

DESTROYER OF WORLDS

Written by

Dave Drews

In a time when mankind has spread to dozens of worlds, a recently demoted FBI-type detective and her secretive ex must choose between saving a girl from her kidnapper with an improbable past or stopping the man who controls all of spaceflight and the Dominion's Emperor from obtaining a doomsday weapon.

This is the first film in the Neologic War trilogy:

- Destroyer of Worlds*
- Creator of Worlds*
- A War in Heaven*

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dave@thomascreek.com

OVER BLACK: SOUND OF HISSING STEAM

SUPER:

**PLANET: MARA
EARTH YEAR: 1179**

FADE IN:

INT. BODYMOD ROOM - DAY

Six of the eight foot high BodyMod tubes line a wall in the small room. A full length mirror is next to the only door.

Two BodyMod tubes HISS open. Their occupants awaken, naked.

ROCHE. Thin, well over six foot. Looks early 30s.

MRS. QUIMBY. Barely five feet tall. Looks 80s.

From within the tubes a cloth-like material emerges and envelopes each to form a jumpsuit around them.

Both walk out, shaking out the BodyMod process remnants. Roche sees himself in the mirror.

ROCHE

No. Really? Human bodies? I thought
we were being sent to...

Fingers on hands spread out. Fingertips press together.
Pulls them apart. Quickly bumps them together three times.

As he pulls them apart, a 3D holographic display hangs in the air in front of him. Alien language on a menu. With the other hand he pulls up a page of alien text.

This is the Maran equivalent to what we'll see later in humans as a TouchTab which is like an advanced, embedded smartphone only with holographic menus, 3D images, etc.

ROCHE (cont'd)

We're really being sent to Earth.

MRS. QUIMBY

Finally reading our mission
statement, are we?

He reads more. Shakes his head.

ROCHE

Marans. Going to Earth. To set up
Sentinels! Don't you see the irony
of that?

MRS. QUIMBY
That was a long time ago.

ROCHE
What year is it for humans now?
1100? 1200? They haven't even
figured out how to manufacture
books yet, have they?

MRS. QUIMBY
They will soon enough. Look. We're
only going to be there for what...
a 1000, maybe 1500 years at most to
complete Phase Two. You can --

ROCHE
What Phase Two?

Roche scrolls, reads more. Shocked.

ROCHE (cont'd)
On Mara's moon?!? You have got to
be kidding! Do the Originals know?
They and a lot of other Marans will
not be happy about this. I'M not
happy about this.

MRS. QUIMBY
Believe it or not, the idea came
from a group of Originals. So did
our special project. It's at the
end.

She walks through the door into an anteroom. Roche follows,
scrolling to read. Stops dead. Looks up at Mrs. Q who nods.

Roche wanders dazed to her side at the outside door.

Roche looks down at his companion.

ROCHE
What is with these bodies the
BodyMod machine gave us? Why am I
so tall? And why are you so... not?
And wrinkled?

EXT. MARA - CONTINUOUS

The pair exit the building to a bright and sunny Maran day.

The building is on the edge of a futuristic small city
surrounded by a very Earth-like wooded area. No one about.

Fifty feet out sits a sleek, hundred foot long spaceship laying on stubby legs with the door open.

MRS. QUIMBY

So we can pass as grandmother and grandson? We'll figure it out. Our accent and story is we're from a country called England. Mr. Leo Roche and Mrs. Henrietta Quimby.

ROCHE

I guess it could be worse. We could be sent to LuoRowg again.

(theatrical grunt)

Two heads, six arms with twelve fingers. Oh, and that annoying appendage.

(high snark)

That was a real treat for over two hundred years. I sincerely thank you for volunteering us for that extraordinary experience.

Mrs. Quimby stops, mouth screws up in annoyance as Roche steps up into the ship.

MRS. QUIMBY

I'm never going to live that down, am I?

ROCHE

Nope.

Mrs. Quimby shakes her head, follows in. Door closes.

The ship rises silently on its graviton drive, heading toward space.

OVER BLACK: SOUND OF SINGING BIRDS

SUPER:

**PLANET: KRAGOR
EARTH YEAR: 2872**

FADE TO:

INT. YOUNG ELLIE'S APARTMENT: BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight streams with summer splendor through an open window where a pair of SINGING birds perch.

Clothes FLY across the room onto the bed, dresser, opened and unopened moving boxes, the floor.

Important things were unpacked: holographic wanted posters and assorted items related to law enforcement. A *MURDER BOARD* with 3D pictures of hanging bodies, shootings, and gruesome murders hangs above the bed's headboard.

ELANDRIAN (Ellie) PERCERA (12), wearing a green outfit, is bent over into a tall box. A sweater comes FLYING out.

Rising up slowly, she rolls her head around toward the open door landing into one of those are-you-insane, side-eye stares preteens are famous for in every century.

The stare target is Ellie's mother, SARRET PERCERA (38), wearing her IBI (Interplanetary Bureau of Investigation) division manager uniform and hologram badge.

SARRET

All I'm saying is if you can't find the belt, wear your blue outfit instead. It will look better anyway since you're giving your big class presentation today.

Embedded in everyone's hand at birth, a TouchTab is like a vastly advanced 3D smartphone.

Ellie, rolling her eyes, activates hers: Thumb taps middle finger three times, tap little finger, tap middle finger.

Selecting from a menu, her wake up alarm (the window and birds) disappear replaced with the real apartment window. Rainy and foggy outside.

Ellie dives back into the box.

YOUNG ELLIE

I hate doing presentations.

SARRET

But you're such a good writer and speaker, skills that'll help you at the Academy and the Bureau.

YOUNG ELLIE

I know, Mom.

She rises up, mouth scrunched in annoyance.

SARRET

(looks at murder board)
And please take down those photos.
They aren't appropriate for a
twelve year old.

YOUNG ELLIE

Uh huh.

Sarret leaves in parental exasperation.

Ellie throws her hands up in youthful exasperation as she
shuffles to the bathroom nearly TRIPPING on another box.

KITCHEN - LATER

Ellie, now wearing a blue outfit, pushes her now empty plate
to the ChefBot who cleans it and puts it away.

Ellie's father, HAMEL PERCERA (39), rushes in wearing the
29th century's version of a suit. Gold executive IBI badge.
Grabs an apple and takes a bite.

HAMEL

And how are you on this fine...
(glances out window)
miserable morning?

YOUNG ELLIE

You're going to the Briggs factory,
aren't you, Dad? The news said
striking workers were fighting.

HAMEL

First day as the Bureau's Regional
Director here on Kragor and it has
to start with something at a Briggs
factory. If he brings in his
personal troops -- his goons -- it
could get...

(shakes head, smiles)
Presentation today, right? Keep
acing everything and you'll have no
problem getting into the Academy.

YOUNG ELLIE

Uh huh.

As Hamel turns toward the door, Ellie looks worried.

YOUNG ELLIE (cont'd)

Dad? Be careful. Please?

He comes back and kisses her on the forehead.

HAMEL

Always.

Ellie smiles as Hamel rushes out. But then quietly...

YOUNG ELLIE

Please?

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Each family member has a HoloVerse room. It renders whatever environment is needed so finely that it looks and feels Star Trek Holodeck real. A floating floor allows roaming.

Sarret's HoloVerse door is open. Holographic IBI agents and staff work in a simulated office. Sarret sees Ellie, waves.

Ellie closes the door and enters...

ELLIE'S HOLOVERSE ROOM

Ellie's room is empty except for a chair and a window.

She activates her TouchTab, selects her school, swipes it out to the RoomTab's HoloVerse system to create the...

INT. HOLOVERSE CLASSROOM - DAY

STUDENTS sit at desks in their homes' HoloVerse rooms.

Their holograms combine into a virtual room so each sees and feels they are all together in a physical classroom where the sun always shines outside.

Ellie takes her seat at her desk as other STUDENTS snap in. The TEACHER'S holo dissolves in at the front.

TEACHER

Good morning all! I know you've
been working hard on your reports
for today, so it's time to share
them with the class.

(beat)

Ellie. What don't you start us off?

The other students sigh in relief in not being first.

Ellie stands, takes a deep breath. Sweaty hands wipe on clothes.

Her desk dissolves away while the other student's virtual desks move into a circle around her.

She selects her report from her TouchTab's menu which then displays 3D holo images and animations next to her.

BEGIN HOLOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION

Swirling dust, rocks, and gas in space...

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.)
A funny thing about history is no
matter what has come before, you
never know what will happen next.

...coalesce into a planet.

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Earth's history began billions of
years ago as dust, rocks, and gas.

Protozoa morph into fish into... etc.

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Billions more went by for life to
arise and evolve into plants and
birds and animals and all the rest.

A caveman family huddle around a fire as the father stands up and draws an animal on the wall with charcoal.

QUICK MORPHS through centuries: a farmer plowing his field, a politician giving a speech, a group building a house, a woman inventing a machine, soldiers fighting a war, etc.

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Unusually smart creatures appeared
after millions of years who then
spent thousands of years creating
their own histories by developing
cities, art, science, pollution,
murder, war, and all the other
things that made them smart
creatures.

QUICK MORPHS of overpopulated cities, polluted oceans, poverty, and climate change around the world.

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
The seas rose, lifespans fell, and
famines spread as the smart
creatures found their world
increasingly unlivable. Many
(MORE)

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
wondered if their species' time was
coming to a close.

*A man in lab coat, back to us, tests his new invention: a
graviton [anti-gravity] system.*

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Hope came when one of the smartest
of the smart creatures discovered
how to manipulate gravity and build
spaceships that could take his
people to the stars.

*The first interstellar spaceship has a sleek, bullet train-
like design. Oddly similar to Roche & Mrs. Quimby's ship.*

*The graviton drive is a flat pad assembly attached
underneath. Another pad is embedded in the ship's floor to
provide artificial gravity. A special version in the front
generates a wormhole when in space.*

*The door closes and the ship silently lifts and soars toward
space. Once there, a violet glow grows around it from the
front, a wormhole opens, and the ship shoots through.*

*It exits a wormhole over a surprisingly familiar, but
pristine world. Water, mountains, plains, and all the rest
identical to Earth, except for the continents' shapes.*

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Over 100 nearly identical clones of
Earth were found. New homes for our
smart creatures.

Back on Earth, dead bodies by the thousands fill streets.

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
But that hope seemed dashed when a
madman ruler in a losing war
released a bio-weapon, the Misery
Virus, that ended the histories of
a third of his kind.

Ships by the thousands leave a devastated Earth.

*On one new world, over sped up years, a few buildings, then
cities grow and spread to hold thousands, millions.*

YOUNG ELLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
The survivors took to pristine
worlds to start new histories. They
left their birthplace behind so it
could reset, to grow wild and
repair itself.

END HOLO PRESENTATION

YOUNG ELLIE

As for my history, I'll follow six generations of my family by joining the IBI -- the Interplanetary Bureau of Investigation -- to safeguard the smart creatures living among the stars.

The class applauds, the teacher smiles approval.

Ellie's HoloVerse DOOR opens.

Ashen faced Sarret slowly enters. Huddles with the teacher, talking in a whisper.

The teacher slowly turns to the class with a stricken look.

TEACHER

I'm... I'm sorry. Class is dismissed for today.

Using her TouchTab, she, students, and classroom disappear.

SARRET

(crying)

Ellie... Your father... He's...

Ellie knows what she's going to say.

Shell-shocked, shoulders sagging. She turns and aimlessly wanders to stare out the room's window.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: OBSERVATION LOUNGE - EVENING

Lights are off in the domed room at the back of the ship.

Ellie, now 29, stands alone, looking out. Shell-shocked, shoulders sagging.

She's wearing her beat up IBI jacket. On one arm at the shoulder, an IBI patch. Below it, one stripe. Stains where two others had been. Red X over info on her IBI badge.

CHAOS outside. PEOPLE frantically try to get onto any ship. A ship lifting off VEERS and CRASHES into another.

Ellie is oblivious as Evan's ship rises silently.

EXT. SPACE ABOVE THE PLANET

Evan's ship, which looks EXACTLY like Roche & Mrs. Quimby's ship, arcs away from the world.

Escaping ships are BLASTED by dark chunks shot from somewhere near the planet causing colorful blossoms to bloom against the blackness of space.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: OBSERVATION LOUNGE

A worried CARLON ORLANIC (29) rushes in, puts his arm around Ellie, startling her.

CARLON

Those who survive need to know why.
They need a record of what
happened. If we make it, Ellie,
you're the best one to write it.
For history.

Ellie takes a moment to register this.

ELLIE

What is it she said? "History is
the tale of wars as told by the
victors, written in the blood of
the vanquished."

(head cocks toward Carlon)

So how should I tell about the end
of the world when I'm the one who
caused it?

Carlon doesn't know what to say.

Looking past Ellie, he's horrified by a ten foot diameter dark chunk STREAKING toward them. Its surface morphs and moves in constant, uncomfortable motion.

EXT. SPACE ABOVE THE PLANET

A violet glow forms at the ship's front, quickly spreading backward to cover the ship as a WORMHOLE opens ahead.

Coming at an angle, the chunk WHACKS the back corner of the ship with a THUD that rocks the ship, but does no damage.

Given what it's made of, this ship, unlike the other cheaply made knockoff ships, could literally fly through a sun.

The ship slips into the wormhole which FOLDS into itself and disappears.

Having missed, the chunk TURNS and TARGETS another ship which blossoms colorfully when hit.

On the planet below, the sky has started to burn.

OVER BLACK: SOUND OF SINGING BIRDS

SUPER:

**PLANET: DOMONI
NINE MONTHS EARLIER**

FADE TO:

INT. EMPEROR'S PALACE: BEDROOM - MORNING

The EMPEROR'S WIFE (35), wearing a flimsy nightgown, opens French doors of the light and airy bedroom. Two SINGING birds on the outside railing FLY away.

Sunlight hits the EMPEROR (mid-40s, short, pudgy, naked), waking him. Rolls over in bed. Enormous FART.

Upon rising, he dons a shimmering robe, then strides to the door to step out onto the...

BALCONY

Like a city surrounded by a sprawling city, the palace grounds are filled with lakes, rivers, trees, gardens, a zoo, amusement park rides, and more.

Everything one would expect an Emperor to want/have.

Domoni is the Earth-like capital planet of the Dominion. Surrounding the palace is a sea of buildings that comprise the Dominion's government.

The Emperor pompously crosses to the railing to survey the ocean it overlooks. Yup. It's still there.

He JUMPS when the Wife sneaks behind him. Gooses him.

EMPEROR

Stop it! I have to get to the office. Briggs insists on meeting me early.

EMPEROR'S WIFE

He insists? You're the Emperor of an interstellar empire. He makes time for you!

EMPEROR

I'll be sure to let him know that.

EMPEROR'S WIFE

The control that man's family and company have had for centuries is unconscionable. And what he wants for the future...

EMPEROR

At least I have my own plan to counter it. All thanks to you and your spy network. How do you do it?

EMPEROR'S WIFE

It's all a matter of finding out what each person wants and how to manipulate them to get what I want.

EMPEROR

Do you manipulate me?

She drops her nightgown with a wry smile.

EMPEROR'S WIFE

Only when I need to.

EMPEROR

(looks to his crotch)

Well, well, well. It seems non-governmental priorities have arisen to delay Briggs' meeting.

Both laugh as he chases her into the bedroom, into bed.
Hoochy coochy ensues.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIGGS' OFFICE - DAY

ALISTAIR BRIGGS (120ish) sits behind a desk in an office designed to inspire fear and confusion in all who enter.

Models of Briggs space stations [*we'll later learn are called Briggs Blobs*] and transport ships abound.

Briggs is ancient, skeletal. A good sneeze would blow him over. Yet out of Briggs' frail-looking body comes an impossible, deep, sneering, commanding, soul rattling ROAR.

Be it venom or showmanship, it's directed toward the Emperor's wife who hugs herself in fear at the tirade.

Briggs' hulking aide/henchman, BROSSICK (34) stands beside the desk eying the Emperor's wife, trying decide if he wants to fuck her or slice her open from neck to crotch. Or both. Of course, he's like that with everyone.

BRIGGS
HE'S GOING TO DO WHAT? AND YOU
DIDN'T THINK IT WAS WORTH TELLING
ME BEFORE THIS?

EMPEROR'S WIFE
I... I...

BRIGGS
Get out! GET OUT! RUN!

She nearly falls racing for the door as Brossick sneers.

BRIGGS (cont'd)
(calmly, almost happy)
Well, Brossick, this is an
interesting turn of events.
(stands up)
Any luck with your search?

BROSSICK
I expect to hear something today,
Mister Briggs.

Briggs rubs hands together as the pair head for the door.

BRIGGS
Excellent. I think it's time to
have some fun with our little
tinpot leader. What do you think?

Brossick smile highlights the scar on one cheek that makes him look more psychotic than he is.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPEROR-MOBILE - DAY

The massive, ornate car races down a city street, hovering on it's ground effect version of the Briggs Graviton Drive.

EXT. EMPEROR'S SPIRAL - DAY

The Spiral is a mile high tower reminiscent of the Vegas Stratosphere. The Emperor's office at the top rotates.

Far below, the Emperor, Guards, and gaggle of TOADIES exit the Emperor-Mobile and enter the Spiral.

INT. EMPEROR'S OFFICE - DAY

Out the windows: the ocean, palace grounds, government buildings. On the horizon, the massive Briggs Spaceport.

A tubular elevator compartment rises from the floor. Door opens. Emperor and his entourage exit.

The Emperor seats himself on a hovering chair at a penis envy-sized desk in the middle of the room.

He waves the toadies away who scurry like rats into the elevator and are gone. The SERVANT (77) stays. Not afraid.

The Emperor spots a package on the desk.

EMPEROR

What's this?

SERVANT

It's the item I suggested for your daughter's birthday. I hope you and she like it, your Eminence.

The Emperor opens it. Chuckles as a glass unicorn with glowing lightning streaks inside walks out of the box.

EMPEROR

She'll love it! Excellent idea.

Elevator rises. Door opens.

Out charges a theatrically furious Briggs waving a paper-thin, iPad-like device. He SLAMS it onto the glass unicorn on the desk, crushing it to dust.

The Emperor is horrified, at this and Briggs' anger that viciously ROARS and ECHOES as he points to what's displayed on the device.

BRIGGS

TARIFFS AND EMBARGOES?!?

The servant, always terrified of Briggs, scoots back out of the line of fire.

