

TERRAFORM

FADE IN:

TEXT:

Earth Time: 575,400 A.D.

To terraform: to biologically re-engineer the environment of a planet to make it habitable for terrestrial life forms.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE DESERT - DAY

Two supersonic fighter jets, piloted by Captain THAON and Pilot GAMIEN, approach a gigantic, white, spherical spaceship in the desert. They are no more than specks of dust to it. The spaceship is miles in diameter, hovering soundlessly, five miles above ground and so large that atmospheric haze obscures the upper part of it, like a moon in phase.

DESAI (V.O.)

Terraforming a planet takes hundreds of thousands of years. The terraforming civilization must have the foresight and technology to start the process long before their own planet becomes uninhabitable. If a planet has reached a tipping point, it is too late...

ANGLE ON

two jets flying over desert.

TEXT:

All alien languages in this film have been translated to English analogs.

THAON

Captain Thaon reporting to base: Recon Mission 1012 from Huntov Air Force Base to Ex-Terra Craft 9301 aka Minder Vessel. Status: no change.

(to Gamien in other jet)

How's the view?

INT/EXT. COCKPIT - DAY

GAMIEN

(staring at the Minder Vessel)
Grew up with one fifty miles from my hometown; never thought I'd fly right up to one. Scarier than I thought: like a moon dropping out of the sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THAON

You'll get used to it, Gamien. Stay on course, Flight Path four-five-niner.

EXT. SKIES ABOVE DESERT - CONTINUOUS

The two jets approach the Minder Vessel, hanging silently, looming mind-numbingly in their field of vision.

INT/EXT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

GAMIEN

Do they ever react, Captain?

THAON

Never.

GAMIEN

Why waste the juice coming all the way out here to check on 'em?

THAON

Question for the ages, kid. After a thousand years, we still can't figure how long they've been here or what they want!

GAMIEN

What's that dark area under them - not a shadow; looks like... I'm framing it now and sending images back to base.

INT. COCKPIT CONSOLE - SAME TIME

We see pictures of the "dark area" being framed and frozen on Gamien's dashboard, stats and enhancements being done, etc.

THAON

Good call, Gamien. Seen the patch before - but it's grown larger.

(into his comm)

Recon Mission 1012, Ex-Terra Craft 9301: dark patch under vessel is now miles in diameter. Images being relayed. Over.

INT/EXT. COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

GAMIEN

Any clue on where they're from, Captain?

THAON

My twenty-third mission and I figure they're from somewhere east of Don't-Have-a-Clue, rookie!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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THAON (CONT'D)

You know the Minders have always been around. Good thing is, when it comes to training maneuvers, you can't ask for a cushier assignment than recon with the Ex-Terra Craft! Back at base, we call it Goin' Nothin': a nothing mission to a nothing ball of steel and going home with nothing but your thumb up your--

Gamien feels his plane jolt and stutter.

GAMIEN

Uh... I've got a problem here.

THAON

Status?

GAMIEN

Computer reports my engine isn't sucking air anymore - atmosphere's thinner--

THAON

Same. Getting choppy. Shouldn't be--

Thaon flicks switches, punches buttons - to no avail.

GAMIEN

Sir, computer's reporting atmospheric anomaly - wait, the atmosphere, it's gone! There's another chemical mix out there - and it isn't air!

THAON

I'm losing control of her.

GAMIEN

Permission to abort mission, Captain.

THAON

Permission granted, rookie! We're goin' home. Wha--?

Warning lights and BEEPS go haywire across Thaon's dashboard. Both jets are still aimed directly at the Minder Vessel.

GAMIEN

Sir, I'm dead stick. Ejecting.

Gamien punches Eject button. Nothing. He punches buttons and flicks switches; punches his canopy, which doesn't budge. WARNING NOISES fill his cockpit.

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CONTINUED: (2)

THAON
 (into comm)
 Mayday! Mayday! Captain Thaon, Recon
 Mission 1012. Mayday! Ejecting at the
 coordinates of the Ex-Terra Craft 9301,
 Huntov Air Force Base. Mayday! Repeat:
 this is...

Gamien is still bashing his canopy fruitlessly as he hears
 Thaon repeat the Mayday message.

P.O.V. FROM INSIDE GAMIEN'S COCKPIT

We see Thaon eject, as we hear him on Gamien's comm repeating
 coordinates.

THAON (CONT'D)
 (in Gamien's comm)
 Rookie - what're you doing? Punch it!

GAMIEN
 Computer's dead. So's my manual override!

Thaon watches helplessly from his descending chute as
 Gamien's plane rockets toward the Minder Vessel.

THAON
 Gamien! Punch it and get out! That's an
 order, rookie!... Gamien!

Gamien's jet explodes on impact with the Minder Vessel, which
 remains unmarked, unmoved, and unconcerned.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

Thaon lands heavily on lush green lichen (looks like short
 grass) - the "dark patch" they saw. He removes his helmet,
 looks down amazed at the vegetation, then turns his gaze to
 the far-off Minder Vessel where Gamien crashed. There is no
 indication of an impact, just jet debris on the desert floor,
 miles away.

THAON
 (whispers)
 Serve well, kid...

Thaon starts asphyxiating. His eyes and neck bulge, as he
 falls to his knees, gropes for his helmet. His last vision is
 green grass inches away from his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Holo-computers clutter the room, desks littered with notes, textbooks. It is a lab in the future. Our characters may be human, or evolved humans.

Young scientist, Dr. REL KAVEL (male, 29 years old), talks anxiously with PROFESSOR BREK (male, 52 years old).

KAVEL

Less than a thousand years.

PROFESSOR BREK

A thousand years?! Show me.

Kavel motions toward a holo-computer and Professor Brek sits and reads, distressed as he shifts info around in the air with his fingertips.

PROFESSOR BREK (CONT'D)

You're sure about this, Dr. Kavel? This Global Environmental Project hasn't been operational very long. How did you estimate these projections?

KAVEL

I estimated nothing. It's empirical.
(grave portent)
Professor Brek, it's now.

PROFESSOR BREK

Verification?

KAVEL

(pulling up data)
Over 200 confirmations around the planet;
from astrophysicists, geologists,
astronomers, environmentalists...

PROFESSOR BREK

(reads stats softly to himself)
...depletion nearing fatal levels;
projections...20% toxicity... Does this
mean--?

KAVEL

We've passed the tipping point.

PROFESSOR BREK

(horrified)
Passed--?! Dr. Kavel, our next status
meeting with Prime Tresda is scheduled
for tomorrow.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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PROFESSOR BREK (CONT'D)

Have you any idea how they'll take news of the planet's environmental death?

KAVEL

What else can we do? Only by reporting our findings can we start work on the solution.

PROFESSOR BREK

Have you considered a solution, Doctor?

KAVEL

Doctor Lankh, myself and a few others came up with this.

Kavel brings up another holo-screen, showing graphs, data. Professor Brek studies it for a beat, acknowledges it.

PROFESSOR BREK

It's feasible. But if we're going to convince the Committee to do anything, the threat has to be discernible within one lifetime.

KAVEL

We can't alter the path of geological death, Professor. If our lack of foresight prevents us from saving the planet for future generations, well, maybe we deserve to die.

PROFESSOR BREK

Let's keep that kind of talk out of the Committee meeting, Kavel. If we bring morals into it, they'll laugh us out of our grant; which we only received, I might add, because you discovered that upsurge in microbial bacteria--

KAVEL

Don't remind me. Two grueling years reduced to a political talking point.

PROFESSOR BREK

Exactly! Now you want to tell our patron, the most powerful man in the world, "By the way, Prime Tresda, that grant money that drove your environmental ticket and got you elected? Turns out those microbes are tipping the planet into biological death!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAVEL

But they'd listen to you, Professor -
you're head of the Institute.

PROFESSOR BREK

You're still young, Kavel - you haven't
been caressed by that malformed hand of
government; the same hand that cradles
you will strangle you if you disagree.

SERENA TRYCE (female, 24 years old) enters the lab.

SERENA

Who's strangling who?

Kavel looks up with a smile, relieved Serena has interrupted.

KAVEL

(happily)

Serena.

Kavel and Serena perform a strange greeting. They kiss each
other's shoulders and touch the backs of each other's hands.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

(introducing Serena)

You know Professor Brek.

(to Professor Brek)

Dr. Serena Tryce, my season partner,
Professor.

Professor Brek touches his right back-of-hand with Serena's
right back-of-hand. (This is the "formal" greeting as opposed
to Kavel's and Serena's "intimate" greeting.)

PROFESSOR BREK

Greetings, Dr. Tryce.

(to Kavel)

If we can't sell the disaster and
solution as a profitable venture, the
Committee won't endorse it.

KAVEL

Only we're not selling a new patent for
peeling gomatoes. Our entire species is
at stake.

PROFESSOR BREK

(grimacing)

And keep it light, my boy! Keep it light!
Remember: diplomacy, tact. Whatever they
say, keep in mind that all four political
parties want their ideology represented--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KAVEL

But this is far more urgent than
political ideology--

PROFESSOR BREK

To them, a dying planet isn't a disaster -
it's political opportunism. So don't let
them see you sweat. Think patience,
subtlety.

KAVEL

How do we convey the magnitude of this
disaster if they won't admit it's a
disaster?

SERENA

Don't sell the disaster. Sell the
industries that will profit from it...

Both men look at Serena, break into big smiles and nods.

PROFESSOR BREK

(as he exits)

I'll pick you up at eight tomorrow. But
check this evidence again tonight. Be
absolutely sure of it!

KAVEL

Professor, you've seen the data. Why do
you doubt me?

PROFESSOR BREK

(turns to Kavel)

Because they will doubt you. We need to
explain this evidence as compellingly and
simply as the primary star rising, so the
Committee understands that if we don't
make plans to get off-planet within ten
lifetimes, there won't be an eleventh.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A few citizens roam the park, sit, laugh, or play. The park
is a strange color - all the trees and grass are purplish.
There are no pets to be seen.

YOUNG CHILD plays near MATER (its mother), who sits on a
bench and applies lotion to her arms and neck. Skies are
orange and pink (almost like sunset - but at high noon). The
white steel sphere of a far-off spaceship hovering
soundlessly breaks up the idyllic tableau; it is so far away
and so large it is a haze on the horizon.

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Young Child notices the spaceship, queries Mater.

YOUNG CHILD
Mater, what's that?

Mater listens to instructions on a holo-computer in her lap and wherever she applies lotion, her skin tightens, like Botox.

MATER
(offhandedly)
Oh, nothing, dearling! Just The Minders.

YOUNG CHILD
The Minders? Why they over there? Are they coming over here?

MATER
(slightly amused)
No, they're staying over there. They don't bother us. And they're very far away.

YOUNG CHILD
How far away? Like to the top of the mountains?

MATER
Further than you can count, dearling!

YOUNG CHILD
Further than--? Huuuh... how long have they been further than numbers?

MATER
Always, my child.

YOUNG CHILD
Always? Like yesterday and today and my first birthing day?

MATER
That's what "always" means, dearling!

YOUNG CHILD
(amazed)
Oooooohhh!
(beat)
Mater?

MATER
(still applying lotion)
Mm-hmm?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

YOUNG CHILD
What does The Minders do?

MATER
They wait.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The Prime Committee. Around a long oval table sit men and women in muted futuristic uniforms: a combination robe-suit. Professor Brek stands at the foot of the table, Kavel sits near. The equivalent of a President, the distinguished PRIME TRESDA, sits at the table head, dressed in black; his aide, SECOND NERIM, sits beside him in gray. Hovering before each person, just under their line of sight, is a holo-computer.

Attending are COUNCILMEN THENTOR, GARDEQ, JENDA, RAND, COUNCILWOMAN ISHA and others.

Professor Brek has just completed his presentation, in front of a hologram filled with data and graphs.

PROFESSOR BREK
...all this evidence of environmental collapse necessitates an evacuation on a planetary scale--

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ
(indicating his holo-screen)
Your presentation is certainly intriguing, Professor Brek, but I don't understand: why evacuation and not repair?

Professor Brek looks at Kavel uncertainly.

PROFESSOR BREK
When a planet's atmosphere reaches a certain toxicity level, it's called the tipping point-- but there is another element to the proposed evacuation--

COUNCILMAN RAND
Our filters were verified the most efficient by the Energy Council--

PROFESSOR BREK (CONT'D)
(trying to keep cool)
Declaring oneself the "most efficient" doesn't prove a single--

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COUNCILMAN JENDA

I'd like to see more logistical details, before I consider this "atmospheric anomaly" a reality.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

You mention, Professor Brek, that the planet will only be habitable for ten more generations, but if we started preparing for the survival of the next ten generations, we would soon exhaust our resources. Our fate would be nearly identical to the one you so urgently spin as fact.

PROFESSOR BREK

(sees red)

'Fact' is empirical evidence, Councilman Thentor! 'Spin' is diplomatic double-talk. My report is all observed data.

Kavel tries to catch Professor Brek's eye, to remind him of his own advice to stay calm. But the Council keep pouncing.

COUNCILMAN RAND

(to the council)

Professor Brek's summation is alarming, but Council, our science teams have mentioned no evidence that our environment is damaged enough to consider evacua--

PROFESSOR BREK

(sarcastically)

Right, Councilman Rand! The planet's survival is not the issue - it is our species' survival that hangs by a thread--

Kavel tries harder to catch Professor Brek's eye, by gesturing to cool it. He goes unnoticed.

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA

--I don't think a thousand years would be considered "by a thread," Professor--

PROFESSOR BREK

(growing animated)

By astronomical standards, one thousand years is no more than an eyeblink, Councilwoman Isha!

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CONTINUED: (2)

COUNCILMAN JENDA

Nonetheless, our scientists still assure us--

PROFESSOR BREK

(pounces on Councilman Jenda)

Funding your sycophantic scientists to feed you evidence that the planet will live is moot! Of course the planet will continue - it's just a rock! But it will be uninhabitable within a millennium!

(to the Council, loudly)

Are you reading this data before you? Do you know how to read the data?--

Professor Brek is interrupted by Prime Tresda firmly.

Kavel is now staring bug-eyed at Professor Brek, motioning discreetly yet urgently for him to stop.

PRIME TRESDA

Professor, it is not the provenance of this council to apprehend your data; we merely act upon the advice of those who interpret your findings. Now... I'm sure your concern is well-founded, but we must look at the big picture, not just "scientific findings."

PROFESSOR BREK

(barely-contained outrage)

Sir, you're dismissing the evidence that shows you the big picture--

Prime Tresda continues unruffled.

PRIME TRESDA (CONT'D)

A planetwide emergency is no small thing, Professor. I urge you to be patient while our experts interpret your data with an eye to--

PROFESSOR BREK

(flabbergasted, voice rising)

"Interpret" the data--? "Interpret"--?
Sir, it is already interpreted! I don't think you understand the urgency of--

SECOND NERIM

The Prime does not understand? Mr. Science Advisor, do not forget your place!--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Kavel breaks in, to everyone's surprise; mainly to stop Professor Brek.

KAVEL
(quietly, to Prime Tresda)
Do you know what terraforming is, sir?

Silence. Professor Brek notices Kavel for the first time, who gives Professor Brek a "What were you doing?" look.

SECOND NERIM
Dr. Kavel, your presence here is a
courtesy, not an invitation to contribute
to the--

Prime Tresda speaks over Second Nerim, to Kavel.

