

ISHIMARU

by

LOUIS EDWARD ROSAS

FADE IN:

OPENING SCENE

EXT. SPACE - Star field

Narration

Not far from now! Man's need for natural resources and precious metals will have exceeded demand that would take us into the next great leap forward in spaceflight technology. Mankind would stretch his wings and fly far beyond the confines of the Earth's solar system and into the cold dark reaches of near interstellar space. Along the way, a new industry of old was reborn. Gold! Yes, there be gold in those stars!

It was a new gold rush for the new era! Vast discoveries were made of deep deposits of precious metals were found on the newly surveyed asteroids and nomadic planetoids that hugged the furthest reaches of our sun's distant light. Therein what was once considered merely a theory, proved to be a profitable bounty for those who were brave enough or as some would argue, foolish enough to make the dangerous journey into the unknown. But as with every gold rush, opportunists motivated by greed appeared bringing with them violence and ruin. This is the story of the Deep Space Merchant Vessel Fortin on preparation for her return flight home to Earth after a successful haul.

EXT. DSMV FORTIN SLOWLY MOVES ACROSS SCREEN.

DSMV FORTIN:

- Vehicle Designation: Deep Space Merchant Vessel.
- Country of Origin: United States.
- Home Port: Homer, Alaska.
- Overall Vehicle Length: 333.8 Meters (1,092ft).
- Vehicle Compliment: Mothership, 1 Delta-9 Scout Ship.
2 JD23 Space Excavators with self-contained drill rigs & processors.
- Propulsion: 2 Rolls Royce Astro-Blade Pulse Engines.
1 Inertia Drive for NFTL (Near-Faster-Than-Light) travel.
- Crew Compliment: 12.

5 Flight Officers,

7 Space Mining Engineers.

- Primary Mission: Exploration & Extraction.
- Cargo: Gold, Platinum, Rhodium, H3/H4 Compounds.
- Cargo Mass: CLASSIFIED.
- Current Position: Morton Claim Fields.
- Current Mission Length: 93 Days.
- Current Status: Final Prep for Inertia Drive Ignition.

Narration

The time is now 1900 hours Earth World Time.

SCENE 2

INT. DSMV Fortin Flight Deck

JACKSON

All system checks complete.
We're green across the board.

CAPT. PAIGE

Ready on Navigation?

LEE

Aye, Captain. Coordinates set,
return course plot entered.
Primary ignition clearance in 1500
meters.

CONNORS

Ignition Key entered. Ready to
start the clock sequence for
Inertia Drive on your call.

CAPT. PAIGE

Thank you. Let's go ahead and set
the clock for 15. Ready on that
Inertia Drive. Jackson; please
inform the Engineering Team for
last call on final prep.

JACKSON

Aye-Aye Captain.

The first officer pressed the ship-wide intercom button to alert the engineering team.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

All hands, make ready for Inertia
Ignition in fifteen starting now.
This is the Jackson.

Connors grins as he sees helmsman Young Lee in his Vancouver Whitecaps Jersey pointing at him in the colored glow of instrument panels of the dimly lit flight deck.

LEE

At this rate, we'll be home well
in time before your wife gives
birth.

CONNORS

I sure hope so. I'm in enough
trouble as it is for going on this
trip in the middle of her second
trimester.

The survey officer appears disinterested as he leans back into his seat and watches subtitled movies in Russian on one of his twin console screens while his right hand inconspicuously pulled out a small thumb drive from his trouser pocket and plugged into a small terminal port below his station.

A repeating beep was heard from the Survey Station.

CAPT. PAIGE

What's that beeping?

ANDRE

Captain, we seemed to have
stumbled upon a mineral-ore-rich
hit on an astral body just off the
edge of our rangefinder.

Lee and Connors both looked at each other in order to await Andre's further findings.

JACKSON

Say, are you sure this isn't from
one of your Russian Gangster films
you know you're not supposed to be
watching on the flight deck when
you're on station?

ANDRE

No. I tell you it's a real hit.
From the looks of things, it's
really big one I tell you! It has
a high probability of rare metal
ore with strong indicators of gold
presence.

CAPT. PAIGE

Where?

ANDRE

It's located in an unclaimed area of the Quad-Threes. Some idiot must have overlooked it.

LEE

An unclaimed ore-rich astral body in the Quad-Threes?
Are you serious?

CONNORS

Could be lucrative, but we've already got a good haul. Besides, I need to be home before the baby arrives.

ANDRE

Dude, relax already! You said she's not due for another six weeks. Another day to mark a claim and a bigger paycheck won't kill you.

CAPT. PAIGE

Can you please verify that?

ANDRE

Yes, come over here and look for yourself. These are state of the art instruments. They do not lie.

CAPT. PAIGE

I'll take your word for it.

Jackson unbuckles his seat restraints and steps over from his station to look at the orbital survey console screen.

JACKSON

Looks pretty legit to me Captain, but it's a bit out on the edge of the Quad-Threes. You might want to think about that.

CONNORS

What are you guys talking about? I've never heard of the Quad-Threes. What's so special about it?

JACKSON

A lot of ships go missing out there. Instruments act up and other weird stuff. Rumor has it that there's been some alien encounters or some shit which might explain why some ships go missing in that region.

CONNORS

Aliens huh?

ANDRE

Never mind such nonsense!
This is big I tell you!

CAPT. PAIGE

How big?

ANDRE

By these readings, I would say there is enough to add another quarter million to each crew member's share.

Jackson's ears perked up as he looked over to Capt. Paige.

LEE

A quarter million more can get you out of that shithole in Osaka and into that Inland Sea paradise you're always talking about.

CONNORS

My wife's Osaka high rise is not a shithole! You try getting a 75th-floor corner view suite on a Merchant 2nd Class salary.

LEE

Okay. So it's not a shithole. It's just an out of my price range shithole that you'd still trade for an Inland Sea house in a heartbeat. Tell me I'm wrong!

Connors laughed as he looked over to Jackson.

CONNORS

See what I have to work with?

LEE

Hey, I'm just keeping it real for you buddy.

CAPT. PAIGE
So what do you say, guys?
Shall we have a look?

LEE
Come on man.

CONNORS
Yeah, sure. What the hell. Another
day won't kill me.

CAPT. PAIGE
All right then. Let's pull the
ignition key, cancel the Inertia
Ignition sequence clock, prepare
to re-engage pulse engines, and
set course for our prospect.

CONNORS
Ignition Key removed, clock
canceled.

ANDRE
Sending new navigation coordinates
over to Helm for lock.

LEE
Coordinates received. All numbers
are entered and locked into
navigation control.

CAPT. PAIGE
Re-engage pulse engines. Oh, and
Jackson, please inform the
engineering team.

JACKSON
Yes, Ma'am. You got it.

First officer Jackson pressed the ship-wide intercom from
his console.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
All hands, stand down from Inertia
ignition. This is the Jackson,
out.

Moments later, a call from the Load-master station was
made. It could be heard from the First officer's station.

CHIEF NUNEZ
Loadmaster Com to Flight Deck.

JACKSON
This is Jackson.

CHIEF NUNEZ

Hey! What's the big idea? Why are we calling off Inertia ignition?

JACKSON

Well, Amigo, something came up. Your engineering team can stand down from final flight prep. Yeah; I know we're going to be little-delayed getting home.

CHIEF NUNEZ

What are you kidding me? We're ready to roll over here!

JACKSON

Relax, Andre' found us a really big unclaimed hit he thinks will earn us some extra dough. Like a quarter million per share.

CHIEF NUNEZ

Quarter million per share? Orale Cabrone! Why didn't you say so in the first place!

JACKSON

You guys might want to get the Delta-9 prepped for a quick survey and while you're at it get your spacesuits ready. I have a feeling you guys are going for a little Walk.

CHIEF NUNEZ

For a quarter million per share? At that rate I'll go outside and push the damn ship there myself!

JACKSON

Glad you finally found your motivation. Jackson out.

Captain Paige got on the ship wide com.

CAPT. PAIGE

Say, Nunez, we'll come down there in ten minutes. Meanwhile, go ahead and prep the Delta-9 and both JD23's.

CHIEF NUNEZ

You got it, Captain!
Loadmaster Com out.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 3

INT. DSMV FORTIN FLIGHT DECK

The flight crew strapped back into their seats as the twin Rolls Royce Astro-Blade Pulse Engines engaged. Captain Paige buckled into her seat overlooking the flight deck and donned her black ball cap embroidered with gold wings and the patch of the DSMV Fortin.

CAPT. PAIGE
Ok Andre, guide us into position.

ANDRE
Piece of cake! It's the big rock
to port over there.

CAPT. PAIGE
Assume a standard survey pattern.

LEE
Yes Ma'am.

JACKSON
That's a big sucker!

LEE
It's almost a full planetoid, but
it's so dimly lit, you could
almost miss it.

CAPT. PAIGE
What's its designation?

ANDRE
Eros 3117.

CAPT. PAIGE
What can you tell us about this
rock?

ANDRE
"It's a standard dwarf planet with
enough mass to generate its own
gravity and a small magnetic
field. It was likely formed by the
collision of two larger planetoids
whose mass coalesced to form this
rock.

JACKSON
Interesting.

ANDRE

From what my console reads, it's mostly composed of iron-ore and has rock and sand on the surface with intermittent patches of ice at the poles and the rims of some of the visible craters. It seems to have a minimal atmosphere composed of carbon monoxide, nitrogen, methane, with trace amounts of argon, helium, hydrogen-cyanide and some smaller proto-carbons.

CAPT. PAIGE

Anything else?

ANDRE

It's unsuitable for any life as we know it. There's also evidence of recent volcanic activity beneath the surface based on the trace sulfur deposits near the surface. That explains the thermal readings I'm picking up which means if you're wearing an LSS (Life Sustaining Suit) you won't freeze to death but your time on the surface would be limited.

JACKSON

You mean to tell me this rock is warm?

ANDRE

Not Earth warm, more like a bad day on Mars warm with a Titan atmosphere. You could mine there, but you wouldn't want to live there even with protective dome.

CONNORS

So tell me player, where's the gold?

ANDRE

According to my console readings, they point to these Fisher-like canyon areas near the equatorial latitudes. From the looks of things they indicate some deep gold and mineral veins close enough to the surface for easy extraction.

CAPT. PAIGE
Well then, that settles it. Take
us in.

CUT TO:

EXT. - SPACE

The DSMV Fortin slowed down and assumed a near standard
orbit of Eros 3117.

RETURN TO:

INT. DSMV FORTIN FLIGHT DECK

CAPT. PAIGE
Survey officer, please enter in
our claim registration to mark the
claim.

ANDRE
Okay, what would you like to call
it?

JACKSON
Andre, seriously! How many times
do we have to go over this? You
signed the same contract as we
did. You know the drill. Unless
you happen to use your own ship or
crash land with an escape pod and
somehow miraculously discover gold
on your own provided you live long
enough to claim it, anything we
find using the company's vessels
we are contractually obligated to
claim it for them.

ANDRE
Yeah but,

JACKSON
I don't need to remind you that if
you violate the terms of your
contract and get caught, you
forfeit all your shares and risk
criminal prosecution.

ANDRE
Like they would know this far out!

CAPT. PAIGE

Look, Andre, we're wasting valuable time for our launch window back to Earth. If you don't like it, you can always get your own ship with your own crew and find something on your own dime and then call it whatever you want. Until that time, mark the claim and do your job with sugar on top. Vy ponimayete (Russian-- You understand)?

ANDRE

Yeah, I understand you loud and clear. And please don't try to speak to me in Russian. You'll only embarrass yourself.

CAPT. PAIGE

Just stow the attitude and do your job. Oh, and by the way: that's an order.

ANDRE

Yes, Captain.

The crew looked on as their Survey Officer shrugged his head as he reluctantly enters the claim marker into the computer for transmission.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Claim MM178353 is now marked and relayed.

CAPT. PAIGE

Good. Okay people, let's tidy up here and set the ship to Survey Mode / Auto Orbit.

Captain Paige leaves her seat and exits out the hatch to head to the Launch Bay. Connors, Jackson, and Lee soon follow while Andre remains at his station.

JACKSON

Andre, you're not coming along?

ANDRE

I think I'll sit this one out.

JACKSON

Is this over our little naming rights dispute?

ANDRE

No, I have some work to catch up on.

JACKSON

Alright man, suit yourself.

SCENE 4

INT. DSMV FORTIN FLIGHT DECK

As the flight deck was left to the Survey Officer, an unexpected incoming priority signal came in. Andre' at first tries to ignore it by donning his headphones to listen to his movie. But the blinking light makes it impossible to watch his movie without distraction. Frustrated, Andre removes his headphones and answers the call.

ANDRE

DSMV Fortin acknowledged. priority message for Mike Connors from Hiroshi Matsumura? Shit!

Andre shook his head and hit the intercom.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Flight deck to scout ship.

CUT TO:

INT. DELTA-9 SCOUT SHIP FLIGHT DECK

Capt. Paige and Jackson now in their LSS suits were just strapping into their seats when the call comes in.

JACKSON

Delta-9 Com, Go.

ANDRE

Don't take off yet. We got a priority message for Connors. Sounds important.

JACKSON

Acknowledged.

CAPT. PAIGE

Mike, you want to take this here, upstairs, or in the launch bay?

CONNORS

I'll take it in the launch bay.

JACKSON
Patch it through to the Com.

ANDRE
Will do. Patching your call to the
launch bay Com.

TRANSITION TO:

SCENE 5

INT. DSMV FORTIN LAUNCH BAY

Connors disembarks from the scout ship in his LSS suit. As soon as he clears the hatch, he goes to the Launch Bay Com while the crew waits. Picking up the wall mounted handset, Connors calls the flight deck.

CONNORS
Launch Bay Com. Go for Connors.

Connors stars into the video screen as the distressed image of his brother in law Hiroshi Matsumura appears.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Mike-san.

CONNORS
What's going on Hiro?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Forgive me, but I have no easy way
to say this.

CONNORS
What's going on? Something
happened to Aya or the baby?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Yes and no.

CONNORS
What does that mean?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
There has been an accident

Connors instantly becomes alarmed at the thought of his pregnant wife flashing before his eyes.

CONNORS
Hiro-san, I need you to be
straight with me. What kind of
accident? Tell me, what happened?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
 Aya's commuter craft from Nagoya
 collided with a high-speed
 sub-orbiter on the ground in heavy
 fog. They say some two hundred
 thirty-three people were killed
 with many injured including Aya.
 I am sending you the news feed via
 data crystal right now.

Connors heart sinks.

CONNORS
 Is Aya and the baby ok?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
 She was found alive and rushed to
 the hospital. I am calling you
 from there now.
 She is in stable condition.

CONNORS
 And the baby?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
 The baby lives, but if Aya's
 condition worsens, they will be
 forced to perform an emergency
 C-Section here at University
 Hospital Osaka.

Connors wiped his forehead as he fears for the well-being
 of his wife and unborn child.

CONNORS
 Stay with her. Keep me updated and
 tell her I love her. I'll be there
 as soon as I can.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
 Hai! You have my word Mike-san.

The news clouds Connors mind as he sighs with deep lament.
 This weighs heavily as he takes a moment before slowly
 walking over to the boarding ramp of the scout ship. Just
 then, Lee appears from the inside of the hatch.

LEE
 Yo! Connors! What's up, man?
 You ok bro?

CONNORS
 No. My wife was in a big shuttle
 collision with an orb jumper in
 heavy fog.

LEE

Oh, dude! I am so sorry to hear that.

CONNORS

Thanks.

LEE

She's going to pull through. I know this has got to suck being so far from home but right now you are here, and there's little you can do. You just have to think positive. You know she'll make it.

CONNORS

I hope so.

LEE

I don't know how you're going to do your job right now with this going on. Maybe you ought to take a break. Get on the long-com and check for any updates.

CONNORS

You know, you're right. I should take a break and check for any updates. With all this drama, my head is not in the game.

LEE

Don't worry man. Paige will understand. She's good about those kind of things.

CONNORS

Okay, Go get the gold and save some for me!

LEE

I wouldn't have it any other way!

Lee shook his head and gave his friend thumbs up before closing the hatch as Connors stepped into the air sealed operator room. He could see the crew in the cockpit as they readied for their mission. Connors reaches for the headset to answer a call from the scout ship.

