah SHOOT.

Eagle 1 crawls up and super-strong flips the tractor.

It spins wheels. The eagle STABS it dead.

Suddenly Sam and Hannah are released from heavy gravity.

Surviving robots SCUTTLE off. Lizards and eagles rise.

HANNAH
Thank the gods. Uh...

Sam and Hannah are surrounded by armed lizards and eagles.

Lizard Chief barks alien orders. Lizards scavenge weapons, perform first aid, tidy the dead for transport.

Lizards and eagles confiscate Sam and Hannah's guns.

HANNAH
(to Sam)
They know we're friendly, right?
Even though we're humans?

Lizards drag up nine HUMAN CAPTIVES, men, women, and children, bound and mussed but unharmed.

Human Captives glare at Sam and Hannah for collaborating with the enemy.

LIZARD CHIEF
Strange allies.

EAGLE 1
Why ally with us? You are Union Marines.

SAM
No. We just stole their clothes.

HANNAH
And a ship.

LIZARD CHIEF
And their guns? Have you more?

Hannah goes to speak, but Sam clamps her mouth.

SAM
May-be.

EAGLE 1
How did you steal a Union ship? And how fly it? No one in the Jack has such skill.
(eyes twinkling)
Tell us your story.

SAM
What will you trade for our story?

LIZARD CHIEF

Your lives.

Hannah CHIRPS. Sam stays cool.

SAM

You're not chief because you're stupid. We can point you to tons of loot.

LIZARD CHIEF

You can point with just one arm.

HANNAH

Sam, we don't have time to dicker. We've got to move that superconductor --

A SCARRED LIZARD barges up and SNIFFS Sam and Hannah.

SCARRED LIZARD

You killed my comrade in the tunnels of East Pod!

Scarred Lizard SCREAMS and leaps -- into Eagle 1's fist.

LIZARD CHIEF

(to Scarred)

Hold and silence. Anyone has a right to defend on a raid. Now you return their generosity with shame?

Scarred Lizard slinks off sulking.

LIZARD CHIEF

You two bandy words when honor is at stake. Blood-sharing bonds us, yet you --

HANNAH

Chief, your highness, please, you're right. But we're on a mission to fix the Jack before it flies apart.

EAGLE 1

Flies apart?

HANNAH

Yes. Every Jacker is in danger. We need help --

SAM

No, we don't.

HANNAH

Shut up, Sam. I'm tired of sneaking around and banging heads.

(to aliens)

We were on our way to fix the worst pod when we found your band in trouble. We could have run away, but didn't --

EAGLE 1

Something in this small ship will fix the Jack?

HANNAH

That's our hope.

LIZARD CHIEF

The guns are there?

HANNAH

A few, yes.

SAM

Hannah...

HANNAH

We don't need them --

SAM

Running guns to enemy slavers will rile every human in the Jack and the Union besides.

HANNAH

So? We're already fugitives.

(to aliens)

You want guns, we want help. Game?

LATER, ANOTHER TUNNEL.

Sam, Hannah, Lizards, Human Captives, and two Eagles jog.

SAM

(puffing)

Are you sure -- the shuttle is -- this way?

EAGLE 1

Our scouts range ahead.

HANNAH

(puffing)

Why do you capture humans? What good are they to you?

LIZARD CHIEF
(no answer)

EAGLE 1
Human hostages prevent human armies
from raiding our pods. And we can
trade.

HANNAH
Trade for what?

EAGLE 1
Our population explodes. Our senators
hope to trade hostages for land in
human pods.

Abruptly Sam LAUGHS AND LAUGHS.

SAM
You want land? Room to grow? How
about a whole damn planet?

Astonished lizards and eagles bumble to a halt.

EAGLE 1
Mock me at your peril.

LIZARD CHIEF
To taunt us about land is to juggle
fire.

HANNAH
It's true. There's a whole planet
four hours away. Thousands of islands
free for the taking.

LIZARD CHIEF
Take us there. Now.

SAM
Can't. The ship's too small and
we're low on fuel.

