

A L I E N H A R V E S T

by
Jon Spaihts

based on characters by
Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Schusett

Quite an experience to live in
fear, isn't it? That's what it is
to be a slave.

--Roy Batty

If one took one's eyes off the
maddening images on the
television, one began to think of
other images, of the city one knew
and recognized, lived in and loved
the way you love a person.

--Tom Piazza

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Wide sky tinted mauve. Below are rolling hills, mustard
hued and speckled golden.

In the distance are tall crops and a row of
extraterrestrial beasts of burden, swinging scythes.
Another row of these GRUNTS, which resemble bipedal mules,
follows raking the crops into sacks.

Two members of another species oversee everything.
Standing over fifteen feet tall and wearing simple robes,
the GROWERS (i.e., "space jockeys") occasionally turn their
elephantine faces to the grunts.

But the growers' attention remains on two humans, FIN and
KARIK, in the foreground.

FIN

The good news is you'll never
have to swing a blade; the grunts
do the heavy lifting. The bad
news is we're responsible for
squeezing out more bushels from
each acre.

KARIK

OK.

Karik sports a crew cut and looks bewildered. Fin is
taller than him and has a beard.

FIN

Over there, it's like hominy.
I've been weighing each stalk, and

FIN (CONT'D)

based on that, I decide which
patches pollinate and which don't.
Karik, you getting this?

KARIK

Do you--can I have some water?

FIN

Yeah. Hey. Why don't you
sit down.

Karik staggers, drops to one knee, and Fin steps up to help him.

Off to the side, a grey tabby CAT crouches in the grass, stalking something. Her pupils are dilated; her butt wiggles.

A grower studies the crops then turns its attention to its feet.

There's the cat, with a small orange animal in her mouth. The cat drops her kill at the grower's feet and lets out a little meow.

The grower looks delighted and laughs.

CUT TO BLACK

A beat. We hear a low mechanical moan, wind rushing, then a crash.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower's eyes open, startled. It looks around to determine the source of the noise.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The ship is a figure eight, two toroids pressed together; the lead toroid is slightly smaller than the rear one. The ship is spiraling out of control into the atmosphere of some planet.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower is reclined in its control chair. Its eyes close again, now tranquil. Its arms fall to its side. A massive, oblong console is mounted obliquely over the grower. The console starts to glow and hum.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The ship's spirals begin to widen, gradually becoming more controlled. Once it's flying smoothly through the atmosphere, it pitches upward, as if to climb, but plummets.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower looks confused. It strains to regain control of the ship.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The ship drops straight down, spinning, aft end first. The spinning slows then stops. It flips, putting the smaller toroid back in the lead. It pulls out of its free fall but can't maintain altitude, let alone climb.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower's clenched face slides into a look of resignation.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The ship streaks over the craggy surface of a planet.

It pitches upward for a better attitude upon impact. But just as the skin of the ship starts scraping the ground, a rocky promontory appears in its path.

The ship ramps off the promontory and is airborne again, pitching downward. The first toroid of the figure eight gets buried in the ground with the larger one jutting out obliquely.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower lets out a sigh and sinks back into its chair. The console is dark. The grower inspects its immediate surroundings, and as its eyes sweep over the floor, it does a double take.

Its hand touches its mouth, and a pitying look sweeps over its face. It regains its composure. Its eyes close. Its left hand comes to its chest; its right goes to the floor. At the moment its hand touches the floor--

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

Explosive bolts fire, jettisoning the aft section of the ship. What remains looks like a horseshoe, as gusts tumble the ship section over the wasteland.

FADE TO:

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower is motionless in the chair.

Time passes. It remains unmoved and calm. More time. We observe the grower's steady meditation for a beat, then another, then another.

Suddenly its hands grab its head, and it lets out a cry.

Just as suddenly, its robe stains purple, and a chestburster erupts from its ribs.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

From each of the tips of the "horseshoe," protrusions start expanding. We hear the muffled sound of an emergency transmission. We recognize the tableau as the sight Dallas, Kane, and Lambert first saw in the original "Alien."

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - GALLEY

Karik sits at a table. All of the furnishings on the growers' planet are simple but not primitive. None use electricity, but all are well made.

A large window overlooks the galley and adjoining locker area. Beyond the window is a hall leading outside.

Fin places a bowl in front of Karik, and he quickly starts eating. Fin sits down and takes a bite or two.

FIN

Like the stew?

KARIK

(swallowing)

Well, it's just the first thing
I've had to eat in two years.

FIN

You were frozen on the
Armstrong?

Karik looks up from his food.

KARIK

The Armstrong was blown to hell
by a . . . pirate clan, I guess.
I was manning the reactor and
first saw its meltdown. So I
notified the bridge and went
straight to an EEV. I didn't
wait for the abandon-ship
command, which is why I'm here.
But as I was going under, I was
sure I'd never wake up again.

A beat.

FIN

I'm surprised the pirates
didn't take you.

KARIK

You'd have to ask them about
that.

FADE IN:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - GALLEY

Fin washes dishes in the background. Karik hasn't moved.
He has his head down on the table. A beat. Fin's hand
appears on his shoulder.

FIN

Come around here.

Karik follows Fin from the galley, around the lockers and
into

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

Fin sits on a bed and gestures to another.

FIN
That's your bunk.

KARIK
Don't we have to get back to work?

The cat hops in Fin's lap, and he pets her.

FIN
No, that's it. We work most days
but just a few hours.

Karik sits on his bed.

KARIK
Do you know where we are?

FIN
No. I'm not a navigator. I'd
guess we're many many parsecs
outside the veil, based on the
constellations.

KARIK
Really?

FIN
Just a guess.

KARIK
Well, when will I go home?

FIN
I've never gotten the idea the
growers intended for me to leave,
and I've been here for about nine
years.

A beat.

KARIK
Well, how many ships are on
this planet? We could get--

FIN

Stop. Just stop right there, Karik. Let me explain a few things.--First, my guess is the growers are terraformers. Making an environment this nice is what they're aiming for. That means every ship leaving here goes to a planet much worse than this one. So forget about being a stowaway. And forget about stealing a ship, because you have no chance of piloting one. They pilot their ships with their minds somehow, just like they put thoughts in your head.--Look, life here isn't bad. Our only concern is improving the crops. The growers leave us to our own devices. But don't piss them off.

Fin rubs the cat's chin as she purrs.

Karik looks at Fin then looks around the room. He considers the two doorways in the back wall for a beat.

KARIK

OK, Fin. What do you do with yourself?

FIN

Ah. Oleo here--we entertain each other. I go for walks. I write in my journal. I'm well rested.

KARIK

Reading your own journal. That's got to be interesting.

FIN

Eventually, it will be.

FADE TO:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

Fin sleeps peacefully in his bed. A beat.

OLEO sleeps in the crook of Fin's arm, resting her chin on his forearm. A beat.

Karik sleeps in his bed. He twitches and fidgets until he wakes with a gasp. He blinks his eyes then looks across the room.

Fin is still sleeping, though Oleo looks up at him.

Karik rubs his eyes.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP

The tan hide of the young alien begins to crack down the length of its oblong head.

Its skeletal torso shakes and contracts.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

Karik blinks his eyes again.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP

In a cavernous space with walls of scalloped resins, an alien moults out of its tan hide like a dancer shedding leotards. Looking up at the vaulted ceiling, it seems to grow larger right before our eyes.

INT. MEN'S QUARTER'S - BUNK AREA

Oleo lands on Karik's bed beside him and looks at him.

Karik considers Oleo before stroking her head then rubbing her chin. She gets comfortable and leans into it, purring.

EXT. PLANET - NIGHT

In the foreground are the men's quarters, a long building with an arched profile nestled in swaying grass. In the background are two identical buildings. The sky above is filled with stars and a purple moon. We hear Oleo's purring.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead is a cylindrical, black ship with jagged contours like that of an F-117A stealth fighter. Red lights at its extremities occasionally blink.

It drifts around a teal gaseous planet with white and grey clouds. In the distance is an orange sun.

SUBTITLES:

cruiser 'Arrowhead'
 crew: five
 mission: security patrol of rim systems
 day 98 of 180 at
 Mu system in Arae constellation

FADE TO:

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

The bridge is a utilitarian array of computer stations and ship controls spread before the command chair under a domed ceiling. Everyone on board wears similar uniforms.

OLIVER, an African-American woman, sits in the command chair, flipping pages on a clipboard.

TRUKS, also a woman, climbs a ladder out of a hatch in the floor.

TRUKS

Oliver, I've recalibrated the
 flow regulators inside the core.
 The reactor's at 94% efficiency.
 The daily dose equivalent is just
 55 micro-Sieverts, so
 everything's good there.

OLIVER

Thank you, Truks.

TRUKS

Hey, in my email, my old lady told
 me she saw Fred walking around the
 Family Station without a cane.

OLIVER

My Fred?

TRUKS

Yeah.

OLIVER

Huh. Fred didn't mention that in
 his email.

TRUKS

Seeing her or not using a cane?

OLIVER

Either one.

At the other side of the bridge, three men--GUNNY, HENZIL, and SINGH--play cards over a small folding table. Gunny has a crewcut, bearing a striking similarity to Karik.

HENZIL

(voice lowered)

Truks is at it again:

(mock-female
voice)

Yeah, Oliver, why don't I come by your cabin tonight? I could lap it up in your lap of luxury.

Singh laughs gratuitously. Gunny does not.

GUNNY

Bid.

HENZIL

I'm just saying, you know Truks has been sniffing around Oliver there since day one.

GUNNY

Just bid.

HENZIL

Sure. I bid 69.

Singh laughs again.

Oliver notices Singh's laughter.

OLIVER

So how's your little lady?

TRUKS

Well, it's the first email I've gotten that doesn't start with her missing her family.

OLIVER

I suppose that's good.

TRUKS

Well, either she's made some friends, or she's found the bar, or both.

OLIVER

Oh.

TRUKS

I just hope it's not "both."--What about you? Email have any news?

OLIVER

Well, Fred's still getting over the accident. I mean, he may be walking now, but he's not over it, you know?

TRUKS

Yeah.

OLIVER

He is walking, though. But--ah--honestly? I was disappointed by the kids'.

TRUKS

Oh.

OLIVER

Here's what it was. All right? Fred points the camera at the kids and says, "Say 'hi' to Mommy." So Fred junior is in one of his games. He never takes off his goggles, never quits working his controller, just yells out, "Hey, Mom!" as he's swinging his stick all over the place.

TRUKS

He'll be a pilot like his mom.

OLIVER

Yeah, right. Then Bailey jumps in on the scene and starts singing and dancing to some kid's song in the background. And that's it.

Singh laughs again in the background.

TRUKS

Cute.

OLIVER

Hey, Singh!

SINGH

Yeah?

OLIVER

I need the latest sitrep off the secure channel.

SINGH

I just did that.

OLIVER

It's eight hours past due.

HENZIL

Can we finish this?

OLIVER

You want to play, Henzil? So do I. But signing off on that report is what's keeping me from kicking it like your little bridge club over there. So let's have it, Singh.

Singh begrudgingly walks over to his station and starts to work it, pressing buttons, looking up codes.

Oliver looks to Truks.

OLIVER

Yeah, I know Bailey's cute. But, where's the conversation? Somehow, by now, I imagined they'd be sitting down and telling me how they scraped their knee and who they've got a crush on. But it seems like I'm just a distraction.

On Singh's monitor is a ring of stars with an over-sized Earth in the center. The image of one star blinks regularly, another has an orange triangle pointing at it.

SINGH

Here. The Endurance is escorting the Octavia through epsilon Eri space. All other patrols in our quadrant report no contacts.

OLIVER

OK.

SINGH

So, just as I--wait.

Pause.

OLIVER

What now, Singh?

SINGH

The network reports contact with an object bearing a class-three isotope tag.

Henzil and Gunny take notice, a bit surprised.

OLIVER

OK, Singh. Now you're going to have to check this every hour, and let me know the moment you've got a second data point.

SINGH

We've already got three.

The bridge falls silent.

Oliver pivots her chair to look at Singh, who nods. She springs to his station and they both look at the screen.

They see a map of their solar system indicating their position and, on the far side of the solar system, three magenta points in a line.

OLIVER

OK. We've got a hard target!
Prep for relativistic travel.

With that, a buzz falls over the bridge. Henzil and Gunny put away the cards, folding chair and table then turn to their stations, working frenetically. Oliver sits down.

OLIVER
Singh, send Henzil that--

HENZIL
Singh, let me have that
packet for analysis.

Oliver notices his interruption.

OLIVER
Singh, just lay in the optimum
intercept path.--Truks, on this
orbit, I want us doing twenty
percent of C by the time we
emerge from the penumbra.

TRUKS
Got it.

OLIVER
This orbit!

TRUKS
Your kids are going to freak when
we take this bounty and show up
two months early.

OLIVER
Yeah, well, the first thing I'll
do is put a boot through Junior's
games station.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The ship comes to life. Thrusters fire, re-orienting the ship. Its engines come on, burning bright blue. As the ship flies into the planet's shadow, its engines' intensity triples, and the Arrowhead quickly pulls away.

FADE IN:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - LOCKER AREA

Fin is weary and dirty.

Karik looks tired but also annoyed. His hair has grown, and he has a light beard.

Oleo studies something contentedly.

The two men are at their lockers. They have reddish stains up to their knees and at their elbows. They are taking tools from their belts and hanging them in their lockers. When Karik unfastens a link of chain, it catches Oleo's eye. She follows the tool into Karik's locker and swats it a couple of times.

