

**ESPER**

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FADE IN:

INT. TITAN BASE - NIGHT

A cold, empty hallway. Sterile gray walls. A door that belongs on a submarine--or a space station.

TITLE: TITAN BASE, 2722 A.D.

We're in an underground facility on Saturn's largest moon, and all is not right. Distantly, GUNFIRE. Automatics. Maybe a grenade. Panicked voices, coming closer.

LETTY  
(muffled)  
Fall back! ...This position has  
been compromised--fall back!

The door BURSTS open, and men and women in red EARTH UNION uniforms pile through it--half a dozen, no more. They're armed, bloodied, and on the ragged edge of terror.

LETTY  
Move, move!

LETTY (40s) muscles the door shut behind them, aided by a GUY WITH A CAMERA. They spin the lock, then double-time it down the hall.

CAMERA GUY  
(panting)  
Bell, you're up next.

BELLEN ZHANG (30s), takes the camera and talks into it as she jogs. Camera Guy helps hold it steady.

Camera POV: BROADCASTING.

ZHANG  
Tom ... I hope you made it to  
Procyon. Wish I could have gone  
with you, but....  
(pulls herself together)  
...Don't blame yourself, all  
right? This was my decision.  
Anyway, I love you.

LETTY  
I think we've lost them again.

The soldiers round a corner and hunker down. Two people point their guns back the way they came.

CAMERA GUY

All right, who does that leave?  
Singh?

(does a double-take)

Where's Singh?

ZHANG

It's just Letty left. Everyone  
else has gone.

Letty swallows. Takes the camera.

LETTY

...Vonnie? I know I promised I'd  
come home next month, but mommy's  
going to have to stay at work a  
little longer, ok? You be good for  
your--

A GUNSHOT interrupts Letty; she falls with a bullet in her  
chest. The shooter is ... Camera Guy?? He stands there,  
sidearm raised, eyes glazed over.

ZHANG

What the hell--

Camera Guy swings his weapon toward Zhang, who ducks for  
cover.

ZHANG (CONT'D)

It's the Espers!

A bullet grazes Zhang's leg. She screams, drags herself  
around the corner. The other soldiers shoot it out.

The gunfire ceases; Zhang peeks back around the corner.  
It's a grizzly sight, no man left alive. They've murdered  
each other.

While Zhang crouches there, breathless and gaping, a BALD  
WOMAN steps out of the shadows behind her. This is SASHA  
(40s). She is unarmed, dressed in pristine white.

Zhang gropes at Letty's wrist, searching for a pulse, then  
realizes she's being watched. In one smooth motion she  
whips her gun around, aims at Sasha....

...But she can't fire. Incredulous, struggling to speak,  
Zhang turns the gun back on herself. Stares down the  
barrel, eyes wide with terror. Sasha smiles.

A gunshot; Zhang falls like a puppet with her strings cut.

Sasha peers dispassionately into the camera, which is still broadcasting. She leans down and turns it off.

EXT. OUTER SPACE/SKIES ABOVE PROCYON - 3 DAYS LATER

A one-man courier craft screams past a cloud-covered planet and docks with a long, slender spacecraft--the FAST COURIER CLEOPATRA.

The planet below is unfamiliar, a central sea and three large continents. Tiny shuttles and larger transport craft wheel back and forth between them--one breaks off, zips across the sea, and crosses the sunset line.

INT. SERENDIPITY INC. - PROGRAMMING LAB - NIGHT

A large room, lined with computer stations. Most of these stand abandoned, code filling their translucent screens. In one corner, a dozen PROGRAMMERS in white lab coats crowd around a single desk.

Seated there is MIDA TAVARES (30s), a black Brazilian with intelligent eyes. She sports an eccentric hairstyle, streaked with color that extends to her face. Right now she's doing her best to rein in a mischievous grin.

Tavares types furiously at her console. It's clear from the way the programmers keep looking over their shoulders that she's doing something unsanctioned, maybe illegal.

On her screen, the Procyon Defense Fleet logo spins away to reveal a directory listing.

PROGRAMMER #1

She's in!

PROGRAMMER #2

Told you she could do it.

They allow themselves a quiet cheer, then Tavares sobers.

TAVARES

You know the rest of you could get arrested just for watching me do this, right?

PROGRAMMER #1

...Just open it.

The grin comes back, and Tavares clicks one of the links. A video file opens. The sound is muted, but we recognize Zhang, Letty, and some of their companions--this is the beginning of their broadcast.

Tavares turns the sound up.

LETTY (V.O.)  
 --shuttle bay has already been  
 overrun. All we can do at this  
 point is slow them down.

Excited faces turn sober as the broadcast continues, but no one is more affected by what they see than Tavares. She looks past the screen, reliving some personal horror.

Gunfire on the video coincides with the sound of the lab's door clattering open. Everyone jumps.

The man who has let himself in is CAPTAIN ANDREI KRUSHCHEV (40s), wearing the blue and white uniform of the PROCYON DEFENSE FORCES. His features are a blend of many human cultures; his eyes belong to a tired soldier.

KRUSHCHEV  
 Mida Tavares?

Tavares rises, ready to face the music. The others draw back with varying levels of guilt and panic.

Krushchev studies the screen, then switches it off.

KRUSHCHEV  
 It's better if you don't see that.  
 (to Tavares)  
 Walk with me.

INT. SERENDIPITY INC. - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tavares and Krushchev walk down the hallway, alone.

TAVARES  
 Are you going to arrest me?

KRUSHCHEV  
 I'm not your parole officer.  
 ...I'm here because I need a  
 programmer with experience  
 fighting the Espers.

Tavares stops in her tracks--that was the last place she expected this conversation to go.

KRUSHCHEV  
Your service with the Earth Union  
Defense Fleet--

TAVARES  
Involuntary service.

KRUSHCHEV  
--warrants an immediate promotion  
to the rank of lieutenant.

Krushchev pulls out an official-looking document and tries to give it to her.

TAVARES  
Look, Captain...

KRUSHCHEV  
Krushchev.

TAVARES  
I don't know what you've heard  
about me, but I'm just about the  
worst person you could pick to  
fight Espers with.

KRUSHCHEV  
São Paulo could have happened to  
anyone. You're not responsible.

TAVARES  
That's not how the rest of the  
squadron felt about it.

KRUSHCHEV  
I don't give a rat's backside what  
they think. You're the only person  
on the planet who can do this job.

He tries once more to hand her the papers, but she's having none of it.

TAVARES  
You'd better pick a different  
planet then, because I'm not going  
with you.

KRUSHCHEV  
You can't run from this fight.  
Next Step took Titan Base three  
days ago; they left no one alive.

This hits her like a punch to the stomach.

KRUSHCHEV

Everyone knows we're next--the only question is whether we'll be ready.

Tavares eyes Krushchev's papers, and for one long moment actually considers saying yes. Instead, she draws back.

TAVARES

I'm sorry. I can't do that again.

Krushchev sighs, folds up the papers, and slips them into his jacket. He then pulls out a different set.

KRUSHCHEV

I was hoping I wouldn't need these.

TAVARES

What is this?

KRUSHCHEV

A conscription notice.  
(off her outrage)  
Our transport leaves in five minutes.

EXT. SPACEPORT - DAY

A bustling spaceport, shuttles departing hurriedly.

A shuttle lands beside a ship in an orbital launch cradle and Krushchev steps out. Tavares follows, still in her lab coat and fighting the urge to run.

Krushchev is met at the boarding ramp by PRIVATE SCOTT KAYLEB (20s), an eager young soldier with his hair in tidy cornrows. He carries a metal briefcase.

KAYLEB

(salutes)  
Captain--I was told you'd want these.

Krushchev hefts the case, fingers the latch, but he already knows what's inside.

KRUSHCHEV

How many did they send us?

KAYLEB

Just two. The rest are still a month out.

KRUSHCHEV  
They'll have to do.

Krushchev hands the case back, and Kayleb leads the way up the stairs. He spares a curious glance for Tavares' polychromatic hairdo before disappearing inside.

INT. ORBITAL LAUNCHER - CONTINUOUS

It's like a private plane with everything but the bare essentials stripped out. The only concession to comfort is the deep padding on the seats.

Those seats are empty, but the launcher is not. LIEUTENANT LOREN GIBRALTAR (30s)--a tall, athletic woman in climbing gear--leans into the cockpit, arguing with the PILOT.

GIBRALTAR  
...pulled me off a mountain in the middle of leave, and you can't even bother telling me what's going on?

PILOT  
I'm sorry, I don't have clearance.

GIBRALTAR  
Clearance my left foot. If you don't start explaining yourself--

KRUSHCHEV  
(entering with Tavares)  
What's going on? Where's Tom?

PILOT  
He didn't report for duty this morning, sir. We pulled your second choice--Loren Gibraltar.

Krushchev sizes up Gibraltar with a glance.

GIBRALTAR  
(second choice?)  
But where are we--

KRUSHCHEV  
Better strap in.

Krushchev turns away, and Gibraltar finds herself face to face with Tavares. Both women's eyes widen in surprise.

GIBRALTAR  
What is she doing here?



Tavares ducks past Gibraltar and flees to the very back of the launcher.

GIBRALTAR

This is literally my worst nightmare.

Resigned, she straps in across from Krushchev. Tavares sits beside Kayleb, who offers his hand.

KAYLEB

Private Scott Kayleb.

TAVARES

(shakes his hand)  
Mida Tavares. Uh...

She pulls out the conscription notice and looks it over.

TAVARES (CONT'D)

...Specialist.

KAYLEB

(re: her hair)  
You're from Earth? ...I'm from the Belt. Well, by way of Mars anyway. Espers blew up my colony a few years back.

Tavares offers a look of sympathy and straps in.

EXT. SPACEPORT - CONTINUOUS

The launcher tips backward in its cradle as a countdown begins. On ZERO she lifts off, cruising up through the atmosphere.

Their launcher isn't alone. It's a mass exodus, dozens of craft leaving the surface to rendezvous with larger ships in orbit, the PROCYON DEFENSE FLEET--ragtag, mismatched, and barely two hundred strong.

Our launcher docks briefly with the slender Cleopatra, spinning around each other in a graceful dance. Then the launcher peels off again, and the Cleopatra's engines ignite. She pulls away, leaving the fleet behind.

INT. CLEOPATRA - PASSENGER BERTHS - SPACE

Tavares, Krushchev, Kayleb, and Gibraltar are strapped into a row of acceleration couches--deep, cushioned recliners which lie horizontal to the floor. Two more couches remain vertical--empty for now.

Our passengers lie with strained expressions, enduring five Gs of acceleration.

BRIDGE OFFICER (OVER COMMS)  
Acceleration phase complete.  
Entering jumpspace in three, two--

EXT. CLEOPATRA - SPACE

The Cleopatra's engines dim, then go out. A moment later the ship vanishes in a flash of light.

INT. CLEOPATRA - BRIEFING ROOM - SPACE

A sparsely furnished room, chairs designed to take up as little space as possible placed around a tactical display table. The door is open, and CREWMEN walk briskly past.

Kayleb lounges with his feet on the table, now wearing a dark blue jumpsuit. Tavares wears the same, standing in one corner with an air of apprehension. Her hair has been tamed in style but retains its streaks of color.

Gibraltar strides in, not quite so pissed off now that she's in uniform (like Kayleb's, but with a wide stripe of light blue across the shoulders). She glares at Tavares.

GIBRALTAR  
That hair is against regulations.

TAVARES  
I'm sorry, Lieutenant. I can--

Krushchev enters, also in an officer's jumpsuit.

KRUSHCHEV  
You can leave it exactly the way it is. ...This is an undercover mission.

Gibraltar turns her glare on Kayleb, who hastily removes his feet from the table.

A sharp bootstep draws everyone's attention to the door. MAJOR NORA NAGAVENI (40s-50s) enters, a double stripe of light blue across her shoulders. She is accompanied by an ADJUTANT, who remains beside the door.

Those already standing come to attention, though Kayleb is only halfway out of his chair when--

NAGAVENI

As you were.

KRUSHCHEV

Major.

Nagaveni returns his nod, gestures to the seats. They sit.

NAGAVENI

By now you've all heard rumors about what happened on Titan. Let me begin by confirming the worst of them.

Tavares and Kayleb turn a bit pale. Gibraltar missed the memo--she looks around, confused.

NAGAVENI (CONT'D)

The Earth Union base on Titan was the last military holdout of the Resistance.

Off Gibraltar's 'oh crap' moment--

NAGAVENI (CONT'D)

Next Step now controls the entire Solar system--as well as every major trade route in this sector.

A wave of her hand wakes the table. The holographic display shows a map of conquered star systems, with Earth at the very edge. Procyon and Wolf 359 are the only Earth-adjacent systems not controlled by the enemy.

NAGAVENI

Our intelligence indicates they're preparing for another assault.

KAYLEB

...Eridani will help us, right? Or the Xa?

NAGAVENI

The Xa will take in refugees, but they're reluctant to get involved in what is ultimately a human conflict.

KAYLEB

(under his breath)

Nothing human about those Esper freaks.

GIBRALTAR

And Eridani...?

NAGAVENI

(no easy way to say it)

...has chosen to remain neutral, hoping to negotiate a treaty with Next Step if we fall.

(then)

I don't have to tell you how likely that is. At best, our forces can hold them off a few days while the population evacuates.

TAVARES

We're not evacuating. ...If we were, you wouldn't need me.

NAGAVENI

(nods)

Evacuation is our last resort.

She switches the tactical display to a holographic view of Mars. Cities dot the Mariner Valleys, linked by a sparse network of roads.

NAGAVENI (CONT'D)

Next Step knows we've cracked their data encryption. They're currently developing a brand new communications network at a facility somewhere in Tithonium Chasma. We believe they will not attack before this is complete.

GIBRALTAR

Couldn't they just communicate telepathically? Have an Esper on each ship...?

NAGAVENI

Fortunately for us, very few of Next Step's telepaths are strong enough to link over combat distances. Move their ships more than a few miles apart, and their entire network would crumble.

KAYLEB

Small favors.

NAGAVENI

Your mission is to deliver Specialist Tavares to the facility on Mars, where she will plant a virus inside the new software. If she succeeds, we'll be able spy on them using their own ships.

Tavares grips the edge of her chair, white-knuckled.

TAVARES

How ... how do we get inside the facility?

NAGAVENI

The Mars' Resistance has an operative who will help you gain access. They'll introduce you to him once you reach Mars.

TAVARES

But won't there be Espers guarding it? If they read our minds--

KRUSHCHEV

Everything's been taken care of. They won't even know we're there.

Tavares doesn't appear comforted by his words.

INT. CLEOPATRA - SHUTTLE BAY/INT. SO LONG - SPACE

A spacious bay, designed to house ships much larger than the stubby, triangular vessel now parked at its center--the SO LONG. Krushchev and his team approach the ship.

NAGAVENI (V.O.)

Crewman Rasulov will brief you on the mission equipment. You have twelve hours before we exit Jumpspace and hand you off to the infiltration team.

Krushchev leads the way inside the So Long's open cargo section. A beat-up LING ROVER--like an R.V. with muscle--takes up most of the space. A pair of crew berths on each side of the bay, little more than man-sized shelves with a sliding shutter.

A pair of legs sticks out from under the Rover.

KRUSHCHEV  
Crewman Rasulov?

Mechanic EDGIN DANTE (20s) peers out from under the vehicle. His hair is unkempt, his uniform stained with engine grease.

DANTE  
Who, me? ...No, I think she's in the--

MYINT (V.O.)  
Raquel! Our guests have arrived.

Tavares perks up at the sound of MYINT CORABELLE'S gruff, disembodied voice.

TAVARES  
This ship has an Upload?

MYINT (V.O.)  
Myint Corabelle, at your service.  
Crewed a blockade runner during  
the Fifth Xa War.

GIBRALTAR  
I thought I was flying.

MYINT (V.O.)  
(chuckles)  
I'm a navigator, not a pilot. You  
can take the stick any time you  
like; just don't chip the paint.

The bright-eyed RAQUEL RASULOV (20s) steps out of the ship's COMPUTER CORE and locks the door behind her. She greets Krushchev with a handshake.

RASULOV  
Welcome aboard the So Long.

KAYLEB  
That's Chinese, right? Something  
about dragons.

RASULOV  
 Actually, it's short for So Long,  
 and Thanks--

TAVARES  
 --for All the Fish?

RASULOV  
 --for All the Fish.

Rasulov grins and bumps fists with Tavares.

KRUSHCHEV  
 Major Nagaveni said you had some  
 equipment to show us.

RASULOV  
 Yes, sir. It's all in these--

A stack of boxes topples as Dante leans against it.