The Emperor LURCHES out of his seat, composes himself. Hopes Briggs doesn't see the fear oozing out of him. Briggs does.

The Emperor's voice is weak, squeaky.

EMPEROR

Listen here, Briggs. The Senate votes in two weeks on doing something about Aurora Prime, and I think tariffs and embargoes are what they will go for.

The Emperor sits. Raises his seat up enough to look down on Briggs. The power play doesn't work. Nervous legs wiggle waggle back and forth like a child's.

BRIGGS

The Senate? You mean that cesspool of bureaucrats, toadies, and grifters who can't order lunch without starting a fistfight over who should pay for it?

EMPEROR

Of course, I know how you would handle it. I prefer a lighter touch.

BRIGGS

You're unbelievable. Instead of President, you assumed the title of Emperor, just short of God, and your plan is to sign a document in the hopes those "*farmers*" on Aurora stockpiling weapons will tremble in fear of your pen?

EMPEROR

You're exaggerating. You know they --

BRIGGS

Your grandfather flayed alive the leader of the Cruxler Incident in front of his family for casually musing about an uprising. Your great-great-grandfather wiped out the capital city of Yutanga when it refused to pay their taxes. 270 years ago, Galwaar became known as The Butcher of Lowain for...

(head back, disgust)

How is it possible your ancestors, ruthless warriors all, could sire a weak, worthless creature like you?

The Emperor jumps down from his chair. Nearly falls. Steadies himself with the desk.

EMPEROR

I am Justinian Whilner Tragaysian
Relany Granville VII, Emperor of 39
inhabited planets that comprise the
Dominion of Peace! I will not be
talked to like that by the likes of
you. Why, with the snap of my
fingers I could have you...

The Emperor's sweaty fingers can't muster a snap.

BRIGGS

(deep, sinister, menacing)
You could what?

Briggs calmly walks to chairs by the window.

BRIGGS (cont'd)

For 860 years, since my ancestor,
Nikolai, invented the Graviton
Drive and created Briggs
Spaceworks, we have controlled all
aspects of commercial and military
spaceflight. Can you guess what
would happen if they all suddenly
stopped working because I...

Briggs' hand rises. SNAPS his fingers. TERRIFYING LOUD.
ECHOES. He shakes his head in disgust. Turns to Emperor.

BRIGGS (cont'd)

It seems someone has forgotten upon
whose pond his gilded lily pad
floats.

The Emperor brings his chair back down. Sits in a huff.

EMPEROR

So what is your solution?

Briggs casually gazes out the window.

BRIGGS

Perhaps a repeat of how the Death
Rattle Rebellion got its name?

EMPEROR

Be serious.

BRIGGS

No, you're right. We need something
new. Something so horrific that
anyone with a spark of rebellion or
secession or anything else I don't
(MORE)

BRIGGS (cont'd)
like... er, sorry... WE don't
like... wouldn't even think of it.

Briggs thinking hard.

BRIGGS (cont'd)
If we could only get our hands on
what ended the Neologic War.

EMPEROR
The Neologic War? Now you're being
delusional. A fairytale created to
scare children. And besides, if
that thing does exist and we could
get our hands on it, threatening to
use it is one thing. Actually doing
so would be inhuman. Not that you
care about such things.

BRIGGS
There's one person who would know
where it is, or could find it.

EMPEROR
You don't mean... Seriously? You
really think we could trust him
after what happened? Besides, no
one has seen him in years. You
really are losing your mind in your
dotage, old man. This is getting
more ridiculous by the minute!

The Emperor picks up a cheap bobble on his desk. Examines it
as if it were a diamond. Sneaks a glance at Briggs.

EMPEROR (cont'd)
(under his breath)
I can be just as tough as...

A squeeze too hard... SHATTERS. He jumps away. Motions to
the servant.

EMPEROR (cont'd)
Clean all this up. Please.

Briggs SNORTS and shakes his head at the nicety.

The servant pulls out a tiny vacuum from his case full of
items to service the Emperor.

Done, he packs up. Slinks to the elevator.

Briggs jumps up. Rushes to the elevator where the servant
has pressed himself into its back corner.

EMPEROR (cont'd)
And where are you going?

BRIGGS
You work on convincing your
politicians while I'll work on
finding our friend.

EMPEROR
Yes. Go search for your boy and his
toy while I work on actually
solving the crisis.

Elevator doors close. Drops through the floor.

The Emperor looks around. Sits. Alone, the weak fool is
replaced by his version of a calculating strongman. Loudly.

EMPEROR (cont'd)
Major Roston, you may come out now.

EXT. EMPEROR'S SPIRAL - DAY

Brossick stands next to a long, black limo's open back door
as his boss exits the Spiral.

BROSSICK
How did it go, sir? What did he
think of the idea?

BRIGGS
Brossick, have you ever heard the
old saying about the difference
between ignorance and stupidity?

BROSSICK
Not sure, sir.

BRIGGS
Ignorance is easily cured with the
application of knowledge. Stupid is
forever. One guess which applies to
our ruthless leader.

BROSSICK
Then you'll like my news. My
operative sent a promising message.

BRIGGS
He's found him?

Brossick pulls something up on his TouchTab. Swipes it to
Briggs who is climbing into the limo.

BROSSICK
As good as.

BRIGGS
(reads, stunned)
Is this for real?

BROSSICK
Verified and everything.

BRIGGS
What could he possibly want with
that? Eh, who cares if it works?

The limo's passenger actually cracks another smile.

Brossick shuts the door and climbs into the front. The car
rises slightly. Speeds off.

INT. EMPEROR'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

A back room door opens. Major Roston steps out. Snaps to
attention in front of the Emperor when reaches the desk.

EMPEROR
At ease, Major. Take a seat. What
did you think?

ROSTON
(sits)
17 years ago, I lead the body clean
up team after Mr. Briggs' private
troops ended a strike at his
factory on Kragor. Hundreds were
killed, including an IBI exec. I
can easily imagine how he would
handle a rebellion of farmers.

EMPEROR
A manufactured rebellion.

ROSTON
Sir?

EMPEROR
A false flag operation of mine to
flush Briggs out after I was
informed of his search for a unique
weapon. His real goal is to use it
to oust me and take my place. I
plan on getting it first.

ROSTON

He already wields so much control.
If he rules the Dominion, too...
But the weapon. Something about a
war? The... Neologic War?

EMPEROR

I want you to lead an effort to
stop him. Select members of the
Guards you trust implicitly. You'll
be provided with whatever you need.

ROSTON

I would be honored.

EMPEROR

I've kicked things off by giving a
little nudge via Brossick, one of
his lackeys. It should make Briggs
quite happy. Or as happy as that
man gets.

(beat)

We have much to discuss.

Roston leans over the desk to view something on the DeskTab
as the two conspirators get down to work.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. IBI OFFICE - NOON

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

This is a real IBI office rather than via HoloVerse.

Ellie leans over the desk of her partner, Detective
Constable JORN SINLAR (26) who is showing her a murder scene
video on his DeskTab.

Detectives and employees mill about, waiting for whatever
the party items spread around the office are for.

Senior Supervisor YENI (78, looks 40) steps into the room.

YENI

Can I have everyone's attention?

Constable SARA (23) at the desk ahead of Jorn's, turns
around in her seat to Ellie.

SARA

Looks like the senior sup finally
got that rejuvenation he's needed.

(MORE)

SARA (cont'd)
He looks half his age. I'd take the half that's left any day.

ELLIE
The man's old enough to be your grandfather, and he's married to my aunt. If you start flirting with him again, I swear I'll --

YENI
I've just heard from the Chief Prosecutor that the evidence you all have spent sixteen long months gathering against Harden Jagner and his crime syndicate is, and I quote, "The most thorough and tightest I've ever seen." In eleven years, this is the first compliment I've ever heard that woman give.

LAUGHTER.

YENI (cont'd)
You will be receiving special commendations, and a bonus. It's been authorized that you will each be receiving a nice chunk of the money seized from the syndicate.

THUNDEROUS CHEERS and APPLAUSE.

YENI (cont'd)
As you all know, none of this would have been possible without the inventive and oftentimes obnoxious persistence of a couple of you.

LAUGHTER as he eyeballs Ellie and Jorn.

YENI (cont'd)
That's why the brass has authorized promotions for both Percera and Sinlar. Get up here you two!

APPLAUSE and HOOTS as Ellie and Jorn, embarrassed, but a bit cocky, wind their way to Yeni who hands them chevrons.

YENI (cont'd)
While there will be a formal ceremony later, I don't see a reason to wait. You can add these new stripes to your uniforms and jackets, Detective *INSPECTOR*
(MORE)

YENI (cont'd)
 Elandrian Percera, and Detective
SERGEANT Jorn Sinlar. Well done!

They press a stripe to each others' IBI jacket sleeves.

Ellie now has three, Jorn two. Their digital badges update with their new titles.

YENI (cont'd)
 And one more thing.

Yeni grabs a trophy of a woman and rifle. Hands to Ellie.

YENI (cont'd)
 It seems Percera won the IBI sharp
 shooting competition, with a
 perfect score!

To CHEERS, Sara POPS a champagne bottle as the party begins.
 Yeni turns to Ellie and Jorn.

YENI (cont'd)
 Take the rest of the week off.
 You've earned it.

EXT. IBI OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Ellie trashes an empty champagne bottle as she and Jorn exit the IBI office and walk toward their patrol flier.

Ellie is ecstatic, if a tad tipsy, as she waves her trophy, then fingers the new jacket stripe. Jorn shakes his head.

ELLIE
 Didn't I say I'd do it? I vowed
 when my father was murdered that I
 would become Detective Inspector
 before age 30.

JORN
 You have. Incessantly. Obnoxiously.
 Since the day I met you.

ELLIE
 Oh, Jorn. You're just jealous of
 how good three stripes look on me.

JORN
 I'm only jealous of how you got
 that stripe. Still haven't told me
 how you figured out Jagner's sister
 worked at Willit's brothel.

Their patrol flier is a 6-person graviton powered transport designed only for terrestrial flight. Jorn opens the driver's side door. Stops. Turns.

JORN (cont'd)
Wait... You didn't.

Ellie stops. Hands on hips.

ELLIE
Didn't what?
(smirking smile)
No. Of course not. Unless I did.
No. Yes. You know what? When you figure it out, you'll be ready for your third stripe.

Ellie struts to the other side. Both climb into the...

INT. IBI PATROL FLIER - CONTINUOUS

Ellie sets the trophy on the dashboard.

ELLIE
How about you drop me off at home?
I'm sure a young'un like yourself has more partying to do.

JORN
Young'un? You're only three years older than me, grandma.

ELLIE
Besides. It's been how many months since you and Derik broke up? Don't you think it's about time for you to find another guy?

Jorn punches in a destination into the console.

JORN
And how many YEARS has it been since Carlon...
(shakes head)
Sorry. My bad. I know I shouldn't bring him up. But it has been --

A BEEPING interrupts them.

JORN (cont'd)
Looks like we got something. Aren't we off duty?

Their boss' holo appears on the FlierTab.

YENI

I know you're off duty, but this should be a quick check. Hop over to Senator Quintin Tynan's estate. His house is closed for renovation, but he and his 9-year old daughter, Kirsta, stopped by for some reason. They're alone, without his normal security detail.

ELLIE

What's happened?

YENI

Their alarm system went off, and when the operator called, Tynan said it was an accident, but sounded odd.

JORN

Why us? Why not send local cops?

YENI

Tynan and his committee controls the upcoming IBI funding bill.

ELLIE

That's why.

YENI

It's probably nothing, but it won't hurt to have the team of the hour show their faces to the Senate chairman using the utmost care and professionalism.

JORN

We're on it, boss.

Yeni's holo snaps off as Jorn resets the destination.

Ellie opens a compartment on the dash. Pulls out a small tin. Opens it and pops two pills. Hands a couple to Jorn.

ELLIE

Here. Take a couple ZeroProof tabs. Don't want the big guy smelling that champagne breath.

Transport rises silently. Turns. Flies over snowy fields.

OVER BLACK: SOUND OF A WWI BI-PLANE PASSING OVERHEAD

SUPER:

PLANET: EARTH
LOCATION: NEW YORK CITY
EARTH YEAR: 1919

FADE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STORE FRONT - DAY

A trim and athletic EVAN LAMOND (looks mid-20s) squints looking skyward to see a WWI bi-plane sly overhead.

Goes back to directing MOVERS carrying antiques into the store.

A WORKER is finishing painting lettering onto the window.

*TIMELESS ANTIQUES
Finest Quality from the World Over
Evan Lamond, Proprietor
Since 1919*

Heavysset COLLINS (50) waddles toward Evan with a clipboard.

COLLINS
Mister Lamond.

EVAN
Mister Collins. How refreshing to see my lawyer working on a Saturday with even more papers to sign.

COLLINS
Final one and you own the building.

Evan takes the clipboard. Scans the document.

COLLINS (cont'd)
Perfect timing, too. With the war in Europe over, more people of means are moving to this area of Manhattan. We're far from the filthy riff raff coming off those immigrant ships every day. All those foreigners. Nothing but trouble.

More a "filthy immigrant" than Collins can imagine, Evan side-eyes him. Shakes his head, but holds his tongue while he signs. Hands clipboard back.

Collins tears off a copy. Hands it to Evan. Shakes his hand. Waddles off as the movers are finishing.

As Evan admires his new store, he rubs a large TIE-TACK: a carved gemstone of a mother and baby.

He enters, closing the door.

MONTAGE

As each decade passes from 1920 to 2010, Evan holds the door as CUSTOMERS exit, carrying their antique purchases.

People, clothes, window displays change. Evan doesn't. Still appears to be in his mid-20s.

END MONTAGE

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - EVENING

The antique CLOCK/CALENDAR on the wall shows almost 6pm on April 12th, 2017.

Evan finishes with a CUSTOMER who leaves.

An ELDERLY LADY is in the side room where the real antiques reside, as opposed to the (still expensive) replicas for the tourists and unwealthy that fill the rest of the shop.

She's looking at a priceless gold bejeweled 11th century Shiva statue holding a gleaming sword.

EVAN

Found something Mrs. Quimby?

That's right. It's Mrs. Quimby, still looking eighty years old like hundreds of years before. She points to the statue.

EVAN (cont'd)

Ah, yes. The story goes that in the final days, God comes to Earth as the Hindu god, Shiva. The creator, the destroyer of worlds. The cosmic dancer who, with his sword held high, dances the world into oblivion. For when the music stops and his sword touches the ground, the world comes to an end.

MRS. QUIMBY

Oh, how poetic. I am so glad I found your store, Evan. Everything you have is like from a dream.

EVAN

You are too kind, Mrs. Quimby.

MRS. QUIMBY

I love seeing these ancient treasures. And hearing you speak of them makes it seem almost as if you had seen them being made and bought them on the spot.

EVAN

Ha! You've found me out. I'm actually a thousand years old, and all these items in here are things I've collected directly from their makers through the centuries.

Mrs. Quimby gives him a quizzical look.

EVAN (cont'd)

Either that, or I have exceptionally good buyers who only purchase the best from the past that the world has to offer.

MRS. QUIMBY

(chuckles)

I wonder if you have --

(sees the clock)

Oh, my! Where has the time gone? I have to scoot. I'll miss my dinner companion!

Mrs. Quimby races for the door. Flings it open.

MRS. QUIMBY (cont'd)

See you in a month. Don't sell AAAANYTHING until I get back.

EVAN

I'll be here.

(under his breath)

I'm always here.

Evan's public face drains away as he closes the door. Presses a button to lower armored gates. Turns on the Closed sign for the who-knows-how-manyeth time.

Evan wanders on autopilot toward the back of the store.

The real antique room's fireproof wall embedded with carbon steel bars lowers down.

Evan stops at a display case. Inside is the complete collection of first editions of Oz books by L. Frank Baum.

The first book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, is open to a page that highlights one of Denslow's illustrations.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Under the lone streetlamp stands Roche, reading a book. Looks up as Mrs. Quimby rushes to him.

MRS. QUIMBY
Finally found him!

ROCHE
I don't understand how his tracker went bad. Did he recognize you?

MRS. QUIMBY
(shakes head)
It has been a long time.

They silently slip down the alley to the back door of Evan's store. A car is parked just past it.

INT. STORE OFFICE - SAME TIME

Evan slumps into his desk chair for the who-knows-how-manyeth time. 2017 calendar with TODAY'S DATE circled.

Evan's hand reaches into his shirt to finger the carved mother and baby pendent. Stokes it fondly. Remembering...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. EVANON'S HOME: BEDROOM - MORNING

[NOTE: Evan's name back then was Evanon]

Birds SING outside on a chilly morning in the year 1179 in future Switzerland.

ADA (O.S.)
Evanon, breakfast!

Evanon (25) shivers a bit as he rousts himself out of bed.

KITCHEN

ADA (25) hums while cooking at the fireplace. Their home is nicer than most reflecting their prosperous family business.

A flame FLASHES down the chimney making Ada back up as Evanon enters.

ADA

Evanon! You have got to get the chimney swept before it's clogged completely.

EVANON

Don't worry, Ada. I'll get the Gregson boy to do it.

She looks dubious as Evanon throws his arms around her. She turns, gives him a quick kiss as he grabs her ass. Playfully swats him away.

ADA

Now you go and sit yourself down, husband. You can't get all worn out now when your father and brother need a good days work out of you.

She carries the pot to the table. Ladles porridge into two bowls. Returns pot to the stove.

A puzzled look from Evanon. Gestures to a third, but smaller bowl and spoon set on the table.

EVANON

Father and Varner aren't coming this morning. Is someone else?

ADA

No. Not now. Eventually.

Hand to belly, Ada returns to the table.

Evanon notices. Looks back to the bowl. Back at his wife. The light slowly dawns. Ada smiles, nodding.

He jumps up and takes her in his arms. They kiss.

EVANON

Finally, mama can stop pestering me about when she'll become a grandmama.

Evanon returns to the table, wolfs down his meal, then it's a leap to the front door.

Stops. Turns around. Rushes back to Ada. A smile as his hand goes gently to her cheek, then belly.

Ada hands Evanon a gemstone on a thin, leather rope. Carved into it is the figure of a mother and baby.

ADA

*My mother gave this to my father
when she knew I was coming. I give
it to you as a reminder of the life
we're bringing into the world.*

Evanon examines it, puts it around his neck.

ADA (cont'd)

*Now scat! I have my own work to do
before the baby comes.*

He hugs her again, then practically skips out the door.