KARIK

Oleo, no! Go on!

Oleo is still interested, standing on her hind legs, occupying most of Karik's locker.

KARIK

Goddamn it! Fucking beat it!

Karik makes a rough swipe at the cat, and she goes sailing out of his locker with a wail.

Fin turns with a stricken look on his face. He furtively checks the windows, and after he's satisfied no one's coming, he pulls off his coveralls and sits in front of his locker.

FIN

Did I tell you there was another guy here?

KARIK

Nope. Where is he?

FIN

Ansley is dead.

Karik, undressing, pauses then finishes and sits in front of his locker facing Fin.

KARIK

How'd he die?

FIN

I'll tell you the whole thing. First off, every time one of those grunts dies, the growers butcher them and spit roast them.

KARIK

The grunts?

(lurching grunt
impersonation)

Those things?

FIN

Yeah, the meat's pretty
rubbery, but the flavor's not
bad.

KARIK

Fin, you ate some?

FIN

Hey, it's meat.

(beat)

So, about six years ago, they
were roasting one. And Ansley
was all excited, which was nice.
He'd never embraced life here.
He griped a lot about what we
didn't have.--But that day he was
actually happy. Said he wished
he had an apple to stick in the
grunt's mouth. And when he got
some meat, he sliced it real
thin. Kept telling me it was
brisket. Whatever.--So we're all
spread out on the grass, everyone
but the grunts.--But then Ansley
put his plate down and turned
away for a second. When he turns
back, there was old Oleo, licking
and chewing his brisket.--Well,
Ansley caught Oleo with his shin.
It was no harder than what you
just did. Then, just as quickly,
the grower standing over Ansley
drove his shoulders into the
dirt. Never touched him. Just
looked at him and crushed him
like a can.

(beat)

Ansley's spine was broke in three
places, and he had a rib sticking
out. I know he had internal
bleeding, too. The good thing was
he was unconscious most of the
time. The bad thing was it took

FIN (CONT'D)

him the rest of the day to die.

(beat)

You seen the orange little things Oleo kills?

KARIK

Yeah.

FIN

Seem to be a parasite too small for the growers. Irritate the hell out of them. I think the growers consider Oleo further up the evolutionary ladder than you and me. And I think Oleo communicates with them somehow. Just from the way they look at each other.

A beat.

KARIK

I was married once.

FIN

Yeah?

KARIK

Yeah. My wife taught me all about being less important than a cat.

The men rise, tossing their coveralls and other dirty clothes in a basket, gathering a few things to take from the locker area.

KARIK

It's good to know I learned something useful from her.

They make their way out of the locker area.

KARIK

They didn't roast Ansley, did they?

FIN

I don't know.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

The men walk along a beaten path in the yellow grass, surrounded by rolling hills.

In a blur before the men, Oleo bursts from the grass, dashes across the path, and disappears in the grass on the other side.

The men keep walking.

As they approach where Oleo disappeared, she bursts from the grass at the edge of the path, crouched low, her claws gripping the dirt.

FIN

Get it, Oleo! Get it!

Oleo furtively looks left and right, and as the men get close to her, she leaps up then sprints into the grass up ahead.

KARIK

What's that?

He points to a building, like their quarters, set apart on a hill.

FIN

The ant farm.

KARIK

Ant farm?

FIN

Not really ants. I just call them that. They're a species of small encephalopods the growers cultivate. Like ants. Meaner than Brazilian army ants.

KARIK

Why are they cultivated?

FIN

All I know is that they've got extreme inter-generational adaptability and the growers use

FIN (CONT'D)

them early in terraforming. My guess is they metabolize new environments into something habitable.

Oleo pops out of the grass and trots down the path to catch up to the men.

KARIK

Have you been to Brazil?

FIN

No.

KARIK

But you're from Earth, right?

FIN

Tucson.

KARIK

Tucson? Sounds like you left at the right time.

Fin looks at Karik.

FIN

No. I was there. When the wildfire rolled down from the mountains, the sky black with ash.

They walk for a beat. Fin looks out over the countryside.

They arrive at a steep ridge of rock in the hillside, about seven feet high.

Fin quickly climbs it using familiar footholds.

Oleo winds up her rear and springs onto a series of outcroppings to the top.

Karik follows them. Near the top, he takes Fin's extended hand.

They resume walking.

KARIK

They've re-engineered it, Tucson.
So lush only executives live
there.

FIN

Look. Over this hill--

KARIK

Yeah?

FIN

Over this hill is a creek. We'll
stop there for a while.

Karik studies Fin for a beat as they walk.

FIN

Come on, Oleo!

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

Karik, in shorts and a t-shirt, enters the darkened bunk
area. He sits on his bunk and looks across the room.

Fin is in his bed, reading a book by candlelight, the only
light in the room.

KARIK

What are you reading?

FIN

(still reading)

The safety manual from my ship's
galley.

KARIK

Why?

FIN

(still reading)

Because my only other book is our
engineer's old lubrication
schedule.

(pauses, looks
at Karik)

It's interesting to remember what
we thought we needed.

Karik lies down then looks around the bed. Finding nothing, he lies down again. He stares at the ceiling for a beat, until his eyes gradually roll, his eyelids fall.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The alien's grimacing face.

The alien's hand plunges into the hole in the grower's side.

The alien's hand shoves a ball of purple guts in its mouth. It chews an intestine stretching from the grower.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

Oleo is outside, stalking a parasite in the tall grass.

Her eyes are fully dilated.

She tracks the parasite, creeping and pouncing, creeping and pouncing, until she finds herself beside an outer wall of the ant farm. A ventilation shaft from the building is open near the ground.

She considers the opening and steps in.

INT. ANT FARM - VENTILATION SHAFT

Oleo crawls along the shaft which isn't much larger than her, until the shaft turns upward.

She looks up and sees a ledge she could jump to.

She jumps.

INT. ANT FARM - REAR HALL

Oleo falls straight over the ledge and onto dark, slick ground.

Her paw is wet, and she licks it clean. She looks up.

The shaft descends straight down from a low ceiling, covered with concave ridges making it unscalable.

Oleo examines her surroundings and takes a few steps before stopping. She growls and hisses, drawing a paw back.

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

Around the ant farm, the yellow grass sways in the breeze, as the sun sets. The ventilation shaft is visible, though not emphasized.

INT. ANT FARM - HALL

Oleo takes a few steps and stops. She hears a creaking sound and pulls back. She leans forward. She hears a sharp pop as something leaps at her.

FADE TO:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - LOCKER AREA

The men enter, returning from a day's work.

KARIK

That is what I did!

FIN

No. You didn't.

They begin pulling off their gear.

KARIK

You told me to plant the seedlings.

FIN

I showed you a yield curve, distributed over paddy diameter. I said only plant the seedlings whose paddies are within the first standard deviation. Hey! Do you know how to sample a basic bell curve?

Through the window in the background, we see a grower walking down the main hallway outside the locker area.

KARIK

What?!

FIN

A bell curve--you can sample one, can't you?

(pauses)

You were the--

KARIK

Yeah, I can work a bell curve!
What do you care?

FIN

I'm trying to increase the yield.

KARIK

Yeah? Why do you care?

FIN

Why do I--guy, look around you!
You know what this is?

Karik shakes his head.

FIN

This is it--the center. The big
bang. The first fish crawling
out of the water. Every day.
The birth of life itself, and
we're part of it.

Karik rolls his eyes. Pause.

FIN

What if the crops decline and we
end up in the barbecue pit?

KARIK

Would we?

FIN

I don't know. Probably not. But
I like not having to think about
it.

(beat)

You were the reactor engineer on
the Armstrong, right?

KARIK

Yes.

FIN

Yes? I was to going say, I could
show you how to sample that bell
curve I gave you.

KARIK

Fine. This time show me exactly what you want. But I don't want some actuary telling me about operating a tier-five fusion kettle.

Karik notices the grower who stands at the window, studying them intently. Karik is just wearing socks and shorts. He is lean and muscular. Still perturbed, Karik faces the window and returns the grower's gaze.

The grower studies Karik's face for a bit. Its eyelids gradually descend, and its face relaxes.

Karik's irritated expression gradually yields to a concerned look of recognition. Fin steps behind Karik. Fin looks up at the grower before fixing on Karik.

KARIK

Is it telling us to--

FIN

Yes. Breed.

Fin grabs Karik's waist and puts his open mouth just below Karik's ear.

Karik is shocked but can hardly respond before Fin pushes him over the table.

INT. ANT FARM - LEFT HALL

Oleo lies on her side, her eyes closed. Her front paws twitch. She looks peaceful. However, nearby lies a small, dead facehugger.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - LOCKER AREA

Fin holds down Karik with one hand on the back of his neck. His other hand runs up and down his torso. He leans over Karik and continues to kiss his back. Karik struggles but cannot resist.

Fin rips down Karik's shorts, exposing his bare backside. He then pulls down his coveralls, and as he pulls them past his waist, his shorts bulge with his hard cock.

INT. ANT FARM - LEFT HALL

Oleo still looks peaceful, when suddenly her eyes open and her stomach bulges with a chestburster.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - LOCKER AREA

The men are having sex over the table. Fin thrusts into Karik a time or two.

Karik's face bears a kind of agony, as Fin fucks him.

INT. ANT FARM - LEFT HALL

We see the flesh-colored chestburster lying outside the ruptured cat. Slowly, the adult "ants" approach the chestburster.

The "ants" are actually the titular aliens in their original form. They all have their species' characteristic oblong head and eyeless face. They are black and tailless, and the number of legs they have varies from four to eight. They are roughly three inches long, slightly smaller than the chestburster.

The ant-aliens start to clean the motionless chestburster. Their smaller mandibles jut out, scooping blood and flesh from the face of the chestburster.

Another ant-alien cleans the chestburster's tail and legs.

The chestburster gradually responds to the adults. It rises on all fours and stretches, arching its back like a cat. It looks up and opens its mouth wide as if to yawn. Then with a vicious swipe of its tail, it sends several of the adults around it flying.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - LOCKER AREA

Fins hands are tangled in Karik's hair.

KARIK

God! Damn it!

FADE TO BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead has the orange sun of the Mu system behind it. Though its engine area is completely aglow with gushing blue flame, it appears motionless.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

The men are playing cards again. Truks and Oliver are at Oliver's station, talking.

OLIVER

Sure, a big payday would be good.

TRUKS

"Would be?" It will be!

OLIVER

But, look, seriously. Day after tomorrow, when we send our next emails, we cannot let on to anyone about our target. Anyone.

TRUKS

I know.

OLIVER

Yeah, well, I'm not worried about you really. I'm just worried about getting those knuckle-draggers on the same page.

Singh checks his watch, puts his cards down, and makes his way to his station.

OLIVER

(continuing,
voice lowered)

If I don't get a good feeling from any one of them, I'll screen their emails myself.

Truks chuckles.

OLIVER

I'm not even talking about the protocols. What about their

OLIVER (CONT'D)
families? Getting their hopes
sky high. What if we don't take
this bounty?

TRUKS
Come on.

OLIVER
I mean it. They'll get those
emails. Think they're on easy
street. Probably start spending
like crazy. And then we show up
empty-handed.

TRUKS
You just can't imagine anything
going your way, can you?

OLIVER
Why should I?

TRUKS
You know this crew is motivated
and will get this done. Look at
Singh over there.

Singh works at his station. He has a concerned look on his
face.

TRUKS
(continuing)
When was the last time he pulled
down a sitrep without you kicking
him in the ass?

Oliver chuckles.

TRUKS
So have you thought about
retiring early?

OLIVER
I've thought about early
retirement every day of this
patrol. I didn't want to take on
this cruise, but Fred couldn't
work.

TRUKS

It's going to be good.

OLIVER

(over her shoulder)

Singh, got that telemetry update?
How are we looking?

(to Truks)

Well, just to have that time with
my babies and be a family again.
And you--not having to work again
at your age--you'd better watch
it or you'll get fat and lazy.

Truks chuckles.

Oliver turns to face Singh.

OLIVER

So Singh, how's our intercept?
Everything good?

SINGH

Ah. No.

Everyone gets quiet. Oliver walks to Singh's station.

OLIVER

What do you mean?

SINGH

I mean there's no more data
since what we got at fourteen
hundred.

HENZIL

Shit!

Oliver shoots Henzil a look.

OLIVER

Let me see this.

Oliver leans over Singh, working some controls at his
station.

OLIVER

Here's the data point, two of
them, way over here. It's on its
way out of the system.

Oliver does a little more work.

OLIVER

OK, Singh, here's what happened. It got a gravity assist from Charlie planet to pull a slingshot. I think you missed that.

HENZIL

Goddamn it!

OLIVER

Hey, Henzil, I'll take care of this. All right? Do your job. Singh, I need you to plot a new intercept path. All right?

SINGH

Yes.

Oliver goes back to her seat, giving Truks an incredulous, I-told-you-so look. A beat.

SINGH

Captain?

OLIVER

Go ahead.

SINGH

At present cruising speed, we will intercept no sooner than 24 days, 5 hours. We will be well outside the heliopause.

The crew groans.

OLIVER

(to Truks)

Can we increase our speed?

TRUKS

Not without engaging the chemical engines.

OLIVER

No. Not that.

A beat.

OLIVER

Gunny, when do we rendezvous with the Amma?

GUNNY

Thirty-two days.

OLIVER

After that?

GUNNY

No other escorts currently scheduled for this patrol.