RASULOV  
Dante! What are you doing in here?

DANTE  
 (scrambling to fix it)  
 Just trying to help.

RASULOV  
 You can help by never touching any  
 of my equipment again. Out!

Dante grabs his toolbox and leaves. Rasulov motions to a locker beside the crew berths. Opens it. Pulls out a wide silver headband, which she shows to Krushchev while the others start exploring.

INT. LING ROVER - CONTINUOUS

Kayleb checks out the Rover. Through a simple airlock are more bunks, a table with two benches, and a kitchenette.

RASULOV (V.O.)  
 These are the anti-Esper bands.  
 They'll prevent anyone from  
 reading your mind, but I don't  
 recommend wearing them for more  
 than twelve hours at a time.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SPACE

Krushchev studies the silver headband.

KRUSHCHEV

Why is that?

RASULOV

They're Xa technology. They work on humans, but they've been known to cause hallucinations after extended use.

Rasulov puts the headband back, then gently lifts out another box, containing five grenade-sized capsules.

RASULOV

These are Evidence Eliminators-- 'E.E.s' for short. There are enough consumer nanites in each one to turn a human body to dust.

INT. SO LONG - CREW MESS - SPACE

Gibraltar and Tavares enter the crew mess/conference area. Six seats, three on either side of the table, each with safety harnesses. There's an open doorway at the far end.

KRUSHCHEV (V.O.)

These supposed to be for the enemy, or for us?

The women realize they're alone together, and their backs stiffen. Tavares retreats. Gibraltar continues on to...

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

The cockpit is tight, with seats for a pilot and copilot. Gibraltar sits and checks out the controls.

RASULOV (V.O.)

Either. They'll eat anything organic or synthetic, so it's a quick suicide option if one of us gets caught.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SPACE

Krushchev gingerly places the E.E.s back in their locker.

KRUSHCHEV

Hopefully we won't need them.  
...What else have you got?



EXT. CLEOPATRA - JUMPSPACE - ESTABLISHING

Stars drift past the Cleopatra at moderate speed.

INT. CLEOPATRA - CREW MESS - LATER

The cafeteria-like room is fairly empty, only a double handful of people seated at the long tables. Gibraltar trades rumors with 2 NON-COMS in the officers' booth. Kayleb and Rasulov are getting to know each other better.

Tavares enters the mess and heads for the lunch line. She keeps her head down, but Gibraltar spots her anyway.

Gibraltar whispers something to her companions, who stand and head for Tavares. One of them gets in line behind her; the other waits at the end.

When Tavares comes through with her tray, the pair jostle her, causing her tray to spill onto the floor.

TAVARES

Hey!

NON-COM 1

Something wrong, Specialist?

Tavares grits her teeth. Reaches down, but one of the Non-Coms kicks her tray across the deck. Rasulov and Kayleb turn to see what's going on.

Tavares recovers her tray, dumps it in the dish return, and stalks out of the mess hall.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SOON

Tavares sits against a wall, head resting on her knees. A clatter announces Rasulov, entering with a fresh tray of food. She hands it to a surprised Tavares and sits down.

Kayleb has come with her; he hangs out beside the Rover.

TAVARES

Thanks.

RASULOV

You want to talk about it?

TAVARES

(swallows a bite)

Not really.

KAYLEB

She was telling people that the Earth Resistance pulled you out of a cell and made you fight the Espers. She said the only reason you're on our side is because they promised you a pardon.

Tavares loses her appetite.

KAYLEB

...Is it true?

RASULOV

You don't have to tell us.

TAVARES

No, it's better if I do. That way you'll know I'm not....

(takes a deep breath)

I hacked into the Virtuality.

RASULOV

You what? How?

TAVARES

...It's complicated.

KAYLEB

Wait, you're the one who Uploaded a bunch of people into the São Paulo Shore. I heard about it on the news!

TAVARES

I only Uploaded one. My father.

RASULOV

Ohh. I'm so sorry.

TAVARES

It's all right. He'd been sick for years, ever since we took low passage from Weg.

KAYLEB

I hear ya. I traveled by cryopod once--coughed my lungs out for a week afterward.

RASULOV

I don't understand. I thought everyone on Earth had the right to Upload when they died?

TAVARES  
Not the Underclass.

Rasulov is still lost, so Kayleb explains.

KAYLEB  
Earth doesn't acknowledge humans born in the outer colonies. Says there's too much alien influence in them.

RASULOV  
Well, that's stupid. What about all these new technologies coming out of Gateway and Xa-Maxin? Do they ignore those, too?

TAVARES  
No, it's a selective prejudice.

KAYLEB  
It was, anyway. The Espers changed things when they took over--lot of Underclass fought on their side.

RASULOV  
...But not you?

TAVARES  
I couldn't. They wanted to disconnect the Virtuality.

KAYLEB  
(realizing)  
And your father was in there.

TAVARES  
It wasn't just him. Some of the Uploads didn't like the way we were being treated, and started teaching us things. Programming, astrogation--all the stuff normally done by the Virtuality.  
(then)  
It's almost like they knew what was coming.

INT. CLEOPATRA - KRUSHCHEV'S QUARTERS - SPACE

Krushchev sits at a tiny desk, staring at a photograph.

ON THE PHOTO: A dozen people in red EARTH UNION dress uniforms--including Krushchev and the soldiers who died on Titan. Front and center are TOM ZHANG (22) and his new bride--the recently deceased Bellen Zhang.

The chirp of a doorbell interrupts Krushchev's brooding. He sits up straight as Major Nagaveni enters.

Krushchev puts the photo away, but Nagaveni isn't fooled.

NAGAVENI

It wasn't your fault.

KRUSHCHEV

I know that, in here--  
                   (taps his forehead)  
 --but it still feels like I  
 abandoned them. And Tom--

NAGAVENI

Still not your fault.

She leans down, hands on the desk.

NAGAVENI (CONT'D)

You didn't abandon them, Andrei.  
 You made their deaths mean  
 something.

It doesn't make things better, but it's an angle he can attack his grief from. He nods.

NAGAVENI

We're scheduled for decel in less  
 than ten minutes. If you have any  
 last-minute business on this ship,  
 you'd better take care of it.

She exits. Krushchev stands, hefts his bag. Looks at the photograph, then crumples it up and leaves it behind.

INT. LING ROVER - SPACE

Tavares sits inside the rover, studying a tablet.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SAME TIME

Kayleb and Rasulov stand beside the equipment locker, flirting. Gibraltar comes in with her bags and inspects the bunks opposite. She's not impressed.

RASULOV  
 (to Kayleb)  
 You'll have to put one on  
 eventually. Might as well try it.

Kayleb accepts the silver anti-Esper band from Rasulov.  
 When he puts it on, the band shrinks to fit him, becoming  
 invisible except for where his fingers touch it.

KAYLEB  
Ugh! It's like ... like it's  
 crawling around inside my head!

RASULOV  
 (grinning)  
 It gets better after a few  
 minutes.

MYINT (V.O.)  
 Didn't you tell Krushchev those  
 caused hallucinations?

That's enough for Kayleb. He removes the band with some  
 effort; it resumes its former appearance.

INT. LING ROVER - SPACE

Tavares looks up as Gibraltar enters.

GIBRALTAR  
 What are you doing in here?

TAVARES  
 I'm working on the--

GIBRALTAR  
 This is my bunk. Scram.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SPACE

Tavares exits in a hurry--her bag follows a second later.

KAYLEB  
 (muttered)  
 Who spat in her latte?

Tavares collects her bag and peers at the other bunks, but  
 the ones on this side are both taken.

BRIDGE OFFICER (V.O.)  
 All hands to decel stations.

RASULOV  
Here--we'll sort them out later.

She takes Tavares' bag and stows it beside her own.

INT. PASSENGER BERTHS - SOON

When the team arrives, one of the acceleration couches is already occupied--by the dirty mechanic Rasulov chased off the So Long.

RASULOV  
Dante, what are you doing?

DANTE  
I wanted to see you off.

RASULOV  
If Nagaveni catches you in the passenger berths...

BRIDGE OFFICER (V.O.)  
Three minutes to jumpspace drop.

KRUSHCHEV  
Let him stay. Better a court-martial than a cracked skull.

Dante suddenly regrets his life choices.

EXT. SPACE

The Cleopatra emerges from jumpspace. Braking engines flare as she heads toward a dim red star.

INT. CLEOPATRA - PASSENGER BERTHS - LATER

The team's faces are strained, enduring G-forces again.

BRIDGE OFFICER (V.O.)  
Three minutes to normal acceleration.

Relief on their faces. But only a few seconds later, the pressure lets up completely. They look around in surprise.

BRIDGE OFFICER (V.O.)  
All hands to emergency stations!  
Repeat: All hands to emergency stations!

INT. CLEOPATRA - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tavares et al. emerge into a bustling corridor, where Nagaveni and her adjutant distribute rifles to the crew.

KRUSHCHEV

What's going on? Why didn't we finish decelerating?

NAGAVENI

The station is under attack. Get to the So Long and launch--you might still make it through.

She hands everyone a weapon, but Rasulov confiscates Dante's and gives it to someone else.

EXT. WOLF 359 ASTEROID BELT - MINING STATION - SPACE

The space station is made of large round sections linked by narrower tubes. Small fighters dart about, shooting any mining ship that dares to fight back. A bulky cruiser--the DEUTERONOMY--holds position nearby, using its lasers to destroy those ships which try to run.

The lance-like Cleopatra zips past, moving too quickly for the Deuteronomy to hit with its beam. The cruiser pursues, straining to match the smaller ship's acceleration.

It doesn't take long for the Deuteronomy to catch up. When it does, several tiny boarding craft separate and jet forward, latching onto the Cleopatra.

INT. CLEOPATRA - HALLWAY - SPACE

A loud BOOM and a distant HISS; the team stumbles.

KRUSHCHEV

We're being boarded!

NAGAVENI (V.O.)

All hands abandon ship! Repeat, all hands--

Another BOOM, closer, knocks our heroes from their feet. A ringing fills their ears; they can hear only dimly.

An indistinct figure stands in the smoke ahead. TALL, with a SHAVED HEAD.

Krushchev shouts inaudibly: AN ESPER!

Tavares freezes up. Dante turns and runs away--Krushchev goes after him. The rest open fire on the Tall Esper.

Movement and smoke fill their path. They cease firing as sound finally fades back in.

KAYLEB

Did we get him?

Rasulov turns slowly, trembling, eyes wide, until her weapon is pointed at Kayleb.

RASULOV

(whispered)

Shoot me!

Kayleb hesitates--almost too long. Gibraltar drags him out of the way as Rasulov scorches the wall with her shot.

Tavares is still frozen in place, heart pounding in her ears, as Rasulov's weapon trains itself on her.

RASULOV

Somebody shoot me!

Kayleb can't do it--but Gibraltar can. Rasulov goes down with a hole burned through her chest.

Kayleb shouts wordlessly. He runs to her, but Gibraltar gets there first, picks up Rasulov's gun. She sets it to overload and throws it down the hall.

An EXPLOSION. Sounds of COMBAT elsewhere, but all is quiet up ahead.

Krushchev returns with Dante as Kayleb cradles Rasulov's lifeless body.

KAYLEB

Raquel!

Gibraltar makes sure the Tall Esper is dead--by shooting him again.

KRUSHCHEV

(to Kayleb)

Leave her--get to the So Long!

Tavares finally snaps out of it, wide-eyed, and grabs Kayleb's arm. Agonized, he snaps off one of Rasulov's dog tags and follows Tavares.



SERIES OF SHOTS

--All along the Cleopatra, escape pods launch.

--Our grieving heroes strap in. Dante looks shell-shocked.

--The So Long launches as the Deuteronomy starts shooting escape pods.

--Gibraltar dodges for all she's worth.

INT. CLEOPATRA - BRIDGE - SPACE

Nagaveni and her BRIDGE OFFICERS stand at their stations, tense. They look like they've been through hell.

NAGAVENI

Now!

SERIES OF SHOTS

--The Cleopatra expends the last of her braking thrust, skewering the larger Deuteronomy, which explodes.

--Krushchev and Gibraltar react to the suicide move.

EXT. WOLF 359 ASTEROID BELT - MINING STATION - SPACE

Battered mining ships take out the stranded fighters. The So Long joins them, zipping in and out around the station. Her guns aren't much, but soon the battle is over.

The So Long docks.

INT. WOLF 359 MINING STATION - LARGE ROOM - SPACE

The remnants of the Cleopatra's crew sit, wrapped in blankets. Many are wounded. Tavares huddles in a corner, head in hands, trying to stop shaking.

A disheveled MINER approaches Krushchev and Gibraltar.

MINER

That's all of them, Captain.

Krushchev eyes the dispirited group, aghast.

MINER (CONT'D)

We owe our lives to the  
Cleopatra's crew. I'm sorry we  
couldn't save the rest.

GIBRALTAR

What about the infiltration team?  
Does anyone know who was supposed  
to ferry us to the Sol system?

The Miner shakes his head.

KRUSHCHEV

It doesn't matter now. Any ship  
arriving from this system will be  
suspect. ...This mission is over.

INT. WOLF 359 MINING STATION - LARGE ROOM - LATER

A miner hands a bowl of soup to a recovering Tavares.  
Krushchev and the rest of the team assemble beside her.

KRUSHCHEV

So here's the new plan. We strip  
out the So Long, pack in as many  
people as the oh-two scrubbers can  
handle. The miners have salvaged a  
jump engine that should get us to  
Procyon, but even--

DANTE

Wait--you're going back? What  
about the mission?

KRUSHCHEV

Without Rasulov, we can't get past  
the security systems at the Mars  
facility. None of the mechanics on  
the station are trained with her  
equipment.

DANTE

Well, I am.

(they stare at him)

It's true! Rasulov was just the  
best at it. You could take  
Farnsworth. Or better yet, Magoro.

Dante looks around, but can't find them. It hits him hard.

GIBRALTAR

It's no good. If we jump to Mars from here, the Espers will search the ship from top to bottom. We'd never reach the surface.

TAVARES

What if we slow jump?

The others turn to look at her.

TAVARES (CONT'D)

If we don't have to decelerate on the other side, they might not spot us entering orbit.

GIBRALTAR

(that's ridiculous)

We'd never make it in time.

KRUSHCHEV

(into his comm)

Myint. How long would it take to slow jump from here to the Sol system?

MYINT (OVER COMMS)

To Sol? ...About three weeks.

KRUSHCHEV

Three weeks. According to Nagaveni's intel, we have two.

TAVARES

We have a man on the inside, don't we? Maybe he can delay the project.

KAYLEB

But there's no way to tell him we're going to be late.

TAVARES

There could be any number of production setbacks. Some glitch in the code nobody noticed--it happens all the time.

Krushchev considers. Tavares peers into her soup to avoid Gibraltar's glare.

KRUSHCHEV

We could go in, with no backup, no guarantee that we'll get there in time, and no extraction plan. Or we can get these people home while there's still a home to get to.

It's a worthy cause. There are small nods, murmurs of affirmation. They're all in consensus--except Tavares.

TAVARES

We have to go in.

(off their looks)

Don't you get it? If we go home, that gets us what? Three weeks, maybe four, before we have to evacuate all over again.

Krushchev wavers.

TAVARES (CONT'D)

You said it yourself--there's nowhere left to run. Next Step controls everything from here to the Long Republic!

The thought of reliving the last few hours does seem daunting. The team reconsiders.

KRUSHCHEV

She's right. Better to die trying than give up our one chance to win. However slim it is.

KAYLEB

...I'll go.

(a glare for Gibraltar)

It's what Raquel would have done.

GIBRALTAR

(not to be outdone)

Oh, I am so in.

Krushchev turns to Dante, gives him a long look.

DANTE

All right, I'll do it! I should never have opened my mouth.

INT. MINING STATION HALLWAY - SPACE

The hall is lined with people, some saluting--miners and soldiers giving our heroes a send-off. The last member of the team turns the corner, and we hear the So Long JUMP.

OVER BLACK, the faint sound of gunfire. Then--

EXT. SÃO PAULO VIRTUALITY DATA CENTER - DAY - IN A DREAM

*Tavares and other Underclass crouch behind a barricade, in combat uniforms--they are under fire. Behind them is a large building, its name in Portuguese on the front.*

*Men and women hurry computer storage devices onto a shuttle, where Gibraltar waits to fly them away.*

*The incoming fire ceases. A BURLY ESPER in a white uniform steps forward. He gestures at the line, and Tavares stiffens. Slowly, she turns her rifle on her fellow soldiers and begins shooting them.*

EARTH UNION OFFICER

*Tavares!*

*Tavares turns her gun on the OFFICER and mows him down. She hears their screams, but can't stop shooting.*

*Gibraltar grabs a downed soldier's weapon and fires back. Tavares falls dead, with a gaping hole in her chest.*

INT. SO LONG - TAVARES' BUNK - SPACE

Tavares wakes, gasping for breath. It was only a dream--or was it? Trembling, she clutches her scarred left shoulder.