INT. LEATHER SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON

A WHISTLING Evanon finishes detailing a fine saddle.

His heavily bearded father, GUSTAVE (49), and fancy mustached brother, VARNER (29), come over to admire it.

VARNER

*You know, father, I think it's time
for a new full partner in the shop.
What do you think?*

YELLING outside.

GUSTAVE

*You know, Varner, I think you might
be right.*

(rubs saddle, admiring)

*Evanon has gone beyond anything
more we can teach him. And besides,
it's only right that your new
nephew has a father who shares
equally in the prof...*

(glances outside)

What's going on out there?

Gustave and Varner hurry to the street. Evanon to the door.

EXT. LEATHER SHOP

PEOPLE race past in the same direction.

GUSTAVE
What is it, what's happening?

PASSERBY
FIRE!

Hearing that, Evanon grabs three buckets. His father and brother each grab one as they race up the street.

Smoke rises in the distance over the shops and houses.

They turn a corner and... Evanon stops dead. Drops bucket.

It's his street. It's his house that's on fire.

The thatched roof is fully engulfed and caved in, walls collapsing.

Evanon pushes OTHERS out of the way who are starting to slow when they see they're too late at...

EXT. EVANON'S HOME

Buckets of water are thrown onto the fire, but at this point, it's to keep the fire from spreading.

EVANON
ADA! ADA!

An elderly NEIGHBOR LADY grabs his arm.

NEIGHBOR LADY
Ada got out, but she went back for something. The roof fell in and...
Her screams... It was horrible.

Evanon trips running toward the house. His hand falls on a burning piece of wood before rolling away. Seriously burned.

Ignoring the pain, he's still intent on finding Ada.

EVANON
I have to save her! The chimney.
It's my fault!

Evanon is hysterical. Gustave arrives. Pulls him away.

GUSTAVE
Son, no. She's gone.

Evanon, in shock, stares blankly at his father. Bolts. Races down the street. Turns back to see his life in flames.

Varner races after his brother. Evanon sees, runs faster.

Evanon's house is near the edge of town. The road leads to fields on one side, a mountain range on the other. He races up into the foothills and disappears.

END FLASHBACK

EVAN

Another year, my love. Perhaps this
time...

Evan stands. Opens a desk drawer. Stares at a new looking,
1870, breech-loading, Colt revolver.

Picks it up. Opens cylinder. Inserts bullet. Only one in it.
Snaps it shut. Spins the cylinder.

Deep breath. Hesitation. Sigh. Barrel to temple. A calm
comes over him.

As the trigger starts to move, the back door starts to open.

SLAM TO BLACK

BAMM!!

[The following is edited footage from multiple cameras mounted in and on the flier, body cams, hover cams, cams on the house, etc. Chaotic. Muffled audio, often indistinct.]

FADE TO:

INT. FLIER - LATE AFTERNOON

Ellie checks her gun as Jorn sails their flier at treetop level to a large, snow covered clearing where Tynan's impressive home sits. A Senate-marked transport at the side.

EXT. TYNAN ESTATE

The IBI flier lands away from the house.

Ellie and Jorn hop out. Survey the area.

JORN

Whadya think?

ELLIE

I dunno. It doesn't feel right.

Ellie motions Jorn to the rear.

He crouch runs to it. Peeking into shuttered windows.
Disappears around the back corner.

Ellie also crouch runs to the front window on the porch.
Peers in. Movement inside.

She slips on ice. Her gun and arm WHACK the window which
BREAKS as she goes down. A chunk of glass CUTS her cheek.

Her arm SNAGS on a metal window piece, cutting into her
wrist. Blood. Drops the gun.

SENATOR TYNAN (49) CRASHES out the front door.

TYNAN
Help me! He's kidnapping my
daughter!

The KIDNAPPER appears at the front door wearing a hooded
jacket that in the dim light, hides his face.

He's pulling a SCREAMING child: KIRSTA TYNAN (9).

Jorn reappears at the other front corner behind them.

Ellie stoops to retrieve the gun. Kidnapper calmly motions
for her not to. She backs up a couple of feet.

The kidnapper also backs up, pulling Kirsta with him.

His head brushes against a lamp which snags his hood,
pulling it partially back.

Ellie sees his face, but we don't. Pulls it back down.

While kidnapper looks at Ellie, Jorn sprints from behind.

Hearing Jorn, kidnapper turns and SHOOTs. Grazes Jorn's arm
causing him to drop his gun.

From that distance and angle, Jorn should have been hit
squarely in the head or chest. Aimed for the arm on purpose?

Kidnapper grabs Kirsta off her feet. He and Jorn lock eyes.

Ellie grabs her gun from the floor with her uninjured hand.

Kidnapper races past Jorn, but doesn't shoot him at point
blank range. Disappears around the Senator's transport.

Jorn painfully picks up his gun. Moves to the porch.

Blood dripping from her cut wrist, Ellie backs up, races to behind a large tree to get a better angle.

Jorn peeks out from around the front porch.

Kidnapper peeks around the transport and FIRES. Jorn jumps back as the bullet ZINGS above his head to RICOCHET down off a tree into Ellie's leg.

Down she goes with a GRUNT. Gun goes FLYING.

Jorn FIRES twice at the transport, hoping to disable it without hitting the girl. He ducks back.

The bullets just bounce off.

Ellie painfully slides on the ground to her gun. Grabs it.

Moving to a better position, takes aim with her shaking left hand. FIRES at the transport.

The shot bulls-eyes the connection point between the transport and the graviton drive. SPARKS sizzle there.

Jorn rounds the corner of the house nearest the transport.

A violet glow from the drive forms around the ship. Snaps off. On. Off. On.

Graviton waves emanating from the damaged, pulsing drive distort the view of the house.

A bizarre, quivering, fireball-like PULSE ERUPTS from the drive, engulfing the ship.

Graviton waves EXPAND into the fireball, then collapse.

A section of the house, ship, fireball, and Jorn compress into a graviton vortex. With a flash, it's gone.

The vortex has taken a rounded chunk out of the house and ground. Jorn's remaining lower half FLOPS to the ground.

Ellie, wide-eyed, SCREAMS! Buries her face in the grass.

Disoriented from pain, she drags her body to the transport.

INT. IBI HQ: LARGE HEARING ROOM - EVENING

REVEAL that we've been watching a holo video in the middle of a C-shaped table where real and holo DIRECTORS sit.

A seven foot tall BAILIFF stands silently at the back.

SUPER: INTERPLANETARY BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS HQ

A haggard, broken Senator Tynan is slumped in the chair next to his pompous LAWYER (62). She's dressed TV-ready.

TYNAN'S LAWYER

I'm certain you Directors share in the Senator's profound loss. First his wife and daughter several years ago, now another beloved daughter, killed. His pain, beyond imaginable.

(hand to heart)

And, of course, there is also the immeasurable loss to the family of Detective Sergeant Jorn Sinlar.

(shakes head)

While the kidnapper died and escaped judgment, the one whose inebriated actions lead to this tragic outcome is still a member of this storied organization.

(points to directors)

It is therefore up to this court to impose the maximum penalty upon Detective Inspector Percera's wanton and reckless --

CHIEF DIRECTOR

Enough. This is not a court, madam. We are only here to gather the facts. We now wish to hear from the detective herself. Bailiff?

The bailiff opens the door. His THUNDEROUS VOICE ECHOS as if this were the Inquisition calling for the next victim.

ROTUNDA

BAILIFF

Detective Inspector Elandrian Percera. The Disciplinary Council summons you.

Ellie fidgets on a bench next to her LAWYER.

Ellie's hand trembles as she wipes sweat on her dress IBI uniform. Her facial and hand scars are nearly healed.

ELLIE

If they fire me, what do I do? Take bot repair courses? Work in the Briggs factories on Haliday? Maybe

(MORE)

ELLIE (cont'd)
 I could stay at the Bureau as a
 front desk receptionist.
 (almost crying)
 How could I know shooting the drive
 would cause that? If I'd been a
 step back, his shot wouldn't have
 missed me and...

Ellie's mother, Sarret, wearing a Vice Director's gold holo
 IBI badge, rushes in to her daughter, smiling.

SARRET
 Good news! I just spoke to Director
 Covern. An order just came down
 from what he termed, "the top of
 the government," to end the
 hearing. It sounds crazy, but that
 can only mean the Emperor himself.
 Why he's interested in --

The hearing room doors BANG open as Senator Tynan storms
 out. Lawyer and armed BODYGUARD following. The crowd parts.

Micro drone-cameras follow as TV REPORTERS describe the
 action. A corner holo shows the news happening live here.

Tynan spots Ellie.

TYNAN
 YOU!! No matter what those
 imbeciles say it was you. You're to
 blame! YOU!!!!

ELLIE'S LAWYER
 You can't speak to my client like
 that. The kidnapper is the one
 responsible. Ellie is sorry for
 your loss, but she wasn't --

The sobbing Senator grabs the bodyguard's gun. Points it at
 Ellie who is frozen in place.

TYNAN
 You killed my Kirsta! You killed my
 baby!

TYNAN'S LAWYER
 No, Senator, let it go. She's not
 worth it.

An odd calm comes over the sunken-eyed Senator.

TYNAN
 You're right.

He raises the gun to his mouth and...

BANG! The top of Tynan's head blows off.

Some in the crowd SCREAM, others rush to the Senator, including the bailiff as blood flows on the floor. The live news report shows closeups of the carnage.

Horrificed, Ellie is pulled away by her mother and lawyer.

The bailiff stands up from those pointlessly trying to help the dead Senator. He looks toward Ellie with a wooden face.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. SKY - AFTERNOON

A private jet streaks across the sky.

INT. JET

Evan is passed out next to a window. Roche is across the aisle, a couple of seats up. Reading, of course.

Mrs. Quimby sits down next to Evan. Takes out an auto-injector syringe and presses it to Evan's arm.

EVAN
(JOLTS awake)
GHAAAA! Mrs. Quimby?!? What... What
was that? What did you give me?

Looks around.

MRS. QUIMBY
Feeling better?

Evan's hand reaches up to his bandaged cheek.

MRS. QUIMBY (cont'd)
What were you thinking?

EVAN
I wasn't really going to... What's
going on? Where am I? Why have you
kidnapped me?

MRS. QUIMBY
Actually, we don't know. The pilot
isn't told where we're going until
he takes off and he can't tell us.

Roche cocks his head, eyebrows puzzled at the lie.

EVAN

Who are you?

MRS. QUIMBY

We're finders of people for other people. The pilot is a taker of people to other people. And then --

EVAN

Why me?

MRS. QUIMBY

Not our job to know. Well, Evan, it's been nice to meet you. If you do get back to your store, I --

EVAN

If I get back?

Joining in on the fiction...

ROCHE

Life has many twists and turns.

Mrs. Quimby looks closely as Evan fingers the bandage.

MRS. QUIMBY

You can take that off now.

He's surprised she doesn't seem surprised when he does and the burn mark from the gunshot is almost healed.

He looks out the window to the night.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. EMPEROR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Emperor sit on a perch looking out the window. Briggs on a couch, reading something on his TouchTab. Doesn't look up.

BRIGGS

I forgot to ask. How did your sojourn go with the Senate yesterday into the invigorating world of tariffs and embargoes?

EMPEROR

You know how they voted.

BRIGGS

A powerful and ruthless, take-no-prisoner sovereign such as yourself, thwarted by a gaggle of reprobates and miscreants? How ever was that possible?

EMPEROR

And how far have you gotten getting our friend to help you find the...
Oh, that's right. Nowhere.

The Emperor reads a message on his TouchTab as he strolls casually back to his desk.

EMPEROR (cont'd)

It seems something has happened to one of your most ardent supporters, Senator Tynan. How unfortunate.

BRIGGS

Things are not always what they seem to the average person.

EMPEROR

I am not... Never mind.

Briggs presses SEND on a message to Brossick: *Begin*.

He then jumps up with surprising agility for someone his age and briskly beelines for the elevator.

Elevator doors open. Major Roston exits. Nods as Briggs enters who doesn't even look at the Major. Doors close.

EMPEROR (cont'd)

Major Roston! Please. Have a seat.

The Emperor moves to where Briggs had been sitting. Gestures Roston to a chair who sits after the Emperor.

EMPEROR (cont'd)

Have you seen the news? Time to make adjustments to our plan.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRANSPORT SHIP - HYPERSPACE

Ellie is asleep in her aisle seat. Groaning, frowning, shaking her head as her nightmare rages.

The faint outline of where two stripes had once been on her shoulder mar the sleeve below the one remaining stripe.

SWIRLING DREAM SERIES OF SHOTS

- *Ellie sees the kidnapper dragging Kirsta, pointing a gun*
- *Fires at the kidnapper's ship causing it to implode*
- *Jorn's top half disappears in the graviton wave*
- *Senator Tynan shoots himself*

END DREAM SERIES

A WOMAN next to Ellie shakes her causing her to SLAM awake, LURCH upright. BLOOD on unclenching nails.

WOMAN

Are you OK, dear?

Ellie sits for a moment, sunken, bloodshot eyes darting. Can't sit still. Stands in the aisle to get her bearings. Wanders toward the front of the ship.

Passenger seating in the back three-quarters. The upper deck has a domed lounge in front with the cockpit below it.

As Ellie steps into the lounge, the transport SHUDDERS slightly. Outside, the colors of hyperspace melt away.

At the approaching bulbous space station, one transport is docked while another is leaving its dock. A third dock looks damaged with a flashing holo Closed sign.

ANNOUNCEMENT (O.S.)

We will be docking at Briggs Hyper Station 05 dash E29 dash 3 shortly. Please gather your belongings and make your way to the exit.

Two JR. MILITARY OFFICER STUDS sitting at the front of the passenger section watch Ellie.

OFFICER STUD 1

That's her. Just like on the news.

A third joins them.

OFFICER STUD 3

A she in an IBI jacket? Alone? I need to do something about that.

OFFICER STUD 2

Walking boner here thinks she's the one that got that Senator to blow

(MORE)

OFFICER STUD 2 (cont'd)
his head off a year ago. Something
about killing his daughter or --

OFFICER STUD 1
Hey, where ya goin'?

Stud 3 smiles back. Quietly sidles up to Ellie.

As he brushes against her shoulder, she side glances toward him, then back. Not worth even acknowledging.

The transport rotates to align with a dock.

OFFICER STUD 3
Ah, a Briggs Blob. Hard to believe
something so big is mass produced.
Since the Briggs Graviton Drives
can only go about 11 light years in
a jump, they put these at
convenient points along the
transport lanes so the drives can
be reactivated and --

ELLIE
I know.

OFFICER STUD 3
Riiiiight. My friends call me Bud.
Bud the Stud. And for good reason.

ELLIE
Ellie. Mine call me the Killer
Castrator.

Ellie slowly closes her fist, tight. At groin level.

A drop of BLOOD falls from her fist. Stud notices.

He backs up a step. Looks back at his smirking buddies.

OFFICER STUD 3
Uh, you're that IBI agent on the
news, aren't you? Bad break, that
demotion and --

ELLIE
Bad break?

Ellie's look lasers him. Pity mixed with I'll kill you if
you keep talking.

OFFICER STUD 3
Wasn't really your fault. The kid
dying? And your partner? Right?

She takes a step toward him. And not in a good way.

OFFICER STUD 3 (cont'd)
Uh, hey. I'm sorry. That's not... I
can't imagine... Look, I better get
back... We'll be...

He rushes to the stairs, followed by his laughing buddies.

Hands clenched, deep breath. Ellie fights not to lose it as
the transport docks at the Blob.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MILITARY CAMP: AIRSTRIP - NIGHT

The private jet with Evan on board lands near mountains.

The plane rolls to a stop.

Door opens. Evan exits as Mrs. Quimby and Roche stand at the
door watching him go.

MRS. QUIMBY
It's too soon. They shouldn't have
found it this early.

ROCHE
We can control a lot of things, but
not the Earth shaking.

MRS. QUIMBY
With our help, Evan may be ready,
but this human civilization isn't.

ROCHE
Were they ready the last time?

MRS. QUIMBY
The last time ended with the
Neologic War.

Roche glances uncomfortably at Mrs. Q before they go inside
and the door closes.

The plane takes off over the camp in the foothills.

EXT. MILITARY CAMP - NIGHT

The camp is surrounded by a barbwire-topped fenced area
filled with dozens of aging US Army buildings and tents.

A military, super-charged golf cart LAUNCHES toward Evan. Its driver is American white-coated scientist DR. NIKOLAI BRIGGS (40s). Chilean medical doctor MATIAS GALDOS (30s) next to him.

DR. BRIGGS
This should be interesting.

The cart SKIDS to a stop inches away from Evan. Briggs jumps out. Grabs Evan's hand. Dr. Galdos follows.

DR. BRIGGS (cont'd)
Mr. Lamond. Mind if I call you Evan? I'm Doctor Nikolai Briggs and this is Doctor Matias Galdos of the Chilean Ministry of Health. He discovered our... discovery.

EVAN
You're in charge?

DR. BRIGGS
Of the whole shebang.

Briggs gestures for Evan to get in. Both do.

EVAN
I don't suppose you can tell me where we are?

DR. BRIGGS
We're in Chile in the Andes mountains. But I bet you're more interested in why you're here.

The cart BLASTS through a guard station, up a road between tents, careening wildly. Soldiers leaping out of the way.

Once away from the tents, the cart kicks up pebbles as it races up a carved out road into the mountains.

DR. BRIGGS (cont'd)
Twenty two years ago, there was an earthquake around here. Matias and his father live in the valley. They went hiking and discovered it had opened the entrance to a cavern.

EVAN
Uh, huh. I don't suppose you could slow down a bit?

Briggs speeds up a bit.

MATIAS

When I saw what was inside, I
called someone who called someone.
Short story: Doctor Briggs has been
studying it ever since. I joined
him several years later.

EVAN

What's *IT*?

The cart SKIDS to a halt in front of the cavern entrance
which has huge inset metal doors and two armed SENTRIES.

DR. BRIGGS

Come in, Evan. Prepare to be
amazed.

INT. CAVERN - NIGHT

Body scanner, then the people door inset in the big doors.

The cavern isn't like your usual cave. A few feet in it's
dim with only a few safety lights on. Something big looms.

DR. BRIGGS

Yup. Squared off walls. 90 degree
corners. Laser cut, we think. Which
presents a bit of a problem, given
when it was probably done.