OLIVER

Singh, does the target have an apparent destination?

SINGH

Yes. Gliese triple seven.

OLIVER

That's just great!

Everyone gets quiet.

OLIVER

Right outside the rim.

HENZIL

And off the network.

Oliver looks at Henzil then sits, thinking for a beat.

OLIVER

OK, people, we're doing this thing. I'm sure you're happy to hear that. Now let's make that our last mistake.--Singh, set that new intercept course.--Gunny, contact the network. Inform them of our situation and course of action. Request the Falconer to assume our escort mission.

Gunny works at his console.

GUNNY

Check!

(to Henzil)

The wife's been griping me out.
I didn't want to read her next
email anyway.

Oliver sits with a disgusted look on her face.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead's engines die. Thrusters fire, reorienting the ship. A slight blue flame emerges from its rear, and it starts to move away. Suddenly its engines roar to life in full force, and the ship quickly pulls away.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Fin and Karik work down separate rows in the field.

Karik takes a few steps. He leans over, grabs a random stalk of the grain, pulls it taught, and quickly hacks it down at its base. He stands up and holds the cut end of stalk against a gage.

The gage is a sheet of metal with a progression of circular holes cut in it. The cut end of the stalk tries to slide into one hole. It doesn't fit. It tries again with a slightly larger hole. It doesn't fit. It tries an even larger hole. It slides in with hardly any room to spare.

Karik drops the stalk and records his findings on a tablet. He walks forward a bit, leans over and hacks another shaft at its base. As he stands, lifting the stalk to the gage, he hears a low bark sound that causes him to glance over his shoulder.

Unconcerned, he begins measuring his stalk. Suddenly, a cacophony of barks erupts behind him. He drops the stalk, looks around, and runs to the nearest clearing where he finds Fin.

KARIK

What the fuck is that?

FIN

It's the grunts. Something's
got to them.

Fin looks around then points to the ant farm.

FIN

Come on. It's coming from
the ant farm.

The two men start running up the hill.

INT. ANT FARM - HALLWAY

The ant farm's layout is identical to that of the men's quarters, opening into a hallway with a large window overlooking a large foyer.

The men find two grunts, dragging a third from the foyer. The third is dead, missing a leg and part of its pelvis. The other two are barking.

Karik immediately covers his nose and mouth, reacting to the smell.

As Fin helps the grunts drag their dead comrade, several more grunts pour in and start barking as well. Once the dead grunt is out of the foyer, Fin closes the door and studies the dead grunt, as its family wails around it.

After a moment, Karik taps Fin, as if to leave. Then suddenly, the grunts fall silent.

Everyone looks up. A grower has entered the hall.

It takes two steps forward and studies the grunt then walks to the center of the window overlooking the foyer.

The grower's eyelids lower. It looks to its left.

Beyond the window, dust and debris kick up.

The grower looks to its right,

rustling the loose items in its gaze.

The grower continues scanning the ant farm, until a startled look flashes over the grower's face.

Oleo's body comes flying out of a hatch in the back of the foyer, up to the window, its burst abdomen apparent.

A sad expression falls over the grower, as it whines faintly and lowers the cat just outside the window.

The grower pivots to face the men, looking down on them with an intense look.

The men stand shoulder to shoulder, looking up at the grower, unblinking. After a beat, they each nod a bit, out of sync with each other.

FADE IN:

INT. ANT FARM - HALLWAY

The men wear heavy gear--boots, gloves, helmets, and facemasks--and stand around a table, alone. Fin puts a tablet on the table.

FIN

So, I've deposited feed in the nest core, and the ants are down there. That'll give us about thirty minutes to find this thing.

KARIK

Won't it be in the nest?

FIN

Probably not. It's probably too large since it gestated in Oleo.

KARIK

How large?

FIN

I can't say. I'm sure it caught that grunt by surprise, though. Plus, the grunt wasn't equipped. We can handle it.

Fin draws a large rectangle on the tablet.

FIN

This is the chamber outside the window there.

Fin draws two hallways that angle away from each at first but eventually meet.

FIN

The two halls through those hatches part and rejoin here, see?

KARIK

Yes.

FIN

So you're going to take the left hatch. I'll take the right. As we go along, we'll flush out whatever came from Oleo. If you hear that I've found that ant, come running forward through the hall. Don't double back.

On the tablet, where the two halls meet, Fin draws a second rectangle slightly smaller than the first, then another pair of halls, parting and rejoining again. The ant farm is, essentially, a figure eight.

FIN

If we meet here and haven't found the ant, there's another loop. So we'll repeat the process.

KARIK

What do we do after we flush it out?

FIN

I'll throw this net over it.

Fin holds up a large sheet of opaque, shimmering fabric. Karik takes it then looks at Fin incredulously.

FIN

Believe me. The ants can't cut through that. Ready?

INT. ANT FARM - FOYER

Each of the men hold three-pronged spades. Karik gives Fin a nod before entering the left hatch. Fin shakes his head.

FIN

Damn it, Oleo.

Fin enters on the right.

INT. ANT FARM - LEFT HALL

Karik prods the rafters with the spade. Then he prods some of the crannies near the floor. He looks over his shoulder.

INT. ANT FARM - RIGHT HALL

Fin does the same work.

INT. ANT FARM - LEFT HALL

Karik takes a step forward and looks back again.

INT. ANT FARM - RIGHT HALL

Fin is halfway down the first segment of his hallway.

INT. ANT FARM - LEFT HALL

Karik prods around some more.

INT. ANT FARM - RIGHT HALL

Fin rounds the first bend in his hallway, and as he does so, the sound of his work diminishes.

INT. ANT FARM - LEFT HALL

Karik notices Fin's diminished sound and immediately starts walking back out of his hallway into

INT. ANT FARM - FOYER

As Karik approaches the right hatch, he tosses his spade aside.

INT. ANT FARM - RIGHT HALL

Karik quietly takes a few steps down the hall. He draws his blade. As he approaches the first bend in the hall, he gets close to the inside corner then peers around it.

Fin, still working, approaches the second bend.

Karik leans back against the wall, listening. When he hears Fin's sounds drop again, he peaks again then steps into the second segment, this time moving a bit quicker.

Fin methodically moves down the third segment of the hallway, prodding likely hiding places.

Karik peaks around the corner and studies Fin and the hallway.

Fin continues working down the last portion of the hall.

Karik enters the hallway quietly moving behind Fin with the blade in his hand.

Fin works to the end of his hallway and finds himself in

INT. ANT FARM - CENTER ROOM

The two halls meet, and two new ones begin. The floors of the new hallways are covered with small alien eggs the size of goose eggs. There's some low tubing and pipes overhead.

Fin stops for a beat then looks down Karik's hall. Seeing nothing, he peaks down the two new hallways.

INT. ANT FARM - RIGHT HALL

Karik starts running down the hall.

INT. ANT FARM - CENTER ROOM

There's an additional tube hanging from the ceiling, but Fin doesn't notice. He looks down Karik's hall again.

FIN

Karik! Where the fuck are
you!

Fin turns to look up his hall.

Still running, Karik has just entered the center room. He jumps into a flying kick.

As Fin notices Karik, the cat-alien leaps at him from the ceiling works. Karik's kick catches the cat-alien in its mid-section and sends it flying to the back of the room.

Fin and Karik collide,

knocking Fin back and

sending Karik's blade sliding across the room.

In a blur, Karik's got his feet under him again, but before he can get his bearings, something dark shoots over him. He ducks but it scrapes his back. He groans.

The cat-alien is the size of a bobcat. It recoils its long, daggered tail that glistens with Karik's blood.

The cat-alien arches its back and makes a feline-like growl.

Fin picks himself up.

FIN

Christ!

Fin grabs his spade.

Karik assumes a low martial-arts stance and steps toward the cat-alien.

The cat-alien and Karik pace around each other.
The cat-alien jabs at Karik with its sharp tail.

Karik parries the blow.

In a blur, the cat-alien jabs again.

And Karik parries.

The cat-alien makes a third jab with its tail and immediately leaps at Karik, its jaws open.

Karik blocks the tail then catches the cat-alien's oblong head with a roundhouse kick that knocks the cat-alien back again.

Fin stands there, awestruck by what he sees, his grip on the spade relaxing. He snaps out of it and looks furiously for the net.

The cat-alien and Karik fight, Karik using lightening-fast martial arts to defend himself.

Fin leans his spade against the wall, picks up the net, and turns, shaking it open before him. Before he can throw it, he groans in pain and looks down.

An ant-alien is biting his calf, just above his boot. Two more are on the toe of the boot. His other foot knocks the ant-alien off.

Across the center room is a throng of ant-alien, gathered around Karik's blood with more arriving from the left hallway.

INT. ANT FARM - NEW HALL

At the end of the hall is a foot-tall ant mound, with ant-aliens climbing out of its single opening.

INT. ANT FARM - CENTER ROOM

Fin is alarmed but checks on Karik.

Karik lands a spectacular series of blows on the cat-alien.

Fin grabs the spade, plants it in the ground, and pushes it forward.

While fighting, Karik steps on a few eggs in a hallway.

The eggs burst and smoke, but Karik's boots resist what little acid gets on them.

Fin has pushed the ant-aliens into a writhing pile. He steps away and looks to Karik.

Karik falls down.

The cat-alien winds up to pounce.

Fin twirls his net over the cat-alien.

The cat-alien blocks the net with its tail, and the net wraps around it. The cat-alien looks at Fin.

Karik picks up his blade.

The cat-alien faces Fin, coiling its draped tail.

With his left hand, Karik grabs the tail and spins the cat-alien to face him. Karik is about to make a back-handed slash into the cat-alien, but

The cat-alien leaps and bites down on his right forearm. Its teeth go through the heavy glove, and blood gushes from the holes.

Karik groans.

Fin groans, too.

Another ant-alien bites the wound on Fin's calf. His boot is almost covered with ant-aliens.

His other foot knocks the ant-alien off his wound then immediately kicks the boot off his foot.

The boot slides into the pile of ant-aliens, twice as large and twice as agitated.

Karik is face to face with the cat-alien. His left hand takes the blade from his right and shoves it into the cat-alien's forehead. Green acid squirts out onto the facemask, and in a blur Karik pushes the facemask and helmet back off his head. Karik shoves the cat-alien back, blood pouring from his wound as the cat-alien's jaws release.

Fin furiously rakes the ant-aliens, trying to beat them back.

The cat-alien staggers, with the blade still stuck in its head.

Karik looks to Fin.

KARIK

Spade!

The cat-alien gathers itself and coils its tail to strike.

Fin looks up startled but throws the spade anyway.

The daggered tip of the tail flies through the air.

Karik catches the spade and shoves it at the cat-alien.

The tip of the spade punctures the top of cat-alien's head, forcing it to collapse on the ground.

Karik still holds the spade and shoves it one last time, as the tip of the tail flies by, falling just short of his neck.

Fin makes a sweeping kick across the ground with his booted foot and runs away from the writhing ant-aliens.

Karik still stands there, gripping the handle, almost catatonic. Fin touches Karik on the shoulder. Karik jumps.

FIN

Whoa. Hey, we've got to go.

The writhing surge of ant-aliens is coming at them.

FIN

They smell the blood.

Karik hasn't budged, while Fin, with one boot, trots awkwardly and unevenly up the hall behind him.

FIN

Move your ass!

Karik drops the spade handle and turns after Fin.

INT. ANT FARM - HALLWAY

The door to the foyer closes behind the men. Fin takes off his helmet and drops it on the ground. He pulls his shirt off.

FIN

Let's wrap your arm in this until we get home.

Karik's punctured, bloodied glove slides off his forearm, revealing a series of puncture wounds. Karik groans a bit. Fin does, too. Fin starts to tightly wrap Karik's forearm.

KARIK

That thing came from the ants?

FIN

(shrugs)

Inter-generational adaptability.

KARIK

(pauses)

Is that the--have you ever heard of something like that--on Earth, I mean?

Fin shoots him an incredulous look. Fin continues wrapping the forearm, tightening the fabric to staunch the bleeding.

FIN

Thank you. All right?

KARIK

(pauses)

I wonder how the growers will ever get the grunts to work in here again.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. ANT FARM - HALLWAY

Through the window, we see Fin enter the foyer and double-check the door behind him. He's wearing heavier gear, including high rubber "wading" pants. With a shovel in hand, he walks down the hallway on the right.

After a beat, he returns with half the cat-alien carcass in the shovel. He tosses it in the center of the foyer.

In the foreground, Karik steps into the hallway, intently watching Fin's work.

Fin returns to hallway on the right.

INT. ANT FARM - CENTER ROOM

The row of eggs extend out of the last two hallways, just into the rectangular room in the center. The shovel scoops part of the pelvis and tail of the dead cat-alien. Fin walks off and returns after a beat.

Two of the ant-aliens are on the toe of Fin's boot. The boot raises off the ground, snaps and flings one of the ant-aliens off. The shovel lifts the remaining ant-alien off the boot and tosses it aside.

Fin scrapes up dead eggs crushed by Karik in the fight.

INT. ANT FARM - HALLWAY

Fin piles the crushed eggs on top of the pieces of cat-alien carcass in the center of the room. Using the leading edge of the shovel, Fin chops up the carcass and eggs into a pile of mulch.

FIN (O.S.)

Whew.

As he mulches, Fin notices Karik at the window.

KARIK (O.S.)
(chuckling)

Yeah.

He stops, smiles, and waves.

FIN (O.S.)
(chuckling)

Come on.