INT. SO LONG - CREW MESS - SPACE

The team picks at their breakfast. No one has an appetite.

Kayleb chucks his MRE in the recycler and leaves. One by one, the others follow suit. Krushchev. Dante. Gibraltar.

Tavares, last, sits there staring at her trembling hands. Gibraltar glares at her from the doorway, then turns away.

INT. CARGO BAY - SPACE

The crew has changed into civilian clothing--long sleeves, dark colors. Kayleb bounces a ball off the wall. Dante has a cylindrical device hooked up to the one door we haven't seen the other side of.

MYINT (V.O.)

I'd really rather you kids stay out of my computer core.

DANTE

I'm just practicing.

MYINT (V.O.)

Captain...

KRUSHCHEV

(enters from the mess)

Dante! Give the man some privacy.

Dante hastily disengages the device.

KRUSHCHEV (CONT'D)

Where's Tavares?

INT. TAVARES' BUNK - SPACE

Tavares studies her tablet. There's a knock on the shutter; she opens it to find Krushchev on the other side.

KRUSHCHEV

How're you getting on?

TAVARES

Honestly, I'm not even sure I know what all this code does.

KRUSHCHEV

I meant you. You alright?

TAVARES

...I've felt better.

KRUSHCHEV

I need you in top shape by the time we get there, so don't hold it all in. You can talk to Myint if you have to.

MYINT (V.O.)

Why is that my job?

His tone make Tavares smile.

KRUSHCHEV  
(re: the tablet)  
Can you make it work?

TAVARES  
Frankly sir, I'm not sure. It should do the trick, but this is a lot of code--someone might get suspicious if they notice it was all added on the same day.

KRUSHCHEV  
Rasulov said the plan was to break into the server room to alter the backups.

TAVARES  
That could work ... I can write a program to randomize the insertion dates, but I'll need to test it on an active database.

MYINT (V.O.)  
Don't look at me.

TAVARES  
What about the rover? It makes logs of all its sensor data.

KRUSHCHEV  
Just put everything back when you're finished.

TAVARES  
Yes, sir.

She collects what she needs, but Krushchev is still standing in her way.

KRUSHCHEV  
...Thanks for what you did back there.

TAVARES  
Sir?

KRUSHCHEV  
I'm not usually the type to run from a fight. I wasn't thinking straight.

TAVARES

I guess that makes two of us.

(amending)

You were right. If Next Step conquers Procyon, they'll do the same thing they did on Earth.

MYINT (V.O.)

Eradicate the Uploads.

Tavares nods in Myint's general direction.

TAVARES

You're the one thing the Espers can't control. I think that scares them as much as they frighten us.

INT. LING ROVER - SPACE

Gibraltar lies on the upper bunk, peering at a crystal pendant.

EXT. VIRTUALITY - PARIS SHORE - DAY - FLASHBACK

An improbable landscape meets the eye. Beneath twilit skies, buildings appear and disappear as needed. The only static feature is a virtual replica of the Eiffel Tower.

TITLE: VIRTUALITY, PARIS SHORE

YOUNG LOREN (12) and her MOTHER (34), dressed in neutral gray, walk across a lush green park with LOREN'S FATHER (30), whose attire changes to match his mood.

LOREN'S FATHER

So, your birthday's coming up pretty quick. Any idea what you want?

YOUNG LOREN

I'm bored--

INT. VIRTUALITY VISITOR'S CENTER - DAY

Young Loren is seated at a pristine white booth, dressed in everyday clothing with a virtual reality visor around her face. Her mother, same, has an arm around her.

YOUNG LOREN (CONT'D)

--of presents. How about a vacation?



EXT. VIRTUALITY - PARIS SHORE - DAY

The trio is seated at a table that wasn't there before.

LOREN'S FATHER  
A vacation? Where would you go?

YOUNG LOREN  
I've never been offworld before.  
How about Mars? ...Or Procyon!

Loren's mother cuts in before things get out of hand.

LOREN'S MOTHER  
We'll think about a trip to Mars--  
if you keep your grades up.

LOREN'S FATHER  
A Martian vacation does sound  
nice.

He SNAPS his fingers, and the park becomes a Martian  
landscape with a nice view.

LOREN'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
But since I can't go with you, how  
about I get you something anyway?

Crystal ornaments appear above the table, rotating slowly.

LOREN'S FATHER  
Which do you like best?

She chooses, and the others disappear. The table is gone  
again, the park restored.

LOREN'S FATHER  
(with a wink)  
I'll send it a bit early, just in  
case you're out of town.

Loren's face falls. Her parents bend down in concern.

LOREN'S MOTHER  
What's wrong?

YOUNG LOREN  
Why can't we just Upload now?

Loren's father hugs her. Mom tearing up.

LOREN'S FATHER

Oh, Loren. You have a whole life to live. I promise I'll show you everything when you're done, but until then you keep smiling, ok?

YOUNG LOREN

(crying)

Ok.

LOREN'S FATHER

I miss you so much.

END FLASHBACK

INT. LING ROVER - SPACE

Gibraltar twines the pendant's chain around her fingers. The rover's door opens; Dante and Tavares come in.

DANTE

...should be right here beside the steering assembly. It'll only take a minute to patch you in.

Tavares looks at Gibraltar, who jerks the curtain shut.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SPACE

Krushchev sets a bag beside Kayleb.

KRUSHCHEV

I want you to go through Rasulov's things, see if there's anything we can use.

Kayleb's jaw clenches, but there's nothing to be said.

INT. LING ROVER - SPACE

Tavares sits up front, her tablet connected by wires to the rover's computer. She's focused on her work, and doesn't notice Gibraltar approaching.

GIBRALTAR

You must think you're so special.

Tavares jumps, nearly dropping her tablet.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SPACE

Kayleb places Rasulov's things into a locker. Clothing, toothbrush, a copy of The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide--a hefty tome, black, with a leaping DOLPHIN on the cover.

Dante peers inside the equipment locker. Offers a silver headband to Kayleb, who declines. Dante looks around for Krushchev, doesn't see him. He lifts out an E.E. capsule.

KRUSHCHEV (O.S.)

You so much as crack that open and  
you can sleep on the floor until  
you find them all!

Busted. Instead, Dante pulls out two tennis-ball sized surveillance drones.

INT. LING ROVER - SPACE

Tavares eyes the door, but Gibraltar has her cornered.

GIBRALTAR

How does it feel, knowing you're  
only useful to Krushchev because  
you didn't do your job in São  
Paulo?

TAVARES

This wasn't my idea, all right? I  
don't want to be here any more  
than you do.

GIBRALTAR

Oh you don't, do you? Why that big  
speech back at the mining station  
then? If you hadn't opened your  
trap, we'd be sleeping in our own  
beds by now.

TAVARES

...You volunteered to complete the  
mission!

GIBRALTAR

Like I'm going to let myself get  
one-upped by some Underclass  
nobody who's only pretending to be  
on our side.

Tavares balls her fist.

TAVARES

I dare you to say that again.

GIBRALTAR

I'll go one better. I know why you didn't shoot that Esper when you had him in your sights, and it has nothing to do with mind control.

TAVARES

If you think I'm going to put up with your ridiculous accusations--

MYINT (V.O.)

Lieutenant Gibraltar--the captain would like to see you up front.

This time they both jump. Was Myint listening?

GIBRALTAR

...I'll be right there.

With a wary look at Tavares, Gibraltar exits.

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - SPACE

Krushchev is in the copilot's chair when Gibraltar enters.

KRUSHCHEV

Sit down.

She sits, bracing for the worst.

Krushchev switches the main screen from a view of the stars to an image of Mars--in all her glory. A dozen cities are labeled, including one on the west end of the Mariner Valleys marked NIGHT CITY.

KRUSHCHEV

I want you and Myint to work out our approach vector.

(studies her face)

Something wrong?

GIBRALTAR

No, sir. I just ... have a lot on my mind today.

KRUSHCHEV

Well I need you to stay focused.  
The Mars' Resistance has suborned  
one of the tracking satellites,  
but we'll only have fifteen  
minutes of unobserved descent.  
You'll have to make every second  
count.

He stands to leave.

GIBRALTAR

Captain....

Krushchev turns back. Gibraltar almost asks what Myint said  
about her and Tavares, but thinks better of it.

GIBRALTAR (CONT'D)

...You said I was your second  
choice. Who was your first?

KRUSHCHEV

...Tom Zhang. Good man, good  
pilot. Got me past the Esper  
blockade, but his wife took  
another ship to Titan, as a decoy.

(beat)

He shot himself when he found out  
we were too late to save her.

Gibraltar wishes she hadn't asked.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - SPACE

Dante holds a tablet, controlling the surveillance drones  
remotely. One hovers right into Kayleb, who is busy  
reading, as Krushchev enters.

KAYLEB

Hey!

KRUSHCHEV

Those aren't toys.

DANTE

How am I supposed to do my job if  
I can't get any practice?

Krushchev relents. Kayleb slams the locker and takes  
Rasulov's book with him.

Krushchev dodges a drone. Off his warning look--

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - SPACE

Gibraltar draws her fingers across the screen, playing with possible trajectories. She looks up.

GIBRALTAR  
...You didn't tell him.

MYINT (V.O.)  
About what? Your little spat with Tavares?  
(then)  
Krushchev has enough on his plate without wondering whether you're going to rough up his payload in a fit of jealousy.

GIBRALTAR  
(she's insulted)  
Why would I be jealous of Tavares?

MYINT (V.O.)  
Do you think I'm stupid?

If Gibraltar does, she knows better than to admit it.

MYINT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I know the names of every single Upload who made it off Earth before the purge. I also know your parents weren't on the list.

GIBRALTAR  
Did you know them?

MYINT (V.O.)  
Not personally. But I consider them some of the lucky ones.

Gibraltar takes this like a slap to the face.

GIBRALTAR  
Lucky?

MYINT (V.O.)  
You kids are so arrogant, thinking you did us a favor in São Paulo.  
(then)  
Do you know what it's like to be part of a world-spanning intelligence, and then to be ripped out and stuffed into a box?

She does not.

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

Ninety percent of the Uploads you rescued are in storage, blissfully unaware of the fact that they still exist. Those that do wake up are going to be very, very angry.

GIBRALTAR

...At the Espers, I hope?

MYINT (V.O.)

Don't worry, kid--I'll get you to where you're going. But if you screw this mission up over some petty grievance, don't expect me to go easy on you.

INT. CREW MESS - SPACE

Once again the team sits with their meals, not speaking.

Dante plays with his drones, letting them zip around the room. He loses control, and a drone knocks Gibraltar's full glass of water into her lap.

GIBRALTAR

You idiot!

MYINT (V.O.)

Clean it up! Don't just let it run everywhere!

Tavares grabs a rag;  
Gibraltar snatches it  
from her. DANTE  
I'm sorry! I've never  
been so sorry in my life!

GIBRALTAR

Give me that! You're so  
useless!

KAYLEB

(to Gibraltar)  
I haven't seen you so  
much as lift a finger  
since you shot Raquel.

TAVARES

Useless? You couldn't  
program your way out of a  
sack, Ms. High-and-Mighty  
'Ace Pilot'!

DANTE

Please, don't fight. It's  
just a stupid glass of--

GIBRALTAR

(to Kayleb)  
Would you rather I let  
her shoot you?

KRUSHCHEV

QUIET!

(they look at him)

What is wrong with you people? We have three more weeks aboard this boat, and you can't even keep it together for one day?

Some of their faces are more repentant than others.

KRUSHCHEV (CONT'D)

I don't care if you like each other. I don't even care if you like me. All of you agreed to come aboard for one reason--to stop the Espers. If you can't figure out who the real enemy is, we might as well just turn around and go home.

The last of them drop their gazes.

KRUSHCHEV (CONT'D)

I'm not your mother, and I'm not your therapist. I'm your commanding officer, and I'm ordering you to get over it. Is that clear?

A chorus of 'Yes, sir's. Krushchev sits back down.

MONTAGE - TIME PASSING

--Kayleb turns a page of Rasulov's book.

--Krushchev and Dante play chess on a folding board. Dante is losing--badly.

--Gibraltar sits in the cockpit, making origami airplanes out of the foil from their ration wrappers.

--Tavares sits cross-legged beside the rover; wires run from it to the tablet on her lap.

--Dante tries to tempt Kayleb with something on his tablet, who turns away in disgust. Oh well--your loss.

The view shows Gibraltar about to change her shirt--then it turns to static. Dante tries to fix it, but can't.

Tavares has an unamused look on her face. Her tablet, still connected to the rover, reads SCRAMBLE MODE.



Gibraltar emerges from the rover, a camera drone in her fist. She flings it at Dante, then glares at Tavares-- because of course it's her fault.

END MONTAGE

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - SPACE

Dante snoozes in the copilot's chair, Rasulov's book on the dashboard in front of him. An ALARM CHIMES.

DANTE

Wha...? I didn't do it!

MYINT (V.O.)

That's the approach alert. Five minutes to Mars.

INT. SO LONG - CREW MESS - SPACE

Tavares straps in, then puts on her anti-Esper headband with a grimace. Kayleb and Dante follow suit.

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - SPACE

Krushchev and Gibraltar strap in, then watch the viewscreen as the So Long DROPS out of Jumpspace.

EXT. MARS ORBIT - SPACE

A ring of ships of all sizes hold position around the red planet. Tens of thousands. This is the full might of the Esper fleet, a force which will crack Procyon's defenses like a hammer if our heroes fail.

INT./EXT. SO LONG - COCKPIT/CREW MESS - SPACE

Gibraltar and Krushchev stare out in shock.

GIBRALTAR

I've never seen so many ships in my entire life. If even one of them sees us...

KRUSHCHEV

They won't. The miners made sure of that.

Backing out through the screen, we see the So Long for the first time since Wolf 359. She is camouflaged, slices of actual asteroid strapped to her hull.

The So Long floats in dead silence through the ring of ships. Tavares holds her breath, keenly aware of the Espers stationed on each and every vessel. They pass through the first ring--not a peep from the enemy ships.

The headbands and the disguise are working. However--

EXT. MARS ORBIT - SPACE

A tiny asteroid spins against the black; just a bit of space debris. It drifts too close to one of the cruisers--and explodes in an orange burst of laser fire.

Periodic flashes reveal bits of space debris being fired upon by other ships. Everything that comes close gets vaporized.

EXT./INT. SO LONG - SPACE

Gibraltar wakes the navigational display; they're headed straight for the sweep zone of a large cruiser.

KRUSHCHEV

Can you evade?

GIBRALTAR

Not without firing thrusters and giving us away. Unless....

(beat)

We could detach the jump drive, and fire a burst right when they shoot it. But then we'd be stuck--

KRUSHCHEV

Do it!

A large section of the ship detaches from the So Long and floats parallel to it.

The gap closes--they're almost to the danger zone. Tavares' lips move in a silent prayer.

DANTE

I'm gonna die. We're all gonna die!

Gibraltar hits the starboard thrusters just as the jump drive is vaporized.

The So Long shakes. A second, glancing shot ablates more of the artificial shell, and then she's clear.

INT. EARTH UNION CRUISER - MARS ORBIT - SPACE

A large, windowed alcove. In it sits our Esper friend Sasha--drinking coffee and reading a tablet.

Through the window, a flash of the So Long's naked hull.

Sasha turns to see what the fireworks are about, but by then the So Long has spun about, camouflaged once more.

EXT. SO LONG/INT. CREW MESS - SPACE

Still spinning, the So Long moves past the danger zone.

GIBRALTAR (V.O.)

We're clear.

Sighs of relief. Dante pulls off his headband--Tavares stops him, but the band leaves his head for a moment.

TAVARES

Not yet!

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - SPACE

Mars looms large on the viewscreen. A thin atmosphere, swaths of green in the Mariner Valleys. A dust storm on the plain.

Krushchev considers Gibraltar with newfound respect.

KRUSHCHEV

Nicely done.

MYINT (V.O.)

Don't congratulate yourselves yet. We're off course, and our satellite window doesn't open for another ten minutes.

GIBRALTAR

I can't fix it with all those ships watching. We're going down!

MYINT (V.O.)

If they see us braking, they'll fry us from orbit!

KRUSHCHEV

Could this dust storm cover our  
braking thrust?

GIBRALTAR

(grinning)

That's exactly what I had in mind.

