

# ROGUE STAR

by

Jeff Black

Circle of Confusion  
8548 Washington Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232  
(310) 253-7777

Circle of Confusion  
107-23 71<sup>st</sup> Road, Suite 300  
Forest Hills, NY 11375  
(718) 275-1012

NOTE:

We're in the future, so there's two things you should know. Tech things.

1) All characters except SEPH are outfitted with "mods". These are hair-thin fibers that run throughout the body which enhance particular characteristics. These could include mental acuity, strength (to a small degree), eyesight, mathematical skills, medical diagnostics, etc.

One might envision them as a root network throughout the body

Some people opt to have their enhancements visible. That is, they are not buried within the skin, but run in grooves along the surface. Think of them as wire tattoos.

2) All characters with mods also have *VIZION*. This is simple: it's essentially a computer screen that fits over one eye like a contact lens. Information is fed to it via the mods or wirelessly from computers or other people's mods.

INT. SOMEWHERE - DARK

There's a VOICE.

It's small, frightened. A young girl's.

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)  
They're still out there. Even  
though I can't hear them anymore.  
I can tell.

Small pinpricks of light in the dark. A child's eyes,  
glittering.

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)  
Aunt Sophie went out to look and  
she hasn't come back yet.

A tiny slash of light crosses a FACE as if knifing  
through the slats of a wall. A glimpse of tear-stained  
eyes, scraggly black hair. It's the girl. She's maybe 10  
years old.

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)  
She told me to hide in here 'cause  
mommy was coming back any day now  
and she'd find me.

The young girl moves backward, away from the light, face  
slowly disappearing into darkness again.

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)  
But that was before the world  
ended.

GO TO BLACK.

FADE UP TO:

A **MAN** *floating in outer space....*

EXT. OUTER SPACE

Around the man is eternity. A field of asteroids dancing  
slowly through the void. At their edge hovers the immense  
orb of Jupiter, banded clouds swirling about its great  
Eye.

Move in on him slowly. He has no suit, no helmet, just  
work clothes with tools strapped to a belt.

And yet... he's ALIVE.

**WALT** is in his 30's, black, his face smooth, flawless. There's a dreamy smile on his lips as he takes in the dwarfing beauty about him.

VOICE

Wake the fuck up, Walt.

His smile fades to annoyance at the Voice.

All a dream...?

NO. Widen out now to see Walt is tethered to the surface of a LARGE ASTEROID. Working nearby in a spacesuit is **CRAWFORD**. "Craw" is in his 20s, Southern trashy. Great-looking and knows it.

WALT

What's your hurry, cornpone? Best view in the universe.

When Craw speaks, his words seem to buzz inside Walt's head. But when Walt speaks, his words appear as a crawl across Craw's left eye, as if they were written on a screen curved across his eyeball. (His **vizion**)

CRAW

Fuck the view.

Another voice comes, female. **MAREK** is the pilot of a space SHUTTLE holding station 50 yards off the surface of the asteroid.

MAREK (O.S.)

Fuck you both.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

Marek's a testy, tough-looking woman in her 20s. Her shuttle's well-worn, utilitarian. Room for ten max, with racks of mining gear near the airlock.

MAREK

I want to get home, so fire your damn tubes or I swear to god I will light up and leave you here.

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE - SAME

Walt pulls himself to the asteroid surface by the tether. His boot bottoms are studded with hundreds of prehensile spikes which automatically search out crannies in the rock and hold him tight to the surface.

WALT

That is one cross woman.

Walt's words cycle through Craw's vision, only this time with a slight fritz, as if there had been some interference.

CRAW

No shit. So tube me already, so I don't have to spend eternity looking at your ugly face.

Walt pulls a TUBE GUN from his belt. It's a two-handed tool, looks a bit like a jackhammer. He braces it against the rock and fires a trigger. A pencil-thin titanium TUBE slams a foot deep into the rock.

Craw jams a slim projectile into the tube. He and Walt step back as a silent EXPLOSION tears a deep chunk from the asteroid surface. Pieces of rock spin away from the new crater; Walt and Craw snare them and slip them into satchels.

MAREK (O.S.)

Good job, boys. Now get the hell on board. According to Ben, you've got my next round of mods in that bag.

CRAW

You hope, darlin'. Probably nothing more'n nickel and iron. A fart in a vacuum.

EXT. SPACE - A LITTLE LATER

The shuttle pulls away, Craw and Walt on board. Behind it stretches a magnificent sight: the Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter. Thousands upon thousands of rocks spinning through their orbit around the sun.

MAREK (V.O.)

Report to Near Earth Asteroid Tracking Station by Pilot Janice Marek. Exploration of Asteroid N-203 completed.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

As they power off, schematics play on Marek's monitor. They track the rotation and path of the asteroid they just left, "N-203".

MAREK  
 (continuing to record  
 a report)

Tracking reveals negligible change to rotational velocity, vector unchanged. Increased chance of Earth orbit intercept in the foreseeable future approaching zero percent. "Send."

EXT. SPACE SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

The shuttle wipes by revealing a SPACE STATION in orbit about Jupiter. It's not big, holding a crew of nine. Two rings circle a central tube. The rotation provides the rings with artificial gravity while the tube is static and is a zero-g zone.

SUPER:

2250 A.D.

Resource Station AB-07

INT. SPACE STATION/COMMAND - SAME

**GORE** is pissed off.

He's in his early 40s, Hispanic. Burly, blue-collar guy. He's shaking his head at **BEN**. Ben's in his 30s, good-looking. Wickedly intelligent. Genius squared. Wee bit arrogant.

GORE  
 ... if it's not mission-specific  
 we don't waste the time or the  
 resources. What don't you  
 understand, Ben?

Watching the two from the helm is a woman in her late 20s, early 30s. This is **SEPH**. She's captain of the station. Though young, she's strong-willed, capable. Driven as hell.

She spins in her chair as Marek's VOICE comes over the comm.

INT. SHUTTLE - SAME

MAREK  
 (into headset)  
 Permission to come aboard,  
 captain?

INT. SPACE STATION/COMMAND - SAME

SEPH  
 Granted. Bring her in, Marek.

She returns to the conversation at hand. Ben's annoyed, trying to keep a lid on it.

BEN  
 Is devolution 'mission-specific'?

GORE  
 Ben...

BEN  
 At least let me show you what I  
 have before we shamble back into  
 the stone age.

GORE  
 We don't need to see it. It's a  
 rock. Just like all the other  
 rocks.

SEPH  
 I'd like to see it. Ben?

PUSH IN on Ben's left eye, into his vizio. An image of space appears, with a small GLOWING OBJECT in it. Words appears in a box beneath the image. "SEND"

PUSH IN on Gore's left eye now, into his vizio as the image appears. Seph though, examines the image on a monitor at her station. (Note: Seph does not have *vizio* or mods)

BEN  
 (of the glowing  
 object)  
 That's a rogue comet. From out-  
 system. You understand what that  
 means? It's from out there. You  
 know how many verified rogues  
 there are? None. Except this.

GORE  
Fascinating. But the Company  
doesn't pay for fascinating. They  
pay us to find ore.

BEN  
Seph...? Captain?

Seph plays it down the middle, trying to mollify them  
both.

SEPH  
Gore's right. But... let's see  
what Marek and the boys bring  
back. If we've got a strike, I'm  
sure we can spare you the time.

Gore frowns at the lifeline Seph's given Ben.

GORE  
(mocking)  
Of course, "Seph". I mean,  
Captain.

Gore leaves. Seph glances at Ben then follows him out.

INT. SPACE STATION/CORRIDOR OUTSIDE COMMAND - CONTINUOUS

SEPH  
Gore.

He turns, anger badly muffled.

GORE  
Captain?

SEPH  
We have a problem, you and me?

GORE  
That's a rhetorical question,  
right?

SEPH  
This station's too goddamn small  
for rhetorical questions. Answer  
me.

Gore steps up on Seph. Not threateningly, but he's bulky  
enough to be imposing. He nods back at the Captain's  
chair Seph was occupying.

GORE

You're in my chair. That's my problem.

SEPH

That's not the way the company sees it.

GORE

Yeah, well the Company hasn't spent the last 20 years hacking ore out of rocks in the middle of space.

SEPH

No. And neither have I. But it's their ship. And they put me in that chair two months ago. Which means it's my call. You got that?

Gore nods shallowly.

SEPH

Good.

INT. SPACE STATION/DOCKING AREA

Two crew members watch the shuttle ease into dock.

**JEFFERS** is in his early 20s, new to the station. A machine whir accompanies the docking umbilical as it reaches out to the shuttle.

JEFFERS

That floatin' in space shit without a suit is spooky, that's all I'm sayin'. It's like, you know, not human.

He's talking to **TECHS**, a beautiful redhead in her late 20s with a touch of the steampunk. A near-genius at fixing what ails the station. Her body is whorled with **METALLIC TATTOOS** which are in fact embedded modifications (MODS).

TECHS

Stow that. You're wired, right?

JEFFERS

Yeah, but -

TECHS

- Walt's just got more'n most.

Through an airlock window, they can see Walt, Crawford and Marek readying to come aboard.

JEFFERS

Sure, I... sure. So *why*? Why's he like that?

TECHS

A fuel spill in zero-g. He breathed it in... and it got sparked. Burned him inside and out.

JEFFERS

Holy shit. What's left that's, you know... *real*?

In answer, Techs just taps her forehead. His brain.

The airlock door opens. Walt steps through. His voice rumbles out, deep, with a touch of the mechanical.

WALT

Techs. Jeffers.

TECHS

Hey Walt... Jeffers here doesn't think you're human.

JEFFERS

What the - I never -

Walt steps up real close to Jeffers. Looks down at him with unblinking eyes. Jeffers tries to meet his gaze.

WALT

You 'n me get to eyefuckin'... you think you're gonna end up on top?

No way Jeffers can hold the line. He shakes his head shallowly.

JEFFERS

Probably not.

WALT

That's right. Probably not. I can lift 500 pounds with one arm. I will live to be 150 years old. I can float naked in space. Damn right I'm not human. I'm an upgrade.

Walt walks through. Jeffers gives Techs a sour look. Techs grin at the trouble she caused.

JEFFERS

Thanks.

INT. SPACE STATION/SCIENCE LAB

Seph's got Walt and Crawford's bag of ore samples on a table and is examining pieces with a microscope. The images appear on a monitor before her.

Techs, Marek, Jeffers and Crawford are jammed in the doorway watching her work.

MAREK

Can I go shopping?

Seph waves them away impatiently.

SEPH

You'll know when I know. Now get out of here and let me work.

They leave, exiting into -

INT. SPACE STATION/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

JEFFERS

So what's with the Captain? Why's she wireless? She religious or something?

TECHS

Who knows. Maybe she's one of those whackos with the Whole Human Movement.

MAREK

Like to see one of them pilot a shuttle without nav mods.

Craw makes an explosion motion with his hands.

CRAW

Oh no you wouldn't.

INT. SPACE STATION/SCIENCE LAB - SAME

Seph glances up at the laughter drifting away. Heard it all. Gets back to work.

EXT. SPACE

The station drifts through its orbit, lonely against the dark.

INT. SPACE STATION/JUNCTION BETWEEN SCIENCE AND CREW MODULES

Seph seamlessly moves from the artificial gravity of the work rings to the NO-GRAV center core in which the crew lives.

With a combination of grab loops and push-offs with her legs, she maneuvers toward the open door of Ben's Quarters.

INT. BEN'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

The room is all curves, no sharp edges to punish a careless no-grav movement.

When Seph enters, Ben is staring at a holographic cube projected in the air at eye level. He points at various spaces, saying numbers 1-9, which appear in boxes within the cube. It's 3-dimensional sodoku.

SEPH

Okay, you're smart.

BEN

Yup.. Well?

SEPH

Well what?

BEN

My asteroid.

Seph shakes her head.

SEPH

Nada, genius. Nickel/iron. Not worth the helium to get there.

Ben shoots her a look.

BEN

Bullshit. Iridium, 6.75%.

Seph and Ben lock eyes. She tries to say nothing. Can't.

SEPH

How the hell do you do it? You  
knock down more strikes than  
anyone I've ever flown with.

Ben enters a last number in the sudoku. Bam. Finished.  
Seph moves forward, face passing through the sudoku  
display. She pulls Ben toward her. They kiss.

BEN

You tell the crew?

She kisses him again, flicks a communications module.  
Leans into the microphone.

SEPH

(to the crew)  
Iridium, 6.75%.

She flicks it off, kicks the door shut.

SEPH

Looks like you got time on your  
rogue.

BEN

It can wait.

They come together, float out of frame.

INT. SPACE STATION/INFIRMARY - SAME

Crawford is sitting upright in an exam chair when Seph's  
pronouncement comes. He grins.

CRAW

Yes.

A man leans toward him. **ARAM** is a good-looking Persian  
man in his late 30s, early 40s. He's the ship doctor.

ARAM

(stern)  
You will *please* not move.

CRAW

Sorry, doc.

Aram lowers a delicate instrument towards Craw's left  
eye, removes what looks like a thick contact lens. This  
is the screen for his *vizion*.

ARAM

You were getting interference  
during communication?

CRAW

Yeah. Out on the rock. So's my  
body rejecting it? Shouldn't be. I  
paid enough for it. Supposed to be  
a perfect DNA match.

ARAM

That's what we will see.

Aram puts the lens in a machine that runs a red scanning  
laser over the surface. A monitor brings up a  
representation of a DNA HELIX. There's something  
different about this one - at regular intervals in the  
chain, there's an EXTRA SET of synthetic proteins  
piggybacking the helix.

Aram examines it, seems satisfied. Points.

ARAM (CONT'D)

Those are the synthetic proteins  
of your vizion mod. If your body  
was rejecting them, they would  
have separated from the helix.  
That's not happened. The  
interference could have been  
anything. Magnetic field, dust...

CRAW

So I'm good to go?

ARAM

Good to go. Let's get you spiked  
again.

Aram picks up the lens. Visible now are thousands of  
tiny pins - contacts - sticking out from the inside  
surface of the lens. He approaches Craw. Craw swallows -  
this is going to get stuck on his eye.

CRAW

This part I don't like so much.

INT. SPACE STATION/COMMAND

Gore's at station, a report on a screen in front of him.  
A few words are important: "Asteroid N-203 Iridium  
content 6.75%. Recommend mining operations commence.  
Signed, Captain Anya Sephoris, Second Officer Francisco  
Gore."