Karik continues studying Fin's work for a quick beat then looks up to meet Fin's gaze.

KARIK (O.S.)
So ah . . . so they've put you on
the eggs now?

Karik smiles and waves.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

The bunks are pushed together, and the men lie together, undressed.

FIN
(continuing)
Yeah. The grunts won out. I've
just got to be ready for the
harvest.

KARIK
Harvest? Of the grains?

FIN
Are you using those distribution
curves?

KARIK
Yes.

FIN
OK. You noticed any improvement?

KARIK
Well, the paddy seedlings
sprouted quickly.

FIN
Good. That grain is for us.
They may use some for seed later.
But watch the kernels per head.

KARIK
I will.

FIN

I think the growers expect me to apply those methods to the ant farm.

KARIK

For what?

FIN

Well, to make up for the losses. After that, I don't know what they want.

KARIK

Can't you ask?

FIN

Can you? Could you ask them?

KARIK

No.

FIN

Me neither. It's just hard to apply the principles of selective pollination to an asexual species. I'm not even sure the growers grasp the concept of heterosexual reproduction in the animal kingdom. I mean, the grunts only have one sex, and I haven't noticed a difference among the growers, either.

Fin pauses, and they look at each other. They both laugh.

KARIK

They're going to be disappointed with us.

FIN

Yes. Yes, they will be.

They laugh some more and embrace. Fin's hand is on Karik's uninjured arm.

KARIK

Did you and Ansley?

Fin shakes his head.

KARIK

Had you been with men before? I mean, before this, before here.

FIN

Yeah. I mean, I like women, too. I go after beauty when I can.

KARIK

But with me, you needed some mind control from a fifteen-foot alien?

FIN

No. I just hadn't thought in those terms for a while. But just touching--it's nice. Had you? With men?

KARIK

God, no!

A beat. He looks at Fin.

FIN

So you're saying you needed mind control from an extraterrestrial to come after me?

KARIK

Yeah. You could say that grower pulled a number on me.

(beat)

But . . . I don't know . . . I'm surprised. I mean, it does make the time pass.

FIN

Yeah, right.

They laugh, embrace and kiss.

FIN

Hey, what is this?

Fin pinches some skin on the side of Karik's uninjured wrist. Between Fin's thumb and fore finger is what looks like a nipple. Karik blanches then recovers.

KARIK

Oh, it's a genetic mod. It--

FIN

What for?

KARIK

It's a gland that secretes a mixture of proteins that protects my skin in extreme conditions. See? Watch.

Karik's thumb and fore finger squeeze and stroke the nipple until a thick white substance squirts from the tip and onto Karik's wrist. Karik dabs some of the liquid from his wrist and onto his lips.

KARIK

See? Nature's lip balm.

FIN

Yeah. Nature.

KARIK

Here. Try it. Come on. Trust me. Trust me.

Fin allows him to apply the liquid to his lips.

FIN

That's for moisturizer?

KARIK

Well, it's more than just that. Pretty good, huh?

Fin rubs his lips together and is quiet for a beat.

FIN

Steven?

Karik looks at him.

FIN

What were you doing before the growers brought you here?

Karik looks away.

FIN

Were you an errand boy for
the Company?

No response.

FIN

You're not an android, are
you?

Karik looks at him, perturbed.

KARIK

No.

FIN

That's good. I know you're not
a reactor technician. And given
where we are, keeping that secret
doesn't make sense. They haven't
been paying you. I promise you.

KARIK

Look, my wife had problems with my
work.

FIN

All right. Forget it. It doesn't
matter.

Pause.

KARIK

I'll tell you. All right?

(beat)

I was an operative for the
Complex.

For a moment, a look of disgust washes over Fin's face,
before he offers a forced smile.

FADE IN:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

The two men are in bed. Karik sleeps soundly on his side.
Fin does not.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - CARGO HOLD

Row after row of alien eggs. A massive alien hand scoops up a dozen.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

Fin lies on his back, eyes wide open, unable to sleep. He sits up. He looks at Karik. He looks at their beds pushed together. He studies Karik for a beat.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - CARGO HOLD

The alien hand, full of tiny alien eggs, shoves them into the alien's mouth. As the alien chomps down on them, they burst in its mouth.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE TO:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

The two men walk on a grassy slope. Fin uses a walking stick and has a small pack on his back. A beat.

KARIK

Have you ever seen a grunt
take a shit?

Fin just looks at him.

KARIK

I mean, the way they lean over.
They're natural yoga masters.

Fin doesn't laugh.

KARIK

Don't get down wind of that
action.

FIN

When the growers found you, you
hadn't been serving on a
freighter, had you?

KARIK

No. A cruiser.

They arrive at the hill's crest, under a cluster of trees with burgundy leaves.

Fin takes off his pack and puts it at the base of a tree.

Karik reaches in and pulls out a water bottle. He takes a long drink then offers it to Fin.

Fin declines. He looks over the countryside.

Their base is about a mile away.

FIN

I miss Oleo. When we came here, sometimes she'd climb up this to branch.

(points to
branch just
out of reach)

Then just look down at me like, "What?" After the third time she made me climb up after her, I started carrying this to goad her down.

Fin sits under the tree, grabs the water bottle and drinks. Karik sits under an adjacent tree, facing him.

FIN

So did your cooling system fail?

KARIK

What?

FIN

The reactor, did it blow?

KARIK

No. We were attacked, like I told you. I was the only one to make it out.

FIN

What attacks a cruiser and lives to tell about it?

KARIK

Bah.

FIN

Come on.

KARIK

It's a long story.

Fin puts his hands in the air, looks around the empty space.

KARIK

Fine. We were tracking the Armstrong for tariff violations. We'd been at it for a week, and it appeared they were entering their system of origin which wasn't on the network. Then they used a small planetoid to slingshot. So, we matched the maneuver. Now, this planetoid had no atmosphere whatsoever. So to maximize the sling and close on them, we were barely three clicks over the surface. Our engines were burning hot as hell. What we didn't know was that the subversives had installed a defensive battery on the surface, and we made a fat easy target. By the time we heard missile lock, we didn't have ten seconds to impact. And that is that.

A beat.

FIN

So you were the pirate ship.

KARIK

Pirate? They were breaking the law.

FIN

Oh. What law were they breaking? Tariff violations? They were probably bringing food to their off-network colony.

KARIK

Uranium and sulfur.

FIN

Oh. Fuel and fertilizer. And why'd they start their colony off the network?

(pauses)

You know.

KARIK

Why don't you tell me?

FIN

Tell you? We both know the Complex squeezes colonies like they're oranges on a juice bar.

KARIK

Oh come on, Adam. We're talking about the law here. The Company, its subsidiaries, other business-- if they're going to be out there, they've got to have security. That's what we did. Why I joined. Keeping Earth safe.

FIN

Oh, fuck you!

Karik looks taken aback. Fin rises and stands over him.

FIN

"Keep Earth safe!" Who's going to keep Earth safe from the Complex?

Fin turns away and looks over the scenery. Pause.

KARIK

You know, Adam, with your attitude, I'd guess your last hitch was chanting in some monastery instead of doing the Company's bidding.

No response. Karik stands up.

KARIK

Still angry about Tucson?

Fin turns to him slightly, scowling.

KARIK

Why'd all those people live where
there's no water anyway?

Fin spins and snatches Karik by the collar.

FIN

You ever had to step over your
neighbors to live?!

KARIK

Wha--?

FIN

The impossible urge to run, as
primal as breathing. Anything to
get ahead of that surge.

KARIK

Adam, what are--?

FIN

Don't "Adam" me!

Fin shoves Karik back.

FIN

When the Sonoran desert became an
inferno, everyone I ever gave a
shit about--all of Tucson--was
out in the streets, running for
their lives, and the only way out
was across the border. Who do
you think was manning the border?
Yeah. Your Complex! So if you
were one of them, you got across.
If you were a Company family, you
got out. But if you weren't, it
was just you and the posse, and
good luck with that.

KARIK

You got out.

FIN

That's right! I did. I got out.
But some people consider where
they're from more than just a
place to consume their vice and

FIN (CONT'D)

bunk their ass! Believe it or not.--And don't give me shit about living in the desert. If we were on the coast and it flooded, you Complex people would ask why all those people were living around so much water! So just...

Fin turns away again. Pause.

KARIK

Hey, I shouldn't have said that. All right?

No response.

KARIK

Look, I was never stationed on Earth. I didn't know.

FIN

(over shoulder)

Yeah? Well I don't want to hear how downing a freighter was keeping me safe.

Pause.

KARIK

You said it doesn't matter here.

(pauses)

Is this how it's going to be? Look, when I enlisted, my father had nowhere to live.

This gets Fin's attention. Karik sits under a tree. He's almost speaking to himself.

KARIK

And my wife had the virus. So I did what I had to to get her well. Once she learned what that was, she left.

Karik grows quiet and leans his face into his hands. A beat. Fin places his hand on Karik's shoulder, and Karik looks up to him.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead's engines burn at full blast. It's moving toward binary stars in the background, one a small red one, the other a larger bright yellow one.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Oliver is doing a calculation on her clipboard. She looks concerned. She's taken aback by her results. She checks over her work then puts her clipboard down in disgust.

OLIVER

So, Singh, you're sure the target's going to Gliese Alpha system?

SINGH

All the network data indicated that up until the target left Mu system.

OLIVER

Henzil, when will we make visual contact?

HENZIL

Soon.

OLIVER

How soon?

HENZIL

Look, Singh just told you the last we know of it was when it was in the Mu system. So all I can say is as soon as possible.

OLIVER

I'll be in my quarters. Call me when you do.

Oliver gets up and climbs down the hatch in the floor.

SINGH

Pssst.

Henzil and Gunny look at Singh. Singh nods toward Oliver's chair, makes a face of mock-scandal, and smiles. Henzil and Gunny exchange glances. Gunny shakes his head a bit.

INT. ARROWHEAD - OLIVER'S QUARTERS

The door closes behind Oliver. Her quarters are extremely cramped: a small desk, dresser and bunk.

She tosses the clipboard, and it lands on the desk near a framed picture. She picks up the picture, a photo of Oliver with her family.

Fred Jr. looks about eleven. Bailey is a couple of years younger. Everyone in the picture is smiling except Fred Sr., whose face is blank.

Oliver tears up.

There's a knock on the door.

Oliver composes herself and opens it. It's Truks.

OLIVER

Don't tell me the reactor's
played out.

TRUKS

No, no. We've got 95%
efficiency.

OLIVER

OK. So what's up?

TRUKS

No, I just wanted to drop by.

OLIVER

Drop by?

TRUKS

I--is everything all right?

Pause.

OLIVER

Come in.

She closes the door.

OLIVER

I've calculated our time dilation for this, going so fast for so long. You know what it is?

TRUKS

What?

OLIVER

Almost three years. When we get back it'll be three years later than we expected it to be.

TRUKS

That's why the Family Sta--

OLIVER

The Family Station can't adjust for this. That's three years on top of its compensation. You're four years older than your wife?

TRUKS

Five.

OLIVER

Well, when we get back, you'll only be two years older than her.

Pause. Truks considers that.

TRUKS

Well, that's why I rob the cradle.

Truks smiles, but Oliver doesn't. A beat. Truks notices the picture in Oliver's hand.

TRUKS

Hey, you'll have the rest of your life with the kids.

OLIVER

(almost crying)

Junior will be a teenager by then.

TRUKS

Sure. But--

OLIVER

Bailey will practically be one. Christ, they're only children once.

(beat)

I mean, being grown-up lasts forever. Besides, the more they're raised by their father, the more likely they'll end up deadbeats, sponging off me.

Truks laughs a bit, and so does Oliver.

TRUKS

I know you're disappointed.

(pauses)

Look, I've got two friends, both mothers. When their kids were going through puberty and all that during those tween years, they wished they could have been on a long mission in a distant ship. I mean, you could--

OLIVER

Oh, I've heard that talk. But I want to be with them. It's not just that, though. It's--

TRUKS

What?

OLIVER

I've just had it.

TRUKS

With the mission?

OLIVER

Yes. No. More than that. It's this whole thing. Fred only re-enlisted to get a pension. He just had to do one more tour, and then we'd have that security. But the accident wrecked that. So I get back in the chair, and now this comes along. The whole point was to get some stability so we could just be together.

TRUKS

Yeah, but--

OLIVER

Look, Truks, in three years, I could do three more patrols. I would just need a fourth to get my own pension.

HENZIL

(over intercom)

Oliver?

OLIVER

(into intercom)

Yeah.

HENZIL

(over intercom)

I've got our target on the scopes.

OLIVER

(into intercom)

I'll be right up.

(to Truks)

Well, maybe if we're set for life, Fred might relax enough to touch me again.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Oliver walks onto the bridge. All three men work at their stations. Truks arrives a moment later.

OLIVER

OK, let's see what you've got.

Singh notices Truks' arrival and grins.

Oliver leans over Henzil's station and looks into a binocular viewer emerging from the console.

ARROWHEAD'S TELESCOPE POV - TELESCOPE MATTE

Around the periphery are various range-finding indicators. In the center is a white point of light, streaked slightly. In the top left is a sliver of the yellow sun.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

When Henzil spotted it, how far
off were we?

Singh looks up from his work.

SINGH

I had to make some minor
adjustments, but it hasn't
significantly altered its course
since Mu.

Singh resumes work at his station.

OLIVER

How long until we're in
weapons range?

HENZIL

One hour, 42 minutes.

OLIVER

Good. Let me know if

SINGH

Oliver!