MYINT (V.O.)

It's only a couple kilometers  
thick. I don't like cutting it  
that close.

GIBRALTAR

(into the intercom)

Prepare for rapid deceleration.

MYINT (V.O.)

Can we talk about this?

GIBRALTAR

Too late!

A faint glow surrounds the So Long as she touches  
atmosphere. Their disguise spins away piece by piece.

The crew is jostled, clinging to their straps.

The dust cloud comes up fast; asteroid fragments burning up  
to either side. Gibraltar grins like a madwoman.

MYINT (V.O.)

Brakes! Hit the brakes!

Just above the top level of cloud, Gibraltar fires braking  
thrusters. Descending blind--our entire world is THUNDER of  
engines and gray, swirling darkness.

INT. SO LONG/EXT. MARS SURFACE - LANDING SITE - DAY

The haze clears slowly, revealing the So Long in the center  
of a blackened stretch of level ground.

Gibraltar breathless. She's just had the ride of her life.

MYINT (V.O.)

I should have known you'd be some  
kind of adrenaline junkie.

KRUSHCHEV

Did they see us?

MYINT (V.O.)

...There's no mention of us on any of their comm channels.

KRUSHCHEV

If you can still read their transmissions, they must not have finished the new system yet. Tavares was right.

GIBRALTAR

(of course she was)

How long until the storm passes?

MYINT (V.O.)

You could roll out now, but the GPS satellites aren't responding. Better wait until the sun's out so I can figure out where we are.

INT. EARTH UNION CRUISER - MARS ORBIT - SPACE

Sasha stands at her alcove window, frowning at an odd ripple in the clouds below. She touches a comm panel.

SASHA

This is Sasha. I want my shuttle ready to launch by the time that storm clears.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY/INT. LING ROVER - DAY

They load up the rover. Weapons go into a SECRET COMPARTMENT, along with Kayleb's metal briefcase.

DANTE

...but aren't Uploads faster at programming than humans are? Why not have Myint do it?

(to Tavares)

No offense.

MYINT (V.O.)

Oh sure, I'll just fly up to the building and plug myself in. That won't be at all obvious.

TAVARES

A single Upload wouldn't be any faster than I am. The Virtuality was a hive consciousness--billions of Uploads, linked mind to mind.

(then)

Anyway, you can't Upload someone into just any computer. The system has to be formatted properly.

Krushchev enters, snapping up the shoulder of a snazzy civilian jacket.

KRUSHCHEV

Take off your dog tags. Anything that could reveal who you are, leave it behind. You can pick it up after the mission.

DANTE

(muttered)

Assuming we survive.

Tavares sets her tags inside her bunk. Kayleb follows suit, but hangs onto the one he took from Rasulov's body.

Dante pulls a small box from the equipment locker.

DANTE

Here--these ear comms will let us talk to Myint when we're outside the.... There's one missing! Has anyone seen--

Krushchev almost manages not to smirk as he walks away.

DANTE

He's been spying on me this whole time, hasn't he.

MYINT (V.O.)

Genius, you are.

Gibraltar follows Krushchev over to his bunk.

GIBRALTAR

Captain, I should stay with Myint. You don't need a pilot now that--

KRUSHCHEV

I need a second in command who can keep her cool when facing down an Esper. That's you.

GIBRALTAR

I can't lead this team. Kayleb has barely said a word to me since the Cleopatra, and you know I can't work with Tavares.

KRUSHCHEV

This is not up for debate, Lieutenant. Put your gear on or I'll do it for you.

EXT. MARS SURFACE/INT. LING ROVER - DAY

They roll out through a foot-deep layer of dust.

MYINT (OVER COMMS)

If you bear three degrees left, you should come up on a track within the hour.

KRUSHCHEV

Roger that, So Long. Stay off the comms if you can; we'll meet you at the rendezvous point once we're finished.

(to the team)

We'll sleep in shifts, Kayleb and myself first.

He and Kayleb retire to the bunks, leaving Gibraltar in charge. She snaps at Tavares.

GIBRALTAR

You, take the wheel. And don't crash into anything.

Tavares climbs up front. Dante takes shotgun; Gibraltar settles herself at the table in back.

DANTE

(to Tavares)

You know this thing can drive itself, right?

Tavares knows.

INT./EXT. LING ROVER - DAY

Dante reaches down and turns on the radio.

RADIO

*Steel to my tremblin' lips/How did  
the night ever get like this?/One  
shot and the whiskey goes down,  
down, down.*

The rover drives across the plain, navigating over hills, around rocks, and through canyons.

RADIO

*I've been standing here my whole  
life/Everything I've seen twice/  
Now it's time I realized/It's  
spinning back around now/On this  
road I'm crawlin'/Save me 'cause  
I'm fallin'/Now I can't seem to  
breathe right/'Cause I keep  
runnin', runnin', runnin'....*

The rover turns onto a beaten track.

KRUSHCHEV (O.S.)

Dante!

Dante hurriedly turns off the radio.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - LANDING SITE - DAY

A small Earth Union shuttle lands beside the scorch marks the So Long left behind.

Sasha exits, accompanied by four gray-clad ENFORCERS--all wearing filter masks and dust cloaks. ADRAN (30s, male), Sasha's head Enforcer, looks around like a nervous hawk.

SASHA

Someone landed here. A small  
craft, possibly jump-capable.

ADRAN

Shall I call it in?

SASHA

No. This could be our chance to  
flush out the Resistance.

(into comm)

Activate the asset.

INT. LING ROVER/EXT. EDGE OF NIGHT WAYSTATION - DAY

Tavares dozes on the bench, trying to sleep. Kayleb has taken over driving, with Krushchev in the passenger seat.



The rover pulls up to a building with three domes, two of which bear garage door-like shutters.

Tavares sits up, blinks out the window. Her eyes widen.

TAVARES

Captain!

The left-hand shutter slides open. Inside are SOLDIERS in Mars-red camos and filter masks, plus an MTA TANK.

MTA OFFICER

(bullhorn)

All passengers will exit the vehicle--by order of the Mars Transit Authority.

Krushchev and Kayleb hurry out, tugging on coats and filter masks. Tavares scrambles to the secret compartment and grabs her tablet, then shoves it back as two soldiers enter. She pretends she was grabbing her coat.

The soldiers escort Tavares, Dante and Gibraltar out of the rover. The MTA OFFICER (40s) approaches Krushchev, followed by an AUTONOMOUS CAMERA DRONE. A JUNIOR OFFICER checks the team's FAKE IDs.

MTA OFFICER

Keep your hands where I can see them. ...This your vehicle?

KRUSHCHEV

Bought and paid for.

MTA OFFICER

We need to search it. And you.

GIBRALTAR

Since when does the MTA drive tanks?

One soldier laughs; another takes off her mask to spit.

MALE SOLDIER

Damn outskirters can't even be bothered to turn on the news.

TAVARES

Our satellite comm is broken. You don't have any parts here, do you?

They ignore her and search the rover, looking under cushions and rummaging through cabinets. One of them steps on the secret compartment, pauses. Looks down.

KRUSHCHEV

(low, eying the drones)  
This isn't great. If they run that  
footage and ID me as an Earth  
Union defector, it'll blow  
everyone's cover.

TAVARES

They're not getting video, sir. I  
rigged the rover to scramble all  
visual recording devices within  
about a ten meter radius.

KRUSHCHEV

What made you decide to do that?

TAVARES

You'd better ask Dante.

Krushchev gives Dante a disapproving frown; Gibraltar eyes  
Tavares with startled realization.

A soldier exits the rover, carrying ... Dante's toolbox?  
She lifts a handgun from inside, hands it to the officer.

MTA OFFICER

I'm confiscating this, by order of  
Mars' provisional government.

KAYLEB

You mean the Espers.

MTA OFFICER

I don't stick my nose in politics.  
If you're smart, neither will you.

He walks away, and Dante endures castigating looks from his  
teammates. The soldiers smirk as they walk off.

FEMALE SOLDIER (O.S.)

Moron didn't even have it loaded.

INT. LING ROVER - LATER

Kayleb and Krushchev return with two canisters of soup and  
a map. Tavares takes the soup and distributes bowls of it.

DANTE

Finally, something hot for dinner.

Dante reaches for a bowl, which Krushchev confiscates.

KRUSHCHEV  
 You'd better pick something you  
 can eat while driving.

EXT. NOCTIS LABYRINTHUS

TITLE: NOCTIS LABYRINTHUS - THE NIGHT LABYRINTH

The Labyrinth sits in perpetual shadow between kilometers-high canyon walls and spires of rock. The rover navigates a dirt track not quite wide enough for two vehicles.

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Krushchev, balancing a bowl on one knee and the map on another, points toward a rickety bridge.

--Dante drives across reluctantly, trying not to peer down the seemingly-bottomless crevasse below.

EXT. NOCTIS LABYRINTHUS - DAY

The road has been blocked by a large rockfall. The team climbs out to inspect a half-buried MTA tank.

KRUSHCHEV  
 Land mine. Probably improvised.

DANTE  
Mines?

KRUSHCHEV  
 It's about time we left the road  
 anyway. Back in the truck.

INT. EDGE OF NIGHT WAYSTATION - GARAGE - DAY

A line of nervous-looking MTA soldiers stand at attention.

Adran stands with their commander while Sasha peruses footage from the MTA camera drone. It's all static, but we hear the voices of Krushchev, Tavares, and Gibraltar.

MTA OFFICER  
 I'm sorry, ma'am. No one checked  
 the recording until they left.

SASHA  
 Did they say where they were  
 going?

MTA OFFICER

No, but they headed into the Labyrinth about an hour ago. My guess is Night City.

SASHA

You will round up everyone who spoke with the insurgents and bring them to me. That includes your men, Lieutenant.

Neither Adran nor the officer are comfortable with this.

MTA OFFICER

Respectfully, ma'am--if they really are insurgents, why aren't we going after them?

Angry murmurs of agreement from the rest of the squad.

SASHA

Because someone is helping them. It's not just insecure comms--we have a spy among our ranks, and I intend to flush them out.

They're still not happy, but neither are they stupid enough to gainsay her.

MTA OFFICER

You heard the woman. Round them up!

EXT. NOCTIS LABYRINTHUS - DAY

The rover winds through unmarked canyons. Dante's surveillance drones scout their way forward.

INT. LING ROVER - DAY

Gibraltar is driving; Dante peers at his tablet.

DANTE

Take a left at this next one.  
...No, no, right! I meant right!

EXT. NOCTIS LABYRINTHUS - CONTINUOUS

Too late; the rover rolls off a drop that would total the vehicle on Earth. In Mars' gravity it's just a bumpy ride.

INT. LING ROVER - CONTINUOUS

The passengers regain their balance.

KAYLEB

Dante!

GIBRALTAR

If we cracked an axle, I am so going to shoot you!

DANTE

I'm sorry, all right?  
(checks his tablet)  
Hey, I see the settlement!

KRUSHCHEV

I don't see any sentries. Are we sure this is the place?

KAYLEB

Yeah, I recognize these pillars. The homestead should be just through there.

Dante's eyes widen, and Tavares takes a look over his shoulder. She grimaces, meets Krushchev's gaze.

TAVARES

Sir, I think we have a problem.

EXT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - DAY

Several buildings have been carved out of the canyon wall. Up on the canyon walls are rooms lined with glass--broken greenhouses full of dead or dying crops. Down below, scorch marks and bullet holes mar the walls.

One of Dante's surveillance drones WHIRS past.

EXT./INT. LING ROVER - DAY

The rover is parked out of sight of the homestead.

The team crouches over Dante's tablet, Kayleb practically biting his nails.

KRUSHCHEV  
Looks like a shootout.

DANTE  
Wasn't our contact in there?

TAVARES  
I don't see any bodies. Either  
they got out, or someone survived  
to bury them.

GIBRALTAR  
Unless they're all inside.

KAYLEB  
...I'm going in.

Kayleb opens up secret compartment and pulls out the  
briefcase he brought from Procyon. Inside are a pair of  
SILVER MESH SUITS; Kayleb pulls one on over his clothing.

KRUSHCHEV  
Gibraltar--go with him.

GIBRALTAR  
Sir, I don't--

KAYLEB  
And get my friends shot if they're  
still alive? I'd take Dante first!

TAVARES  
Scott....

KRUSHCHEV  
Fine--I'll go.

He starts pulling on the second suit.

TAVARES  
But you're in command. Maybe I  
should--

KRUSHCHEV  
You're the only indispensable  
member of this team. Without you,  
there is no mission.

Kayleb pulls on the hood of the suit and DISAPPEARS. The  
airlock opens by itself a moment later. Krushchev looks  
Tavares in the eye, then puts on his hood and vanishes.

EXT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - DAY

POV: An UNSEEN DRONE peers out over the scene, tracking the dust eddies that whirl around Kayleb and Krushchev.

INT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - DAY

The airlock cracks open; two sets of tracks appear in the dust. Broken belongings litter the entranceway.

Kayleb pulls off his hood and filter mask and switches on a flashlight. Krushchev follows suit.

KAYLEB

Laian? Jamal?

KRUSHCHEV

I don't think anyone's been here for a while.

KAYLEB

They might be deeper in, hiding.

KRUSHCHEV

(readies his gun)

Just stay close.

EXT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - DAY

One of Dante's camera drones zips across the scene. The unseen drone trains crosshairs on it, fires a laser burst. Dante's drone goes down--TARGET NEUTRALIZED.

INT. LING ROVER - DAY

Dante's screen is split, showing two different views of the homestead. One of them fizzles out.

TAVARES

What happened?

GIBRALTAR

He probably flew it into a wall.

She grabs for the tablet, but Dante pulls it out of reach.

DANTE

Could you let me do my job?

INT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway ends with a closed door. Krushchev grabs the handle and nods at Kayleb, who goes in--

--and nearly gets blown away when a FIGURE IN BLACK opens up with an automatic weapon. Kayleb ducks behind the door; fires back, but can't get a good angle.

Krushchev grabs Kayleb's gun arm, then makes a sound like he's been hit. Kayleb stops firing, drops his flashlight.

The incoming fire ceases. The black-swathed figure steps through the door--barrel first--but sees no one.

Something invisible tackles him. A desperate struggle, but Krushchev and Kayleb pin him within seconds.

Kayleb grabs his flashlight. Blinking up at them is SAMRIS LIBRIZZI (30s), a wiry man who could be mistaken for Kayleb's young uncle or older brother.

KAYLEB

Samris?

Kayleb tugs off his hood. Krushchev finds a light switch and turns it on, revealing a supply room with a makeshift bed and empty food wrappers in one corner.

SAMRIS

Scott Kayleb? ...Thought you ran off to the colonies.

Kayleb helps him up.

KRUSHCHEV

What happened here? Is Beckett still alive?

SAMRIS

Who's this loser?

KAYLEB

He's the guy that talked me into coming back.

SAMRIS

You were better off staying put. ...Beckett's dead. She knew the MTA would call in the Espers if they caught her, so she ... she made sure they didn't.

Kayleb looks like someone just kicked him in the gut.



KRUSHCHEV

What about the others? Does anyone else know which contact we're supposed to meet with?

SAMRIS

Maybe somebody in Night City does, but not me.

KRUSHCHEV

All right--less talking, more walking.

EXT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - DAY

One nervous-looking Samris steps out, apparently alone.

The hidden KILL DRONE rises from its perch. It's like a robotic jellyfish, guns on the end of each jointed arm.

INT. LING ROVER - DAY

Dante's remaining camera drone scouts the ground, but then the view tips upward....

TAVARES

(into comm)

Watch out!

EXT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - DAY

Samris turns and looks, then takes off running.

KAYLEB

It's a kill drone!

Glimpses of Kayleb and Krushchev appear as their quick motion causes gaps in the mesh suits.

The kill drone hesitates, trying to determine its target. Finally it settles on Samris.

Krushchev glances back. Sees the kill drone taking aim. He pushes Samris out of the way.

A hail of bullets--Krushchev grunts in pain. The others keep running toward the rover, which pulls up and stops with a lurch. Tavares helps them through the airlock.

INT./EXT. LING ROVER - DAY

Kayleb tears off his hood and turns around.

KAYLEB  
Where's Krushchev?

The dust settles for a moment, but there's no sign of him.

TAVARES  
Captain!

Bullets ping off the rover's armor; Gibraltar floors it.

DANTE  
You can't just leave him!

Gibraltar ignores him, too busy dodging the kill drone. For a moment, everyone else is too busy hanging on.

TAVARES  
Lieutenant, please! He could still be alive!

GIBRALTAR  
You want to jump out and look for him, be my guest.