Gore thinks a moment, adds an addendum. The words come up on the screen as he speaks them.

GORE

New target asteroid acquisition  
delayed pending conclusion of  
science officer's investigation of  
rogue comet.

(beat)

Approved by Captain Sephoris.

Gore hits "send".

INT. BEN'S QUARTERS

Seph and Ben are resting, still entwined. They're holding hands. Ben slides his out, allowing the tips of his fingers to rest against the tips of hers.

Tiny metal studs the size of a brad stick out slightly from his fingers. These are the tips of the mods. They nestle into Seph's smooth, untouched skin.

BEN

(of the mods)

If you had these, I could tell you  
what I was thinking without saying  
a word.

SEPH

You were going to datavise me how  
much you love me?

BEN

How do you know that's what I was  
going to say? Maybe I was going to  
say that was nice, but I've had  
better?

Seph purses her lips and squeezes his nipple. Hard. He yelps, laughs.

BEN

Enough.

He pulls her close, whispers in her ear.

BEN

*I love you.*

SEPH

I like to hear you say that.

BEN

So why not?

SEPH

(of the mods)

Get them?

BEN

Yes, get them. The Company's got you fast-tracked, but if you want to captain inside the Belt, you'll be up against officers who're full-body Wired.

SEPH

Won't help 'em.

BEN

Why? 'Cause you're so special?

SEPH

Aren't I?

She kisses him then settles back.

SEPH

My father spent every penny he had on mods. He figured it would give him a jump on everyone else. Didn't work out that way, though. He died where he lived. Right in the middle. Me and my mom buried him with half a million dollars worth of wires we're still paying for.

She's not looking for pity, but the pain in her voice gets to Ben. He holds her tight.

SEPH

The only thing that'll get me where he didn't go is me.

INT. SPACE STATION/VARIOUS - MONTAGE

MAREK'S QUARTERS

Marek's a catalog slut, "thumbing" through pages on her monitor. She's checking out Navigation Mods guaranteed to be "100% DNA-matched, rejection-free".

Accompanying the offerings are rotating models giving a quick glimpse of a human body rigged with the mods.

The wires twine up through the spine and branch out into the limbs and the brain.

Satisfied, she hits "BUY".

#### ARAM'S QUARTERS

Aram kneels on a prayer rug. On a screen before him is a picture of MECCA. He leans forward to pray.

ARAM

Subhana rubbiyal a'ala...

#### INT. REC ROOM

Craw and Jeffers play ping-pong in no-grav. (two tables, parallel to each other, separated by 4 feet, a net strung between. The ball must be hit against either the top or bottom table.)

TECHS

... she's an over-ambitious bitch.

Techs is working on a curiously old-fashioned MECHANICAL SPIDER about the size of her hand. When she places it on the table, little pincer feet dig into the surface as it walks itself around. She smiles, happy with her creation.

CRAW

I hear that. Gore should be running this outfit. He's put in the time.

JEFFERS

I don't know. I rode out here with her. She's not that bad.

Techs levels him with a baleful glare.

TECHS

What's your contract? Two years out here? I guess you don't mind spending it alone. Although you look like a guy who's used to taking care of himself.

Jeffers takes her meaning.

JEFFERS

But I can see where you're coming from. She is kind of bitchy now that I think of it.

## WALT'S QUARTERS

Walt stands before a large window, looking down on Jupiter and its immense moon Ganymede. Seems kind of lonely.

His eyes narrow in sudden interest at something he sees: a spear of light lancing down toward the plane of the solar system. A COMET.

## EXT. SPACE STATION

A telescope adjusts slightly, taking in the distant comet.

## INT. SPACE STATION/BEN'S QUARTERS - SAME

Ben watches it on a monitor in his quarters. We move in on his *vizion*, which also shows the comet, only with constantly shifting numbers clicking off speed, mass. One number holds, grows larger. "Density: 1.5 Gms per cm<sup>3</sup>".

Ben's eyes narrow as an extraordinary thought scratches at his mind.

BEN

Huh...

## INT. SPACE STATION/HEALTH MOD

Seph is upside down, running on a tread mill. Obviously, no-grav. Ben's voice breaks in on her.

BEN (OS)

Seph. I think you should get everyone together.

## INT. SPACE STATION/COMMON AREA

CRAW

So what'd we got? This rogue of yours made of gold or something?

Ben holds the floor, watched by the crew: Seph, Gore, Walt, Crow, Techs, Jeffers, Aram and Marek.

(It's not overt, but definitely noticeable that Gore, Techs, Crow and Marek don't particularly like Seph.)

A little spark of healthy greed flickers among the crew, extinguished quickly by Ben.

BEN

Nickel, Iron and trace Iridium.

JEFFERS

Then what the hell? I got Craw bent over the ping-pong table and I'm about to fuck him into Sunday. Why are we here?

GORE

Thanks for that deeply disturbing image.

JEFFERS

Welcome.

GORE

But a good point. Is this your apology for wasting company time?

BEN

(unperturbed)

Not exactly.

In Ben's *vizion* is the info on the rogue comet. A glowing cursor appears under the command "Send local". An image of the comet lights up a monitor. It seems bigger, closer, and utterly unimpressive.

CRAW

Oh wow. Another rock out in space. What's that make - 3 trillion *and one*? Can I get back to my game now? I was just about to give Jeffers here a reach-around.

SEPH

Close it, Crawford or I'll have you shunted out an airlock.

CRAW

Yes sir, ma'am.

With infinite patience, Ben enlarges the image.

BEN

Notice anything?

A puzzled beat by all, then -

SEPH

No spin.

BEN

Good.

Seph's right - compared to the movement of the asteroids in the belt, the rogue is rock solid, not rotating in any direction.

WALT

How is there no spin? How is that possible?

BEN

It's not. Now try this on - it's approximately 3 miles long on the x axis, 1.5 mile each on the y and z for a mass of about 20 billion tons.

He waits, but not even Seph can put this one together.

BEN

That puts the density at 1.5 grams per cubic centimeter.

Techs's mechanical spider crawls off her lap as she reacts, startled.

TECHS

No way. Even I know that can't be. That's not nickel or iron, that'd be more like paper.

Seph's mind whirls.

SEPH

Unless... it's hollow.

CUT TO:

INT. SPACE STATION/COMMON AREA - A LITTLE LATER

Two groups have broken off. WITH Walt, Craw, Aram, Jeffers, Techs.

ARAM

Hollow?

CRAW

Like man-made?

WALT

Except not, you know, man-made.

WITH Seph, Ben, Gore and Marek. Seph is muffling excitement.

SEPH

You really think this could be something?

BEN

I won't know until I get close enough to scan it.

GORE

*Close enough?* What are you talking about?

SEPH

Marek - can you get us in tight, match speeds with it?

MAREK

I do a high burn, I might be able to.

GORE

You can't be serious.

Seph's dead quiet.

GORE

We are getting flight clearance from company control.

BEN

There's no time, Gore.

Ben indicates a map of the solar system. The comet is coming in from the "top" near Pluto and its projected plot has it exiting the solar system on the "bottom" beneath the Sun.

BEN

The rogue is vectoring out-system. We've got an intercept window of two hours at most, and that's if we take off now. We'd never get an answer back from Earth in time.

GORE

Then we don't go.

Ben looks at Gore with a mixture of wonder and disgust.

BEN

Gore, we live in a space station orbiting Jupiter - Jupiter!

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)  
 - 400 million miles from home. We  
 land on asteroids and moons to  
 find out what they're made of.

(points to the rogue)

Are you actually telling me that  
 you don't *have* to know what that  
 is?

GORE

That's exactly right. I -  
 (whipping his head at  
 Seph)

- we are paid to spot ore for the  
 company that built this station  
 400 million miles from home at a  
 cost of a trillion dollars, not  
 chase down a rock because you  
 fucked up a density reading.

Seph steps in.

SEPH

Enough. Gore... make out a report  
 to the company.

(pointed)

You're good at them. Tell them  
 we're going out for a ride. And  
 look at it this way - if it really  
 is nothing, you'll probably get  
 that chair you want.

Gore considers. She's right. Seems like a good bet.

GORE

I'll make out the report.

He leaves.

BEN

It's not nothing.

SEPH

I hope you're right.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

The entire crew is strapped down, with Marek piloting,  
 Walt copilot.

Techs has a pack of tools at her feet. In her hands is  
 the mech spider. She shoos it with her finger and it  
 crawls into the bag. Craw sees. Gives her the eye.

CRAW

You know you're fucked up, right?

Techs looks at him mock-crazy.

TECHS

Yeah. You never know when I might  
just... *snap*.

Meanwhile, Walt checks the controls at his station.

WALT

Systems green.

He looks back at Seph. She nods.

WALT

Detaching.

In his *vizion*, he gives the order to "Detach". A visual pops up, fed by an external camera - of the umbilical between shuttle and station popping free.

EXT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

The umbilical detaches in a puff of air that dissipates in the vacuum. Attitude jets fire in short controlled bursts, re-aligning the shuttle.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

Vectors swim across Marek's *vizion* as she maneuvers the shuttle free of the station then commands a burst of plasma from the main engine. The crew is jerked back into their seats as the thrust builds.

MAREK

Well boys and girls, we've got  
about 2 hours before intercept so  
kick back and relax.

DISSOLVE TO:

Nothing but blackness through the shuttle ports. Ben's nose is dug into his computer station as the ship begins a slow barrel roll. As it does, something HUGE suddenly looms in the windows!

Craw jerks backward.

CRAW

Holy shit!

It's the ROGUE.

MAREK

Cool it, Deep South. We're good.

Marek's tense, sweat beading her brow.

MAREK

(to Ben)

Right?

Ben's *vizion* is whirling with numbers and images as he works the controls before him.

BEN

Scanning.

MAREK

Well do it fast, 'cause I've got about three minutes to match speeds or this rock's gone forever.

BEN

(tense)

I'm working on it.

Seph and the others can only watch as the asteroid speeds closer and closer.

SEPH

Ben?

IN BEN'S *VIZION*, as computer-generated WAVES course out from the shuttle, enveloping the onrushing asteroid. They bounce back, and something like an x-ray image begins to form.

BEN

Send!

The image darts into the others' *vizion*, as well as appearing on monitor stations.

The image builds itself: the asteroid's exterior, oblong and pitted. But the *interior* ...

IT CONTAINS A NETWORK OF IRREGULARLY-SHAPED CHAMBERS.

WALT

Jesus.

CRAW

It's a ship. It's a fucking ship.

TECHS

They must've carved it out of the  
asteroid -

JEFFERS

'They?' Who's 'they'?!

Marek's sweating even harder.

MAREK

I don't care if Santa's fucking  
elves built the goddamn thing!  
Thirty seconds! Captain - what do  
I do?

A heartbeat's hesitation -

SEPH

Set us down!

Marek acts instantly and the thrusters ROAR! They're  
slammed hard into their seats, joints cracking.

MAREK

Okay... *where?*

BEN

Sending you coordinate overlay!

From his *vizion* to the monitor - a series of longitude  
and latitude lines that define the surface of the  
asteroid.

Ben grits his teeth against the g-strain:

BEN

25.5 South; 173 west.

EXT. SPACE

The shuttle rolls again, so the asteroid is beneath them  
now. It dives down toward the surface as -

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

MAREK

Walt! Get ready!

WALT

On it! Harpoons armed.

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE - SAME

The shuttle's matching speed, coming in hard. The surface is pitted, ruptured. Impossible to land.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

MAREK

Go!

Walt flicks a switch. Four controlled explosions echo through the shuttle.

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE - SAME

CLOSE ON the underbelly of the shuttle as FOUR HARPOONS trailing polycarbon lines erupt from their tubes.

The harpoons streak down and DIG DEEP into the asteroid surface.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

SEPH

Reel us in!

INSIDE THE HARPOON MECHANISM, gears whir and turn spindles, reeling the harpoon lines back in.

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE

As the harpoon lines are reeled in, the shuttle is drawn down to the asteroid surface.

WALT

We're on.

MAREK

Dropping thrust.

The engines power down as the asteroid surface draws closer and closer and then, with a metallic *clang!*, the shuttle comes to rest.

A long moment then, as they look at each other, closer than any before them to an alien vessel. Then -

SEPH

Marek - how long do we have here?

MAREK

Six and a half hours before we're too far out to make it back to the station. So I'd say six to give you some padding.

SEPH

All right people, suit up! We've got six hours to make history.

Instant motion then, as the crew unbuckles, starts pulling on helmets, etc.

SEPH

(to Ben, quiet, awed)  
First contact. Us.

BEN

Yeah.

SEPH

You think you can get us inside?

BEN

I've got an idea. That's about it.

SEPH

And if we do get in... you think there's anything in there?

BEN

Backtracking its course, there's not a star within a hundred light years. And it's powering through our system without even slowing. Odds are, it's a derelict.

Seph's more than a little nervous, but hiding it.

SEPH

What kind of odds?

BEN

Even I'm not that smart.

SEPH

All right, then, I want signals sent out across the spectrum. If there's anything in there, I want them to know we're coming.

BEN

Done.

SEPH

Walt, you stay here with Marek.  
 (over his objections)  
 I want both my pilots on board.  
 Craw, hand out tube guns, mining  
 charges. And the axes.

CRAW

Why?

SEPH

Just in case.

Puzzled, Craw starts pulling the supplies from the hold.

CRAW

(low)  
 "In case" what?

TECHS

(you're an idiot)  
 We're not alone in there.

Craw gets it, looks at the rock axe in his hand.

CRAW

I'm going into an alien space ship  
 with a rock pick. That should even  
 things up.

EXT. SPACE

Jupiter, storm-ridden, amidst a sea of rocks. From a  
 distance, a small asteroid crosses the solar plane,  
 heading "down", out of the system.

Seven arrows of light cut back and forth across the  
 darkness of the sunless side of the asteroid surface.  
 It's Seph and the others, lighting their way from the  
 shuttle.

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE - SAME

WITH THE FIGURES, tethered together. The prehensile  
 spikes on their boots dig into the rock with each step  
 down, release with each lifted foot.

TECHS

(movements clumsy)  
 Christ, I hate E.V.A.

GORE  
(not happy to be  
here)  
Five and a half hours.

BEN  
Thank you, Vasco Da Gama.

Ben, in the lead, stops at an outcropping that hovers over his head by a few feet. It's riven with deep vertical cracks.

BEN  
We're here.