CONNORS

Go for Connors.

CAPT. PAIGE
Lee just filled us in. Hope your
wife and your baby are okay. Don't
worry about us. You got other
things to deal with.

CONNORS
Thanks, Captain. Will do!
Ready for O2 sweep.

CAPT. PAIGE
Initiate O2 sweep.

Connors hits the button that vacuumed the air out of the launch bay. Rotating red and yellow beacons light up as an automatic alarm announced the launch bay doors are impending opening. Once the door is fully opened, the scout ship lifted off the deck and backs out before turning 180* to slowly exit the launch bay before engaging her engines. As the scout ship maneuvers out of view, Connors closes the launch bay doors and resets the O2 levels.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 6

INT: DELTA-9 SCOUT SHIP FLIGHT DECK

Lee manually pilots the craft down towards the surface of Eros 3117.

LEE
Slowing descent at 500 meters per
second.

CAPT. PAIGE
Heads up! We're going to feel some
atmospheric chop.

CUT TO:

EXT: DELTA-9 SCOUT SHIP

No sooner than the captain made her prediction, the scout ship began to rock with turbulence.

RETURN TO:

INT: DELTA-9 SCOUT SHIP FLIGHT DECK

JACKSON
Captain, I'm scanning the
coordinates, but I don't see
anything.

CAPT. PAIGE
Run a quick diagnostic on the
scanner.

Just then, the scout ship began to pitch in the heavier
turbulence.

LEE
Now entering stratosphere, slowing
descent at three-hundred meters.

CAPT. PAIGE
Deploy Air Brakes and maintain
heading.

LEE
I'm on it.

As the ship continues to descend, Jackson scours through
his instruments but finds nothing.

CAPT. PAIGE
What's wrong?

LEE
The Quad-Threes?

CAPT. PAIGE
I don't want to hear that!

LEE
Sorry.

JACKSON
I still don't see anything.

CAPT. PAIGE
Have you run another diagnostic?

JACKSON
Yes! I've run it twice, and it
still comes up in good working
order.

CAPT. PAIGE
Well then run it again.

Just then the faint starlight appeared over the horizon as
the turbulence subsides.

LEE

Now leveling off at
twelve-thousand meters.

CAPT. PAIGE

Let's maintain this altitude and
check our equipment again.
Maintain a standard search
pattern.

LEE

Yes, Ma'am.

SCENE 7

INT: DSMV FORTIN

Connors makes his way to the lockers to get out of his LSS suit. Then suddenly, he noticed out of a small window what appeared to be a large shadow enveloping the Fortin followed by bright navigation lights off the port side of the ship.

CONNORS

What the hell is going on here?

Connors raced up to the flight deck. Just as he was about to enter the flight deck, he could hear what sounded like a ship to ship communications in Russian. Andre' could be heard replying back in Russian. A moment later, Connors heard a loud clump from the port side of the Fortin in what sounded like a docking column securing to the cargo hold.

TRANSMISSION

Columns secured. Ready for mass
transfer, standby.

ANDRE

Go for Mass Transfer. Initiate.

CONNORS

Son-of-a-bitch! After all we've
been through, I can't believe this
guy is fucking us over.

Connors quietly slipped into the launch bay and back into the operator room without detection. He could see a dozen large men in space suits with pulse rifles slung on their backs moving the gold-laden cargo containers onto the conveyor belts leading into the docking column to the adjoining ship.

CUT TO:

INT: DELTA-9 SCOUT SHIP FLIGHT DECK

JACKSON

I tell you there is nothing there!

CHIEF NUNEZ

Okay then! Let's get settled this once and for all! Call Andre and confirm the coordinates.

CAPT. PAIGE

All right then! Let's call our survey officer and see if he can explain this.

Jackson shook his head and donned his headset then radioed back to the mothership.

JACKSON

DSMV Fortin, come in please.
DSMV Fortin, come in please.

(static sounds)

LEE

Huh?

CAPT. PAIGE

Something's not right.

JACKSON

I'm switching to Priority Channel One. This way if Andre is asleep or he's taking a dump the whole ship will know we're trying to reach him.

CAPT. PAIGE

Okay.

JACKSON

DSMV Fortin, come in, please. Seriously Andre, quit messing around!

CAPT. PAIGE

I don't like this. Let's break off the search and return back to the Fortin.

JACKSON
Aye-aye Captain.

LEE
Now breaking search pattern Alpha
and taking her back to the ship.

CUT TO:

INT: DSMV FORTIN

Connors hid in the operator room. He could see on the console encased in glass, an emergency docking clamp master release button. Contemplating this, he would have to break the glass box covering the button which would then blow explosive bolts severing all docking couplings. But when he peeked into the launch bay and watched armed men stealing their haul with Andre's help, it incited him to take drastic action.

CONNORS
Oh hell no! I'm putting a stop to
this.

Connors counted to three then leaped up exposing him to the armed men below as he slammed his fist down on the console breaking the glass covering and depressing the button.

COMPUTER
WARNING! EMERGENCY MASTER CLAMP
RELEASE IN FIVE SECONDS.

CUT TO:

INT: DSMV FORTIN FLIGHT DECK

ALARM BELLS SOUND
Andre shouts into the intercom.

ANDRE
Get out of the launch bay!
Do it now!

(*BA-BOOM!-BOOM!*)

Within seconds, a muffled series of explosive sounds released along the side of the ship. All ten docking couplings abruptly exploded in rapid succession one after another instantly sucking out several of the Russian accomplices out into space instantly activating the hull breach alarms throughout the ship.

Andre' knocked his head during the explosion as the Fortin violently jolted hard to port. A deep guttural voice shouting frantically in Russian likely demanding to know what just happened could be heard. He looks at the surveillance camera showing Connors in the operator room. Andre quickly reached for his bag he stowed under his console and quickly opens it to pull out his small sidearm.

TRANSMISSION

Andre!

ANDRE

Da!

Andre hears alarm bells and men yelling at each other in Russian as he looks out the forward observation pane and sees the glitter of gold floating away into space past the flight deck.

TRANSMISSION

Andre! We have suffered damage and lost propulsion! We are now drifting into you!

The larger ship was now adrift and heading towards the Fortin. Collision alarms sounded throughout the ship right as the scout ship was hailing.

JACKSON

Scout ship to Fortin,
Come in Andre. Connors.
Somebody pick up!

Hull breach warning alarms sounded from the launch bay. Connors picks up the handset to reply.

CONNORS

Connors, over.
The haul is being high jacked by
Russian pirates...

CUT TO:

INT: DSMV FORTIN FLIGHT DECK

Andre' instantly cuts off all communications with the scout ship just as the two ships were about to collide and break apart. Now aware of Connors presence, Andre' switches on the surveillance cameras for the launch bay. Spotting Connors, Andre angrily called him out.

ANDRE

Connors! What the fuck man!

You aren't supposed to be here
right now! You're supposed to be on
the scout ship!

CONNORS

Yeah, well, if you had listened in
on my priority message like you
normally do, you would know that
life had other plans.

ANDRE

Stupid asshole! Now the entire
haul is getting sucked out into
space! Thanks to you, nobody is
getting paid!

CONNORS

Well, if you hadn't been so
greedy, we wouldn't both be out of
a paycheck, now would we?

ANDRE

I'm going to kill you!

Connors quickly donned his space helmet and looked into the
surveillance camera before entering the escape pod.

CONNORS

No! Your greed has killed you!
Dasvidaniya!

Andre' began to lift out of his seat as the artificial
gravity fails while he watches the warning light system
panel light up as the shadow of the larger Russian vessel
collides with the Fortin.

Throughout the ship, loud sounds of grinding metal could be
heard. Connors rushed to seal the hatch to the escape pod
and looked out the small window to see Andre' aiming the
camera right at him. In a final gesture, Connors delivered
a one finger salute before hitting the escape pod launch
button sending him and the escape pod shooting out of the
ship. Within seconds clearing the Fortin, Connors watched
the series of rapid internal explosions flash and flicker
throughout the Fortin. Connors looked out the small window
and watched the two ships break apart into a thousand
pieces into the dark silence of space.

SCENE 8

INT: ESCAPE POD

Fiery flames enveloping the small window view of Connors
escape pod as it pierced through the thin atmosphere of

Eros 3117. The turbulence of reentry shakes the small escape pod and its sole occupant as he braced himself inside.

CONNORS

I always said to myself I hoped I would never have to actually use one of these things!
But here I am!

As the shaking intensifies, Connors hits the descent computer's interactive key.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

What's the time of descent?

COMPUTER

At this angle of descent your reentry time will be four minutes of atmospheric burn before final descent.

CONNORS

Great!

NARRATION

As Connors held on for dear life, he recalled from his military training the legendary "Howling Mad Jack" Evans who had made the most Mars insertion drops conquering what was commonly known as the "Six Minutes of Terror" five times. For most people, just one orbital assault landing alone or descent via escape pod would be enough to last a lifetime.

CUT TO:

INT: MILITARY TRAINING MODULE

Connors along with his class were strapped in their training module seats in Earth orbit before the drop when Evans unbuckled his restraints and stood up and howled at the moon as they made their fiery descent.

RETURN TO:

INT: ESCAPE POD

CONNORS

The time remaining?

COMPUTER

Ninety-Seconds remaining.

CONNORS

I can do this!
I just got to hold on!

Suddenly, a red flashing light became active on the small descent computer panel. Connors immediately hit the flashing light button.

COMPUTER

Recalculating descent.
You now have one-hundred-eighty
seconds remaining.
Total estimated retry time has
been recalculated to six minutes.

CONNORS

Six minutes?
Oh hell no!

The fiery glow quickly diminished to the sounds of winds. As the escape pod pierced the small planetoid's skies, A loud pop could be heard as the descent air brakes. The primary descent chute deployed. The flashing lights of the altimeter blinked in rapid succession measuring the escape pods rapid descent. At three-hundred meters, the heat shield was jettisoned, and the landing airbags deployed to cushion the landing.

COMPUTER

WARNING! Secondary Descent Chute
Deployment Failure. Emergency
Backup Chute Deployment Failure.

CONNORS

Shit!

Connors hits the release for the emergency airbags that encompassed the escape pod.

COMPUTER

BRACE FOR IMPACT.

Connors took a deep breath as he nervously tucked into his head in low as he could while strapped into his seat. As he looked out the small circular window noting the fast rotation of the escape pod, he thought of his wife Aya's last performance at the Kyoto Concert Hall.

FADE TO:

INT: KYOTO Concert Hall

Aya Matsumura sat at the piano in a long white formal dress as her fingers touched the keys captivated the audience as she played a haunting rendition of Claude Debussy's Clair

de Lune on a black Steinway Grand Piano before members of the Imperial Family and a host of international celebrities & local dignitaries.

CUT TO:

INT: ESCAPE POD

As the melody played on, the rapidly descending escape pod was not slowing down. Headed for an uncertain fate, he closed his eyes and imagined seeing Aya play the last notes of her concert as the computer relayed its final warning.

COMPUTER
Impact in three, two, one.

(BOOM!)

CUT TO BLACK:

SCENE 9

EXT: THE BLACK SANDS - NIGHT

A fine haze of shiny black dust filled the thin air of the crash site as stars appeared overhead. Connors opened his eyes to find himself lying flat on his back. He had been thrown from the crashed escape pod as it hit a large outcropping of rock breaking the small capsule apart.

CONNORS
Congratulations!
You've now qualified for the Mars
Orbital Assault Badge!

He could feel a deep, sharp pain from both his lower back and his left leg.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
Oh, this is no good.

Following crash protocols, he would have to activate his small ESC (Emergency Survival Computer) that was strapped to his left wrist over the arm of his LSS suit.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
Let's hope this thing is working.

Connors tapped the Emergency Survival Computer to activate it, but it remained unresponsive.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
Come on baby, work!

His space helmet slowly filled with condensation. His core body temperature was began to drop.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
Come on, come on, damn you!

After a dozen tries tapping the activation button, he made one last attempt with a hard thump with his hand clenched. The small lights of the wrist attachment suddenly came to life. To Connors relief, a male voice with an unexpected soft English accent began to speak.

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER
Your Emergency Survival Computer
has now been activated.
Your Emergency Location Beacon has
now been activated.
Medical Triage scan has now been
initiated.

Connors drew a sigh of relief as he could see the emergency beacon in the sand several feet away with its small flashing indicator light flickering on and off in successive motion.

Connors looked to his ESC and could see the medical scan was nearing completion.

CONNORS
Med status?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER
You have two broken ribs, one
pelvic fracture, one leg fracture,
and one minor head concussion. You
will need medical attention upon
rescue.

CONNORS
No kidding.

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER
Please remain still and lie on
your back.

CONNORS
Well I could have figured that one
out for myself!

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER
ESC analysis concludes atmosphere
inhospitable for human conditions.
Recommending that you remain in
your LSS with your helmet firmly
secured.

CONNORS
Tell me something I don't already
know! Confirm location.

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER
You are currently within the
equatorial spectrum of Eros 3117.

CONNORS
Shit! Stuck on a rock in the
Quad-Threes. Great! So tell me
about this rock I am on?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER
No viable vegetation or known life
forms exist on Eros 3117. There is
a pocket of methane pools and ice
500 kilometers away suitable for
H2O conversion. The ice detected
here requires a water refinement
treatment plant cycle for human
consumption.

CONNORS
Great! Like I happen to have a
water refinement plant in my back
pocket. A lot of use that
information will do.

Sighs

CONNORS (CONT'D)
How much air do I have?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER
There is minor damage to your left
O2 Processor. Standard LSS
survival time is seven days.
You have less than one-hundred
nineteen hours remaining for
rescue.

Shakes head.

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER (CONT'D)
There is another problem.

The damage to your left 02 processor has left you an unequal mix which overtime will bottom out with nitrogen. Combined with your concussion, you may be subject to blackouts and hallucinations.

CONNORS

Great, blackouts and hallucinations he says.

There stretched out upon the dark sands of Eros 3117 under a canopy of stars he lay dreaming of his beautiful Japanese concert pianist playing her signature rendition of Clair de Lune while he waits for a passing ship to pick up his emergency beacon and come to his rescue.

FADE TO BLACK:

SCENE 10

INT. 7TH FLOOR Osaka University Hospital Osaka, Japan

The big white doors flung open revealing a freshly mopped hospital floor as the twin pairs of polished black military boots marched out from the hallway leading from the elevators to the ICU waiting room. These were officers of the JASDF (Japan Air Space Defense Force) wearing their dark blue Class-A uniforms under their damp black trench coats still wet from the morning's rains outside. Their officer's caps are wrapped in a plastic rain protectors while one carried a briefcase. Retired Major Hiroshi Matsumura had been sitting in the ICU waiting room all night with little sleep when he noticed the two JASDF officers standing at the doorway.

CAPT. YAMAZAKI

Major Matsumura?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Hai!

The two JASDF officers came to and stood sharply at attention and saluted.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

No need to salute me, Captain.
I am a civilian now.

CAPT. YAMAZAKI

Forgive our intrusion, Sir.
I am Capt. Yamazaki and this is
Lt. Kodomo.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

We received an urgent message from Europa Station which monitors all outbound intersystem communication traffic.

Lt. Kodomo opened the briefcase. He produced a large vanilla envelope which he passed to Capt. Yamazaki to present with both hands to Hiroshi Matsumura.

Hiroshi Matsumura quickly opened the envelope and pulled out the white paper dispatch with the red Kanji lettering at the top of the page for urgent. A look of astonishment and disbelief filled his tired eyes.

CAPT. YAMAZAKI (CONT'D)

The American husband of your sister Aya Matsumura had listed you as an emergency contact in here in Osaka. We were unaware that she was injured in the Itami Air Disaster. We wish her a speedy recovery.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Arigatou' Gozaimasu.

CAPT. YAMAZAKI

Your sister's American husband, Mike Connors is listed as missing.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

How?

CAPT. YAMAZAKI

We still have few details. All we know is that someone on his ship activated its distress beacon at 1935 hours EWT. From what we understand, an escape pod was launched. A minute later, the ships transponder and emergency beacon ceased transmitting. We believe the American Merchant Vessel is bearing the designation DSMV Fortin was destroyed somewhere in the Quad-Threes region of space near the Morton Claim Fields at 1936 hours EWT.