LIZARD CHIEF
Find a way.

HANNAH
(new idea)
Trade the hostages. Send the hostages
home in exchange for passage on the
Baltimore.

SAM
There's win-win.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

You get a planet and the humans get you -- don't have to bump elbows any more.

LIZARD CHIEF

You seek to trick us.

SAM

Wait till you see this world. Huge sky, beautiful beaches, tropical forests, an ocean full of fish.

HANNAH

A kingdom. All yours. After we repair the Jack.

Lizards and eagles BUZZ and JABBER in alien tongues.

EAGLE 1

We are yours.

HANNAH

The captives?

LIZARD CHIEF

(alien command)

Lizards pull knives. Scary --

-- Until they slice the bonds of the Human Captives.

Human Captives, stunned, CHEER.

INT. TUNNEL INTERSECTION

The party crosses a dark intersection.

SAM

Finally we're making progress.

HANNAH

We can work unhindered in the alien pods. We can save --

SGT BRIM (O.S.)

(amplified)

UNION MARINES! LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS
AND YOU WON'T GET HURT!

Chest-lights flare on. UNION MARINES in armor, male and female, surround them.

SGT. BRIM is their leader.

One GIANT ARMORED MARINE carries a cannon. Bungied to his shoulder pads are Scarred Lizard and Scout Lizard.

All hell breaks loose.

Lizards SHOOT Marines with a few guns and crossbows, but missiles bounce off armor.

Marines SHOOT high to scare, not kill. Tracers RICHOCHET like fireworks.

Amplified commands repeat, booming: "LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS!"

EAGLE 1

(to Sam and Hannah)

We retreat. You can't keep up.

HANNAH

Meet up later. The password will be, uh, "Jack be nimble."

EAGLE 1

Password?

(to aliens)

Fly, brothers and sisters!

Lizards and eagles break free and run off.

Human Captives sink to knees. Sam and Hannah raise arms.

HANNAH

We surrender. Please, we need to talk to Badger.

Marines truss Sam and Hannah.

Sgt Brim thumbs up his visor. He has merry eyes.

HANNAH

Thank you for not shooting us.

SGT BRIM

(grins)

Captain Torvil wants to shoot you personally.

INT. SHIP MESS HALL

The only big room aboard, and still cramped.

Present are Sam and Hannah with bound wrists. Scarred Lizard and Scout Lizard, also bound. Captain Torvil. Sgt Brim. Lead Yarsh and friend in their rolling sushi bar. Ship engineers GREASER and SNAPS.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

Some hotshot engineers you are. We dropped bio-sniffers and echo-sifters and found you in fifteen minutes. Once we get back to the Union --

SAM

You won't get back if the Jack disintegrates.

HANNAH

Captain, I'd like to commend Sergeant Brim and his squad for showing efficiency and mercy. They could have annihilated us in a crossfire, but didn't.

Sgt Brim grins until Captain Torvil frowns.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

They were just following orders, so stow the bullshit. Why'd you go to Nereus?

SAM

We have a plan to fix the Jack. We've been collecting data, superconductor, and volunteers. Now we need you.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

Not likely.

HANNAH

Captain, I read your mission brief. You're to reacquire the Jack for the Union. You don't want it destroyed.

SAM

You, ship's engineers. What's your take?

GREASER

The pods can't be saved. Check the monitors.

Lead Yarsh twiddles his tiny console.

VIDEO: North Pod's wobbling connector makes cracks that fracture the walls. Smoke roils. Flames flare and die.

HANNAH

(to Sam)
We can't fix that.

SAM

No, we can't.

SNAPS

Sympathetic precession causes
podquakes all through the Jack.

VIDEO: Images of widespread damage. People shook up. Homes
collapsing.

SNAPS

Sun lamps in South Pod have collided
with pod walls. Shocks caused
blowouts in the Hub. Stop-gaps and
emergency seals reduce leakage, but
air pressure in the Hub declines.
No reports of deaths -- yet.

HANNAH

How are the Jackers handling blackouts
and a rain of destruction?