JEFFERS  
Where's here? Don't look like here.

Ben datavises his *vizion* to the others. For Seph, it appears on a screen across her faceplate.

BEN  
This is what I saw.

It's the fuzzy plot of the interior of the asteroid. There's a snake-like line leading from one of the empty spaces to the edge of the asteroid.

ARAM  
A tunnel?

BEN  
That's right. And it comes out here.

He places his hand on the surface of the outcropping.

SEPH  
We get any returns on the signals?  
Anything?

BEN  
Nothing.

SEPH  
Okay then. Craw...  
(you know what to do)

CRAW  
You gotta be fucking kidding. Am I the only one here who thinks it's a bad idea to blow open a hole in an alien spaceship?

TECHS

We all think it's a stupid idea.  
That's why you're doing it. You're  
expendable.

Craw's about to retort; Seph shuts him down.

SEPH

Just do it.

Craw jams the tube gun against the crack, fires first one, then two, tubes into the rock. Jeffers loads the charges.

IN Craw's *vizion*. Icons representing the charges. A moment's hesitation, then words appear, and flash to the others. "Fire in the hole."

A silent whump, big chunks of rocks spinning out into space, disappearing into the black.

JEFFERS

Oh wow.

THEY'VE UNCOVERED A DOOR.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

Walt and Marek watch everything through cameras mounted on the suit shoulders.

They can see the door: tall and thin, not quite human dimensioned.

WALT

(soft)  
It's real...

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE

All of them stare. Disbelief mixed with excitement and fear. Techs pulls aside rock chunks and touches the door, as if to see if it's real.

CRAW

I didn't... I just...

He trails off. Seph and Ben share a look.

SEPH

Can you get us in?

Ben's examining the surface of the door, finds FOUR OVAL HOLES about 3/4 of an inch at the widest.

BEN

Techs - give me some fiber.

Techs rummages expertly through her kit. Extracts a fiber optic cable. Ben takes it, inserts one end in a female connection on his suit, works the other into the holes, one after another.

IN his *vizion*, as he sees inside the holes. They curve down and back toward him for almost a foot, like a "U" on its side. What looks like buttons lie at the very end of the holes.

GORE

For fingers?

ARAM

Long ones, by our standard.

BEN

Techs?

TECHS

Give me a minute.

She thinks, then dips into her kit. Pulls out the mech spider.

TECHS

(to the spider)

Sorry, Sam.

One by one, she pulls off the LEGS, rigging up four articulated picks that she attaches to her fingers.

TECHS

Move.

She pushes past Ben, inserts the picks in the holes. With the aid of the fiber optics, she manipulates them down the curve of the holes and to the buttons at the bottom.

With a visible puff of gas, the door retreats in then slides away out of sight. Techs hesitates, and Seph steps past her. Her suit lights pick out a thin passage carved out of the rock itself.

CRAW

(scared)

We're not really going in there, right?

With a look at Ben, Seph steps into the passageway. She turns to beckon them forward -

- AND THE DOOR SLAMS BACK INTO PLACE, CUTTING HER OFF!

JEFFERS  
Holy shit! Holy shit!

BEN  
Seph! Techs -

TECHS  
ON IT!!

ARAM  
(trying to make radio  
contact)  
Captain! Can you hear me?

Techs is stabbing the picks back into the hole, but before she can engage them...

... the DOOR SLIDES BACK OPEN...

... revealing SEPH on the other side, just fine.

BEN  
(relieved)  
You all right?

SEPH  
There was a moment there...

CRAW  
"A moment"...? Christ, I think I  
shit my suit.

BEN  
How'd you get the door open?

SEPH  
It wasn't locked.

Ben follows her into the passageway. With varying degrees of hesitation, the others follow, until they are all in.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY - CONTINUOUS

When the last is inside, the door once again slams shut. Seph points to a simple raised surface.

SEPH  
Pressure plate.

Craw tests it out. Door opens.

SEPH

Happy?

CRAW

Do I look happy?

SEPH

When the door closed, I tried to make contact. Did any of you get my signal?

(chorus of 'noes'.)

Walt?

IN THE SHUTTLE, Walt answers.

WALT

Nothing, Captain.

SEPH

Okay, Techs, Jeffers, see if you can string some microfiber in the doorway. I want relays to the shuttle. Walt, give us full mapping: 3-D, audio, thermal.

WALT

You got it.

Jeffers steps back outside, sets a small device (a RELAY) in the rock. It has a wide-angle camera lens. Techs clips in an almost invisible fiber, then drapes it down across the door sill. They both step inside and the door shuts behind them. They wire up another relay to the fiber.

While they work, Seph, Aram and Ben take small steps forward down the passage. Around a slight curve, they can see ANOTHER DOOR at the end.

ARAM

We're in an airlock.

Behind them, Techs checks communications.

TECHS

Walt, Marek? You receiving?

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

WALT

Got you Techs, nice and clear.

MAREK

Automap's up.

ON A MONITOR BEFORE THEM, A 3-D PROGRAM IS CREATING A PHOTO-REAL MAP OF THE INTERIOR OF THE ROGUE AS IT IS EXPLORED. IT IS UPDATED IN REAL-TIME FROM THE RELAY CAMERAS AND THE CAMERAS ON THE SPACE SUITS.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY - SAME

TECHS

Good. How we set for relays?

JEFFERS

Plenty.

TECHS

All set, Captain. The rest of the relays we should be able to set wirelessly.

SEPH

Then let's do it.

They follow Seph to the next door at the end of the passageway. There's another pressure plate on this door.

Seph presses it. The door opens.

INT. ROGUE - REAR CAVERN

Seven faces stare up in wonder.

They are in an artificial CAVERN carved from the asteroid. It is lit only by the heavy lancing beams of their suit lights.

As the lights play here and there, details emerge. Machinery is set into the rock at odd heights; metal catwalks cross wide expanses high overhead. There are no angles to the constructs; they're all curves. Despite this, they are unlovely, seemingly following an unrecognizable geometry.

One of the strangest features are the tall, thin PASSAGEWAYS that branch off from the cavern. There are dozens of them - black mouths set into the walls, even the floor. The passages high up the wall are reached by footholds carved into the rock.

SEPH

(to Gore)

You still think we should have stayed home?

No mockery. He can afford a real answer.

GORE

No.

CRAW

Hell, I'm happy as shit we're here. Really. We're heroes. Now what say we take some pictures and get back onto the shuttle before someone realizes we just kicked in their back door.

SEPH

I've got a feeling whoever was here is long gone. Look at this.

Seph hunkers down, indicating what looks like *fog* drifting slowly at foot level.

SEPH

Dust.

It's everywhere, undulating at their every move. Seph puts her hand in it, brings it up for them to see. Ultra-fine dark particles cling to her glove.

SEPH

If they were still around, I doubt they'd let it build up like this. Can't be good for the machinery.

Craw shakes his head, unconvinced.

TECHS

Hell, Captain, far as we know, the machinery's alive and eats this shit.

CRAW

Yeah... what she said. Who knows?

TECHS

Jesus Craw, I was making fun of you.

CRAW

Fuck you.

SEPH

Gore, take life readings. Check movement, temperature fluctuations, everything. Doc... tell us what they breathe.

Gore and Aram pull small machines from their packs, begin their sampling.

Craw and Jeffers peer into the darkness, none too happy with their surroundings. Ben comes up to them.

BEN

Maybe this will rekindle your pioneering spirit: the rogue is vectored that way.

He points parallel to the floor.

JEFFERS

So what?

BEN

There's gravity. And it's not centripetal. It's REAL. That means whoever built this can generate gravity. We can't. So what do you think the secret of gravity generation is worth to the company. A trillion? More? And your share's what, one percent? Do the math.

He walks off, smiling, as figures whir through their minds.

JEFFERS

A billion.

CRAW

(liking that number)  
What're waiting for? We've got like, four hours.

As Jeffers attaches a relay to the wall, Seph comes up to Gore.

SEPH

Well?

GORE

Nothing. No movement. No hot spots, no cold spots. Temperature toward the center rises slowly. I'm thinking generators.

SEPH

Good. Doc?

ARAM

Atmosphere sterile. No pathogens,  
no radiation. 11/88  
Oxygen/nitrogen at 13.2 Psi.  
Helmets are optional - our suits  
can scrub the extra nitrogen and  
bring up the oxygen.

SEPH

Here goes.

Seph twists a control at the neck joint and the entire suit goes slack as the current that kept it rigid is interrupted. It now hangs loosely on her body. She twists the helmet and it comes off with a shh of escaping gas.

She takes a breath - deep and ragged. Feels bad.

SEPH

You sure?

Aram twists off his own helmet.

ARAM

Suit's got you, don't worry.

Wire-thin needles extrude from wrist health-monitors into Seph's skin.

SEPH

Better.

She nods at the others; off come the helmets.

SEPH

Walt - you have us?

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

She and the others are visible through the wide lens of the relay. Tiled below that main feed are the suit cameras.

WALT

Clear.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN - SAME

SEPH

Good. We're moving on.

They head across the cavern, darkness holding them close. The floor is rough-hewn, no attempt made to smooth it out after the initial mining operation.

At every step, the omnipresent dust swirls and eddies.

Suddenly Gore stops. Points ahead, peering.

GORE

What's that?

A HULKING SHAPE looms before them. It moves jerkily in the crisscrossing light.

Seph swallows, inches forward. Eases up.

SEPH

Machinery. Nothing.

The three surround it. It's destroyed, spread over thirty or forty feet. Ben looks up. The catwalk overhead is splintered.

BEN

Fell from there.

SEPH

Looks like you were right. This place is dead.

Craw's trying to get a signal in his *vizion*, but it's fritzing, unclear.

CRAW

Hey doc, you said I was good to go. My *vizion's* for shit.

ARAM

(puzzled)

You checked clear. I'll look at it again when we get back.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Walt shakes his head sadly.

WALT

Now I know how Michael Collins felt.

MAREK

Who?

WALT

See? Michael Collins. The son of a bitch who sat on his ass in Apollo Eleven when Armstrong and Aldrin landed on the moon. Why are we sitting here when Crawford doesn't give a damn where he is?

MAREK

Because she can trust us to get them out if things turn to shit. Craw on the other hand...

BOTH

... not worth a fart in a vacuum.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN

They reach the far end of the cavern. Ahead are TWO TUNNELS, each leading a different way.

SEPH

(into radio)  
Marek - how much time?

MAREK

(on radio)  
Three hours, forty-two minutes.

Seph looks at the two passages facing her, then at Gore and Ben.

SEPH

Bad idea?

BEN

Usually is.

GORE

Captain, we should stick together, map what we can and get out of here. It's the safe move.

Seph considers, answers for Gore alone.

SEPH

We're the first people in history on board an alien ship.

She turns to the others.

SEPH

We're going to split up. Techs, you're with Ben and me.

(MORE)

SEPH (CONT'D)

Gore, you lead the others. Relays at every junction. Walt, you're our eyes.

She steps forward.

SEPH

I want whatever version of a cockpit they have.

GORE

(getting a bad feeling)

Why?

SEPH

Because we're going to fly this thing home.

Seph disappears into the darkness of the nearest passage, leaving the others gaping. Ben watches her go with admiration then turns to Gore.

BEN

And that's why she's in your chair.

He follows after her. When they're gone, Gore shakes his head.

GORE

She's crazy.

JEFFERS

Yup. All of that and then some.

As Techs brings up the rear, she scratches at one of her tattoo mods swirling around her neck. It's a little bit red.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Walt and Marek watch the progress on the mapping system. The two parties are in diverging tunnels moving off from the first cavern into the unknown.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

WITH Seph's group (Seph, Ben, Techs).

The passageway jags through the solid rock.

SEPH

How did they get it moving? We haven't seen any rockets...

BEN

Maybe they launched it electromagnetically.

SEPH

Maybe. But how were they going to stop it?

No answer from Ben. Suddenly though, Techs slows.

TECHS

You see that...?

A faint glow of LIGHT at the end of the tunnel. Seph levels the tube gun like a weapon.

They move forward to the end of the passageway. Another cavern looms ahead, only this one is lit by a very faint BLUE light. It emanates from a glowing liquid coursing sluggishly through transparent tubing. Here and there the tubing has broken, and the blue liquid pulses feebly in streamers down the wall.

And lit by the blue light...

TECHS

Wow.

... is a JUNGLE.

INT. ROGUE/GREENHOUSE

Alien plants of gray-green grow in wild profusion throughout the immense space. At some point there was order to the riot; now it looks as if they are warring with each other, growing beachheads into each other's territory.

Ben squints at them, puzzled, reaches out a slow hand. His fingers brush an exotically-curved leaf. He gasps as it simply *dissolves* into dust.

SEPH

What did you do?

Ben touches another. It too, dissolves.

TECHS

Jesus.

BEN

They're dead. All dead.

An entire biodome of fragile death.

They move forward on a PATH that takes them along the outer edge of the jungle. Other, smaller paths lead deeper in, towards darker corners. Ben points out rows and rows of teardrop-shaped fruit hanging high overhead; Seph nods at spiky potato-like objects hugging the ground.

SEPH

This was a generation ship. All this... it was supposed to feed someone. But what happened to them?

TECHS

Maybe they died out and all this just rotted away.

BEN

Or all this rotted away and they just died out.

As they move on against the shifting blue shadows, their motion eddies the dust in their wake. To the side of the path, it swirls away, revealing something pressed into the dry alien soil.

Over a foot long, thin, with four long divots extending from it.

A FOOTPRINT.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY - SAME

WITH Gore's group (Gore, Craw, Jeffers, Aram)

The passage gives way to a smaller cavern, perhaps a hundred feet in diameter. As they enter, Jeffers slaps a RELAY on the wall.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY - CONTINUOUS

WITH WALT, watching them enter from the shuttle.

BACK WITH the group. Their flashes reveal a dozen TALL METAL PODS sunk deep into the walls. Each has a wide transparent faceplate.

Gore peers through -

AND A FACE STARES BACK AT HIM!

GORE

Holy shit!

He jerks back... then realizes he was just looking at the reflection of Aram's face as he stepped up next to him.

Nervous laughter.

GORE

Christ, Doc. Christ. Don't do that again.

ARAM

I apologize. I'll make an effort to avoid all mirrored surfaces.

Gore steps back up, peers in. The metal pods extend deep into the rock. They are hollow, contain what seem to be benches of some sort and odd-shaped harnesses.