PRIME TRESDA
We funded your microbial research that
helped win an election, young scientist.

Second Nerim is stopped short; silence from the Committee.

KAVEL
Uh... yes, sir.

PRIME TRESDA
You have the floor.

KAVEL
(surprised)
Uh, thank you, sir. The issue is not just
evacuation - but a haven to evacuate to.
That's where terraforming comes in:
manually creating a self-sustaining
biosphere on another world, which we -
and a number of subsidiary species -
would then relocate to. The details are
here...

Kavel punches keys on his holo-computer which brings up data on everyone's.

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA
Professor Brek mentioned that we have
plenty of time before our planet will
supposedly expire. A thousand years?

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CONTINUED: (4)

KAVEL

Councilwoman, all due respect:
terraforming takes hundreds of thousands
of years. We're already too late...

CUT TO:

COMPUTER MONITOR SHOWING SCIENTIFIC READOUTS:

Nitrogen level: 60% (an arrow indicator shows the level is rising). Oxygen level: 16% (another arrow shows this level is rising also). Carbon Dioxide: 10% (indicator shows falling levels). Other trace elements are listed: Argon, Neon, Helium, etc.

TEXT ON READOUT:

Lichen colonies have corrupted indigenous fungi and continue robust photosynthesis process.

CLOSEUP

of a human eye, reading this text as a holo-image directly in front of it. We see no other images other than this eye.

AUDIO: radio comm-links, voices reporting the element levels, other technical data being imparted.

COMM VOICE 1

Atmosphere responding well to microbial implants. Nitrogen levels show a definitive exponential rise over the last two centuries.

MILLER (O.S.)

Tipping point, sir?

DESAI (O.S.)

I'd say we've reached tipping point, soldier.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

What is this "tipping point" you keep mentioning?

KAVEL

It means we've passed the point of no return. We can't reverse the chemical reactions taking place in our atmosphere.

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PRIME TRESDA

Dr. Kavel, what has caused this atmospheric degeneration?

Kavel looks anxiously at Professor Brek.

KAVEL

Sir, we believe the microbial agents we were commissioned to study.

Walla around the conference table. As soon as Prime Tresda speaks, walla dies out.

PRIME TRESDA

Dr. Kavel, am I to understand that the same microbial agents that this administration issued public warnings against; that prompted the most comprehensive Clean Air Bill in history - those same microbial agents are now... destroying the atmosphere anyway?

KAVEL

(grimacing)

All due respect, sir, passing a Clean Air Bill doesn't physically address the problem - that is, it doesn't automatically make the air clean; it just lets the public know you're concerned...

Kavel's comment creates offended walla through the Committee.

Councilman Gardeq turns to Professor Brek.

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

As Science Officer, wasn't it your duty to ensure the Clean Air Bill was enacted?

PROFESSOR BREK

Councilman, if we were allocated the requisite funding, resources and personnel, we would have moved - but the Clean Air Bill was...

Walla dies to silence.

PROFESSOR BREK (CONT'D)

... was more of a Mission Statement. With no substance other than its, uh, "political" capital.

Outraged walla erupts. Second Nerim shouts above the din.

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CONTINUED: (2)

SECOND NERIM

This derogation is uncalled for! You are here to report on planetary atmospheric, not insult the administration--

Prime Tresda speaks and the room is suddenly silent.

PRIME TRESDA

Have you determined the origin of these microbes, Dr. Kavel?

Kavel looks to Professor Brek for support.

KAVEL

Yes, sir... The Minders.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WATERFALL AND STREAM - DAY

A family group lounges next to a waterfall and stream. Father RONTH and mother SHAYRA lie on purple grass away from the milky-white water. Their BABY GIRL sits near the water on the grass, while their two boys, MATCHEL (7 yo) and MARKEL (6 yo) play in the water.

On the distant horizon, a Minder Vessel perches innocuously.

SHAYRA

(gesturing to the Minder)
Wouldn't you like to see what's inside them, Ronth?

RONTH

(while reading a book)
Inside what? The Minders?

SHAYRA

Yeah. Why not?

RONTH

Shayra, seems if they leave us alone, we should leave them alone.

SHAYRA

Yes, but don't you ever wonder who they are? Or what their purpose is?

Ronth looks up from his book, speaks matter-of-factly.

RONTH

We know who they are, dearheart: they're The Minders.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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RONTH (CONT'D)

Been here since before writing and speech; since before we could space travel - so we know they're not from here; haven't done anything for millennia; no threats, no communication, no interference.

Ronth goes back to reading.

SHAYRA

Okay, that's what they teach us as birthlings. But how can they "teach" us what they don't know themselves?

RONTH

What do you want to know about them? They're just a part of life.

SHAYRA

How do we even know they're space travelers? Maybe they were constructed by an ancient civilization. Why are they called "Minders"? What are they minding? Are we the ones being minded?

RONTH

Shayra, you know these questions are useless. If we can't penetrate them with radio waves or gamma rays or even nuclear devices, well... Why do you even think the Vessels are inhabited? By beings with some kind of "purpose"?

SHAYRA

Someone's got to run them. For some reason.

RONTH

Maybe. But maybe you wouldn't like what you'd find.

(puts book down)

You know Jardeth, right?

SHAYRA

Mm-hmm.

RONTH

He went right up under a Minder Vessel - that one up near Korden Keys.

SHAYRA

(excited)

Really?! Tell me! Tell me!

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CONTINUED: (2)

In B.G. the boys SPLASH and laugh while Baby Girl squeals at them in pleasure.

RONTH

Says he traveled for three days underneath it while it just hovered there. It was so big, took him three days to get out from under it and it wasn't even moving. Said the smell was horrible underneath it, he nearly suffocated; in its shadow, nothing - just dead land. A strange kind of water was running through this area and the grass was turning weird colors - probably from decay; the soil was black and fetid... if that's what those Vessels do, I don't want to imagine what goes on inside.

SHAYRA

But that could just be from hovering there. If the primary and secondary star can't shine on the ground under them, how can anything grow there?

RONTH

Well, there was stuff growing under there, but it wasn't natural. Jardeth says all the wildlife there was dead, or "changed" - or worse.

SHAYRA

(uneasy)

What do you mean?

RONTH

He says he found a fish with tiny legs instead of fins. And the water he found it in - it was weird.

SHAYRA

Weird how, Ronth?

RONTH

I don't quite understand: said he could see right through it--

From the stream, Matchel screams in horror. Ronth and Shayra are startled from their reverie, Ronth rising immediately, running towards his son, being helped from the water by Markel.

RONTH (CONT'D)

Matchel! What's wrong?!

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CONTINUED: (3)

MARKEL

His legs are burning, Pater! His legs!

Shayra has run to their Baby Girl, crying on the grass.

As Matchel whimpers in pain and stumbles to the grass, Ronth sees the skin of Matchel's legs blistering and peeling. Ronth picks Matchel up in his arms.

RONTH

We need to wash it off!

Ronth tries to carry Matchel back into the water.

MARKEL

(holding him back)

Pater! No!--

RONTH

(to Markel)

Move! What are you doing?!--

SHAYRA

(pointing to waterfall)

Ronth! No! Don't go in the water! Look!

Ronth looks at the waterfall, now clear water, instead of milky white. The clear water merges slowly with the white water in the stream, gradually overpowering it.

Matchel screams, pointing to the transparent meander.

MATCHEL

That's what touched me - that stuff!
Oooww! It hurts, Pater!

RONTH

(in shock)

What is that?

Shayra cradles Baby Girl, hushing her, joins Ronth and Matchel.

SHAYRA

(to Matchel)

Dearling - are you sure? What's happening?--

MATCHEL

(crying)

Yes, Mater! It burns! Make it stop!

Matchel is shaking in Ronth's arms, holding Shayra's hands.

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CONTINUED: (4)

SHAYRA
(aside to Ronth, fearfully)
Like Jardeth saw.

Both Ronth and Shayra direct an anxious look at the Minder Vessel on the horizon.

SHAYRA (CONT'D)
(to Matchel, soothing)
Darling, we're going to a hospital right now. Be strong, dearheart!

Ronth runs with Matchel in his arms to their hovercar nearby.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Professor Brek and Kavel show hologram closeups of the hull of a Minder Vessel.

KAVEL
You can see these hull openings here, and here. What you cannot see is the colorless, odorless gas being emitted.

Next picture is red-tinted and choked with thick "smoke," obscuring the hull of the Vessel.

KAVEL (CONT'D)
But in infrared, we clearly see...

PROFESSOR BREK
We believe these are exhaust vents. Estimating the energy required to run vessels of that size, and the length of time they've been in our skies, we arrive at the pollution levels documented on these charts.

Dynamic CGI visuals accompany their data, in motion on each councilperson's holo-computer.

KAVEL
We believe the microbial bacteria is indigenous to the Minder Vessel; it has been pouring into our atmosphere unchecked since before our great-great-grandfathers were alive. The bacteria have adapted to our atmosphere, disrupted our biological balance.

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As Kavel speaks, we see the faces of the Council registering alarm as they digest this evidence.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

Now, our questions are myriad: Do the Minders know their gases are harmful to us? Even if we could communicate with them, would they cease emitting? I mean, those processes might be integral to the survival of their species--

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

I don't think their species has any say in the matter, Dr. Kavel. After all, they are on our planet. They should cease harming us.

PROFESSOR BREK

Councilman, who's to say they weren't here first? Has there ever been a time in recorded history when they weren't in our skies? Maybe this is their planet!

Murmurs around room.

KAVEL

I must add that all our questions are moot, as identifying the problem has not given us the wherewithal to rectify it, let alone stop it.

COUNCILMAN RAND

Yet rectifying or stopping would make no difference, would it, Dr. Kavel?

KAVEL

Correct, Councilman. Even in their passivity, the Minders display an overwhelming power and technology that defies our civilization. Our only solution is evacuation. And we're already a thousand years behind schedule.

An AIDE runs into the room to the side of Prime Tresda and whispers in his ear. As Prime Tresda rises to leave, the Council all stand as one.

PRIME TRESDA

Citizens, a pressing matter has forced a conclusion to this meeting; a matter you should all be privy to, as it will help determine our course of action.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Murmurs of anxiety ripple through the Council.

PRIME TRESDA (CONT'D)

After being fixtures in our constant
skies longer than our species itself can
remember--

(looks directly at Kavel)
--the Minders are moving.

CUT TO BLACK.

END ACT I

ACT II

TEXT ON BLACK:

The killing moon - will come too soon.
"Killing Moon," Echo and The Bunnymen.

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A bustling metropolis, skyscrapers huddled together, shadowing streets crawling with traffic and citizens. A traffic jam of "futuristic" cars is on the actual roadway, while another traffic jam of hovering cars forms a layer above the roadway. Citizens walk on the sidewalks, while other citizens bustle above them on hovering walkways, the same level as the hovercars.

A DEEP RUMBLING in the ground. Pedestrians hesitate, look around, look up. A Doppler Effect of WHOOSHING BREEZE blows through the canyon of the main street. A far-off APPROACHING JET ENGINE WHINE is heard. We see citizens on the streets disoriented, looking everywhere.

Suddenly, two jet fighters streak across the sky just above the skyscrapers, ENGINES SCREECHING, startling the crowd, who all look up. The jets make a long bank and streak back in the direction they came.

We see, in the hazy distance, through the canyon walls of the skyscrapers, a spherical shape, becoming clearer as it advances, five miles high in the sky.

A Minder Vessel. We see only a sliver of the Vessel through the skyscrapers, yet it is visually overwhelming - like a moon descending on a city.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROWD-1

What's that? Is it moving?

CROWD-2

Why is a Minder flying? Minders don't move!

CROWD-3

What's going on? Why are the Minders coming here?

An involuntary silence envelops the crowd, as the downdraft that precedes the Minder Vessel blows everyone's ears out. The pavement buckles. The tops of skyscrapers shudder and spiderweb with cracks.

Then - a SCREECHING HIGH-PRESSURE WIND howls through the main street canyon, steel and flesh and concrete mashed into a RUMBLING, SCREAMING, RENDING mush as the city is decimated by the Minder Vessel's forward air pressure.

WIDE SHOT

of Minder Vessel slowly moving forward and an invisible (but discernible) air pocket around it toppling skyscrapers and creating a shockwave on the ground.

INT/EXT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME

PILOT-1 "escorting" the Minder Vessel.

PILOT-1

(into his radio)

Oh no! Escort for Ex-Terra Craft 5212 to base: The ETC is tearing up the land! Repeat: the ETC is destroying the city of Barbesson.

BASE COMMAND

(on Pilot-1's radio)

You have authorization to return fire!
You are authorized to engage ETC 5212.

PILOT-2

Sir, they're not firing on the city!
They're just moving above it!--

BASE COMMAND

Say again, Pilot!--

PILOT-2

The backwash of the craft is so powerful,
it's razing everything in its path!--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BASE COMMAND
Bring that vessel down, Pilot! Now!

PILOT-1
Understood, sir! Over!
(to Pilot-2)
You heard 'em. Give it all you got!

WIDE SHOT:

The two jets close in on the Minder Vessel. They look like motes of dust next to it.

INT. CORRIDORS OF PRIME HOUSE - SAME TIME

Prime Tresda strides quickly with Professor Brek and Kavel on either side of him, trying to keep up. A portable holo-computer hovers before Prime Tresda and Second Nerim as they walk. Only four Council Members accompany Prime Tresda's party: Councilman Thentor, Gardeq, Isha and Rand.

KAVEL
(to Prime Tresda)
Begging your indulgence, sir: where are we going?

PRIME TRESDA
Right now - to Defense Condition 4.

Second Nerim punches his porto-holo and colors change on his screen.

PRIME TRESDA (CONT'D)
(to Kavel)
Now since you two headed the team that studied the Minders, that makes you the closest thing we have to authorities here. So I'm invoking Prime Order Emergency Clause nine-two-zero and promoting you to heads of the Evacuation Team. Authorize the directive, Second Nerim.

SECOND NERIM
At once, sir.

Second Nerim punches more buttons as he walks.

AIDE-1 appears on Prime Tresda's porto-holo.

AIDE-1
Sir, the reports for the downed pilots at site ETC 9301 have arrived. Sending now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We see dossiers of Captain Thaon and pilot Gamien appear on Prime Tresda's screen.

Professor Brek notices the sleek choker around Prime Tresda'S neck - the porto-holo computer - and comments aside to Kavel.

PROFESSOR BREK

A neck-portable! Been meaning to get one, but they're just so complex; I won't find the time to read the instructions.

KAVEL

Actually, they're more convenient than the belt model. But I can't find the time to get out of the lab.

Kavel implies cheekily it is Professor Brek's fault.

AIDE-2 appears on Prime Tresda's screen.

AIDE-2

Prime Tresda, the Evac Prep Team is standing by.

Kavel looks at Professor Brek in shocked surprise as he wonders aloud to Prime Tresda.

KAVEL

You've already assembled a planetary evacuation team?

PRIME TRESDA

(to Aide-2, ignoring Kavel)
Integrate ops with Second Nerim.
(a Voice Recognition screen appears, to which he responds)
Authorized, Prime Tresda.

AIDE-2

Right away, sir!

Immediately, we see Aide-2's face disappear from Prime Tresda's porto-holo and appear on Second Nerim's porto-holo.