Kayleb pulls out his handgun and starts firing back. The bullets just ping off the kill drone's casing.

KAYLEB  
I need a bigger gun!

Tavares hands him a rifle. Samris gets out of the way.

GIBRALTAR  
Coming up on the road.

DANTE  
No--what about the mines?

He grabs for the wheel; Gibraltar elbows him in the chest.

TAVARES  
Dante, I need your tablet!

Dante, still gasping, hands it to her. Tavares goes into the source code and starts messing with it.

Gibraltar spots a mine and just barely swerves in time.

DANTE  
 Whatever you're doing, you'd  
 better be qui--

Tavares shoves the tablet back; the screen is all fuzzy.

DANTE (CONT'D)  
 What did you do to it??

TAVARES  
 It's a metal detector now. The  
 copper coils inside the drone's  
 transmitter are affected by  
 magnetic--

GIBRALTAR  
 Just use it!

The camera drone zooms on ahead; it spots something buried  
 in the dirt.

DANTE  
 ...Veer left!

Gibraltar veers, but the kill drone peppers the ground  
 beside the rover. The mine blows; Gibraltar barely keeps  
 control.

GIBRALTAR  
 Kayleb!

KAYLEB  
 I'm still not even denting it!

TAVARES  
 Lieutenant--could you drive over a  
 mine?

GIBRALTAR  
 You really are trying to get us--  
 ...No. No, it could work! Dante,  
 find me another one!

DANTE  
What?

KAYLEB  
 What are we doing?

TAVARES  
 You'd better hold on tight.

Up ahead, a mine is half-buried in the middle of the road.

DANTE  
There's one--dead ahead.

TAVARES  
Put it right between the tires.

GIBRALTAR  
I know!

TAVARES  
And hit it as fast as you--

GIBRALTAR  
Shut up, Tavares!

She guns it. Dante curls up, shouting wordlessly.

Faster and faster. Gibraltar puts the mine dead center to the wheels and DRIVES RIGHT OVER IT.

The vibration arms the mine, which is on a two second delay. The kill drone goes down in a blaze of glory.

EXT. NOCTIS LABYRINTHUS - SOON

The rover rolls to a halt in the shelter of an overhang.

INT. LING ROVER - DAY

Bruised and battered, the rover's passengers take stock.

TAVARES  
Was that the only one?

DANTE  
I ... I don't....

KAYLEB  
Get it together! Is anything still following us?

Dante fumbles for his tablet, hands shaking. Tavares switches it back to visuals mode for him.

GIBRALTAR  
(re: Samris)  
...Want to tell me who this is?

SAMRIS  
Samris Librizzi. I'm from the Belt--like Scott here.

He offers his hand, but Gibraltar isn't playing ball.

GIBRALTAR

What do you expect me to do with him? And where's our contact?

KAYLEB

(addressing Tavares)

Samris was the only one left in there. We're back to square one.

TAVARES

Lieutenant--we need to go back. We can't leave the captain behind.

DANTE

Th--there's nothing else following us. We're in the clear.

GIBRALTAR

We're not going back.

TAVARES

But he could be hurt, or--

GIBRALTAR

He could be dead! And even if he isn't, somebody set that trap for us. Whoever it is won't waste any time before coming back to see who tripped it.

It's a stand-off, Gibraltar and Tavares tense, staring at each other. Finally Tavares backs down.

DANTE

But if he is alive, and they capture him....

GIBRALTAR

Krushchev knows what to do.

She touches the E.E. strapped beneath her coat. Dante eyes his own, finally realizing what it's for.

SAMRIS

...I can help you find the Resistance. I know people in Night City who--

Gibraltar levels a gun at him.

GIBRALTAR

Now that I think about it, you  
were part of that trap.

KAYLEB

You can't shoot him! The Espers  
killed his parents. He hates them  
as much as we do!

GIBRALTAR

So did Rasulov.

Dante inches carefully away from Samris. Kayleb eyes his  
friend with realization and horror--Gibraltar is right.

SAMRIS

(bitter)

You don't have to worry that I'm  
under Esper mind control. I'm a  
Zero.

GIBRALTAR

A 'Zero'?

TAVARES

...They're people the Espers can't  
read. Next Step hates them--when  
we left Earth they had already  
started putting people in work  
camps.

SAMRIS

It's the same here. They've caught  
just about everyone but me.

GIBRALTAR

I don't buy it. Kayleb, can you  
vouch for him? Is he really a  
Zero?

KAYLEB

I ... I don't know.

Gibraltar's grip on her gun tightens. Kayleb's hand strays  
toward his own, but Tavares intervenes.

TAVARES

Wait--I know how to find out.

She grabs a silver headband from the secret compartment.

SAMRIS

(backs away)

What is that thing?

KAYLEB

Hold still, Samris. I swear,  
she'll kill you in a heartbeat.

Samris isn't sure which 'she' Kayleb means, but he complies. Tavares slips the headband around his temples.

Not a twitch. As far as the anti-Esper band is concerned, Samris doesn't exist.

Sighs of relief all around. Gibraltar puts away her gun.

GIBRALTAR

So now what?

TAVARES

We need to get to Night City, but chances are that drone sent off pictures of the rover before it went down.

KAYLEB

I thought you had it rigged to scramble video.

TAVARES

At close range, sure, but that kill drone was too far out to guaranteed anything. ...We'll have to enter the city on foot.

EXT. NIGHT CITY - DAY

The Labyrinth gives way, opening into the east end of the largest canyon in the solar system: The Mariner Valleys. Near the north side of a basin so wide that Earth's Grand Canyon wouldn't even be a notable feature, lies the city.

TITLE: NIGHT CITY, VALLES MARINERIS

Concrete buildings dot the surface; pale gray blisters linked here and there with bridged walkways. The true city lies underground, her deeper levels glimpsed through the snow-dusted skylights.

Samris leads the team--sans Dante--down into the city, on foot and wrapped in their parkas. Drones fill the air above them, and every door is barred shut. On the bright side, they don't need their filter masks anymore.

Tavares frowns at a graffiti-covered sign that reads 'Closed: by order of the Mars Transit Authority'.

KAYLEB  
How do we get in?

GIBRALTAR  
(into comm)  
Dante?

EXT. VALLES MARINERIS

The rover is parked in an alcove overlooking the valley. It is camouflaged, hidden from view but near the road.

INT. LING ROVER - DAY

Dante leans over his tablet, scouting the city.

DANTE  
There's one entrance open, but  
they're screening every car that  
goes through it.

EXT. NIGHT CITY - DAY

A snaking line of vehicles winds toward the checkpoint. Armed guards, a couple of tanks--but the real threat is the bald ESPER peering into each vehicle as it goes past.

The team eyes the checkpoint from around the corner. Tavares, white-knuckled, checks to make sure that her anti-Esper band is still on tight.

KAYLEB  
All this for us?

SAMRIS  
They're just scanning for Zeroes.  
Wasn't this bad last I was here,  
though.

GIBRALTAR  
It's no good. We can't walk  
through that, with or without the  
headbands. Unless anyone besides  
Krushchev has Esper resistance  
training?

No one has any they'll admit to.

KAYLEB  
Samris--you have a way in, right?



TAVARES  
Lieutenant....

SAMRIS  
I wasn't part of the Resistance--I  
just hung out with Beckett to  
avoid the Espers.

KAYLEB  
What about those walkways? We  
could climb up to one of them and-  
-

GIBRALTAR  
No good. There's drones  
everywhere, and I'm pretty sure I  
saw a sniper back there.

TAVARES  
Guys?

SAMRIS  
What about that suit Scott was  
wearing? The one that makes him  
invisible?

KAYLEB  
Yeah, I think that's our best bet.  
I'll run back to the rover, grab  
the suit, and then--

TAVARES  
Hey!  
(they look at her)  
I can get us in.

ON DARKNESS

The sound of labored breathing. A heartbeat pounds in our  
ears. Light appears--blurry at first, then clearing....

EXT. ABANDONED HOMESTEAD - DAY

Krushchev groans, propping himself up one elbow. He's  
wounded, bleeding. He looks around--no rover. Reaches for  
his comm, only to find it has slipped out of his ear.

The wind howls, a rising whine like a shuttle's engine. Red  
drops stain the Martian ground as Krushchev crawls, still  
invisible, toward cover. Dust covers his tracks almost  
immediately.

The whine is gone now. Was it just his imagination? He pulls himself up to a sitting position, then sees the trail of blood he left behind.

Krushchev's vision is going dark again, but he sees her. A bald figure in white, coming closer. He fumbles for his gun, but it, too, is missing.

SASHA  
(fading out)  
What do we have here?

Sasha's coldly curious face is the last thing he sees before blacking out again.

EXT. NIGHT CITY - DAY

Tavares leads the team back to the graffiti-covered door she noticed on the walk in. The others watch with expectation, wondering how she's going to hack her way through a deadbolt.

Tavares approaches the door. Not 100% sure this is going to work--more like a 95. She grabs the handle, turns it ... and pulls the door open. Her relieved gaze meets three incredulous ones, then they follow her inside.

INT. SAFE HAVEN - GROUND LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

They enter a small airlock, which closes behind them. A comm panel on the wall says SECURITY.

TAVARES  
(pressing the button)  
We're looking for Rückzugsort.

A box pops out from the wall.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
Leave your weapons here.

Tavares complies; the others follow suit grudgingly.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
Second door to your left.

He lets them through. They walk down the hall and enter...

A TINY ROOM

As soon as the door is shut, the whole room slowly DROPS.

KAYLEB

How did you know it was open? And who is Rucka ... Rookzu....?

TAVARES

It means 'Safe Haven'. That yellow mark on the door is the Wegger sign for Sanctuary.

Gibraltar allows herself to be impressed.

The hidden elevator stops, and the doors open. They stare in surprise at what lies beyond.

GIBRALTAR

Congratulations, Tavares. You've found the Resistance.

INT. LING ROVER/EXT. VALLES MARINERIS - DAY

Dante chills in the rover, bored now that the team has gone inside. He picks up Rasulov's book.

Not far from where the rover is hidden, a PALE ESPER prowls--escorted by a pair of armed Enforcers.

INT. SAFE HAVEN - LOWER LEVELS - DAY

Deep underground, in a parking garage. A dozen or so REBELS, men and women, point their guns at our heroes. Beyond them, the chamber is filled with Night City's dispossessed: homeless, filthy--and armed.

REBEL #1

Step out of the elevator.

They comply, and submit to a pat-down.

REBEL #2

They're clean.

SAMRIS

We need to see whoever's in charge. Tell them Laycie Beckett sent us.

The rebel looks at him dubiously before nodding.

REBEL #1

Wait here.

INT. LING ROVER/EXT. VALLES MARINERIS - DAY

The Pale Esper walks past the alcove where the rover is concealed. Suspicious, looking for something.

Dante glances out the window, then hits the deck.

The Esper looks up, scans the rocks, but can't see anything. He motions his Enforcers forward.

Dante crawls toward the secret compartment. Fumbles for his anti-Esper band. Puts it on.

INT. SAFE HAVEN - WEGGER SHRINE - DAY

Tavares and Kayleb stand beside a sort of memorial. Ribbons with names on them hang from the wall, and various mementos rest on a low platform in front of it. Tools, trinkets-- personal things.

Tavares kneels and makes the sign of the cross.

KAYLEB

What's this?

TAVARES

(stands)

It's how we remember those who didn't Upload.

Kayleb pulls out Rasulov's dog tag and rolls it in his fingers. His jaw clenches.

TAVARES

You still haven't forgiven Gibraltar.

KAYLEB

How can I? She shot her own teammate, without even hesitating.

TAVARES

She made the tough call so you wouldn't have to.

KAYLEB

I would rather have let Raquel shoot me than have to watch her die!

TAVARES

You think that's better? How do you think she would feel if she had to live with that memory?

Kayleb is taken aback. He hadn't even thought about it.

TAVARES

You watched someone you care about die. I'm sorry--but at least you don't have to live with the fact that it's your fault.

It's hard for him to hear. Kayleb clenches his fist, screws up his face ... and hangs the tag on the wall. With it goes the anger that kept him from grieving.

Kayleb bites back a sob while Tavares comforts him.

NEARBY

Gibraltar and Samris stand just out of earshot, lost in their own thoughts.

Gibraltar eyes the dirty refugees, keenly feeling the lack of a weapon. She's out of place here, and she knows it--she's too clean, too well-fed.

Guarding a nearby door is a REFUGEE GIRL (10-12) with an assault rifle strapped across her chest. To Gibraltar, it's like looking in a twisted mirror. The same hair, the same hard, cold eyes. Unnerved, Gibraltar turns away.

SAMRIS

Hey--I'm gonna go check in with some friends. Meet you back here?

Gibraltar gives a distracted nod; Samris leaves.

INT. LING ROVER/EXT. VALLES MARINERIS - DAY

Dante huddles on the floor, headband on, scrabbling for his tablet. He calls back his drone camera and sees:

The Esper is still frowning at the rocks, but now he's doubtful, confused. Just as the enforcers are about to discover the rover, he calls them back.

Dante pretty much collapses with relief.

INT. SAFE HAVEN - WEGGER SHRINE - DAY

Gibraltar wanders back toward the others just as the door beside the shrine opens and CHAI LI FEN (50s) drives through it in an electric wheelchair. Burn scars mar her face, and both feet are missing.

CHAI LI FEN

Are you the ones claiming to bring me news from a dead woman?

GIBRALTAR

We don't have any news. We're looking for someone who had access to her contacts.

CHAI LI FEN

(realizes who they are)

And why should I give that information to you? Procyon doesn't care about us. You're trying to save your own skins.

TAVARES

That isn't true. All of us have friends living under Esper rule.

Li Fen takes in Tavares' Underclass appearance, and her distrust weakens.

CHAI LI FEN

You were supposed to be here three weeks ago. If Beckett hadn't been waiting for you, she'd still be alive.

KAYLEB

We got ambushed by the Espers on our way here. Lost a lotta good people.

GIBRALTAR

(follows Tavares' lead)

There's no going back for us--we had to ditch our jump drive before landing. Completing this mission is the only thing we have left.

Li Fen allows herself to be convinced.

CHAI LI FEN

Which contact do you need?

TAVARES

He works at the programming  
facility in Tithonium Chasma.

She doesn't like that one bit.

CHAI LI FEN

You mean Jason Yueh? ...No one but  
Beckett will touch that contact--  
and neither should you.

TAVARES

...Why is that?

EXT. LOWELL PARK - NIGHT

The park is a tranquil place, a breath of fresh air after  
our long trek through the Martian dust. Precisely pruned  
bushes, beautifully manicured grass. A warm glow shines  
from the handful of businesses which line the park.

In front of a coffee shop, we find JASON YUEH (late 20s)  
seated at a table, reading. He wears an expensive suit as  
comfortably as he does a wide-eyed, almost naive optimism.

He also sports the clean-shaven head of an Esper.

EXT. LOWELL PARK - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Gibraltar peers around the corner at Yueh.

GIBRALTAR

That's him. That's our contact.

TAVARES

(about to freak out)

I can't do this. I can't go out  
there.

Kayleb looks like he's got a mouthful of gravel. He's  
dressed in his mesh suit, ready to go stealth mode.

KAYLEB

I'm with Mida. Can't we bust into  
the place on our own?

GIBRALTAR

Even if we knew where it was, we  
could spend days planning the op  
and still not learn as much as he  
could tell us in an hour.

KAYLEB

But how do we know he's on the level? What if he was messing with Beckett's mind the whole time?

GIBRALTAR

Only one way to find out.  
(into comm)  
Dante, are we clear?

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Dante, now snug inside a parking garage, focuses on his tablet. His camera drone is already in the park.

DANTE

(into comm)  
Everything looks good from here.

EXT. LOWELL PARK - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Gibraltar puts on her anti-Esper band.

GIBRALTAR

All right, let's do this.

EXT. LOWELL PARK - NIGHT

A TERRIFIED WAITRESS darts in with a cup of coffee, drops it on the table, and retreats before Yueh can thank her. Yueh tries not to let it bother him, but fails.

Gibraltar seats herself, startling Yueh.

YUEH

...I'm sorry, I'm expecting a friend for--

GIBRALTAR

Beckett's not coming.

Yueh stiffens, looks around in alarm. Gibraltar tenses.

YUEH

Has something happened to her? She didn't meet me last--

GIBRALTAR

...How about you tell me?



YUEH

Me?

(then)

You think I'm responsible. ...I swear to you upon everything I cherish: I have never broken confidence with Ms. Beckett.

GIBRALTAR

And I'm supposed to believe you, why?

YUEH

If you think I betrayed her, why are you here? Aren't you risking your life just talking to me?