Hiroshi Matsumura appeared stunned as his elder father Shintaro Matsumura (himself a retired JASDF Colonel) and his mother Mrs. Fuyumi Matsumura entered the ICU waiting room.

CAPT. YAMAZAKI (CONT'D)
Ohaiyo-Gozaimasu. (Good morning)
Good morning Mrs. Matsumura.

SHINTARO MATSUMURA
Thank you, Captain. What seems to
be the trouble?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
There has been another incident.

SHINTARO MATSUMURA
An Incident?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Mike-san has gone missing.

SHINTARO MATSUMURA
Missing?

FUYUMI MATSUMURA
Is anyone looking for him?

CAPT. YAMAZAKI
Hai! There are five ships
including one from Japan taking
part in the international search
effort for survivors. But time is
critical, and the probability that
we will find survivors is very
slim in such a vast region of
space.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
I understand.

Hiroshi passed the urgent dispatch contained in the
envelope to his father to read.

CAPT. YAMAZAKI
As a matter of professional
courtesy, we can offer you a seat
on a scheduled military transport
to Europa Station.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
When does it leave?

CAPT. YAMAZAKI
It leaves Atsugi Naval Air Station
at 1100 hours. If you wish to
accept our offer, you must come
with us right away.

Out of respect and cultural tradition, Hiroshi looked to his father for approval before making a decision.

SHINTARO MATSUMURA

Hiro, you go with them.

FUYUMI MATSUMURA

Find Mike-san. Bring him to back to Osaka. We will contact his family in California and manage here.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Hai!

I will do my best!

With a quick bow to his parents, Hiroshi Matsumura rushed out of the Intensive Care Unit waiting room with Capt. Yamazaki and Lt. Kodomo.

CUT TO:

EXT. Osaka University Hospital Osaka, Japan

A black JASDF staff car awaited them in the Emergency Room parking zone down below. They quickly drove off before zooming aboard an awaiting military chopper that would take him to Atsugi Naval Air Station to catch the Europa Station bound transport.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 10

EXT: SPACE

The first ship to reach the edge of the Quad-Threes region of Morton Field Claim area closed in on the Fortin's last known position. It is the USDSRV Red Adair.

CUT TO:

INT: USDSRV RED ADAIR COMMUNICATIONS DECK

Communications officer John Kirby sat at his post holding an antique stopwatch in the red glare of his console. The thirty-two-year-old Veteran communications officer was about to be relieved from his shift when suddenly his instruments lit up detecting a faint distress beacon just as twenty-four-year-old Specialist Karen Johnson arrived bearing a cup of coffee in hand to relieve him.

SPC. JOHNSON
Say, Kirby, you should get some
rack time. I can take it from
here.

JOHN KIRBY
No, wait! I think I got something.

SPC. JOHNSON
What is it?

JOHN KIRBY
It's either a Pulsar or a faint
distress beacon.

SPC. JOHNSON
Is that so?
Let me give you a hand.

John Kirby tried to adjust his instruments to get a better
fix on the faint distant signal as Spc. Johnson took her
seat at the adjoining console.

JOHN KIRBY
Deploy the high gain receiver and
point her thirty degrees right
declination.

SPC. JOHNSON
Thirty degrees right declination
Sir.

SPC Johnson looked up at the mission clock.

JOHN KIRBY
Don't pay attention to that.
You need to rely on instinct and a
good set of ears.

SPC. JOHNSON
Well that's why I learn from the
master!

They continued to make adjustments to get a fix on the
faint signal's location when suddenly a semi-audible
distress beacon broke through the crackle of static. Kirby
instantly reached for the intercom to contact the bridge to
report the new contact.

JOHN KIRBY
DSC-COM. We've picked up a faint
distress signal at 1,678,300
meters, thirty degrees right
declination.

CAPT. COLE
Bridge acknowledged.

A second intercom called the Communications Station. Spc. Johnson picked up the hand receiver.

CUT TO:

INT: USDSRV RED ADAIR BRIDGE

Captain Augustus Cole sat in his chair as he looked over the incoming data and conferred with his executive officer.

LT. MEYERS
What do you think there Boss?

CAPT. COLE
I'd say let's call this in and take a closer look.

LT. MEYERS
Bridge to DSC-COM. Send long-range mission update to Europa Control.

CAPT. COLE
Helmsman, take her in thirty degrees right declination nice and slow.

HELMSMAN
Aye, Captain Sir.

CAPT. COLE
Let's all remain vigilant and be on the lookout for debris. After all, we wouldn't want to be needing rescue ourselves.

HELMSMAN
Taking her in nice and slow.

SCENE 11

INT: USDSRV RED ADAIR COMMUNICATIONS DECK
(30 Minutes Later)

John Kirby remained at his post hunched over his console in the glare of his instruments. Wearing headphones, he listens to static and the galactic noise from distant pulsars for the faint distress beacon. Suddenly, a clear audible communication is heard.

JOHN KIRBY

Whoa!

SPC. JOHNSON

What is it?

JOHN KIRBY

I had this thing turned up all the way when another distress signal only louder burst through.

Spc. Johnson calls the bridge.

SPC. JOHNSON

DSC-COM. We have a second signal coming through.

LT. MEYERS

A second signal?

SPC. JOHNSON

A second signal confirmed.

John Kirby reached for a relay button on his console and patched the audible body of the signal so everyone could hear it.

CAPT. PAIGE

Mayday-Mayday-Mayday. This is the DSMV Fortin calling out on all frequencies. Come in, please! I repeat this is the DSMV Fortin. We are adrift in our scout ship with limited supplies and need urgent rescue. Our ship has been high jacked. We'd like to report an act of space piracy. I repeat this is the DSMV Fortin.

LT. MEYERS

Bridge to DSC-COM. Good job guys. We'll take it from here.

JOHN KIRBY

DSC-COM, thank you.

SPC. JOHNSON

Looks like you can stop your old school ticking stopwatch and add another one for the books wouldn't you say?

Kirby rubbed his tired eyes and thought about it.

JOHN KIRBY

I don't know. It's too soon for me. I don't stop the clock until everyone has been accounted for and right now we still don't know yet. We had two signals. The first signal came from further out.

SPC. JOHNSON

Well, why don't you go get some rest. You've been on watch for close to 20 hours now.

JOHN KIRBY

You're right. I'll go down to the galley and get a bite to eat. Afterward; I'll climb into my rack.

SPC. JOHNSON

You've earned it boss.

Communications officer John Kirby got up from his post and pat Specialist Johnson on her left shoulder.

JOHN KIRBY

Always remember our motto.

BOTH

When someone drops the ball,
We get the call!

Before Kirby stepped away, he looked at his stopwatch and contemplated the SAR (Search and Rescue) mission.

JOHN KIRBY

Say: do me a favor; whatever the Captain says about this SAR, keep the mission clock running until I say otherwise.

SPC. JOHNSON

Will do!

TRANSITION TO:

INT: USDSRV RED ADAIR BRIDGE

Lt. Meyers opened the channel to the Fortin's scout ship.

LT. MEYERS

DSMV Fortin. This is the USDSRV Red Adair hailing. Do you copy? Come in, please.

CAPT. PAIGE

This is the DSMV Fortin. We copy. Boy, are we happy to hear from you! With low supplies, we were starting to get desperate here.

LT. MEYERS

It's our pleasure to help you, and that's what we get paid for. Your position has been locked in. We should be IVR (in visual range) in fifteen mikes.

A round of applause could be heard on the loudspeaker coming from the scout ship. Capt. Cole appeared satisfied as he marked his entry into his logbook. He then turned to his flight engineer to check his mission status.

CAPT. COLE

What's our fuel situation?

FLIGHT ENGINEER

We've got an hour before we hit Bingo and have to return home Captain.

Satisfied, Captain Cole chose to address the crew.

CAPT. COLE

Now hear this: We have found the survivors of the Fortin. We shall pick them up in the next quarter hour and return home. I would just like to say, good job everyone! This is the Captain. Out.

Cheers could be heard throughout the decks of the Red Adair.

CUT TO:

INT: USDSRV RED ADAIR COMMUNICATIONS DECK

Unsatisfied, John Kirby wondered about the faint distress signal that loomed just beyond his communications range.

JOHN KIRBY

Somewhere out there, there has to be a jettisoned escape pod operating on automatic.

Kirby looked again at his stopwatch still running as he slowly drifted off to sleep.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 12

EXT: THE BLACK SANDS - NIGHT

Connors awakened from his pain induced slumber and slowly opened his tired, weary eyes. As he came to, he could see a heavy ground fog all around him. He moved his hands and grasped the coarse surface sands. Connors released his grip and watched the sand that contained reflective particles float down like snowflakes in the low gravity of Eros 3117.

CONNORS

Am I going to lose my mind like this? Better get a grip before I completely lose it.

Connors sat up and switched his ESC on interactive mode to break the deafening silence.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

How long have I been out for?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

Your last recorded sleep duration was three hours forty-two minutes.

CONNORS

How much time do I have left?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

You have less than sixty-five hours of optimum life expectancy.

CONNORS

Rescue beacon status?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

Rescue beacon remains active and is transmitting on high gain frequencies.

Connors breathed in deeply and closed his eyes.

CONNORS

What's my chance of rescue?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

Insufficient data. Please conserve your limited energy until rescue.

CONNORS

Good advice.

Connors closed his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK:

SCENE 13

EXT: THE BEACH - DAY

Connors opened his eyes, he could see what appeared to be daylight, or so he thought, and then he noticed he was out of his LSS suit barefoot dressed in casual white. His breathing was no longer shallow. He is not sure where he is or why he hears the sounds of distant waves.

CONNORS

Am I dead?

Connors looked up and could see gray skies much like that on Earth. He was on a beach somewhere.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

This has got to be a
hallucination.

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

Sir?

CONNORS

I am on Eros 3117.
I am not really here.
This is all in my mind.

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

I'm sorry, Sir. I do not
understand what you are trying to
say.

The ESC had suddenly developed a personality. He closed and opened his eyes and expected to find the cold dark sands and canopy of stars twinkling overhead. Instead, he was on some beach that resembled Southern California. He noticed his space helmet was removed and he was breathing real air.

CONNORS

This can't be!

The unmistakable sounds of crashing waves echoed off in the distance. Connors looked up and noticed a seagull passing overhead.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

This must be a dream, or I am
dead?

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

A dream, Sir?

The change in the language of the ESC from a dry monotone computer voice had evolved to a warm polite vernacular with a sense of presence. Connors turned his head to the ESC strapped to his wrist and realized it was no longer there.

CONNORS

This is getting weird.

EMERGENCY SURVIVAL COMPUTER

Weird, Sir?

Connors turned his head to the direction of where this voice was coming from. To his shock, his onetime girlfriend Leanne now deceased was right next to him lying on a beach towel.

LEANNE

What?

Suddenly, everything went white again.

SCENE 14

EXT: THE HIGHWAY - DAY

Connors opened his eyes and found himself walking up a fog-laden highway. A terrible memory to relive. He looked down and noticed the skid marks leading off the S-Turn and the flashing lights of the emergency vehicles.

CONNORS

Oh God, no!

As he walked past the police, he could see the EMT's wheeling a white sheet covered body as their mutual friend who was the local accident investigator approached him weeping.

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATOR

Sorry Mike.

CONNORS

How?

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATOR

Her brakes failed at high speed. She lost control on the turn. She had no time to react. I'm so sorry.

CUT TO:

SCENE 15

EXT: SAN DIEGO ALLEYWAY - DAY

In the blink of an eye, Connors awoke reliving that moment from years before. He had just been thrown out of a bar and into the rainy alleyway. Leanne's death left him distraught.

It was then that Connors noticed a small military shuttle passing over the concrete canyon of the long alleyway. The roar of the shuttle's engine nacelles came to a slow halt as it landed on a pad close by before blending in with the winter rain.

CONNORS

How different things could have turned out.

Connors hung his head low to tune the world out until he heard the sounds of dress shoes entering the alleyway.

THE ADMIRAL

Stop for a second.

NAVAL OFFICER

Do you know this man?

THE ADMIRAL

I'm afraid so. Help me help him up.

Connors felt the strong hands of two men lifting his arms and propping to an upright seated position against the red brick wall. He opened his eyes and noticed a pair of polished black dress shoes standing in front of him. To his sense of shame, he looked up and realized who it was standing in front of him extending his hand to get Connors up off the ground.

Standing in a long black raincoat covering his dark naval uniform and rain covered officer's cap stood his late girlfriend Leanne's father, a highly decorated naval line officer and Rear Admiral nearing retirement who spoke to him with repose.

THE ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

Son, you need to get yourself ship-shape and get it in gear. I know you're hurt. We're all hurt.

CONNORS

Sorry, I just really miss her.

THE ADMIRAL

We all miss Leanne. She was very special but you're just going to have to be a man and work through this. Drinking isn't going to do you any good. Life will go on and so must you.

The Admiral offered his hand at what seemed the lowest moment of his life had leaving Connors in awe. He accepted his hand and stood up and unconsciously saluted.

THE ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

Sooner than later, you're going to have to find your way and I hope you do. That's all I have to say.

The rain stopped as the Admiral looked up to the skies then walked away.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 16

INT: KADENA AIR BASE AUDITORIUM - DAY

Connors recalled his military posting in Japan. He remembered stepping through the twin doors of the base indoor basketball court in the auditorium. He was dressed for PT in his black shorts and hoodie. It was there he joined his buddy Tom Mathews up into the third row of the wooden bleachers among other the assembled American Servicemen and Women in PT workout gym clothes. A moment later, a young airman brought out a silver microphone stand and placed a live microphone for use before standing aside to let an officer from the Special Air Group Command address them. Americans all stood up at attention before a superior officer entered the basketball court. This was a big intimidating looking man with blonde hair, squinted eyes, and lots of ribbons on his chest who smiled as he took the microphone.

MAJOR REYES

Good morning.

AMERICAN PERSONNEL

GOOD MORNING SIR!

MAJOR REYES

Please sit.

Everyone sat down in the bleachers.

MAJOR REYES (CONT'D)

For those who don't already know me I am Major John Reyes, and today we are going to have four special Martial Arts demonstrations by our good friends & neighbors of the JASDF 6th Sentai. That means the 6th Air Wing for those of you who were not paying attention.

Audience laughter.

MAJOR REYES (CONT'D)

They will be starting off with a Kendo fencing demonstration which for those of you who love Samurai films might particularly enjoy. Afterward, there will be an Aikido demonstration which for you off duty MP's of the 233rd Battalion, and you SOG (Special Operations Groups) folks out there who may or may not be present which we will neither confirm nor deny might enjoy. I highly recommend it particularly if you plan to later go into law enforcement particularly in the off-world jurisdiction zones.

TOM MATHEWS

That's a lot to digest.

CONNORS

Come on. I want to hear this.

MAJOR REYES

After lunch at 1100 hours, we'll have Judo, and the local favorite you might know as Karate. Now please show the instructors all the proper respect and feel free to ask the instructors any questions you might have at the end of their presentations. So without further adieu, let's give a hand to our first instructor who holds the rank of Third Dan in Kendo which is like a black belt for those who don't know and who also happens to be the CAG (Commander Air Group) of the 6th Sentai Intercept Squadron JASDF, Captain Hiroshi Matsumura.

The American personnel applauded from the bleachers as the Japanese Captain entered the basketball court barefoot. He appeared wearing the traditional black split Hakama sword pants and dark blue Keogi under his black kendo armor. He walked in with a bamboo shinai in one hand and his Kendo helmet under the other as he smiled and looked around the bleachers before he spoke.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Ohaiyo Gozaimasu!
Good morning everyone.

AMERICAN PERSONNEL
GOOD MORNING SIR!

As Capt. Matsumura began to speak; Tom Mathews prodded Connors into their own conversation.

TOM MATHEWS
He speaks good English.

CONNORS
Yes he does.

TOM MATHEWS
Say, Mike, you did fencing in high school did you not?

CONNORS
I suppose this is similar enough I could probably do it.

TOM MATHEWS
You think you could take him?

CONNORS
Come on. I want to listen to what he has to say.

They had been noticed by both Major Reyes and Capt. Matsumura. Major Reyes then raised his hand to politely interrupt and address his two subordinates.