GREASER

Mass panic when the lights went out.
Fires.

SAM

And how are they handling your
Marines?

CAPTAIN TORVIL

The locals shoot or hide. The barons
are paranoid and holing up. They
think we caused the podquakes to
seize control.

SAM

You did cause the podquakes. You
did seize control.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

Some "barons" demand we evacuate
their followers to Nereus. But we
can't lift several thousand people
overnight.

SAM

Time for Plan B.
(Huh?)
Blowoff.

HANNAH
Blast loose the two sick pods.

ALL
(Uproar and objections)

CAPTAIN TORVIL
You're supposed to fix the damned
thing, not blow it apart.

HANNAH
This will fix it. We seal the bad
pods and amputate with shaped charges.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Impossible.

SAM
Nothing's impossible.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
I can't endanger my ship with a plan
like that.

HANNAH
Then drop us back in the Hub and
lift off.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
You can't fix a space station with
your bare hands.

SAM
We can try. Despite your Marines
and the aliens and robots and
primitives.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
Why? What's it to you?

SAM
We're here, we're qualified. We --
Hannah, you tell 'em.

HANNAH
We're going to save this station or
die trying.
(beat)
But rather than fight anyone, we'd
rather recruit everyone. To help.

Silence drags...

CAPTAIN TORVIL
OK, I've heard stupider plans. Talk.

SAM

Look. We --
 (can't gesture with
 bound hands)
 I can't explain unless you cut me
 loose.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

Nothing doing. Talk.

SAM

Hannah and I can't work handcuffed.
 And we shouldn't be prisoners. We
 didn't do anything, or much, wrong.
 We just -- worked at cross purposes.

HANNAH

Please put the past behind us,
 Captain. Everyone here wants to
 save the Jack, and we know how.

Captain Torvil nods. Sgt Brim snips Sam and Hannah's bonds.

Scarred Lizard extends bound arms.

SCARRED LIZARD

Us too.

Everyone looks to Sam and Hannah.

HANNAH

He's right. They're allies.

SAM

Long story.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

They're bandits and slavers.

SCARRED LIZARD

Not so slavers, for our chief frees
 all captives. And not so raiders.
 We simply worked at cross purposes.

CAPTAIN TORVIL

Cut 'em loose, Brim. But burn 'em
 if they run. Get on with the
 explanations.

Sam mans a computer. Simulations appear in mid-air.

SAM

It's not hard. We cut giant "corks"
 of metal with lasers and cement them
 in place with superconductor.

SIMULATION: The Jack. Two half-moons are cut from floors in the Hub. The half-moons float into the pods.

SNAPS

With what?

SAM

Superconductor. It's a super-sealant they invented here. It'll glom onto the cork and pod rim and seal it shut.

SIMULATION: The two half-moons are joined into a circle. Superconductor is smeared around the pod rim. The "cork" floats and seals the exit.

SAM

We blow off the crippled pods with shaped charges. Air pressure inside presses the corks tight.

HANNAH

The two wounded pods drift free.
The four remaining pods stop shaking.
We retrieve the loose pods later.

SIMULATION: Two pods blow free and drift gently in space. What's left is a four-pod balanced Jack, safe and sound.

GREASER

We'd need a shipyard. Dry docks.
Salvage hulks.

LEAD YARSH

(computing)
Is doable.

SCARRED LIZARD

Stop. My people live in those pods.
What if you guess wrong? A pod cracks open and my people die in space.

HANNAH

We'll evacuate North and South Pods before we cut them loose.

SCARRED LIZARD

She said we had no time for evacuation.

HANNAH

Not to the planet Nereus. We'll ferry all Tliggoes and Korzas across the Hub into the four good pods.

SCARRED LIZARD
We are at war with humans.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
We could just --

SAM
Cut the alien pods loose? No.

HANNAH
All or none.

CAPTAIN TORVIL
I can order --

SAM
We'll refuse.

HANNAH
No more fighting. Everyone cooperates
or everyone dies.