Brilliant lights snap on.

Evan gets his bearings, but then stumbles back as his brain
connects with the impossible cavern contents.

Luckily, behind him are a row of chairs against the wall. He
stumbles onto one.

EVAN

(under his breath)
It can't be...

DR. BRIGGS

There've been more than a few
people with the same reaction first
time they see an alien spacecraft.

But that's not exactly why Evan is gobsmacked.

BEGIN FLASHBACK**EXT. MOUNTAIN CLEARING, 1179 - EVENING**

Evanon rips off his shirt and drops to his knees, sobbing, fingering the pendent around his neck.

EVANON

*Why, God? Why? What have we done to
earn your wrath?*

Evanon falls into a blubbering, sobbing mess as his brother arrives. Kneels down next to him.

HOURS LATER...

Evanon has exhausted himself and fallen asleep. Varner is asleep on the other side of a smoldering fire.

A BLAST of harsh white light from above, centered on Evanon, wakes him. He jumps up, ready to fight, but freezes.

Varner wakes, too, confused. Looks up to the light.

The 100 foot long spacecraft silently lands.

A door opens toward the front of the ship. The silhouette of a short FIGURE appears in it as the bright light flicks off.

Both brothers are paralyzed with fear.

Two figures stand in the doorway: Mrs. Quimby and Roche.

ROCHE

It really is him.

Mrs. Quimby steps down from the craft.

Reaching the pair, Mrs. Q presses a small disc to Varner's forehead. He lies down. Trance-like. Oblivious.

She does the same for Evanon. Instantly calm, but awake. Guides him toward the ship's door.

Reaching the ship, Evanon raises his hand to touch the sides. Into the ship they go.

LATER...

The sun peeks morning between mountains. Mrs. Quimby and Roche stand at the ship's doorway as Evanon wanders, in a daze, to his brother.

MRS. QUIMBY

You OK with our special project?

ROCHE

I guess I have to be. Of all humans... Besides, he might not survive the next thousand years.

(beat)

Let's go. Get this ship stowed so we can, "join the flow of humanity into the future." I can hardly wait.

The door closes. The ship rises silently. Sprints away.

Evanon removes his brother's forehead disc. It dissolves away in his hand which he realizes is now almost healed.

VARNER

Wha... What's happened?

(sits up)

Your hand! How...

EVANON

They said they've made me immortal. A sentinel so I can warn their people when --

VARNER

Immortal? Like a god? You're talking nonsense.

Evanon looks around, not at all sure what to do next.

VARNER (cont'd)

It must have been a dream. We both must have been dreaming. That has to be it.

EVANON

Was yesterday a dream?

Varner offers a comforting arm as they trek towards home.

END FLASHBACK

The ship is the one Evan encountered so long ago. Evan realizes something. Under his breath...

EVAN

Mrs. Quimby... Can't be. But...

He glances at Briggs. Composes himself. Can't let on.

Briggs leads a dazed Evan toward the ship's door. He runs his hand over the side like so long ago.

DR. BRIGGS

Weird feel, huh? Took forever to analyze it. Nothing worked. Zapped it with extreme heat, extreme cold. Radiation. Acids, bases. Every chemical you can imagine. One engineer was so frustrated, he tried peeing on it. You name it, we've tried it. We finally --

EVAN

I don't care. I just want to know what this has to do with me.

An AIDE hands Briggs a clipboard. Reads what's on it.

DR. BRIGGS

Well, that's the thing. You see, Evan, the ship asked for you.

EVAN

It what?

Briggs signs the clipboard. Hands it back to the aide.

MATIAS

Tests show the ship was sealed in here as much as a thousand years ago. No idea why, or what happened to the aliens who put it here.

Needing to steady himself, Evan's hand lands on the graviton drive pad under the ship.

DR. BRIGGS

That's the propulsion system, sort of. It manipulates gravity using graviton particle... something. Still working on the theory. We did figure out how to make one. Sort of. Need to come up with a name to call it. Wanna keep it simple.

MATIAS

The Graviton Drive.

DR. BRIGGS

The *BRIGGS* Graviton Drive. Like it!

They reach the ship's door near the front.

DR. BRIGGS (cont'd)
 After all these years, we only got
 inside the ship last week. Couldn't
 find the damn door. Came in one
 day, there it was. Open.

Briggs steps in. Gestures Evan follow. Matias stays outside.

SHIP

Evan steps in. Looks around.

To the right, two rooms with a corridor between running to
 the back. One has a large window. Inside, an odd medical bed
 with a clear cover. Used to make him "immortal?"

To the left, the ship's cockpit/control room/bridge.

DR. BRIGGS
 Not exactly sure what comes next.
 We can --

Matias sticks his head in the door.

MATIAS
 Doc, you have a phone call from
 Washington. It's General Smolitz.

DR. BRIGGS
 Damn. I gotta take this. You
 just... hang on. I'll be back.

Briggs bounds out leaving a bewildered Evan standing there.

Holographic and haptic controls on the console turn on.

CAVERN

Briggs picks up a phone on a nearby desk.

DR. BRIGGS
 General. Yup, he's here. I --

MATIAS
 Nikolai!

Briggs turns around to see the ship's door closing and legs
 folding up as the ship silently rises.

Evan appears in a window, wide eyed. Briggs drops the phone.

Facing the door, graviton waves emanate from the front of the ship. Everyone runs for their lives as the waves hit the huge metal cavern doors which bend outward until...

EXT. CAVERN - NIGHT

The doors BLAST out of the entrance at terrific speed followed by the ship which floats through the opening.

ALARMS blare. Troops race around, not sure what to do since they've never trained for this.

Briggs and Matias race to the entrance.

Briggs stands with hands on hips as the ship shoots away.

DR. BRIGGS

Well, I was right. Tonight was interesting.

INT. JET - NIGHT

Mrs. Quimby watches out a window as what's now Evan's ship speeds away. Roche is reading a book.

MRS. QUIMBY

There he goes.

She uses her TouchTab-like device to contact the ship. The back of Evan's head appears on it.

MRS. QUIMBY (cont'd)

Hello, Evan.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: BRIDGE - (INTERCUT)

Evan's head snaps around to see Mrs. Quimby's 3D holo face popping up from the console.

EVAN

What!? Mrs. Quimby? Are you... What is going on?

MRS. QUIMBY

Don't worry. Everything is fine. I know this is confusing and scary, but I wanted to assure you it's all under control.

EVAN

What's under control? Where am I going?

MRS. QUIMBY

You're going to your new home base which is on the coast of China. Or more accurately, under it.

EVAN

I don't understand.

MRS. QUIMBY

We're following right behind you. Just sit back and relax. It won't be long. We'll explain everything when we get there.

Evan's baffled face dissolves away as Mrs. Quimby switches off the TouchTab session.

END INTERCUT

INT. JET - CONTINUOUS

ROCHE

Everything?

MRS. QUIMBY

Yes... Well... Not that, of course.

When I was in his store, he showed me a statue of a Hindu god. The creator and destroyer of worlds. I'm not sure how Evan would handle learning he was describing himself.

ROCHE

And Phase 2?

MRS. QUIMBY

We won't have all quarter million for a long time. If we need him for that, then... Maybe you're right. Not everything at once.

ROCHE

For now, he's going to have enough to learn about and absorb in the...

(theatrical)

grand tour of our wondrous galactic neighborhood that will awe and

(MORE)

ROCHE (cont'd)
inspire him to greatness without
the guilt.

MRS. QUIMBY
Good grief.

Roche returns to reading his book with a bitter smile.

EXT. JET

The jet, which is far more than a plain plane, shoots off at graviton drive speed to fly beside Evan's ship toward China.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BLOB: CARGO BAY - DAY

Ellie, hands on hips. Deep breath. Time to get to work.

She surveys 40 feet of wreckage that once was a 60 foot long passenger transport. The rear half is mostly fine. The front is so twisted and crumpled, hard to tell what it once was.

Several IBI TECHS crawl over the mess.

A slight WHOOSH as the elevator door opens behind Ellie.

Carlton Orlandic steps out with a comfortable air of authority and sophistication that can't be taught, but also a beaten down something. Smile time.

CARLTON
I hope there's still enough left to
tell you something.

No. That voice... It can't be. Ellie whirls around. Stunned.

ELLIE
Carlton?! Wha... What are you doing
here?

CARLTON
Believe it or not, I run the place.
(to the techs)
Gentlemen. Can we have a moment?

The techs look toward Ellie who nods, numbly. They file out. Carlton walks up to Ellie, ready to hug her.

CARLON (cont'd)
It's so good to see you, Ellie. Not quite like what we had together in college on Eridani, of course.

Ellie shoves/punches Carlon's shoulder.

ELLIE
You asshole! You just up and disappear one day without a word? I tried to contact you, but it's like you didn't exist. And you never once tried to contact me.

CARLON
I'm so sorry. As much as I wanted to I couldn't stay or explain why. Besides, I would have just interfered with your career.

ELLIE
My career? Seriously? We talked about spending our lives together!

CARLON
I had to. To protect you.

ELLIE
From what?

CARLON
From my uncle.

ELLIE
Who's your uncle?

Ellie notices Carlon's name tag on his suit.

ELLIE (cont'd)
Wait a minute... Carlon *ORLANIC*? What happened to Syndor? You've changed your last name? Is this why I couldn't find you in the Dominion Citizen Registry?

CARLON
No. Well, yes. Sort of. It's one of my middle names. Just not in the Registry. It made it easier.

ELLIE
Easier for what?

Behind them, the elevator door WHOOSHES open. Carlon's fastidious ASSISTANT (21) steps out, frowning. She has an annoying, yet commanding voice.

CARLON'S ASSISTANT
Boss, you told me to make sure you weren't going to be late. Again.

CARLON
Yes, alright. I'll be right there.

The assistant doesn't move as she waits, glaring at Carlon.

CARLON (cont'd)
I have to go, but I promise I'll explain everything when I can.

Carlon gestures to the junk pile that was once a transport.

CARLON (cont'd)
Any ideas?

ELLIE
Pilot error?

CARLON
He was almost docked when it suddenly flipped around and into the stabilizer. No, Martinez was too good a pilot for that. Besides, docking is an automatic process.

ELLIE
The logs show all systems were normal, then for no apparent reason, he moved the controls.

CARLON
We pulled out what's left of him. Maybe the Doc found something.

The assistant loudly CLEARS her throat.

CARLON (cont'd)
We'll catch up later? No disappearing this time, I promise.

Carlon turns and walks to the elevator. In a huff, the assistant gets in first.

ELLIE
You requested me, didn't you?

Carlton stops a beat just before the elevator, then enters and turns toward Ellie.

CARLTON

After all you've been through, I
thought, despite everything... A
friendly face...

Ellie starts to say, *Thank you*, but stops.

With everything else, not sure if she wants to scream or
cry. Instead, sucks it up as several STATION WORKERS enter.

Assistant reaches past Carlton to stab a button. Door closes.

Ellie rubs her face. Can't let workers see her emotions.

INT. ELEVATOR

Assistant pulls up a schedule/diary with her TouchTab.

CARLTON'S ASSISTANT

I don't remember sending a request
to the Bureau for her. Did you do
it yourself?

CARLTON

No.

CARLTON'S ASSISTANT

(rolls eyes)

Then why did it sound like you did?

CARLTON

I don't know how she got assigned
here, but I didn't request her.
Just a coincidence, I guess.

CARLTON'S ASSISTANT

Uh huh. Yeah, right. Coincidence.
Your old girlfriend just happens to
show up here, after how many years?

CARLTON

I'm more concerned why they sent an
IBI Detective to a middle of
nowhere space station to
investigate what probably isn't
even a crime.

The assistant side-eyes him, shrugs. Given up. Doesn't care.

INT. BLOB: MEDICAL BAY - DAY

A bit disheveled DOC YUNE MARSHANSK (61) looks like a cigar is missing from his mouth. He's standing over an examining table containing a mess that was once MARTINEZ, the pilot.

Ellie enters. Wrinkles her nose at the sight.

ELLIE

Doctor Marshansk? Detective
Constable Ellie Percera.

Ellie goes to shake hands. Doc peels off bloody gloves.

DOC

Well, as you can see, we're pretty
limited here. We don't usually deal
with bodies in this kind of
condition. All I can tell so far is
I think he's dead.

ELLIE

No matter where I go... Are doctors
required to take classes in bad
medical humor? What have you got?

Doc pops up holograms showing assorted stats.

DOC

A perfectly normal bio-rec.

ELLIE

No drugs? No brain tumor? No psych
eval where he dances naked into a
whirling fan?

DOC

Bad IBI humor?

ELLIE

(smiles)
Nothing at all?

DOC

I wouldn't say that.

An x-ray of a hand pops up. Doc points to an oval spot.

ELLIE

Is that what I think it is?

DOC

I'm pretty sure with your elite training you can tell that ain't from a 32 caliber knife.

ELLIE

Thanks, Doc. Let me know if you find anything else.

Doc GRUNTS. Snaps on new gloves as Ellie leaves.

Turns on 29th century HEADBANGER MUSIC. Picks up a vibro-scalpel. Dancing a bit, it's cuttin' time!

INT. BLOB: CARGO BAY - DAY

A robot welder slices the transport into two sections. The front mangled section CRASHES to the deck.

Both older TECH 1 and younger TECH 2 step up into the rear section. At their feet is a dried pool of blood.

TECH 1

Funny thing about this job is how quickly you go from puking at a drop of blood to stepping over someone's intestines and thinking, *What should I have for lunch?*

They notice Ellie is there.

TECH 2

Uh... Hey, boss! We, uh...

ELLIE

Let's have some respect. Either of you find a gun in all --

A distant POUNDING sound. Ellie looks around.

ELLIE (cont'd)

What was that?

POUNDING again.

Ellie and techs turn toward the now accessible section whose ceiling is bashed down.

TECH 2

There can't be anyone in here. All the passengers and crew were accounted for.

They focus on a HATCH to the cargo compartment. Ellie and the techs wrestle the seats smashed over it.

Door's bent. Ellie grabs a long metal something to pry it.

A young girl rolls out. Dried blood. Bruises. Hair covering her face. Barely conscious, but alive!

ELLIE

Oh, my God! It can't be!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MEDICAL BAY - DAY

Two armed SECURITY MEN stand on either side of the doors. One turns and looks inside.

SECURITY MAN 1

Is that really Kirsta Tynan?

Seeing Carlon and a rattled Ellie approach, Security Man 2 clears his throat. Both snap to attention.

Ellie and Carlon look in the room's window. Doc is checking out Kirsta. Finished, he comes out to them.

DOC

Damn good shape for being stuck in that ship for a couple days.

ELLIE

Did she say anything?

DOC

Seems they escaped on the kidnapper's ship in the woods.

ELLIE

Was she...? Did he...?

DOC

No. Nothing like that. Her injuries are consistent with the crash which are healing surprisingly fast. She's dehydrated and hungry, but nothing permanent. You, however...

ELLIE

I'm OK.

DOC

Yeah? Don't want you ending up on my table. Want a sleep aid?

ELLIE
 (shakes head)
 Did she tell you about the kidnapper? Who he is?

DOC
 Hardly ever saw him. Never heard his name. Says she escaped somehow and stowed away on a transport, jumping onto several of 'em until she got here. I don't know. I'm not a detective like you, but something just doesn't feel right about it.

ELLIE
 What do you mean?

DOC
 Her story seems... rehearsed. And, I'd think she would be more traumatized. But I'm not a shrink either, so who knows? Could be an act. She's no dummy. Asked intern level questions about her injuries.

ELLIE
 Can we talk to her?

DOC
 Yeah, just not for too long.

Ellie nods to Carlon who leaves after he gets a message on his TouchTab. She enters the...

MED BAY

Kirsta perks up as Ellie comes to her bed.

ELLIE
 Kirsta? Do you remember me?

KIRSTA
 You're the one who tried to rescue my father and me.

ELLIE
 There's a lot we should discuss. About that day and what happened after. About the man who --

KIRSTA
 Will he come and take me back?

ELLIE

You have my word. You'll never see him again. But right now, I need to ask you about the crash. Do you remember anything?

START FLASHBACK

Kirsta wakes up. Opens the cargo door enough to peek out.

Two men, UKANOR (50ish), and Briggs' man, Brossick, argue.

KIRSTA (V.O.)

I fell asleep. When I woke up, two men were arguing with each other. I couldn't hear about what.

Ukanor pulls out a gun. WOMAN PASSENGER SCREAMS. Points it at Brossick. They struggle. The gun FIRES.

Kirsta can see the pilot standing, facing the pair. His hand is HIT and JERKS back.

KIRSTA (V.O.) (cont'd)

The pilot yelled. That's when everything went crazy.

Pilot's hand SLAMS against a control, jerking the ship into the stabilizer above the docking bay where the front of the ship crumples like tissue paper. Crushes around the pilot.

Kirsta tumbles to luggage at the back of the cargo hold. Door closes. Ceiling buckles. Blackness.

END FLASHBACK

KIRSTA

When I woke up, the door was jammed and nobody heard me yelling until you found me.

ELLIE

Did you learn anything about the man who took you?

KIRSTA

No. I was locked in a room. A bot brought me food. I escaped when it came in one time.

ELLIE

I guess that's all for now. Doc said you need to rest.

Carlton enters.

ELLIE (cont'd)
 This is Mr. Sol... Mr. Orlanic. He
 runs this station.
 (to Carlton)
 She's concerned about the kidnapper
 trying to get her back.

CARLTON
 See those men outside? They're here
 to guard you. Nothing is going to
 happen to you.

ELLIE
 Get some rest. We'll be nearby.

Ellie and Carlton exit. Kirsta sees them through the window
 walking and talking down the hall.

When gone, Kirsta's demeanor changes: scared to calm, almost
 happy. Lays back in the bed. Enters a TouchTab message.

INT. ELLIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Ellie talks to her boss.

YENI (ON TOUCHTAB)
 It's on you to keep her safe.

His hologram dissolves away.

Wanting herself to dissolve, Ellie lays down. Clothes on.

Restless. Exhausted. Can't sleep. Gets up and goes out.

CORRIDOR

Ellie wanders.

Rounding a corner to the med bay, she's shocked to see the
 two security men laying unconscious.

Rushing to them, she looks up into the dark med bay where a
 shadow is MOVING.

Lit only by night lights, an INTRUDER is bent over a desk.
 In the dark, wearing a hoodie, we can't see his face.