MAJOR REYES
Say do you two have something really important to share with the rest of the group?

BOTH
No Sir!

MAJOR REYES
Then good! We don't want to be rude to our hosts. After all, they are really big on politeness here.

Captain Matsumura remained silently amused.

MAJOR REYES (CONT'D)

Since you boys know so much, why don't you come down and volunteer to partake in this demonstration?

TOM MATHEWS

Oh shit!

MAJOR REYES

What was that?

TOM MATHEWS

Nothing, Sir! I don't know anything about this style of fighting beyond what I learned in Basic Training, but my good man Connors here says he did a lot of championship fencing back in high school.

CONNORS

Thanks a lot there, Blue Falcon!

MAJOR REYES

Is that a fact?

CONNORS

Uh, yes Sir.

MAJOR REYES

Alright then, since you're so inclined to comment on your expertise; you come right down here and let Capt. Matsumura's people suit you up. This ought to be interesting.

CONNORS

I'll say!

Connors shook his head and gave Mathews a scolding look as he stepped down from the wooden bleachers. Two dozen Kendo uniformed participants from the JASDF entered the indoor basketball court and lined up in two neat rows before sitting down in the traditional Japanese seiza position resting on their knees with their legs tucked in beneath them as they placed their bamboo shinai down to their sides before placing their hands on the deck and bowing. Capt. Matsumura looked Connors in the eye and smiled.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

So you have done European fencing before?

CONNORS

Yes, Sir.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Good. You shall do fine.

Capt. Matsumura nods his head to two seasoned looking JASDF service members wearing standard military camouflage uniforms to bring forth the backup set of Kendo Armor.

CONNORS

Uh Sir?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

No need to worry.
Sgt. Suyama will help you into a proper Kendo uniform and armor. All you need to do when he is ready is to walk up to the white line and bow then say:
Onegaishimasu!

CONNORS

O-ne-gai...?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Onegaishimasu. You cannot step into the Kendo arena until you say Onegaishimasu.

Connors two hands were simultaneously strapped into the heavy boxing like gloves worn by Kendo fighters. The helmet with heavy side flaps seemed quite bulky.

CONNORS

Oh Tommy boy! I'm so going to get back at you for this.

As soon as Connors was ready, Capt. Matsumura gave him a quick crash course on how to hold the shinai and the three points on the body he was allowed to strike.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

You must grip the shinai sword with both hands. You may only strike the top of the head which we say Men or the abdomen Do or the wrists as if you were to cut off an opponent's sword hands you say Kote.

CONNORS

I think I got this gist of this.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Good. Now step onto the black line
bow and say Onegaishimasu.

CONNORS
Right. Onegaishimasu.

Instead of choosing one of the more larger men to fight,
Capt. Matsumura called for the smallest fighter there.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
Oh, now you are just making fun of
me!

The smaller fighter took to the opposite side of the circle
and bowed.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Step into the circle and when I
say Son-kyo, draw your shinai
sword and crouch down.
This is a low form of bowing to
your opponent to show respect
before engaging in combat.
This was the way of the Japanese
Sword. The Way of the Samurai.

Connors breathed deeply as he looked out his helmet as he
stood opposite the smaller fighter.

SGT. SUYAMA
Sonkyo!

Connors mirrored his opponent and performed the customary
bow while gripping his shinai sword with both hands. Then,
the two fighters arose with their swords pointed at each
other. A sudden thrust and Connors deflected one then two
quick strikes.

CONNORS
This isn't so hard.

The smaller Kendo fighter let out a loud high pitched
"Ki-Ai" scream and leaped into the air striking for
Connors' head. He was hit two more times driving him
backward then a hard thrust sending Connors flying six feet
back until he landed flat on the floor.

The American personnel jeered and whistled at Connors'
quick defeat by the smallest fighter in the room.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Not so easy, Ne'?

CONNORS
No, Sir! It's more than I
bargained for.

Capt. Matsumura extended his hand to help Connors up on his feet. Connors turned and bowed to his masked opponent and returned to the sideline where the two JASDF servicemen quickly helped him out of the Kendo armor. Tom Mathews comes down from the bleacher to check on him.

TOM MATHEWS
You alright?

CONNORS
Yeah, I'll live.

TOM MATHEWS
Man, that was some serious ass
whooping you just took back there!
I thought you said you were a
fencing champion in high school.

CONNORS
Yeah that was a while back, but
this is a whole different kind of
fencing particularly with the
gear.

To their surprise, the Kendo fighter removed the helmet to reveal it was a beautiful Japanese girl.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
Oh man! Are you serious?

Mathews chuckled as he could not believe who Connors' opponent was.

TOM MATHEWS
Whoa, dude! You not only got your
ass kicked by a girl, but she's
seriously hot!

CONNORS
But not for you!

Major Reyes walked over with a big grin on his face to interject.

MAJOR REYES
Nor you so don't even think about
it. That's Capt. Matsumura's
younger sister.

CONNORS
No Sir!

MAJOR REYES

Boy, I have to say that was quite a show you put on there. Now let that be a lesson to you so you'll remember to keep your big mouth shut when the Sensei is talking.

CONNORS

Yes, Sir!

MAJOR REYES

As for you Mathews, I expect you'll have this floor all mopped nice and shiny by night's end.

TOM MATHEWS

Yes, Sir!

FADE OUT:

SCENE 17

EXT: THE BEACH - DAY

Connors opened his eyes and turned his head. To his surprise, he was no longer alone. He could see a middle-aged English Butler in a black morning suit and gold embroidered vest sitting in one of two red upholstered chairs there on the beach.

CONNORS

Are you?

HOPKINS

If you must, its Hopkins, Sir at your service.

Connors scratched his head. He sat on a red upholstered chair across from an English butler named Hopkins on a strange beach amidst gray overcast skies breathing air without a regulator or a space suit.

CONNORS

Am I hallucinating?

HOPKINS

It is quite possible.

Just as he could feel a light coastal breeze brush the hairs on his arms, Connors unexpectedly saw what appeared to be Leanne walking by on the beach waving at him from a distance.

CONNORS

Hey! Wait!

Leanne waded into the glistening waters and began to swim into the swells before disappearing.

HOPKINS

Sir?

CONNORS

Where did she go?

HOPKINS

Who Sir?

CONNORS

That girl! The one that was just there! And Please call me Mike. This is getting really weird!

HOPKINS

Sorry Mike, Sir. I still don't know which girl you are referring to.

CONNORS

The one who was just there! The one in the red bathing suit that just walked into the waves with the bushy strawberry blonde hair.

HOPKINS

I'm so sorry Sir. I don't recall seeing anyone on this beach this morning.

Connors rubbed his eyes and looked out to the gray seascape seeing no one in sight.

CONNORS

I suppose this was just in my mind.

HOPKINS

I'm so sorry, Sir. I'm afraid it's quite possible given the nature of your head injury in combination with your other injuries and depleting oxygen Sir.

CONNORS

I wish it weren't so.

Connors tried to put the thought of it out of his mind as he struggled to adjust his pillow and attempted to fall

asleep in the outdoor cabana. He closed his eyes for a moment without having any sense of time elapsing. When he awoke, the same beach was still in front of him. He turned his head and was suddenly startled by the sight of Hopkins standing next to him standing at attention.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Oh crap! You about scared the shit out of me!

HOPKINS

I'm sorry, Sir.
I am here at your service.

CONNORS

I'm still on this rock am I?

HOPKINS

I'm afraid I see no rocks on this beach Sir. I insist you lay back and relax to avoid further exacerbating your injuries.

CONNORS

How long have I been out for?

HOPKINS

I'm sorry?

CONNORS

You know, asleep. How long have I been asleep?

HOPKINS

You have been asleep for another six hours, Sir.

CONNORS

Wow! Six hours and the skies look the same as I left it. You know I really could go for an ice cold beer about now.

HOPKINS

Sir?

CONNORS

Oh, nothing. It's just in a setting like this you'd want a beer or some tropical fruity drink like say a piña colada or something to fit the mood. Say! You wouldn't know where to get a decent cheeseburger around here would you?

HOPKINS

I'm so terribly sorry, Sir, but there are no cheeseburgers on this beach.

CONNORS

I'll assume a pepperoni pizza or some decent sushi is out of the question?

HOPKINS

Sir, may I remind you that sushi is not an off-world dining option. However, pizza is available at most major civilian off world installations including the Lunar surface, Europa Station, and on Mars.

CONNORS

But not on this beach?

HOPKINS

No, I am afraid not. I highly recommend that you not focus so much on food. It will only make you desire further culinary options that are unavailable at this time making you even hungrier.

Hopkins stood there holding a covered silver platter in one arm. Connors bent forward to lift the cover to reveal a sirloin steak with sauteed mushrooms to which he reached for hoping to get a bite. But just as the steak was in within reach, his injured ribs sent forth sharp pains that forced him to lie on his back depriving him. In an instant, the steak was gone.

CONNORS

Not even in a dream.

FADE TO BLACK:

SCENE 18

Ext: THE BLACK SANDS - NIGHT

A bone-chilling temperature drop seeped into Connors LSS suit adding misery and discomfort. A moment later, a small warning sensor on his LSS suit set off an alarm alerting him that his environmental control status had been further degraded. The tardy light flickered on and off, but by then he already knew that he was in trouble.

CONNORS

Gee, thanks for the warning.

Alert and freezing, Connors opened his eyes and discovered the day had turned into a near-freezing starry night. To complicate matters hunger had set in on Eros 3117. The pristine white beach had given way to a bleak desert landscape of black course sands. Connors sunk his gloves into the sands and watched the fine grains float downward. Within it, he could see gold glitter flakes that looked like fine dust particles sparkling away into the mixture of dark sands as they slipped from his grip. Connors found it amusing to laugh as his pain allowed him.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

If only this was real gold.
How could I cash it in?

HOPKINS

Sir? Are you ok?

Connors turned his head and sees Hopkins sitting in a chair wearing a heavy wool overcoat, a scarf around his neck, ear muffs, and a pair of black gloves.

CONNORS

It's cold isn't it?

HOPKINS

Yes, it is quite cold Sir.

CONNORS

The sensor.

HOPKINS

I'm sorry Sir. There appears to be a secondary cell failure in the environmental control unit that cannot be repaired or replaced at this moment.

CONNORS

Yeah, I imagine my predicament is a real deal breaker.

HOPKINS

Sir?

CONNORS

Forget about it. We're still transmitting, right?

HOPKINS

Yes, on high gain emergency distress channels.

CONNORS

Do me a favor. Temporarily suspend distress signal for three cycles and transit claim marker with location with my credentials ISM Six-Tango-Alpha-Charlie 811735. Repeat three cycles then resume distress signal.

HOPKINS

But Sir, the LSS Emergency protocols are strictly for distress beacons only. This is highly irregular and if I may say, such a waste of valuable transmission time.

CONNORS

Just do it for me even if I'm just imagining. It can't hurt right?

HOPKINS

As you wish, Sir. Temporarily suspending distress signal three cycles before resumption. Now transmitting new claim marker.

CONNORS

Thank you.

Connors looked up to the stars as he dug his gloved hand into the black sand. He picked up and threw a handful of grains into the thin atmosphere and watching the sand particles and flickers of gold float down like glitter.

HOPKINS

May I ask you a question, Sir?

CONNORS

Sure.

HOPKINS

Why was it so important for you to put your personal safety at risk to forego valuable transmission time to mark a gold claim? If rescued, what is your personal interest? More specifically, what would you do with this gold should you return and extract it?

CONNORS

How can I best explain this to you?

(MORE)

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Gold is used for components and sophisticated circuitry. These days it's too valuable to hoard for personal wealth or waste on gaudy trinkets. Only an asshole would do that and believe me; there are plenty of them still around. But since we've become a space-faring race, the demand for gold has skyrocketed exponentially. There's still gold to be found back home but it's getting harder to find and too expensive to mine. Particularly if you go to remote places like Greenland or the Russian Arctic Islands. People also wind up dead if they are not careful. If the Polar Bears don't get you, bandits with weapons just might. Deep space mining has become more lucrative than scouring around the Arctic Circles to find hauls that barely break even.

HOPKINS

But is the risk worth so worth the gain?

CONNORS

Right now, I don't know.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 19

EXT / INT: UNDISCLOSED AIRBASE - NIGHT

Within the blink of an eye that Connors found himself reminiscing back to the early part of his military training.

He was as he looked up and noticed the big "OAV" (Orbital Assault Vehicles) parked in front of him. He quickly got in line for the large white hatch of the EPTM (Escape Pod Training Module) that sat inside the bay of the large OAV23 Space Plane slowly opened its wide doors as the two helmeted rows of men and women each wearing escape suits awaiting entry.

As soon as the Loadmaster gave the thumbs up to the TI(Training Instructor), Master Sergeant Evans held his hand up and waved his troops to board the EPTM.

He filed into the module and took his seat. The seats were lined opposite of each other in two long rows in the near windowless module. As soon as they were seated, they were to buckle themselves in the safety straps before the large restraint bars were lowered to protect those inside from being thrown from their seats in the violent g-forces they could potentially face in an emergency descent into a hostile atmosphere.

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS
Listen up people! Make sure all your restraints are locked into position. Failure to do so may result in internal ejection from your seats which means one of you in here will be using a mop to remove your splattered remains off my module. Is that clear?

MILITARY PERSONNEL
Yes, Master Sergeant!

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS
All right then!

LOADMASTER
We are good to go!

With thumbs up from the Loadmaster, the hatch of the EPTM slowly closed sealing the trainees in. No sooner than the sound of the EPTM being locked and the outer rear doors of the OAV23 were heard being closed, MSgt. Evans made one last walk through checking to see that everyone was securely locked in.

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS
You good?

CONNORS
Check!

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS
Relax flyboy. This is just Earth. You have no idea what the real deal is like. I'll tell you what; you'll all get through this in two shakes of a lamb's tail in no time!

Connors felt a flight bump on his elbow from his wingman Tom Mathews who grinned as he shook his head to Connors.

CONNORS
What was that for?

TOM MATHEWS

Dude! That's "Howling Mad Jack"
Evans! He's a living legend!

CONNORS

Never heard of him.
Should I've?

TOM MATHEWS

You know that Orbital Assault
Badge those Army Rangers and
Special Ops badasses wear?

CONNORS

Yeah?

TOM MATHEWS

That man not only has one for
Earth, but he's also the only man
in the entire service to have one
for Mars with five red clusters!

CONNORS

No shit?

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

I shit you not flyboy.

TOM MATHEWS

Man, I tell you, that's a whole
Six Minutes of Terror of the worst
degree, and he did it four of them
by choice! That's more than any
Special Ops guy alive! How's that
for confidence?

CONNORS

We'll see who doesn't have wet
bitches when we're back on Terra
Firma.

TOM MATHEWS

Plop and drop! Oh man, oh man!
You would have to bring that up on
an actual orbital drop!

No sooner than the overhead lights switched to dim, the OAV23 taxied out onto the runway for a straight steep combat climb high up into mid-orbit. Connors clenched his grip onto his armrest when the woman to his right with the name patch that read 'Woods' nudged him to offer him a stick of chewing gum.

CONNORS

Thanks.

WOODS

Don't mention it. Helps me from gnawing my teeth.

The overhead lights switched to magenta. The OAV23 lifted off the runaway and made a rapid, steep climb. Connors could feel his stomach rumble away as the fast ascent upwards played havoc with his system.

TOM MATHEWS

Oh man! I thought only fighter jocks did this kind of flying!

CONNORS

These OAV's are made to go everywhere anyhow. You knew we'd have to do this. Just think, a year from now this we'll probably be the ones flying this bird.

TOM MATHEWS

Well, Amen to that buddy!

The OAV23 rocked and shuddered as it made its fast ascent. Inside the EPTM, Connors chewed his gum as the turbulence and thunderous roar of the space plane's engines gave way to a muffled hum and the serene sensation of weightlessness. This brought about momentary relief within the EPTM as the OAV23 leveled off once in orbit.

A moment later, a repeating buzzer sounded off, and the lights switched from magenta to combat red. MSgt. Evans unlocked his restraints and stood up from his seat to address:

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

Listen up people! This is your two-minute warning! Make sure your O2 lights are green, and your visors are down and in the locked position. Once the light turns green, there will be a thirty-second warning buzzer before the drop. So hang on to your nuts and enjoy the ride!