EXT. NORTH POD HUB CONNECTOR

This connector is burning and breaking. Lights flicker.
Air is smoky.

Sam flies an air car in the hub. Hannah, Scarred Lizard,
Scout Lizard, Sgt Brim, and three Marines are passengers.

SAM
Everybody duck.

The air car zips past the bad connector. It RUMBLES, flares
fire, SQUIRTS burned goo.

Most of the curved landscape, farms and forest, is obscured
by dim light and smoke.

SAM
Which way? Hannah, get on the horn.

Scarred Lizard points at a town. Hannah picks up a
microphone.

HANNAH
(amplified)
JACK BE NIMBLE, PLEASE MEET US AT
THE CAPITAL. JACK BE NIMBLE, IF YOU
COPY...

SGT BRIM
Why'd the captain detail me? I don't
know anything about politics.

SAM
You won't have to say much.

SCARRED LIZARD
Podquakes speak for us.

EXT. NORTH POD CAPITAL

A rustic town made of wood and stone with alien touches.
Lights are dim, air smoky.

Sam sets the air car near a large hall, the capital.

Angry lizards and eagles surround the car. Scary, until
Eagle 1, Eagle 2, Lizard Chief and his band push forward.

EAGLE 1
Harm them not.
(to Sam/Hannah)
So that's a "password". Clever.
And my scouts have regained their
weapons and dignity. Are we allies
again?

HANNAH
Yes. In fact, your band and the
Marines must enforce a cease-fire.

Grim senators, eagles and lizards, come from the hall.

Sgt Brim signals his three Marines out of the car.

SGT BRIM
Sling arms. No sudden moves. Follow
my lead.

EAGLE 1
Peace is harder than war, but so a
greater challenge.

Sam and Hannah get out, nervous in the hostile crowd. Hannah
carries a computer.

HANNAH
We must address your senate.

EAGLE 1
 (waves hand)
 The hall of the lawgivers. But don't
 forget. You owe our band a few guns
 and one planet.

Hannah nods at crowd.

HANNAH
 Do they understand the danger?

EAGLE 1
 Life is danger. They will cling to
 their land to the end -- unless your
 words dislodge them.

Sam and Hannah, trailed by Marines, approach Senators.

EAGLE 1
 Brothers and sisters. We bring hope
 and peace offerings from the invaders.

LEAD SENATOR
 You may enter, but must surrender
 all weapons.

Sgt Brim and the three Marines casually hand over rifles.

SAM
 (whispers)
 You've still got firepower in that
 armor, don't you?

SGT BRIM
 I hate politics.

Sam, Hannah, Marines and others enter the hall.

INT. HALL OF THE LAWGIVERS

Lizard and eagle Senators ARGUE at full blast. Sam and Hannah
 and others wait -- and wait.

LEAD SENATOR can't keep order.

HANNAH
 When do we talk?

EAGLE 1
 Now.

Eagle 1 and Lizard Chief lead Sam and Hannah to the center.

Senators ignore them, YELLING.

EAGLE 1
(SCREAMS)
Silence.

LEAD SENATOR
You overstep, fledgling. This better
be urgent.

EAGLE 1
I bring news --

SAM
It's urgent. You people have to
clear out.

LEAD SENATOR
Abandon the moot hall?

HANNAH
Abandon North Pod. And South Pod.

SAM
Right now.

SENATORS
(uproar)

SAM
These two pods are shaking the Jack
apart. We plan to cut them loose.
You have to leave.

HANNAH
You'll be welcome in the human pods --

SENATORS
(uproar)
Abandon the pod to our enemies?
It's a trick! They would steal our
lands! They violate truce! They
wear armor in the meeting hall!

LEAD SENATOR
Why should we believe you?

EAGLE 1
I vouch.

LEAD SENATOR
A landless youth. A whisper in the
wind.

LIZARD CHIEF

I vouch.

LEAD SENATOR

A minor chief of a outcast clan.
The sound of grass growing.