OLIVER

(continuing)

there's the slightest deviation
in its course.

HENZIL

Absolutely.

OLIVER

Any sign of detection.

SINGH

Captain!

OLIVER

What?

SINGH

Based on the target's current trajectory, it's moving to rendezvous with planet Lima Victor four two six.

OLIVER

OK. I'm glad you caught that. When?

SINGH

Two hours, seven minutes.

OLIVER

Is it getting ready to slingshot again?

Singh checks his console.

SINGH

I can't determine that.

OLIVER

All right everyone, it looks like we're going to have a tight window between the target's entering weapons range and making it to Lima Victor. It could just slingshot again. It could have a station waiting. It could have reinforcements waiting. I don't intend to find out, because I don't plan to let it get that far. So everyone needs to get their ducks in a row. Dress right dress. Once we engage this thing, I don't want any surprises.

Oliver sits in her chair and watches her crew working at their stations for a beat.

As he works, Henzil grows more and more agitated, checking and rechecking his instruments.

HENZIL

Oliver?

OLIVER

What?

HENZIL

This is the strangest thing.

OLIVER

Let's have it.

HENZIL

The target has no electromagnetic signature whatsoever.

OLIVER

What do you mean?

HENZIL

I mean, we can see its reflection of the star and read the isotope tag it's carrying. But it's emitting no radio signals, no sign of even an electric current. Not even a propulsion system.

Oliver looks shocked. Henzil returns her gaze and nods.

OLIVER

Truks!

TRUKS

Yes.

OLIVER

How quickly can you shut down the reactor?

TRUKS

The main thing is reducing the plasmatic pressure without freezing the core. An hour, maybe two.

OLIVER

If we don't power down before we're in weapons range, we might as well be stalking a deer with a cowbell around our neck.

TRUKS

I see.

OLIVER

Go make that happen.

Truks climbs down the hatch.

OLIVER

All right, people, I told you to get squared away. We're about to see if you took my advice. We're going dark. And don't think that's going to excuse one misfire, one heading error, or losing visual contact. This is what you trained for, so do your job. Questions?

(pause)

Truks is cooling down the reactor. That's our bottleneck. If she needs your help, don't even ask me; go do it. In the mean time, you'd better be ready to rock before she is. Get to it.

INT. ARROWHEAD - REACTOR STATION

Truks presses a series of buttons on the reactor's control panel. On a screen, a bar graph is full of tall vertical columns. A succession of columns appears, each shorter than the one before. Truks pulls a long handle.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The bright blue flame from the engines suddenly gets fatter, rounder, and less defined.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

A low roar is audible. Oliver paces the bridge, watching other's work.

SINGH

The navcom is tracking the target and will give you a hard copy of final data before power down.

OLIVER

Are you ready?

SINGH

Yes.

Oliver unfolds a black hood made of heavy fabric and slides it over Singh's head.

OLIVER
Keep your eyes open.

SINGH
I know.

Oliver opens a trap door in the floor just before her seat. She pulls a nearby lever, and a folded crew seat rises on a hydraulic cylinder. She unfolds the seat, walks over to Singh, grabs him by the arm, and walks him to the chair. He sits, and Oliver hands him one seatbelt strap and then another, which he locks and cinches up.

OLIVER
Are you good?

SINGH
Yes.

OLIVER
Be still.

Oliver pulls the lever again, and Singh rises to the middle of the domed ceiling. Oliver pulls another lever.

Mounted on the ceiling is a pulley, with a chain resting on it. The pulley turns, releasing lengths of chain with an enormous pair of binoculars hanging on them, which descends until it's just over Singh.

OLIVER
Keep your eyes open.

SINGH
I am.

OLIVER
(to Henzil)
Any news?

HENZIL
Its course hasn't changed. If
it's aware of us, it hasn't shown
it.

OLIVER
I need you to go below and prep
Gunny's Marines.

Henzil moves toward the hatch.

OLIVER

Hey. Start thawing them out but don't rouse them. Just be ready to push adrenaline on them and make sure the boarding craft is charged up.

HENZIL

Sure.

INT. ARROWHEAD - REACTOR STATION

Truks is at her station, checking her clipboard and pressing buttons on the console. The columns on the bar graph are much lower than they were before. Henzil slides past her to a door adjacent to her station. Henzil enters a code in a key pad, and the door slides open. He steps in.

INT. ARROWHEAD - FREEZER COMPARTMENT

The hall is flanked on both sides by freezer chamber after freezer chamber, at least ten on each side. Each has a little window which emits a faint blue light.

Henzil works at a console just inside the door. He presses a few buttons.

With multiple pops, tubes on top of each chamber disengage. The light in the windows changes from pale blue to red.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The ball of blue flame coming from the engines has diminished significantly. It's growing smaller. Finally the flame sputters and disappears.

INT. ARROWHEAD - REACTOR STATION

TRUKS

(into intercom)

The reactor's down. The core's still hot, so re-ignition shouldn't be a problem.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Everyone but Truks is on the bridge.

OLIVER
(into intercom)
Good work. Ready for power down?

TRUKS
(over intercom)
Ready.

OLIVER
(into intercom)
Take your station.
Gunny, any signal from the
target?

GUNNY
Negative. Complete silence.
Oliver walks to Singh's station and presses a button.

OLIVER
Henzil, how long until
weapons range?

HENZIL
Twelve minutes.

OLIVER
The Marines?

Oliver tears a piece of paper from a printer at Singh's station and puts it on her clipboard.

HENZIL
They'll reach room temperature
well before they're needed.

OLIVER
The Ripper?

HENZIL
Fully charged.

Oliver takes her seat and fastens her seatbelt.

OLIVER
OK, good work people. Now let's
do this thing. Gunny, open
bridge shields.

GUNNY
Check.

Gunny pulls a lever.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

On the Arrowhead's dorsal surface is a dome. Sections of black plating hinge backwards at the dome's base, onto the ship's surface, exposing the bridge under glass.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

The glare of internal lights obscures much of the view of outer space.

OLIVER

(into intercom)

Truks, you in position?

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks is strapped in a seat surrounded by a series of large mechanical levers.

TRUKS

(into intercom)

Yes.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

(into intercom)

Prepare for zero g.

Men, ready?

Nothing's said, a nod or two.

OLIVER

Gunny, disengage artificial gravity.

Gunny flips a switch.

Smalls items, pens and whatnot, drift from the crew's consoles. They take a second and grab anything near them, sticking them in uniform pockets and into clipboards. A few pieces of paper drift around in the rear of the bridge.

OLIVER

(into intercom)

OK, prepare for power down.

She inserts a key and opens a panel.

OLIVER

In--3, 2, 1.

Oliver pulls a large switch inside the panel.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The glowing dome of the bridge goes black. The red lights outside the ship flicker and go out, and with that, the Arrowhead disappears in the blackness. All that is visible are stars and an absence of stars where the Arrowhead was.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE TO:

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Beyond the glass dome, the scene is awash in stars with the binary stars of the Gliese system in the background. Slowly, the underside of the dome's support beams starts to glow with glow-in-the-dark blue. It gradually becomes clear that the glow displays numbers, marking degrees of latitude. Degrees of longitude glow around the perimeter of the dome.

Oliver cracks a glow stick.

Henzil holds a glow stick, glowing green, and slides a band on his head.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks wears a headband and snaps her green glow stick into her head band.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Gunny, wearing a head band with a green glow stick, sits at his station.

Oliver wears a head band with a glow stick.

OLIVER

Singh, you can take it off now.

Singh removes the hood; his pupils are enormous, dilated completely.

OLIVER
OK, now find it.

Singh grabs the enormous binoculars on the chain overhead. Despite their size, Singh can handle them, putting them up to his eyes. He looks through them for a beat.

OLIVER
You see it?

SINGH'S POV - BINOCULARS MATTE

The target is now a small, oval streak of light.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

SINGH
Got it.

OLIVER
Let's see that heading.

Singh, still looking through the binoculars, presses a button on top of them. A red pointing laser fires from the binoculars. A red dot appears on the dome at 0 degrees latitude and longitude.

OLIVER
Its course hasn't changed.

Oliver grabs her end of a speaking tube, a small funnel connecting to a tube. She speaks loudly into the funnel.

OLIVER
Truks, engage chemical engines
fifty percent.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

TRUKS
(into speaking tube)
Gotcha. Fifty percent.

Truks flips two levers then pushes a large brass handle.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

Stars and blackness. Suddenly a deep red flame erupts, illuminating the rear of the Arrowhead. The flame is not as bright as the blue flame; it hardly illuminates the rear of the Arrowhead and nothing else.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Oliver checks her watch.

OLIVER

I've got three and a half minutes
until weapons range.

EXT. TARGET SHIP

The ship, a glowing oval, is as distant as Singh saw it.

OLIVER (O.S.)

Good work. Now, Gunny.

GUNNY (O.S.)

Aye.

EXT. TARGET SHIP

A closer view of the target ship, now differentiated into two glowing ovals.

OLIVER (O.S.)

We've got to stun this thing,
not pancake it.

GUNNY (O.S.)

Roger that.

EXT. TARGET SHIP

An even closer view reveals it's the grower's ship.

OLIVER (O.S.)

If our ordinates are maximum
yield, we'll just blast this thing
into so much space dust.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower sits at its station in a completely calm state of meditation. The console above it glows and pulses.

OLIVER (O.S.)
 For our first salvo, we should
 start with one-quarter yield.
 Agree?

GUNNY (O.S.)
 Roger that.

The grower's face remains in serene meditation.

OLIVER (O.S.)
 OK, go arm four rounds and await
 my command.

The grower's eyes open, as if it just heard Oliver's words.
 It looks angry.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

The two men are in a field. Karik's hair is longer. He
 holds a stalk that looks similar to barley.

KARIK
 Twenty-three, twenty-four,
 twenty-five. Twenty-five
 kernels, this stalk.

Fin makes some notes on tablet and takes a few steps over.

FIN
 OK, over here.

Nothing happens. Fin looks back.

Karik is slack-jawed, looking up.

An enormous grower's ship silently glides over them at a
 low altitude before descending behind a hill.

KARIK
 What's that? Is that their--

FIN
 One of the growers' cargo craft.
 That's all.

KARIK
 I've got to see this.

Karik starts walking toward the hill.

FIN
Can we finish this?

Karik stops.

KARIK
Why--what's it doing here?

FIN
To load up.

Karik starts marching up the hill again.

KARIK
(over shoulder)
I've got to see this.

FIN
(to himself)
Fine. Go check out your toy.

FADE IN:

INT. ANT FARM - FOYER

The foyer is filled with eggs. In the center is an undifferentiated mound of resin where the carcass and crushed eggs had once been.

INT. ANT FARM - CENTER ROOM

The center room is also filled with eggs. Off to the side is a depression in the floor where Karik's helmet had landed and dissolved.

INT. ANT FARM - REAR HALLWAY

The ant mound stands over eggs nearby. Its only opening is plugged with a large concrete stopper.

INT. ANT FARM - FOYER

Wearing heavy gear, Fin sets about methodically harvesting the eggs.

Fin holds a staple gun that extends into a long stainless steel tube. From a distance, he staples the flaps of an egg together. He does it repeatedly, covering a wide area.

Fin pulls out his blade and drops to his knees. He cuts through the resin around the nearest egg. He uses the curve in the blade to pry the egg from the floor. He does that for all of the stapled eggs, their flaps quivering.

Fin gets a metal tray and puts in the eggs in rows of six.

Fin slides the full tray into a slot on a tall rack and pulls out an empty tray.

Fin repeats this process, working through the large space.

Eventually, he finds himself in a rear hall on his knees. He crawls around a corner and pulls a tray closer. He cuts out a few eggs.

He glances up and does a double-take then scrambles backward. Near the ventilation shaft Oleo fell from is an egg two feet high, towering over the others.

INT. ANT FARM - HALLWAY

Fin gets a clear vessel and fills it with water that steams slightly. He walks into the foyer and returns with some resin on his blade. He stirs the resin into the water until it dissolves.

INT. ANT FARM - HALL

Fin walks down the hall holding the shimmering net in front of him. He crouches down to approach the large egg. Then he swirls the fabric forward.

The see-through fabric rests over the egg with a draw string hanging off of it. The draw string goes tight and tugs a bit to adjust the fabric on the egg. All the smaller eggs around this egg are stapled.

Fin holds the draw string and checks his other gear. He tightens his chinstrap. He taps his face shield a few times, until he's satisfied. He leans forward. The egg's flaps open, and the fabric stretches with the motion. He sees the lacy interior of the flaps and the pink diaphragm inside the egg.

A beat.

The diaphragm tremors slightly.

Another beat.

The fabric shimmers a bit.

Another beat.

Fin sighs.

Without a sound, the facehugger is out, hurtling at Fin, its proboscis stabbing forward. Then he hears the facehugger shriek.

At the last second, the net catches the facehugger. Fin falls on his ass then jerks the draw string.

The edge of the fabric slides off the top of the egg, drawing up, catching the facehugger in its pouch.

Clenching the drawstring, Fin wrestles the facehugger as it thrashes around him. Eventually he dunks the facehugger into the clear vessel of water, dropping the drawstring inside and slamming the lid down.

Fin lifts the vessel and watches, as the facehugger fights out of the fabric then swirls around the interior of the vessel. It's large enough to cover his face.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

The scene is one of a twenty-foot-high waterfall, pouring into a pool down below. High ridges surround the pool on all sides, and in the foreground is a sandbar at the edge of the pool.