Gibraltar isn't convinced yet, but Yueh's straightforwardness has put her off guard.

GIBRALTAR

...You should probably quit looking around so much.

YUEH

I'm sorry. I'm still not very good at this.

GIBRALTAR

Well you'd better get good in a hurry, because we have a mission to complete.

YUEH

The specialist is here then? ...I was beginning to think they wouldn't make it on time. I've done everything I can to delay the project, but any more and someone will suspect me.

Gibraltar looks up at Dante's drone and nods.

EXT. LOWELL PARK - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Kayleb snaps a mesh sleeve over his handgun.

DANTE (OVER COMMS)

There's the signal.

KAYLEB

I'll be right beside you.

Tavares nods, takes a deep breath, and walks out.

EXT. LOWELL PARK - NIGHT

Tavares' heart pounds in her ears. At every step she remembers a previous encounter with Espers. São Paulo. The Cleopatra. She keeps walking anyway, reaches the table.

Yueh follows Gibraltar's gaze, and his jaw drops. He stands, so abruptly that his chair tips over.

YUEH

You're her. You're Mida Tavares!

Yueh reaches for Tavares' hand; she jumps out of reach.

YUEH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry--I never imagined I'd meet the woman I've read so much about.

Gibraltar is startled as Tavares.

GIBRALTAR

Read about?

YUEH

What programmer doesn't know the name of the woman who hacked into the Virtuality? You're a legend!

TAVARES

...Could we get this over with?

YUEH

Right. Of course.

Yueh goes to sit, almost forgetting that he knocked over his chair. He slides over the tablet he was reading.

YUEH

I'm not allowed to copy data out, but I've taken some photographs.

Tavares warily takes the tablet, starts paging through.

TAVARES

...Which libraries are you using?

YUEH

Yours, of course. Next Step doesn't trust anything written by Uploads.

TAVARES

My-- ...Those were for the  
Underclass!

YUEH

Many thousands of whom are now  
respected members of society,  
thanks to your work. Isn't that  
what you wanted?

Whether it was or not, she isn't happy.

YUEH (CONT'D)

I'm afraid these are a bit out of  
date. Here, let me--

Yueh reaches across to show her something, but as soon as  
his hand moves, Tavares leaps out of her chair.

TAVARES

...I need to take a walk.

Gibraltar wants to say no, but something makes her soften.  
She nods, and Tavares walks back the way she came.

YUEH

(tense, leaning forward)  
Would someone be so kind as to...

GIBRALTAR

(realizing)  
Kayleb--ease off.

Yueh straightens as Kayleb's invisible gun is removed from  
the back of his neck.

YUEH

You're zeroes--all of you. How--

KAYLEB (O.S.)

You said the program was almost  
ready. How long do we have?

YUEH

(you're where, exactly?)  
The practical test of the software  
is scheduled for tomorrow morning.

GIBRALTAR

It has to be tonight, then. Can  
you get us in?

YUEH

I believe so.

Gibraltar stands, taking Yueh's tablet.

GIBRALTAR  
We'll meet you on the road to  
Tithonium Chasma in half an hour.

Yueh, at a loss, stands and watches them go.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Dante leans out of the rover to catch his camera drone.

GIBRALTAR  
(removes her headband)  
We should take these off until we  
get there.

KAYLEB  
You sure we can trust Yueh?

GIBRALTAR  
No. But I also don't think they'll  
do us any good if he decides to  
turn on us.

Kayleb takes off his headband as Samris trots up.

KAYLEB  
Where have you been?

SAMRIS  
I got a life too, you know. ...Not  
so sure I should stick around with  
the Espers looking for me, though.  
You need another set of eyes?

Kayleb turns to Gibraltar, not quite meeting her gaze.

KAYLEB  
We are a man short.

GIBRALTAR  
...You can babysit Dante.

DANTE (O.S.)  
I heard that!

INT. LING ROVER - OR IS IT? - NIGHT

Krushchev lies on a bunk, blinking at the overhead light.  
Someone moves into the light--blurry and shadowed.

TAVARES  
How do you feel?

KRUSHCHEV  
Tavares?

Tavares gives a meaningful look to someone behind her.  
Krushchev makes out the indistinct shape of....

KRUSHCHEV  
Gibraltar? ...Why did you come  
back for me? The mission--

TAVARES  
Shh. That's over now. We need to  
get you back to the ship--do you  
remember where it is?

GIBRALTAR  
Ma'am....

Tavares holds up a hand--

INT. SASHA'S SHUTTLE - NIGHT

--except it isn't Tavares. It's Sasha, and the taller  
'Gibraltar' is really Adran.

Krushchev lies on a bed, an IV dripping into his arm. His  
eyes track left and right, but he doesn't seem to see  
what's right in front of him.

SASHA  
Good ... good, yes; that's  
perfect. We're heading there  
already. You just sleep for now.

Krushchev's eyes close as Sasha tweaks the IV.

SASHA  
I have a course. Do you have word  
from the asset?

ADRAN  
Yes, ma'am. He made contact this  
afternoon, but he claims not to  
know who their informant is, or  
where they're going next.

Sasha's displeasure is palpable, and Adran cringes at the  
mental pressure. Sasha reins it in after a moment.

SASHA

No matter. We'll catch up to them  
with or without his help.

Off the sleeping Krushchev--

EXT. NIGHT CITY - NIGHT

Yueh waits by his car in the cold, breath clouding. The  
rover drives up, opens. Yueh climbs in.

INT. LING ROVER - CONTINUOUS

Yueh scans the sea of unfriendly faces.

GIBRALTAR (V.O.)

...came alone, that's a good sign.  
He could still be working with...

KAYLEB (V.O.)

(he's driving)  
...could shoot him right now. Just  
pull out my gun and...

DANTE (V.O.)

...not cut out for this sort of  
thing. Going to get myself...

He comes to Samris, whose body language tells it all.

SAMRIS

What the actual hell?

GIBRALTAR

We're not happy about it either,  
but he's all we've got. Tavares,  
you need anything else from Yueh?

TAVARES

(she's riding shotgun)  
I'll let him know.

GIBRALTAR

Kayleb and I are going to get some  
sleep. ...If he tries anything  
funny, you have permission to  
shoot him.

Samris swaps places with Kayleb. Yueh hesitantly seats  
himself; Dante edges as far away as possible.

YUEH  
I promise, I don't bite.

Dante is either attempting to smile, or about to throw up.

EXT. TITHONIUM CHASMA - NIGHT

The rover makes its way along the empty road.

INT. LING ROVER - LATER

The rover is on autopilot; Samris looks at a photograph.

TAVARES  
Who's that?

SAMRIS  
My daughter, Shay. She'll be three  
next month.

TAVARES  
Is that who you went to visit?

SAMRIS  
Sort of. ...She's in the camps  
with my sister. I have someone who  
brings me updates.

Tavares gives Samris' hand a comforting squeeze.

TAVARES  
You'll see them again. We're going  
to make everything right.

Samris pales. He wants to tell her something, but....

YUEH  
(climbing up)  
You'll want to take a left at the  
next branch.  
(they avoid his gaze)  
...I can drive, if you'd like?

Samris gives Yueh a full-on glare and shoves past, leaving  
the driver's seat empty.

Yueh takes over. Makes the turn.

YUEH

...I understand that you're used to seeing me as the enemy, but I wouldn't be here if I weren't on your side.

Tavares can't even look at him.

TAVARES

You expect us to just forget what you're capable of? We've all seen it first hand.

YUEH

Not from me. I would never use my gift to harm another human being.

TAVARES

Then why learn at all? Why let them turn you into a weapon?

YUEH

You see telepathy as a loaded gun, but there are so many ways it can be used.

TAVARES

For spying--

YUEH

No. I could help a blind man see the face of his child. A deaf woman hear music for the first time. Imagine--communication without words, on a level only the Virtuality has ever achieved.

Tavares stares at Yueh, seeing him for the first time.

EXT. SPACE - MARS ORBIT - SPACE

An EUDF cruiser glides past. The fleet--so numerous it's hard to tell ships apart from stars--waiting for dawn.

Down and down. To the Mariner Valleys, dotted with lights. To Tithonium Chasma, where the rover drives into a tunnel.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

It's go time. Everyone is awake, hiding in the rear; Yueh glances back as they all put on headbands. Tavares turns off the video scrambler--it would only give them away.



INT. TUNNEL/EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Yueh shows his I.D. to the GATE GUARD.

GATE GUARD  
This a new truck?

YUEH  
It's borrowed.

GATE GUARD  
It matches the description of a  
vehicle that shot up a homestead  
earlier today. I should check the  
registration--

YUEH  
Are you accusing me of something?

The gate guard abruptly remembers who he's talking to.

GATE GUARD  
N-no, sir. Forget I mentioned it.

The gate opens, and Yueh drives through into a lit cave containing a dozen mid-sized buildings. He parks in a shadowed alley beside the programming building.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

The team crawls out of their hiding places.

GIBRALTAR  
Good thing no one has the guts to  
search an Esper's truck.

KAYLEB  
Couldn't you have ... Espered him?

YUEH  
If I enjoyed invading people's  
minds, do you really think I'd  
still be working as a programmer?

GIBRALTAR  
Let's get on those cameras.

Kayleb and Dante get their stuff ready. Samris settles himself on the bench.

YUEH  
I'm going to run through and see  
if there's anyone inside.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Kayleb steals to a nearby camera and places a device on it.  
Dante launches his surveillance drone.

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - 1ST FLOOR - NIGHT

Yueh steps through the security scanner, which finds his ID card and turns green.

Motion-activated lights turn on as Yueh walks to one of the cubicles and wakes the computer. He nearly jumps at the sound of footsteps behind him.

The wide-eyed Esper behind Yueh is a security guard, SUYIN (20s). She smiles shyly at him.

YUEH

Suyin.

SUYIN

Working late again?

YUEH

That's right. Getting things ready for tomorrow's roll-out.

SUYIN

You're always so closed off. Don't you ever open up to people?

YUEH

I wouldn't want to bore them.

She laughs--an innocent giggle.

SUYIN

You should take some time off, do something worth thinking about.

YUEH

Maybe once this project is finished.

She wants to stay and chat, but duty calls. As soon as she's gone, Yueh slips a device onto the back of the computer and turns the monitor off.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Tavares and Dante fiddle with their respective tablets while Gibraltar looks on with impatience.

Yueh returns.

TAVARES  
What am I seeing here?

YUEH  
I've patched you into the main grid. It's supposed to be independent from the security system, but they use the same network. You can access the one through the other--

TAVARES  
(grins)  
--if you know to look for it. I've used that exploit before.

She meets Yueh's gaze, and her grin fades. Gibraltar frowns in general disapproval.

YUEH  
Suyin is on duty tonight. You'll need to keep your shielding devices on until we leave.

SAMRIS  
Or we could just...  
(pantomimes shooting)

YUEH  
Suyin isn't a soldier. She's just doing her job.

SAMRIS  
Yeah, only her job includes rounding up innocent civilians and locking them up. Have you even seen the camps?

YUEH  
...I've seen them.

EXT. PRISON CAMP - DAY - FLASHBACK

Inside a steep crater, men and women dig trenches in the Martian soil--a handful are complete, glassed over and filled with crops. The guards wear filter masks, but many prisoners toil with only a scarf over their faces.

ON YUEH'S FACE, with the Martian sky behind him. He looks down in horror.

SAMRIS (V.O.)

They've got nothing out there. No protection from the wind ... they eat only what they can scrape out of the Martian dust.

One prisoner collapses. He is dragged past a rough tent from which peers Samris' wide-eyed daughter, SHAY (2).

END FLASHBACK

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Samris' fingers are itching for a gun.

SAMRIS

How many people have you sent there? Maybe you're the one who needs a bullet between the eyes.

YUEH

I swear to you I have never participated in that atrocity.

GIBRALTAR

We're not shooting anyone. The point is to get in and out without anyone noticing, remember?

Samris takes note of this.

GIBRALTAR

How much longer?

TAVARES

Granting us access ... now. We should be able to walk right through the doors.

GIBRALTAR

And the cameras?

DANTE

Gimme a second.

Several seconds pass.

GIBRALTAR

If you need Tavares to take over--

DANTE  
I can do it, all right? If  
everyone would stop breathing down  
my neck and let me think....

GIBRALTAR  
(into comm)  
How's it look?

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Suyin exits the building and swings her flashlight down the path. She walks right past the invisible Kayleb.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

KAYLEB (OVER COMMS)  
That Esper just left the building.  
I'd hurry upstairs before another  
guard comes around.

It takes everything Gibraltar has not to prod Dante again. Finally his screen flickers. On it are several views--one is the drone; the rest are security feeds.

DANTE  
Got it! I can set the cameras on a  
loop. No one will see us.

GIBRALTAR  
All right--you three, get in  
there.

Tavares gives Dante an encouraging pat on the shoulder, then follows Yueh. Gibraltar gives Samris a look.

SAMRIS  
...Who, me? I thought I was  
staying with Dante?

GIBRALTAR  
That room is shielded; I need  
someone to relay comms.

She hands him a comm. He puts it on and exits.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Tavares is halfway to the programming building when the WHISPERS begin. She looks for the source, but sees no one.

Tavares touches her anti-Esper headband, and the whispers grow briefly louder. She remembers the warning about hallucinations--too late to do anything about it now.

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - 1ST FLOOR - NIGHT

Yueh steps through the security scanner with confidence, but Tavares doesn't relax until the light goes green.

YUEH

This way.

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - 2ND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

They climb up the stairs; motion-detecting lights turn on by themselves. Yueh unlocks a heavy steel door.

SAMRIS

(into comm)

We're going in.

GIBRALTAR (OVER COMMS)

I want reports every fifteen minutes. Don't be late.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Samris steps in and hangs up his coat; a HAND CROSSBOW hangs from his waist. Yueh shows Tavares to his desk.

YUEH

My workstation is here.

Tavares looks around, distracted by the whispers.

YUEH (CONT'D)

...I'll just log you in.

He does so, then holds the chair for Tavares. She sits warily, but isn't comfortable until Yueh backs off.

YUEH

Who'd like some coffee? It'll look strange if I don't make up a pot.

Tavares puts a device on the computer, just like the one Yueh placed downstairs. A mirror of his monitor appears on her tablet--split screen with the code she's inputting.

SAMRIS

What are you doing?

TAVARES  
 We're planting a virus inside  
 their communications network.

SAMRIS  
 So you can spy on 'em and stuff?

Tavares nods. Samris frowns, unsure of his next move.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Kayleb's feet leave temporary imprints in the dust.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

The VOICES are starting to get to Tavares. Not just  
 whispers--phantom sounds, like doors closing or someone  
 laughing. It's getting hard to concentrate on her screen.

YUEH  
 Mida? ...Mida!

Things come into focus again.

YUEH (CONT'D)  
 You can't put that hook there.  
 Vasquez has been working on this  
 module--she'll notice. Try that  
 one; Davis never documents  
 anything.

TAVARES  
 Sorry. I think I need more coffee.

Yueh goes to start another pot.

SAMRIS  
 I'm gonna go report.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Dante studies the tablet; Gibraltar listens to her comm.

GIBRALTAR  
 (into comm)  
 How long?

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - 2ND FLOOR - NIGHT

Samris is in the hallway, the door open behind him.

SAMRIS

(into comm)

Hard to say. ...Tavares thinks she's about half an hour out, but she keeps jumping at nothing. Like she's hearing things.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

GIBRALTAR

...The headband. How long has she had it on?

DANTE

Did she ever take it off?

GIBRALTAR

Damn it, Tavares.

(into comm)

I'm coming up there.

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - 2ND FLOOR - NIGHT

The sounds of an ARGUMENT from the other room--Samris unhooks his crossbow and hurries back.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tavares, on her feet, confronts a defensive Yueh.

YUEH

...It's not my fault. I told you those photographs were from an older version!

TAVARES

You've been working on this for months! How could you miss something so important?

SAMRIS

(puts away crossbow)

What's going on?

TAVARES

He's been letting me work in the wrong partition. I'm practically starting from scratch!



YUEH

Let me take a look. Maybe I can  
salvage--

He touches her--an innocent hand on the shoulder--and it  
breaches the mental seal.

EXT. VIRTUALITY DATA CENTER - SÃO PAULO - DAY - FLASHBACK

It's the assault at the data center--just like Tavares'  
nightmare. Yueh finds himself in mid-scene--an invisible  
witness. He spots Tavares, crouched behind a barricade.

TAVARES

They're lining up again!