Ellie pulls a small gun from her ankle holster. Slowly
 pushes the door open. Arms outstretched. Gun darting.

He's gone!

MED BAY

From behind the door, the intruder's arm WHACKS down on Ellie's, knocking the gun from her hand. Kirsta SHRIEKS.

He grabs Ellie's arms and WHIPS her into the med bay.

As he lets go, Ellie grabs his arm, stopping her fall.

She pulls herself to him and CHOPS at his throat.

The intruder starts choking, stumbling around. He lashes out knocking Ellie to the floor.

Ellie grasps for her gun and finds it.

KIRSTA

STOP IT!

As Ellie scrambles up, starting to raise her gun, the intruder regains his balance. Rushes her.

He SLAMS her full force in the stomach with his shoulder. Drives Ellie to the wall. Gun goes flying.

Her back hits a light switch. Main lights BLAST on.

Looking up for an instant as she slides down to the floor, she can see, but not us, the intruder's face in the hoodie.

ELLIE

YOU!

The intruder races to Kirsta's bed.

A metal bedpan has fallen next to Ellie. She grabs it.

When the intruder turns around, with a GRUNT of everything she's got, Ellie LUNGES upward.

Bedpan meets intruder's chin. He goes down with a THUD.

Ellie crawls to the wall. SLAPS her palm on the emergency button. Alarms BLARE. Slumps down. Out. Blackness.

MOMENTS LATER...

Several SECURITY MEN burst in, guns raised, led by Carlon, followed by the Doc. The alarm stops.

Carlon helps Ellie to a chair while the Doc checks her head.

CARLON
What happened? Where's Kirsta?

Ellie whirls around. Kirsta is gone.

ELLIE
It was him! The kidnapper.

Carlton looks at his TouchTab.

CARLON
He's gone. His ship just took off.
(to security man)
Find out how he was able to dock
here and where he's going. NOW!

The security man races out.

ELLIE
We promised we wouldn't let him get
her back. We have to find her.

LATER...

Through the window: Carlton is stunned by what a TECH is
telling him, then enters the med bay.

CARLON
It's incredible! We can't contact
the stations in either direction.
On top of that, there's only one
ship here now, and it's being
repaired. Won't be ready for hours.

ELLIE
That's all mighty convenient. Who
tipped him off she was here?

CARLON
Get some rest. I've got some
yelling to do.

Ellie wants to help, but just nods. No condition to argue.

INT. ELLIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Ellie talks to her mother via TouchTab.

ELLIE
They can't do this! I tried to stop
him from taking her. You're a Vice
Director at the Bureau. You have to
be able to do something!

SARRET (ON TOUCHTAB)
 My hands are tied. It came from too
 high up, but I'll keep trying. You
 worked so hard to get --

Ellie angrily ends the call.

Her jacket's badge has NOT AUTHORIZED and a big red X. She
 takes off her jacket and throws it, hard, to the floor.

Sitting slumped in a chair, she throws her head back, hands
 hanging to the floor, starts to SCREAM, but...

A pleasant doorbell MELODY. Now what? Ellie hauls her
 carcass up.

Opens the door to a worried Doc who rushes in.

DOC
 You whacked the kidnapper pretty
 good with that pan.

ELLIE
 Not hard enough.

DOC
 Some of his blood got on it.

ELLIE
 Yes! Did you get a DNA match?

DOC
 Sort of. His name's Evan Lamond,
 but that's literally all that's in
 the Dominion Citizen Registry. No
 address, fingerprints, eye scan,
 financial records, photo. Nothing.

Doc pulls up Evan's DNA profile on the DeskTab.

ELLIE
 How's that possible? Everyone's
 full profile is recorded at birth
 and updated constantly. You need it
 for ID to buy and pay for things
 and to do... well... everything.

DOC
 And that's only the first weirdity.

Doc punches up 3D images and charts of Life Serum.

DOC (cont'd)

As you know, at birth, everyone receives a dose of the concoction commonly called Life Serum. It contains a stew of synthetic antiviral and antibacterial agents, DNA inhibitors, biogenic filters --

ELLIE

It's why people rarely get sick.

DOC

Periodically, the mixture is updated as viruses mutate, die out, new stuff... whatever. Genetic coding makes sure you get the right mixture for every 30 year booster.

Doc brings up the Life Serum timeline. Touches the right end of it. A popup lists Life Serum contents dated this year.

DOC (cont'd)

Here's the list of what's in it today. The markers for all of that should show up in his blood.

(points to Evan's record)

He doesn't have any.

ELLIE

What does that mean?

DOC

Either the markers were erased which is impossible since it's bound to your DNA, or he was born before Life Serum was invented 800 years ago. Unlikely. Or he somehow evaded ever getting Life Serum. I can't guess how. Then again, how he has no info in the Registry except DNA and why even that...

Doc turns to go as Ellie rubs her temples in frustration.

DOC (cont'd)

Oh. Something else. It may mean nothing, but one of the men on the transport was a Briggs Spaceworks employee, name of Sorel Brossick. Another one was a wanted thief, Ahn Ukanor. I'll send you the details.

The doorbell MELODY again. Really?? Someone else?

ELLIE

Thanks Doc. Lots to think about.

Ellie wanders to the door where its view screen shows Carlon. Doc's arm shoots out to block her from opening it.

DOC

Listen. I'm just a lonely, old
broken bone fixer on an even older
Briggs Blob, and you're the IBI
detective.

Ellie looks pained, reminded that she isn't anymore.

DOC (cont'd)

Maybe it's all a mistake with a
contaminated blood sample or his
records are faulty or tampered
with. If I were you, I'd be careful
of everything and everyone.

(beat)

I understand you have a history
with Carlon, but don't forget who
his uncle is.

Doc backs off the door as Ellie looks hard at him.

ELLIE

You know who his uncle is?

Doc touches a pad. Door opens.

CARLON

Hello, Doc!

DOC

Evening, Carlon.

(to Ellie)

Now stop worrying. Like the old
ones, your cuts should heal without
scars. Goodnight to you both.

Doc leaves. Ellie closes the door. Carlon carries a package.

CARLON

You're not going to believe this!

ELLIE

At this point, I'd can't imagine
what I wouldn't believe.

Ellie yawns BIG as Carlon sets the package down on a table.

ELLIE (cont'd)
Turns out the kidnapper's name is
Evan Lamond. Mean anything to you?

CARLON
Don't think so.

He plays a security video of Ellie and Evan fighting.

CARLON (cont'd)
Watch this. After you're knocked
out, see what Kirsta does?

Kirsta gets out of bed and helps Evan up. She smiles at him
as they walk to the door together.

CARLON (cont'd)
He didn't force her. She went
willingly. I don't think she was
escaping from him when she came
here. It was all an act.

ELLIE
That's ridiculous. She was scared
of him coming to retrieve her.

CARLON
Watch it again. She doesn't look
scared to me.
(restarts the video)
What if she wasn't on that
transport by accident. What if she
was here for a specific reason.

ELLIE
Like what?

Carlton punches up a schematic layout of the Blob.

CARLON
Before you came into the Med Lab,
Lamond was looking at this map.
(points to map)
I think he was trying to find the
station's safe to get this.

Carlton hands Ellie the package: a hard plastic case. On top
is written, *FOR KIRSTA*.

CARLON (cont'd)
We found it in the wreckage before
you got here, so I put it in the
safe and forgot about it.

Ellie opens the case. Inside is an ornate metal box, eight inches to a side, with an inset button on top.

ELLIE

I know what this is. It was the only thing stolen during a museum break-in. They think it was made centuries ago.

Ellie presses the inset button. The metal sides snap up to reveal a thick glass ball in the cage. Inside is a gray metallic sphere morphing and twisting in constant, uncomfortable motion.

CARLON

It looks like some kind of nanotech toy. Why would he want this?

After setting the box down, Ellie paces, thinking.

ELLIE

There were two men on the transport. One was a professional thief named Ukanor. The other was a Briggs employee named Brossick.

CARLON

Brossick...? I know that name.

ELLIE

Suppose someone at Briggs had Brossick get Ukanor to steal the box from the museum.

CARLON

Probably Alistair Briggs himself. I think Brossick works for him.

ELLIE

Then they give this to Kirsta who takes it to Lamond?

CARLON

Maybe the thief wanted more money, shot at Brossick, missed, hit the pilot instead, causing the crash.

ELLIE

Why send a nine-year old to get it?

CARLON

Who'd suspect a kid carrying a package?

ELLIE

But then why didn't Lamond just come and get it himself?

CARLON

Obviously, the crash was unplanned, and he didn't expect you to be here to recognize her.

(eyebrows raise)

Unless you were.

ELLIE

Were what? Supposed to be here?

CARLON

I have to confess something. I was as surprised when you arrived as you were to see me. I didn't request you. I thought it was just a coincidence, but now...

ELLIE

You think Briggs wanted me here? Or the Emperor? It might explain something my mother said.

CARLON

I gave up trying to understand anything about those two long ago.

ELLIE

Even if you're right, I just can't believe Kirsta was a willing accomplice, unless she's been brainwashed. And why take her from Tynan's in the first place?

(the guilt hits)

I let her down. We have to find them. We have to get Kirsta back.

(quietly)

And my job.

It takes Carlon a moment to connect with what she said. He pulls Ellie to him to comfort her. It's not working.

INT. CARLON'S OFFICE - MORNING

Next morning, Ellie looks vaguely better after some sleep. Carlon sits at his desk. Ellie stands in front of it.

ELLIE

What do you mean he wasn't headed for a Blob? He has to have been.

CARLON

There's a device that records wormholes created locally. Every transport has gone either to the station before or after this one. Except for his.

ELLIE

Where's it heading?

CARLON

In the direction of Domoni, the Dominion's central planet.

ELLIE

Why would he go there?

CARLON

Why is he doing anything he's doing?

ELLIE

"In the direction of Domoni." You mean straight there? How?

She pulls up a 3D map on her TouchTab of the Dominion planets with this Blob at the center.

ELLIE (cont'd)

We're way out here near Heldsport. You have to go through at least a half dozen Blobs, curving around... You can't go direct. It's too far without a regeneration. They'll never make it.

CARLON

They have emergency supplies for several days, but that's it. I don't know what to think.

INT. ELLIE'S CABIN - AFTERNOON

Ellie stares into space through the window. The strain finally hits. Breaks down crying.

Stopping herself, she makes her way, barefoot, to the bathroom, but stubs her toe on the doorframe.

Steading herself with a hand to a wall panel, her knuckles scrape something on the panel. Moves her hand away.

Briggs Blobs are built with mass produced panels. One corner of each panel has raised lettering:

Manufactured by Briggs Spaceworks

She glances at her hand, then stares dumbly at the panel, not really focusing until she sees what scratched her. Looking around, every panel has this lettering.

A crazy idea takes hold.

INT. CARLON'S OFFICE - LATER

Carlton sits, leans back, hand on top of head, astonished by what he is hearing. Ellie paces as she pleads her case.

CARLON

So, let me get this straight. You think graviton drives can go any distance without regenerating.

Carlton gets up and wanders, thinking. Ellie stops pacing.

ELLIE

What exactly is that? I checked. A Briggs tech presses a *REGENERATE* button in the dock. What if that's just for show?

CARLON

So the Briggs company has kept this secret. For centuries. Why?

ELLIE

Briggs Spaceworks builds, owns, and rents out every spaceship. It owns and maintains every Blob. Hell, what in space isn't made or owned by them? On top of that, they also make the graviton pads for terrestrial vehicles. All highly profitable. But that's chump change compared to the fees for trillions of regenerations. Sounds to me like a profitable secret worth keeping.

Carlton at window. Turns on, contemplates TouchTab.

CARLON

You know, the comm system links between TouchTabs and for HoloVerse rooms is owned by them, too. Do you know how they work?

ELLIE

Isn't it something like entangled
micro-wormholes, or something,
between the two parties?

CARLON

Thing is there's no limit on the
distance. It's sort of similar, but
if ships can go any distance...

Ellie sits down, leans back. Hand to chin.

ELLIE

Can your direction detector be
fooled? Could Lamond seem like he's
going one direction but really
going another?

CARLON

No.

ELLIE

And how did he get here in the
first place without being noticed
going through Blobs? Direct from
who knows where?

(emphatic)

This guy may be a lot of things,
but stupid or suicidal isn't one of
them. He wouldn't head off into
empty space if he didn't know he
couldn't get where he's going.

CARLON

But the Emperor and others in the
government would have to know --

ELLIE

And you're sure they don't?

Carlton SNORTS as he walks back to his desk.

ELLIE (cont'd)

Can you think of another reason
Lamond would do something everyone
else would think is insane?

Carlton shakes head slowly. Ellie leaps up.

ELLIE (cont'd)

We have to go after them. And if
I'm right, no reason we can't.

CARLON

Actually, there is. I can't go back to Domoni. I'm under special exile from there by the Emperor.

ELLIE

(sits down)

The Emperor? Why does the Emperor care or even know about you? And what is special exile? What would happen if they found you there?

CARLON

I think the official term is... *misplaced*, as in, "Sorry. We seem to have misplaced his mutilated body somewhere."

Ellie sighs, leans back, closes her eyes. Just one more thing for the pile. She can barely think anymore.

ELLIE

Alright. I'll go by myself.

CARLON

No. We'll both go. We just have to be very careful. First, we need a ship. I have an idea about that.

EXT. BLOB - SPACE

A small transport leaves. A wormhole opens and it enters.

INT. TRANSPORT SHIP - HYPERSPACE

The transport is a single cabin, personal luxury model. Pilot console behind a wrap-around window. A semicircular sofa with a table in the middle. Small kitchenette, etc.

A stunned Ellie sits on the sofa next to Carlon.

ELLIE

The Emperor is your uncle? All those years together at school, why didn't you ever tell me?

CARLON

You can't imagine what growing up in a royal family is like. I wanted a normal life. Just for a while. That's why I didn't use my real

(MORE)

CARLON (cont'd)
last name. I'm not in the Registry
because royals are excluded.

ELLIE
You should have told me.

CARLON
Yes. You needed to know what being
a part of my family would mean. For
your life and career, or if you'd
even be allowed to have a career.

ELLIE
You should have let me decide that.

CARLON
I just kept up with the lie hoping
I'd eventually figure something
out. But I was deluding myself. The
irony is I was going to tell you
the night I had to leave.

ELLIE
Why did you leave?

CARLON
How do I put this? There's a thing
in inbred royal families where a
less than genius will occasionally
be born. Fools and kings are often
the same thing. Or in this case, a
younger sibling. My father.

ELLIE
The next generation seems to have
turned out brilliantly.

CARLON
Yeeesss. A fluke of nature am I.

ELLIE
You thought I was referring to you?

Carlon feigns horror, then smiles, then serious.

CARLON
One guess whose brother attempted a
spectacularly inept coup that
failed miserably. Of course, my
father and his accomplices were
captured and put to death.

ELLIE
But you weren't involved.

CARLON

What I didn't expect was he tried to save himself by saying it was my idea. I was arrested and whisked away before I could tell you.

Ellie puts her hand on Carlon's.

ELLIE

Oh, Carlon. If I'd only known.

CARLON

Too dangerous. You could have been implicated. Luckily, the Emperor knew his brother was an inveterate liar and didn't believe his story.

ELLIE

The Emperor saved you?

CARLON

He wanted to let me go, but Briggs realized I didn't inherit the idiot gene, so he wanted me dead. They compromised on exile with the threat of death if I ever returned.

ELLIE

So, what do we do?

CARLON

I sent word to a friend I trust we were coming. She's knows someone who can mask info about the ship.

Carlon moves to put his arm around her. She pulls away.

ELLIE

But can I trust YOU?

CARLON

What? Of course.

ELLIE

My head says I can't blame you for why you left, but my heart... I was so happy. My life's path was set. You and the Bureau. Suddenly it was all shattered. I shut out everything but my career. You're back, and now this? I don't know how to feel.

CARLON

I wanted that path for us both as well. I am so sorry. My only excuse is leaving wasn't my choice.

Carlton's TouchTab indicates a message.

ELLIE

Saving Kirsta has to be our priority. My career is in the past. Who knows what will happen if we --

CARLON

What the hell?

He swipes the message to the DeskTab: an IBI officer next to 3D rotating images of Ellie and Carlton.

HOLO OFFICER

IBI announcement 544-YT-137. Arrest warrant R33813a and b. Former IBI detective Elandrian Percera. Wanted for the murder of Doctor Yune Marshansk.

ELLIE

Murder?

HOLO OFFICER

Briggs station manager Carlton Orlandic. Wanted as an accomplice in the murder of Doctor Yune Marshansk. Special directive: Although both are to be considered armed and dangerous, non-lethal force only during apprehension.

Ellie's mouth hangs open as Carlton turns it off.

CARLON

Why would someone kill the Doc and blame us?

Ellie jumps to her TouchTab messages.

ELLIE

There's a message from him. What if they wanted to stop him from sending it to me?

Ellie tosses it to the DeskTab. The Doc's holo appears.

DOC

I did some more tests. Although
there wasn't much of Lamond's blood
left, I found something odd in it.
I don't have the equipment to tell
what it is. But the more important
thing is, Kirsta is --

A loud NOISE causes the Doc to look, then lurch to the side.
Holo cuts off.

Ellie slumps down, forehead on table. Carlon mulls it all.

CARLON

What a pair we make. It's like a
bad movie. Two wanted criminals,
once lovers, on the run from
trumped up charges. Could be worse.

Ellie picks her head up to glare at him.

CARLON (cont'd)

A poster with a reward saying,
Wanted Dead or Alive.

Down her head goes.

LATER...

Carlon sits at the console. Fingers drumming.

Ellie is a bundle of nerves. Head between knees. Jumps up.
Pacing back and forth. Sits at the table. Up. More pacing.

ELLIE

If I'm wrong, no one is crazy
enough to come after us only to
meet the same fate.

Holographic numbers of a countdown clock hang in the air
above a panel. 00:00:32, counting down.

Carlon: Eyes locked on the clock.

Ellie: Sofa. Fidget. Jumps up. Pacing. Wrings hands.

10 seconds: Carlon stands up. Sweat beading on forehead.
Ellie rushes to stand next to him. Takes his HAND. Tight.

5, 4, 3...

Ellie closes her eyes.

00:00:00 BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Both JUMP at the sound, but nothing happens. The drive is still working.

Carlton was so tense he shakes himself to unkink his body.

CARLTON

We made it! You were right. There
is no limit.