Fin is out in the pool, treading water, looking at Karik. We see Karik from behind. He is naked and up to his shins in water.

FIN

It's not cold!

KARIK

(slowly walking
into the water)

Where's the hot springs?

FIN

Never said there was any. Don't
tell me the Complex never trained
you to swim.

KARIK

Yeah, yeah.

Karik dives into the water and swims out to Fin.

FIN

See? Not bad.

KARIK

How deep is it here?

FIN

I don't know. Let's find out.

Fin takes a deep breath and submerges under the surface. Karik follows him.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Fin, also naked, stands on the banks of the waterfall, looking down at the pool. Karik looks up at him.

KARIK

Do you know if that's safe?

FIN

Do you?

KARIK

Do I? Have you done this before?

(gets no
response)

Adam, have you done this?

FIN

No.

KARIK

Adam, why don't you come on down?

FIN

Steven?

KARIK

Come on down.

FIN

Steven?

KARIK

Yeah?

FIN

Promise me, if I break my neck,
you'll make it quick and
painless.

KARIK

Smart ass.

FIN

Quick and painless.

KARIK

Adam, get down!

FIN

You got it.

Fin dives out into the pool, as Karik yells at him:

KARIK

Adam!

Fin plunges into the surface. For a beat, Karik furtively
looks into the pool. Nothing. After a second, Fin appears.

KARIK

You all right?

FIN

(chuckling)

Yeah. Ansley used to do that
all the time.

KARIK

Asshole.

FIN

I'd always meant to try it.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Fin stands in water up to his waist in a cave behind the
waterfall, bathed in blue light, watching and listening to
the soft roar. After a beat, Karik emerges from the
surface a few feet from Fin.

He looks to Fin then the back of the waterfall.

FIN

Nice, huh?

Karik nods, walks to Fin, and kisses him.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - NIGHT

The men have a fire going on the sand bar. A bucket of water rests in the fire. Wearing gloves, Fin pulls the bucket from the fire. He gets a bar of soap, lathers his hands, and sits down.

FIN

Come here.

Karik puts his head on Fin's lap, and Fin starts to lather his beard.

FIN

Something I wanted to ask you.

KARIK

What?

FIN

When we were in the ant farm.

KARIK

Yeah?

FIN

And you fought that ant.

KARIK

Yeah?

FIN

Where did you learn all that?

Fin takes out a long razor and starts shaving Karik's neck then the periphery of his beard on his face.

KARIK

Training from the Complex. Basic hand-to-hand.

FIN

Basic hand-to-hand? That's basic?

KARIK

Yeah.

FIN

I knew operatives learned something. But I had no idea. Had you used it before?

KARIK

Oh, yeah. A few times I had security details. Once when I was in a bar.

FIN

Ever hurt someone with it? Kill them?

KARIK

No. I never killed anyone.

FIN

You left that to your ship, huh?

Karik winces at the comment, and Fin notices.

FIN

Hey. I shouldn't. It's OK. All right?

Karik nods.

Fin finishes cleaning the perimeter of Karik's beard. He gets a rougher blade and starts raking it against the grain of Karik's beard, trimming it down.

FIN

I've been angry enough to kill. After the fire. If I'd had your skills. It wouldn't have been good.

KARIK

How did you land here?

FIN

I wish I knew. My regional manager had always asked me why I stayed in Tucson, and I'd always told him that if I leave Tucson, I'm leaving the planet. Well, Tucson was gone, so that's what I did. I got my transfer. I was in Earth orbit when I went under. When I woke up, I was here. Me and Ansley and another guy--what was his name?

(pauses)

I can't remember. He never woke. Stayed in a coma for three weeks then died.--Not the transfer I had in mind.

KARIK

I bet.

FIN

I was not good company. When I first saw the growers, I just assumed it was the beginning of a brief, miserable existence-- experimentation or slavery. I couldn't have imagined . . . this.

(finishes
shaving)

Here. Sit up.

Karik sits up, his back to Fin. Fin gathers Karik's long hair in his hand, twists it, and starts cutting it with the blade.

FIN

About three years later a grower showed up with Oleo. No one else. Just Oleo in an EEV.

KARIK

Why'd you call her Oleo?

FIN

It was on her collar.

Fin continues trimming up the back of Karik's hair and shaving the back of his neck.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - NIGHT

The two men sleep beside each other on the sandbar. The fire is now just a pile of glowing embers.

Karik wakes with a start. His eyes blink and focus.

Tonight, all he sees are the stars arrayed above him.

He looks at Fin and touches his face.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead's chemical engines are burning red. In the background are the bright dual ovals of the grower's ship. Behind that is ringed LV-426 (Lima Victor four two six) with the binary stars of Gliese 777 even further in the background.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

GUNNY

(over speaking tube)

Tubes one and two, loaded.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

That's one-quarter yield.
We're only going to disable
it, not obliterate it, right?

GUNNY

(over speaking tube)

Check.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

OK, Truks, kill the engines.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks pulls the brass handle back; the roar dies.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The red engine flame dies; the Arrowhead disappears again.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER
 (into speaking tube)
 Gunny, open the tube doors.

INT. ARROWHEAD - WEAPONS STATION

Along the ceiling are two long racks holding one missile after another, dull and grey, each one as large as Gunny himself. At the end of the station are two round hatches to the tubes. Beside each of them, are large brass wheels. Amidst all the markings and controls on the wall is an EEV hatch.

GUNNY
 (into speaking tube)
 Check.

He starts turning the wheel on the left.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The grower's ship appears motionless in flight.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower sits at its station, its eyes still open. Its eyes rolls back, and the console above it glows brighter, pulsing faster.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The grower's ship accelerates out of view.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Singh looking through his binoculars.

SINGH
 Whoa! Whoa!

SINGH'S POV - BINOCULARS MATTE

The glowing oval shrinks rapidly.

OLIVER (O.S.)
 What?

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

SINGH
It's running! It's running!

OLIVER
Heading?

The laser pointer's red dot is still at 0 degrees longitude and latitude.

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Truks, give me eighty percent on the engines.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The engines roar to life again.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER
Did it spot us?

SINGH
Still unclear.

HENZIL
No way.

OLIVER
What's it doing? Slingshotting?

SINGH
Probably. Either that or running from us.

HENZIL
There's no way.

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Gunny, are we ready to fire?

EXT. ARROWHEAD

At the forward part of the ship, two round tube doors are sliding up into the ship.

INT. ARROWHEAD - WEAPONS STATION

Gunny turns the brass wheel on the right. He turns it several times until it stops. He's a bit winded.

GUNNY

(into speaking tube)

Doors open. Awaiting orders.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

We see the grower's ship from the rear. LV-426, including its rings and moons, looms large before it.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The grower's ship is just discernible in the far background. Gradually, the dark nose of the Arrowhead creeps into the foreground.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

SINGH

We're in weapons range.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Gunny, fire tubes one and two!

INT. ARROWHEAD - WEAPONS STATION

With both hands, Gunny pulls two levers between the tube hatches. We hear a loud "whoosh."

EXT. ARROWHEAD

With a gush of gases from the tubes, two missiles shoot out of the Arrowhead. Once clear of the ship, the missiles silently come to life with electronics in their noses lighting up and the engines burning bright blue. They rocket away from the ship and into the distance.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

Again, from the rear of the grower's ship. Now LV-426 completely dominates the scene.

EXT. MISSILES

Over the noses of the missiles, we see their blinking lights with the bright oval of the grower's ship in the distance and LV-426 straight ahead.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER
Time to impact?

SINGH'S POV - BINOCULARS MATTE

LV-426 dominates the scene behind the large oval of the grower's ship and the bright blue dots of the missiles.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

SINGH
About 40 seconds.

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Gunny, put two more birds in the tubes.

GUNNY
(over speaking tube)
Roger that.

INT. ARROWHEAD - WEAPONS STATION

Gunny spins a wheel on the first tube hatch, then pulls a handle, and, with a gasp, opens the hatch.

His feet slide into two straps on the floor to hold him in place.

He turns to the rack of missiles overhead and grabs handles inset in the surface of the missile.

Gunny gently lifts the enormous missile from the rack. He gently slides the missile into the tube and slams the hatch closed.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

Below the wide rings of LV-426, we see the grower's ship, growing larger and larger, until it quickly flies over and past us.

In the distance two pinpoints, which look like stars, grow larger, until it's clear they're the missiles. They, too, fly over us, silently.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

GUNNY

(over speaking tube)
Tubes one and two loaded.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)
OK.
(to Singh)
Time to impact?

SINGH

Ten seconds.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

With the ring of LV-426 looming overhead, the missiles bear down on the grower's ship from behind.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

SINGH

Five. Four. Whoa! It's
breaking! Going evasive!

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

Just as the missiles are almost on top of the grower's ship, the ship makes an impossibly sharp turn, up and to the right. The missiles shoot right past the ship's position and have to arc back to continue tracking the ship. As they do so, the grower's ship disappears into the debris of the planet's rings. The missiles fly into the ship's point of entry into the rings but collide with chunks of rock and explode.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

The dome is filled with LV-426. Two bright flashes appear on a ring.

OLIVER

Impact! Is that a hit?

SINGH'S POV - BINOCULARS MATTE

The planet's rings just have a patch slightly disturbed and less uniform than the rest.

SINGH (O.S.)

Negative.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

Henzil, take the ventral spotting station, just in case.

Henzil unbuckles his seatbelt and, guiding himself with hand rails, floats across the bridge toward the hatch.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Truks, kill the engines.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks returns the brass handle to its original position, as Henzil floats by her and down a hatch in the deck beneath her.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The red engines die again. Now the Arrowhead is beneath the planet's rings; LV-426 dominates the background.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

Henzil floats through a hatch in the ceiling to a seat that is upside down relative to the rest of the ship. He straps himself in, and puts his glow stick in a pocket. Around him is a dome like the one on the bridge but smaller. He takes giant binoculars, like Singh's, off a nearby rack.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

What do you see?

Singh looks up at the top of the dome, studying the rings above. His feet rest on a metal ring around the chair, and he pivots by pushing against this ring with his feet.

SINGH

Nothing.

OLIVER

Filter everything but the
isotope tag.

Singh's finger slowly turns a drum dial inlaid in the top
of the binoculars.

SINGH'S POV - BINOCULARS MATTE

Individual pieces of debris constitute the ring. The image
of them becomes filtered--first orange then shifting to
green, blue, violet then dark shadows and silhouettes.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

Found it?

SINGH

No.

OLIVER

Come on!

SINGH

Give me a second!

Singh pivots around in his chair, looking up through the
dome.

SINGH'S POV - BINOCULARS MATTE

The slightest flicker of a dim, magenta light.

SINGH (O.S.)

Wait a second!

More flickers of the light.

SINGH (O.S.)

There it is!

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

Let's see it.

Singh uses the laser pointer on his binoculars. The red spot is near the top of the dome with the rings looming overhead.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Truks, bring us around to 87 degrees north, 4 degrees starboard.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks pulls hard on one lever, groaning. She strains to pull another lever, as its actuator runs to the front of the ship where it pulls on a valve.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

At the front of the ship, thrusters on the port and underside of the nose fire. At the rear, thrusters on the starboard and topside fire. The ship pivots up and to the right. When it's perpendicular to the plane of the rings, opposing thrusters fire briefly to stop its rotation.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

OK, give me a two-second burst at 20 percent.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

A slight red flame emerges from the engines for two seconds, and the ship slips into the ring.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

The dome above is full of glittering, gold dust punctuated by occasional rocks in the background.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Henzil, get your eyes open.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

Henzil puts the binoculars up to his eyes to test them, as the ring's dust drifts by his dome.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead emerges in the space between the ring and LV-426.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Singh eagerly scans the dome, starting from the forward section, working out and up.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

Henzil scans in the same pattern.

HENZIL
Come on. Show yourself, you filthy bitch.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER
Anything?

SINGH
Not yet.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

OLIVER
(over speaking tube)
Henzil, got it?

HENZIL
(into speaking tube)
I just started looking.

Henzil puts the tube on a nearby hook. As he does so, he glances down. He does a double take.

Nestled in the debris of the ring, is the grower's ship, not a spot, not an oval, the full ship right beside them, appearing at his feet.

HENZIL
(into speaking tube)
Here!

OLIVER
(over speaking tube)
Heading?

Henzil is flabbergasted. The ship fills such a large area of the dome he guesses at its heading.

OLIVER
(over speaking tube)
Henzil, what's the heading?

HENZIL
(into speaking tube)
Ten degrees south, one-seventy
port. It's right on top of us!

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower sits peaceful again in quiet meditation.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Oliver is shocked by what she's heard.

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Truks, port Immelman. Now!

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead maintains its forward momentum and drifts past us. Directly below is the grower's ship in the plane of the ring.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks quickly pulls two levers, pushes the brass handle for a second, then pulls two more levers, groaning with the effort.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

In the foreground is the grower's ship, lying in oblique profile, with the dust of the ring stretching around it. Above is black space and the Arrowhead making its turn.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower sits in a meditative pose, though its breathing quickens. The pulsing of the console above it picks up, too.

Suddenly the grower's eyes open. Its face strains, grimaces, groans. The console above instantly goes from pulsing to a conduit of molten heat. The console discharges, recoiling like a rifle bolt towards the ceiling.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The Arrowhead is halfway into its turn, when it suddenly spins across the rings, like an invisible fist had punched its rear.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

The spinning slings Oliver and Singh around in their seats. The binoculars fly out of Singh's hands.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks fights to right herself then starts pulling levers.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

The binoculars fly out of Henzil's hands and into the side of the dome.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

As the Arrowhead spins away from the grower's ship, thrusters fire to stop its yaw component of spin.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks grabs different levers and pulls them.