EARTH UNION OFFICER

We can hold them. Just keep an eye  
out for--

The incoming fire ceases, and there he is. The Burly Esper  
gestures, and Tavares--no, it's Yueh in her place now,  
wearing her uniform. His eyes glaze over, and he turns his  
rifle on the men and women behind the barricades.

EARTH UNION OFFICER

Tavares!

Tavares-Yueh can't hear him, can't stop--but he wants to.  
His face twists with deeper agony at every shot.

Gibraltar grabs a downed soldier's weapon and fires.  
Tavares-Yueh falls backward with a bullet in his shoulder.

END FLASHBACK

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Tavares jumps back, eyes wild. Yueh clutches his left  
shoulder, but is relieved to find no blood there.

YUEH

I-I'm sorry. I didn't know--

TAVARES

Don't ever touch me again.

A sound from the hallway--doors opening and closing. An  
OMINOUS WHIR. Tavares is uncertain, thinking it's just  
another hallucination, until--

YUEH  
I hear it too.

EXT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - NIGHT

Starting on one end and going to the other, lights come on all through the building.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Gibraltar has just finished buttoning her parka when she sees the lights.

GIBRALTAR  
(into comm)  
What's going on in there? Samris?  
Kayleb!

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Yueh shuts the door; the others grab their coats and hide.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Dante stares at his tablet, incredulous.

DANTE  
Nobody went in--I've been watching this whole time! Whoever's in there must already have been inside.

KAYLEB  
(enters, takes hood off)  
It's not just this building--it's the whole complex.  
(sees Gibraltar)  
You'd be crazy to go in there.  
Someone set a trap for us.

GIBRALTAR  
You want me to just abandon them?

Kayleb hesitates, then follows.

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - NIGHT

Gibraltar enters, weapon readied. Hears the WHIRRING but sees no one. This floor is empty.

On to the second floor. The noise is coming from just ahead. She pauses at a corner, peeks. Off her surprise...

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

A knock at the door. Yueh composes himself. Tavares hides; gun ready, but she doesn't want to use it.

Yueh opens the door to find Gibraltar in the hallway. Kayleb pulls his hood off, watching something off camera. The HUM seems less ominous and more familiar. Like...

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

A MAINTENANCE DRONE vacuums the carpets as Kayleb watches.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yueh gapes at the drone as the others come inside. Samris and Tavares emerge from hiding.

YUEH

The maintenance drones--they run at night, so they don't get in anyone's way. I completely forgot!

GIBRALTAR

Anything else you 'forgot' about?

YUEH

...I don't think so.

GIBRALTAR

(to Kayleb and Samris)

You two take Dante to the server building, get him started on the locks. I'll take over here.

Tavares and Samris share a look.

GIBRALTAR

What's wrong?

TAVARES

Our estimate's been pushed back. I'm going to have to start over.

GIBRALTAR

What? How long do we have before people start showing up for work?

YUEH  
Not more than three hours.

TAVARES  
I can get it done--as long as  
nothing else goes wrong.

The guilt is plain on Yueh's face.

GIBRALTAR  
Wonderful.  
(puts gun away)  
Well? Get going!

Kayleb & Samris exit. Yueh retreats to the coffee counter,  
and Tavares gets back to work.

TAVARES  
(to Gibraltar, low)  
You didn't have to come up here.

GIBRALTAR  
I'm not going to leave anyone  
alone with an Esper, even if he--

TAVARES  
No--when the lights went on, and  
you thought we'd been made: you  
had to know you'd be caught too.

GIBRALTAR  
...I didn't really think about it.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Kayleb, Samris and Dante cross to the server building.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Yueh is still out of earshot.

TAVARES  
(nervous beat)  
In São Paulo ... you had to know  
I'd keep firing if I didn't go  
down immediately--but you didn't  
you kill me. Why not?

GIBRALTAR  
I just--

TAVARES

Don't say you just reacted; I saw how you took out Rasulov. You didn't pull any punches with her, so why was I different?

Gibraltar avoids meeting Tavares' gaze.

TAVARES (CONT'D)

Was it my punishment for letting the Espers get to me? Or did you just miss?

GIBRALTAR

Of course I didn't miss. I wanted to hurt you, not kill you.

Yueh return with a cup of coffee for each of them.

YUEH

Here we are.

Gibraltar clams up, unwilling to explain further with Yueh there. Tavares considers her worst suspicions confirmed. Neither of them looks at each other as they take their cups from Yueh.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - SERVER BUILDING - NIGHT

Kayleb and Samris on edge--Dante takes his sweet time with the electronic lock. Finally it opens, and they go inside.

INT. SERVER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Flashlights illuminate the dust swirling through the door--there are no automatic lights here. They round a corner, and Samris nearly shoots a vacuum drone.

Dante inspects the server room door and whistles.

DANTE

Thing's as tight as a safe.  
Electronic warning systems, extra bolts ... this'll take a while.

SAMRIS

But you can open it?

Dante pulls out the wide, cylindrical device he was accosting Myint with back on the So Long.

DANTE  
That's what this thing is for.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Tavares is starting to see things--distortions, flickers of light. The WHISPERS are louder, and it doesn't help that she's angry too.

Gibraltar stands by the door, pensive. She wants to tell Tavares the rest of the story, but Yueh is still hovering.

YUEH  
There must be something I can do.  
Get you another coffee, or some  
snacks from down the hall?

From Tavares' perspective, his concerned expression becomes a cruel smile. She knows it's not real, but--

TAVARES  
Stay away from me.

Yueh backs off, at a loss.

INT. SERVER BUILDING - NIGHT

Kayleb watches the tablet while Dante works.

SAMRIS  
I can do that if you like. Let you  
patrol some more.

KAYLEB  
Naw, this is better.

Samris sighs--so much for that plan.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

A security guard exits a building and swings his flashlight down the path.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Tavares runs a test with her tablet. On the divided screen, a progress bar fills up almost to the end, then flashes:  
COMPILE FAILED. RETRY: Y/N?

TAVARES  
Compile. Why won't you compile!

She drops the tablet, frustrated. The WHISPERS mock her.

YUEH  
Mida--you've been working all  
night. You're tired, and that  
thing is messing with your head.  
Let me take over for a while.

TAVARES  
It would take more time to explain  
than it would to just do it.

INT. SERVER BUILDING - NIGHT

Dante turns the dials, frustrated.

KAYLEB  
I think that guard is heading our  
way.

DANTE  
Don't rush me. If I don't do this  
right, we'll have a hundred Espers  
on our backs before we can sneeze!

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Yueh steps closer, ignoring Gibraltar's warning look.

YUEH  
Then don't bother explaining--show  
me. All it would take is a moment.

He holds out his hand.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

The guard turns, walks toward the server building.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Tavares eyes Yueh's hand as she would a venomous snake.

TAVARES  
I can't. You saw what happened the  
last time I ... the last time  
someone like you....

YUEH

What was done to you was a violation of your rights as a human being. It was cruel and unconscionable, and things just like it will continue to happen for as long as Next Step remains in power.

INT. SERVER BUILDING - NIGHT

DANTE

I don't understand it. I've gone through almost every possible--  
...Wait. There is one thing I haven't ... yes. Yes, yes, yes!

Kayleb is skeptical. Was this clown even worth bringing?

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

YUEH

My voice is not enough to stop it. I'm powerless without your help. Please--don't let everything we've done here go to waste.

The WHISPERS tease Tavares, tell her not to trust him. Then she pushes back. Steels herself. Takes Yueh's hand.

A RUSH OF MEMORY

Every thought, every fear Tavares has had since putting on the anti-Esper band bombards the hapless telepath, but Yueh pushes back. Shoves everything he doesn't need behind a mental wall, until all that is left is Tavares.

They stand inside their own personal Virtuality, face to face. The blackness around them fills with lines of code.

INT. DEVELOPMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Wonder and realization cross both programmers' faces. A moment to take it all in, then Yueh takes Tavares' seat.

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Dante's on a roll, one tumbler after the next. The others catch his excitement, leaning in.



--The guard reaches for the doorknob. Turns it.

--Dante gives a quiet whoop, and the door clicks open. They hurry inside--just in time.

--The progress bar reads 50%. 80%. 100% complete!

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

The servers HUM quietly. Dante places his device on the inside of the door, so he can open it at will.

KAYLEB  
(into comm)  
Gibraltar--we're in.

INT. PROGRAMMING BUILDING - NIGHT

Gibraltar has moved into the hallway. Behind her, Tavares and Yueh congratulate each other.

GIBRALTAR  
(into comm)  
We're about done here too. Give us five minutes, then open the door.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Kayleb exits. Dante pulls out the black box Tavares tested on the rover and plugs it into one of the servers.

SAMRIS  
Now what are we doing?

DANTE  
We're writing Tavares' changes into the backups, to make them harder to erase.

SAMRIS  
...So without this part, someone could undo what she did with the press of a button?

DANTE  
Yeah. Talk about all that work for nothing.

A new plan forms behind Samris' eyes.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER/INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

The guard finishes his rounds and heads back in to where Suyin sits watching monitors.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Dante is focused on his surveillance tablet again. Samris creeps over while he isn't watching and slides the cable out of the server, then looks for an alternate port.

DANTE

What are you doing?

Samris whips around, wide-eyed.

DANTE (CONT'D)

If it's not plugged into the hub,  
we won't get all of the....

For once in his life, Dante gets a clue. He backs away from Samris, reaching for his comm.

Samris grabs Dante, covering his mouth so he can't scream.

SAMRIS

I didn't want to do it this way.

Samris grabs Dante's headband and tries to pull it off.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Suyin takes a sip of her coffee, studying the screens.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Dante's headband is starting to come off despite his struggles. Desperate, he grabs his Evidence Eliminator.

Samris notices--too late to stop him--and jumps back. In a horrible but brief spectacle, a gray powder spills out, consuming Dante before he has the chance to scream.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT

Suyin focuses on one of the monitors ... then leans back in her chair, relaxing. She didn't sense a thing.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

All that remains of Dante is his headband and a pile of dust--but Samris didn't escape unscathed. Half a dozen E.E.s eat into the flesh of his hand, leaving it bloody.

Gasping, Samris wraps the wound with his parka sleeve and plugs the black box into the wrong server.

EXT./INT. SERVER BUILDING - NIGHT

Kayleb lets Gibraltar in; she hands him a data device.

KAYLEB

You didn't leave Mida alone with Yueh, did you?

GIBRALTAR

She's a big girl--she can handle herself.

Kayleb has his doubts, but leads her down the hallway.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Samris watches a maintenance drone vacuum up the pile of Dante dust as Gibraltar comes in.

GIBRALTAR

Where'd Dante go?

SAMRIS

...Men's room.

KAYLEB

(for real, Dante?)

Did he finish here at least?

SAMRIS

Yeah, it's all ready for you.

Kayleb plugs the data device into the black box.

GIBRALTAR

(to Samris)

You do something to your hand?

SAMRIS

Cut it on some scrap. No big deal.

He eyes the door, but Gibraltar is in his way.

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - NIGHT

It's dark; we see Krushchev's lips move, and nothing else.

KRUSHCHEV  
Gibraltar. Tavares.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Tavares, seated across from Yueh, sits up straight.

KRUSHCHEV (OVER COMMS) (CONT'D)  
You copy?

YUEH  
Something wrong?

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Gibraltar, Samris and Kayleb share incredulous glances.

GIBRALTAR  
(into comm)  
We're here--we read you.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Tavares doesn't answer, convinced she's hallucinating.

GIBRALTAR (OVER COMMS)  
Where are you? We thought you were  
dead!

KRUSHCHEV (OVER COMMS)  
I'm fine, but none of you are. We  
need to scrub the mission.

TAVARES  
Captain?

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

KAYLEB  
(into comm)  
What? But we're almost done!

KRUSHCHEV (OVER COMMS)  
The whole thing was a setup.  
Beckett never had any contacts for  
us--you've walked into a trap.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Tavares stares at Yueh; it's a distorted view.

TAVARES  
(into comm, nervous)  
Lieutenant?

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

KAYLEB  
(panicked beat)  
Mida's still in the truck with--

GIBRALTAR  
Go!

He rushes out.

GIBRALTAR  
(into comm)  
But sir, that doesn't make sense.  
Why would Yueh go to all this  
trouble when he could have just  
had us arrested?

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - NIGHT

KRUSHCHEV  
Yueh? As in Jason Yueh, the  
telepath?

Pale fingers grip Krushchev's shoulder--Sasha's fingers.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Dust eddies follow Kayleb as he runs, invisible.

GIBRALTAR (OVER COMMS)  
You know him?

INT. SO LONG - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Sasha's lips move; these are her words, not Krushchev's.

KRUSHCHEV  
He's a slippery little liar, and  
you should kill him.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Kayleb, hood off, closes the airlock behind him. He and Tavares stare at each other for a beat.

YUEH  
Are we almost finished? Mida won't tell me what's going on.

KAYLEB  
...They need her inside.

Tavares stands up, heads to the airlock.

KAYLEB  
(into comm)  
Dante, is the coast clear?  
...Dante!

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

GIBRALTAR  
(into comm)  
I'll find him.

She darts into the hallway. Samris dares a peek at the tablet hidden inside his coat, then slips out as well.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Tavares puts on Kayleb's suit.

TAVARES  
(whispered, to Kayleb)  
Something's not right.

KAYLEB  
...I know.

She exits. Kayleb stares Yueh down, wondering if he's the lying traitor Krushchev claims he is.

YUEH  
Aren't you going to sit?

Kayleb surreptitiously eases his gun in its holster. Sits.

KAYLEB  
So what's with the....

He indicates Yueh's bald head.

KAYLEB (CONT'D)

Is that supposed to intimidate people?

YUEH

(runs a hand over it)

I think of it as a courtesy. It takes a lot of training to completely block everyone out. Those who see me know that their thoughts aren't private, and can direct them appropriately.

KAYLEB

More likely they'll worry you're trying to dig out their secrets, start thinking about whatever it is they most want to hide.

YUEH

(with chagrin)

It does have that effect on some people.

INT. SERVER BUILDING - NIGHT

Samris creeps to the outer door. Puts his hand on the latch--just as a soft tap sounds from outside.

He opens it. Tavares slips the hood off, still jumping at shadows. She comes inside.

TAVARES

Which way?

Samris, seizing an opportunity, leads Tavares deeper.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Kayleb takes his hand off his gun, doubt resurfacing.

KAYLEB

You're not what I expected.

YUEH

How's that?

KAYLEB

(how to put it?)

You must have half of Night City bowing and scraping to you. That would go to my head pretty quick.

YUEH

Truthfully, I have an ego big enough for two of me--but when you're constantly aware of what other people feel, it's hard not to empathize with them.

KAYLEB

Maybe. But if every Esper saw things that way, I doubt there'd be a war in the first place.

YUEH

I believe that's the highest compliment anyone's ever paid me.

Kayleb actually smiles. He offers his hand to Yueh.

KAYLEB

Truce?

INT. SERVER BUILDING - NIGHT

A maintenance drone rattles petulantly across Gibraltar's path. She kicks it; it spits out a snap from Dante's coat.

Gibraltar picks up the snap, compares it to her own. One tiny E.E. falls out onto her finger, and she hisses in pain. A beat, then she takes off running.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

The servers are like banks of fog. Tavares can barely find her way to the main server, but she blinks away the hallucinations, focusing on the errant connection.

TAVARES

This isn't right.

Samris reaches into his coat--and not for Dante's tablet.

TAVARES (CONT'D)

Did Dante do--

She turns to find Samris lifting his crossbow toward her. But is it real? She can't decide.

Time slows. Fog closes in, illusory visions of people walking back and forth. Ghostly copies of Samris turn and walk away, laugh at her, look away in shame--but the real one takes aim. Pulls the trigger.



The bolt flashes through the air--

--and buries itself in Gibraltar's shoulder as she tackles Tavares to the ground. Gibraltar turns her gun on Samris, but he's already beating a hasty retreat.

INT. LING ROVER - NIGHT

Yueh shakes Kayleb's proffered hand. Their thoughts are connected as--

GIBRALTAR (OVER COMMS)  
Samris just tried to kill Tavares,  
and I think he E.E.ed Dante!

Kayleb is stunned by this pronouncement. He stares at Yueh, betrayed and uncertain. Then he bolts for the door.

YUEH  
What about the guards?

KAYLEB  
I can't just sit here!

YUEH  
...I'll go with you. I can guide  
you around them.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Kayleb and Yueh crouch beside the rover. They spot Samris running away from the server building and dart after him.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Gibraltar and Tavares help each other up.

TAVARES  
You're hurt!

Gibraltar yanks the crossbow bolt from her shoulder and flings it on the ground.

GIBRALTAR  
It's not deep. I'll be fine.

She pulls out a medkit and rifles through it one-handed.