GORE

What are they?

Shrugs.

GORE

Walt? Marek?

WITH Walt and Marek, checking the feed.

WALT

Rake the interior.

Gore angles the camera. A bank of CONTROLS becomes visible.

WALT

(to Marek)  
Crash couches?

MAREK

Could be.

WALT

Best guess... escape pods. Those look like crash couches with restraint harnesses. But who knows? It's not like we're dealing with human physiology. They could just as easily be bathtubs.

BACK WITH the group.

CRAW

Tubs. That's good. We're in an alien bath house.

JEFFERS

I'll take the happy ending.

Unseen by the others, Aram has wandered to the other end of the chamber. There are two more tunnels angling off. He aims his light down the right tunnel. Not far away is another, smaller chamber.

He disappears into the tunnel.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Seph, Ben and Techs come to another split. Down one passage is more of the same - a hewn corridor. But down the other, something different. Seph touches the wall. Unlike the other passages, this one is sheathed in a brownish, gun-gray METAL.

SEPH

Let's try it.

They enter the metal-sheathed tunnel. It curves, giving way to ANOTHER CHAMBER. As their lights play out, Seph smiles at what she sees.

SEPH

Bingo. You see this, Walt?

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

Images come up of a smallish chamber, maybe 50 feet top to bottom and side to side. Every inch of space is dominated by wall-mounted machinery.

WALT

Yeah. Yeah.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY - SAME

Seph and the group step forward into -

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

- the BRIDGE.

Panels crawling with curved alien writing jut from walls at a height of five feet - too high for humans.

Backless "chairs" are ranged at the various panels. An enormous darkened MONITOR wraps half the room.

And at the center... what looks like an alien CAPTAIN'S CHAIR.

SEPH

(to Ben)

So... how smart are you?

BEN

Scary smart. Why?

SEPH

Marek - time?

MAREK

(over radio)

About 2 1/2 hours.

SEPH

(with a challenging  
smile)

Think you can learn how to fly an alien ship in 2 1/2 hours?

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

MAREK

(to Walt)

If anyone can...

(beat)

Why don't you shunt image over to Gore. Tell them Seph found the bridge.

IN Walt's *vizion*, as he sends picture to Gore's group.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

The images download to the group.

GORE

Jesus... she did it.

He turns to the others. Notices -

GORE

Where's the Doc?

CRAW

What... he was right here. Doc?  
DOC?!

They run to the opposite side, see the tunnels. Jeffers leans into the left one, Gore the right.

GORE

Doc!

Jeffers peers into the dark.

REVERSE ANGLE - as Jeffers steps into the tunnel, light flaring.

The angle *shifts slightly* as he takes another step.

Moving closer.

JEFFERS

DOC!

And closer still...

Jeffers pauses, *feeling something*...

JEFFERS

Doc?

And then --

ARAM (O.S.)

I'm in here! Look at this.

With a nervous glance backward, Jeffers abandons the tunnel. He follows Gore and Craw into the right-hand passage.

As they leave the Launch Bay, PUSH IN slowly on that left-hand passage.

A beat... then the thick dust heaves forward and begins to swirl.

INT. ROGUE/SHRINE - CONTINUOUS

Aram is in a smallish chamber. ALIEN WRITING curves about all the surfaces. Carved into the rock wall is what looks like a small altar. Two pieces of the desiccated fruit from the dead jungle sit within.

Chipped into the rock around the altar are what look like dozens of intertwined ARMS. Alien limbs seeming to reach for the altar.

Aram stands before it, quiet, unnerved.

JEFFERS

(small)  
What is this place?

ARAM

I think it's some kind of shrine  
or -

GORE

(coldly furious)  
- I don't care what the fuck it  
is! You don't ever go off without  
telling someone.

A flash of anger rips through Aram but he quells it.

ARAM

You're right.

GORE

Damn right I am. Now let's get out  
of here. Captain found the bridge.  
Walt - you think you can lead us  
out of here?

WITH WALT. The map of the rogue's interior has grown,  
encompassing all the chambers so far, and the  
intersecting tunnels.

WALT

You can go back the way you came,  
but I think I can get you there a  
little faster. It'd flesh out the  
map, too.

GORE

Let's do it.

WALT

All right. There's a passageway  
across from the one you entered.  
Head out that way.

Gore and the others slip through the rocks. Aram casts a  
last glance behind - he'd like to stay, but finally moves  
on after the others.

A beat, then the POV shifts slightly, as if something had  
been watching them leave.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

SEPH

I'm sitting at the helm of a starship.

Seph is filled with wonder. She is sitting in the "captain's chair" at the center of the room. Her feet are about two feet off the floor.

She twists in the backless chair to see Ben and Techs working behind her.

SEPH

(puzzled)

Chair doesn't swivel. There are stations everywhere. Should swivel.

Ben answers without looking up. Techs is attaching the mech "fingers" to his hand.

BEN

Maybe they do.

SEPH

Swivel?

BEN

Why not? Our range of motion is about 45 degrees. Maybe theirs was greater.

He inserts the fingers into four oval slots like the ones that opened the airlock door. A BLUE GLOW blossoms from liquid reservoirs in the ceiling. It washes over the room, fully illuminating the controls.

BEN

*Lux fiat.*

SEPH

(unimpressed)

Yeah. And *tempus* is *fugiting*. So get the engines started.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Walt and Marek see the lights come up in the Bridge.

WALT

He may do it yet.

MAREK

He's only got two hours.

Walt returns his attention to the 3-D map perched over the cascade of feeds from the various relays. It's filling out as Gore and the others make their way through the passageways.

WITH Gore's group. They've come to a split in the passages.

GORE

Which way?

BACK WITH Walt. On the map, one passage seems on a direct line with the bridge.

WALT

Try the left. And there's a dead space on the map between you and the bridge. Seems like there should be something there. So keep your eyes open.

WITH Gore's group.

CRAW

Thanks for the advice. I was definitely in danger of relaxing too much.

BACK WITH Walt and Marek. Walt smiles. Watches as they push on.

What he doesn't see...

In the cascade of feeds from the relays, key on one in particular. The shrine.

Push in on it slowly, image fuzzy. Something different about the altar.

Where once there were two pieces of the fruit in the niche, there are now THREE.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Gore and the others move on. Suddenly Crow shakes his head in annoyance.

CRAW

Shit.

GORE

What?

CRAW

My *vizion's* off-line. Completely.

IN his *vizion*. Nothing to see but glitches here and there. A cursor hovers, then the word "shutdown" comes up, leaving his normal vision clear.

JEFFERS

I've been getting interference too. You think there's something going on, doc?

Aram frowns.

ARAM

I won't know until I can examine you both. Wait until we get to the bridge.

Meanwhile, Gore has gone on a few paces, to the end of the passageway. He plays his light outward.

Stops dead in his tracks.

GORE

My god.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben stands at a station directly in front of the monitor screen. Instead of buttons or other obvious controls, the surface is marked with dozens and dozens of the oval holes that contain the controls within them. Ben is manipulating them with his mechanical fingers.

With an electronic crack, the monitor screen suddenly bursts to life. Images appear all around them. As with the lights, the images on the screen are formed from a liquid that flows through the monitor itself. The images are off to human eyes, but still distinguishable.

It's a STAR SYSTEM.

Seph and Techs step up next to Ben.

SEPH

What are we looking at? Is that where they're from?

BEN  
No. That's... here. Our solar  
system. Now. They must have  
external sensors. See - Mars,  
Earth.

Just then, Gore's voice comes over the suit radio. It's a  
little shaky.

GORE (O.S.)  
Seph...

SEPH  
(a little taken  
aback)  
Did he just call me 'Seph?'  
(beat)  
What's wrong?

GORE  
I found something you need to see.  
Right now.

The three exchange looks.

SEPH  
Let's go.

BEN  
Permission, Captain, to continue  
to work here.  
(she hesitates)  
Under two hours.

SEPH  
Do it.

CUT TO:

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY - A LITTLE LATER

Flashlights glance off the dull rock. Seph and Techs are  
moving quickly down the passage. Techs draws a short  
breath, flexes her hands as she walks.

SEPH  
What's wrong?

TECHS  
My fingers hurt. Christ, my whole  
body hurts. Like the flu or  
something.

SEPH

Get the doc to check you out when  
we get home.

Another step, and they can see Gore and his group huddled close to each other. Their torches are aimed at the ground, as if they didn't want to see further out into the dark.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

As they step from the passage, Gore turns to her. Her questions die in her throat. He's scared. He plays his torch out into the darkness. The others follow suit, revealing the cavern around them.

It is larger by far than any to this point, its upper reaches lost in shadow.

And into every inch of wall are set long, TRANSPARENT PODS. Thousands upon thousands of them, stretching from floor to ceiling, end to end.

*Every single one of them has been smashed open.*

*Every single one is empty.*

The floor is littered with an infinity of smashed crystalline window components.

Seph's voice comes small, squashed by the immensity of what she is seeing.

SEPH

Sleeping pods...?

He nods wordlessly.

SEPH

Then where are they?

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

Walt and Marek access the images.

WALT

I don't like this. Not one bit.  
They should get the fuck out of  
there.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY

Seph takes a step forward, foot crunching against the crystalline shards. She talks to Ben on her suit radio.

SEPH

Ben, you getting this?

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE - SAME

BEN

I see it.

Ben's sitting in the captain's chair. In his *vizion* are the images from the bay. But his full attention is elsewhere - he's manipulating controls on the captain's console with the metal fingers.

SEPH (O.S.)

Why sleep pods? I thought this was a generation ship. That's why they had the fields. They needed the food.

BEN

Maybe they needed a population to tend the machines while the rest slept. Maybe they rotated. I don't know.

Ben's fingers stop. Something's happening on the console. A metal cover is sliding back. It reveals a pool of dark LIQUID about 8 inches long.

BEN

Huh.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY - SAME

SEPH

What happened here?

BEN (O.S.)

Million-dollar question, captain.

SEPH

And you're the one with the million-dollar mods. I want some answers.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE - SAME

Ben stares into the thick liquid. His reflection looks dully back at him.

BEN  
(from afar)  
I'm working on it.

He rubs his fingers against each other, like a gambler feeling the dice. Then he lowers them to touch the liquid.

Ben's eyes fly wide open, his mouth drops. His entire body goes rigid.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY

Seph and the others have spread out through the cavern. Their lights cut back and forth in the dark as they examine the pods.

Techs has opened up a panel in the back of one of the pods. Circuitry is visible.

SEPH  
Techs - what do you have?

TECHS  
Back to the wall, I agree. Near as I can tell, these are cryo units.

Craw's getting a little edgy. Scared.

CRAW  
That's great. Sleepers. So what happened to them? That's what I want to know. They all just woke up one day and broke out?

JEFFERS  
Or something broke in.

CRAW  
Even fucking better. Captain, there's no way we're staying here, right?

SEPH  
Just get back to it. I want bio samples. We need something to show for all the helium we burned.

Craw swallows his fear, and he and Jeffers start climbing a "ladder" that leads to the second level of pods.

CRAW

(to Jeffers)

This place makes me twitch. I'd rather it was crawling with bugeyes. Anything but this ghost ship shit.

WITH ARAM, examining one of the pods. An indentation within traces the outline of a tall, thin inhuman body.

He grimaces as his fingers touch the surface. Looks at the tips. His mods (which are small metal studs at the very tips) are slightly inflamed.

He turns at a crunching sound behind him. It's Seph, boots grinding the clear fragments.

SEPH

What's your guess?

ARAM

I don't have one.

Gore joins them.

GORE

There were thousands of them in there... and whatever happened to them, we don't want it happening to us.

*We should leave.* Seph looks around, torn. Finally turns back to Aram.

GORE

Come with me. We're getting Ben.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Marek glances at the counter. A shade over an hour left. Walt's checking out the 3-D map of the rogue. It's begun to fill out: a series of caverns of various sizes joined by a network of passageways leading in and out at various angles.

As he manipulates the Rogue he sees that a number of tunnels lead into an unexplored **DARK ZONE** at the center.

WALT

Check that out.

MAREK

Gravity generator?

WALT

That's what I'm thinking. But here's what I don't get. This thing has to stop, right? I mean you don't just shoot a ship across space without being able to stop it or change course. If the gravity generator's in there, where are the engines?

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Nearing the bridge...

ARAM

He's not going to like it.

SEPH

He'll get over it. Gore's right. We're getting out of here.

Ben's voice floats to them from the bridge. An odd quality to it. Distant, pre-occupied.

BEN (O.S.)

But it happened so long ago.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

They enter. Ben stands with his back to them, hands at his side. He is limned by the liquid glow of the solar system painted across the monitor. Seph looks at him. Something strange about him...

SEPH

Ben?

BEN

So long...

He turns... and it's just Ben. With a small, dreamy smile.

BEN

I found the captain's log.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY

Gore, Craw, Techs and Jeffers are searching the pods in pairs.

WITH Techs and Gore. Techs points out a dried splotch of dark liquid in one of the pods.

TECHS

That look like blood to you?

GORE

Scrape it up.

She does, places the sample in a plastic bag in her kit.

WITH Craw and Jeffers. Each level is serviced by a ledge that runs in front of the row of pods; the ledges are reached by short passageways that are connected by rough-hewn stairs running from floor-level to the roof.

They emerge from a passage onto a ledge high in the air. As with all the others, these pods are broken and empty. Craw's jumpy, playing the light into the shadows.

CRAW

How long you think this has been out here? A hundred years? A thousand?

JEFFERS

(spooked, and pissed about it)

I don't know and I'm too scared to give a shit. Just shine the light over here so we can get her her goddamn DNA and get out of here.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

BEN

Dip your fingers in. You'll see.

Seph's staring down at that small reservoir of liquid in the captain's chair.

She returns her gaze to Ben. Locks eyes.

BEN

Trust me.

She does. Dips her fingers. And GASPS at what she sees.

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF IMAGES:

*A planet afire/a giant rock in space/an alien city in mid-riot...*

Seph jerks back, eyes wide.

SEPH

What. The. FUCK.

Aram steadies her.

ARAM

What did you do to her!? What is that?

Ben takes a moment to answer, relishing the words.

BEN

Liquid memory.

Their attention is all his.

BEN

I can't begin to tell you how they do it, but I think they lock experience in that liquid. It's like our memory chips.

SEPH

But... it wasn't just that I saw. I felt. I think it was fear. Hope.