INT. WEAPONS STATION

Gunny stands up straight. The missiles clink, as they shift in their racks.

INT. ARROWHEAD - ENGINEERING STATION

Truks groans and pulls different levers.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

More thrusters fire, and the Arrowhead stops pitching.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Singh curses under his breath. Over the speaking tube, Oliver can hear similar sounds coming from the crew.

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Quiet! Quiet!

The crew settles down.

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Listen.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

Henzel gazes out of the dome with his ear toward the hatch. His binoculars drift by, and he grabs them.

INT. ARROWHEAD - WEAPONS STATION

Gunny holds himself upright, listening intently.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

From high above, we see the grower breathing heavily, its console cooling. Once composed, the grower resumes its meditation, and with a "clunk," the console slides back down. Out of focus in the foreground, something creeps in the rafters.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The Arrowhead is in the background, out of position. The grower's ship pivots and flies out of the ring, toward two moons rising over LV-426.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Anyone hear anything?
(beat, no answer)
Truks, what do you read?

TRUKS
(over speaking tube)
Still ten thousand Pascals.

Oliver looks at a barometer.

OLIVER
 (into speaking tube)
 I've got the same thing. I think
 we're intact. OK. Henzil.
 Singh. Someone give me a
 heading.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

Henzil pivots and cranes his neck to view where they
 emerged from the ring. He lifts the binoculars.

HENZIL'S POV - BINOCULARS MATTE

Two dark, swirling motes within the otherwise homogeneous
 ring.

INT. ARROWHEAD - VENTRAL SPOTTING STATION

HENZIL
 (into speaking tube)
 It's gone.

OLIVER
 (over speaking tube)
 What do you mean?

HENZIL
 (into speaking tube)
 I mean, a hit and run.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER
 (into speaking tube)
 Well, find it. Can't be far.

SINGH
 I've got it.

Singh faces the rear of the ship, looking high up on the
 dome.

OLIVER
 Good! Let's have it.

Oliver spins her chair around to see the rear of the dome.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Truks, 84 degrees north, 92
degrees starboard. Fifty percent
burn.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

Thrusters fire on the Arrowhead reorienting it towards the moons. The red engines come to life, and the ship takes off toward the grower's ship, which is now a glowing oval again, two thirds of the way towards the planet.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Oliver sits stoically, as the roar of the engines fills the bridge. A beat.

SINGH

Weapons range!

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Gunny, fire tubes one and two!

INT. ARROWHEAD - WEAPONS STATION

Gunny pulls both firing levers simultaneously, and again, the whoosh of the missiles' launching.

EXT. LV-426 - NEARBY SPACE

The mustard orb of LV-426 is mottled with red, turbulent eddies. The distant, dual ovals of the grower's ship streak towards it. As the ship nears the planet, its trajectory becomes a perfect tangent to the planet surface at which point it rapidly accelerates around LV-426.

After a beat, the streaking missiles follow, moving faster than the ship and matching its maneuver.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

SINGH

It's slingshotting!

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Truks, prepare to slingshot!
Kill engines on my mark!

SINGH
Birds matching it.

Oliver stares intently at the dome, as the planet grows larger and larger. She looks at her console.

A small plumb bob points to the ship's rear. After a beat, the bob pivots towards the floor slightly.

OLIVER
(into speaking tube)
Mark!

The roar in the ship dies.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

LV-426 wheels beneath the Arrowhead's nose. In the background are the two glowing jets of the missiles just before the horizon.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER
Time to impact?

SINGH
Unknown. Target is beyond the horizon. The birds are closing, though.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead is above, LV-426 below. The missiles in the background speed over the horizon.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The missiles creep up on the grower's ship, racing around the planet.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower strains again, as its console turns molten and recoils toward the ceiling.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

Suddenly, the missiles haphazardly plunge into LV-426's atmosphere like an invisible hand swatted them down.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

Again from the ceiling of the ship, we see the grower composing itself, as its console cools. The creeping thing in the foreground drops from the rafters into focus.

It's a facehugger, and it falls with its leg spread wide. Just before it reaches the grower, the grower's eyes focus on it, recognizing it.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

SINGH

Lost the birds!

Oliver looks devastated.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The smaller facehugger is just able to cover the grower's mouth, its spread legs keeping it from falling in. Its tail is just able to hook around the back of the grower's neck. The grower's forearms seize up, and its eyes roll back in its head.

EXT. ARROWHEAD

LV-426 wheels beneath the Arrowhead, as a red moon rises over the horizon in the background.

OLIVER (O.S.)

Over the horizon?

SINGH (O.S.)

No.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The grower's ship gradually starts to corkscrew into LV-426's atmosphere.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

Oliver's desperate for some good news.

OLIVER

Impact?

Singh takes his binoculars down, disappointed.

SINGH

No.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

OLIVER

Update.

Henzil is at his station on the bridge, wearing headphones.

HENZIL

Still nothing on the crystal receiver.

OLIVER

Singh?

Singh looks away from his binoculars to Oliver and shakes his head. Oliver sighs.

OLIVER

Keep looking.

(beat)

This is the last orbit we're doing dark. After this, we'll power up and get the scanners on.

(beat)

Let's just talk about this. Henzil? Singh, can you talk and keep your eyes open at the same time?

SINGH

Yeah.

Henzil slides one headphone off and turns to face Oliver.

OLIVER

Our last sighting of the target was when it started to slingshot around the planet, right?

SINGH

Right.

HENZIL

Yeah.

OLIVER

And our last view of the birds
had them approaching the horizon?

HENZIL

From below, I didn't have Singh's
perspective.

OLIVER

Singh?

SINGH

Yeah, that's right.

OLIVER

Are you sure they didn't impact
the target over the horizon and
knock it down into the
atmosphere?

SINGH

I'm sure. Besides, if they had
impacted, the kinetic energy
would have knocked the target
away from the planet, not into
it.

Singh glances at his watch then looks off, lost in thought.

OLIVER

That's true.

(beat)

What if it just dove into the
atmosphere on its own?

HENZIL

Well, it could have, but it's
unlikely.

OLIVER

Why?

HENZIL

Well, planets of this type have
atmospheres that are notoriously
treacherous. There's almost
certainly nothing down there.

HENZIL (CONT'D)

And besides, if it were going to enter the atmosphere it wouldn't have had to start a slingshot to do it.

Oliver just looks at Henzil then shakes her head in disgust.

OLIVER

Maybe it broke for that moon when it was over the horizon. Singh?

Singh is still lost in thought.

OLIVER

Singh, could it have made for the red moon?

SINGH

It didn't.

OLIVER

You could have been studying the horizon, and it could have been at 10 o'clock high.

SINGH

I would have caught that.

OLIVER

Basically, we know the target was orbiting this planet at some point. But it's not now. And we never saw it leave. So it's got to be in the vicinity. We've got a handful of possibilities, and no answers.

SINGH

Oliver?

OLIVER

Yeah?

SINGH

Something else.

OLIVER

Let's have it.

SINGH

If we're going to resume our patrol when we told the network, we'll have to be underway in less than two hours.

Oliver leans back in her seat. Beat.

OLIVER

Then this is the last orbit.

HENZIL

What!

OLIVER

Once we're powered-up and underway, you can scan the area as we move out.

HENZIL

No!

OLIVER

Get serious.

HENZIL

I am serious. We could make retirement twice over and never get this chance again.

OLIVER

You don't think I know that? But do you want to go before the courts and explain why we weren't at our post? You wouldn't have to--I would. So save it, Henzil. All I want to hear about is you prepping for power-up and going relativistic. Got that?

Henzil doesn't say anything.

OLIVER

(into speaking tube)

Truks, Gunny, begin prep for power-up and relativistic travel.

TRUKS

(over speaking tube)

Gotcha.

GUNNY
(over speaking tube)

Check.

We stay on Oliver as sounds in the background gradually become filled with the clatter of her crew going to work. A beat.

OLIVER
(to herself)

Fuck.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - GALLEY

Karik is pouring a liquid from a ceramic vat into a cup when Fin enters.

FIN
Are you coming or what? What
is that?

Karik starts laughing. He's a bit drunk.

KARIK
Try this.

He offers Fin the cup.

KARIK
Come on. Look.

He takes a drink and offers it to Fin. Fin tentatively drinks some and gasps.

FIN
What have you got?

KARIK
I made it.

FIN
I know. What is it?

KARIK
I gathered up some green berries
and crushed them in here. Then I
found some old, cooked grain that
had molded--

FIN

Oh, god!

KARIK

Hey, it worked. Fermented.

FIN

Yeah.

KARIK

Here. I'll get you some.

Before Fin can object, Karik pours some into another cup. He hands the cup to Fin then tops off his own. Karik raises his cup in a toast.

KARIK

To barbecue day.

FIN

To barbecue day.

They toast and drink. Fin gasps again, and Karik laughs.

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Fin and Karik top a hill with their cups in hand, Fin with the vat.

Below is the barbecue pit. In it is the carcass of the grunt on a spit, roasting. The roasting grunt is missing a leg.

A half dozen growers stand around it, silently. They look to the men as they approach.

The men nod.

The growers return the gesture.

On the periphery are high tables with bowls, vats, and various cooking implements. Karik puts his vat with the others.

The men join the growers around the pit. They drink for a beat. Suddenly both men look up. Karik looks confused.

FIN

The new grower wants to meet us.

KARIK

Oh no.

FIN

Come on.

A grower stands near the tables. The men put their cups on the tables and stand before it. They bow slightly, and Karik laughs again.

The grower looks down at them. We recognize it as the pilot stalked by the Arrowhead.

The men return its gaze for a beat. Then nod and get their cups.

A second grower approaches and nods towards Karik's cup.

Karik holds it up.

The second grower leans over, sniffs, and snorts, shaking its head.

The new grower laughs.

Karik bursts into laughter. He looks to Fin.

Fin smiles, too.

FADE TO:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

In the foreground, the growers watch the two men, who are running towards a tree in the distance.

The men run around the tree and keep running toward the growers.

As the men get closer, the growers start barking. Their noise builds to a crescendo until the two men run past them, first Karik then Fin, at which point the growers erupt into bursts of laughter.

The men stop running and grab their knees, gasping for air.

KARIK

I can't believe they made us
race.

FIN

I can't believe they made me
lose.

FADE TO:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Karik pours from his vat again.

KARIK

Hey, Adam! More grog? That's
a "yes."

Karik pours a second cup, walks to Fin who's seated on the
ground, and hands him the cup.

Karik sits down, and Fin hands him a plate with grain,
greens, and several thin strips of meat.

KARIK

Oh boy.

FIN

Come on.

Karik eats the meat, at first tentatively then heartily.
He starts laughing.

KARIK

Tastes just like--

Karik laughs some more.

FIN

Don't.

KARIK

Tastes just like . . . brisket!

Despite himself, Fin is amused and shakes his head. They
continue eating.

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

The growers and Fin sit on the hillside, watching the sun
set. Karik sits by Fin, hands him a cup, and kisses him.

KARIK

So tomorrow we hike past the waterfall?

FIN

I can't.

KARIK

What?

FIN

I've got to oversee the grunts' loading the crop into the ship.

KARIK

Oh fuck!

FIN

What?

KARIK

Look, I got to tell you . . .

FIN

Yeah?

KARIK

(leans, whispering)

Ah, so far, I've gathered in exactly zero bushels.

FIN

We're not loading grains. It's the eggs. From the ants.

KARIK

(laughs, relieved)

Oh.

FIN

Yeah, I told you that's the first step.

KARIK

Wait--what? Those ants are going on the ship?

FIN

I told you that.

KARIK

Those ants?

FIN

Yeah. Today is a send-off, kind of a celebration for our next planet.

(pauses)

The crops look good this season. What kind of yield will you get? Same as last?

KARIK

Yeah. Better than ever.

FIN

Really?

KARIK

Oh yeah.

FIN

After I load up the eggs, I'll have some time to help you.

KARIK

Oh that's good. Load up those ants.

FIN

Don't worry.

(pauses)

I'm ready to go in. How about you?

KARIK

Oh yeah. I'm going to take a leak and get the rest of the grog.

FIN

Easy on the grog?

KARIK

Oh yeah.

Karik leans over and kisses him.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Karik stands on a hill overlooking the grower's ship, docked.

The docking station is an array of wooden platforms around the ship with enormous wooden chocks supporting the ship's curved underside.

He descends the hill, moving towards the front of the ship. He walks around it, studying it. Then he pauses and thinks. He walks to some nearby shrubs and pees. He comes back to the ship, looks at it, and gets lost in thought again. Then he sighs and rolls up his left sleeve.

He rubs the little nipple on his left hand until it squirts into his right.

Then he drops to his right knee and rolls up the pant leg on his left calf, exposing a nipple there.

He milks it into his right hand as well.

He stands, approaches the front of the ship, looks back, then rubs his right hand on the surface of the ship.

With that, the liquids in his hand combine and react, leaving a smoking smear on the surface of the ship.

Karik coughs from the fumes.

The hand print on the ship gradually quits smoking and becomes invisible.

Karik takes a few steps away and then leans over and vomits in the bushes.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead's red lights are on. Its bridge shields are up.