MSgt. Evans sat back down into his seat and locked his restraint bars; the lights went from red to green on cue with the warning buzzer recycling every three seconds.

CONNORS

Ready?

Tom Mathews smiled as the sound of the bomb bay like doors opened underneath.

TOM MATHEWS
Piece of.....CAKE!

A loud sound could be heard from within the EPTM indicating that the module had just been dropped from the OAV. A rush of G-Forces could be felt as the module pulled down by the Earth's gravity at high speeds for the rapid re-entry.

Connors closed his eyes as the Escape Pod Training Module dropped into the fiery fall from space.

CUT TO:

SCENE 20

EXT: THE BLACK SANDS - NIGHT

Connors found himself lying on the back sands amidst the wreckage of the escape pod looking up at the stars above. The silence was somewhat uncomfortable. Thus he decided illusion or not he would make conversation with his English Butler seated next to him.

CONNORS
Say Hopkins, what do you know
about this region of space?

HOPKINS
I'm afraid not very much, Sir. My
Specialty is medical triage and
emergency communications. But
unofficially, I have heard some
things.

CONNORS
What kind of things?

HOPKINS
I'm afraid and there's not much I
can really tell you about it that
would do you any good.

CONNORS
I am told they call this area the
Quad-Threes. I've heard strange
rumors of aliens, ghosts, and
stuff.

HOPKINS
That is most curious, Sir. I am
not versed in any such details or
aware of the existence of any such
alien activity.

(MORE)

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

It was not included in my pre-programmed mandate. My primary concern is for your survival.

Connors struggled to stay conscious. He thought of his unborn child still in Aya's womb tossing and turning as he could hear in his mind the sound of the infant's heartbeat.

CONNORS

This has to stop.

HOPKINS

Sir? Are you all right?

CONNORS

I don't know. I'm worried about my pregnant wife back home.

HOPKINS

Understandable.

CONNORS

Before I had to jump into the escape pod I had just learned she had been in a serious accident.

HOPKINS

I am so sorry to hear that Sir.

Connors remembered Aya's elder brother Hiroshi had sent him a file downloaded to data crystal which he had placed in the outer pocket of his LSS suit.

CONNORS

Say Hopkins?

HOPKINS

Yes, Sir?

CONNORS

Is there a way I can view the files on this data crystal I am holding in my hand?

HOPKINS

I am certain something can be arranged. Please allow me to see it.

Connors handed the small data crystal to Hopkins extended hand. Out of nowhere, Hopkins wheeled forth and stainless steel cart with a small insertion box with a pen point projector. Hopkins next inserted the data crystal which

activated the small pen point to produce a thirty-inch wide projection of the encrypted files.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

May I have your personal identity code, Sir?

CONNORS

Yes.

Without saying a word, the screen decrypted the files and began to play with a male voice speaking in Japanese.

JAPANESE VOICE

Itamik k no kanshi kamera.
(Itami Airport Surveillance
Camera)

The high definition footage revealed a fog-laden taxiway. A twin-engine commuter craft rolled down the taxiway towards the terminal in dense fog when suddenly out of nowhere a heavy sub orbiter plane emerged out of the fog on the wrong runway at high speeds careening into the tail section of Aya's commuter flight sending lifting into the air and crashing on its port side. The sub orbiter sheered it's underbelly cutting right into its fuel lines on takeoff before flipping over at high takeoff speeds breaking the sub orbiter apart before exploding into a ball of flames.

CONNORS

Stop the footage! I can't watch anymore.

HOPKINS

As you wish, Sir.

The projection suddenly disappeared as Hopkins wheeled the stainless steel cart out of view.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

Will you be okay, Sir?

CONNORS

I don't know.

Suddenly, something thuds into the sands nine meters in front of him. It appeared out of nowhere. It protruded from the dark sands at an angle one meter long. Its black jagged edges appeared menacing and unnatural.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

What the hell is that?

To his alarm, a dim green light beam began appeared and began to pulsate from the top leading edge of the black jagged edged object.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

That can't be man-made. Right Hopkins? Hopkins? Are you there?

Hopkins failed to reply. Connors strained himself to turn over so he could see over his shoulder. He could see Hopkins standing over another one of these sinister looking meter long black rod like probes with a jagged knife-like edge. To Connors' astonishment, Hopkins gestured to him with his index finger to his lips not to make a sound as he pointed out the dozen or so probes that landed in the black sands around him.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

I don't like this.

HOPKINS

Like what, Sir?

CONNORS

These things! They're giving me the creeps.

Hopkins looked about the sinister looking probes rubbing his calm white-gloved hands along their sharp leading edges.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

I don't know about you but whoever sent those things probably don't have the best of intentions.

HOPKINS

I am inclined to agree with you.

Hopkins sharply turned his head at the crack of a distant sound reminiscent of thunder mixed with a high amplitude electro wave. Hopkins could see what appeared to be a faint eerie green glow in the distance identical to the light pulsating from the jagged black probes sticking out of the sands. The sense of alarm became further heightened as Hopkins pointed the approaching glow of green lights.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

Sir, I believe it is in your best interests that we best help you move away from here.

CONNORS

Agreed.

Hopkins reached under Connors armpits and slowly dragged him ten meters away from the ring of jagged probes encircling the crash site. Connors was propped up against a small black rock outcrop where he reached down to his right leg to reach to see if the small pistol he normally stashed in the bottom leg pocket was still there.

The disassembled weapon was in a brown square pack disguised as a bandage pack. Connors quickly unpacked the three pieces and quickly assembled them then loaded the magazine before sliding off the safety ready for use. He then sat gripping his small pistol for whatever was coming around the corner.

HOPKINS

Sir, your digital defensive screen is available. Would you like me to activate it?

CONNORS

Do it.

By appearance, Connors disappeared from the outcropping as Hopkins kicked away the trail in the sand from where he had dragged Connors.

Connors closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them up again, he could see scores of massive indescribable black reflective craft hovering one-hundred meters above the surface scanning the black sands in what appeared to be a search like a pattern.

The black vessels cut their green search beams and drifted away off into the horizon. Connors breathed a sigh of relief.

No sooner than he placed his pistol onto his lap, a disturbing sound could be heard coming his way. Slow moving shadows appeared of large eight-foot black figures with hoses protruding from their helmets walked right past where Connors hid. They carried a large rifle like weapons that were black in color and reflected light much like their armored space suits. Connors dared not to move as the black troopers from scouted past him. They moved like a hunting party with Connors their likely prey.

CUT TO:

SCENE 21

INT / EXT: OSAKA HIGH RISE - NIGHT

Connors closed his eyes as the Alien hunting party trod by. A moment, later, he could feel Aya's arms wrap around him

as he lay there in the dark of their Osaka high rise bedroom at night.

AYA MATSUMURA

You must stay focused if you wish to live. Think of something better.

CONNORS

You're right.

He looked around the Zen-like a white bedroom with nothing more than the white linen on the bed and the matching black lacquer wood bed stands. He could see Aya laying back on the bed as she pulled the linen sheets to cover her from the early Autumn air. A slight breeze and the sounds of wind chimes beckoned him to walk towards the glow of neon lights looming outside the balcony.

Connors slowly stepped towards the sliding glass door. The door was partially left open. With his hand, he opened the door wider to allow him to step through and stepped out onto the balcony.

Connors looked down over the balcony's edge, he could see the hustle & bustle of the city down below him alit with streetlights and vehicle traffic.

Just before he opened his eyes, he could smell the unmistakable smell of cigar smoke. Connors turned his head to find MSgt. Evans in his olive green utility uniform and combat boots leaning over the balcony enjoying the view as he puffed on his cigar.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

What the hell!

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

Boy, I have to tell you, that's some view you got here. Outstanding! Looks like you did good after the service.

CONNORS

Actually that was my wife's family who helped us get in here. I sure couldn't afford the rents or the down payment up here.

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

No, I suppose not.

As Connors tried to get a handle on the moment, Evans looked him in the eyes and offered him some friendly advice.

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS (CONT'D)

Now before you get all worked up over the particulars, you best listen to your old Master Sergeant. Your wife is right. You best think of something better and remember what I taught you in training, and you'll get through this. I guarantee.

CONNORS

You think?

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

I can say this with confidence; you've come this far. Keep it up flyboy and keep the mind focused. Achieve this one objective, and you'll go all the way.

CONNORS

No shit?

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

I shit you not flyboy. I would know, I trained you myself.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 22

INT: MATSUMURA HOME JAPAN - DAY
(YEARS EARLIER)

Connors opened his eyes and found himself entering Aya's home for the first time admiring its subtle details. On one side there was a small Washitsu styled section with earth tone painted walls, tatami mats, and hanging scrolls next to a small flowered alcove. On the other side was completely modern with tiled flooring and a sliding glass door leading out to a balcony. The centerpiece of the room was an old black Yamaha grand piano. It had been restored from fire. Connors could not resist the temptation to play one of its keys. He curiously walked right up to it and played one key just to hear how it sounded. Then he noticed an old framed black & white photo of a woman in a kimono. She bore a striking resemblance to Aya.

CONNORS

Who is she?

Aya appeared in a modern black sleeveless form-fitting dress as she walked up to the piano. Aya picked up the framed photo and sighed with sadness.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

She looks like you.

AYA MATSUMURA

She was my great-great Obachan
(grandmother) Masami Matsumura.
This was her piano.

CONNORS

She was very beautiful.

Aya nods her head in agreement as she sat down on the black piano bench and began to play.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

What is that? I have heard that
before. It sounds so familiar.
Beethoven?

AYA MATSUMURA

It is Beethoven's Moonlight
Sonata. It is the last thing she
played the night she died.

Connors sighed deeply at the thought of this woman playing on until her last moment on Earth.

AYA MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

She died March 9th, 1945.

Aware, of history, Connors listened, but tread cautiously.

AYA MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

My family descended from a Samurai
Clan. Everyone even to this day
learns Martial Arts. I, myself,
had to learn Naginatajutsu and
Kendo when I was in school. It is
a tradition of martial discipline
to always finish what you start.
Masami believed the same thing.

Aya as she continued to play.

AYA MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

I was told Masami had an English
teacher who taught her how to play
the piano before the war broke
out. She had not completed her
lessons when her teacher
disappeared. Undaunted, she
continued to practice and learn on
her own.

(MORE)

AYA MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

By March of 1945, we had lost many family members in the war. On the night of the great air raid, Masami was to give her first public recital at the family home. She wore her best kimono to play before a packed house of friends and war-weary neighbors. She had been melancholy since she had sent her three children to live with her aunt in the countryside. The chance to perform before her family and friends gave her a further sense of purpose beyond her job in the munitions assembly bunkers. It was her one and only performance she would see through to the end no matter what the cost.

FADE TO:

SCENE 23

INT: MATSUMURA HOME TOKYO 1945 - DAY

Masami Matsumura bowed before her gathered audience and then sat down on the piano bench. No sooner than she began to play Moonlight Sonata, the air raid sirens started. Everyone got up from their seats and began to rush for the air raid shelters down the street but not Masami.

AYA MATSUMURA

(Narration)

Samurai discipline long taught in our family prevalent at the time made her play on.

The droning sounds of approaching B-29 bombers could be heard. Air raid sirens blared and flak exploded in the searchlights overhead.

AYA MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

(Narration)

Masami's younger brother Takeru urged Masami to flee but she could not until she finished playing.

(MORE)

(CONT'D)

Both her older brothers have shot down a month apart over the Solomon Islands, and her father died at his post aboard the Super-battleship Musashi before it was sent to the bottom of the sea. In their memory, she felt honor bound to stay at her post and play on. Takeru tried to force Masami off this bench and make for the shelter, but she refused to leave until she had finished the Sonata.

Frustrated, Takeru tried to leave, but as the bombs rained down on our street, his escape path was cut off.

AYA MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

(Narration)

Takeru tried to run back to the house, but an explosion blocked his path nearly killing him. Amidst the explosions, flames, and clouds of black smoke, he could still hear his sister playing on until the last note. It was the most beautiful and surreal rendition he had ever heard. No sooner than she played the final ending key the house next door was bombed. The explosion leveled our house with still Masami inside. When they found her, she was still alive. She smiled and was no more. She died happy knowing she finished what she started. The Matsumura family that survived the war salvaged Masami's piano so it could be handed down as a family heirloom. Moonlight Sonata was her song.

CUT TO:

INT: MATSUMURA HOME OSAKA - DAY

CONNORS

And what is your song?

AYA MATSUMURA

I like to play Claire de Lune.

Connors closed his eyes and replayed Aya's rendition of her Moonlight Sonata and imagined the bombers were coming to

kill him. Somehow, the B-29's transformed into a wave of the massive black reflective vessels that had been hunting him earlier on.

CUT TO:

SCENE 24

EXT: THE BLACK SANDS - NIGHT

Connors that he was no longer on Earth but back on Eros 3117. Out of nowhere, Hopkins reappeared with a sense of urgency.

HOPKINS

Sir, I've re-engaged your digital defensive screen for your protection. I highly suggest that you remain perfectly still, so they do not notice you.

Connors closed his eyes and replayed Aya's rendition of her Moonlight Sonata and imagined the bombers were coming. Somehow, the B-29's transformed into a wave of the massive black reflective vessels that had been hunting him earlier on.

Connors watched in awe of the strange black reflective vessels.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

Sir, may I suggest happier thoughts.

CUT OUT:

SCENE 25

EXT: THE BEACH - DAY

Connors was suddenly back on Earth.

He was dressed in a black Martial Arts hakama and white keogi standing about a white sand beach with overcast skies. He could smell the salt air as he looked to the crashing waves.

To his left was Aya with her long raven black hair tied back wearing her full white Kendo armor carrying an identical set of Japanese Martial Arts training attire holding two bamboo shinai swords.

AYA MATSUMURA

Take this.

Connors looked at the bamboo shinai sword in his hands.

CONNORS

Am I dreaming?

AYA MATSUMURA

No, I am preparing you for this fight.

CONNORS

Hiroshi?

AYA MATSUMURA

This is a challenge to show your sincerity. You must do this if you are to win my hand. Everything reveals its true nature under crisis.

Somehow he was reliving his days of training with Aya to prepare him for a match against her elder brother Capt. Matsumura to prove himself worthy before being allowed to marry Aya.

CONNORS

Seriously? Why is this necessary? He is a Third Dan, and I'm just a mere novice. What could this possibly prove?

AYA MATSUMURA

Because they don't believe you are serious enough to see this through. Mixed marriages in Japan often end badly, especially if there are children involved. You don't have to prove anything to me but if you want to prove your sincerity to them, then you must accept this challenge.

CONNORS

But I can't win.

AYA MATSUMURA

Your objective is not to win, But to endure.

Connors donned his helmet and tied its long cords securing it's open back to his head before stepping forward to the challenge before him.

Aya stood in front of him to adjust his chest plate armor assuring him once more.

AYA MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

Bear in mind, my elder brother Hiroshi bears you no malice. This is just an old Samurai family custom. Remember, remain focused, and you shall do fine.

CONNORS

We shall see.

Connors walked to the marked circle gripping his bamboo shinai sword to where he was to challenge Hiroshi Matsumura. Aya's father Shintaro Matsumura himself a Sixth Dan would preside over the match. As he reached the edge of the circle, Connors stopped and bowed before the elder Matsumura who himself was wearing proper Kendo attire and armor.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Onegaishimasu!

The elder Shintaro Matsumura gave the nod to step one pace at the edge of the white marked ring. Connors could see Hiroshi appear in full armor carrying his bamboo Shinai sword at his side.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Onegaishimasu!

The elder Matsumura gave his nod after Hiroshi made his customary bow. The challenge had been accepted.

As the two fighters stepped one pace into the ring, a beam of white light appeared and not how he remembered it.

The two fighters stepped one pace drawing their swords before making the customary "Sonkyo" bow. Connors closed his eyes for a moment then suddenly English accent called his attention.

HOPKINS

Sir Mike?

Connors quickly turned his head, and to his surprise he found Hopkins appearing where he should not be

CONNORS

Hopkins, what are you doing here?
This is not how I remembered this!

HOPKINS

I understand your concern, Sir,
but it's imperative that I must
warn you that the circumstances
have changed.

CONNORS

What the hell does that mean?