BEN

Memory. Now put your fingers back in. Let me guide you.

(off her look)

It shows you what you want to see.

Trepidation overload. But still, Seph dips her fingers in. Again, the weird images overlapping, until Ben's voice begins to sort them out.

BEN (O.S.)

There was a solar flare.

*A view from space, of a flare ripping from a sun and enveloping a planet...*

*The planet burning, a sea of molten rock on the sun-facing side...*

BEN

The planet was dying. They built a ship. Out of an asteroid.

*Small ships, like tug boats, maneuvering an asteroid into orbit around a small moon...*

*Mechanical diggers ejecting pulverized rock from the asteroid as they claw into its belly...*

BEN (O.S.)

Only a few could go. There were riots.

*From on high - the view of a high-hovering machine - as an alien city implodes. Curved towers connected by ornate bridges collapse as munitions explode like blue flowers...*

BACK WITH SEPH - a moment, as tears threaten. The images are overwhelming, awful.

BEN (O.S.)

The ones who left were the powerful. That doesn't change anywhere in the universe. They were called the Larl. They were frozen, destined to wake when the ship arrived at a new planet.

*A seemingly endless chain of the sleeper pods is loaded into the Rear Cavern (where they entered) and down through the tunnels into the asteroid. It looks like a series of ant eggs being carried into a hive...*

BEN (O.S.)

But the ship couldn't self-sustain. It needed mechanics. Ones who would live and die on the ship, whose children would live and die on it.

*A familiar place. The CARGO HOLD of the Rogue now, as the pods are loaded into their slots along the wall. Each is whole, containing a dimly-seen occupant...*

BEN (CONT'D)

Slaves.

*The darkness of the cargo hold is broken only by dim blue lights, so the figures loading the pods are difficult to see.*

*They are tall, thin, with leathery gray/black skin that hugs tight a bony structure. But every now and then, their movement is strangely fluid, as if their bones were extremely flexible...*

BEN

The Kril. But something went wrong. Wherever they were headed, they missed. Time passed, generations lived and died.

*A final image, of systems failing within the Rogue, girders twisting and falling, the plants in the jungle blackening in death, a POV of a gray-skinned alien hand with four long fingers holding a 'fruit' in its hands that turns to a fine dust...*

BACK WITH SEPH, as she lifts her fingers from the liquid memory. Her hand is shaking, her face stricken.

SEPH

How much time?

The dreamy fascination of discovery leaves Ben's face.

BEN

As near as I can tell, 5,000 years.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY

Craw and Jeffers are examining the pods on the top levels now. They are a hundred feet off the ground. Jeffers has rolled the top half of his suit down about his waist, is working in a thick undershirt. He starts scratching his chest, annoyed and a little frightened.

JEFFERS

Hey - I know your *vizion's* down, but...

CRAW

What?

JEFFERS

You got anything else wrong?

CRAW

Like what?

Jeffers lifts his shirt, revealing a network of angry red lines running down his chest. It's the beginning of infection around the modification wires running under his skin.

CRAW

Jesus wept. You tell the doc?

JEFFERS

Not yet.

CRAW

Well you better. God only knows, maybe you caught something from this place.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

SEPH

5,000 years. What happened? What went wrong?

BEN

Their nav maybe. I couldn't tell. I don't think the captain knew. But I could feel he was scared. He knew their life support wasn't designed for that much time.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Walt's looking at the relay feeds of the passageways leading to the Cargo Bay when...

*... a DARK FIGURE brushes past the camera!*

WALT

What the hell...?

He plays the camera around but can't see anything.

WALT

(into the radio)

Uh... any of you people duck into one of the tunnels when I wasn't looking?

WITH GORE

His POV - Techs examining a ground-level pod; Craw and Jeffers on a higher level.

GORE

No one from the bay. We're all accounted for.

WITH SEPH

SEPH

No. Why?

BACK WITH Walt -

WALT

I think I saw something move that  
wasn't one of us.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY (HIGHER LEVEL)

Just as those words come over the radio, Craw sees a spot of something on the inside of the pod. It looks like the dried 'blood' Gore and Techs found. Only when he reaches out to scrape the sample...

... IT'S WET.

Craw straightens up, suddenly very frightened.

CRAW

Jeffers, look at -

SOMETHING LOOMS UP FROM THE PASSAGE BEHIND JEFFERS!

Craw screams; his light drops.

A quick strobe image of a **CREATURE**, tall, skin wrapped tight around bones. Sinewy arms that *blur* forward and -

- JEFFERS ARCHES IN AGONY! His feet jerk, sending crystal fragments shooting into space.

Jeffers reaches out for Craw as blood sprays forward.

Their eyes lock, Jeffers pleading; Craw terrified...

Then Jeffers is whipped backwards, disappearing into the dark!

WITH Gore and Techs, staring upward, horrified. They leap aside as the kicked glass rains down on them from overhead.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Seph, yelling into her radio.

SEPH

Jeffers!!

No answer. Swings on Ben.

SEPH

What the hell was that thing!?

Ben plays the image in his *vizion* from Craw's camera. Hard to see - dark images in flashes from the torch, plus: his *vizion* is starting to fail too.

BEN

I can't tell! It was too fast!

WITH GORE AND TECHS

Gore races into the stairs off the ground-level passageway. He stops in the shadows - Techs isn't following. He looks back: "Come on!"

TECHS

(terrified)

Shit!

She runs in after him.

WITH SEPH

ARAM

Can you access Jeffers's camera?

SEPH

(into radio)

Walt?

WITH WALT

WALT

Sending feed... now.

BACK WITH SEPH

In their *vizion*, in her suit monitor, nothing but blackness -

BEN

Camera must be -

- and SOUNDS.

JEFFERS (O.S.)

NONONONO!! AAAHHHHH!! NOOOOOO!

They recoil in horror.

SEPH

Jesus. Walt. Cut it.

CUT TO:

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Gore and Techs run out onto the ledge where Craw has fallen to his knees, faced splattered with blood.

GORE  
COME ON!

CRAW  
Where are we going?

GORE  
(angry)  
Where the fuck do you think we're going?!

Gore grabs him roughly, propels him into the same passage Jeffers disappeared into.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Marek spots Gore and the others.

MAREK  
Seph - it's Gore.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

MAREK (O.S.)  
They're going after it.

SEPH  
Shit. Gore! Wait! We're coming!

GORE (RADIO)  
We don't have time to wait! He'll be dead!

SEPH  
You don't even know where the thing is!

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

GORE  
Yeah, yeah I do.

Gore's torch picks out BLOOD smeared on the floor and walls, even the ceiling, as if Jeffers had been dragged and pulled along like a doll.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Walt and Marek watching the cascade of feeds -

MAREK

THERE!

Just a *flash* of movement, a tall alien form, Jeffers dragging behind it, then gone.

MAREK

Is he...?

WALT

I think he was alive.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

SEPH

Ben, Doc, move! We've got to catch up with them.

BEN

You go. There's too much here to lear-

Seph spins on him, eyes flashing.

SEPH

Move! That's an order!

Ben swallows his retort - this is a Seph he hadn't seen coming.

She races out, followed by Ben and Aram.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

Marek sees the timer, catches Walt's eye, worried.

MAREK

We spotted Jeffers. We think he might still be alive. But Seph... you're running out of time.

WITH SEPH AND THE OTHER TWO, racing through a passage.

SEPH

How long?

MAREK (RADIO)

Twenty minutes. Tops.

ARAM

We'll never make it.

SEPH

We'll make it. Walt, can I get some help here?

BACK WITH WALT

Tracing with his finger where the creature took Jeffers, where he was spotted.

WALT

I can cut some time off for you, get you to where Gore's going.

SEPH

Do it!

A quick calculation, then -

WALT

Take the next passage right....  
The one slanting down.

WITH SEPH, coming to two passages, clambers into the downward slanted. The others follow.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Gore leads, then Techs, and Craw.

CRAW

Christ, Gore, you heard what she said! We can't have more than 15 minutes!

GORE

Shut up!

Up ahead, lights pick up a smeared trail of blood leading into a chamber.

Gore slows, hoists up the tube gun. Techs and Craw bring up their axes.

They edge forward. See something familiar. Alien writing carved into the walls. The SHRINE is just ahead.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Seph and the others, scrambling downward. Seph grunts in pain as her knee slams an outcropping. She keeps moving.

INT. ROGUE/SHRINE

CLOSE ON: the dust, flowing like liquid on the ground. Suddenly it explodes upward in a slow-motion corona. Twice more, in quick succession, like meteor strikes in the desert.

It's SWEAT, dropping from Craw's face. They're about to enter the shrine. A beat, then they whip into the chamber.

Nothing there.

Breath lets loose, ragged in relief. And then they see it. What's on the altar next to the desiccated alien fruit.

TECHS

Nooo...

THEN COMES THE SOUND OF SOMETHING ONRUSHING, CAROMING THROUGH THE PASSAGEWAY, RIGHT TOWARD THEM!

Gore grits his teeth, scared, but holding his ground.

CRAW

Gore...

GORE

Hold on -

CRAW

GORE -

GORE

HOLD ON -

And then it's there! Gore's finger tightens on the trigger... then lets up: IT'S SEPH AND THE OTHERS.

CRAW

HOLY SHIT! Holy shit. Holy. Shit.

SEPH

Did you find anything? Where's Jeffers?

Gore angles his head at the altar.

GORE

There's... part of him.

Seph, Ben and Aram look. Look away.

It's Jeffers's ARM.

Torn off at the shoulder, wire mods dangling from their places beneath the torn skin.

It's been placed on the altar. Like an offering.

SEPH

(cold)

Doc. Could he live through that?

Four sets of eyes on him, each wanting the same answer. Not getting it.

ARAM

Yes. It's possible.

CRAW

Bullshit! His fucking arm's torn off. No way he lives through that.

TECHS

(low)

Craw, don't...

CRAW

And even if he is, we got no time. Back me up on this Marek, how long we got?

MAREK (RADIO)

15 minutes. Tops. Get out of there.

CRAW

(triumphant)

See? We gotta go.

Seph locks eyes with Gore. Asks him a silent question - 'you with me'? A moment, then he nods shallowly. With her.

SEPH

Walt... you got a vector on that thing?

CRAW

Oh shit.

WITH WALT

WALT

Yeah. Passageway right behind you.

SEPH (RADIO)

Where's it go?

BACK WITH SEPH

Bad looks at the answer.

WALT (RADIO)

The Greenhouse.

INT. ROGUE/GREENHOUSE

The ashen jungle of alien plants spread out before them, lit only by their suit lights.

At their feet is a spray of blood. It disappears at the head of two trails that lead deep into the gray fronds.

They look at the two paths, then at Seph.

SEPH

(quiet)

We stay together.

Muted relief. She sets off down a path, tube gun leading. The others follow, eyes squinting against the dark.

As they move through, the stirred air swirls particles from the plants that haze their vision.

Seph stops. The path continues on, but off to the side, the plants have been trampled, leaving a trail that heads directly into the middle of the greenhouse.

She leaves the path, plants turning to a fine powder beneath her feet.

They follow after her, and soon the trail opens before them into a wide cleared area. There are no plants here, but the ground is jumbled with *something*. They play their lights back and forth. Can't quite tell what it is they're seeing. And then...

CRAW

Oh fuck.

BONES. The killing field of an alien race. Thousands upon thousands of them, all jumbled together. Victims of some time-lost slaughter.

ARAM

These are the ones from the sleepers.

TECHS

But what happened to them?

BEN

A war, maybe...?

Aram kneels down, plays his light over the remains. Recognizable arms and legs, but all of them segmented - an inch or two of bone connected to the next with rubbery cartilage, like a human spine. He picks one up, twists it. It rotates easily past 180 degrees. Fascinated, he puts it in his sack.

SEPH

We don't have time for that. We find Jeffers and go. Marek?

MAREK (RADIO)

Ten.

They spread out, stepping gingerly through the skeletons. And all the time... *watched*.

A Presence, following them, peering between bones.

Finally, Techs's voice comes out of the darkness. Choked.

TECHS

I've... he's over here.

Seph and the others come running, find Techs a few feet ahead. At her feet is Jeffers's body. His chest is split down through the middle, from breastbone to spine, as if the thing had begun to tear him in half. His head is tilted unnaturally to the side, held in place by ribbons of tissue.

CRAW

Now... can we GO? oh my god.

THE CREATURE ERUPTS FROM THE BONES BEHIND TECHS!

For a moment, the flashlights converge on it. It's tall, almost ten feet, but thin, with gray flesh mottled with black. It has two arms and two legs; the arms ending in four stiletto fingers. Nestled within the fingers like a spider's body is a pinched, muscular *mouth*.

Techs twists, a slow frozen turn...

... then SCREAMS as the stiletto fingers jam into her shoulder! Ribs shatter as they plunge through her, tearing out through the muscles of her back.

For a moment, the four fingers stand out from her space suit and then each one splits in half, folding outward to form hooks that clamp her flesh.

As if weightless, she's yanked downward into the pile of bones to a TUNNEL hidden beneath!

A horrified beat, then Seph shoves the skeletons aside and slides down into the tunnel. Adrenaline-charged, the others drop down after her.

INT. ROGUE/TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Techs screams, blood blooming on her suit. The creature slams her against the wall, stunning her. Its top half rotates at the waist toward Seph as she and the others pour in after it. Seph swings up the tube gun and FIRES!

The slim titanium tube hisses through the air and buries itself in the creature's back. It arches in pain, and lets out a HISSING ROAR from a skin-fluttering tympanum in its neck.

Techs drops free and it scuttles off down the tunnel, body jointlessly slithering around the curve as it disappears.

SEPH

GET HER!

Seph reloads as Gore and Ben grab Techs, pull her out of the tunnel and back in to -

INT. ROGUE/GREENHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SEPH

MOVE! Marek - what do we have?!!

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

Marek and Walt, watching the whole thing.

MAREK

Five minutes!

INT. ROGUE/GREENHOUSE

SEPH

Jesus... let's go, get her, come on, COME ON! Fuck the trail - GO!

They drag Techs straight through the jungle, plants dusting as they heave her forward. She shrieks and moans with pain.

ARAM

I've got to stop the bleeding!

SEPH

No time! We don't make it to the shuttle, they're taking off without us!

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY - CONTINUOUS

They slam into a passageway.

SEPH

Marek?

MAREK (RADIO)

Three!

SEPH

Get ready to blow the lines!