PRIME TRESDA

There's a virtual contingency plan for everything, Doctor Kavel. Your task is to organize the real off-planet evacuation. With resources that I will place at your disposal - today!

Professor Brek and Kavel exchange an anxious look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PROFESSOR BREK

Begging the Prime's pardon again, sir,
but terraforming is the priority and
we've not yet located a suitable planet--

Prime Tresda pulls up the pilot dossiers and crash info on
his porto-holo.

PRIME TRESDA (CONT'D)

Noted, Professor. You will have your
teams and your resources.

(he switches gears instantly)

Our pilots met with an untimely end two
weeks ago in the shadow of a Minder
Vessel. Nothing like this has happened in
the two hundred years we've been doing
recon flybys. Maybe you can enlighten--

Prime Tresda looks at Professor Brek and Kavel, sees they are
not outfitted with porto-holos, and chides his Aides.

PRIME TRESDA (CONT'D)

Outfit these scientists with portables!

AIDE-3 and AIDE-PORTO appear and clip black chokers around
the necks of Professor Brek and Kavel. Aide-Porto directs
Professor Brek to place his finger on the choker.

AIDE-PORTO

(to Professor Brek)

Please place your fingerprint here, sir.
Now recite your birthing date.

PROFESSOR BREK

Seven, Ranken, six-zero-seven-two-five.

BLIPS sound, tiny LEDs flash, then stabilize at orange. Kavel
goes through same process with Aide-3.

KAVEL

(in b.g.)

Fifteen, Harton, six-zero-seven-five-
seven.

AIDE-PORTO

You're online, sirs.

As Aide-Porto is exiting, Professor Brek shouts after him.

PROFESSOR BREK

Wait! How do you get these things off?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AIDE-PORTO
(illustrates the gesture)
Press the side firmly.

KAVEL
(jocular)
Looks like you found the time.

PROFESSOR BREK
(archly)
But you'll still be stuck in the lab.

AIDE-1
(on Prime Tresda's screen)
Sir, military escorts dispatched to all
Minder Vessels across the planet.

PRIME TRESDA
Keep me informed of Minder movements
within 50 miles of Prime House, military
installations and major cities.

AIDE-1
No threat discerned to Prime House, sir.
Sending report of all other movements.

A readout of coordinates scrolls down Prime Tresda's screen.

Kavel is reading his downed report and interrupts.

KAVEL
Engine malfunction? Followed by computer
shutdown. Of course!

Second Nerim gives Kavel a dirty look, like he is breaching
protocol. The walking party enters the War Room and spreads
out, all taking seats.

INT. WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A gigantic oval table is the centerpiece of the War Room,
while around the perimeter, staff scurry and holo-screens
show every logistical detail they could need.

PRIME TRESDA
(regarding the report)
Something catch your eye, Dr. Kavel?

KAVEL
The jets failed because they're designed
to operate in an atmosphere of a precise
combination of elements.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAVEL (CONT'D)

We can now surmise that the area directly around the Minder Vessels has been reformulated by that bacteria. In that completely alien mix of elements, the engines failed, precipitating computer failure.

SECOND NERIM

Why couldn't Pilot Gamien eject?

GENERAL MARKEP enters the War Room, answers Second Nerim.

GENERAL MARKEP

When the computer sensed the unsafe atmosphere, it assumed the plane had ditched either underwater or in a toxic environment - which it was in this case - so it overrode the Eject mechanism and sealed the canopy for the safety of the pilot.

PROFESSOR BREK

(ironically)

"For the safety of the pilot"...

PRIME TRESDA

(in greeting)

Serve well, General Markep.

GENERAL MARKEP

Serve well, Prime Tresda.

PRIME TRESDA

(makes introductions)

General Markep, Professor Brek, Dr. Kavel.

General Markep greets Professor Brek and Kavel by performing the "formal" greeting: touching backs of right hands.

GENERAL MARKEP

We've never encountered an enemy that would replace the air itself, Professor.

KAVEL

(to himself)

A biological force-shield!...

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

Is that what we're talking about now? An "enemy"?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PROFESSOR BREK

Please, I ask of the Council, don't judge the Minders too hastily. They've proven peaceful, even to this point, where lives were lost accidentally. Those pilots were technically invading their airspace.

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA

You've opined this planet might be theirs, Professor. I'd hate to think they were somehow trying to take it back--

COUNCILMAN RAND

(interrupts)

They've just been hanging there forever doing nothing! Even if they're inhabited, how can they claim this planet if we're the ones living productive lives on it? I think that gives us the claim to rights!

Harried, Professor Brek looks to Councilwoman Isha for support before retorting to Councilman Rand.

PROFESSOR BREK

I'm sorry, Councilman, but that's just plain ludicrous. Aside from the fact that we can't possibly apprehend the Minders' purpose, you're saying that by being more active, we can claim this planet as ours?

GENERAL MARKEP

And no one has granted the Minders rights to the airspace they inhabit--

PROFESSOR BREK

Are you going to try and rescind those rights, General? How exactly?

COUNCILMAN RAND

You sound like you admire them, Professor.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

(aside)

And why not? Their power knows no bounds.

GENERAL MARKEP

I suggest you reassess your allegiances, Professor... or you and I will soon come to a disagreement.

Councilwoman Isha looks on, stunned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PROFESSOR BREK

Now hold on, General! I'm not allying with anyone - I don't want rash decisions and knee-jerk responses to what could very well be--

PRIME TRESDA

(interrupts General Markep)

No doubt you have seen my authorization giving Professor Brek and Dr. Kavel control of the military for terraforming operations, General Markep?

General Markep is taken aback for a moment, then pulls up the Authorization on his porto-holo, scowls, and slumps in his seat - just as a SERGEANT appears on a wall holo-screen.

SERGEANT

Barbesson Air Force Base reporting to Prime Base.

General Markep flicks a switch on the desk.

GENERAL MARKEP

General Markep, Prime Base Commander: Report, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

Sir, Barbesson is gone.

Many heads look up. Crowd goes silent.

GENERAL MARKEP

Say again, soldier. What do you mean, 'gone'?

SERGEANT

Sir, ETC 5212 moved over the city and created a downdraft that simply flattened everything. We didn't have the firepower to stop it.

Councilman Thentor and General Markep glance at Professor Brek, who looks aghast.

GENERAL MARKEP

Firepower? How many weapons have you deployed on the ETC?

Military personnel immediately rush to action in the War Room, verifying incoming satellite pictures and reports of decimated Barbesson, which appear on the walls around them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SERGEANT

Sir, we were only meant to escort - there were just two jets - the military is spread so thin across--

GENERAL MARKEP

And what happened when you fired on it?

SERGEANT

Nothing, sir.

GENERAL MARKEP

Nothing?

SERGEANT

Absolutely nothing, sir. But...

GENERAL MARKEP

But what, Sergeant?

SERGEANT

When the jets got within one mile of the ETC, they went down, sir.

GENERAL MARKEP

Went dow--? Transmit full report...
(in shock, as he ends
transmission)
Serve well, Sergeant...

SERGEANT

Serve well, General...

General Markep blankly stares, as transmission data scrolls onto wall-screens that he doesn't look at.

Prime Tresda has been watching these events and turns to Second Nerim.

PRIME TRESDA

(quietly)
DefCon 2.

CUT TO BLACK.

TEXT:

Earth Time: 575,401 A.D. One year later...

FADE IN:

COMPUTER MONITOR SHOWING SCIENTIFIC READOUTS:

Nitrogen level: 62% (arrow indicator shows level is rising).
 Oxygen level: 17% (arrow shows level is rising). Carbon
 Dioxide: 15% (indicator shows falling levels).

CLOSEUP

of human eye. This is the only visual. AUDIO is comm-link.

DESAI (O.S.)

At the depletion rate of the atmospheric elements of the host planet, it is possible for Community Alpha to commence a viable existence in sealed biospheres on the host planet within ten years, Earth Time. Host planet's atmosphere estimated to experience total collapse and molecular restructuring within the next millennium.

CROSS FADE:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

As DESAI (O.S.) is saying the last line, AUDIO is cross-faded with Kavel's line at the conference.

KAVEL

...atmosphere estimated to experience total collapse and molecular restructuring within the next millennium.

Kavel stands behind a holo-screen, so we can see graphics and text hanging in the air in front of him (and moving about when he moves them).

At the head of this Terraforming Committee Meeting are Professor Brek, Councilman Thentor, Councilman Rand, Serena, Gardeq. In the crowd are scientists LANKH, GEROL, TRENN, SHYLEE, DOKEV, BELOK, and various other specialists and scientists; no citizens present.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

So it is not a moment too soon that spectroscopic analysis of the Belugian Star System has discovered evidence of a suitable planet for terraforming, approximately four light years from us.

Belugian System appears on holo-screen. (The visual looks strangely familiar - they are looking at our Solar System, without the visual giveaway of Saturn.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAVEL (CONT'D)

Near the primary main-sequence star is a cluster of rocky planets, one of which perfectly suits our purposes.

(to the computer)

Zoom in: TF-01.

Holo-screen zooms in, singles out a blueish planet.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

Official name: TF-01. We're calling it Rejuvena. A world over halfway to restructuring its atmospheric elements in our favor.

Each scientist's holo-screen shows data readouts, graphics of Rejuvena from all angles, orbit path, position in space, etc.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

How very convenient, Doctor.

KAVEL

Convenient for us - but not for life on Rejuvena. They require an atmosphere that is inverted to our own, and their diminishing carbon-based life tells us they've been adversely affected by their atmospheric restructuring, probably caused by some catastrophic event in their distant past.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

So: we need a planet - you find a planet. Don't you think that looks suspiciously convenient for you?

PROFESSOR BREK

We were looking for planets, Councilman. That would infer the eventual 'finding' of one, wouldn't you say?

Councilman Thentor snorts and turns to look at his screen. Kavel continues, only slightly perturbed.

KAVEL

Note the high carbon dioxide levels; oxygen, nitrogen and trace element levels. An abundance of hydrogen trapped in the large bodies of water would react to our terraforming agents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEROL

(raising his hand)

Astrobiologist Gerol, sir. By the looks of this data, this world is almost ready to populate.

Kavel walks through the hologram to the front of it. He flicks the display to another graph as he passes through it.

KAVEL

"Almost," Dr. Gerol. We'll push it chemically so it tips to a habitable atmosphere. Citizens, this find could not be more timely.

COUNCILMAN JENDA

And you say it's only four light years?--

PROFESSOR BREK

Practically in our neighborhood, Councilman Jenda. Matter of fact, from Rejuvena's night sky, we would still be able to see our primary star; our secondary star orbits so close, they'd both look like one star from Rejuvena. Our grand-birthlings will always be able to see where they came from--

TRENN

Wait a minute! That's a nice romantic notion and everything - but has anyone considered blowing the aliens out of the sky instead of turning tail and running?

Councilman Thentor shoots Trenn a hostile look.

KAVEL

Even our subspace and anti-matter weapons are useless against the ships, Dr. Trenn. The military's nuclear strikes simply decimated our cities and did nothing against the Minders. We are not "turning tail" - we're leaving.

LANKH

So the terraforming process, which should have taken millennia, may now take--

PROFESSOR BREK

That's right, Dr. Lankh! It may be achievable within our own lifetimes, with our grand-birthlings directly benefitting from our efforts!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COUNCILMAN RAND

This should make the Council look more favorably on the project, Doctors.

Kavel nods in thanks to Councilman Rand, looks in relief to Professor Brek - when Lankh butts in.

LANKH

Then shouldn't we begin work, Dr. Kavel?

KAVEL

(confused)

I thought work was already in progress.

LANKH

We've all been assigned our duties, but our funding has not been processed yet.

KAVEL

What?!

GEROL

My situation is the same, Dr. Kavel. My team is ready to move, but when can we expect the go-ahead?

Councilman Gardeq steps to the front of the room.

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

To answer your question, Dr. Gerol: Doctors Brek and Kavel have only recently confirmed the suitability of this planet. We are in the process of finalizing the budget proposal, which the, uh, Terraforming Council will review at its earliest convenience.

Kavel and Professor Brek look at each other in surprise.

KAVEL

What are they talking--?

PROFESSOR BREK

(shaking his head)

"Politics."

TRENN

(to Councilman Gardeq)

All due respect, sir, our planet's atmosphere is breaking down. Our water and livestock have been tainted so badly that we've diverted major funds for alternative production of both.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TRENN (CONT'D)

We live underground in bunkers like fugitives in our own cities, breathing murky air filtered by generators, because there are nearly 5,000 Minder Vessels up there doing who-knows-what?! - and you're talking red tape?

SHYLEE

Why must money come into this equation? Are we driven by greed even in the face of catastrophic doom?

GEROL

(looking directly at the Councilmen)

It's because the powers who make these decisions have not been affected by the reality on the surface--

COUNCILMAN RAND

(ignoring Gerol's dig)

Dr. Trenn, scientific caution is not red tape, and I'm sure Doctors Brek and Kavel are doing--

KAVEL

(outraged)

Don't put this on us! We're ready to move forward!

LANKH

(to Rand)

But your delays are not scientific caution - that's just brazen stupidity! Preliminary prep should have been completed by now--

Councilman Rand raises a reassuring hand to Lankh and Kavel as he continues speaking to Trenn.

COUNCILMAN RAND

--It may seem like paper-pushing, but in order to progress this planetwide evacuation efficiently--

TRENN

Enough talk, Councilman. You'd drown in your bureaucracy before admitting it is dragging you underwater. While you talk, our planet's ecosystem is collapsing--

LANKH

--has collapsed!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

TRENN

--as well as its social structure.
Criminality has become a way of life on
the surface, clean food and water are
scarce, citizens are disfigured, they're
birthing monstrosities - do you think
efficiency on our part will curb the
insanity of the citizens on the surface?

GEROL

Who are probably too far gone to save
anyway--

BELOK

You speak as if every citizen is mutated
or homeless - remember there are millions
who still cling to their jobs and homes.
Those are the citizens who'd benefit from
our aid - those are the citizens we
should be targeting.

Walla from the conference crowd.

SHYLEE

So it's a given we can't save everyone -
but who decides who lives and who dies?

Silence. Heads look around.

PROFESSOR BREK

(cautious)

All those who work on this project are
guaranteed a cabin on the evacuation
ships - but Citizens, we must terraform
long before cabin allocation-

SHYLEE

Easy for you, Professor Brek - you are
solo; and Dr. Kavel's season partner is a
scientist.

(motioning to Serena)

But my season partner is a finance
manager! How will our birthlings and
theirs retain guaranteed ties to this
project?--

SERENA

(steps forward indignantly)

This is not about season partners, or
birthlings--

SCIENTIST-1

What about my birthlings?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

A chorus of "Or mine" goes up.

Professor Brek raises his voice above the crowd.

PROFESSOR BREK

Citizens, we must stay focused--

SHYLEE

By definition, terraforming destroys indigenous life-forms on the host planet. Has anyone considered the intelligent life on Rejuvena?

KAVEL

We've had radiowave technology for over 4,000 years; in our search for signals from the cosmos, we have never intercepted any radiowave or ultrawave frequencies from Rejuvena's sector. For all intents and purposes, we assume Rejuvena possesses no intelligent life as we know it.