Connors turned his head to face his opponent then he realized something was terribly wrong. Rising out of the "Sonkyo" position gearing ready to fight was another fighter and not Hiroshi Matsumura.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Oh hell no!

Standing directly across from him with his with a black jagged sword drawn readying to strike was the menacing eight-foot-tall alien in his black reflective armor and hoses running from his helmet to his back that had stalked him earlier.

Out of nowhere, Major John Reyes stood off to the side with his old wingman Tom Mathews cheering him on.

MAJOR REYES

Don't worry son.
You can take him!

The sudden home court advantage calmed his nerves restoring his confidence as he raised his sword ferociously leaping into the air with a fearsome battle cry.

SHINTARO MATSUMURA

Score one! Men!

Connors fast attack hit the alien square on the head before he could deflect his blow. The large growling alien in black reflective armor appeared stunned if not indignant that the human before him had struck first.

Connors turned with his sword drawn to face opponent who suddenly drew a loud deep resonating howl. Undaunted, Connors gripped his shinai and circled. The alien lunged forth nearly striking Connors hard hitting his chest armor. Connors quickly regained his footing and lunged forth to counter striking "Do" in a diagonal strike across the chest.

SHINTARO MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

Score two! Do!

The large alien gripped his black jagged sword. The large Alien fighter then threw his full body weight throwing

Connors six feet back into the air landing him square on his back.

CUT TO:

Connors came to and found himself out of his Kendo Armor. In the momentary daze, he found himself somewhere else in full combat gear holding a pulse rifle strapped into the seat with two dozen assault troops.

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

This is it boys and girls!

CONNORS

Huh?

Our Japanese Allies made the call and damned if we don't deliver! As our combined American and Japanese strike forces come in over the water, we'll make the orbital drop and come in high from out of the sun hitting them so hard the bastards won't know what hit them!

MILITARY PERSONNEL

HOOAH!

CUT TO:

SCENE 26

INT: COMMUTER CRAFT

Within the blink of an eye, Connors found himself seated across from Aya as her commuter craft landed at Osaka.

Aya reached for her phone to call her brother. Connors could hear the wheels skidding on the runway and slowing to a slow taxi.

CONNORS

Aya-Aya!

She could not hear him.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Aya! Put your head down now!

Aya suddenly put her phone down and appeared shocked to find Connors appearing right next to her urging her to lower her head. Before she could speak, she could see a fast oncoming object racing towards the windows of the craft.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Duck!

Aya instantly ducked her head as the commuter craft was struck in a violent collision. Fire and smoke filled the air.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Aya!

CUT TO:

INT: OAV

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS

Who the hell is Aya? There's nobody here by that name!

Connors unexpectedly found himself in the crashed belly of the orbital assault ship that was hit by a small missile.

MASTER SERGEANT EVANS (CONT'D)

If you want to stay alive, you best stay awake!

CONNORS

Stay awake?

CUT TO:

SCENE 27

EXT: THE BEACH - DAY

Connors could no longer tell if he was dreaming.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Hopkins are you there?

HOPKINS

Yes, Sir. I am right here by your side as I have been the entire time.

CONNORS

I can no longer tell the difference between a memory and a dream no more than what is an oxygen-starved hallucination and what is a reality.

HOPKINS

That is one of the reasons I am here for Sir.

CONNORS

How much time do I have left?

HOPKINS

I am afraid you only have
one-hundred twenty minutes
remaining before your oxygen runs
out.

CONNORS

How does one spend that last
one-hundred twenty minutes of
one's life?

HOPKINS

I cannot say Sir.

CONNORS

No. I suppose you can't, but I
will figure something.

Connors closed his eyes once more and listened to the
sounds of the crashing waves.

LEANNE

See you around.

Connors looked up to see Leanne smile back at him as she
walked into the three foot waves before disappearing for
the last time. Connors looked up with a single tear in his
eye as Leanne disappeared from sight. Hopkins appeared
standing right by his side to offer some friendly advice.

HOPKINS

Sir, please forgive me for saying
this but that girl likely
represents your past. While the
other girl off in the distance
represents your future.

Connors looked over far down the beach and spotted Aya
alone riding a horse along the water's edge off in the
distance.

CONNORS

Yes, I believe she plays a big
role in my future.

HOPKINS

That is correct Sir. You must
think of the future if you are to
have one.

CONNORS

I think I would if there's still a
chance I can get off this rock
still breathing. Do you believe
there is still hope?

Hopkins knelt down on his knees so he could speak frankly.

HOPKINS

Please forgive me if this is too forward of me to ask, but when you found yourself in that alleyway in San Diego where you thought all was lost, did you give up then or did you find your way?

CONNORS

You're right. You know, I believe I am going to make it.

HOPKINS

Well done Sir! That's the fighting spirit!

CONNORS

My emergency transmit beacon is still working?

HOPKINS

Yes, we are still transmitting.

CONNORS

If I am correct, there should be another patrol making a run in this sector that should come close enough to pick up my signal.

HOPKINS

It is most possible.

CONNORS

Great! All I need to do to win this battle of the mind and then I will conqueror this battle for survival! You know, I believe I'll get out of this yet!

FADE TO BLACK:

SCENE 28

EXT: THE ISLAND - DAY
(1830'S)

Four young survivors of the Mika-Maru washed ashore. The four boys were Ryuichi (Age 15), Onchi, (Age 13) Iwakichi, (Age 12) and Yukichi (age 10). They had all suffered from the effects of scurvy during their fifty-three-day ordeal at sea. They could only drink what few precious drops of desalinated water the boys could muster and eat what little

fish they could catch while adrift. But now they were on land. There, they had found themselves washed ashore on a small deserted island lined with white sands, a dozen few trees, and little vegetation.

Ryuichi became conscious along the water's edge hours after he had washed ashore. He had been lying down in the wet sand as the white sea foam of the surf repeatedly tingled his scrawny feet. The battered juvenile rolled over onto his back and opened his eyes to look up at the bright blue sky and heavens above. The bright sun was blinding forcing him to raise his hand to block it out from his eyes.

Ryuichi looked away and let out a small laugh followed by a short cry that he was still alive as he sat up and breathed deeply. He looked out to the crashing waves as he clasped his hands together and begged for forgiveness.

RYUICHI
Amida Buddha! Gomenasai! Amida
Buddha henjo kongo!

The boy began to cry as he knelt deeply into the wet sand and bowed.

He could hear a familiar voice shouting over the ocean surf in the distance.

YUKICHI
Okasan! Okasan! (mother)

The cries for Yukichi's mother had startled Ryuichi. Looking both ways, Ryuichi called out to him.

RYUICHI
Yukichi-kun! Yukichi-kun!
Where are you?

YUKICHI
Over here!

Ryuichi raced over the sand to find the youngest of the half-starved boys lying there shouting for his mother in a tearful panic. Ryuichi grabbed the boy and lifted him from the wet sand.

RYUICHI
Calm yourself.

Yukichi looked up with tears in his eyes to his older shipmate when he then heard the calls of two other boys.

YUKICHI
That must be Iwakichi!

RYUICHI

Hai! Sounds like Onchi is with him
too!

The two boys got up and raced over hundred meters down the shoreline before finding their stranded shipmates sitting under a palm tree. Out of breath, Ryuichi dropped down to his knees.

ONCHI

We're alive aren't we?

RYUICHI

Hai!

IWAKICHI

Anyone else survive?

RYUICHI

I don't think so. We are the only
ones left alive.

YUKICHI

Ryuichi-san, when are we going
home to Mihama?

RYUICHI

I do not know. For now, we are
stuck here on this little island.

Unwilling to accept his fate, Onchi stood up and raced towards the water's edge screaming.

ONCHI

Baka! Baka! Baka!

Ryuichi feeling to need to restore order chased raced after him and tackled him sending both boys into the low surf.

RYUICHI

Get a hold of yourself!

The other boys could see the Ryuichi and Onchi beat each other in the crashing surf hitting each other repeatedly.

IWAKICHI

Yame! (Stop)

The two younger boys raced over into the low surf to break the two older boys apart.

IWAKICHI (CONT'D)

Just stop it!

Ryuichi backed off Onchi whose lip was broken.

ONCHI
My mouth is bleeding!

Ryuichi held his head low and tried to look the other way. Yukichi got in Ryuichi's face and demanded he apologize.

YUKICHI
Tell him you are sorry!

Ryuichi turned around to face Onchi who was sitting in the low surf watching the sand recede around him with the tide.

RYUICHI
Gomenasai.

He then extended his hand to help Onchi out of the tide. Onchi took Ryuichi's hand and got up out of the surf.

YUKICHI
What are we going to do now?

Ryuichi scanned the beach and spotted what looked like rope and seaweed. They could see what looked like part of a ripped sail further down the small beach giving Ryuichi an idea.

RYUICHI
If we are to survive to be rescued, we must do what we can while there is still a few hours of daylight left. Let's build a shelter, gather what we can, and then we will forge for food and water. Are we Men of Mihama? We shall endure!

BOYS
HAI!

The boys scavenged what they could find scattered about the shore. They had found enough tattered strands of rope from the torn sail to string up a small square covering to shelter them from the sun and the tropical rains.

Ryuichi instructed the boys how to use jagged rocks to cut open coconuts and use the broken shells to collect rainwater to drink from. Ryuichi struggled to make a fire rubbing two sticks of driftwood together, but it was no use.

FADE TO:

SCENE 29

EXT: THE ISLAND - DAY

The very next morning, Ryuichi lay alone under the square sail shelter.

YUKICHI
Ryuichi-san! Ryuichi-san!

Ryuichi awoke to find the young boy kneeling at his side trying to wake him.

YUKICHI (CONT'D)
Onchi spotted a ship!

RYUICHI
Eh?

YUKICHI
Onchi spotted a ship! Hurry!
We're saved!

Ryuichi jumped onto his feet and raced over to the north end of the island. Iwakichi stood up atop a large rock wearing only his fundoshi (traditional Japanese male undergarment) and tied palm leaves on his head to cover from the sun pointing away.

IWAKICHI
Ryuichi! Look!

Ryuichi climbed atop the same rock seeing Onchi further down the sand jumping and waving towards the white sails of a distant ship.

ONCHI
Oka-san! (mother)

Yukichi and Iwakichi both joined in jumping up and down crying "mother" in Japanese. The crew of the distant ship could neither see the boys waving at them nor could they hear their pleas for rescue. The sudden burst of energy and excitement soon gave way to sullen despair as the boys watched the ship sail right past them never noticing the boys crying for help.

ONCHI (CONT'D)
Come back! Come back you bastards!

YUKICHI
Why aren't they coming?

RYUICHI
They are too far away to see or
hear us.

IWAKICHI
Baka!

RYUICHI
It's not their fault.

ONCHI
What do you mean by that?

Ryuichi looked inland to the scattered palm trees and few
grasses.

RYUICHI
Screaming and waving is not going
to work. If we are going to be
rescued by a ship, we must light a
big fire. The flames and smoke
will get their attention.

Just then, a coconut fell down from a tree nearly hitting
him in the head. Ryuichi looked up and saw what looked like
dried grass up in the tree.

ONCHI
What are you looking at?

RYUICHI
That dried grass! It can make a
kindling!

IWAKICHI
I can climb that tree and get it!

RYUICHI
Good! Go climb up there and gather
as much as you can!

IWAKICHI
Hai!

FADE TO:

Hours later, Iwakichi had gathered small bundles of the
dried grass while Ryuichi sat under the square sail shelter
rubbing the two sticks together furiously. Yukichi could
see that Ryuichi had rubbed so deeply into one of the
sticks that a small spot was turning black emitting smoke.
Ryuichi blew on the smoke and rubbed even more furiously
until a tiny spark emerged.

RYUICHI
Quick! Add the dried grass.

Yukichi added a small bundle of the grass as Ryuichi blew on it. Suddenly, the dried grass caught fire.

RYUICHI (CONT'D)
Ah ha!

Iwakichi added small driftwood to the small flame and it began to burn.

BOYS
We've made fire! We've made fire!
We're saved!

FADE OUT:

SCENE 30

EXT: THE ISLAND - DAY

Days passed into weeks, then months. Their tattered clothes were no use. They wore palm leaves over their fundoshi's and hats for their heads made from the same trees. Their exposure to the sun had left them with dark sunburnt skin. Their hair had grown long and scraggly. They survived off what few fish they could catch and crabs that appeared on the shore and tide pools. Any driftwood they could find that washed aground had to be collected to maintain a small cooking fire and to provide a small torch to light a bigger fire in the event a passing ship was to come by.

One day, Ryuichi woke up and could feel his feet were wet.

RYUICHI
Eh?

He realized one of the ropes tethering the square sail had come undone allowing water to drip in and putting out their small fire.

RYUICHI (CONT'D)
Onchi.

ONCHI
What.

RYUICHI
Everything is wet.

Onchi nudged Iwakichi who was too asleep to wake up.

IWAKICHI
What do you want?

ONCHI
The fire is out you idiot!

RYUICHI
I thought you were on fire watch.

ONCHI
I was until I made Iwakichi keep
watch so I could sleep.

IWAKICHI
Don't blame me!

RYUICHI
Both of you! Baka!

Ryuichi had enough of their bickering and walked out to the northern rock finding young Yukichi sitting there making something from palm leaves.

RYUICHI (CONT'D)
What are you doing Yukichi-kun?

The boy looked up and smiled as he held up a little doll of a man made from tied palm leaves. Ryuichi smiled back.

RYUICHI (CONT'D)
May I?

YUKICHI
Hai.

Yukichi handed Ryuichi the small doll.

RYUICHI
This is pretty good.

YUKICHI
Arigatou.

Something caught Ryuichi's eye.

YUKICHI (CONT'D)
What is it?

RYUICHI
It's a ship!

The two boys raced back to the shelter shouting with excitement.

BOYS
It's a ship! It's a ship!

Ryuichi grabbed his two rubbing sticks and began to rustle them together to make a fire.

RYUICHI
Quick! Find some dried grass!

Iwakichi and Onchi scurried all over the place to find something that wasn't wet.

ONCHI
Everything's wet!

YUKICHI
Hurry! Hurry!

By now the white sails of a three mast sailing ship could be clearly seen off beyond the small coral reef and crashing waves and with it a sense of hope.

Ryuichi furiously rubbed the two sticks together.

RYUICHI
Come on!

YUKICHI
Hurry!

Then, at last, a spark! Ryuichi continued to rub the sticks as Iwakichi added what little-dried grass he could find. Once smoke started, Onchi blew on the tiny igniting spark.

RYUICHI
Keep doing that!

The small flame became fire. They boys had fastened a small triangle shaped carriage out of twigs to carry the small embers up a tree. As soon as the flame was transferred to the carriage, Iwakichi gingerly climbed up a tree in the hope of igniting it.

YUKICHI
Hurry! They are sailing away!

Iwakichi caught a glimpse of the passing ship beyond the coral reef before nearly losing his grip. Within the span of a second, Iwakichi nearly fell out of the tree. In a panic, he grasped at a branch within reach to keep him from falling. At that moment, a large cache of collected water unexpectedly showered down on him dousing the small fire laden carriage snuffing out the small flame.

Onchi raced over to the base of the tree hitting Iwakichi on the head the moment he reached the ground.

IWAKICHI
It's not my fault!

ONCHI
Yes, it is! Thanks to you, we're stuck here!

Young Yukichi threw himself between the two fighting boys before Ryuichi had enough.

RYUICHI
Yame! (stop) Both of you!

ONCHI
But he screwed up!

IWAKICHI
How was I to know there was still water up there?

RYUICHI
It's nobody's fault but my own.

Ryuichi hung his head low and began to explain.

RYUICHI (CONT'D)
This was my plan. I had come to realize we did not have enough driftwood or trees to build a bonfire. I thought if the opportunity came, we could set a tree on fire. We could be saved without wasting what little we had. You know I want to return home to my family just as much as you do. I think nothing more than getting us off this little island. What I would give for some Manju, sweet buns, or a moment atop a fresh new tatami mat in my family's home. I want to go home just as much as any of you! But to fight over our failures will do us no good. I don't want to die here any more than you. We have to use our heads and come up with a new plan and should it work; we'll all go home. Agreed?

BOYS
Hai!