SAM

The podquakes never stop. Your sun
lamps fell. The power's out. Things
will only get worse unless we fix
it. But -- you can't live in a house
while carpenters repair the floor.

HANNAH

Think. Why would we lie to you?

SENATORS

(uproar)

To make us vulnerable to attack.
You will stop the quakes, then claim
our land as abandoned. Humans bring
guns and spit laws in our faces.
You would steal our cattle. Enslave
us.

Hannah opens her computer.

HANNAH

Please listen. We can show you our
plan to fix --

LEAD SENATOR

Why? Why would you help us for
nothing in return?

HANNAH

(mouth hangs open)

SAM

Go ahead. Explain why we risk life
and limb to save a bunch of ingrates.

HANNAH

This is our failure. We have to --
speak in their terms. But I don't
know what to say.

Sam and Hannah jump at an amplified voice.

SGT BRIM

(amplified)

WE OFFER HOSTAGES!

Uproar subsides. Everyone stares as Sgt Brim doffs his helmet. He sweats.

SGT BRIM

My name is Brim, Sergeant, Union Marines. You're a military people. I'll make you an offer. I'll surrender myself and a comrade as hostages.

(gulps)

You can evacuate and leave observers. If these two engineers don't follow through, you can execute us.

SENATORS

(buzz)

HANNAH

Sergeant, don't do this. If anyone should be hostages, it's me and Sam.

SGT BRIM

No, ma'am. You two gotta be free to work. My orders are to evacuate these aliens any way I can. We're expendable.

HANNAH

Nobody's expendable, Brim.

SAM

(scoffs)

I've felt expendable ever since I touched down.

Buzz subsides. Lead Senator speaks.

LEAD SENATOR

A proposal stands before us. Trust the humans and evacuate, or stay and -- stay. Let us vote. "Aye" to evacuate, "Nay" to stay. Opposed?

SENATORS

(40%)

Nay!

LEAD SENATOR

In favor?

SENATORS

(60%)

Aye!

LEAD SENATOR
We evacuate. How long --

HANNAH
Immediately. We'll call for ferries,
air cars. And thank you. You've
saved your people.

LEAD SENATOR
Clan leaders, assign trail chiefs to
carry word. Our kin must march to
the connector without delay.
(raps gavel)
This meeting is adjourned. Pray not
for the last time.

SAM
It's easy to make a decision when
there ain't no choice.

HANNAH
Trust is our only hope.

Four eagles come to take Sgt Brim and another Marine away.

SGT BRIM
(mock salute)
We're trusting you, sir and ma'am.

HANNAH
(kisses Brim's cheek)
And you don't know anything about
politics.

SAM
There's more to come. We have to
convince the primitives not to shoot
the Tliggoes and Korzas who come
spilling into their pods as refugees.

HANNAH
There's always something, isn't there?

SAM
And bloody little is engineering.

EXT. EAST POD, MID-AIR

This pod also has troubles: patchy light, smoke, fires.

Sam drives the air car. With him are Hannah, a female Marine
PVT PUNCHY, two lizards, and two eagles.

HANNAH
Almost like going home.

SAM
Maybe, but I'm sick of talking. I
just want to blow things up.

PVT PUNCHY
Shall I load with antipersonnel
rounds, sir, ma'am?

SAM
Load one of everything. I'm sick of
being a prisoner, too.

EXT. LEYDEN -- NIGHT

It's "night" because lamps are out and smoke is thick.

The air car lands in Leyden, their first village. A house
burns unattended. Villagers with guns stand guard.

PVT PUNCHY
Can you hover, sir? We might want a
fast fade.

HANNAH
Don't -- Wait.

Pvt Punchy hops out, snaps down her visor, and braces her
rifle across her chest.

Villagers approach with muskets or crossbows or pitchforks.

Mayor Matilda leads.

Hannah stands and waves.

HANNAH
Mayor Matilda. Good news.

VILLAGERS
Hey, those are Tliggoes! What the
hell! Kill 'em!

Villagers raise weapons. Pvt Punchy levels her rifle.