DOKEV

"Assume"?! But what if it supports a complex ecosystem - just without technological beings? What if their civilization is just entering the radiowave stage? Wouldn't our intrusion derail their progress?

Crowd walla.

Kavel looks to Professor Brek for support.

PROFESSOR BREK

Is the "level" of intelligence the question here? If so, what level could Rejuvena possibly be if we've never received signals? Is it the size? What if the intelligent life-forms on Rejuvena were the size of dust mites? Would we care about a civilization we couldn't even see or communicate with?

SHYLEE

You talk about other life as if they're pests, Professor.

SCIENTIST-1

Wouldn't they be - if they stood in the way of our survival? I mean--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

As the whole Committee turns to SCIENTIST-1 disapprovingly, he backpedals.

SCIENTIST-1 (CONT'D)

I mean--we need to think about our birthlings!

PROFESSOR BREK

Citizens, our planet is in its death throes. Scientists, doctors, physicists - you're here to keep our species alive and coordinate an evacuation, not debate on lower species--

BELOK

You said it yourself: we're scientists and doctors and physicists - not murderers!

Shouting breaks out among the conference.

SCIENTIST-3

Who gives us the right to terraform Rejuvena anyway?

LANKH

Clearly our ends are justified by our circumstances. There's no intergalactic code that prohibits us--

SHYLEE

And none that gives us authorization!

KAVEL

Please, Committee! We urgently need to start our prep to outfit spacecraft to transport the terraforming materials--

DOKEV

We need to put this to a vote!

PROFESSOR BREK

A vote on whether to live or die?--

SHYLEE

We leave our descendants a stained legacy if we murder for their sake!--

LANKH

It's not murder! It's terraforming for a whole species' survival!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

Dokev separates the word, clearly intoning its double meaning.

DOKEV
Right! "Terror Forming"--

Crowd is now in an uproar, two factions forming on the Committee floor, pro-terraform and anti-terraform.

Councilman Thentor steps forward.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR
Citizens, even though we must take drastic measures to save ourselves, I agree we should not commit genocide on a planetwide scale--

Professor Brek and Kavel look at each other in alarm.

PROFESSOR BREK
(interrupts, aghast)
But Councilman, you've authorized the injection of biological agents into a suitable planet's atmosphere. Rejuvena meets all the criteria--

Professor Brek pulls up holo-screen data with Councilman Thentor's authorization on it.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR
(ignoring Professor Brek)
Professor Brek has presented his analysis and recommendations. The Council must carefully consider the moral implications of such action before--

LANKH
(addresses Councilman Rand)
More talk! Councilman Rand, is this the official stance of the council?

Councilman Rand gives a puzzled look to Councilman Thentor as he answers.

COUNCILMAN RAND
No, Doctor. The Council was unanimously in favor of planetary evacuation, but it appears we have suddenly become divided on Professor Brek's findings.

Kavel, aside to Professor Brek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

KAVEL

I thought you said morals shouldn't come into it.

PROFESSOR BREK

(exasperated)

When politics get slippery, morals provide the perfect traction.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

This Council is out of order! These terraforming measures are speculation at best. I refuse to sign any document that would implicate us in an intergalactic incident--

SCIENTIST-4

An intergalactic incident has already occurred! A year ago when the Minder Vessels brought us to our knees!

SCIENTIST-5

But they've stabilized now - they've been hovering over their new locations without incident for a year. They keep us safe!

GEROL

Keep us safe?! They destroyed half the planet in one day!--

Kavel breaks into the arguing.

KAVEL

Whatever you believe the Minders' plans are, the facts are in the atmospheric data - they're restructuring our air and oceans at a molecular level--

SHYLEE

That's nonsense! The data is unverified--

KAVEL

The data is verified! You cannot state data is unverified because you refuse to verify it. Hundreds of other scientists verify this slow progression towards planetary death.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

I want those scientific reports verified by the Council!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

PROFESSOR BREK

Councilman Thentor, you can't be serious--

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

What if that day comes and goes and nothing happens?

KAVEL

(exasperated)

Council, please understand: there will be no cutoff day where there is suddenly no breathable air; there is no line of demarcation...

PROFESSOR BREK

(supporting Kavel)

We are experiencing the gradual slide into uninhabitability right now! We cannot waste another second pondering the rights and wrongs of saving our species--

DOKEV

We are already behind schedule. Why waste resources on a losing battle? Even if Rejuvena became hospitable tomorrow, it would take 150 years to get there, even at a tenth the speed of light! Our resources would run out! And we'd need inordinate amounts of fuel just to carry the inordinate amount of fuel we'd need to carry!

KAVEL

(passionate)

You are right, Dr. Dokev! Our resources will run out - that's why each Evacuation Ship will be a self-sustaining ecosystem; generations will birth and recycle. And for propulsion we're using--

(looks to Trenn)

Dr. Trenn?

TRENN

A combination of nuclear and solar-panel power, which would recycle on the journey and provide the requisite acceleration.

KAVEL

Life is about continuance, Doctor Dokev: even in futility, as long as Life exists, it seeks to replicate itself. That is Life's purpose on a genetic level--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

DOKEV

I don't need a biology lecture, Doctor. I am a doctor of medicine.

KAVEL

Then let's stop talking! We need every spare second to construct these Evacuation Biospheres. And we need every second before their construction to ensure our destination is safe for us.

Silence from the crowd. Councilman Thentor stands, looks around defiantly, then stalks from the room. Silently, a third of the room straggle out after him.

PROFESSOR BREK

This is not going well...

INT. MILITARY FACILITY - DAY

Second Nerim is on holo-screen being updated by GENERAL YIRIK, while text appears on the holo-screen under Second Nerim's visage.

Graphics dynamically illustrate what the text describes, showing ETC movements on the planet.

TEXT ON HOLO-SCREEN:

Less than 1 primary solar year ago, all 9,670 ETCs (aka Minder Vessels) across the planet moved exactly fifty miles from their previous location. Not one ETC overlapped another ETC. And each ETC moved to an area not covered by the previous planetwide ETC formation. This uniformly planned maneuver denotes a high intelligence...

GENERAL YIRIK

...infrared, x-ray, gamma, visual patterns, visual lights, audio greetings - no response, Second Nerim.

SECOND NERIM

What is your assessment of the Minders' cognizance of our signals, General Yirik?

CUTAWAY

EXT. OPEN SKIES - AFTERNOON

A MINDER VESSEL. Swarming around it, smaller than ants, choppers and fighter jets, eliciting no response. Some choppers flash symbols on lighted boards, others blare noises. We see soldiers at consoles transmitting radio.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

General Yirik V.O. during these visuals.

GENERAL YIRIK (O.S.)

Second Nerim, there are two options:
either they are receiving our communiques
and choose not to reply, or nothing is
getting through via the frequencies and
wavelengths we are transmitting on.

SECOND NERIM (O.S.)

Continue the process, General Yirik, and
keep me informed of any--

GENERAL YIRIK

Uh, yes, Second Nerim; we have new
developments on the video surveillance.

SECOND NERIM

(beat)

Report.

GENERAL YIRIK

The, uh, video is raw at this moment, but
our enhancement team is working on the
data and we should have a cleaned image
ready to relay within the hour.

SECOND NERIM

Thank you, General Yirik. Serve well.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - EVENING

Shayra in the living room with Baby Girl on the floor,
playing. Matchel sits propped in a chair, braces on his legs,
blankly watching a hologram TV.

On TV, Prime Tresda gives a news conference. TV AUDIO is in
b.g. throughout this scene.

PRIME TRESDA

...building an economy that will put
citizens to work repairing roads,
hoverways, bridges and schools, but we'll
also retrofit for a global economy. That
means investing in the science, research
and technology that will lead to cleaner
air, water and brave new frontiers...

SHAYRA

(looks up from Baby Girl)

Matchel, dearheart, you want to watch
something else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATCHEL
 (sighs, listless)
 Don't care.

MARKEL (O.C.)
 (calls from other room)
 Mater! Where's my catcher?

SHAYRA
 In the middle cabinet, Markel!

Ronth enters through front door. He moves slowly, as if in shock. Prime Tresda continues on TV in b.g.

PRIME TRESDA
 ...this Renewal Plan will provide relief to workers and families who were victims of last year's disaster. To get citizens spending again, 95-percent of working families will receive tax cuts; extended unemployment insurance and health care to citizens who have lost their jobs...

SHAYRA
 (to Ronth)
 Dearheart, what's wrong?

RONTH
 I... My work...

Ronth gives Shayra a confused, unbelieving look.

SHAYRA
 What do you mean?

RONTH
 They demoted me, Shayra!

SHAYRA
 Demoted?-- You have twenty years at the company! How could they do this?! What did you tell them?--

RONTH
 I had no choice! Either take the cut or leave...

Ronth walks to a countertop and slumps forward, still standing. Shayra looks at the two kids, who remain quiet while the TV AUDIO continues in b.g.

Markel comes running in from other room, joyously hugs Ronth around the waist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARKEL

Pater! Pater! Eeeeyay! Come and see this!
Come and see this! I made it!

SHAYRA

(quietly)

Will the insurance still pay for
Matchel's medical therapy?

RONTH

No. It's been cut.

MARKEL

(grabbing at Ronth's pants)

C'mon, Pater! Come and see, come and see!

SHAYRA

But we can't possibly afford--

RONTH

I know, I know...

MARKEL

(dragging on Ronth)

But Pater! Eeeeeee! Pater!--

MATCHEL

(to Markel)

Hey! Be quiet, you idiot! Can't you see--

MARKEL

(turns to Matchel)

You're an idiot!

PRIME TRESDA

(on TV in b.g.)

...Government at every level will have to
tighten its belt, but we'll help
struggling families with basic needs, as
long as they take responsibility and use
the money to renew the ailing economy...

MATCHEL

You can't even catch a zeeball!

MARKEL

You can't even walk properly!

Ronth and Shayra speak over the two boys and the TV.

RONTH

We'll have to find another school for
Markel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MATCHEL
 (weeping, to Markel)
 I'll kill you if you say that again!

MARKEL
 Oh yeah? If you can catch me!

SHAYRA
 I'll try to find a job--

RONTH
 (aggravated)
 There are no jobs! What do you think is
 happening here?!

SHAYRA
 It can't hurt to look. I'm not going to
 be negative and just give up--

MATCHEL
 (crying)
 Maaa! Make him stop!

RONTH
 What's that supposed to mean? You think
 I'm giving up - because they moved me?!
 What was I supposed to do? At least I
 still have a job--

SHAYRA
 I only gave up my designing job because
you wanted three younglings!--

MARKEL
 Not listening to you! Ah-la-la-la-la!

RONTH
 So it's my fault you haven't worked in
 ten years?!--

Baby Girl starts crying, Matchel and Markel shout at each other and Ronth and Shayra are shouting over them, while on TV, Prime Tresda promises rainbows.

INT. MEETING HALL - NIGHT

THE MINDER CULT. 500 cultists, called THE RENEWED, are gathered. A hologram of a glowing Minder Vessel hovers center stage. On each side of the stage stands a Minder monument: a 10-foot pillar topped by a sphere. The podium is unattended.

In a middle row, two Reneweds engage in spirited affirmation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FALJER

Y'know, Rywell, the Minders cleanse this planet and all we hear in the "science" news is citizens planning to leave it!--

RYWELL

I know! The ingrates! Fleeing the paradise offered by the Minders!
(looks to the stage)
When is our Renewed Leader coming on?

FALJER

Won't be long! Citizens have the audacity to tell me they can't breathe! They don't even realize the air is not turning stale - it's being "renewed"!

RYWELL

Exactly! "The Minders Renew." What don't they understand? Faljer, you wouldn't believe the ignorance! Someone asked me: "How can The Renewed be sure the Minders who test us are gods and not the Serpent!"

FALJER

The disrespect! Only gods can test us!

RYWELL

Only gods "test" - the Serpent "tempts," with wines and sweetmeats and fruits of the flesh, to turn us to evil! Only gods bring disease and destruction to test us for salvation!

FALJER

How can it be any clearer? I mean, how do you make citizens understand?!

RYWELL

"The Minders Renew."

FALJER

"The Minders Renew"!-- Look, it's him!

P.O.V.

from behind Faljer and Rywell, as they rise with the crowd, cheering, obscuring their RENEWED LEADER as he takes the stage. Chanting goes up.

THE RENEWED

The Minders Renew! The Minders Renew!

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

AUDIO of Reneweds chanting cross-fades with the chanting of a single RENEWED DISCIPLE, who stands beneath a 10-foot high Minder monument.

P.O.V. FROM ROOFTOP

We see the Renewed disciple through the crosshairs of a red gunsight.

RENEWED DISCIPLE

The Minders Renew! The Minders Renew!

P.O.V. GUNSIGHT

on roof, as it moves down the street - to Serena. Data fills the gunsight screen (think: THE TERMINATOR vision).

Serena and LANIA gather atmosphere samples, with scientific instruments, both dressed in slick protective suits. They are on a quiet, poorly lit street that used to be a main road, as evidenced by the elevated hoverwalks (now in disrepair, missing segments), with little traffic and few pedestrians. Bedraggled HOMELESS wander in the distance.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

LANIA

(re. their instruments)

And what is this readout, Dr. Tryce?

SERENA

The saturation balance between pollutants and breathable air.

LANIA

Pollutants reading pretty high.

SERENA

Yes, it is. These samples are for the bacterial soup that should regenerate itself when exposed to the host planet's hydrogen.

A hovercar careens down the street above the traffic and crashes into a streetside shop about 200 feet away. Homeless onlookers do nothing but watch; pedestrians scurry away. As Serena and Lania watch from afar, THUGS exit the hovercar and shoot the VENDORS, begin stealing supplies.

P.O.V. GUNSIGHT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

on roof. Gunsight skews to the hovercar crash, focusing on the thugs. Data changes on the gunsight readout: wind velocity, distance, etc.

LANIA
(yells impulsively)
Make them stop!--

Serena grabs Lania, silencing her.

P.O.V. GUNSIGHT

on roof. It pans to Lania.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Serena motions Lania to follow her. They gather their equipment and move briskly through the city's blasted streets, passing average citizens and homeless, trying not to attract attention. A homeless man, FRAKE, approaches them.

FRAKE
Hello! Scientists! Can you help us?

HOMELESS-2
They're the ones who caused the plague!

FRAKE
Don't be stupid! They're trying to help.
Can't you see that?

Frake moves towards Serena and Lania. He leaves a young child, about 5yo, THELIZE, behind on the sidewalk.

HOMELESS-3
(antagonistic)
Then why are they running away?

FRAKE
(calmly, to Serena and Lania)
Hello, my name is Frake Dornth.

Lania acknowledges Frake and is hushed by Serena.

LANIA
Hello, Frake--

SERENA
(nudging in front of Lania)
What do you want, Citizen?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAKE

Can you tell us why the Minder Vessels moved? I noticed you were taking samples over there. Do you know what is happening to the air--?

HOMELESS-6 (O.C.)

(talking over Frake)

They're not "Minders"! They're aliens!
Not minding us - trying to wipe us out--

SERENA

We're sorry, we don't know!

HOMELESS-4

Yes, you do!

The Renewed Disciple has heard the commotion.

RENEWED DISCIPLE

(to Homeless-6)

Are you mad, citizen?! The Minders Renew!
These "scientists" say the world is ending! It is being renewed!