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

MAREK

Ramping engines...

Walt and Marek flick switches. Shuttle engines start to hum.

MAREK (CONT'D)

Get ready with -

WALT

- I'm on it.

IN Walt's *vizion*. A cursor hovers over the 'Harpoon Release'.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN

They blow out of the tunnel into the CAVERN they entered first, past the downed machinery they saw earlier.

SEPH

Almost there...

MAREK (RADIO)

One minute!

SEPH

We'll be there!

Just ahead, the airlock door leading to the exit tunnel.

ANGLE FROM high up on the wall as they rush forward. They're being *watched*.

Ben's the first to reach the door. About to slam the pressure plate when...

THE ASTEROID BEGINS TO THRUM WITH POWER.

CRAW

What the fuck's that?!

SEPH

I don't care! Ben - !

A ROAR BEGINS TO FILL THE CHAMBER. A MECHANICAL DIN KNOCKS THEM TO THEIR KNEES.

SEPH

Ben...?!!

BEN

I DON'T KNOW!

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

They feel it in here, too.

MAREK

What's happening?

Walt scans the panels. Indicator lights going crazy. Red everywhere.

WALT

There's a magnetic field beneath us. Strong. Building.

More red.

WALT

And the temperature's spiking. 500 degrees. A thousand.

Walt realizes. Horror rips him.

WALT

The magnetic field - it's a plasma cone. We're on top of the rocket exhaust.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN - SAME

They all hear.

SEPH

Walt... get out of there. Blow the lines and go!

WALT (RADIO)

We'll lose you, Seph! We can't get back!

Seph shares a look with the others. No choice. Craw moans.

SEPH

Do it.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

MAREK

(off the indicators)

Oh my god. Temperature 3500 degrees.

A flick of a switch. Outside cameras show the ground beneath the shuttle.

IT'S BRIGHT RED.

Walt hits the harpoon release.

Three of the ropes explode downward.

But the fourth... the catch is melted, unable to release.

Walt sees. Leaps from his seat, heads for a hatch into the belly of the shuttle. Screams at Marek.

WALT

HELMET!

Marek scrambles into her helmet as Walt shoves through the hatch.

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE - SAME

The asteroid surface is melting. Magma flows in wild zero-g shapes. The shuttle, held by a single tether, is floating above it like a kite over hell.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME

Walt anchors himself to the floor, raises his fist AND PUNCHES THROUGH THE SHIP SKIN!

Synthetic flesh tears, revealing metal bones. Orange blood-analog sprays into the air, and is sucked out into the void as the shuttle atmosphere VENTS.

Walt thrusts his hand down through the hole, grabs the melted tether hook and yanks.

OUTSIDE, the shuttle glows red, skin beginning to melt.

*It's too late.*

The fuel tank melts.

Walt looks up at Marek.

Marek opens her mouth to speak.

THE SHUTTLE EXPLODES.

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE - SAME

Huge chunks of the shuttle slam into asteroid outcroppings.

Marek's flaming body cartwheels into the void.

With a final jolting soundless roar, a flame half a mile high blossoms from the hidden rocket, vaporizing the magma itself.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN - SAME

Shock. Aram looks up in horror, then recovers, works to staunch the blood flowing from Techs. Seph and Gore stare at each other wordlessly.

CRAW

Holy shit. We're fucked. We're fucking dead.

SEPH

(soft)  
Shut up, Craw.

CRAW

Or what? Huh? You're not fucking captain here!

(MORE)

CRAW (CONT'D)  
 You're only captain on your ship  
 AND IT JUST BLEW THE FUCK UP!

Gore grabs Craw, shoves him back.

GORE  
 (quiet, hard)  
 She is the captain and you will do  
 as she says.

Seph turns to Ben. And he's... watching the dust flow  
 over his feet.

BEN  
 Look at it. The dust.

It's moving differently now, flowing in one direction.

BEN  
 The rockets shifted our course.  
 (beat)  
 We're on a different heading.

Craw shrugs free of Gore.

CRAW  
 Shifted course? That's what the  
 two of you were trying to do,  
 wasn't it? Did you do this?

He launches himself at Ben

CRAW  
 DID YOU?

WHAM! Seph clocks him, dropping him to his knees.

BEN  
 Thank y-

Seph spins back on him, cutting him off.

SEPH  
 - Did you?

BEN  
 I hadn't gotten that far. The ship  
 did this.

SEPH  
 What do you mean?

Ben holds his head, closes his eyes, as if dizzy.

BEN  
 I'm thinking.

SEPH  
We don't have time for you to  
think.

Craw spits blood. Quiet now, but crushed, lost.

CRAW  
We got all the time in the  
world...

Ben's *vizion* shudders.

BEN  
(to himself)  
My mods, they're not -

CRAW  
(finishing)  
... we're in an alien ship being  
hunted down by that thing, heading  
nowhere.

Ben keys on Craw's last words.

BEN  
No. We are headed somewhere. We've  
got to find out *where*.

CUT TO:

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE - A LITTLE LATER

BEN  
There.

Seph, Ben and Gore stand before the monitor screen. Ben points out the blue ball of Earth. Where before it was off to a corner, it's now dead-center.

BEN  
Earth.

GORE  
(unnerved)  
How did the ship know to do this?

Seph shakes her head, steps close to the screen.

SEPH  
What's it going to do when it gets  
there?

BEN  
Colonize.

The word drops like a stone in a pool.

BEN

That's what they set out do, isn't it?

SEPH

But how? There's nothing left of them but that thing out there -

BEN

(snapping, angry)

*I don't know.* Christ, for all I know, their protocol could be to cause an extinction event and wipe out the dominant species. We're in an asteroid. It could slam right into the ocean. What does it matter if none of them are alive to crawl out and multiply. Who gives a shit at that point?

NEARBY, Aram and Craw have made Techs as comfortable as possible. She's moaning in pain, drifting in and out of consciousness. Her eyes partially focus on Craw. Her voice comes out garbled.

TECHS

...wh- what are you?...

CRAW

It's me, honey. It's Craw. You're going to be all right.

He looks at what Aram's doing. He's got her shirt off, examining the four puncture wounds that entered her back and drove out her shoulder. They are lividly inflamed. He shares a look with Craw. It's very, very bad.

TECHS

I want to go home. She's... I want to go home...

CRAW

Can you...?

ARAM

I can try.

Aram removes a very long needle from his bag, loads it up with a liquid antibiotic. He poises it over one of the exit holes.

ARAM

Techs, if you can hear me, this is going to hurt, but it'll help you.

He leans forward, inserts the needle into the torn flesh. It slips in all the way. Craw looks away. Aram squeezes; the liquid enters the wound. He glances at Techs for reaction -

- and finds her staring at him. No hint of pain. No emotion. Nothing.

ARAM

(thrown)

Techs?

TECHS

Who?

She closes her eyes, drops her head back down.

BACK WITH SEPH AND BEN

Ben gathers himself.

BEN

Sorry. It's my head, it's -

SEPH

(cutting him off)

- How long before we hit atmosphere?

IN Ben's *vizion*. Formulae stream across but there are dead zones within the field.

Ben finishes off his figures by writing with his finger tip in the dust on a command console. Seph looks at him, worried.

BEN

(annoyed)

I'm fine.

Ben picks up one of the communications relays. His fingertip mod runs along a contact on top. A COUNTDOWN DISPLAY begins.

BEN

This is what we've got.

2:43:05. 2 hours, 43 minutes, 5 seconds.

SEPH

Jesus. All right, everyone, listen up. We've got a shot, but that's all. Ben, you're here. Get the engines working. We have to change course. This thing can't reach earth. That's job 1. Doc, stay here with Techs. Do what you can.

BEN

What about you?

SEPH

(to Gore)

You said you spotted escape pods on the way in, right?

GORE

That's what Walt thought, yeah.

SEPH

Let's hope he's right. We're going to see if we can get them working. Craw, you're with us.

She eyefucks Crawford.

SEPH

You good with that?

Takes a moment, but he nods.

CRAW

Yeah. Yeah, I guess.

SEPH

Good. Grab Techs's kit. We'll need it.

Craw does. As he closes it up, he spots Techs's mech spider, half of its legs gone. It makes him sad. He gets to his feet, puts his hand on Techs's head. She's burning up.

CRAW

(soft)

You'll be okay, darlin'.

Nearby, Gore's loading up on supplies - the tube guns, some explosives.

Meanwhile, Aram steps up to Seph.

ARAM

How do you feel?

SEPH

That a real question?

ARAM

I don't mean it that way.  
Physically.

SEPH

Good enough.

ARAM

You mind?

He takes her hand, holds it palm up. CLOSE ON his fingers. His mods are diagnostic - tiny metal studs on the very tips. He holds them against her skin.

IN HIS VIZION. Like the others, it's fritzing. But Seph's vitals come up, read by his diagnostic mods. Normal temperature, heart beat, oxygen content. Everything normal.

SEPH

What?

ARAM

There's something going on. The whole crew is having problems with their mods, running at least low-grade fevers. Aches and pains. Everyone but you, that is.

SEPH

And I've got no mods. Not a coincidence.

ARAM

No.

SEPH

Well figure it out. I've got other things to worry about.

(to Gore and Craw)

Let's move.

As they gather, Ben puts a hand on Seph's arm.

SEPH

You worried about me?

BEN

That creature's still out there.

SEPH  
(fatalistic)  
Yeah. It is.

BEN  
Be careful.

SEPH  
You too.  
(soft, but strong)  
It doesn't matter if we get off.  
That's all that matters.

She nods at the monitor. Earth.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Seph, Gore and Craw enter the passageway. Seph leads, tube gun aimed ahead. Gore pulls up rear, moving backward. They come to three branching tunnels.

Gore's *vizion* is almost gone, but he's got a schematic based on the map created by Walt and Marek.

SEPH  
Which one?

GORE  
(off his *vizion*)  
Middle.

They disappear inside.

Behind them, another RELAY counts down. 2:38:11

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben cracks his fingers. They hurt. Each digit has a group of red lines beginning to form on it. Looks a bit like infection lines. He sets the mech fingers in place and begins to work on the panel.

Aram cuts the arms free from Techs's shirt. Sucks in his breath. Her external mods have begun to curl free from her skin.

Aram takes a skin sample and places it in a small machine from his bag. Its SCREEN lights up, showing us the skin sample he took. He zooms in, past the cell stage, pushing in on the DNA itself.

As with Jeffers's DNA, seen earlier, Techs's DNA has the normal double helix, plus the piggyback DNA strands of the mods. However, there is something different now.

ARAM

My god.

The DNA of the mods is covered with strange new proteins like barnacles on a piling.

ARAM

(to himself)

It wasn't the air though. It wasn't.

He casts about, mind whirring. Then he notices it. The DUST, swirling over his boots. He leans down, lets some settle into his hand.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY - CONTINUOUS

Seph Gore and Craw exit a passageway into a familiar area.

The clear-fronted 'escape capsules' line the far wall.

GORE

This is it.

Craw rakes his light around nervously.

CRAW

I can feel the fucking thing out there. Watching us.

Seph grabs him.

SEPH

Craw - I need you here. Without Techs, you're the only one who can do this. You good?

Craw gathers himself.

CRAW

Head hurts like a motherfucker, but I'm good.

SEPH

So what do you need to do?

CRAW

Make some fingers.

He rummages through Techs's bag. Comes up with the mech spider. Pinches a leg in a pliers.

CRAW  
(to the spider)  
Sorry.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Aram puts a sample of the dust into his microscope. Brings up a side-by-side of Techs's DNA and the dust.

Ben doesn't notice Aram. He's busy at the controls. Suddenly the bridge is BATHED IN MUTED LIGHT as the control panels hum to life.

BEN  
I'm close, Doc. I can do this. I  
can -

ARAM (O.S.)  
- It's in the dust.

Ben turns to him.

BEN  
What is?

Aram indicates the viewer. It shows the DUST is laden with the same barnacle-like proteins on Techs's DNA.

ARAM  
Their DNA. Whatever those things were in the sleepers, they must not reproduce sexually. They just shed DNA, like skin cells. And whatever it lands on, it attacks like a virus.

Ben looks down at his fingers. They've begun to crack and bleed at the tips.

BEN  
We're becoming them?

Aram looks at his own diagnostic mods. They've begun to turn red.

ARAM  
I don't know. Maybe. Maybe something... in-between.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

The mech spider lies legless at the bottom of the bag.

Craw's got a new pair of mech fingers. He's working them in the oval holes on the face of an escape pod.

CRAW

My head feels like it's going to crack open.

The tips go in deeper, twist...

CRAW

There, almost... SHIT!

He pulls them out in frustration.

CRAW

I can't do it. Christ, I can barely even think. My head's -

SEPH

I don't give a fuck about your headache. You don't get that open, we all die.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

CLOSE ON: another sample of the alien virus piggybacking a DNA strand.

ARAM

That's yours. Which means we're all carriers now. All of us except Seph. She's symptom-free.

BEN

She's wireless.

ARAM

Yes. All our mods are genetically tagged so our bodies don't reject them. I think that opened a back door for the alien DNA.

BEN

If we're all carriers, that means...

He steals a glance at Earth, getting closer in the monitor. Aram nods.

TECHS (V.O.)  
*...long, long years...*

They turn quickly. Techs is sitting up. Her bare chest has begun to *change*. Ribs standing out in high relief, skin DARKENING. As she speaks, her voice moves oddly up and down the register; her throat throbbing like a drumbeat.

TECHS  
*...we didn't want to do it...*

Ben and Aram share a look: "we?"

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

Gore's bending one of Craw's 'fingers' with a pliers, re-aligning it.

Then comes a NOISE.

A banging, insistent, metal on metal.

From there. Down that passageway.

The pliers clatters to the floor; Seph and Gore aim down the hall with the tube guns.

SEPH  
 (to Craw)  
 Keep working.  
 (to Gore)  
 What is it?

He shakes his head.

It comes again. A knocking. *Bang! Bang!*

Seph takes a step toward that dark passage.

GORE  
 What are you doing?

SEPH  
 Looking.

GORE  
 I'll come with you.

SEPH  
 No. Stay with Craw. You're a lot more useful than I am.

Gore makes to say something more but -

SEPH

*Stay.*

Gore attempts a smile.

GORE

You always were a bitch.

SEPH

Still am.

Seph disappears down the corridor. A RELAY clicks over:  
1:34:17.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben and Aram step away from Techs. She stares at them from eyes whose skin has begun to fold down, hooding the iris.