FADE TO:

SCENE 31

EXT: THE ISLAND - DAY

Weeks later, Yukichi found himself one cloudy overcast morning eyeing a good sized fish caught in a tide pool that he intended to spear. He had grown taller, his hair had grown longer and the little doll he made he now wore as a pendant tied around his neck with grass for string. His keen almond-shaped brown eyes were trained in on the fish zeroed in his sights. Then, at the right moment, he thrust his spear! Yukichi successfully pierced the fish.

YUKICHI

Yah!

Yukichi smiled as he discovered the fish was significantly larger than it looked in the water. Large enough for everyone to share.

YUKICHI (CONT'D)

I got a big one!

Yukichi having caught a fish hopped off the large rock from to return back the shelter. He could see the other boys sitting around the small camp as he walked up with the spear and fish in hand.

YUKICHI (CONT'D)

Guys! Look what I caught!

The boys looked up somewhat unenthused.

IWAKICHI

That's great. Another fish.

ONCHI

I'm so sick of eating fish!

Yukichi stood there and became upset.

YUKICHI

What is wrong with you guys?
We're men of Mihama right?

IWAKICHI

More like Castaways of Crap
Island.

RYUICHI

Maybe not for long.

Ryuichi got up and walked right past Yukichi who was not done scolding his fellow ungrateful castaways when Onchi also noticed Ryuichi walking toward the beach. The look on Onchi's face instantly changed from anger to excitement as he nudged Iwakichi to turn over and take a look.

YUKICHI

I'm standing right here, and you guys act like I don't exist! What the hell are you looking at?

IWAKICHI

There! Look!

Yukichi stopped his rant turned his head. He was looking at the largest ship he had ever seen! Not just any ship he had seen before. It was a Japanese ship! The boys stood in awe of the massive three masts white-hulled vessel sailing towards their little island bearing a large white rising sun flag. Then it occurred to Ryuichi what must be done.

RYUICHI

The fire!

The boys raced toward the water's edge before doing a rapid about-face back towards the covered fire pit. Ryuichi quickly fed the small carriage with a small flame and gingerly brought it over to the fire pit.

RYUICHI (CONT'D)

Throw everything we have!
Do it!

BOYS

Hai!

Ryuichi quickly set the small flame into the fire pit as Yukichi added kindling setting the pit aflame.

RYUICHI

Hurry! We must make it big as we can make it!

Iwakichi and Onchi gathered every branch and driftwood they could gather throwing them into the fire. Within seconds, the small flame grew into a real bonfire sending a towering cloud of white smoke high into the air.

BOYS

We're saved! We are saved!

CUT TO:

SCENE 32

EXT: JAPANESE SAILING SHIP DECK - DAY

Just offshore, a young Japanese lookout had spotted the rising column of white smoke and bonfire at its base.

LOOKOUT

Captain! Bonfire spotted on the island dead ahead!

The sudden news drew instant attention among the crew who all dropped what they were doing to look out over the ship's rail to see the distant fire up ahead. Forty-seven-year-old Captain Murakami looked out over the ship's rail with his brass spyglass atop the Quarterdeck as his First Mate Shichiro joined him to await his commands.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

What is it?

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

Castaways!
Young ones too.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Shall we look Captain?

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

We must render them aid.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Hai!

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

Bring the ship to port and prepare to secure sails and drop anchor.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Hai!

The First Mate turned to the helmsman manning the large wooden wheel.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO (CONT'D)

Come to port!

SHIP HELMSMAN

Hai! Coming to port!

The First Mate next turned to the ship's crew.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Secure sails!

A loud "Hai!" could be heard from the crew as the scurried to their posts and up the mast's rope ladders to secure the large white sails.

SEAMASTER

Sails secured!
Ready to drop anchor!

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

Drop Anchor!

With a nod from the ship's Sea Master, a veteran sailor swung a large black hammer down onto the release sending the large black chain holding the heavy iron anchor plunging into the crystal blue waters below as the boys awaited knee deep into the shoreline.

CONT:

SCENE 33

EXT: JAPANESE SAILING SHIP LAUNCH - DAY

Captain Murakami ordered a wooden launch be lowered into the water. First Mate Shichiro descended down a small rope ladder strung alongside the ship to board the awaiting launch. Six crew members sat patiently as Shichiro boarded the small boat as Capt. Murakami and the rest of the crew looked on.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Make way!

OARSMAN

Hai!

The crewmen pushed the launch away from the ship. The crew next raised their long wooden oars. On the First Mate's command, the men aboard the launch lowered the oars into the water and began to row to shore.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Row! Row!

As the launch came closer in Shichiro looked out and could see the boys jumping up and down waving at him knee deep in the water. Shichiro happily waved back but then as he came closer to shore, he could hear them cry out.

BOYS

Oka-san! Oka-san!

First Mate Shichiro's cheerful expression quickly turns from joy to horror.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
Oh no!

OARSMAN
What is it?

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
They're Nihonjin (Japanese)!

OARSMAN
Eh?

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
Turn the boat around now!

OARSMAN
But Sir?

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
Just do it!
That's an order!

CUT TO:

Back on the beach, the boys continued to cry out "Oka-san" until they noticed something was wrong. Cheer replaced panic as the boys observed the approaching launch turning around.

YUKICHI
Ryuichi-san! They are heading back
to the ship!

The boys could not believe their eyes as the launch came about and headed back towards the ship.

ONCHI
No! No! No!
Comeback!

CUT TO:

SCENE 34

EXT: JAPANESE SAILING SHIP DECK - DAY

Capt. Murakami stepped down from the quarterdeck to demand Shichiro's explanation as he pulled the launch alongside the ship. No sooner than the oarsmen raised their oars, First Mate Shichiro stood up and took hold of the rope ladder to climb back aboard the ship.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
What the hell are you doing?

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
 Captain, Sir.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
 Well? Why didn't you rescue the
 boys? What the hell is the matter
 with you?

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
 We can't, Sir!

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
 What do you mean we can't rescue
 them? We have a moral obligation
 to help these child sailors!

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
 Sakoku Law.
 (Sighs)
 Sakoku Law.

The crew looked to their startled Capt. Murakami in
 silence.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
 No! This cannot be!

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
 "Sencho! Those boys are Nihonjin
 (Japanese)! With all due respect,
 you know as well as I do that
 under Sakoku Law, our Lord and the
 Bakufu (Shogunate) forbids us to
 save them.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
 Damn the law! I order you to go
 back and bring them here!

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
 And do what? Turn them over to the
 Bakufu when we arrive? They'll
 only arrest them and throw them in
 prison or worse, execute them!

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
 So we drop them off close to port.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
 You don't know where they are
 from. Suppose we do as you say and
 drop them off somewhere near port.
 (MORE)

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO (CONT'D)

They get caught at a border checkpoint without a pass, get arrested, tortured, then give up the name of the ship that brought them there, and then they come after us and in the end, they still get executed! Do you want their blood on your hands?

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

I suppose not.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Sencho, I want to help them as much as you do. Believe me, I do! But the fact is we are not Satsuma nor do we have a sympathetic Lord who would allow us such free reign to do what we please. I want to bring those boys home as much as you do but I don't want our crew to lose their heads at the hands of the Bakufu Samurai over this! Do you?

FLASH CUT TO:

Captain Murakami quickly imagined himself and First Mate Shichiro on a dockside wharf on their knees with their hands tied behind their backs as two Samurai unsheathed their swords preparing to cut their heads off.

FLASH RETURN TO:

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

No!

SEAMASTER

He's right you know.

The crew looked on conflicted by the unsettling prospect of violating the Sakoku Law.

Captain Murakami angrily slammed his fists upon the ship's rail in utter frustration before reaching for the handle of his short sword tied to his waist under his black topcoat. Just then, three armed crewmen threatened swords upon the Captain.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

What are you doing?
This is mutiny!
I am the Law here!

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

No Sencho, if you cannot abide and enforce his Excellency's Law, then you have forced our hands and shall be relieved of it.

Facing an armed mutiny, the Captain found himself overruled. Seeking to defuse the tension, he looked to his trusted Sea Master.

SEAMASTER

Sencho, First Mate Shichiro is correct. Philosophically, I agree with you. I would like very much to help the boys, but our hands are tied. This is a Shogunate-controlled Ship. They will check our manifest upon arrival leaving us much to answer for upon discovery of any such impropriety. As cruel and as selfish as it sounds, we must consider the lives of our crew. They along with us can all lose our heads over this. This happened to another ship. Please do not let this happen to us.

Captain Murakami nodded his head and took his hand off the pommel of his short sword. The Sea Master then waved his hand signaling the three armed crewmen to put away their weapons defusing the situation.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO

Sencho, forgive me, but this is the way it has to be.

Captain Murakami paused for a moment as he looked towards the boys awaiting rescue on the beach. A single tear appeared in his eye as he sighed deeply.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

You are right. This is most cruel. May Buddha-sama and Kami-sama forgive us.

First Mate Shichiro felt sick to his stomach and began to weep in shame as he signaled for the Sea Master to come forward. The Sea Master stepped forward with tears in his eyes for he knew the captain had no choice but to obey the law.

SEAMASTER

Your orders, Sir?

Captain Murakami looked over to his veteran Sea Master and shook his head before delivering his order.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

Drop the second launch and load it with as much food, clothes, and weapons we can spare then tow it out as close to shore as you can so they can retrieve it. We cannot leave them here to die without a fighting chance. As soon as the first launch returns and is secured up on deck, weigh anchor and make sail for Edo and speak never more of this shame we shall carry. May the Gods have mercy on us all.

FADE OUT:

SCENE 35

EXT: THE ISLAND - DAY

An hour later, the boys could see the wooden launch sailing towards them once more with a second boat in tow.

RYUICHI

Look!

ONCHI

They are coming back!

Iwakichi raced back into the water to swim out to them. Halfway out, Iwakichi came within fifteen meters of the boats when he noticed they dropped a small anchor on the boat and began to row away back towards the ship.

IWAKICHI

No! Comeback!

Take us with you!

Iwakichi swam as fast as he could but had reached the breaking surf at the edge of the coral reef pushing him back. The boy briefly went under the wave nearly drowning. When he surfaced, the launch had rowed away.

Using all his strength, Iwakichi pulled himself up out of the water and into the small wooden boat. He could see under a pair of canvas sails a dozen wooden crates containing oranges, bananas, dried fish, sacks of rice, a pair of swords, some clothes, and a pistol. Iwakichi inspected the small cache of goods the ship had left them.

Iwakichi rowed the small wooden boat back to shore. Ryuichi and Onchi raced towards the boat to help pull it to shore. An exhausted Iwakichi hopped out of the boat and lumbered back onto shore before falling face down in tears into the wet sand. Onchi immediately noticed the covered crates and tried to take a peak before Ryuichi scolded him.

RYUICHI

Get the boat ashore first!
You can look later!

The two boys landed the boat ashore and pushed it up out of the wet sand. Nearly out of breath from pushing the cargo-laden boat, Ryuichi unfurled the canvas cover to see what they had been left with.

RYUICHI (CONT'D)

Is this is the best they can do?

Iwakichi continued to sob away on the wet sand as Onchi looked around for Yukichi.

ONCHI

Where's Yukichi?

Ryuichi looked back and pointed to the shelter where young Yukichi sat holding his doll pendant crying wanting to go home to his mother. Onchi looked back out to sea and could see the ship's sails being deployed as they began to sail away. Indignant, Ryuichi became angry and walked back into the knee-deep surf to deliver his angry curse.

RYUICHI

You bastards! You can't do this to us! This is wrong, and you know it! You can't leave us to die here! I call upon the Great Kami-Sama and the ship's crew to hear me now! You shall never reach port until you do us right! You hear me? You'll never see home until you do us right!

FADE TO BLACK:

SCENE 36

INT: USDSRV REDDAIR COMMUNICATIONS DECK

The USDSRV Red Adair returned to the area where the last known contact with the undetermined first signal was made. The SAR mission clock continued running.

Deep inside the Communications Deck, communications officer John Kirby and Spc. Karen Johnson was at their posts scanning the vast region of the "Quad-Threes" for any conclusion to their mission. They had one hour remaining.

Holding his stopwatch in his hand, Kirby looked up to the mission clock and to the second set of subtracting numbers below which indicated what time remained on any deployed LSS suits. Unwilling to give up, he remained determined to continue searching until the very last minute. Just then, the momentary silence was broken by a call from the bridge.

SPC. JOHNSON

You want to take this?

JOHN KIRBY

Sure, I believe the captain will want to hear directly from me.
DSC-COM Kirby.

CAPT. COLE

John, do you have something for me or not?

JOHN KIRBY

Not yet, Sir.

CAPT. COLE

Time is running out. I hate to say this but at this point, those guys are likely gone, and the chances of us finding them out here in the "Quad-Threes" are not very good. I can't say I've ever heard of anyone finding survivors out on this far region of space. Personally, nobody in their right minds has any business out here. One would think these space miners knew what they are getting into before they come out here risking lives for some lousy gold.

JOHN KIRBY

That might be the case, but until the clock runs out I have a duty to do everything I can before we close the books on this SAR.

CAPT. COLE

You do that John. I know you are the best at this.

(MORE)

CAPT. COLE (CONT'D)

But in an hour from now if we come up blank, we're going to have to close the books on this one and write them off then head back to the barn.

JOHN KIRBY

I understand.
DSC-COM Kirby out.

TRANSITION TO:

SCENE 37

EXT: THE BLACK SANDS - NIGHT

Back on the desolate surface of Eros 3117, Connors lay on his back amidst the scattered wreckage of his escape pod. With condensation building within his helmet, Connors looked up to the stars that filled the horizon.

CONNORS

There is beauty in an unobstructed night sky. A deathly peace.

Connors sat in his flight suit with no helmet before a twilight seashore with his trusted English butler Hopkins by his side.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Say, Hopkins?

HOPKINS

Yes, Sir?

CONNORS

How much time do I have left?

Hopkins sighed with a somber look on his face.

HOPKINS

I'm afraid Sir, that we have reached the final hour.

CONNORS

I suppose we have.

As the seconds ticked away into the twilight vista and darkened shoreline before him, he could see in his mind, Misami Matsumura. She was playing a grand piano near the water's edge in full kimono. Her somber keys echoed Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata as a sky full of contrails came into view.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Is this how it will end? A body
and mind lost never to be found?

HOPKINS

No, Sir.

CONNORS

If I am to die on this rock, how
should I be?

HOPKINS

Tranquil and Dignified Sir.

CONNORS

Easy for you to say! You're just a
figment of my imagination.

HOPKINS

Yes and no, Sir.

CONNORS

Well, in any case, I am glad you
are here Hopkins.

HOPKINS

Thank you, Sir.

Connors gathered his final thoughts when he noticed Hopkins
appeared saddened.

CONNORS

What is it? What's wrong Hopkins?

The English butler sighed and looked to Connors with
tearful eyes.

HOPKINS

I am afraid Sir, I must go now.

CONNORS

What?

HOPKINS

Your LSS systems are starting to
fail. To sustain life support I am
assigned by protocol to shut off.

CONNORS

No Hopkins, don't leave me!
I can't do this without you!

HOPKINS

I am so sorry, Sir. Please focus on the blinking star up above you and think of all those you have loved and lost. Please take those memories with you. They are your most valuable possessions.

Connors began to feel the cold entering his LSS suit as he took in the devastating news that his trusted companion would leave him in his final moments. With a tear rolling down one eye, Hopkins stood up straight and adjusted his suit before bidding Adieu.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

May I say, Sir, it has been an honor and a pleasure serving you. Please focus on the blinking star and enjoy this last parting gift.

Connors blinked his eye and discovered Hopkins was gone.

Connors became distraught and started to succumb to despair in the shadow of his impending doom. For a moment, he imagined seeing the Admiral standing before him looking on with pity when suddenly he noticed a small message indicator light blinking on his wrist. With no delay, he depressed the small button to play the long overlooked pre-recorded message. Strangely, he did not recall ever recording it.

The audible recording sounded like the crashing waves before turning into the sound of thunderous applause. As the applause died down to a discernible silence, a male voice made an announcement in Japanese.

MALE VOICE

His Royal Majesty, Members of the Imperial Family, Ladies, and Gentlemen, may I please present to you Miss Aya Matsumura.