Serena tries to move forward with Lania, but they are blocked by gathering homeless, with more slowly approaching.

FRAKE

(to Homeless-4)

If they say they don't know, they don't!

(to Serena)

Can you help us? My child's hands are--
they were burned off when she touched the water! What is happening?!--

(breaks down and cries)

RENEWED DISCIPLE

(to Serena)

We don't need you here spreading your lies! Get out! Leave the city you abandoned!--

Serena looks back at Thelize on the sidewalk; hunched over, with both her hands almost nubs. Thelize looks directly at Serena and Lania beseechingly, and calls to her father sadly.

THELIZE

(weeping)

Pater! Pater!

Frake half-turns to Thelize to reassure her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRAKE

Don't worry, Thelize! These are the scientists going to help us, baby! The scientists are good.

RENEWED DISCIPLE

The scientists are mad!

FRAKE

(to Renewed)

Get out of here! Leave us alone!

RENEWED DISCIPLE

Do you want to be renewed, brother?--

SERENA

(to crowd)

Please - no one touch the water! And make sure the food you eat has not died from water contamination. The air and water are changing and we're doing all we can to change them back, Citizens!

FRAKE

What can I do to help her, or--or ease her pain at least?

SERENA

(softly to Frake)

I'm sorry. We're trying to solve the problem. We need to go, Frake...

RENEWED DISCIPLE

Solve the problem?! You run from the problem! Breathe the renewed air, you gutless filthworms!--

Frake weeps, while Serena and Lania gingerly push through the homeless to move off. Serena looks back at Thelize on the sidewalk, who innocently repeats her father's line as she watches Serena and Lania go.

THELIZE

You the scientist going to help us?

The crowd start hounding with questions, pushing ever more forcefully at Serena and Lania.

HOMELESS-2

Where are you going? Take us with you!

RENEWED DISCIPLE

Let them go! Get out, unrenewed minds!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HOMELESS-5

Can I help? Can any of us help you?

HOMELESS-3

It's safe there, right? That's why you're unaffected. That's why you look healthy! Take us!

HOMELESS-6

They live underground! They experiment on citizens down there!--

CRIES of "take us" go up, as crowd jostle Serena and Lania.

CROWD

Where can we get food that isn't diseased?! - Take us! - Help us please! - Will it take long to change back? - Can you make the aliens leave our planet alone? Stop lying to us! - What should we do? - Why did they move?--

Serena and Lania find they are surrounded completely by citizens, homeless and the Renewed disciple.

P.O.V. SERENA

She turns every direction, only to be blocked and jostled. Crowd noise intensifies, Lania whimpers.

LANIA

Serena... Serena...

Two POWERFUL GUNSHOTS are heard. Crowd goes silent. All heads look up as one. From the rooftops on either side of the street, BODYGUARD-1 and BODYGUARD-2 (two soldiers with heavy artillery and the P.O.V. gunsights) descend fast, hoverpads on their boots. They wear black helmets and uniforms - the same slick material as Serena and Lania.

SERENA

(aside to surprised Lania)
Our bodyguards.

Bodyguard-1 lands on the street near Serena and Lania, Bodyguard-2 lands atop a section of hoverwalk. Their big guns are raised skyward, non-threatening - but crowd gets the message. Bodyguard-1 motions for Serena and Lania to move off, which they do. Crowd remain silent, motionless.

Bodyguard hover down to take up the rear behind Serena and Lania, who half-run awkwardly with their equipment. Crowd pursues them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Frake runs to the front of the crowd, calling Serena.

FRAKE

Wait! I can help you! I'm an engineer!
I'll do anything to save her - just tell
me what to do!

Bodyguard-1 points his gun at Frake - a threat to come no further. Serena turns back, shouts at Bodyguard-1, but the crowd noise drowns her out.

SERENA

No! Not him! Stop! Don't shoot! Don't
shoot!

Serena runs toward Bodyguard-1, now aiming at Frake, who still moves forward.

GUNSHOT. Frake's head splatters, he falls, stopping crowd behind him in their tracks.

RENEWED DISCIPLE

Murderers! Filthworm scientist murderers!

The crowd screams at the scientists, but remain immobile.

Serena is shocked, wide-eyed. She screams, as Bodyguard-1 carries her bodily forward.

SERENA (CONT'D)

You animal! These are citizens! They're
not our enemy! Stop this madness!

Bodyguard-2 motions for Lania, dazed and speechless, to move.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Serena, Lania and the two Bodyguards turn down an alley into pitch black. Deep in the alley, they enter a doorway, a checkpoint where two Council Guards stop them for I.D.

Into an elevator that takes them down, down, to the Terraforming Committee's underground bunker.

We see exterior of elevator doors opening. Inside, Serena, shoulders hunched, eyes tear-stained; Lania dazed, shell-shocked. They exit elevators with Bodyguards.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bodyguards escort Serena and Lania through office. Holo-screens aglow everywhere, creating ad-hoc cubicles. SCIENTISTS scurry.

Professor Brek and Kavel speak to a group of scientists in front of a hologram of a terraforming probe. Serena, with Lania in tow, moves through the maze to them.

PROFESSOR BREK

After we launch these probes later this year, our Evacuation Ships will follow on their heels - just ten years later. And we'll actually be ordering the probes to disperse their terraforming agents from our Evac Ships.

KAVEL

Our hope is that the host planet would be so far along terraforming that by the time our Evacs arrive - in just over 150 years - it will only take the ten years nudging to pass tipping point.

Serena interrupts the meeting, dumping the equipment on a table. Professor Brek does not notice her dishevelment.

SERENA

Professor Brek, the atmosphere samples.

PROFESSOR BREK

Thank you, Dr. Tryce. Dr. Kavel, could you distribute these to the labs?

(turns back to scientists)

As the data indicates, the elements in these samples must be altered slightly to react with Rejuvena's atmosphere...

Kavel grabs the equipment and exits with Serena, leaving Lania sitting blankly.

KAVEL

Serena, you okay? D'you need the infirmary? What happened out there?

SERENA

I'm okay now - but
(looks back at Lania)
--she might need a medic.

As Kavel walks, he calls a MEDIC on his porto-holo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAVEL

Medic to Terraforming Offices, Underfloor
12, Professor Brek's office!

MEDIC

(on porto-holo)
On our way, Doctor.

SERENA

(as they walk)
Those bodyguards are monsters, Rel. They
shot innocent citizens.

KAVEL

For your protection, Serena. I've seen
the cities; the anger and hostility--

SERENA

Rel, we're doing this to protect them!
Not kill the ones that the plague doesn't
kill! The fact that our bodyguards even
had to intervene this time--

KAVEL

(stops her tangent)
Serena!

Serena stops her momentum and her movement. Kavel pulls her
into a hug. Serena changes gears.

SERENA

I worry about the future, Rel.

KAVEL

We're doing all this so we'll have a
future, Serena; you know that--

SERENA

What world will our birthlings know?

KAVEL

(surprised, breaks the hug)
Our birthlings--? What do you mean?
(implying she is pregnant)
You mean?--

SERENA

(amused, but sad)
No-- I mean which world will they be born
on? This one - or the next?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAVEL

(relieved)

Oh... uh... depending on when we leave, I guess... or on whether you... you mean you want to? Or, uh...

SERENA

No, dearheart! Don't worry - I wouldn't put our project in jeopardy right now. I just want my birthlings to know this world - where we lived, how we lived, what we loved.

KAVEL

They can always know this world, Serena.

SERENA

From the archives--

KAVEL

(points to an imaginary space)

Not the archives. Look up in the night sky. From Rejuvena. Just look to the primary star. Our world will still be orbiting in its glow.

Serena smiles into Kavel's eyes.

SERENA

Let's get these samples to the lab.

KAVEL

(good-natured teasing)

Anything to stop you worrying about the future.

Serena slaps Kavel playfully as they move off.

SERENA

(as they walk)

It's worse since the last time we surfaced.

KAVEL

Monitors say the air is deteriorating rapidly. That's probably the last good sample you'll get.

SERENA

I feel like I lied to them. We're not finding a solution to the problem, Rel! We're running from it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KAVEL

The only way to fix the problem is to run. Serena, I hate to say it... but the Minders have beaten us - and they might not even know or care!

Kavel's porto-holo alerts him with beeps. He looks at it tiredly, then snaps alert.

AIDE-1

(on porto-holo)

Professor Brek and Dr. Kavel, please report to Conference Room urgently. Meeting with Prime Tresda.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Professor Brek and Kavel enter Briefing Room. Prime Tresda is on a holo-screen, with General Markep and Second Nerim on other holo-screens around the room. Attending in person are Council members Gardeq, Isha, Jenda, Rand.

PRIME TRESDA

Professor Brek, Dr. Kavel, I know I'm calling you away from urgent duties, but this new information is, uh - well, take a look...

Kavel and Professor Brek exchange an anxious look.

Video starts playing on a holo-screen, blurry images of a closeup of one small section of a Minder Vessel. It is military surveillance footage, focusing on small windows miles high on one side of a Vessel.

PRIME TRESDA (CONT'D)

This footage was retrieved two days ago from our surveillance team on ETC 3855, over Thanafarm.

Dark, blurry figures move behind the windows. A collective gasp from the viewers.

COUNCILMAN JENDA

There are beings inside the Minder Vessels!

COUNCILMAN RAND

Are they living beings - or shadows of machines?!

PROFESSOR BREK

By the primary and secondary stars!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

This proves intelligence behind the technology! They can be reasoned with!

Blurry figures on the screen continue moving and casting indistinct shadows over the windows.

COUNCILMAN JENDA

No! They're living beings! Look!

Kavel speaks while transfixed to the video.

KAVEL

How long have you been surveilling, General Markep?

GENERAL MARKEP

Doctor Kavel, the military were surveilling the Minders for over a thousand years. Nothing. Ultrabytes of blank footage.

PRIME TRESDA

(to Kavel)

Resources were naturally redirected to more pressing matters, Doctor. Except for the occasional recon flyby, we've ignored the Minders for the past 200 years.

GENERAL MARKEP

As they have ignored us.

Onscreen, a shadowy figure stops moving, framed behind the window. Everyone leans forward in anticipation.

PRIME TRESDA

This video is classified, Council.

SECOND NERIM

(ordering the video)

Freeze.

The video freezes on the blurry figure framed by the window.

SECOND NERIM (CONT'D)

(ordering video)

Enhance... brighten... enhance... sharpen...

Onscreen, we see pixels sharpening, then sharpening again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A collective gasp as the video freeze frame shows a human male, about thirty years old, peering out the window to the ground below.

KAVEL

By the primary star - the Minders look like us!

CUT TO BLACK.

END ACT II

ACT III

TEXT:

I made a pilgrimage to save this human's race. Never comprehending the race had long gone by. "I Melt With You," Modern English.

FADE IN:

TEXT:

Earth Time: 575,411 A.D. Ten years later...

COMPUTER MONITOR SHOWING SCIENTIFIC DATA

Nitrogen level: 73% (arrow indicator shows level is rising).
Oxygen level: 19% (arrow shows level is rising). Argon level: 0.45% (level rising). Carbon dioxide 5% (level falling).

TEXT ON READOUT: Lichen report: Spores blossoming over host planet, spread by prevailing winds. Successful hybridization with indigenous life, enabling photosynthesis and native oxygen production.

CLOSEUP

of human eye, with data hologram over it.

DESAI (O.C.)

Y'ever get to thinking, soldier, how we've come four light years to terraform another planet - instead of saving our own?

CLOSEUP

of finger pushing buttons.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLER (O.C.)
 Earth has been dead for 10,000 years,
 Skipper; bit late to feel remorse.

DESAI (O.C.)
 Not dead exactly, Miller. Evolved.

Angles on control room, without showing characters; banks of technical equipment, futuristic designs. AUDIO continues over room visuals.

MILLER (O.C.)
 How say, Captain?

DESAI (O.C.)
 Evolution is adaptation, son. Don't doubt that life on Earth has adapted to the noxious greenhouse environment that overtook the planet half a millennia ago.

MILLER (O.C.)
 Our ultra-great-great-grandkids ruling the wasteland, Captain?

CLOSEUP: "MILLER" name tag on a uniformed chest.

DESAI (O.C.)
 Well, they're not exactly "homo sapiens" any more, kid - a new, mutated species.

CLOSEUP: "DESAI" name tag on a uniformed chest.

DESAI (CONT'D) (O.C.)
 Remember, the atmosphere back on Earth is more like the atmosphere here: lungs, metabolisms, food - either life mutates or gets in line for extinction.

AUDIO: Desai and Miller speaking, while we see NATURE SCENE visuals, denoting the "evolution" Desai speaks of.

NATURE SCENE: tiny green spores float on the wind, through a field of purple grass, up the nostrils of a grazing horse-like creature. It snorts, hacks coughs, then keels over dead.

MILLER (O.C.)
 But there's been no communication with Earth in over 10,000 years.

NATURE SCENE: Transparent water flows down a stream, overpowering milky-colored water; through the transparent water, we see fish dying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DESAI (O.C.)

Intergalactic communication is a mark of technology, not an indication of Life. Maybe technology that wasn't imperative to survival was abandoned. Technology dies if society stops maintaining it--

NATURE SCENE: A small bird in a tree is suddenly snapped up by a giant mosquito.

MILLER (O.C.)

Maybe it wasn't maintained 'cause no one was around to maintain it. Why d'you think there's anyone still out there?

NATURE SCENE: From a cloudy stream, a salamander-creature crawls onto land, breathing laboriously through gills.

DESAI (O.C.)

Not any "one" - any "thing." Because Life will find a way. It might not look or think or act like our notion of life, but it if eats and shits, it's alive, kid!

MILLER

(laughs)

Earth atmosphere just tipped over in the end?

DESAI

Now it resembles the noxious environment we've been eliminating from this atmosphere for the last 450K.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

We see DESAI (56 year old, male, unshaven) for the first time. He sits at a console in a very lived-in Control Room, reading a hologram before him; cups of liquid and clothes strewn about, tools, computer parts, disks, etc.

MILLER sits a few feet away (22 year old male, military cut). Both men are dressed casually in military uniforms.

MILLER

Why didn't they all leave? Not enough room in these ships?

Desai works with a hologram before him as he speaks.

DESAI

Someone will always stay behind, kid. Even if it means their death...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESAI (CONT'D)

Believe me, there are people still alive
back there - but I doubt we'd still call
'em people...

INT/EXT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - DAY

EVAC SHIP UNDER CONSTRUCTION, nearing completion. Steel framework, catwalks, pipes and looms of cables surround the gigantic Evacuation Spaceship. Scientists, looking like insects beside the ship's massive hull, use catwalks, weld, follow holo-blueprints.

The lower part of the hangar is encapsulated in a transparent perspex shield. The upper ship is open to the atmosphere, worked on by scientists in breathmasks.

Angle on Kavel on a catwalk, ten years older, watching a news piece on his porto-holo.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Littering the ground in the shadow of
this Minder Vessel in Kalfania are
hundreds of bodies--

KAVEL'S PORTO-HOLO

shows shaky news footage of dead citizens on an expanse of plain, a Minder Vessel looming overhead.

REPORTER (CONT'D) (O.S.)

--yet another mass suicide by the cult
known as The Renewed, who voluntarily
congregate under the looming ships until
they asphyxiate...