BEN

Who are you?

She cocks her head. It drops to the side, a little further than normal.

TECHS

Who the fuck do you think I am?

A spark of anger there... then confusion. Her words are halted, as if unfamiliar.

TECHS

I'm me. But what I remember... the things I remember. I didn't do. I didn't see.

Aram dares a step forward.

ARAM

What do you see?

She indicates the ship around her. Ben and Aram look at her fingers. They have started to SPLIT down the center, as if forming two fingers where a single one was before.

TECHS

This. Our ship. *Their* ship. The ones who mattered.

(beat)

The ones who slept.

Ben and Aram shiver in air suddenly gone dead cold.

TECHS

Not us, though. We lived and died.  
Children lived and died.

Techs eyes suddenly darken in panic. She looks about wildly.

TECHS

Sam? Where are you? SAM?

ARAM

(soothing)  
He's not here. Crawford has him.  
He's all right.

Techs looks at Aram as if he should know better:

TECHS

Sam's not a boy.

Ben lays a hand on her arm, tries to refocus her.

BEN

Tell us about the ones who slept.

TECHS

*Them...* We kept faith with them.  
Prayed for them. For the ship to  
stop. But it never did. Never  
stopped. Never stopped.

Techs pauses. Her eyes shift back and forth. A secret to be told. A bad one.

TECHS

But the food stopped.

INT. ROGUE

Seph inches down the passageway, tube gun poised. Sweating. A tunnel opens to her right. She peers down, light barely denting the black.

*Bang!*

Not from the tunnel. Forward. Keep moving.

The light picks out the end of the tunnel. She exits into the Rear Cavern.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

*Bang. Bang. Bang.*

The sound reverberates through the dead space.

She follows it, her lone light ineffectual against the mass of darkness pressing down.

Dust swirls at every step; shadows creep along the hewn stone walls.

*Bang. Bang.*

There.

Coming from the airlock door.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

TECHS

There were machines. Food came from them. But so long we were in the stars. The food stopped coming. Nothing grew. All dead dust. But the hunger was still there. So...

Techs chomps down hard.

Two of her teeth drop to the floor in a shower of blood.

She doesn't even notice.

BEN

DOC?!

Aram rummages his bag, pulls out a hypo.

TECHS

... we ate. First the ones that mattered. The ones that slept. Never waking up.

Techs smiles, a bloody snake-grin.

TECHS

Not usually.

Ben and Aram exchange horrified looks.

TECHS

Then... bad. Bad. Ourselves. Eating us. Hoping to stop. Never stopping. One by one, until none. None but...

(beat)

... but the one. Out there.

Aram jams the hypo into her arm. At the pain-prick, she casually swipes him with her arm, sending him to the ground. She staggers to her feet, then drops back, unconscious.

INT. ROGUE/CARGO BAY

Craw plunges the fingers in again and...

... the ESCAPE POD DOOR OPENS.

GORE

Yes.

CRAW

No. All I did was open the door.  
We've still got that ahead of us.

A CONTROL PANEL lining the interior of the escape pod.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN

Seph steps toward the airlock. Stops. *Feels something* behind her.

Whirls and -

- nothing. Blackness empty.

*BANG!*

She jumps. Swallows hard. Hand reaches out toward the airlock door. The pressure plate. Fingers outstretched...

... then pulled back. She shakes her head, too frightened to open the door.

And then it bursts open!

A DARK CREATURE LUNGES FOR HER!

The tube gun spits, but the tube slides by, digging deep into the rock wall. Useless.

Seph yells out as a MAN tumbles into the cavern! Not the creature at all. It's WALT.

ALIVE.

SEPH

Oh my god - Walt. Walt!

She kneels beside him. Blackened eyes stare up at her, mechanical pupils dilating slowly.

WALT

Seph...?

His voice a gurgle, from melted vocal chords. His face blackened and charred. One arm is gone, the other half-melted. His entire body is a mass of bubbled metal dense with inclusions - bits of the asteroid surface and the ship blown into his metal skeleton while it was near-liquid with the blast-heat.

SEPH

Oh Jesus, Walt, I'll get you help,  
I'll ... it'll be okay.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben and Aram stand over Techs's form. She's out, but her body is twisting and turning, as if her insides were contorting terribly.

BEN

The greenhouse... that's where  
they put them when they were  
through.

Aram looks past Ben toward the monitor curving across the wall. The ball of Earth has grown closer. But there's something more. Something different.

ARAM

Ben... why are the stars moving?

Ben spins around. THREE PINPRICKS OF LIGHT ARE MOVING OUT FROM EARTH TOWARD THEM.

BEN

Those... aren't stars.

He screams into his suit mike.

BEN

SEPH!!!

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN - SAME

His voice cuts over her suit radio. She peers down at the suit monitor. It's showing the same 'stars' heading their way.

SEPH

Oh my god.

EXT. SPACE - - SAME

Earth coming up fast as the asteroid plunges forward. But arcing out from the atmosphere are THREE NUCLEAR MISSILES.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE - SAME

BEN

(soft)

It's asteroid tracking defense.

ARAM

Are they enough?

BEN

I don't know.

Aram shuts his eyes.

ARAM

Allahu Akhbar...

EXT. SPACE

**IMPACT.**

They hit one after another, soundless domes of infinite light, sun-hot. Rock vaporizes beneath them.

The asteroid deforms under the impact as the surface boils.

WITH SEPH, crying out in agony as the air pressure spikes and her ears POP, blood starting down her neck.

WITH BEN, hurtling through the air, hitting the ceiling then dropping back to the floor.

INT. ROGUE/FORWARD CAVERN

The ceiling of a forward cavern glows red with the impossible heat. The stone becomes plastic then BUBBLES UP as the air pressure pushes outward.

With a *whump*, the ceiling balloons out and SNAPS!

Tendrils of magma fly outwards as the air blows into space.

Vacuum hits the Rogue.

MULTIPLE ANGLES of:

AIR whistling down passageways;

DUST swirling in mini-vortices;

DEBRIS hurtling through the air.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

The air cyclones out of the launch bay.

Gore is ripped from his feet and slammed into a wall. A sickening *crack!* as his leg snaps.

Craw is whipped through the air, rocketing broadside into a pillar.

Only... his body doesn't break, instead *bends* oddly about the stone.

CUT TO:

SOMEWHERE we haven't been yet...

INT. ROGUE/CENTER

Deep inside the asteroid. The dark zone at the center of Walt's map.

It's a perfectly spherical space, hundreds of yards in diameter. Thousands of STALACTITES hang down from every point on the inside of the space.

At the center of the space, held in the wavy fractured light of a magnetic field is a SPHERICAL OBJECT. It crawls with electrical charges that slither across its surface like a snake over a sand dune.

As the energy from the nuclear blasts vectors down through the asteroid, the stalactites SHATTER and are SUCKED toward the Object from every direction.

This is the source of the asteroid's gravity field.

The thousands of tons of rock hit the magnetic field, are slowed for a moment, then javelin in, right at the gravity generator.

They hit... and the Spherical Object begins to CRACK.

INT. ROGUE/FORWARD CAVERN

The air continues to blow out the ceiling, until AIRLOCKS drop into place, sealing off the cavern.

Only the passageways to this Forward Cavern are closed down. The rest of the passageways remain open.

And nearby, a RELAY clicks down from 1:00:00 to 0:59:59

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

As the wind dies down throughout the ship, the dust hangs like a FOG in the silent passages.

ANGLE DOWN A PASSAGE as something scuttles within. Stiletto fingers scratch at the rocks.

It's the CREATURE.

It moves to the end of the passage, its gray/black head keying downward.

A little more detail in the face now. Where eyes might be is a single liquidy sac - some kind of fluid held beneath a semi-translucent membrane. After a moment, an *image* begins to form in the liquid. This is how it sees.

The image coalesces. Two forms in a cavern below it. Human. They are:

CUT TO:

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN - SAME

WALT kneeling by SEPH. His mechanical eyes fight to focus on her.

WALT

Did we... just get... *nuked*?

SEPH

Yeah. Yeah, we did.

WALT

What's.... Next? Locusts?

Smile from Seph.

SEPH  
Like living in California, right?  
Always something.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

Craw untangles himself from the pillar of stone. His body has an almost elastic quality to it. The visible skin is etched with vivid red lines where the subcutaneous mods are being rejected by his body.

Gore is trying to heave himself into a sitting position despite his broken leg. Craw goes to help him.

GORE  
Don't worry about me.  
(indicates the escape  
pod)  
Get that thing working.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN

Seph snaps on her suit radio.

SEPH  
Ben? Are you there? You read me?

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben's there, but not doing so well. He drags himself to his feet. Looks down at his arm.

There's a new 90 degree angle in his forearm.

He's holding the arm straight out from his body, but the wrist and hand are pointing directly down at the floor.

But then... the "broken" half of his arm lifts back up parallel with the floor, as if there were a NEW JOINT in his forearm.

BEN  
(scared)  
Doc?

Aram's shaking himself as he gets to his feet. He looks at Ben, then at the table.

TECHS IS GONE.

Ben swallows his own fear, nods to Aram.

BEN  
 Find her.  
 (into radio)  
 Seph?

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN

SEPH  
 Right here. And Walt - he's alive.  
 He looks like shit -

WALT  
 - Thanks.

SEPH  
 - But he'll make it. The nukes -  
 did they kick us off course?

INTERCUT WITH BEN

Ben checks the monitor. Earth looming large, dead ahead.

BEN  
 No.

BACK WITH SEPH.

SEPH  
 (into radio)  
 Gore? How's it going?

WITH GORE. Craw's inside the pod, trying to figure the control panel.

GORE  
 Craw's in. He's working it.

BACK WITH SEPH

SEPH  
 (to Walt)  
 You travel?  
 (off his nod)  
 Ben - we're heading your way.

ANGLE FROM HIGH UP - the creature's POV. Seph and Walt move out across the long cavern floor toward the tunnel leading forward.

WITH THE CREATURE as it begins to crawl downward from its high perch, stiletto fingers finding minute cracks in the rock wall.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Aram is scared. He's alone, light searching the corridor ahead of him.

ARAM  
(voice small)  
Techs? You there? Te-

He stops. There's a corridor junction ahead. A FIGURE sits on the floor, back to him.

It's Techs. She's shivering.

ARAM  
Techs! Are you all right?

He approaches slowly. Something not right here.

TECHS  
It hurts. A lot.

He halts a few paces away. His light envelopes the back of her head.

ARAM  
I can help.

**And then her head turns to face him - 180 degrees!**

TECHS  
No. You can't.

Terror. The light drops from Aram's hand. In slow strobos, Techs's torso twists 180 degrees to match her head, but her LEGS are still in the same position.

Aram turns and runs.

Techs is on her feet, fast, hunting him in the single low beam of the flash.

Aram breathing hard, terrified. Behind him, Techs running, legs and arms moving strangely, flowing with new joints.

Aram almost to the end, when she LEAPS! Techs lands on his back, slams him to the floor. Blood cascades from a cut on his scalp, blinding him red as Techs flips him over.

Barely-seen, her new face. Skin completely gray, pulling tight against the bones. Eyes disappearing behind translucent folds of skin.

Aram SCREAMS. In a grotesque human parody, she raises an alien finger to her lips. *Quiet*. A now-vestigial thumb dangles uselessly to the side.

A new scream dies in his throat. Hope flares.

ARAM

Techs...?

A moment's hesitation, then...

**The knife fingers rocket down into Aram's chest.**

TECHS

No.

INT. ROGUE/CENTER

Cracks are spreading faster and faster over the surface of the sphere. The falling stalactites are acting in exotic ways, moving sideways, then up, then down, as local gravity fluctuates.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN

Seph and Walt move through the fallen machinery at the end of the cavern.

She checks a RELAY - 0:37:46.

SEPH

(scared)

We're not going to make it.

Her foot accidentally kicks a chunk of metal. It clatters against the floor then leaps slowly into the air before settling back down. Like gravity wasn't working quite right.

SEPH

Did you see that?

WALT

Yeah.

SEPH

What the hell was it?

WALT

(getting a really bad  
feeling)

Locusts, I think.

*And then two things happen at the same time:*

**FROM THE DARKNESS, THE CREATURE LAUNCHES ITSELF AT SEPH!**

Just as -

INT. ROGUE/CENTER - SAME

**THE GRAVITY GENERATOR SUFFERS CATASTROPHIC FAILURE.**

The magnetic bottle shimmers, then dies.

The spherical object *shatters* and *explodes*. Time slows as the million pieces expand outward in a perfect sphere then STOP and are suddenly SUCKED BACKWARD. They disappear into a perfect point of zero width and are gone as if they never existed.

Gravity is gone.

INT. ROGUE/REAR CAVERN

So - as the creature hits Seph, its momentum carries the two of them halfway up the wall, where they stay.

WALT

SEPH!!!

Seph screams as the creature tears at her, its knife fingers shredding her suit. Its hands reach out for her face, the claw fingers opening, revealing the muscular mouth enfolded within.

Just as it's about to clamp down on her -

- WALT IS THERE, slamming the creature aside!

The alien spins out in the zero-g, hitting against a wall twenty feet over the floor.

Seph and Walt cling to the wall as the creature bellows at them, its throat vibrating.

WALT

Get out of here! I'll hold it off!

SEPH

I'm not leaving you!

WALT

Look at me - what do I have to lose?

SEPH

Not happening.

On the opposite wall, the alien gathers its legs beneath it, ready to leap back at them.

Seph spots something. The tube she shot it with earlier, still sticking out of its back.

IDEA. She tosses Walt a MINING DETONATOR just as the creature launches itself right at them.

WALT

What are you -

He gets it.

WALT (CONT'D)

No fucking way!

With all her strength, Seph leaps into the air RIGHT AT THE CREATURE!

ANGLE WIDE - The alien and Seph heading right for each other in the middle of the air, twenty feet off the ground.

They meet in the middle. As it passes, it aims a disemboweling sweep at Seph. She twists away, grabs at the TUBE embedded in its back.

Misses.

Grabs again... and HOLDS! Vectors shift; Seph and the creature spin in the air. With her free hand she pulls out a MINING CHARGE and jams it into the tube.

At the same time, the creature's upper torso twists 180! Seph is suddenly staring down at its face as its arms swing at her!

Just as it's about to rake her belly, she draws her legs beneath her and pushes off from the alien's back!