Joy! Elation! Ellie embraces him.

ELLIE

If we made it, Kirsta made it!

Carlton starts to pull back, but Ellie pulls him back in. Kisses him. He doesn't resist. Years melt away.

Graviton drive shuts off. Ship drops out of hyperspace.

COMPUTER

Graviton drive distance limit
exceeded. Safety protocols engaged
for your protection. Please enter
the nearest Briggs Spaceworks
facility for regeneration.

Ellie and Carlton drop their embrace.

ELLIE

No. Oh, no, no, no!

Carlton pounds his fist to the console.

ELLIE (cont'd)

Wait... Wait... Of course. There
must be something in the system to
prevent anyone trying this. But
that means we don't have a way to
tell if the drives can go farther.

CARLTON

Or a way to override it if there is
no maximum. Unless there's a remote
way to... Now what?

A soft BONGING is coming from the console.

CARLTON (cont'd)

There's another ship out there. No,
wait. Several of them.

EXT. SHIP

A half dozen Royal Guard ships pop out of wormholes.
Surround our pair's ship.

One approaches. Sidles up. Attaches a short, tubular walkway
between the ships' doors.

INT. SHIP

A muffled BANGING as the walkway connects.

CARLON

They're Royal Guards! They knew
where we'd be. Someone on the Blob
must have contacted them.

ELLIE

Maybe your Domoni friend?

They stand anxiously at the console, staring at the door.

ROYAL GUARDS, guns aiming, boil out when it opens, followed
by a LIEUTENANT who steps to the front. TouchTab displays an
arrest warrant.

LIEUTENANT

By order of his excellency, Emperor
Granville VII, Elandrian Percera
and Carlon Orlanic Solnor Granville
are commanded to be arrested.

Guards grab Ellie and Carlon. Yank their arms behind them.
Handcuffs. Black bags over heads.

LIEUTENANT (cont'd)

I can't wait to see what the
Emperor does with you pair.

Guards shove them to the door. One stays to pilot.

EXT. SHIP

The Guard ship retracts its walkway. Wormholes open. Gone.

INT. GUARD SHIP

Ellie and Carlon are led into a cell. Forced to their knees.
Major Roston enters the outer room.

ROSTON
Lieutenant, I told you not to be
rough with them. Help them up and
get those off.

The Guards pull the pair up. Remove hoods.

CARLON
Roston?

ROSTON
Yes, Lord Carlon. I'm sorry sir.
(to the Lieutenant)
And the cuffs.

LIEUTENANT
But Major, they're dangerous.

ROSTON
No Lieutenant, they are not.

LIEUTENANT
Sir.

The puzzled Lieutenant nods to the Guards who uncuff them.

CARLON
What's going to happen to us?

LIEUTENANT
That's up to His Eminence to
decide.

ROSTON
Enough, Lieutenant. Dismissed.
(to the guards)
You, too.

When the Guards are gone...

ROSTON (cont'd)
Take a seat. Don't worry. Despite
whatever the Lieutenant said,
things aren't what they seem.

Ellie and Carlon are more confused than encouraged.

Roston exits. A Guard stands at attention outside the cell.

EXT. EMPEROR'S SPIRAL - DAY

A Guard ship and Ellie and Carlon's ship land next to each
other in the yard behind the Spiral.

The prisoners are led off into the building.

ELEVATOR

At the top, through the glass doors, they see the Emperor and Briggs "discussing" something. The Emperor snootily folds his arms while Briggs shakes his head in disgust.

CARLON

So, which one is the boss again?

Roston chuckles as the door opens and leads them out.

EMPEROR'S OFFICE

The Emperor in his floating chair rises so the he can look down on everyone. A big, goofy smile breaks out on his face.

EMPEROR

Welcome! We are pleased that you
have come for a visit.

Carlton's eyebrows jump up at his pleasant tone.

EMPEROR (cont'd)

So, nephew. How have you been?

Carlton opens his mouth to answer, but before he can...

EMPEROR (cont'd)

Good to meet you, detective. Oh,
sorry. Former detective.

He casually gestures to Briggs gazing out the window.

EMPEROR (cont'd)

May I present Mr. Alistair Briggs,
the man currently RESPONSIBLE for
Briggs Spaceworks.

Briggs doesn't respond.

Bots set up a table and chairs in front of our pair. The elevator door opens and other bots bring food and drink.

The Emperor gestures for Ellie and Carlton to sit.

CARLON

What is this? Our last meal before
you two get us out of the way?
Permanently?

Briggs cocks his wrinkled head a bit, but stays at the window. That voice doesn't.

BRIGGS

Watch your mouth, boy.

The Emperor weak voiced angry roar comes off as petulant.

EMPEROR

You will NOT speak to a member of my family like that again!

BRIGGS

(turns, bows)

I profusely apologize, your Eminence.

(to Ellie & Carlon)

What I am sure the Emperor wishes to convey is that to ease your minds, for now, you two are of more use to us alive than dead.

Briggs turns to glare at the Emperor who is unnerved by it.

BRIGGS (cont'd)

You see, we know you are searching for Tynan's daughter. We wish you to continue with a small, additional assignment: bring her kidnapper to us.

ELLIE

Why would you want him?

EMPEROR

We believe he knows the location to something we are seeking.

ELLIE

The location of what?

BRIGGS

That is none of your concern.

EMPEROR

I am informed that you apparently have figured out that the graviton drives don't need regeneration.

(sneering look at Briggs)

Bravo! Your ship is now being modified to remove any limitations.

CARLON

So it *IS* a scam.

BRIGGS

A profitable enterprise. But a scam? Funny word coming from someone who was involved with Halorin and his little affair.

CARLON

(shrinks back)

You know about that?

BRIGGS

We know everything.

ELLIE

Then why don't you know how to find Lamond? Can't you track his ship?

BRIGGS

We found the ship he used to escape the station, but he and the child were gone. He had transferred to a ship that is... unconventional.

ELLIE

How are we supposed to find him?

EMPEROR

Just do what you are supposed to be good at, ex-detective. We've put a tracker on your ship. Go to where he is. Once you find him --

BRIGGS

We will take care of the rest.

ELLIE

What does that mean?

BRIGGS

Again, not your concern.

CARLON

Why should we do this for you?

EMPEROR

Well, let's see. The penalty for a special exile returning is... death? And for her, a life sentence for... Briggs! What could we charge her with?

BRIGGS
 (dismissive hand wave)
 You're the Emperor. Indulge
 yourself.

EMPEROR
 Of course. On the other hand,
 complete your mission and
 reinstatement with the IBI at full
 rank for her. You will have your
 exile lifted with full royal
 privileges, including, perhaps, a
 path to the throne. More questions?

Ellie starts to ask something, but Carlon stops her.

Briggs comes to the table. Picks up the one drink glass with
 his company's logo on it.

BRIGGS
 Then let's drink to the success of
 your mission.

The Emperor raises his glass with a flourish.

When Ellie and Carlon don't, Briggs glares at them until
 they pick up glasses and drink.

EMPEROR
 Oh. By the way nephew. That doctor
 on your station is fine. The wanted
 notice was just a bit of fun.

Briggs shakes his head in disgust. Again.

CARLON
 He's alive?

EMPEROR
 Incomunicado. Unless you are
 unsuccessful, of course.
 (waves hand)
 You may leave our presence.

Roston leads the pair into the elevator. The door closes.
 It's now just the Emperor and Briggs.

EMPEROR (cont'd)
 Do you think this will work?

BRIGGS
 If it doesn't, perhaps your
 successor will fare better.

The Emperor shrinks from the implication. Presses a button on his chair which then floats to the food table.

Briggs is doing something on his TouchTab as he heads towards the elevator. Without looking up...

BRIGGS (cont'd)
I really don't think you want to
eat that.

The Emperor drops the food morsel almost in his mouth. Glares at Briggs entering the elevator.

INT. TRANSPORT SHIP - DAY

Ellie enters. Sets her gun on the console, walks to the couch, and lays down. Rubs her face with her hands.

Carlton enters. Closes the door. Sits at the console.

ELLIE
Do you actually think we'll get our
lives back if we succeed? Should
we... Can we... trust them?

CARLTON
My uncle? I trust him, more or
less. Briggs, however... Even when
he's telling the truth, there's a
lie in there somewhere.

ELLIE
What could they want with Lamond?

CARLTON
Do you really care?

ELLIE
No. You're right. Not in the least.
I just want Kirsta away from him.

CARLTON
First, there's the whole finding
them thing. So, once and future
Detective Inspector. Where to look?

ELLIE
I take it we can't use --

A message signals on Ellie's TouchTab. Stunned, Ellie tosses it to the DeskTab. A hologram of Kirsta, happy as can be.

KIRSTA HOLO

Hello, Ellie and Carlon. We heard about you being wanted, so we decided not to go to Domoni. Here are coordinates to where we are. Please come and visit us. We'd really like to see you. Bye!

ELLIE

What the hell was that?

CARLON

Toss me the message. Let's just go to wherever Kirsta is sending us. At least it's away from here.

Ellie does and Carlon transfers the destination coordinates.

INT. EMPEROR'S OFFICE - DAY

Roston stands before the Emperor.

EMPEROR

Everything in place?

ROSTON

Ready, your Eminence. I'm concerned about what will happen if Mr. Briggs discovers what we're doing.

EMPEROR

He'll fume and... well... be Briggs. Let me worry about him. Just bring them all here safely with Lamond.

ROSTON

Understood. I'll take care of it.

INT. BRIGGS' OFFICE - SAME TIME

Briggs' vicious looking SECURITY CHIEF (50ish) in his black leather company uniform stands in front of his boss' desk.

BRIGGS

Just bring me Lamond. Alive. I don't care what happens to the other two. Or the girl.

SECURITY CHIEF

Don't worry, sir. Collateral damage is sometimes an unavoidable hazard in operations like this.

He turns to go, but a TouchTab messages stops him.

SECURITY CHIEF (cont'd)

My spy says something is up with the Royal Guards. What should I do if I encounter them?

BRIGGS

Collateral damage?

INT. TRANSPORT SHIP - HYPERSPACE

Carlton pulls up a star map holo. It zooms from Domoni with a small line leading toward...

ELLIE

Can you tell where we're going?

The ship drops out of hyperspace over a pock marked surface.

CARLTON

Here... We've only jumped to one of Domoni's moons. Hold on... There's another ship out there.

Ellie turns to look out the window where she can see Kirsta waving in the approaching ship's front, domed window.

A walkway extends and connects the two ships.

Ellie comes back around to stand with Carlton as the door opens. Before Evan steps in...

EVAN (O.S.)

I come in peace.

Evan walks in, arms raised. Steps to the console.

Ellie reaches to her HOLSTER. Empty. Spots her GUN on the console next to a pleasantly smiling, unarmed Evan who looks at it, then back at Ellie.

He picks up the gun and tosses it to her.

EVAN

You might want this. You never know when a bad man might show up.

Ellie points the gun at Evan. Falters as Kirsta steps out from the door to stand next to Evan.

KIRSTA
Do you think she'll shoot us?

EVAN
I don't know, darling.
(to Ellie)
Will you?

ELLIE
Kirsta, you can come over here.

KIRSTA
No thank you. I'll stay right here.
(to Evan)
I don't think she knows. I thought she was smart, but I don't think she's figured it out yet.

EVAN
Shhh, dear. That's not very polite.

ELLIE
Figured what out?

KIRSTA
Who we are, of course, silly.

EVAN
I thought we should meet. To clear the air.

ELLIE
Are you serious? I should shoot you where you stand for what you did.

EVAN
Oh? And what exactly did I do?

KIRSTA
What DID you do, Daddy?

ELLIE
You mean aside from getting my partner killed and kidnapping a Senator's daugh...
(utter confusion)
Did you say Daddy?

EVAN

Come with us and I'll explain. We
need to leave before the calvary
arrives.

Evan takes Kirsta's hand as they walk to the door.

KIRSTA

Daddy wants you to bring the box.
You know the one.

Carlton gets the box, and the wary pair follow.

EXT. TRANSPORT SHIP

Walkway retracts. Evan's ship leaves via a wormhole as the
calvary -- Royal Guard ships -- arrive via wormholes.

INT. TRANSPORT SHIP

Roston enters with the Lieutenant who goes to a panel and
retrieves a tracking device. Holds it up.

ROSTON

Doesn't matter. Nano-trackers were
in their drinks at the Spiral.

LIEUTENANT

So we'll have them when their ship
pops out into normal space.

ROSTON

It's probably shielded for that,
but eventually they'll come out of
the ship. We'll find them.

The Lieutenant smiles as the pair return to their ship.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP - SAME TIME

This is the finely crafted original upon which all Briggs
Spaceworks cheap knockoff transports are based.

Ellie and Carlton sit looking around while Kirsta wanders
around, zooming around them. Evan leans on the console.

EVAN

I suppose I should introduce
myself. My name is Evan Lamond, and
this is my daughter, Kirsta.

ELLIE

She can't be.

CARLON

Maybe that's what the doc wanted to tell us. From the blood test.

EVAN

I met her mother, Veliora, at a party on Juno. Two years later, on October 19th, Kirsta was born. I was away on... business... for her third birthday.

ELLIE

October 19th? Six years ago...?

EVAN

Vel decided to take her to Waldrum's Fantasy Mall on Tranta.

ELLIE

Oh my god.

EVAN

Once on Tranta, they boarded --

ELLIE

...the 9 am train.

EVAN

When it arrived at Waldrum's, Kirsta ran out toward the Mall. Six seconds later, graviton bombs imploded the train --

ELLIE

...and instantly killed over 200 passengers and crew. I'm so sorry about your wife, but there were no reports of a survivor.

EVAN

Hidden by the government which is why I assumed Vel and Kirsta were both killed.

ELLIE

Why did Tynan take her?

KIRSTA

His wife and daughter had drowned in an accident. He wanted... needed... a substitute. Me.

EVAN

He took her without even trying to find relatives. Now who stole whose child?

ELLIE

How did you find her?

Evan pulls up a holo photo on his TouchTab.

EVAN

When I received this old picture of the Senator and a young girl, I went to get my daughter back.

CARLON

One guess who that came from.

ELLIE

So the Emperor or Briggs expected me to arrest you at Tynan's and turn you over to one of them.

(realization hits)

Tynan didn't believe you, or want to believe you, did he? That you were her father?

EVAN

His gun changed everything. I wrestled it away. You know the rest. Although I thought you worked for Tynan, I tried not to shoot either of you.

ELLIE

Jorn's still dead.

EVAN

I'm sure you don't care, but I am truly sorry for what happened to your partner.

Ellie gets up, walks to the far wall. Not sure if she's more angry, sorry or confused. Anger wins, Storms back to Carlon.

ELLIE

Who the hell are you? Why are the Emperor and Briggs looking for you?

Evan wanders around the console to the front window, gazes out. Pensive. Kirsta stops and stares at her father.

EVAN

If you had to guess, how old would
you say I am?

Anger turns to confusion. Where is this going?

ELLIE

How old? Um... I don't know. 26,
27? 30 at most.

EVAN

(to himself)

30 at most.

(wistful, but smiles)

I married Ada, my first love, when
I was 20. We were so happy. Even
more so when she told me that after
years of trying our dream of having
a child was to come true.

(smile fades)

By nightfall, that dream had died
in a fire. I went a little mad and
ran into the hills, screaming at
God for taking her away.

Her anger sapped away by this, Ellie sits.

EVAN (cont'd)

That's when they came.

CARLON

They?

EVAN

I was told a story I couldn't
really understand. I was to become
a sentinel, to warn them when
something had reached Earth.

CARLON

Are you talking about aliens?

EVAN

Sentinels were set up on many
planets. An early warning system of
sorts for their world called Mara.
It could be the next day or in a
thousand years. So they brought me
inside their ship -- this one as it
happens -- and gave me a little
gift. In there.

Nods toward the med bay room.

EVAN (cont'd)

A little genetic tweaking here, a
bit of molecular rearranging there.
I was let out and they were gone.

(long pause)

That was 1,735 years ago.

ELLIE

So... You can't die? Even Life
Serum can't do that.

EVAN

I'm immune from most diseases and
wounds heal rapidly. I do age
slowly and I guess I'll die someday
when my atoms wear out. There are
still accidents and such. Cut off
an arm and it won't grow back. At
least I don't think so. On the
other hand, fire, drowning,
beheading... All sorts of ways to
die. I've thought about them all.

A great sadness. A look of utter, world-weary tiredness
comes over him. Ancient. An upset Kirsta comes to him.

KIRSTA

Daddy...?

He puts his hand on her head and looks down with a smile.

EVAN

Sorry, dear. That was all long
before I met your mother and you
came along. I'm all better now.

CARLON

So there were others on Earth.
Sentinels.

EVAN

Apparently, I'm the last. Wars,
accidents. Many at their own hand.
The weight of the years had become
too much to bear.

KIRSTA

The biggest hazard to living
forever is having to live forever.

ELLIE

Why'd they pick you?

EVAN

I'd like to think they saw something special in me. Of all the people in the world, I was the one chosen to save it. Truth is I think I was just a guy they came across near where they landed. It had to be someone.

CARLON

What's it like to live forever?

Evan goes back around the console to Ellie and Carlon. Kirsta tight at his side.

EVAN

What's it like to see people you've come to love wither and die while you go on and on? To witness millions die from poverty and disease and wars and all the other horrors mankind is so good at inflicting on itself? To read historical accounts you know are wrong because you were there?

(shakes head)

You'd be amazed how many people, cities, entire civilizations were wiped from history by their conquerors through brutal wars.

KIRSTA

History is the tale of wars as told by the victors, written in the blood of the vanquished.

Evan proudly smiles at Kirsta. Leans against the console.

EVAN

It's all about who controls history. There are also examples of faked events littered throughout. For example, the Misery Virus that --

ELLIE

OK. Stop! You don't mean the Misery Virus didn't happen, do you?

EVAN

What really happened isn't what you learned in school. A deception to hide the truth.

ELLIE

That's ridiculous! How do you change, or hide, or cover up something like that?

EVAN

With surprising ease. Many are still alive who witnessed the carnage at the Briggs factory on Kragor. They saw first hand and remember what --

Ellie looks like she was punched in the gut. Slumps down into her chair. Evan is puzzled.

CARLON

Her father was an IBI exec on Kragor when she was 12. He was cut to pieces in the crossfire.

EVAN

I'm so sorry for your loss, but that's a perfect example of what I'm talking about.