Kavel "humphs" at the news piece in derision. He turns toward the factory floor below and sees two Council Guards standing close together, backs to him, facing out the perspex shield. They are obscuring something on the ground in front of them. Kavel calls down.

KAVEL

Guards! To your posts!...

No reaction. Kavel transmits through his porto-holo.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

Guards at shield airlock, this is Doctor
Kavel. Please report back to your posts.

No reaction. Something is moving on the ground at their feet. Kavel descends catwalks fast, calling the guards.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAVEL (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Hey! Hey! What's going on here?

P.O.V. THROUGH THE LEGS OF GUARDS

someone prostrate on the ground, with their shirt off. He hears gibberish from the figure on the ground.

KAVEL

Guards! Hey! The shield entrance is open--

Kavel moves to grab a guard by the shoulder from behind, but stops short when he sees Councilman Thentor kneeling and rising, adjusting his robe-suit.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

(shocked surprise)

Uh, Councilman Thentor - uh, are you, uh - are you okay?--

(to guards)

Help him!

Councilman Thentor motions he needs no help, and greets Kavel as if nothing is out of the ordinary.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Doctor Kavel. How nice to see you.

KAVEL

Uh, I saw something from the catwalk so

I, uh--

(to guards)

Your posts.

Councilman Thentor motions to the guards he is okay, and they move off. Kavel tries to atone for his gruffness.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

(to guards)

Uh, serve well.

The guards give Kavel a contemptuous look, then exit.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

(to Thentor)

What was that?

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Serve well is a military salutation, Doctor. They don't take kindly to citizens co-opting it for any reason.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAVEL

Well, uh, I've just heard it a lot around here lately...

(uncomfortable, changes gears)

Uh, decided to buy a ticket at last, Councilman Thentor?

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

(goodnatureedly)

Oh, no, Doctor! I think our paths are destined to be separated long after world's end - if the world ends. Just the annual inspection to ensure those Council funds we disbursed for your frivolous hijinks are being put to use, if not for any real purpose, then at least creating jobs.

KAVEL

Well, every Evacuation Ship has created an industry around itself - every disaster is a windfall for somebody, right Councilman?

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

(indignant)

Hmmph!

KAVEL

(truly concerned)

How can we convince you we're legitimate, Councilman? I'd hate to be proven right at the last moment, when there is nothing you can do.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Ah, but there is nothing I need to do to continue my existence on this--

(stamps the ground)

--solid rock. And - as you pointed out - there's the profit.

KAVEL

The rock isn't in any danger, Councilman, and the profit won't matter much longer, but-- Ready for the tour? Where are the others?

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - MOMENTS LATER

Kavel leads Councilman Thentor, Gardeq, Rand and Isha, General Markep, and a group of OFFICIALS through the hangar. As they walk, the Officials eye machinery, inspect holo-charts, speak to scientists on the factory floor. Kavel confers with the Councilmen.

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

We've heard there is a launch date.

KAVEL

In 250 days.

COUNCILMAN RAND

So soon? With only 87 of these Evac ships, Dr. Kavel?

KAVEL

(taking it personally)

Everything is overextended, Councilman - our personnel, construction space, resources; the logistics have been traumatic. And each Evac only holds 5,000 citizens. Our civilization will have to regenerate from less than half a million. If we all make it to Rejuvena.

An uncomfortable silence, as Kavel appears to choke up. Kavel composes himself and addresses General Markep.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

Any news on our communication attempts with the Minders, sir?

GENERAL MARKEP

I... I can't answer that, Doctor...You know their size makes it hard for us to calibrate our frequencies--

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

(to Kavel)

What makes you think we can speak with them?

KAVEL

They look like us - mouths, ears - they must communicate in a similar manner.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

We are made in their image. But gods rarely deign to speak with their--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COUNCILMAN RAND
'Gods,' Thentor?

An comfortable silence. General Markep quietly finishes.

GENERAL MARKEP
...and maybe... they're just ignoring us.

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ
(changing the subject)
How do you propose to ensure security
closer to the launch date, Doctor?

Kavel looks at two security Guards with Council logos on their chests, at attention near a gate, beyond which can be seen the giant spaceship under construction.

KAVEL
(motions to guards)
With the military stretched across the planet curbing riots and wars, I'm relying on the Council for security.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR
(happily)
I can guarantee that, Dr. Kavel!

Kavel looks out beyond the perspex shield at the semi-rebuilt city beyond. For miles, he sees citizens going about their daily business, most wearing small breathmasks. Amongst the normalcy, bedraggled citizens are camping, milling aimlessly, or standing at the shield, looking in.

A Minder Vessel hovers on the horizon.

Outside the shield, a 50-foot high Minder monument has been erected. A few Renewed disciples cluster around its base.

As Kavel looks out past the shield, behind his back, Councilman Thentor gives the two Council Guards a sinister, meaningful look and a nod, which they return with slight nods. No one notices this exchange.

KAVEL
(introspective, veiled alarm)
Now that the Evac Ship is ready, the number of citizens outside the shield grows every day...

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA
Is that a concern, Doctor?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAVEL

I just wonder how far some of them are willing to go for a cabin on the Evac.

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

Have you decided how they will be chosen, Doctor?

KAVEL

I can't make that decision, Councilman. After our project personnel are onboard, anyone who can walk through that airlock is welcome onboard.

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

Won't that be inviting chaos, Doctor?

A band of RIOTERS outside the shield hurl derision at the passing Inspection Party. Their shouts are muffled by the shield. Some throw rocks at the shield ineffectually.

RIOTERS

Stinking bureaucrats! - Help us, you heartless animals! - Paper pushers, don't know what's happening in the outside world! - Go back to your underground caves, you liars!...

The Council try to ignore the rioters.

KAVEL

Every day, the ruthlessness of this evacuation eats at me...

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA

We are the ones who make society what it is, Dr. Kavel. If we, who have the power to survive this ordeal, do not use that power, of what use is it?

COUNCILMAN RAND

Amongst the lower animals, the powerful survive at the expense of the weak.

Councilman Thentor looks outside the shield, focusing on the Renewed monument as he speaks.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Sacrifice is a way of life, Doctor. It's knowing which side of the sacrifice you're on.

The Inspection Party slowly leaves the rioters behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RIOTERS

Let us in, damn you! - By the secondary star, they're going to let us die! - Let us on that ship! - Useless paper-pushers! - At least let us into the shield, we can't breathe!--

KAVEL

(looks out the shield)

I don't know whether I could use power given to me to sacrifice so many others.

Serena joins the Inspection Party. She is pregnant.

SERENA

(smiling)

Then sacrifice for the sake of your son!

KAVEL

Serena! Shouldn't you be resting, dearheart?

Kavel and Serena kiss each other's shoulders and touch backs-of-palms. Serena nods in greeting to the Councilmen.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

(introduces Serena)

You all know Dr. Tryce.

SERENA

I'm only rested when I know your mind is working, not your conscience.

Commotion at the shield airlock as three shiny black hovering limousines enter the hangar compound. The heavy, armored limos hover across the yard to Kavel's inspection party and pause in the air, a foot from the ground. Four security personnel exit the middle limo, followed by a smiling Prime Tresda, then Second Nerim.

PRIME TRESDA

Greetings, Council, Dr. Kavel!

COUNCILMAN GARDEQ

Prime Tresda, an honor!

REPORTERS dash from the other two limos, portable media devices running, video and pictures. This is a photo op.

Prime Tresda wades into the Inspection Party, touching backs of hands as he speaks for the cameras.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PRIME TRESDA

A ten-year landmark for Terraforming.
Through the adversity of a plague, an
economic meltdown; through Minder
intrusion, our team has pulled through!
Well done, all!

KAVEL

(speechless)

Uh, thank you... uh, Prime Tresda, uh...

The rioters outside the shield scream and taunt Prime Tresda,
who ignores them to appear unruffled for the press.

PRIME TRESDA

(touching Kavel's back-of-hand)

Dr. Kavel. An auspicious occasion.
Admiring your monumental achievement. And
your lovely season-partner, Dr. Tryce.

SERENA

(touches Prime's back-of-hand)

Honored by your visit, Prime.

RIOTERS

Crawled up from your underground hole at
Prime House, you filthworm?! - How dare
you show your face in the primary star's
glow?! - It's your fault the Minders hate
us! - What are you doing to help us!--

PRIME TRESDA

(indicating Serena's pregnancy)

I trust you are being treated well by
these facilities, Doctor.

SERENA

Couldn't ask for better care, sir.

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA

When are you due, dearling?

SERENA

Actually, after liftoff! It's going to be
a birth amongst the cosmos.

(cradles her tummy)

His descendants will be the pioneers of
Rejuvena.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

(dark portent)

His descendants will have to live with
what you have done.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Everyone gives Councilman Thentor a horrified, unbelieving look. Prime Tresda looks uncomfortable for the press.

COUNCILMAN RAND

(annoyed)

And what have we done? Saved our species, Thentor!

Councilman Thentor walks away contemptuously, a contingent of officials following him, as Councilman Rand chides his retreating back.

COUNCILMAN RAND (CONT'D)

Your political posturing nearly buried this project; we don't need your questionable ethics here.

(points to the Evac Ship)

By the secondary star, this is the future of our world, Thentor! We keep this world alive by living!--

At a nod from Prime Tresda, Second Nerim herds the press away to a distance.

PRIME TRESDA

(diplomatically, calming Rand)

All ideologies are represented in our Council, Councilman Rand; Thentor has his reasons for discontentment...

KAVEL

He's right, though. So much death so that we can live - not just our own citizens, but life on the host planet--

Serena takes Kavel's face in her hands, looks into his eyes.

SERENA

Dearheart! Do not doubt! I know you will make the right decision!

Kavel breaks from Serena's hands, turns to Prime Tresda decisively.

KAVEL

Sir. Apologies for speaking my mind, but you have the world's resources at your disposal. You can authorize more resources to make more ships, to hold more citizens, to carry more fuel - Can we not save more? Can we not save all?--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

As Prime Tresda listens to Kavel, he turns to look out the shield introspectively, at the enraged and pathetic hordes. He interrupts Kavel.

PRIME TRESDA

(looking out the shield)

An unfortunate conundrum, Doctor. Up to this point, we have passed the blame to the Nature Mater as she performs her natural selections. But now she has handed her curse to us - the power over life and death. The desire for life overrides morals and ethics and citizen law. Only some will live. Only some can live. If we try to save all, all will die.

INT. MEETING HALL - NIGHT

The Renewed rowdily await their Leader, chanting and cheering. Faljer is in the crowd near a Renewed, Theway.

THE RENEWED

The Minders Renew! The Minders Renew!

THEWAY

Are we going tonight, brother Faljer?

FALJER

Yes, brother! Tonight - we breathe the essence of The Minders! The New Air!

THEWAY

Where is our leader? Is he not going to lead us triumphantly into a Minder Vessel?

FALJER

You are new, brother.

Theway nods.

FALJER (CONT'D)

Our leader is but an instrument of the Minders; one who seeks out those worthy of Renewal. His curse is that he cannot be renewed himself.

THEWAY

(sincere)

I am sorry for him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FALJER

We all pray for him to join us soon.

Ronth enters the meeting hall at the back of the room. He receives a pamphlet and beatific smile from female GREETER, and moves hesitantly amongst cheering Reneweds.

Angle on Faljer and Theway.

FALJER

Have you purified your soul by
surrendering your worldly distractions to
the Holy Order of the Minders?

Theway looks at Faljer in confusion. Faljer gestures to a hologram computer terminal near the foot of the stage. An old citizen is using it, with a queue behind him.

FALJER (CONT'D)

No matter. There is one last opportunity
to offer up your physical ties to this
life - or you will be passed over. That's
why I was not chosen to breath New Air
until tonight--

THEWAY

Brother Faljer!?

FALJER

My whole life, I believed we the citizens
could solve anything; that we didn't need
outside help - I was wrong. I'm a
neuropsychologist, brother - I assessed
the Minders as I would any psychological
issue - with common sense - and I came to
the conclusion they are, in fact,
benefactors. We need their help to save
our planet; they showed us our weakness
and also showed us their strength.

THEWAY

Please help me, brother Faljer. What do I
do? Show me the way.

The sick, the infirm, the lame, people in hover-wheelchairs,
all approach the computer (as well as physically healthy
citizens). Faljer and Theway stand in line.

Ronth watches these proceedings from the back of the room,
and speaks to RENEWED-2, who is manically swaying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RONTH

Your friends are preparing for a journey.
Where do all of you go tonight?

RENEWED-2

We go to meet God, brother.

Renewed-2 dashes toward the computer terminal.

With a dissatisfied look, Ronth turns to exit, and is stopped physically by Greeter.

GREETER

(fake smile)

Leaving so soon, brother?

RONTH

They told me there is a way to reclaim my
job, my life. This is not the way! I
thought there would be explanations,
solutions...

As Ronth speaks, Reneweds gather around him ominously.

RONTH (CONT'D)

...but you've blinded these citizens with
promises turned backwards. How can you
claim the air is not toxic? How do
citizens follow such obvious lies?

Greeter steps to Ronth with her fake smile intact, grabs him by the shirt and throws him out the entrance. Other Reneweds gather and start kicking him on the ground. Ronth does not retaliate or plead.

A Renewed SECURITY GUARD wades in, breaks up the scuffle.

SECURITY RENEWED

Hey! Hey! What're you doing? Get back!
Get off the citizen! Move away!

Ronth rises slowly. He moves to thank the Security Renewed, who stops him from getting near.

RONTH

My thanks to you--

SECURITY RENEWED

You better get out of here, citizen!

Ronth flips open his phone as he exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RONTH
 (into phone)
 Dearheart, I'm coming home.

INT. MEETING HALL - SAME TIME

A soothing voice over the P.A. assures The Renewed.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR (V.O.)
 (unrecognizable voice)
 The shelter you need, They will provide;
 the love you seek, They will give; the
 pain you bear, They will taketh away. The
 Minders Renew...

Theway reaches the computer with Faljer, who instructs him at the console. A readout shows Theway's finances being transferred to the Minder Holy Order account.

FALJER
 Now... you are pure.

The Renewed start chanting and cheering louder at the imminent appearance of their leader.

RENEWED-3
 Our leader is here!

RENEWED-4
 The Minders Renew! Be renewed, leader!

Faljer and Theway look toward the stage, where many spotlights focus.

Onto the stage steps - Councilman Thentor - to raucous applause.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Desai and Miller at their consoles.

MILLER
 I don't really need to know any of that ancient history about tipping points and the wars of 100K. I just wanna finish my watch, go back to my cabin, have a froth and a slunk with my she-mate, and collect my credits.

DESAI
 You kids today! Those who don't know their ancient history are doomed to repeat it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miller's and Desai's conversation continues O.S., while visuals show us action inside the construction hangar.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - SAME TIME

While welding activity continues in another corner of the hangar, under floodlights, two Council Guards (who nodded at Thentor) sneak around in another corner, near one of the massive Boot Locks on one of the spaceship's ten landing legs. The lock unit is as large as a small building.

MILLER (O.S)

Don't see how we can repeat the mistakes of a stone age.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

The Council Guards duck down a corridor that leads to a room full of consoles.

DESAI (O.S.)

There was a period known as The First Five Thousand Years, son; we can't forget our heritage - that's how Earth became what it is.