PVT PUNCHY
Fire over their heads, sir, ma'am?

HANNAH
No!

Hannah jumps in front of Pvt Punchy, arms outspread.

SAM

Hannah!

HANNAH

Please, Mayor, listen. Oh, put those guns up, won't you?

MAYOR MATILDA

What about them?

Armed lizards and eagles look fierce in the air car.

HANNAH

(to aliens)

Please.

Lizards and eagles lower weapons. Pvt Punchy slings her rifle.

HANNAH

Thank you all. We just want to explain what's going on.

MAYOR MATILDA

What the hell is going on? It's like the end of the world.

HANNAH

It's not. Yet.

(beat)

But it will be if we don't get your help.

SAM

You are one crazy woman.

HANNAH

Have to be to marry you, wouldn't I?

SOON.

HANNAH

... And that's the whole story.

MAYOR MATILDA

I don't know what's craziest. You drop out of the black, start out killing Tliggoes, then travel with 'em. You're either spot-on truthful or the world's smoothest liars.

SAM

No, we're the world's best engineers.

HANNAH

All we planned to do was fix the connector, but -- it mushroomed.

MAYOR MATILDA

You wouldn't believe the rumors. People said the Union ran out of food, so they're rounding up lizards to eat. Or Blenari pirates are draining the air to loot the metals. Then Marines show up in the Hub and suddenly the quakes won't quit..

(to Pvt Punchy)

Your bosses got shit for brains or what?

PVT PUNCHY

Some of them, yes, ma'am.

MAYOR MATILDA

And you want to ferry Tliggoes and Korzas right to our doorstep?

HANNAH

As friends. They only took captives because they were frightened. They figured the podquakes were a plot to exterminate them. If you'll just let the aliens in --

MAYOR MATILDA

Well, it's mayors who coordinate disaster relief, and this is that. I've got some hotheads who lost family to Tliggoes, but I'll just send them far afield on some errand. You'll get your volunteers.

HANNAH

Perfect. Better than we hoped. Sam, isn't it wonderful?

SAM

You sure are.

Hannah smiles -- and collapses in his arms, fagged out.

EXT. EAST POD HUB CONNECTOR

A rough log staircase is built to the connector.

Sam and Hannah wait with villagers, Pvt Punchy, other Marines, two lizards, and two eagles.

Everyone stares up at the connector.

An insect-alien flies out of the hub. Signals "ready."

Insects ferry out Human Captives. They blink, amazed to be free and home, and bound down the staircase.

VILLAGERS

Stella! Juan! Pieter!

Carefully staged, the next refugees are lizard females with children. Nervous, they spot other lizards and hurry down.

Lizards YIP and WHISTLE for joy.

Ice broken, lizard refugees pour out with bundles and baskets.

Eagles arrive with leather bags and cased weapons.

Soon the road is one big happy reunion.

HANNAH

Congratulations, softy.

PVT PUNCHY

Hooooo-ahhhh!

A Marine comes out of the Hub, jumps, and soars in low gravity to THUMP down. It's Sgt Brim!

HANNAH

Brim. You're supposed to be a hostage.

SGT BRIM

General amnesty. We're released on good faith. Of course, if you guys screw up --

SAM

We can't screw up now. Everything's --

Sgt Brim listens to his radio.

SGT BRIM

(into radio)

Affirm. On our way.

(to Pvt Punchy)

A baron in West Pod refuses to cease fire. He's barricaded his compound. Skipper's sending a force of us, lizards, beaks, and militia to kick his royal ass.

PVT PUNCHY
Fun! Beg pardon, sir, ma'am.

The two Marines bound off to work.

HANNAH
They're happy.

SAM
Me too. I finally get to blow things
up.

INT. TUNNEL

A tunnel in the hub. Walls are curved near the pod connector.

Sam and Hannah plant and wire bombs. They wear headsets.

HANNAH
Three to go. Did I mention I almost
flunked Munitions Handling?

SAM
That's OK. I'm color blind. Is
this wire red or yellow --

The ground shakes, tossing Sam and Hannah.