TAVARES  
Why did you do that--jump in front  
of me like that? You hate me!

GIBRALTAR

I never said that. I might have thought it once, but--

TAVARES

You said you wanted to hurt me.

GIBRALTAR

Not you; the Esper. I figured if he was deep enough inside your head to control you, he'd feel everything, too. I thought maybe ... I could make him let you go.

It's as close to an apology as Gibraltar will ever speak aloud, but for Tavares, it's enough. She helps Gibraltar with the medkit.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Samris sees a guard on the tablet. Ducks into an alley. Back around the corner, Yueh stops Kayleb from running into the same guard.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Tavares is done. Gibraltar stands--or tries to. Her knees buckle, and she catches herself against the servers.

TAVARES

Lieutenant!

GIBRALTAR

Damn. I think Samris poisoned me.

Tavares grabs the crossbow bolt; there's a dark stain that isn't blood.

GIBRALTAR (CONT'D)

Should be some combat stims in that kit.

TAVARES

You need to lie down, not go running around--

GIBRALTAR

Give me that stim before he shoots someone else!

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

The coast is clear. Samris moves--but spots Kayleb and Yueh coming after him. He breaks into a run.

INT. SERVER ROOM - NIGHT

Gibraltar has left. Tavares fights back the fog, focuses on plugging the black box into the correct server.

EXT. FLEET TECHNICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Samris pulls up short--it's a dead end. He breaks out his crossbow as Kayleb darts around the corner, gun drawn. Yueh waits at the mouth of the alley.

SAMRIS

You won't fire that. One shot and every guard in this place will come running. Me, on the other hand....

Kayleb stares at the crossbow, incredulous.

KAYLEB

What game are you playing, Samris?  
Whose side are you on?

Samris wants to fire and get it over with, but he can't.

SAMRIS

She made me do it. Sasha ... she has my little girl. Said she'd kill her if I didn't stop you.

YUEH

Sasha?

KAYLEB

You should have told me! I would have--

SAMRIS

What? Scrubbed the mission, over some kid you've never even met?

YUEH

Samris--you have to know Next Step will never let your daughter go. They'll hold her over you for the rest of your life.

Samris doesn't want to listen, but he knows Yueh is right.

YUEH (CONT'D)

Do you think she'd want you doing  
their dirty work in her name?  
Could you look her in the eye,  
knowing what you'd done?

Samris lowers his crossbow in shame. A scuffling sound from above; Gibraltar leaps off the roof and tackles him.

KAYLEB

No, don't hurt him!

She pulls her punch--a little--but Kayleb's careless shout has attracted the attention of a nearby guard.

YUEH

We need to get out of here!

Gibraltar hauls Samris to his feet, takes his crossbow.

GIBRALTAR

Can you climb?

Kayleb and Yueh climb the wall. Samris feigns compliance, but slips out his remaining crossbow bolts. He clenches them in his fist--and plunges them into his own stomach.

KAYLEB

Samris!

GIBRALTAR

No! ...What did you hit me with?  
Is there an antidote?

Samris can't reply; his muscles spasm and he begins to foam at the mouth. The tablet falls out of his coat.

Gibraltar searches Samris--nothing. She grabs the tablet, but the screen was cracked during their struggle.

YUEH

There's someone coming!

There's no way Gibraltar is getting Samris' body up that wall, low gravity or not. She pulls out her E.E. and turns him to dust, then Kayleb and Yueh help her climb up.

They cross the roof and drop to the other side--and a truck pulls up, catching them like deer in its headlights.

TAVARES

Get in!

It's the rover. They pile in, Yueh takes the wheel, and they head out of the complex. Just in time--cars have begun rolling through the gate.

EXT. TITHONIUM CHASMA/INT. LING ROVER - DAWN

They drive through the waning darkness, shell-shocked. Kayleb grieves. Yueh wonders what he could have done differently. Gibraltar's face is pinched with pain.

Tavares takes her headband off and sighs with relief.

KAYLEB

...So that's it. We did it, right?  
The mission's complete?

Yueh and Tavares share a look.

TAVARES

Not yet.

YUEH

Samris mentioned a woman named  
Sasha. That captain of yours,  
Krushchev? I believe he's already  
her prisoner.

GIBRALTAR

Krushchev has Esper resistance  
training. If he can hold her off  
until they roll out the software--

YUEH

Sasha is the strongest telepath  
I've ever met, and she enjoys  
breaking people. We can't leave  
this to chance.

TAVARES

There's more. We have to get back  
to the So Long.

KAYLEB

But the captain knows where it is.  
Better to hide--at least then we  
can help the Resistance.

TAVARES

The virus....

(looks at Yueh)

...it isn't complete. We think there's a piece missing--something Nagaveni didn't want the Espers to find out if we were captured.

KAYLEB

You mean it isn't going to work?

TAVARES

Not without the last piece. I'm pretty sure Myint has it.

GIBRALTAR

I'll go. ...Everyone give me your stims.

TAVARES

The only place you should be going is a hospital!

Gibraltar shudders, wracked with pain. She gets control.

GIBRALTAR

And die in a bed when they can't figure out what Samris hit me with? I'd rather go out fighting.

INT. SO LONG - CREW MESS - DAY

Krushchev is strapped into one of the seats. Sweat beads on his forehead; he stares straight ahead.

Facing him is Sasha, eyes locked with his, fingernails digging into the flesh of his arm.

SASHA

Tell me what I want to know. Let me in, or I'll stake you out in the dust until you beg for death.

Krushchev trembles, but doesn't give in.

ADRAN

(steps in)

I just got word that fleet communications will be down for a few minutes while they test the new software.

SASHA  
Don't interrupt me while I'm  
working!

Before she can get back to it, another Enforcer enters.

ENFORCER #1  
Ma'am--there's a vehicle headed  
straight for our coordinates!

Sasha gives Krushchev a cruelly triumphant smile.

EXT. SYRIA PLANUM - DAY

The rover drives toward the So Long, which is concealed  
beneath the shadow of a large rock.

The So Long's hatch opens; the rover drives inside.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY/INT. LING ROVER - DAY

The rover stops; Adran leads Sasha's Enforcers inside. They  
find it empty.

ADRAN (V.O.)  
There's no one here.

SASHA (V.O.)  
Don't be a fool, Adran.

Adran nods to the others. Raises his gun. They unleash a  
flood of bullets, tearing up the rover's interior.

Silence falls, but is broken by the sounds of something  
tapping against the So Long's hull.

ADRAN  
They're outside!

He leads two Enforcers out; two more guard the hatch. An  
invisible figure slides carefully off the rover's roof and  
enters it through the open airlock.

GIBRALTAR  
It's clear.

Tavares climbs out of the secret compartment--rattled but  
unscathed. Gibraltar takes off her hood long enough to  
inject herself with another stim.

EXT. SYRIA PLANUM - DAY

Kayleb tosses one last rock at the So Long, then rejoins Yueh behind cover, where they've placed all the weapons from the secret compartment.

KAYLEB

You know how to fire that thing?

Yueh warily hefts a handgun.

YUEH

It's part of our mandatory training.

KAYLEB

When it comes down to it, don't think--just shoot. ...Sure you don't want Dante's headband?

YUEH

I'll be fine. As long as Sasha doesn't know I'm here, I'll be able to hide my presence.

(then)

They're coming.

Kayleb takes a weapon in both hands and steps out shooting. The Enforcers scramble for cover, firing back. Yueh slips toward the ship while they're distracted.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

The last two Enforcers run toward the gunfire, and Tavares and Gibraltar dash to the computer core.

TAVARES

Myint?

No response. Tavares tries the door--it swings open. The lock has been sheared right off.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE - CONTINUOUS

Tavares enters, horrified. The server room looks like the aftermath of a hurricane.

Gibraltar takes off the mesh hood to get a better look; behind her stands Captain Krushchev.



EXT. SYRIA PLANUM - DAY

Kayleb takes down two Enforcers before taking a hit in the leg. He drags himself behind cover.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE/CARGO BAY - DAY

Gibraltar sees the look on Tavares' face and spins around, gun ready, but Krushchev kicks it out of her hand.

TAVARES

Captain!

Gibraltar pulls on the mesh hood and disappears. She hits Krushchev hard enough to knock him backwards into the cargo bay, where he settles into a judo stance.

Tavares searches the damaged server room for any sign that Myint's memories might still be retrievable, but finds nothing. She sinks to the floor, grieving.

Krushchev holds his own against Gibraltar, getting in jabs that make her gasp despite not being able to see her.

GIBRALTAR

Krushchev--snap out of it! You're stronger than this!

Yueh slips in through the hatch, keeping to the shadows. He knows Sasha is there, but she's wearing Krushchev's mesh suit. He can't get a fix on her.

EXT. SYRIA PLANUM - DAY

Kayleb, breathing hard, peeks out from cover but sees no one. A sound from above--Adran's boot precedes the rest of him as he drops down and tackles Kayleb.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE - DAY

Tavares picks up Gibraltar's gun and spots a tiny FISH etched into the floor. A line of them leads deeper in.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

Krushchev grabs Gibraltar and slams her into the ground. He pulls out a knife--but hits only the deck with it.

Yueh gets a bead on Sasha and takes a shot. Misses.

EXT. SYRIA PLANUM - DAY

Two Enforcers drag the wounded Kayleb toward the So Long. Adran looks up in alarm, takes off running.

Kayleb uses the distraction to pull an E.E. from each sleeve and activate them.

KAYLEB

Eat this!

It's not a clean death, but Kayleb takes both Enforcers with him.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE- DAY

Tavares follows the line of fish to the wall. She shoves aside some equipment and discovers a dolphin etched into a square panel--it's identical to the one on Rasulov's book.

RASULOV (V.O.)

Actually, it's short for So Long,  
and Thanks for All the Fish.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

Gibraltar is flagging. Combat stim or no, she can't keep up with Krushchev any longer. He drives his knife toward her throat--and slips in the blood from his reopened wound. He misses her throat, but slices open her arm and disables the stealth suit.

Adran rushes in. Fires at Yueh, who ducks under the rover. Adran gets in a lucky shot that sends Yueh's gun flying.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE - DAY

Tavares places her hand against the dolphin panel. It slides inward; the wall splits down the center and retracts. Beyond it are the servers from São Paulo.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

Gibraltar stumbles, limbs growing weak as the poison finally works its way to her heart. Krushchev grabs her, tears off her hood.

Yueh pretends to speak into an imaginary comm.

YUEH

All teams, converge on my  
position!

Sasha falls for it--Krushchev drops Gibraltar and runs to look out the hatch. Adran takes no chances, grabbing Yueh and dragging him out from under the rover.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE - DAY

Tavares stares in wonder for a moment, then remembers what she came for. A screen prompts, BEGIN UPLOAD SEQUENCE?

Tavares keys the sequence. The servers wake up, fans humming, and names begin to flash across the screen. Catalina Motta. Angelino Parente. Kwesi Okoro, Andy Caro, Marina Casal, João Tavares--a thousand more.

EXT. SYRIA PLANUM/MARS ORBIT - DAY

The So Long begins broadcasting. Beams of light reach a satellite and split a thousand different ways--each one arriving at a ship in orbit.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

Adran drags Yueh over to Sasha. By the time they realize he doesn't even have a comm, Gibraltar has disappeared.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE - DAY

Gibraltar crawls in from the cargo bay, face ashen.

GIBRALTAR

Couldn't ... stop them.

TAVARES

(rushes to her)

I found the last piece. The  
Uploads--

Krushchev steps through the door, murder in his eyes. Tavares backs away, lifts Gibraltar's gun, but can't fire.

TAVARES

Captain, please. You have to fight  
her!

GIBRALTAR

Shoot him. J-just ... pull....

Krushchev yanks the gun from Tavares' hands, then punches her. Tavares tries to pull out her own sidearm, but it clatters to the floor as Krushchev drags her out.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

Krushchev forces Tavares to her knees beside Yueh, who a now-visible Sasha has already begun to torture mentally.

SASHA

I've been looking for you a long time. Clever, hiding right under my nose, but not clever enough.

She turns to Tavares; Yueh catches his breath.

SASHA (CONT'D)

But you--you're a surprise. Andrei here seems quite impressed with your skills; maybe I can make use of you.

Krushchev strips Tavares' anti-Esper headband off so Sasha can scour her memories.

SERIES OF SHOTS - FLASHBACK

--Tavares in her bunk.

TAVARES

Honestly, I'm not even sure I know what all this code does.

--Tavares and Dante.

TAVARES

Anyway, you can't Upload someone into just any computer. The system has to be formatted properly.

--Tavares talking to Myint.

TAVARES

You're the one thing the Espers can't control.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

Sasha's face fills with outrage.

SASHA  
 (to Adran)  
 Contact the fleet--tell them to  
 shut down the communications  
 network immediately!

Adran, after making sure Sasha has control of Yueh, runs out through the cargo hatch.

YUEH (V.O.)  
 Fight her, Mida. She can't control  
 all three of us!

SASHA (V.O.)  
 THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG.

Tavares and Yueh scream in pain.

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE - DAY

With the last of her strength, Gibraltar collects Tavares' gun. Pulls it to her chest. Removes her headband; fires.

INT. SO LONG - CARGO BAY - DAY

Sasha senses the new mind, reaches out to take it--and is jolted by its sudden death. Her hold on the others cracks.

With a wordless shout, Tavares grabs the gun from Krushchev's hand and shoots Sasha in the throat.

A PSYCHIC SCREAM sends them to their knees. When it fades, Sasha lies in her blood, staring sightlessly at the sky.

TAVARES  
 (crawls to Krushchev)  
 Captain, we've done it. We  
 completed the mission!

Krushchev tracks her with his eyes, but can't seem to make his muscles obey. Yueh touches Krushchev, dismayed.

YUEH  
 Mida ... there isn't much of him  
 left. Sasha broke everything but  
 his spirit.

Tavares clutches Krushchev's bloodied coat, refusing to accept the loss of yet another friend. Krushchev's eyes travel to meet Yueh's, pleading.

Yueh reaches into Krushchev's pocket and draws out the CRUMPLED PHOTOGRAPH of Tom and the others. He didn't leave it behind after all.

YUEH

I understand.

Yueh guides Krushchev's hand to his chest, where his E.E. rests beneath his coat.

TAVARES

No....

YUEH

It's what he wants. I'm sorry.

A faintly grateful smile. An apology for Tavares. Then Krushchev takes his own life.

MONTAGE

--Tavares confirms Gibraltar's death.

SONG

*When you were standing in the wake  
of devastation/When you were  
waiting on the edge of the unknown*

--Yueh finds Kayleb's headband.

SONG (CONT'D)

*With the cataclysm raining down,  
insides crying save me now/You  
were there impossibly alone.*

--Dante's toolbox sits abandoned in the rover.

TAVARES (V.O.)

The Procyon defense fleet never  
intended to wait for Next Step's  
attack.

--The Procyon fleet drops out of jumpspace. A handful of ships fire at the invaders, but most remain silent.

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

They hid just outside the solar  
system, waiting for us to plant  
the virus which let the surviving  
Uploads take over the Esper ships.

--Adran runs toward Sasha's shuttle--which takes off and begins to chase him.

--A dogfight. Several ships are destroyed; then it's over.

TAVARES (V.O.)

The Earth Union surrendered within a day. I wish I could say that was the end of the war, but some battles can't be fought with weapons.

--Tavares and Yueh crouch above the prison camp. Explosions go off, blasting holes in the fence.

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

They have to be fought with words, in the hearts and minds of the people.

--Yueh carries Samris' daughter out through the gap.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SYRIA PLANUM - DAY

Tavares and Yueh step out of the So Long and watch the exploding ships light up the sky like fireworks.

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

Those battles continue, but this one...

Yueh takes Tavares' hand. For a moment, she sees her team standing there--even Rasulov--smiling at her. Then they fade, and Yueh holds her while she cries.

SONG

*Do you feel cold and lost in  
desperation?/You build up hope but  
failure's all you've known/  
Remember all the sadness and  
frustration/And let it go....*

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

...for now, this one is over.

CREDITS ROLL

INT. SO LONG - COMPUTER CORE - NIGHT

On the wall hang several pairs of dog tags. Krushchev, Kayleb, Dante ... Gibraltar's are missing.

Tavares has dragged one of the São Paulo servers into the space where Myint's core once sat. She hangs Gibraltar's tags and crystal pendant on the server. Powers it up.

SCREEN: UPLOADING ... UPLOADING ... UPLOAD COMPLETE.

GIBRALTAR (V.O.)  
Hello? Can anyone hear me?  
(then)  
Where am I?

Tavares smiles.

FADE OUT

THE END