MILLER (O.S)

You mean 'what it was'.

DESAI (O.S.)

Huh, yeah! What it was. Back in that First Five Thousand, a guy named Sagan started talking terraforming...

MILLER (O.S)

So he was responsible for this?

DESAI (O.S.)

Not exactly - it wasn't until two thousand years after Sagan that they started building terraforming craft.

MILLER (O.S)

Why so long?

DESAI (O.S.)

Sometimes intelligence gets in the way of survival. Read your digital history.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

The Council Guards deftly manipulate the console, bringing up a hologram display.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLER (O.S.)

Didn't all the libraries and online data get fried in the wars of 100K? After the Greenhouse came down?

DESAI (O.S.)

It was reconstituted digitally and stored off-planet at one of the LaGrange points. Safest place to keep information - away from people.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

A hologram of the Evac Ship spins in a slow 360-degree visual, also showing the Boot Locks on its ten legs.

MILLER (O.S.)

Always astonishes me when I hear about ignorant people destroying the work of others.

DESAI (O.S.)

That's just how we're built, kid. Ignorant, scared and selfish. We're not noble, and we'd do anything to stay alive - at any cost!

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

The Council Guard types commands. On the Evac Ship hologram, one of the Boot Locks registers "malfunction."

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Desai and Miller onscreen as a comm-link voice cuts in on their headsets.

COMM VOICE

Sir, more incoming signals from host planet.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - DAY

THE EVACUATION: Thousands of citizens jostle and squeeze through the bottleneck of the shield airlock gateway, overseen by scores of armed Council Guards.

The shield airlock is made up of two entrances; inside the first entrance, about 100 people gather in the airlock; inside the next, they enter the hangar proper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Both entrances have a single giant perspex door (like barn doors, except one-foot thick and transparent) that slides slowly open and closed at intervals, with an ALARM.

Serena and Professor Brek, high on a catwalk, look down on the masses sadly. Kavel is on the factory floor, busy with a porto-holo.

SERENA

Ten days to launch. We're already at capacity. And still they come.

PROFESSOR BREK

(sadly)

Kavel can't bear to leave anyone. But we have to - or the ship's resources... I fear that those we turn away will live longer in our consciences than on this dying world.

Serena gives Professor Brek an empathetic look. She turns to look at the milling crowd, being directed by scientists and aides to two yawning entrance ramps into the underside of the ship. The ramps are 50 feet wide and a quarter-mile long, inclined at a 20-degree angle.

Serena spots a frail girl, about 14, carrying a makeshift bundle awkwardly, entering the shield, jostled in the crowd, dismayed at the commotion. The young girl drops her bundle and can't seem to pick it up, as crowd ignore her and stream around her, almost trampling her. Serena sees the girl's missing hands - it is Thelize, ten years older.

Serena rushes down the stairs. Professor Brek looks on, surprised.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR FLOOR - CONTINUOUS.

Serena shoves into the crowd and scoops out Thelize, who continues reaching for her bundle on the floor. Serena hugs Thelize hard, who is wary.

THELIZE

Who-- Who are you?

SERENA

(weeping, laughing)

I'm the scientist going to help you, dearling!

As Thelize registers recognition, Serena reaches into the crowd and retrieves her bundle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Serena, wiping away tears, leads Thelize to Kavel, interrupts him talking on his porto-holo.

KAVEL

--the ducts on corridor 342. No, they circulate only on level 30, to isolate the sick bay from the rest of the ship--
Serena!

(into porto-holo)

Hold please, Doctor.

(to Serena)

Who's this?

SERENA

She's sharing our cabin.

Kavel looks sternly at the crippled Thelize, looks up sternly at Serena. Despite his look, he answers immediately.

KAVEL

Of course.

Serena leads Thelize towards a ramp, as Kavel goes back to his logistics, while watching their retreat.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

--no, their upper surfaces need re-sealing...

FADE TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Desai and Miller review a transmission on their holo-screens.

MILLER

What are these signals, Captain?

DESAI

(looking them over)

Uhhh... y'know, the translation engines have been trying to decipher these signals for over a thousand years; trying to separate them from the Cosmic Background Radiation...

MILLER

Are there intelligences trying to communicate with us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESAI

Can't tell. S'far as we know, there's nothing "intelligent" down there; a lot of fauna and flora, though--

MILLER

All microscopic.

DESAI

That's right. We're here because this planet supports life - but so far it's all microbial.

MILLER

Can we see any of it?

DESAI

Sure - if we goofed around reconfiguring and refocusing the electron microscopes. But the native life isn't a priority - who has time to look at ant life while human lives are waiting for a home?

INT. HOVERBUS - DAY

AUDIO: Desai's V.O. continues as we see:

Angle on the underside of a hoverbus ROARING away from us, towards the Minder Vessel on the horizon near Kavel's Construction Hangar.

50 Reneweds fill the hoverbus, most of them looking unsure, some leading cheers and singalongs with their shirts off.

RENEWED-3

Yeeaaaah! Come on: "The renewed minder is the key / To the God in me! / The renewed minder is the key / To the God in me!..."

We hear Desai and Miller O.S. during hoverbus scene.

MILLER (O.S.)

But if there's something intelligent enough to send signals--

DESAI (O.S.)

Look, we can't tell what the signals are yet, so don't go ascribing intelligence to them--

MILLER (O.S.)

But shouldn't we display our intelligence by looking into--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESAI (O.S.)
 What'd I tell ya, kid? Don't let
 intelligence get in the way of survival.

RENEWED-4
 (to the Minder Vessel)
 We're coming! The Minders Renew!

Some Reneweds cower and whimper, to the annoyance of the cheerleaders. Renewed-3 smacks a cowering Renewed.

RENEWED-3
 What are you doing?! Get up! Praise our
 God in song!
 (to the screaming Reneweds)
 Shut up! You cowards!

INT. HOVERBUS - CONTINUOUS

As the hoverbus nears the underbelly of the Minder, the driver (wearing his breathmask), flips a switch which snaps open all the windows; he ejects and chutes down, and runs in the other direction, as the hoverbus careens towards the Minder Vessel, Reneweds screaming and singing.

The hoverbus loses altitude; it skips, bumps, and grinds to a stop, throwing up dust. No explosions. All is still.

Angle on interior of hoverbus. All occupants are dead, through simple asphyxiation.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

MILLER
 (sighs)
 So why did we come all this way, Skipper?
 Couldn't we terraform Earth - our species
 was there already - instead of traveling
 four light years to the Alpha Centauri
 system to resurrect this dying rock?

DESAI
 Politics, kid. Politics.

MILLER
 But didn't this Centauri rock have the
 same atmospheric components that were on
 the rise during that Greenhouse that
 tipped Earth?

DESAI
 It did--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLER

So why come here to kill the indigenous life-forms in their own atmosphere - by changing it to ours?

DESAI

Roundabout way of getting elected, Miller. So here we are: the children of Sagan. Destroying life to continue it.

MILLER

Isn't that how Life works, though, Cap'n? What do we eat? Other life. Ergo, destruction for continuance. Like you said - we gotta live, one way or another.

DESAI

(sighs)

What would Sagan think of us now?

MILLER

Guess he'd condemn the morals and think the science was some kind of magic.

DESAI

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

MILLER

Hah! That's good. And true. Sagan?

DESAI

No. Can't remember who said that. Another ancient with the mind of a modern--

A BEEPING alerts them to incoming data. Desai flips a switch and his hologram fills with data, which he reads silently.

We see Desai's eye behind atmospheric readings, the same visual we've seen before, except now we know who and what it belongs to.

DESAI (CONT'D)

Kid... It's time. Suit up.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - DAY

Just inside the shield airlock, from the crush of crowd, a shout goes up.

CROWD-5

The Minders! They're moving!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crowd starts screaming.

CROWD-2

No! No! Look! They're going away! They're leaving here!

Crowd look towards the Minder Vessel on the horizon and realize it is moving away from them. A shockwave follows the Minder Vessel on the ground, clouds of dust are raised, but the Vessel is definitely sinking slowly past the horizon.

Cheers of joy from the crowd. Suddenly - a scream.

Heads turn to the opposite horizon, where the unmistakable, horizon-girdling swell of another Minder Vessel is rising.

Crowd goes insane, rioting to get inside the shield airlock, beaten back by council guards. Citizens stampede up ramp into the Evac Ship, tripping, trampling others in blind terror.

Kavel runs toward the shield airlock, pushing past stampeding refugees, punching his porto-holo on the way. COMMANDER PLAVET appears onscreen.

KAVEL

Commander, initiate launch now!

COMMANDER PLAVET

Sir, we're outside our launch window; Rejuvena won't be in position to--

KAVEL

Commander, we have 150 years for course corrections!

COMMANDER PLAVET

Sir, we haven't completed our safety protocol checks or launch programming!--

KAVEL

Now, Commander!--

COMMANDER PLAVET

Yes, sir!

Commander Plavet disappears from Kavel's porto-holo, as Kavel punches up an intercom link. We hear him on speakers throughout the construction hangar.

KAVEL

Citizens! Please! The Evac capacity is dangerously overloaded.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAVEL (CONT'D)

We must close the airlock - or everyone will die. Council Guard, initiate seal!

As the giant perspex airlock door starts closing slowly, is it accompanied by red warning lights spinning and WARNING KLAXONS throughout the hangar.

Kavel looks sadly at the pleading and infuriated hordes outside the shield. He walks away.

We see Ronth and Shayra outside airlock, Shayra pulling on Baby Girl, now 10, and clutching at Markel (now 16), who helps his brother, Matchel (now 17) on makeshift braces and a custom crutch. Ronth pushes through the crowd for them.

Angle on Shield Airlock. A black hover-limousine drives up, Councilman Thentor exiting, his two council guards (the saboteurs) roughly shoving citizens aside, allowing him to stride imperiously into the airlock.

The massive perspex door continues its slow close, as Ronth is shoved roughly by Councilman Thentor's council guards, separating Ronth from Shayra and his children.

The perspex door closes with a resounding SLAM. ALARM stops. Ronth is inside; Shayra and the children are outside!

HANGAR GUARDS push everyone towards the second inner door, as Ronth tries to alert them to his family.

RONTH

No no no! Wait, wait! My family! My family! Don't leave them! Open the door! There they are--

Ronth pushes back against the flow of the crowd. The inner door opens with an ALARM and the crowd surges through towards the Evac Ship ramps. Ronth is the only one struggling in the opposite direction towards the airlock door. He meets the Hangar Guards head on.

RONTH (CONT'D)

(pointing wildly)

My wife! My babies! They're right there! Just open it--

Outside the airlock, crushed against the perspex, Shayra hugs Baby Girl close, struggling to breathe, while Matchel and Markel shout desperately. Citizens crush in on them, snapping Matchel's leg braces. The Hangar Guards look back unsympathetically, motion Ronth toward the Evac Ship.

GUARD-1

That way, sir!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RONTH

Please! Open it just a little; just let her in, please!

GUARD-2

(as if to a child)

The door is sealed! Understand? Hey! We're evacuating!

Shayra screams, as she realizes Baby Girl is dead in her arms with her eyes open. Ronth looks back and screams in anguish. The Guards see this tableau, leave Ronth and flee. Matchel and Markel struggle to breathe as they cry.

Ronth stumbles toward the perspex, slams into it, then slumps to the ground, with Shayra outside, wailing and slumping.

RONTH

(inconsolably)

Aaaaaaagh! My baby! My baby!--

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - SAME TIME

As the rioting intensifies around him, Kavel moves toward an entrance ramp on the Evac Ship, as he calls Serena.

SERENA

(onscreen)

Rel, something's happening. There's a panic running through the ship--

KAVEL

A Minder Vessel, Serena! It's coming! We're going! Strap down!

SERENA

Okay, Rel! We'll be waiting for you!

Kavel punches porto-holo buttons in the air. Serena disappears and Professor Brek appears, as Kavel steps onto the entrance ramp amidst citizen chaos.

PROFESSOR BREK

Kavel - where are you? What's happening?

KAVEL

Professor. It's happening! Are you in your cabin?

PROFESSOR BREK

Yes, yes, son - but where are you? We heard there's a Minder-- get inside--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAVEL

I'm on my way, Professor--

Kavel hears his name and looks out over the crowd. He breaks his transmission to Professor Brek as he sees Councilwoman Isha struggling against the crush. Kavel jumps off the ramp and jostles to her side.

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA

Dr. Kavel! Dr. Kavel! Please!

As Kavel grabs her arm and drags her through, he quips.

KAVEL

What I wouldn't give for some good old-fashioned paper-pushing right now, Councilwoman!

COUNCILWOMAN ISHA

Thank you, Doctor! Primary star blessings to you and your family!

Lankh appears on Kavel's porto-holo. Kavel points Councilwoman Isha to the ramp and lets her go, nodding at her gratitude amidst the crushing crowd.

LANKH

Kavel, citizens are crowding the sick bay - just to be onboard. We can't take on any more--

KAVEL

The airlock has been closed, Lankh. I know we're over-capacity--

LANKH

I'm sure Dr. Gerol can discuss payload overages with you, but all I'm worried about is--

Kavel is struck on the head and falls to the ground, dazed, his porto-holo losing transmission. He is trampled. Cowering in confusion, a strong arm wrenches him up from the ground - a Council Guard. Kavel finds himself confronted by Councilman Thentor. Two council guards surround him while chaos rages around them all.

INT. EVAC SHIP BRIDGE - SAME TIME

Commander Plavet and CO-PILOT HEMO flick buttons, switches, in preparation for liftoff. Hologram images of the Evac Ship appear before them on the dashboard, glow orange for 'Go,' as they run their checklist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMMANDER PLAVET
Primary engines?

CO-PILOT HEMO
We have orange for 'Go.'

COMMANDER PLAVET
Secondary engines?

CO-PILOT HEMO
Orange for 'Go.'

COMMANDER PLAVET
Binary reactors?

CO-PILOT HEMO
Orange for 'Go.'

COMMANDER PLAVET
Solid fuel injection pumps - maximum
thrust.

CO-PILOT HEMO
We have 'Go.'

INT. MINDER VESSEL - SAME TIME

As Desai and Miller don spacesuits, a PRIVATE appears on a wall-screen.

DESAI
Yes, Private?

PRIVATE
Captain Desai, many of the people in
Community Alpha refuse to leave the
biosphere.

DESAI
I know, Private. Let them be.

MILLER
(surprised)
You know? When were you gonna tell me
this news?

Desai keeps suiting up as he talks.

DESAI
It's not news, kid. Just human nature.
Lived all their lives in this tin can;
they know nothing else.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESAI (CONT'D)

I'm sure there'll be a whole contingent who want to tend the Sector Five Farmlands for eternity. After this craft is derelict, they'll still be in here tending the plants and artificial meats.

MILLER

Under an artificial sun.

DESAI

When they could have two suns...
(cheekily)
Some life forms just don't adapt...

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - SAME TIME

Rioting rages around them, yet Councilman Thentor fixes his wild eyes on Kavel, ignoring all else. The council guards close Kavel in.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

You wish to kill us all!

KAVEL

(dazed)

Councilman, what are you talking about?--

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Liar! The Minders try to save us - you spin their redemption into death!

KAVEL

(motioning around him, holding his hurt head)

How can you say that?! Can't you see what's going on?