Hearing the brief applause brought a smile to Connors face and light to his tearful eyes. Aya's haunting melody played as the blinking light he had been advised to pay attention to appeared to descend and become closer until turning into a series of bright lights. All Connors could do was smile and laugh to himself as the series of lights appeared to be an approaching white-hulled vessel.

CONNORS

Perhaps this is the end, and the angels have come for me.

Connors looked closer through his condensation filled space helmet, he could just make out a smaller series of English lettering clear as day just above the large Japanese writing. ISHIMARU - NAGASAKI.

CONNORS (CONT'D)
Ishimaru? What the hell? A
Japanese ship out here? God Bless
them!

Connors could feel and hear the sands shake all around him and could hear the muffled sounds of large thruster engines close by. The condensation in his helmet had made it nearly impossible for him to see clearly. Sand and dust clouds filled the thin air in front of him. Moments later, beams of white light were pointed right at him.

Connors crossed his hands to block out the blinding light pointed directly into his eyes when suddenly he could feel two sets of hands pulling his hands down. He could almost hear the muffled sounds of men speaking when suddenly he could feel that they were lifting him to slide a gurney under him. While he still couldn't see very well out through his condensation filled helmet, Connors flew faint gasps of hot breath, just enough to clear a small view of the men in white space suits lifting him up off the ground. They carried him twenty meters to what appeared to be a brightly lit landing ramp. Connors could not see or breathe very well. He struggled to blow warm air until he could hear an internal sensor warning him his oxygen supply would be out in thirty seconds. Suddenly everything went black again.

CUT TO BLACK:

SCENE 38

EXT: THE BLACK SANDS - NIGHT

JAPANESE VOICE
CLEAR-O!

Connors had just been shocked with a defibrillator.

JAPANESE MEDIC
Mate'-Mate (wait)!

Connors took in a deep breath of life-saving air. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see several medics dressed in white jumpsuits attending to him. He could see someone looking over him behind a white surgical mask who was ready to intubate him. Lucky for Connors, he had become conscious before that could happen.

Connors opened his eyes once more and found two men dressed in white standing before him. One wore a surgical mask and a stethoscope around his shoulder. The other man wore a cap with some insignia of the ship they were aboard. Connors tried to speak but found it difficult. Suddenly, the doctor tried to speak to him in broken English.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

If you can hear me, please move
your hand.

Connors struggled yet slowly moved his right wrist and nodded his head to acknowledge him.

JAPANESE MEDIC

Are you American?

CONNORS

Hai.

JAPANESE MEDIC

Wakarimasu ka?
(Do you understand)

Connors once again understood the man's question and waved his right wrist back and forth.

CONNORS

Hai. Sukoshi desu.
(Yes, a little)

Connors blinked his eyes once more under the bright white lights in the room. He still could not clearly make out detailed of the man in front of him as he continued to speak.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI

I am Murakami. I am the captain of
this ship.

The captain leaned ever closer to Connors' ear and spoke to him in English.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI (CONT'D)

You are safe now. You shall be
home soon.

Connors nod his head to thank him.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI (CONT'D)

Are we good now?

CONNORS

Huh?

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
Are we good?

CONNORS
I don't understand.

FADE TO WHITE:

SCENE 39

INT: RETURN SHUTTLE MEDICAL BAY

Connors awoke in a white medical bay. He had no idea how long he had been out for when he started to come to he could hear the sound of a friendly voice.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Mike-san. Wake up!

Connors squinted his eyes and found his brother in law smiling in a chair wearing his old brown JASDF aviators jacket bearing the patch of the 6th Sentai on one shoulder and the Japanese Flag on the other sitting right next to his bed.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA (CONT'D)
How do you feel?

CONNORS
Like shit.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Well, I heard you had quite a crash. Your data recorder shows from the shallow angle of entry into the thin atmosphere of the planetoid you crashed on that you conquered the Six Minutes of Terror you were always afraid of.

CONNORS
I wasn't afraid of it. I just prayed I'd never had to do it.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Same thing!

CONNORS
What's become of my crew?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA
Everyone but the survey officer was accounted for. He is presumed dead.

CONNORS

Well, that's good to know the crew on the D-9 Scout Ship made it. As for Andre, he got his. Say, where the hell am I anyways?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

We had just come out of the NFTL flight stream thirty minutes ago. At our current rate of deceleration we should be back on Earth within an hour.

CONNORS

How long have I been out?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

After you were transferred to Europa Station you were put in a medically induced coma for a month before we could make the flight home.

CONNORS

Home?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Hai!

Hiroshi pulled back a small curtain to reveal a window where he could see they were just crossing the Moon's Equator before the final leg to the big blue planet they called home up ahead.

CONNORS

Beautiful isn't it?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Hai! Would you like to see something even more beautiful?

CONNORS

Yeah.

Hiroshi pulled forth a small projector on a movable arm that was attached to the bed. With the flick of a switch, a beam projected a 30-centimeter image of Connor's unborn child moving around in Aya's womb.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

Is that?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Yes. This was taken earlier this morning.

Just then a call came in. Hiroshi switched the screen over to project Aya's call.

Connor's eyes lit up as he looked upon his wife as she lay in her hospital bed on the other side of the call. He could see that she had stitches right above her temple yet her smile put him at ease.

AYA MATSUMURA

Hey there, stranger.

CONNORS

Well a hello to you too!

AYA MATSUMURA

I heard about your ordeal. I am happy to hear they found you alive. You have no idea how much I've missed you.

CONNORS

I could say the same. How's the baby?

AYA MATSUMURA

You're going to be just in time for our little girl's delivery next week.

CONNORS

A girl?

AYA MATSUMURA

Hai! We're going to have a little girl.

CONNORS

I just want to say how sorry I am for taking this contract and coming home broken and empty-handed. Gomenasai.

Aya and Hiroshi both giggled.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

AYA MATSUMURA

You didn't tell him didn't you?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Ehhh...

CONNORS

Tell me what?

Hiroshi smiled as his sister nudged from the screen to reveal some unexpected news.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

We know from the Red Adair that the Fortin was high jacked with the entire haul lost. The rest of the crew were recovered within hours of colliding with an unknown pirate vessel believed to be of Russian origin.

Before you were rescued, you had transmitted a claim to a gold discovery on the planetoid you crashed on. Under the exemption provisions of your contract, you are the sole claim holder of your find on Eros 3117. You landed on top of a large find. Those black sands were rich with gold. You're going to be rich my friend!

Connors appeared in shock as Hiroshi and Aya both grinned with excitement.

AYA MATSUMURA

You hear that? You won't have to go out on dangerous deep-space contracts anymore.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

You can lease your claim and take a healthy percentage. Now you can move to the Inland Sea or the Puget Sound or wherever you want to raise my new niece.

AYA MATSUMURA

Mike, the nurse says I need to rest so I will see you soon. Love you! Mata ne!

CONNORS

Love you too! See you soon!

Connors smiled yet still appeared somewhat confused as he stood up out of bed to stretch his arms.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

What's wrong?

Connors rubbed his eyes and looked out the window to the Earth before speaking.

CONNORS

You mentioned that I was transferred to Europa Station. Transferred from what ship?

Hiroshi appeared somewhat confused and did not understand his query.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

You were brought aboard Europa Station by the crew of the USDSRV Red Adair. You owe your life to a communications officer named John Kirby.

Connors seemed somewhat at a loss to understand how this could be.

CONNORS

You say I was rescued by the Red Adair? That's impossible!

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

It's true. You were rescued by the USDSRV Red Adair. In fact, you have a taped message from the Captain and Communications Officer Kirby that rescued you who wish you a speedy recovery and luck with your new family.

Connors continued to shake his head in disagreement.

CONNORS

I remembered the ship that came for me. It was an angular vessel with a lot of bright white lights and a pointed bow. It was a Japanese ship painted white with big red letters saying ISHIMARU - NAGASAKI.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

No, that must have been a dream. You were rescued by the Red Adair.

CONNORS

I tell you I was not dreaming! I was rescued by a Japanese vessel out of Nagasaki bearing the name Ishimaru. I even met their Captain Murakami.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Ishimaru? Murakami?

CONNORS

Yes! I tell you that's who came for me. I remember talking to him in both English and Japanese.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

What did he say to you?

CONNORS

He introduced himself as being the captain of the Ishimaru then asked me in English if we were good. I have no idea what he meant by that.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Mike-san, we have an hour before we land. If you so choose, please join me in the passenger lounge while I let you get your bearings straight. This will allow me time to research this.

CONNORS

I'll do that.

FADE TO:

SCENE 40

INT: RETURN SHUTTLE PASSENGER LOUNGE

Thirty minutes later, Connors appeared in the passenger lounge freshened up and ready to take his seat next to his brother in law before entry into the Earth's atmosphere.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Ah! There he is!

CONNORS

Iie-iie (No-no), don't get up. You can keep the window seat. I've seen enough space.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

You might want to buckle in. The flight attendants are about to make their announcements.

Connors sat down and buckled his seat before sighing at the thought of returning home. Connors appeared perplexed which Hiroshi could hardly ignore.

CONNORS

Did you find any information on
the Ishimaru?

Hiroshi looked uneasy as he pulled out a small tablet to
show what he had found.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

As far as I could find, history
records five Japanese vessels by
the name of Ishimaru. There was
one record from the year 1830 of a
vessel commanded by a Captain
Murakami that was lost at sea with
its fate unknown.

CONNORS

Can you pull up an image on what
he looked like?

Hiroshi tapped a link on the projected image that produced
a small rough black and white etching of Captain Murakami.
Connors' eyes lit up as soon as he recognized the man.

CONNORS (CONT'D)

That's him I tell you!
But how?

Hiroshi Matsumura sighed deeply before answering his
American brother in law's question.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Do you believe in ghosts?

CONNORS

Yes, I believe they exist.
Why?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Have you ever heard of ghost ships
like the Flying Dutchman?

Connors turned a shade of pale.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

It's okay. We have such stories in
our history too. Due to Japan's
Isolationist policies of that
time, many stranded sailors washed
ashore only to be ignored by
passing Japanese ships for fear of
prosecution.

(MORE)

HIROSHI MATSUMURA (CONT'D)

There are stories of young boys who were eventually rescued who often cursed the crews of such ships that left them marooned to die. Perhaps this may have been one of those ships doomed to sail on like restless spirits until they right a wrong.

CONNORS

Perhaps you're right.
I guess we'll never know.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Hai.

CONNORS

It's good to be coming home.

Hiroshi just smiled.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

What would you say after all this drama is over we have a rematch?

CONNORS

Are you freaking kidding me?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

No, I thought not.

CONNORS

What? You think after what I've been through I can't take you?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

That remains to be seen.

The two men laughed.

Just then, a tall American red-headed Flight Attendant with an elaborate up-do hairstyle stood at the top of the aisle to address the passengers via the ships public address system in English and Japanese.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We thank you for flying with us.
Please make sure all your restraints are properly buckled.

(MORE)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

We shall be entering Earth's atmosphere over the Asian continent in five minutes and landing in Osaka Japan shortly after we clear the stratosphere. The local weather is a cool eighteen degrees Celsius overcast with morning fog. Please enjoy the rest of your flight.

Connors looked at Hiroshi and smiled.

CONNORS

Hey. Thank you for coming out so far to bring me back home. Domo Arigatou' Gozaimasu.

Hiroshi smiled and made a slight bow of his head from his seat.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

It was my pleasure to assist you.

Connors sighed once more before asking one last question.

CONNORS

I know the crew of the Red Adair are the ones who rescued me. As soon as I get settled, I will be sending my thanks to their crew. But I have to ask, what's the chance that I really did encounter Captain Murakami and the ghostship Ishimaru?

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

In my culture, it is entirely possible.

CONNORS

And what if I did? Would they sail on or would they finally return home?

Hiroshi smiled as he turned off the small projection tablet.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

I would like to think so.

So did Connors as he could see their ship passing through the red glow of re-entry that quickly changed to thick clouds.

CONNORS

You know; I believe we're good.

HIROSHI MATSUMURA

Hai Mike-san.

I believe we are.

Satisfied, the two men looked out of the passenger window and could see the thick gray mist content that all was right in their world knowing that they would soon be home.

FADE TO WHITE:

SCENE 41

EXT: MIHAMA VILLAGE CHITA BAY HARBOR 1830's JAPAN - DAY

Out of the fog appeared a big white hulled three mast ship. Her ships prow gracefully cut through the thick gray-white mists of Chita Bay as she slowly made her way towards the small rock-lined port near at the base of Mihama Village.

Her appearance came as an unexpected surprise to the villagers who were busy repairing fishing nets along its shore. The inhabitants of Mihama Village had never seen such a large Western built merchant vessel before flying the ensign of the Rising Sun at her stern. Nor had they ever seen a ship flying the crest of the mura Domain ever make port in their tiny deep water harbor.

The harbor master quickly sent a young man to climb up the village fire tower to ring the bell to alert the villagers of the ship's arrival. But no surprise would be greater than for seven-year-old Takako Tamura who had been playing along the rocks when she looked up and spotted her older brother Ryuichi standing atop the ship's rail shouting.

RYUICHI

Oka-san!

Little Takako-chan instantly recognized her long-lost brother and shouted back.

TAKAKO TAMURA

Ani-chan! (brother) Ryuichi!

Almost all the villagers dropped the nets and stood up as the little girl in her tattered clothes raced to go find her mother shouting.

TAKAKO TAMURA (CONT'D)

Oka-san! Haha-we (mother)!

Ani-chan!

The little girl raced up to the village screaming for her mother the entire way until she had reached the small row of wood and paper houses where the Tamura Family lived. Nearly out of breath, Takako-chan burst through the sliding paper door startling her mother.

TAKAKO TAMURA (CONT'D)
Haha-we! Big brother Ryuichi has
come home!

Mrs. Tamura instantly dropped the wooden tray in her hands in disbelief at the sudden news she thought she would never hear.

MRS. TAMURA
Ryuichi-kun?
My son is home?

TAKAKO TAMURA
Hai! He is with Onchi-kun and two
other missing boys on a big white
ship that just sailed into Mihama!

Mrs. Tamura stood there in shock and utter disbelief as tears streamed down her eyes. Her long-lost son was finally home. She could not believe her ears as she heard shouts from outside her home all about the village that her neighbor's son Iwakichi-Kun had also returned home. Then another shout could be heard from across the way that the youngest of the missing boys Yukichi-kun had too returned to Mihama.

Mrs. Tamura grabbed her little girl and raced down the hill together along with her three neighbors who were mothers of the other missing boys. They raced down to the small port landing with tears streaming as fast as their legs could carry them all calling their sons names.

Suddenly the boys could be seen standing at the bow of the ship shouting.

BOYS
Oka-san!

The Ishimaru had sailed in as close to the landing as possible before dropping anchor to allow the boys to disembark. Crowds began to form along the water's edge and the small landing as the frantic mothers who had long feared their son's deaths had found a reason for rejoicing in such a long-awaited miracle.

RYUICHI
Tadaima (I am home)!

Ryuichi disregarded the wooden launch that was being lowered into the water and jumped into the cold water to swim to shore just as his mother and younger sister rushed into the water to reunite with him.

Yukichi's mother was seen with tears of joy as she could see her long lost son excitedly climb down into the wooden launch with Onchi and Iwakichi happily in tow.

As Ryuichi emerged from the water, he embraced his mother and little sister in a tearfully joyous reunion while the wooden launch ferried the remaining boys to the small wooden landing. All about the water's edge people cheered with joy while back aboard the Ishimaru the crew looked on with relief.

CUT TO:

SCENE 42

EXT: ISHIMARU DECK - DAY

First Mate Shichiro could be seen standing next to Capt. Murakami expressing a sigh of relief.

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
Sencho, I don't understand.
Why are there no Bakufu Samurai to
inspect us?

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
Does it really matter now?

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
I suppose it does not.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
We did right by going back didn't
we?

FIRST MATE SHICHIRO
Hai! Now we've earned our right to
go home.

CAPTAIN MURAKAMI
As soon as the launch returns,
weigh anchor and set course for
Nagasaki. We're going home.

ISHIMARU CREW
HAI!

CONT:

NARRATION

Just as mysteriously as she first appeared, the Ishimaru quietly weighed anchor. A ghost ship no more, the Ishimaru set her sails and slipped back into the mists and sailed on to legend.

The End.