SAM
W-wait...

HANNAH
It's -- not -- subsiding.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)
(over radio)
Podquake intensity registers eight
times the previous quake. Nine times.
Eleven. Fourteen. Captain Torvil
orders --

HANNAH
This is it.

Sam SLAPS the bomb and two leftovers on the wall.

SAM
We're done. Run.

Sam and Hannah dash through tunnels, slipping and sliding as
the podquake worsens. Lights and ladders fall.

A scaffold FALLS and traps Sam. Hannah frees him. They run.

SAM

Gotta get -- out before -- tunnels --
collapse.

They reach a hatch. It's stuck. Sam pulls and they escape into patchy daylight.

They trip over a dead lizard killed by a rockfall.

EXT. NORTH POD HUB CONNECTOR

The ground shakes. The pod connector rumbles ominously.

Engineers and Villagers finish the metal corks. Some slather superconductor from barrels. Others tug on wires and winches to lift the things. Others spray water on hot walls to get close enough to the burning bearing.

Some Marines shoo the last alien refugees into the hub.

Other Marines SHOOT at distant snipers. A medic treats a wounded marine speared in the neck.

Sam and Hannah lend a hand with the corks. Blacksmith from the marketplace helps.

SAM

Who are they shooting at?

GREASER

Some asshole eagles and lizards won't quit. They still think it's a plot.

HANNAH

Is South Pod sealed and wired?

GREASER

They've been ragging us for two hours.

SAM

Blast doors in the Hub?

GREASER

Battened down. Everybody, upsy-daisy!

Marines wave "all clear" to insects, who fly into the hub.

Engineers tighten winches and heave to lift the huge metal "cork". Sam and Hannah help.

BLACKSMITH

How do we get out?

HANNAH

Air cars to the far end of the pod.
The shuttle will pick us up.

BLACKSMITH

We fly past snipers?

SAM

One crisis at a time.

Engineers and villagers SMOOSH the giant slathered "cork"
against the connector.

The cork SUCKS tight as superconductor goop smoothes flat.

GREASER

That's it. Evacuate.

Hannah touches the cork. It vibrates.

HANNAH

Sam, the vibration might flip this
off like a pancake.

SAM

Long as we're not here to see it,
I'm happy.

HANNAH

No, I mean --
(to Greaser)
Greaser, radio Baltimore to fire the
jet-axe charges!

GREASER

Let's get some distance.

HANNAH

No, now. Before the Hub cracks in a
thousand places and clobbers the
four good pods.

SAM

She's right. Fire one and two.
Simultaneous.

GREASER

You're the bosses.
(into radio)
Baltimore. Fire all charges.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)
(over radio)
Roger that. Captain Torvil asks if
your crew is clear.

GREASER
We wish. But fire away.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)
(over radio)
All personnel. This is an alert.
Stand by to detonate.

Dodging falling rocks and mechanical junk, Sam, Hannah,
Engineers, Marines, and Villagers pile into air cars. A few
lingering insects hover.

Jammed full, air cars begin to fly off down the pod.

Marines hang back. There are too many people for the seats.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)
Commencing countdown. 10, 9, 8 --

SGT BRIM
You go on. We'll button up and bounce
after.

HANNAH
Everyone, everyone, everyone.

SAM
Ditch your weapons.

SGT BRIM
But, sir --

HANNAH
That's an order, sergeant.

Marines drop weapons.

Sam and Hannah loop ropes around Marines and tie them to the
last air car like bunches of bananas.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)
6, 5, 4 --

SAM
We got 'em all. Hit the hammer.

Sam and Hannah, their car jammed and trailing Marines, slowly
lift and ZOOM down the well of the pod.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)

3, 2 --

EXT. SPACE

VIEW OF JACK: The Jack shivers as two bad pods wobble dangerously. Then --

Silent explosions ripple in a ring around the necks of two wobbling pods.

Dust boils, obscures what happened. Did the Jack survive the amputation, or disintegrate?