Seph arrows straight up just as -

- Walt thumbs the detonator and -

**THE MINING CHARGE EXPLODES!**

The alien's body is ripped in half! Blood starbursts in the zero-g. Pieces of the body carve comet-trails through the dust hanging in the air.

It's dead.

Seph hits a ledge. Walt looks up at her. Shakes his head.

WALT  
That was supremely fucked up.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

Gore is inside the escape pod with Craw. He's floating a foot off the floor, teeth gritted against the pain of his broken leg.

GORE  
(to himself)  
No quiero estar aqui ya.

Lights suddenly play across the control surfaces.

GORE  
Jesus... you did it.  
(beat)  
How did you do it?

Craw cocks his head slightly, responds without turning.

CRAW  
I don't know.

ANGLE ON Craw's fingers. They're buried in the controls, but what's visible is bright red with infection.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben's working feverishly on the bridge controls. A twisting manipulation and a HUM begins to build, like when the rockets fired.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Seph and Walt kick down zero-g halls, feel the hum build.

SEPH  
You feel that? He got them going.

The RELAY reads 0:14:37.

Seph meets Walt's eyes. Hope flickers.

SEPH  
Maybe.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben fishes a fiber optic cable down another set of holes. Brings a picture of them up on a suit monitor. Complex grouping of miniature buttons.

BEN  
 (to himself,  
 confused, angry)  
 Which ones?

He closes his eyes in frustration, and IMAGES play in his mind. *The buttons at the bottom of the holes, shifting into place...*

BEN  
 (seeing it)  
 Fifth position, third position,  
 rear port thruster. Second  
 position, hold for thrust  
 parameter.

His eyes open slowly. Fear written in them.

BEN  
 How do I know that?

VOICE (O.S.)  
*Because you are we.*

Ben shoves backward in fear.

It's TECHS.

Bent at the waist, boots gone, knife-point toes digging into the rock to hold her down.

No longer human. A nightmare stew of alien and human DNA. Rejected mod wires float around her where they curled loose from her skin. Voice emanating from a toothless mouth hung with flayed flaps of skin.

TECHS  
 And we know.

Her head twists down with an ugly popping of new joints until her face is inches from Ben's. Her voice is sinewy, almost sensual. Her hand reaches out, touching his face. From the corner of his eye, Ben can see the skin beginning to pull away from the palm of her hand, forming a new structure.

A mouth.

TECHS

We know. But we don't do. No. We want to leave here. We want to go.

BEN

Where?

For a moment, it seems as if Techs were there once again.

TECHS

Home. Don't you want to go home, Ben? You don't want to die here, do you?

BEN

(quiet, frightened)

No.

She reaches down, pulls his hand back, until the mech fingers disengage the controls.

TECHS

Then do nothing.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Seph helps Walt along. He's in worse shape now. Gore's voice comes up on her suit radio.

GORE (RADIO)

Seph - Craw's done it. We've got a way off.

SEPH

About goddamn time. We're under ten minutes. Ben - you hear that? How long before you get the thrusters going?

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Ben's RELAY reads 0:9:14; EARTH is large in the monitor.

When Seph's voice comes through, Techs's face harshens.

TECHS

(hissing, of Seph)

Not us.

Techs is gone again, sublimated within the creature she is becoming.

TECHS

Death comes.

As she pulls herself toward the passage entrance, Ben looks at his hands, his arms. They're changing.

He checks the monitor. Earth. Home. So close. Do nothing...

He bends his lips to his suit radio.

BEN

Seph...?

(beat)

There's something in us. A virus. We're changing. I'll get the thrusters up, but after that... we can't bring it back. We can't go home.

Techs hears. Snarls.

She spins back on Ben. Leaps at him. The minute her bulk hits him, she SCREAMS!

She looks down. Ben's hand is jammed against her chest, the four mechanical fingers jutting into her flesh!

She pulls back, the mech fingers staying in the wound. Viscous black blood pumps onto Ben's hands.

A terrible swipe of her arm sends him flipping through the air.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Seph and Walt hear the fight.

SEPH

Ben? BEN?!

Walt tears his arm free from her.

WALT

Go! I'll catch up. GO!

Seph kicks away down the corridor.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

Gore is distraught. Looks up at Craw working the panels.

GORE

Did you hear what Ben said?

Craw doesn't stop working. His fingers are still buried in the alien finger holes.

GORE

I said did you hear -

He stops. Notices something floating near the ground. The mechanical fingers. But Craw is still working the controls. How...?

He grabs Craw's arm. Swings him around. Staggeres backward in horror.

Craw's changing too. Same gray/black skin, same bone-thin features. And his fingers... they're different too. Long, slim. Tips like stilettos. He flexes them. They sway like reeds in the wind on their new joints.

CRAW

We heard.

Gore kicks backward on his good leg. He spins out of the escape pod into the launch bay. Out of control in the zero-g, he slams into a rock. He screams as the broken leg erupts in agony.

Gore jams himself into a darkened niche. His POV - Craw emerging from the pod, scanning for him, head bobbing unnaturally on his neck.

Craw's voice husks into the shadows.

CRAW

Why hide? Look.

In his hiding place, Gore steals a glance at the skin on his arm. It has begun to shrink around his bones. He's changing.

CRAW

You're already us.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Seph flies into the bridge. Ben's single worklight casts a circular glow on the floor.

Ben floats in the middle of it, unmoving.

SEPH

Ben? Ben?!

Seph kicks to him then clamps down with her boots on the floor. Her questing hands find a terrible wound in his chest. Blood seeps from it in the zero-g.

SEPH  
(hopeless)  
Ben...

She starts at a sound behind her. Walt. He hangs his head when he sees Ben's floating body.

But then - Ben's eyes flutter open. Relief floods through Seph.

SEPH  
You're - thank god.

BEN  
(very weak)  
No... time.

Seph jerks up - the RELAY reads 0:3:15.

BEN  
Need... the mech fingers. Can't  
fire engines.... Without them.

SEPH  
Where are they?

BEN  
She... Techs.

Seph looks around; no sign of her.

BEN  
She's hurt. Left... there.

Seph spies another corridor leading off the Bridge. Traces of Techs's blood hang in the air, a trail to follow.

SEPH  
I'll get them.  
(to Walt)  
Find out what we need to do.

Torn, but knowing she has to leave him again, Seph leans down, kisses Ben.

SEPH  
(for him alone)  
I love you.

BEN

(weak)

I like to hear you say that.

A small smile on Seph's face, then she is gone. In her hand is her lone weapon - a miner's axe.

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Gore hiding. Craw moving close by. Gore's hands close over a piece of alien metal. A weapon.

CRAW

(rasping)

Come come come. New world. Below us. Close.

Gore grits his teeth... AND SPRINGS AT CRAW!

The makeshift club sails in, smashing Craw in the temple. Blood sprays. His jaw deforms; his body flips through the air, hits the wall. Gore comes in again, swinging wildly.

This time though, Craw catches the downswung club and rips it free. Gore is helpless, swaying in the air as Craw comes toward him.

He shrieks as Craw brings the club down on him. Again. And again. He spins in the zero-g under the relentless rain of blows.

Blood shoots in arcless streamers through the air, splashing against the face of a RELAY. 0:2:57.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROGUE PASSAGEWAY

Another Relay: 0:2:56

Seph follows the trail of Techs's blood, skipping from wall to wall as fast as she can.

SUDDENLY - A DARK MASS, COMING UP FAST!

Her momentum slams her into it. The two spin together, tangled. Seph shoves it away. She raises her axe to strike-

- ARAM! He's dead where Techs left him, face a bloody mask.

Seph moves past him, plays her light ahead. There's a SMALL CAVERN ahead.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Walt's running his fingers over the control panel. The RELAY reads 0:2:02.

Earth fills the monitor.

WALT

Come on, Seph.

INT. SMALL CAVERN

Inside the cavern. From the connecting passage comes a lance of light - Seph's flash. It illuminates a mass of Techs's blood hanging in mid-air.

Angle up, into the shadows. A gray/black form clings to the ceiling like a spider waiting to drop.

TECHS.

CLOSE ON her eyes, watery membranes forming an image of the approaching light.

Then she's there - Seph, floating in horizontally, flash held ahead of her.

Human/alien muscles bunch, and Techs launches straight down at Seph!

Her talons dig deep into Seph's back!

Seph slams against the floor under Techs's momentum. Techs tears at her, spins her face to face.

TECHS

(ugly, rasping voice)  
We never liked you.

Then Seph's face becomes visible in the glow of her flash.

Only it's not Seph.

It's Aram.

Flashlight jammed into his dead hand.

Moment of realization -

- then Seph comes flying out of the darkened corridor, axe in full swing!

Techs takes it full in the head. Black blood spews; Techs lets out a gurgling hiss then thuds into a wall.

SEPH

Never liked you much either.

She tries to rise but Seph hits her once again and she goes limp.

Seph reaches down, grabs the mech fingers. As she pulls them free, TECHS GRABS HER! Pulls her close.

Only now, at the moment of death, the madness leaves her and it's just Techs looking up at Seph. There's desperation in her voice.

TECHS

Please...

She tugs Seph closer, says something inaudible in her ear. Seph looks at her, nods.

SEPH

I will. I promise.

Techs dies.

Seph lets her float free. Checks a RELAY. 0:0:59.

Now it's a race.

*Walt, watching the timer click down.*

*Seph, kicking wildly down the corridor.*

*Earth, coming up fast.*

*Seph slamming into a wall, rolling, bruised, bloody, kicking out into...*

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

SEPH

WALT!

She hurtles in, throws the mech fingers to Walt. Walt jams them on, dips his fingers into the controls.

RELAY: 0:0:25.

Seph holds Ben. His breathing shallow.

RELAY: 0:0:17

Walt working the controls.

RELAY: 0:0:12

Inside the controls - metal fingers tripping buttons.

RELAY: 0:0:7

**IGNITION!**

EXT. ASTEROID SURFACE

Rockets fire from hidden channels, vaporizing rock.

EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The asteroid slams down into the atmosphere, glowing hell red.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Seph and Walt look on in despair as Earth's atmosphere embraces them.

SEPH

No.

But then -

EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The asteroid arrows across the sky, skipping off the atmosphere.

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

For a moment, they can see a wide expanse of ocean beneath them. Home. So close.

And then they leave it behind as they climb back out of Earth's atmosphere.

Seph and Walt exchange looks. They did it.

SEPH

Ben, we -

His eyes are closed, his breath still.

Tears fill Seph's eyes.

Walt lays a hand on her shoulder.

Seph kisses Ben.

WALT

I'm sorry, Seph.

SEPH

Don't be. He just went a little  
ahead of us.

EXT. SPACE

The Rogue leaves Earth behind. Ahead of it lies the deep  
emptiness of space...

INT. ROGUE/BRIDGE

Seph stands at the edge of the passageway. Walt is  
slumped against a wall.

WALT

You can't go alone.

SEPH

I need to find out what happened  
to Craw and Gore.

WALT

What if there's something else out  
there?

SEPH

(smiling grimly)  
What if there is?

Then she's gone.

SHORT MONTAGE

Melancholy, almost beautiful, as Seph kicks her way in  
the zero-g through passageways and caverns, coming at  
last to the Launch Bay.

INT. ROGUE/LAUNCH BAY

She floats out of a passageway to find a BODY still  
spinning slowly in the air. She touches it. Gore's body  
is barely recognizable.

She moves past him.

SEPH  
Crawford? Craw?

No answer, no movement.

She edges slowly down the line of escape pods, eyes searching out the dark corners.

SEPH  
Craw -

She stops. Looks to the side, at one of the escape pods.

IT'S GONE.

Through the window she can see right out into space. The ball of Earth is just visible.

SEPH  
No.

EXT. EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE

Something fiery red burns down through the air.

The escape pod.

INT. ESCAPE POD - SAME

Rumbling, shaking.

A FACE leans forward, looks through the forward porthole.

What used to be Craw grins.

CRAW  
Home.

GO TO BLACK

.. And then fade up, just a little, to that Young Girl's face, slashed by the light.

INT. SOMEWHERE DARK

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

Her Voice comes up once more.

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (V.O.)

Aunt Sophie told me to hide in here 'cause mommy was coming back any day now and she'd find me. But they're still out there. I can hear them.

A sudden NOISE from somewhere outside.

The girl stifles a gasp.

The noises come again, footsteps marred by a strange dragging sound.

Her eyes disappear as she scrambles backward, out of the light.

They come closer, closer...

LIGHT POURS IN as a door is thrown wide!

The Young Girl screeches in terror, throwing herself to the back of her CLOSET.

A figure leans in toward her...

...and SAYS:

NEW VOICE

It's all right. It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you.

The figure straightens up. It's SEPH!

SEPH

You're Sam, right? Samantha?

The little girl nods.

SAM

Who.... Who are you?

SEPH

I'm a friend of your mother's. I promised her I'd find you.

SAM

(excited)

You know my mommy? Where is she? Is she here?

Seph has to say something. Wrong time.

SEPH

She's not here. But we'll talk later.

That dragging sound comes again. It's WALT, pulling an injured foot behind him. Sam sees him, scuttles backward in terror.

SEPH

It's okay. He's here to help. He knew, knows, your mommy too.

Sam masters herself, but hides behind Seph.

SAM

You did?

WALT

Yeah. She used to get mad if people made fun of the way I look.

That gets a small smile from Sam.

SAM

She did?

WALT

She did.

Seph leans down, takes the girl's shoulders.

SEPH

We have to leave now, Sam. Which means you're going to have to be brave. Like your momma.

Sam nods. She'll try.

SAM

Where are we going?

SEPH

I don't know yet. We just made a long trip ourselves and we're not sure what's out there.

Seph extends a hand. Sam takes it. The three of them leave Sam's bedroom. Something catches Seph's eye on the way out.

A little mechanical spider.

SAM

My mommy made that.

SEPH

I know. Do you mind if I take it  
with us?

Sam nods. Seph takes the spider. Her eyes find an open window. She peers outward.

A SMALL CITY sprawls outside.

It's a picture of chaos.

Half of it is burning. People are scattering through the darkness. A misshapen shadow lunges from a doorway, dragging someone inside.

Then the SOUNDS begin to filter back through. Muffled screams. Fluttering roars from throats no longer human.

Seph shares a grim look with Walt, stuffs the spider in her satchel.

SEPH

Just in case.

They head out the door and we -

GO TO BLACK.

THE END