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Fearmongering! Duplicity! Madness!

KAVEL

Where have you been the last ten years, Councilman?

(points to Minder Vessel outside shield)

See that? You call that duplicity?

The council guards blanch at the approaching Minder Vessel, but hold their ground.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Yes! You have made it duplicity! They come to save us!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAVEL

Save us from-- You can't be serious,
Councilman!

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Your flimsy theories and so-called
evidence! The New Air is only killing
those who are not ready to breathe it!

KAVEL

What are you telling me? You're a--
you're a... zealot?!

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

The planet is not dying, Kavel!
(points to Evac Ship)
But these 5,000 citizens will die! This
construct of death is not going to make
it to your imaginary Rejuvena. And it
will be your fault for placing the fear
in their minds that they would die if
they didn't go!

Kavel turns to the Minder Vessel and gestures without
patience or protocol.

KAVEL

Thentor! Look at that! Forget your
politics! Forget your religion! Do you
know the physical force that a craft that
size must exert to stay aloft? The
downdraft alone is going to kill us if we
don't move now!

The council guards, their weapons raised, look toward the
Minder Vessel and visibly sag in futility.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

I welcome our Minders!

KAVEL

Look, Thentor! You can proselytize all
you want...

Kavel looks back at the council guards threateningly.

KAVEL (CONT'D)

I'm getting onboard that ship!

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

Board your mighty ship, Kavel. But it
will not launch. And we will all be safe.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COUNCILMAN THENTOR (CONT'D)
Your ship will fail, Kavel! As you must
fail for your insolence!

KAVEL
How can you say we'll be safe after
seeing what the Minders do?
(beat)
Wh--What do you mean 'the ship won't
launch'?

On Kavel's porto-holo, Commander Plavet appears, with 3D
graphics of the Evac Ship accompanying his report, showing a
malfunction.

COMMANDER PLAVET
Sir, Boot Lock-7 has malfunctioned. We're
locked on the ground.

As Commander Plavet speaks, Kavel looks at Councilman
Thentor, realizing he is the saboteur. Kavel looks at the
rioting mobs piling onto the entrance ramps.

COMMANDER PLAVET (CONT'D)
The computer reports a sabotage virus
that can only be rectified manually at
the ground console. Copilot Hemo is on
his way--

Councilman Thentor proudly confesses.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR
I have saved you! I have saved all these
citizens unnecessary deaths.

KAVEL
(decisively)
No, Commander! You need Hemo on the
bridge for liftoff.

COMMANDER PLAVET
Sir, we can't liftoff unless the Boot
Lock is deactivated manually and Copilot
Hemo knows the codes--

Kavel interrupts Commander Plavet while looking at Councilman
Thentor.

KAVEL
I know the codes, Commander.

Councilman Thentor motions to the council guards, who grab
Kavel's arms and try to detach his porto-holo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

The ship will stay, Kavel! You will thank me. You are worthy, son, to be renewed! You are just unaware.

KAVEL

Commander - raise the ramps!

COMMANDER PLAVET

Yes sir!

The council guards snap a look at each other, look back at an Evac ramp closing, laden with citizens, scrambling and falling off it, grabbing legs, hanging onto the edge. Red lights and KLAXONS continue.

Council guards release Kavel and run for the ramp. Councilman Thentor shouts after them.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

You shall not be renewed, you fools! I personally reject your souls!

The council guards fire on citizens in their way, killing them. Kavel screams after them.

KAVEL

By the primary star! No!

Crowd surge around the council guards, bringing them down and pummelling them. The ramp continues its rise, as dead bodies fall from it.

Councilman Thentor is knocked to the ground by the crowd. In the confusion, Kavel jostles his way to the Console Room.

Kavel calls General Markep on his way.

GENERAL MARKEP

(on porto-holo)

Dr. Kavel!

KAVEL

General, I'm at Evac Hanger 3. Do you read the Minder Vessel approaching this location?

GENERAL MARKEP

(looking aside)

Yes, Dr. Kavel.

KAVEL

ETA?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GENERAL MARKEP
Less than one hour, Dr. Kavel.

KAVEL
Have you lifted off? Is the Prime secure?

GENERAL MARKEP
Evac Ship 24 is in flight, Doctor. Prime
Tresda is setting up the provisional
Council as we speak.

KAVEL
Good luck, General!

GENERAL MARKEP
See you in transit to Rejuvena, Doctor.

Kavel breaks his connection as he enters the Console Room.

INT. CONSOLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Evac Ship hologram appears before Kavel, spinning slowly, as he works the console. Onscreen: "Boot Lock Override Code:" then, "Boot Lock access: Evac Ship 03."

Serena appears on Kavel's porto-holo, desperate.

SERENA
Rel, the ramps have closed! Are you
onboard?

More buttons. The hologram shows graphics of the ten leg locks, text onscreen: "Boot Lock 1 Disengaged. Boot Lock 2 Disengaged. Boot Lock 3 Disengaged..." all the way to "Boot Lock 10 Disengaged."

KAVEL
(as he works)
Serena!... Dearheart!...

Serena senses what is happening, yet does not want to say it.

SERENA
(whisper)
Rel?...

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - SAME TIME

Councilman Thentor rises, disoriented. As crowd swells around him, he clears his head, groggily rises, and watches the Evac ramp shut with a CLANG. He goes after Kavel.

INT. CONSOLE ROOM - SAME TIME

Commander Plavet appears on Kavel's porto-holo.

COMMANDER PLAVET

Locks disengaged! Dr. Kavel, with that thing on our tail, we've got to achieve escape velocity so fast our liftoff is going to obliterate the surrounding buildings. Get out of there!

Serena screams into the porto-holo.

SERENA

No! Please! Rel! Get onboard! Commander, open the ramp! Don't leave him!

KAVEL

Serena - if we try to save all, all will die! Commander!

COMMANDER PLAVET

(beat, quietly)
Serve well, Doctor.

CLOSEUP

Kavel, half-smile, fighting back tears.

Then Commander Plavet flips a switch and his voice is on intercom throughout the Construction Hangar and Evac Ship.

COMMANDER PLAVET

Citizens. This is Commander Plavet, Evac Ship 3. Prepare for emergency liftoff!

ENGINE WHINE builds, a DEEP RUMBLING shakes the ground.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - SAME TIME

The crowd trapped inside the Construction Hangar now panic, screaming wildly, spreading to the edges of the perspex.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - SAME TIME

Meanwhile, the crowd pushing on the outside of the shield realize what is happening.

CROWD

They're gonna blast us! - They're launching! - Filthworms are leaving without us! - They're gonna kill us all!--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crowd flee into surrounding city, many asphyxiating, collapsing, limping. Reneweds gather around their monument, gasping and praying.

Shayra is left weeping and gasping for breath, slumped at the airlock door, with Ronth weeping on the inside, trying to touch her through the perspex. Their three children lie dead beside Shayra.

INT. CONSOLE ROOM - SAME TIME

SERENA
(weeps on holo)
Rel! Rel! No! You can still make it!

KAVEL
(to Serena)
Serena... tell our son... to look to the primary star...

Through Serena's face on the holo-screen comes the real face of Councilman Thentor, scowling, tackling Kavel.

INT. EVAC SHIP BRIDGE - SAME TIME

Amidst the WHINE OF ENGINES warming to full power.

COMMANDER PLAVET
(to Co-Pilot Hemo)
Emergency launch codes, overriding computer trajectory: execute.

Co-Pilot Hemo punches in codes, flicks switches.

CO-PILOT HEMO
Emergency Launch protocol executed, sir!

Commander Plavet punches more buttons, flicks switches.

COMMANDER PLAVET
Launch.

INT. CONSOLE ROOM - SAME TIME

Councilman Thentor has shoved Kavel aside and works the console desperately.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR
You - must - not - launch!

Kavel rushes Councilman Thentor, shoves him against a wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAVEL

This madness has to end, Thentor!

COUNCILMAN THENTOR

You will see. The Minders Renew! The
Minders Re--

Angle on engines under Evac Ship. The EXPLODE into life.

INT. CONSTRUCTION HANGAR - SAME TIME

Ignition fires from the Evac Ship's engines THUNDER AND ROIL over the trapped crowd in the hangar, as well as Ronth and his family, incinerating everything and everyone in a heartbeat.

CLOSEUP

SERENA

Rel!

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

The walls EXPLODE inwards on Kavel and Councilman Thentor.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. EVAC SHIP BRIDGE - SAME TIME

The immense thrust of the Evac Ship liftoff pushes Commander Plavet and Co-Pilot Hemo into their seats. On hologram monitors around them, outside views of their Evac Ship.

CLOSEUP

on outside hull of Evac Ship as it rises past us. We see the thousands of tiny cabin windows, indicating the ship's immense size, yet when the Evac Ship clears our field of view, in the distance, we see the Minder Vessel looming insanely larger, and bearing down.

CUTAWAYS

Professor Brek in his cabin, strapped in.

Sick Bay: Lankh with scores of citizens strapped into beds.

Councilwoman Isha strapped in her private cabin.

INT. EVAC SHIP BRIDGE - SAME TIME

Co-Pilot Hemo flicks switches, works his console, watches the Minder Vessel growing large in a monitor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CO-PILOT HEMO
 (alarmed, grimacing)
 It's coming, sir! Downdraft closing in--

COMMANDER PLAVET
 (to himself, watching monitor)
 Come on... gimme more... go... go...

WIDE SHOT:

We see the Evac Ship rising, pulling away from the planet as the Minder Vessel, thousands of times larger, slowly bears down on it.

EXT. RUINS OF CONSOLE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kavel rises from rubble and sways on his feet. His porto-holo has been stripped from his neck. The building has been knocked down and exposed to the atmosphere. Councilman Thentor rises a few feet from Kavel, pushing rubble off himself. They both cough, struggling to breathe.

Kavel looks up at the Evac Ship, now a speck in the sky - then looks at the approaching Minder Vessel, like a moon astride the land.

Councilman Thentor faces the Minder Vessel, rips open his shirt and prostrates himself, whimpering and praying.

COUNCILMAN THENTOR
 I expose myself to be renewed. The
 Minders Renew. The renewed Minder is the
 key to the god in me...

Kavel looks in pity at Thentor, then notices green lichen growing in patches everywhere. His chest hitches as he tries to breathe. Realization spreads over his face.

KAVEL
 The Minders do renew, Thentor. But not
 for us.

Councilman Thentor raises his head, remains kneeling. He looks around dazed and focuses on the Minder Vessel as if for the first time. His eyes widen in terror. As he breathes faster, his chest hitches. He screams and flees - and trips over the crumbled Minder monument.

CLOSEUP

of Thentor's face, close to the ground, wide-eyed, open-mouthed, his last vision is lichen inches away from his face as he asphyxiates.

INT. SERENA'S CABIN - SAME TIME

SERENA
(near tears)
He didn't make it, Professor.

PROFESSOR BREK
(on holo)
We're here because he did make it,
Serena.

Serena tears up, cradles her stomach; looks at Thelize strapped in near her, hugging her bundle.

EXT. RUINS OF CONSOLE ROOM - SAME TIME.

Kavel experiences the silence before the shockwave.

SLOMO

Kavel looks up one last time at the retreating Evac Ship, nothing but a bright star now; his hair slowly shifting in the Doppler created by the oncoming shockwave.

As the Minder Vessel THUNDERS overhead, Kavel closes his eyes.

The shockwave hits like a ROARING HURRICANE, disintegrating everything.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. LUSH GREEN PLAINS - DAY

We see a Minder Vessel landing, but from a very different perspective. Whereas we've always viewed the Minder Vessels from the P.O.V. of Kavel and his peers, we now see the Minder Vessel in profile, as simply a spherical spaceship putting down landing gear in lush green lichen.

As a ramp descends from the side of the Minder Vessel, barely seen, all about the plains, twenty tiny sparks rise almost in unison - Evac Ships. Though city-sized, the ships are no bigger than ants compared to the Minder Vessel.

Desai and Miller, in full outdoor spacesuits, emerge, and slowly walk down the ramp, which is about 200 feet long, 20 feet wide. Halfway down, they stop to look at the twin suns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILLER
(pointing to each sun)
At our orbital position now, I'd say
that's Centauri A... and Centauri B.

Desai looks over the land.

DESAI
We've only got pictures to go on, but I'd
say this looks pretty damn close to Earth
back before Greenhouse. What say, Miller?

MILLER
Close enough, Skipper.

They continue to descend the ramp. Desai records a verbal
report as he walks.

DESAI
Duirnal Earth time: 575,411 A.D. 11:55
a.m. Touchdown on host planet Sagan,
orbiting Rigil Kentaurus aka Alpha
Centauri A. Terraform Craft 5923. Captain
Carleed Desai reporting. Recon for
Community Alpha. Atmospheric data
reads...

Desai reads his visor data. He stops walking. Miller stops
behind him.

DESAI
(almost sacredly)
There's air here already, Miller. Check
me!

Miller punches buttons on his forearm console, checking data
in his hologram visor.

MILLER
Looks good. Your call, Captain.

Miller watches silently as Desai unclasps his helmet. A HISS
of escaping air. He waits, then twists the helmet off the
spacesuit and raises it. With his eyes closed, he takes a
breath.

DESAI
(opens his eyes)
Tangy.

Miller removes his helmet. They both continue to descend
ramp. Miller points - a few miles away, another Minder Vessel
is landing. Miller contacts them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MILLER

This is Terraform Craft 5923. Do you read our coordinates?

Through CRACKLING STATIC, Miller hears:

CAPTAIN HARRIS

We read you 5923. 5774 here, Captain Harris, touching down on Sagan. How's the weather out there?

MILLER

Tangy, Captain. Tangy!

Desai and Miller laugh and continue walking.

Unnoticed, the sparks of the Evac Ships are high in the sky.

Desai's and Miller's earpiece comm-links CRACKLE with a message from ENSIGN.

ENSIGN

Captain Desai, thought you'd like to know: we've identified weak signals indicating some sort of off-planet exodus.

DESAI

Off-planet? What's moving off-planet, Ensign?

ENSIGN

Sir, the off-planet frequencies are the same type of signal we've been receiving the last ten years now.

DESAI

You mean something has been trying to contact us? And on top of that--

ENSIGN

Yessir! Seems the little guys have interstellar space technology!

Desai and Miller look at each other in wonder.

ENSIGN (CONT'D)

We have departing signals all around the planet. Not many, but we're reading 'em.

DESAI

(humorously surprised)
Any particular destination, Ensign?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ENSIGN

Yes, sir.
(beat)
Earth.

Miller looks at Desai.

MILLER

(bemused)
Greenhouse there would now be like it was
here - before we started terraforming:
high carbon dioxide, low oxygen, low
nitrogen... Earth would now be more
like... their atmosphere... was...

Desai looks closely at Miller, then breaks up laughing.

DESAI

We terraformed two planets, kid!

MILLER

(laughing)
Looks that way, Cap'n!

Desai turns and strides down the ramp, helmet under his arm,
laughing uproariously, followed by Miller.

DESAI

Well, I hope those little buggers
appreciate all we've done for 'em!

Miller smiles broadly at Desai's shameless irony.

MILLER

I'm sure they will, Cap'n. I'm sure they
will...

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

TERRAFORM

by Jon Dunmore / Damon Pipitone (C) 2009

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