ELLIE

What do you mean?

Carlon punches into his TouchTab.

EVAN

Look it up. Instead of a peaceful labor protest put down violently by Briggs storm troopers, it's labeled a riot. I doubt if your father's even mentioned.

CARLON

He's right.

EVAN

I'm the only one still around who witnessed what really wiped out a third of humanity. And it wasn't a madman ruler releasing a bio-weapon in a war he was losing.

ELLIE

But the history books say --

EVAN

Have you ever seen one? A physical paper book, I mean, outside of a museum? When has anything existed
(MORE)

EVAN (cont'd)
in other than digital form on
government monitored servers?

(beat)
Slowly, bit by bit, decade after
decade, century after century, as
the witnesses and those they told
died off, simplifications and
deletions erased the real truth. It
was replaced with fake truth,
manipulated truth, pseudohistory,
so that it became whatever those in
power wanted it to be to put them
in the best light.

ELLIE
Oh, come on. That's crazy!

CARLON
I think he's right.

Ellie shoots an incredulous look at Carlon.

CARLON (cont'd)
The Emperor had real books in his
private office. One had a crazy
title like *The Misery Virus That
Wasn't*. I was 12 when I snuck in
and started reading it. Got kicked
out before reading more than the
intro. Something about an AI war?

EVAN
The short version is a government
screw up caused sentient AIs to
gain control and turn against their
oppressors. That's why building one
now gets you the death penalty.

CARLON
But why hide that it happened?

EVAN
The fledgling Dominion needed a
strong government, but because
everyone knew who caused the
disaster, it wasn't. So a new
narrative was created.

ELLIE
What's next? Life Serum was derived
from your blood? The Briggs
Graviton Drive wasn't invented by
Briggs? The Infinite Battery --

EVAN

Actually... Dr. Nikolai Briggs ran the project studying this ship and founded Briggs Spaceworks soon after. Dr. Matias Galdos, who found the ship, became the project's chief medical officer, and guess who developed Life Serum? Others on the project went on to "invent" miraculous things. Just coincidences?

ELLIE

OK. So maybe they used tech from this ship. How did you get it?

EVAN

The ones who made me immortal left it for me, although an earthquake revealed it earlier than planned. Dr. Briggs investigated it and I --

CARLON

This is all fascinating, but so what? The real question is what does my uncle and the current Briggs want with you?

EVAN

(stretches hand out)
Box, please.

Carlon is wary, but fetches it and hands it to Evan.

Evan presses the inset button. Sides snap up revealing the metallic blob twisting in constant, uncomfortable motion.

CARLON

Just a nanotech toy.

EVAN

Oh, it's a bit more than that.

CARLON

Again, so what? Your insane age, being Kirsta's father, all the rest. Why should we believe you?

EVAN

Perhaps you shouldn't. But the Emperor and Briggs do, and something tells me they made it worth your while to at least see what all the fuss is about.

ELLIE

Which is?

EVAN

What the Emperor and Briggs think I
can find is its big brother.

Perfect timing. The ship pops out of a wormhole above a
Earth-sized world. They all go to the front window...

EVAN (cont'd)

In 1945, after testing the first
atomic bomb, Dr. Robert Oppenheimer
reflected on a line from the Hindu
Bhagavad Gita, "I am become Death,
the destroyer of worlds."

...to see the airless world whose surface is more cue ball-
like than planet.

EVAN (cont'd)

But unlike his atomic bomb, what
did that is an actual destroyer of
worlds.

Ellie and Carlon look to the impossible world in horror.

EXT. IN SPACE ABOVE EARTH

Evan's ship pops out of hyperspace over Earth. It heads down
toward what used to be China.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP

Ellie looks at a navigation display.

ELLIE

This is Earth. Why are we here?

EVAN

Of all the places in the Dominion,
would you ever think to look here?

EXT. EARTH - DAY

The ship sails over water and through spectacular, massive,
natural stone pillars into jungle.

A rectangular section is a hologram that clears to reveal
huge opening doors. The ship descends. Doors overhead close.

INT. OZ-WORLD - DAY

This underground world extends a half mile. Holograms hide the rock walls and display a cloudy sky as the ship lands.

The four exit the ship into what looks like a 1930's era US Midwest farm's barnyard about to be hit by a storm. There's a barn, pens for pigs and chickens, etc. Only the foundation for a farmhouse. Beyond is a cornfield with a swirling, holographic tornado in the distance. And a rainbow.

KIRSTA

Ya gotta see the best part!

Kirsta pulls Ellie to the back of the barn where a narrow road made of yellow bricks starts as a spiral. It meanders away between a small stand of trees and a sunflower field.

They all walk towards a turn in the road. Ahead...

KIRSTA (cont'd)

See! It's the Munchkin village!
Daddy built it. They've got witches
and a wizard. And flying monkeys!

Kirsta drops Ellie's hand. Skips ahead. It's like she's five again as she races to the village.

EVAN

The book it's based on is *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. A movie of it came out in 1939. I've always liked it.

ELLIE

I did too. I saw it once at a festival of 20th century movies.

EVAN

Started building this years ago.
All for her now. She never had much fun living with the Senator.

ELLIE

You built all this by yourself?

EVAN

I've had a lot of time on my hands.
It's good to have a hobby.

(turns to them)

I'm sure you two must be tired and hungry. Don't worry.

(melodramatic)

All will be revealed. After dinner.

Kirsta joins the others. The four march down the road like the four in the movie to an Emerald City-styled house.

Reaching the front door it automatically opens to a recording of a song from the movie.

INT. EMERALD CITY: BEDROOM SUITE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Ellie and Carlon enter an Oz-weird styled bedroom with a massive bed. Ellie flops on and sinks down onto it.

ELLIE

Oh, my... You won't believe how soft and comfortable this is.

Carlon checks out the equally huge Oz-themed bathroom.

Returns to find Ellie softly snoring.

THAT EVENING...

Ellie, showered and be-toweled, walks out of the bathroom to where Carlon is not happy with the crazy styled, red tux tails jacket he pulled out of the Oz costume-filled closet.

ELLIE (cont'd)

What's wrong?

CARLON

Aside from being on Earth in an underground playground based on an ancient movie with a guy telling crazy stories who may or may not be a tad older than he looks and who kidnapped a child who actually is his daughter and is wanted by a psycho businessman and my idiot uncle for what may or may not be a doomsday weapon which he may or may not control?

ELLIE

Besides that.

CARLON

This jacket doesn't fit right.

ELLIE

Trust me. That's not all that's wrong with it. Put it back.

Carlon does, then looks out the window as Ellie dresses.

CARLON

What do you think of our host? Can we believe his stories, or is all this just a front for him actually being a... bad man?

ELLIE

Or the Wicked Witch?

(unsure)

My goal was to rescue Kirsta, but since she actually is Lamond's daughter, now what? Should she stay with him?

CARLON

And what about Lamond? Do we take him back to the palace?

ELLIE

I assume this place is full of tech to prevent us taking him if he doesn't want to go. Or us leaving, if it comes to that.

CARLON

Bottom line: Is getting our lives back worth the evil twins getting their hands on a weapon that can wipe out a planet?

ELLIE

Think they'd actually use it?

CARLON

My uncle? He'd just wave it around to intimidate people. Briggs? First chance he can. Even if they lock it away, who knows what future rulers might do?

ELLIE

And if we don't turn Lamond over, besides what might happen to us, is the Dominion safe with this Evan Lamond person -- whoever or whatever he is -- being the keeper of it? What are his plans? I have no idea which option is worse. We need more information.

Ellie tries on a wiiiide brimmed hat. Carlon rolls his eyes and shakes his head, no. She tosses it.

Sits on the bed. Shakes her head. Carlon sits beside her.

CARLON

There's something else, isn't there?

ELLIE

Getting demoted was hard, but I was still in the Bureau. Now... I told you my aunt was in line for IBI Director until her accident. Then she was glad she couldn't take it. *"All I ever wanted was a simple life,"* she said. *"And all I ever got was anything but."* I didn't really understand that until now. A simple life. What a wondrous idea.

CARLON

My father insured my life as a Royal crashed and burned. I never thought that I could feel happy in a job running a mostly automated Briggs Blob. But no longer having the responsibility and pressure of my family business was liberating. If I got my standing back, I'm not sure I'd want it.

ELLIE

Like you said, what a pair we make.

They sit together quietly for a bit, holding hands. Ellie stands, pulls on a pair of ruby slippers.

CARLON

I realized something while you were asleep. His last name, Lamond? It's an anagram of *old man*.

Carlton picks a flower from a vase for Ellie. He picks another one for his lapel.

CARLON (cont'd)

Shall we be off to see the Wizard?

ELLIE

You know, in the end, it turns out the Wizard wasn't really who everyone thought he was. Oz was a dream, a fairy tale. Maybe all this is, too, but we need to be ready for anything. Even flying monkeys.

Carlton chuckles, frowns, nods, offers his arm to Ellie, and out the door they go where the hallway floor is a yellow brick road carpet.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A banquet is set by ChefBots. Food swirls slowly on miniature fair rides and a train. Wine is served from a floating balloon like the one the Wizard left Oz on.

Evan opens the door and stands to one side. With a slight bow and a sweep of his hand, he bids them enter.

Kirsta shows Ellie to her seat, then sits next to her. She points to and describes her favorite things on the table.

Carlton stops before going in to scrutinize Evan's face.

CARLTON

I get the feeling we've met before.

EVAN

We have. You were 14. The Emperor's birthday party at the Selano palace? You tripped and your cake flew onto my nice new suit.

CARLTON

So you knew my uncle?

EVAN

An argument that night between me, the Emperor, and Briggs ended what had been a long relationship with your family.

CARLTON

How long?

EVAN

In a round about way, Quentin Tragaysian became the first ruler of the Dominion because of me.

CARLTON

So, aside from hobnobbing with my family, and building your World of Oz, what else have you been doing for the last 800 years?

EVAN

(ponders a moment)

To warn sailors away from unexplored lands, some medieval cartographers inscribed around the edge of their maps, *Here be Dragons*. If I were to make a map of beyond the Dominion, I would do the same, only the warning about dragons would be real.

Evan turns and enters the room leaving Carlon in the doorway to ponder what he said. He then enters and takes a seat.

LATER...

Bots clear things. Fair rides slip down inside the table as Evan stands up and slowly walks around it.

Kirsta opens a door and skips off to play.

EVAN (cont'd)

To answer your questions, I've prepared a little show and tell.

A swirling cloud appears on the table. It resolves into animated holograms. Essentially cartoons with solid color animated humanoid figures that accompany Evan's narration.

Importantly, you can't tell what species they are.

Evan paces back and forth as he tells his tale.

EVAN (cont'd)

There once was a race of beings who had neglected their world, making it unlivable. Their only hope was to find a new world for their kind.

BEGIN HOLOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION

A spaceship exits a wormhole over a moon-like planet.

EVAN (V.O.)

Luckily, they had discovered how to control gravity and build spaceships to take them to the stars. But all they found were barren, airless rocks.

OVERHEAD: Desperate groups battle each other as they converge on a building.

EVAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Standard terraforming was too costly and would take decades, centuries even, for one world, much less the many worlds demanded by factions with incompatible wants.

OVERHEAD: A scientist figure demonstrates manipulating a Neomech sphere into different shapes.

EVAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
 On one of the worlds, an ancient, alien technology had been found. It was a kind of nanotechnology they called Nanomechs which could communicate with each other.

Interlocking Nanomechs form into a twisty turny ball.

EVAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Combine millions of Nanomechs into what he called, Neomechs, and you can build anything.

BACK IN THE ROOM...

ELLIE
 So that's a Neomech in the box? How did you get it?

EVAN
 It was on the ship, removed by Dr. Briggs' people, and it ended up in a museum. Not realizing what it was now, a certain someone heard I was looking for it and tried to get it to me, with unfortunate results.

CARLON
 Another attempt to find you by you know who.

BACK TO THE HOLO...

A 2000 mile diameter TerraMech exits a wormhole over a moon-like planet.

EVAN (V.O.)
 The idea was to build a vast, infinitely changeable, Nanomech-based machine the size of our moon that was called the TerraMech. It would travel to a world and...

It reforms itself into a cube, then splits into 64 equal-sized cubes which distribute themselves evenly around the world. These sections descend, splitting and splitting and splitting again.

EVAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...split into pieces that would
 spread around the planet.

On the planet's surface...

EVAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Millions of them morph into
 whatever custom machines of any
 size, any form, any function that
 were needed for terraforming.

Multi-mile-wide NeOMECHs carve and shape the land.

EVAN (V.O.)
 They carved out ocean floors and
 built up continents. An atmosphere
 was generated. Rain filled the
 rivers, lakes, and oceans.

NeOMECHs deposit genetic material around the planet.

EVAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Then plants, animals, and all other
 living things brought it to life.

The machines rise and merge together over the planet.

EVAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 When done, the TerraMECH
 reassembled itself and traveled to
 the next planet as its makers
 streamed in to their new paradise.
 And so an empire spanning nearly a
 hundred worlds was created.

*As the TerraMECH jumps away via a wormhole, other wormholes
 deposit settler ships over the new world. Cities grow.*

BACK IN THE ROOM...

ELLIE
 Something happened, didn't it?

EVAN
 It was just another dead world like
 all the rest. But what the machine
 didn't know, couldn't know, was
 that the world was owned by beings
 (MORE)

EVAN (cont'd)
 with their own empire who didn't
 take kindly to others touching
 their property.
 (pause)
 And so began what became known as
 the Neologic War.

BACK IN THE HOLO...

*Dozens of ships from both civilizations fight in space.
 Powerful weapons from ships that got through defenses blast
 and bomb the surface of planets on both sides.*

EVAN (V.O.)
 The empires were evenly matched.
 Generation after generation was
 born, fought, and died knowing
 nothing but war.

Then one day the balance shifted
 slightly, almost imperceptibly. A
 skirmish here, a battle there. But
 soon it was clear that one side was
 destined to lose.

*OVERHEAD: A decimated landscape surrounds a command tent,
 more holes than tent. Inside, a table with the flickering
 display of planets and battles around which shabby, hunched
 COMMANDERS weigh their empire's end.*

A FIGURE bursts in. All others turn towards him.

EVAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Someone remembered the machine that
 started it all. They reprogrammed
 it to only do one thing: grind a
 planet's surface to dust, and all
 living things on them as well.

CARLON (V.O.)
 The ultimate doomsday weapon.

EVAN (V.O.)
 And so they did it. They set it
 loose.

*The TerraMECH exits a wormhole over a planet and begins to
 split and descend to wipe the surface clean.*

*Ships attack the NeOMECHs, but the machine has the ability
 to ingest debris and repair itself.*

The NeOMECHs fire back with tiny chunks of itself with unerring accuracy. Escaping civilian transports are targeted, too.

No one survives as the world is turned into a cue ball.

END HOLO PRESENTATION

EVAN

Within months, the war was over. Or so the TerraMECH's makers thought. When the enemy was no more, it reverted to it's original job of terraforming planets, starting with the enemy's.

CARLON

That explains the planets that became the Dominion.

EVAN

What the maker's didn't realize was that in their haste, an error was introduced into the code. Within months, their worlds were also scraped clean and re-terraformed. Then the machine vanished.

ELLIE

The maker's homeworld was destroyed too?

EVAN

The programming to not harm the homeworld held. But... There's a phrase from our 20th century that fits. They were bombed back to the stone age. Literally. It took many tens of thousands of years to regain a semblance of what they had.

(beat)

What WE had.

ELLIE

We? What are you trying to say? You're not implying the TerraMECH's makers were humans, are you? From Earth?

Evan just looks at them, silently.

CARLON

That's impossible. There'd have to be traces of them everywhere.

EVAN

Some are recognizable. Some not. What wasn't obliterated in the war was erased over millennia by earthquakes, volcanoes, asteroids, ice age glaciers, and just plain weathering erosion.

ELLIE

The sentinels... The aliens who made you immortal. They wanted you to warn them if the machine came back. If it reached Earth.

EVAN

There were rumors and fears that it had was rampaging through the galaxy, but it never happened. The TerraMECH had simply stopped.

Ellie lets it all sink in for a moment.

CARLON

The enemy. Who were they?

EVAN

No idea. Erased from history.

ELLIE

What did happened to the TerraMECH?

EVAN

For all the pain the Emperor and Briggs have put you through to find it through me, ironically and fortunately, I have no idea.

ELLIE

I have so many questions that --

A very unpleasant ALARM. Evan looks at his TouchTab.

Kirsta runs in, scared.

KIRSTA

Daddy? Something's happening.

EVAN

Seems we have company. Royal Guard ships have just landed.

ELLIE
How did they find us?

EVAN
They shouldn't have been able...
Did you eat or drink anything while
at the Emperor's office?

ELLIE
(pissed)
Nano-trackers! I thought Briggs was
pushing too hard for that toast.

INT. OZ-WORLD - NIGHT

Opening the house's front door, the four cautiously walk out. Carlon receives a message.

CARLON
It's Roston. He and my uncle are
working to stop Briggs, but I'm not
sure I trust any of them. On the
other hand, if one of them gets the
weapon, I'd rather it be my uncle.

ELLIE
Can we get away in your ship
without being followed?

EVAN
Maybe. It can't be destroyed, but
it doesn't have weapons for combat
if it came to that.

ELLIE
They know where you are now. I
doubt if they'll just go away. Let
them in. See what they have to say.

EVAN
I've survived this long by keeping
out of conflicts. And I have her to
worry about now.

He places his hand on Kirsta's shoulder.

EVAN (cont'd)
I hope you're right, Carlon. About
the Emperor. Alright. Let's see
what they have to say.

A press on his TouchTab causes a huge RUMBLE as the massive overhead doors at the end of the cavern begin to open.

EXT. EARTH SURFACE - NIGHT

A dozen small Royal Guard ships have either landed or are hovering above. A large command ship overlooks everything. Roston and several GUARDS stand looking down into Oz-World.

Roston reads Carlon's reply. Motions return to their ships.

As he steps in, a warning alarm BLARES.

SWARMING in just above ground level, through the jungle, are dozens of Briggs ships, FIRING on the Royal Guards.

Two Guard ships on the ground EXPLODE as rockets strike. Some of Roston's people on the ground are hit.

Several of the Briggs ships release large drones.

They sprint for the command ship which FIRES at the drones. The drones maneuver and dodge at extreme speed.