FADE TO:

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower, still seated, raises its left hand to its chest, its right touches the floor.

FADE TO:

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead appears motionless, though its engines burn bright blue.

FADE TO:

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower's eyes slowly close; its face grows relaxed.

FADE TO:

EXT. ARROWHEAD

The Arrowhead flies by with the binary stars of Gliese 777 in the background.

INT. ARROWHEAD - BRIDGE

The men are playing cards again. In the background, Oliver sits in her chair.

GUNNY

Hey, there are no guarantees.

HENZIL

I can't believe you're saying that.

SINGH

Yeah.

GUNNY

There are guarantees?

HENZIL

I just assumed you of all people would understand getting the job done.

GUNNY

You assume.

HENZIL

Rather than obsessing over every nit-picky rule.

GUNNY

Why don't you just play.

Henzil puts a card down.

HENZIL

Why did she wait so long to power up?

Oliver sits in her chair, with a clipboard on her lap, but she stares in the distance. The men's talk is just murmuring, but she overhears:

SINGH

That's why I wanted you in command.

Oliver gets up and walks to the hatch.

OLIVER

Henzil.

HENZIL

Yes, ma'am?

OLIVER

I'll be in my quarters. Call me when we're on the network.

HENZIL

Yes, ma'am!

Singh laughs off-screen. Oliver stops to look back at them.

FADE TO:

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - BRIDGE

The grower still sits in its meditative pose, when suddenly its eyes open.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The tableau of the crashed ship, just as Dallas, Kane, and Lambert saw it. Its warning transmission audible.

FADE TO:

INT. ARROWHEAD - OLIVER'S QUARTERS

As Oliver unbuttons the last buttons on the blouse of her uniform, something catches her eye. She stops and turns down the photo of her family on her desk. She finishes the last two buttons, slides out of the blouse, and drapes it over the back of her chair.

She's wearing a tight t-shirt underneath. She sits on her bunk, unlaces her right boot, and slides it off. She's halfway through with the other boot, when there's a knock on the door. She takes off the boot and answers the door. It's Singh.

SINGH

We've left Gliese's heliopause.

OLIVER

OK.

Singh hands her a clipboard.

SINGH

And these are the crew's reports for this engagement.

Oliver skims the reports, turning a few pages.

OLIVER

Not our best day, was it, Singh?

SINGH

Ah. No.

Oliver leans back to toss the clipboard on her desk. Singh checks out Oliver's svelte form in her tight shirt. As Oliver turns back to Singh, she catches him. A pause.

OLIVER

Get in here, Singh.

Singh is taken aback.

SINGH

Wha--?

OLIVER

Now!

Singh slinks in. Oliver leans toward him and closes the door.

OLIVER

You like this?

SINGH

Like? What?

OLIVER

You know what. Let's see how much you like it.

She grabs Singh's belt and pulls him toward her. She reaches down and strokes him, off-screen. Singh gasps.

OLIVER

Oh, come on. What are the guys going to say, when they hear I put it right in front of you, and you couldn't get it up?

FADE IN:

INT. ARROWHEAD - OLIVER'S QUARTERS

Singh and Oliver are on the bunk, fucking. Singh lies on the bunk. Oliver is on top, riding him. Both are naked. While Singh is freaked out, Oliver's eyes are closed, lost in her inner world. A beat.

FADE IN:

INT. ARROWHEAD - OLIVER'S QUARTERS

Singh is getting dressed.

OLIVER

Singh?

He turns to face her. Oliver is in her bunk under the covers, still undressed.

OLIVER

Next time we're on an intercept,
remember there's more than one
planet in the solar system.

SINGH

(pauses)

Yes.

OLIVER

Now, get out.

The door closes. Oliver just stares at the ceiling. Beat.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

Fin spoons behind Karik when he awakens. He rises out of bed and gets dressed. Before he leaves, he goes to Karik's side of the bed. Karik is pasty and clammy.

FIN

(nudging Karik)

Steven? Steven?

KARIK

(eyes still closed)

Yeah.

FIN

You OK?

KARIK

Yeah.

FIN

You look dead.

KARIK

Too much grog.

FIN

You sure?

KARIK

Yeah.

FIN

You staying in today?

KARIK

Yes.

FIN

Well, I'll be back around
lunch time.

Fin touches his forehead and leaves.

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Grunt after grunt are lined up outside the grower's ship. Each one pushes a rack full of eggs. Fin walks to the head of the line. He carries a large metal key the size of a baseball bat.

He inserts it in a keyhole in the side of ship and turns it. There's a loud "clunk." Then he slowly turns a large mechanical wheel on the side of the ship, and as he does so, the hatch in the teardrop-shaped portal rises. Once opened, he turns to the grunts.

FIN

Chip!

The grunts nearby put their hands on the racks.

FIN

Tup!

They slowly start pushing the racks into the ship. Fin stands watching as the cavernous vessel swallows this plodding army.

FADE TO:

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA

Fin enters and finds Karik still in bed. He looks just as bad as he did when Fin left.

FIN

Christ! You're not up?

KARIK

I was about to.

FIN

How much did you drink?

KARIK

I don't remember. Too much.

FIN

I was feeling it a little this morning, but you . . . Hang on.

Fin leaves and returns with a cup of water.

FIN

Drink this.

With a groan, Karik sits up, takes the cup and drinks. Fin gets another cup and gives it to Karik.

Karik drinks most of it. As he gives the cup to Fin, he slips in the bed.

They have an awkward exchange, and Fin touches Karik's wrist.

Fin raises the cup to his mouth to finish the water but smells something.

FIN

Damn! What is that?

KARIK

What?

FIN

Ugh--that stink!

Fin doesn't drink the water.

KARIK

Oh, last night I got a little sick. Some of it must have lingered on me.

FIN

Sick? Like?

KARIK

I puked.

FIN

Vomit? In here?

KARIK

No. Outside. Sorry.

FIN

That's vomit?

KARIK

Yeah.

FIN

Well, you've got to keep
drinking water.

KARIK

Sure.

FIN

I'll be back later.

KARIK

You're still working?

FIN

Yeah. Today. I've got to get
that ship loaded. It's just one
of those days.

KARIK

Oh.

FIN

I'll be back by sunset. You,
keep drinking water, and try
eating something.

Fin leans forward to kiss Karik's cheek. As he rises up, he notices the smell again.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - CARGO HOLD

In the cavernous hold are long lines of grunts, passing trays from racks to open spaces in the hold, where grunts on their knees arrange them on the floor.

Fin walks among them giving them orders in a crude language.

As the hold fills up, Fin starts ordering them home, one at a time, and each of them leave pushing an empty rack.

Eventually Fin finds himself alone in the hold. He takes a moment to look over his work.

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

Before he quits, he walks around the ship. When he walks by the front of the ship, he stops. He smells something.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA - FLASHBACK

Fin halting in the middle of drinking Karik's water.

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

Fin sniffs the hull of the ship and recoils at the terrible smell on it. He thinks.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - BUNK AREA - FLASHBACK

Fin taking the cup from Karik, emphasis on his touching Karik's wrist.

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

Fin is overcome with understanding, as dread and anger pass over him.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - CARGO HOLD

Fin looks over the hold of the ship again. He thinks for a moment then nods to himself.

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

Fin walks to the ant farm. A beat.

He walks back to the ship, carrying something.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP - SUNSET

Fin stands at the teardrop-shaped portal. He just stands there, thinking. Eventually he shakes his head.

FIN

Shit!

Fin splashes the vessel with the facehugger into the ship.

The facehugger slides a bit across the floor then recovers. It starts scrambling toward Fin, getting faster and faster.

Fin pulls a lever outside the portal.

The large wheel rapidly spins in reverse.

The hatch drops down with a "dong."

Fin turns the large key.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - GALLEY

Karik sits at the table. He still looks like hell, like it was all he could do to get there.

Fin enters. He tosses whatever gear is in his hands into his locker, but he doesn't bother to change clothes.

FIN

What did you do to the ship?

KARIK

What?

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower sits in its chair. It relaxes and closes its eyes. The console slides down and begins to glow and pulse.

EXT. PLANET - SUNSET

The grower's ship silently rises out of the docking station, pulling away from the ground.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - GALLEY

FIN

What did you do, Steven? Don't give me that!

KARIK

Nothing.

Fin grabs Karik's wrist, smells it and gasps from the stink.

FIN

This is not puke!

KARIK

I did puke.

FIN

(thumbing
Karik's
genetic mod)

This is not for moisturizer!

He pushes Karik's arm away.

FIN

Steven, what did you do?

(pauses)

I showed you the ropes. You, you saved my ass in the ant farm. We pushed our bunks together, Steven. And now you're going to pull this on me? I know better.

KARIK

Fine. I tagged it.

EXT. GROWER'S SHIP

The grower's ship climbs into space around the growers' planet, awash in golden particles of the solar wind.

As these particles strike part of the ship's front, glowing magenta ripples from the points of contact. More and more particles hit the ship until the area glows steadily, revealing a smeared magenta hand print.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - GALLEY

FIN

Tagged? For the Complex?

Karik nods his head. Fin sinks down into a seat and hangs his head.

KARIK

It's the eggs. There were ancient reports about those encephalopods. Delivering a sample has an enormous bounty. They just want the eggs.

FIN

They--!

KARIK

Hey, those reports were from the Company, Adam!

Pause.

FIN

What do you think they'd do with those eggs? Hmm? What would they do to the grower?

Karik can't answer.

FIN

Well, that's moot, because the Complex will never get them.

KARIK

Huh?

FIN

If the Complex troubles that grower enough to bring it down, they'll find far more than they can handle, waiting for them.

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - COCKPIT

The grower has been stripped of muscles from its arms and legs. Its torso has collapsed, though it still remains in its chair. The alien stands over it, clearly, several feet taller than the enormous grower.

INT. MEN'S QUARTERS - GALLEY

KARIK

Yeah, right.

FIN

Hey, let's forget about that, because I've got to think ahead. Let me ask you: what do we have here? Hmm?

Karik looks at him.

FIN

Look around this place. You and I, what do we have here?

KARIK

Adam, we'll still be together.

Fin smiles.

FIN

Oh yes. You and me, huh? All those feelings. But feelings don't change facts. They don't change reality. Like having enough to eat. Either you do, or you don't. Either you get your friend to safety, or you don't.

(stands over Karik)

Either you protect your home, or you do not!

(backs away)

So if the hordes show up here, what about this place?

Karik walks toward Fin.

KARIK

No, listen. This will get us back home.

FIN

I'd rather live the rest of my life never seeing another human face than be a slave on that world again.

Karik turns away out of frustration.

KARIK

(over shoulder)

Christ, Adam! You said the Complex didn't matter here.

FIN

And you made me a liar.

KARIK

(faces Fin)

A liar? You know how much they'll pay us? We'll be set. All right? You and me. No worries. We could even afford to live in Tucson-- good Tucson--if you wanted.

FIN

Good Tucson! Good Tucson's gone.

KARIK

All that you're doing is
dismissing the place without
knowing one thing about it.

FIN

I know about--

KARIK

How? How do you--

FIN

I know what was lost.

KARIK

(turns away)

Fine. Sulk if you want.
Meanwhile, I'm offering you a life
most people dream of.

Fin approaches him from behind.

FIN

I'd rather never see a human face
than be a slave owner in that
world.

Fin reaches around Karik and plunges his blade into Karik's
torso.

Karik groans and looks down in disbelief.

He tries to grab Fin's hand, which maintains its grip on
the handle. Karik's hand slips off and into the blood
spilling out of his wound.

KARIK

You, you said the words.

FIN

I know. But love is not enough.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE TO:

INT. GROWER'S SHIP - CARGO HOLD

The alien lays the latest in a row of eggs, six perfect upright ovals. It rises, takes a couple of steps, sighs deeply, collapses, and curls into the fetal position.

Over time, the eggs' bases become thicker, and a glowing blue gas escapes from their pores.

Eventually, the eggs are wedded to the floor and blanketed by a glowing, blue fog. It's apparent that the alien laid far more than six eggs.

Finally, the alien's carcass begins to steam and hiss, as the breakdown of its cellular membranes releases its internal acids, dissolving most of its body, leaving an unrecognizable mound.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL LABORATORY

SUBTITLES:

Five years later

A WOMAN sits at a computer terminal.

The crew's report from the Arrowhead is on the computer screen.

An ANDROID sits beside her desk, facing her. His body looks like a man's, but his head is uncovered, exposing its mechanical, artificial nature.

The woman presses a few keys at the terminal, and the android jerks a bit in its chair.

WOMAN

Program?

ANDROID

Primary:
Protect crew's safety.
Secondary:
Follow orders.

ANDROID (CONT'D)

Orders:
 Ensure ship's return.
 Ensure cargo's return.
 Act as science officer.
 Tertiary:
 Protect my safety.

WOMAN

Exception.

The android flinches and looks at her.

She presses the keys: 9, 3, 7, enter.

The android looks away, as its facial features twitch randomly for a moment.

WOMAN

Program?

ANDROID

Primary:
 Protect creature's safety.
 Ensure creature's return.
 Secondary:
 Ensure exception 937's secrecy.
 Tertiary:
 Crew expendable.

WOMAN

Confirmed.

The woman presses several buttons.

A robotic arm lowers the skin over the android's head. After some work, the arm stretches the skin tight over the head and seals it with the rest of the skin. The arm lifts away.

We recognize the android is ASH from the original "Alien."

The woman presses a few buttons.

ANDROID

Collating, collating, collating...

FADE TO:

THE END