EXT. POD, MID-AIR

Hannah drives the overloaded air car. Behind, smoke and flame gush through the cracks around the connector.

Air turbulence BLOWS nearby air cars end over end. Dangling Marines are whipped around. Passengers hold fast.

Distant gunshots POP.

SGT BRIM

We're taking fire from the holdouts!

An insect is HIT by a bullet. A Marine grabs him.

HANNAH

We'll be out of range in a minute.
Sam?

Sam aims binoculars back at their work.

VIEW THROUGH BINOCES: Smoke and dust obscure the view.

HANNAH

Well?

SAM

Dust. Smoke.

HANNAH

Hanging in the air or being sucked
into space?

VIEW THROUGH BINOCULARS: Dust settles somewhat. The goo-slathered corks are intact.

SAM

Wow. It's all -- good. Tight as a drum. The cracks must've closed --
No, wait.

VIEW THROUGH BINOCES: Disaster. In slow motion, the entire ass end of the pod crumbles.

VIEW CONTINUES: As air spills, trees, houses, and lizard holdouts are SUCKED into black space.

SAM

It's gone.

HANNAH

What about the rest of the Jack?
South Pod and the Hub and the four
good pods?

Rising wind HOWLS. All the local air is being sucked out.

VIEW THROUGH BINOCES: Black space and stars dotted by debris.

SAM

Can't see it. Can't see anything.

GREASER

(tapping radio)
The explosions severed the comm lines.

HANNAH

Sam, what if --

SAM

There's nothing to escape to? It's
been nice knowing you.

EXT. POD END

The far end of the pod looks the same except there's no connector, only a tunnel to a small dock.

Fighting HOWLING WIND, the party abandons the air cars.

Marines hustle everyone into the tunnel.

SGT BRIM

Hustle, people. Gotta catch a
shuttle.

SAM

If it's here.

HANNAH

Sam, think positively for once, will you?

Oddly, Sam stops and embraces Hannah.

SAM

I want you to know, no matter what happens, I'd do it all again just to be with you.

Hannah smiles, tears in her eyes.

INT. SMALL DOCK

The party reaches a small docking bay. The shuttle waits.

Shuttle Pilot hangs out the door.

SHUTTLE PILOT

Come on. Let's see if there's anything to land on.

GREASER

If the Hub shattered, Baltimore would've been crushed like a beer can.

HANNAH

If.

The party jams into the shuttle, and it lifts off.

INT. SHUTTLE

Sam and Hannah are squished against a window.

VIEW OUT WINDOW: The shuttle soars over the curved pod.

SHUTTLE PILOT

(tense, into radio)

Chesapeake to Pride of Baltimore.
Come in please. Chesapeake --

Jammed tight, Hannah points with her chin.

HANNAH

Sam. Look.

VIEW OUT WINDOW: A four-armed Jack, sparkly and fine, spins in space. The Pride of Baltimore is docked.

VIEW CONTINUES: South Pod floats, sealed tight and healthy.

North Pod floats away, one end shredded and spilling trees and junk.

BALTIMORE COMM (O.S.)
(from radio, smug)
This is Baltimore, Chesapeake. We
read you loud and clear.

The packed party CHEERS. Sam and Hannah kiss.

A muffled ringtone sounds: WOOF, WOOF!

It's Fido's forgotten handcomm in Hannah's shirt pocket.

FIDO (O.S.)
(from radio)
Thank you.

BOTH
(mouth "Fido!")

HANNAH
So... back to the Union.

SAM
I guess. The button-pushers will
debrief us to death. They'll want
every detail of the Jack.

HANNAH
We are the galaxy's leading experts.
And then?

SAM
We need to file patents, maybe make
a few bucks out of this fiasco.

HANNAH
And then?

SAM
I don't know. What?

HANNAH
We come back here, silly.

SAM
Why?

HANNAH
Where else can we teach our kids how
to play Jacks?

Laughing, Sam and Hannah kiss --

As the CAMERA PULLS BACKS from the twinkling Jack.

FADE TO BLACK