The Royal ships are no match for the heavily armored and weaponed Briggs ships engaged in a dogfight.

OZ-WORLD

Evan presses a button to reverse the doors opening.

One of the larger Briggs ships is hit and spirals down.

It CRASHES into a door knocking it off its moorings. The ship and door PLUMMET to the ground.

EARTH SURFACE

Drones reach the command Guard ship and attach to it. A massive EXPLOSION rips the ship in half.

One half CRASHES in the jungle, shaking the ground.

OZ-WORLD

The other ship's half SLAMS onto the remaining Oz-World door. Both CRASH to the ground with a deafening ROAR. Huge parts break off, fly off. The barnyard is on FIRE!

The hologram images on the walls and sky snap off.

Kirsta grabs onto her father as other pieces fly toward our people who rush for cover behind a boulder next to the wall.

A flaming piece DEMOLISHES part of the Emerald City house.

EARTH SURFACE

The battle is quickly over because the Guards are woefully out manned and out gunned.

OZ-WORLD

Multiple gunshots can be heard from above as a Briggs ship glides down to where they are and lands.

The door opens. A battered Roston in handcuffs is pushed out and SLAMMED to his knees a dozen feet from our group.

A HENCHMAN grabs Carlon. Forces him down next to Roston.

The Security Chief comes up behind Roston. Draws his pistol. Holds it up for Evan to see. It's the 1870, breech-loading, Colt revolver from back in the store.

SECURITY CHIEF

Look familiar Mr. Lamond? I'm told
this used to belong to you.

Chief holds up a golden bullet. Inserts it. Spins the cylinder. Points the gun at the back of Roston's head.

The Chief looks at Evan, then pulls the trigger.

CLICK! A spin of the cylinder, still looking at Evan.

CLICK! Another spin...

ROSTON

(to Carlon)
I'm sorr--

BAMM! Roston's head BLASTS apart. Carlon gets blood and brain splatter. Kirsta SCREAMS!

The Chief inserts another bullet, spins the cylinder, points the gun to the back of Carlon's head.

Ellie is beside herself.

Carlon is scared at first, looks to Ellie, then his breeding stiffens him, ready for what's to come.

SECURITY CHIEF

Well, Mr. Lamond? I have plenty of golden bullets for the rest of your party if you --

EVAN

I'll go. Just don't hurt them.

SECURITY CHIEF

I believe you have something to bring?

EVAN

In my ship.

The Chief gestures to henchman to take him and the others there. Carlon rises as Ellie runs to him, pulls him up.

KIRSTA

He's a bad man.

EVAN

Yes he is. Don't worry. We'll fix up Oz when we get back. But for now, I think Ellie needs you.

Evan and Kirsta hug, tight, then Kirsta runs to Ellie.

EVAN (cont'd)

Keep in mind that Briggs gets nothing if you harm my daughter.

SECURITY CHIEF

As you wish. Can't guarantee what he'll do when we get back, though.

A SHORT TIME LATER...

Evan's and Chief's ships rise silently as fires RAGE in Oz.

EXT. EARTH SURFACE - NIGHT

Burning ships and dead Guards litter the ground around the entrance as Evan's ship and the Briggs ships fly off.

EXT. DOMONI: BRIGGS SPACEPORT - DAY

Evan's ship lands in a bay at the edge of the spaceport.

The henchman forces our group out and into a waiting van.

EXT. EMPEROR'S SPIRAL - DAY

Henchmen pull our four from the van. The Chief carries the box as they enter the Spiral.

INT. EMPEROR'S OFFICE - DAY

Two henchmen stand behind the Emperor who is tied to a chair. Briggs sits in the Emperor's chair behind the desk.

The Chief has the group kneel in a row in front of the desk.

BRIGGS

Ex-detective. Good to see you again. Welcome, Mr. Lamond. It's been a long time. And Carlon, my boy. Weren't you supposed to be executed for coming back here? Oh, well. We'll deal with that later.

Briggs rises and goes around to stand in front of Kirsta.

BRIGGS (cont'd)

And this must be the child who has caused such a stir.

(to the others)

As you can see, a few things have changed since your last visits.

The elevator opens. The Emperor's Wife exits. Goes to Briggs. Cheek kiss. The Emperor's eyes go wide.

EMPEROR

You! You traitor! You fed me bogus information!

BRIGGS

Now, now. It seems someone DOES know upon whose pond their gilded lily pad floats.

(turns to Emperor)

Oh, before I forget, your Eminence. I'm sad to report your Guard, Roston had an unfortunate accident and won't be able to join us.

ELLIE

His thug "accidentally" shot him in the back of the head.

The Emperor is seething, red-faced.

EMPEROR

I'll kill you! I'll burn your
company to the ground! I'll --

BRIGGS

I wonder how many Roman politicians
met a quick end with a blade? No
matter. I have something slower in
mind for you. But that's for play
time.

Briggs pushes the Wife away, and leans back on the desk.

BRIGGS (cont'd)

So, Mr. Lamond. I think you have
something for me, or will
misadventure accidentally befall
your daughter as well?

EVAN

Ask your man. He's got it.

The Chief sets the box on the floor. He presses the button
and the sides snap up.

Briggs slinks to hover over it.

BRIGGS

Ha! Are you serious? That thing
from the museum I had Brossick get
to lure you out? I hardly think --

EMPEROR

Ha ha ha! You really don't know?
For all your power, you really are
ignorantly stupid.

ELLIE

Carlton laughed when he saw it. He
also thought it was a toy until
Evan showed us what it really is.

BRIGGS

Oh? And what might that be?

Ellie grabs the gun from the hip of the guard next to her.

She turns, FIRING. The Chief and the thugs fall dead to the
sharpshooting champ before they can react.

ELLIE

See for yourself.

Ellie aims for the ball and begins to pull the trigger.

EMPEROR

NOOOOO!

BAMM! The bullet shatters the ball.

The NeOMECH inside shoots out and up through Briggs' chest. He gapes at her as he falls onto the box, dead.

The Emperor's wife races away, SCREAMING, as the NeOMECH zips around the room.

Ellie FIRES at it. It FRACTURES, pieces drop to the ground.

EMPEROR (cont'd)

You have no idea what you've done!
Out the containment, it will have
signaled the TerraMECH to come.

Adding to her still fragile mental state, this is a doozy.

CARLON

What happens if it did contact the
TerraMECH?

EMPEROR

It will come and destroy this
planet. It will kill everyone. You
need to get off this world.

EVAN

We need to get to the Spaceport and
find my ship.

Evan, Ellie, and Kirsta race for the elevator. Carlon stops, turns back to his uncle.

CARLON

I guess we should take him, too.

Carlon grabs a knife from a henchman's belt. Cuts ties.

A small piece of the blasted NeOMECH is at Kirsta's feet. She picks it up, puts it in her pocket.

Carlon rushes to the elevator as the Emperor stands rubbing his wrists, but not moving.

EMPEROR

I'm not going.

Our group turns.

EMPEROR (cont'd)
This all started because of me. I
wanted what shouldn't exist to make
me into something I shouldn't be.

CARLON
Are you sure?

The Emperor walks to the Emperor's desk and sits in the
Emperor's chair.

EMPEROR
This is where the Emperor of the
Dominion of Peace belongs.

He finally looks like a proper Emperor. Carlon lingers to
nod to his uncle, then enters the elevator with the others.

EXT. EMPEROR'S SPIRAL - EVENING

The Emperor's men are fighting Briggs' troops allowing our
group to sneak toward a car, but a missile causes it to go
BOOM before they can escape in it.

Carlon leads the four to the exit of the palace grounds,
dodging the fighting as best they can.

EXT. SPACE: ABOVE DOMONI

A shuttle prepares to leave a space station in orbit.

INT. SPACE STATION

The grouchy CARGO SUPERVISOR (55) uses his TouchTab to
select cargo pods to be loaded onto the shuttle.

A small group of WORKERS joke as they lounge and drink
coffee on their break. The Supervisor yells at them, so they
reluctantly get up and maneuver the pods into the shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

The PILOT stows her bag and settles into her seat as 3D
holographic controls pop up on the console.

A display shows a massive blip nearby. The pilot turns to
the side window. Seeing nothing, shakes her head.

A FLASH from outside illuminates the cabin causing her to
jerk back around. Something's there now.

EXT. SPACE: ABOVE EARTH

A multicolored vortex forms a monstrous wormhole spitting the TerraMECH from the center.

It's surface solidifies. Morphs into a cube. Seams form across its surface. Sixty-four equal-sized NeOMECHs separate and maneuver into equidistant positions over the planet.

One section is on a collision course with the station.

INT. SPACE STATION

PANDEMONIUM!

The shuttle's pilot packs workers into the shuttle. When full, the doors close. Those left POUND on the doors.

While his workers SCREAM and PANIC around him, the Supervisor stands stoically, watching the approaching towering NeoMech out of a big window.

EXT. SPACE STATION

The shuttle darts away from the station seemingly just in time, but like an elephant unaware of an ant underfoot, the massive NeoMech OBLITERATES the station and shuttle.

EXT. SPACE ABOVE DOMONI

Each large NeOMECH splits into many smaller ones as they plunge through the clouds. Splitting and splitting, millions of pieces descend to every part of the world.

EXT. DOMINION CITY - AFTERNOON

Alarms BLARE. News reports SHOUT that they are under attack.

EXT. A SIDE STREET - EVENING

our group, out of breath, stop for a moment.

In the distance, a vast shape is descending to the ground.

ELLIE
What have I done.

EVAN

I don't understand. I examined the NeOMECH's containment. It's just glass. If it was going to contact the TerraMECH it could have done it a long time ago.

The group takes off again as GUNSHOTS ZING from somewhere.

EXT. SEASHORE - AFTERNOON

A young BOY followed by his small DOG bounds between a COUPLE sunbathing on the beach. They sit up, annoyed.

The dog sniffs, licks at the couple's empty picnic plates, then continues chasing the boy, passing him.

The boy turns to them and shrugs, mouthing "Sorry." He then turns back to watch the dog who suddenly stops.

A swarm of insect-sized NeOMECHs surround the dog who BOUNCES around and YELPS as red stains form on its fur.

The boy frowns and swats his neck.

He looks at his hand: a drop of blood and a tiny mechanical thing with pincers. It BURROWS into his skin. The boy SHRIEKS in agony.

Behind him, the couple and OTHERS swat the tiny NeOMECHs that eat them alive to the bone, then the bone.

Massive shapes descend through the clouds to the ground.

EXT. SEASIDE TOWN - AFTERNOON

Swarms of the tiny NeOMECHs ATTACK any living thing that tries to escape the buildings.

Quarter-mile wide roller NeOMECHs MOW DOWN buildings, CRUSHING them flat.

INT. CULVERT - AFTERNOON

A young GIRL and several ADULTS scurry down an embankment and into a culvert, cowering.

SOBS, SCREAMS, and GROANS can be heard outside for a while, but soon, no one is alive to make them.

The girl peeks out. Shadows above. She SCREAMS.

A massive NeOMECH flattens the culvert.

In the city beyond, vast machines are grinding it to dust.

EXT. DOMINION CITY - LATER

CHAOS! SCREAMING! CURLING UP in a ball! CRYING! Cars
CRASHING! LOOTING! FIRES!

Running somewhere, but nowhere to escape to! Committing
suicide rather than face it all!

Ellie and our group walks fast to the spaceport sidestepping
as best they can the weight of human despair.

They have to move carefully, ducking around corners, jumping
behind vehicles, passing through buildings.

Not knowing their boss is dead, Briggs' troops have locked
down the city. Wanted posters on TouchTabs of our group.

EXT. BRIGGS SPACEPORT - NIGHT

Briggs Spaceport covers hundreds of square miles of desert
on the edge of Dominion City. It's home to a vast complex of
docking, assembly, and repair bays for everything from one-
person runabouts to massive warships.

Interspersed are luxury hotels, fancy restaurants, pleasure
domes, and everything else the wealthy need to survive while
transiting to other worlds. It's also dotted with seedy
hotels, dive bars, gaudy casinos, and brothels for the rest.

In normal times, ships of all sizes come and go silently on
their Briggs Graviton drives, appearing and disappearing via
wormholes above the planet.

These are not normal times.

Briggs troops have stopped fighting and are trying to get
out like the rest of the doomed, only they have guns.

It's taken hours to get here, but our group enters the
Spaceport by walking over the remnants of a fence
surrounding it, torn down by others fleeing to ships.

Ellie, horrified at what she has wrought, just floats along.
Carlton leads her by the hand.

In the distance, a dark shape behind the Emperor's Spiral
which is collapsing.

A couple dozen terrified MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN RACE frantically toward a T-44 transport in one bay. Scaffolding, pipes, cranes and other equipment tower over the ship.

Evan points to his ship in the next bay. He and Kirsta race toward it, Carlon and Ellie following.

A ways off, two ships, blindly scrambling, CRASH into each other and BURST into flames as they SLAM back to the ground and onto other ships.

Our four enter Evan's ship. Close the door.

A group of PEOPLE race up. POUND on the door. GUNFIRE from somewhere scare them off.

On the horizon, vast shapes have reached the other end of the Spaceport.

Ships all around rise silently, but chaotically, to space.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: BRIDGE

Evan and Carlon prepares for takeoff. The wall panels next to them has been taken off and the insides torn apart.

CARLON

What the hell did Briggs' men do to the ship?

EVAN

They only had a short time way back when to examine its systems. They probably wanted to learn how to improve their knockoff versions.

CARLON

Where are we going?

Evan opens his TouchTab and swipes something to the console. A star map shows a planet as a dot a loooong ways away.

EVAN

Roche said to go here if something bad happens. I think this qualifies.

CARLON

Who?

Kirsta leads Ellie to the back of the ship.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Lights are off. Kirsta leaves.

Ellie is shell-shocked, shoulders sagging, standing alone in silhouette at the window looking out without seeing.

To her right, through the glass, is the T-44: a Briggs knockoff clone of Evan's original ship.

Terrified evacuees fill its domed, brightly lit rear lounge.

EXT. BRIGGS SPACEPORT - NIGHT

Both Evan's ship and the T-44 rise almost simultaneously.

Below, a small ship lifts off, but VEERS into a crane structure which collapses and CRUSHES the group who had been pounding on Evan's ship's door.

EXT. EDGE OF SPACE

Spaceships arc away from the hell on the planet below. While a few escape through wormholes, most don't.

NeOMECHs in orbit SPIT chunks of themselves at escaping ships. When HIT, they BLOSSOM like colorful flowers against black velvet.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: OBSERVATION LOUNGE

Looking past Ellie to the T-44, a NeOMECH chunk PUNCTURES its dome, SUCKING passengers into the silence of space.

T-44 VEERS off. The chunk rounds back and SMASHES it squarely. Another blossom blooms.

Ellie is oblivious.

EXT. EVAN'S SHIP

Through the window, we see Carlon enter. Places his arm around Ellie who is startled by it.

Carlon says something to her. She responds a moment later.

Carlon, pained, spots something. Pulls Ellie back.

A chunk of NeOMECH speeds at an angle directly for them. Its surface morphs and moves in constant, uncomfortable motion.

A violet glow forms at the ship's front, quickly spreading backward to cover the ship. A wormhole opens ahead.

At an angle, the chunk WHACKS the back corner of the ship with a THUD.

The ship slips into the wormhole which folds into itself and disappears.

The chunk turns, STREAKS for another ship which blossoms colorfully when HIT.

On the planet below, the sky has started to burn.

EXT. ABOVE NEW EARTH

New Earth is actually a large moon orbiting the planet Mara where Mrs. Quimby and Roche are from.

Evan's ship SHOOTS out of a wormhole too fast and too close to the moon whose gravity pulls it down toward it.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: BRIDGE - SAME TIME

The console blanks out meaning the drive is offline.

The ship's out of control. It starts to spiral.

Evan frantically searches for what's wrong.

Looks to open panel on the wall. Pushes together two cables with loose connectors.

Controls snap back on, but it's all erratic. Evan tries to steer, but the drive shuts off again.

EXT. ABOVE NEW EARTH

The ship dives toward a city made up of hundreds of eight story apartment buildings arranged in quads with a park or special structure in the center of each quad. Enough apartments for a QUARTER MILLION people. "Phase 2?"

The city is surrounded on three sides by mountains. The fourth leads to a beach and bay surrounded by a horseshoe shaped area with nine fancy houses on estates.

The entire complex is covered by a massive clear dome. Outside, a moon-like landscape with work occurring to eventually make the complex larger.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: BRIDGE

Drive's on again, but Evan has to fight to control the ship.

EXT. NEW EARTH - DAY

A SCREECH echoes across the city as the ship PIERCES the dome causing air to rush out. The dome quickly heals itself.

The Auditorium is a two story building between the city and the bay. Trees stretch on either side to the mountains.

The ship SHOOTs from over the mountains, over the city.

A HARD SKID landing throws up dirt as the ship lands, stopping just feet from several PEOPLE. The ship is intact, of course. The occupants, though...

Ellie and Carlon stumble out, then Kirsta and Evan.

Ahead, surrounded by blood, a WOMAN'S head lies in a crying MAN'S lap. A BLACK WOMAN stands next to them.

Beyond, a MAN'S BODY lays next to a circle of nine double-width chairs. A white square on the ground in the center.

A CROWD approaches from the city as the Black woman walks toward Evan and Kirsta.

KIRSTA
I've got a feeling we're not in
Kansas any more.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EVAN'S SHIP - SEVERAL DAYS LATER - DAY

Walking to the ship from the Auditorium, Kirsta notices something stuck on the back corner of the ship. Stops and breaks it off. Looks closely at it.

INT. EVAN'S SHIP: WORK ROOM

Kirsta places the piece into a microscope-like device. Adds the NeOMECH piece from the Spiral. Adjusts to zoom down to the NanoMECH level for both.

KIRSTA
(shocked)
They're not the same.

Walking by the door, Evan hears her. Enters.

EVAN

What isn't?

Evan looks closely at the screen. Kirsta points.

KIRSTA

See? That's the piece from the box.
The Neologic War piece.

(points to other one)

That's from the chunk that hit the
ship. The TerraMECH that destroyed
Domoni. They're not the same.

Realizing the implication, Evan drops into a chair.

KIRSTA (cont'd)

Does that mean you were right? The
NeoMECH didn't tell the TerraMECH
to come? Ellie didn't cause what
happened?

EVAN

Yes, but what's more important
is... it means someone's built
another TerraMECH!

FADE TO BLACK