



UNIVERSAL CABLE PRODUCTIONS

NIGHTFLYERS

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Based on the novella by:
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Clean Second Network Revisions

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The dead void of space.

Tiny stars scattered in darkness like diamond dust. The hollow sound of the SOLAR WIND building as --

An enormous TITANIUM SPHERE slowly moves into frame.

As it moves we can make out a network of trusses connecting six identical titanium spheres like points on a carbon ring.

Inside the ring are decks, a bridge, coupling docks, portals and bays. Too big to get a sense of design other than the sheer complexity.

Etched into the side of the massive sphere:

NIGHTFLYER BAY SIX MAX LOAD 20 mKT.

The roar of the ship becomes deafening as we --

CUT TO:

INT. LOWER DECKS

Cycle through empty hallways and decks. No sign of life.

The ship is a marvel of engineering. Smooth walls, metal floor grates with automatic lighting, bays and screens.

Red light wavers to the PULSE of the hydrogen drives.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL LAB

Brilliant bright steel. We hear a WOMAN'S VOICE somewhere.

She moans slightly as we turn to REVEAL --

A disembodied EYEBALL rotating lazily in the air.

Our POV drifts past the spinning eye, disengaged from the frame of the room. Untethered in zero gravity.

We move toward the voice past more body parts: part of an ear... a finger... the shredded remains of a leg.

Our POV picks up a WOMAN suspended in the corner. Upside down. Or perhaps she's right side up and we're upside down?

It's disorienting and eerie.

The woman grips a small RECORDING DEVICE in her hand, voice shaking as she whispers with a slight British accent --

AGATHA (RECORDING)
This is Medical Officer Agatha
Matheson of the Nightflyer. We
have sustained fatalities...
structural damage...

A SHADOW moves past the lab window in the background.

Agatha freezes. Terrified. Breathing shallow.

MOVE IN on her face as she whispers into the recorder --

AGATHA (RECORDING) (CONT'D)
This is a warning, not a distress
call. Do not board this ship. Do
not bring the Nightflyer back to
earth.

The instrument panel behind her suddenly comes to life, cycling through command prompts. A CAMERA turns and focuses.

Tracking her movement.

Agatha quickly pulls herself along the wall, sliding the device into a BIO-WASTE TUBE. She shoves it into an air lock in the wall, sealing the hatch as --

A SHADOW falls into frame behind her.

CLOSE on her face, afraid to turn as we RACK FOCUS to --

A MAN hovering behind her. Uniform torn, face hidden in shadow. A bent metal ROD in his hand caked with blood.

Agatha quickly initiates the purge sequence with trembling fingers. We hear vacuum pressure building in the tube --

The EJECT BUTTON lights up. Ready to purge.

But as she reaches for the button the Man behind her hits a switch on the wall activating a localized GRAVITY FIELD and --

All the floating body parts slam to the ground!

Agatha's hand misses the button as her head collides with the console, flipping her backwards with a thud. Out cold.

The EJECT BUTTON chimes eerily in the background as --

Agatha's eyes flutter open, lying on the floor.

She looks up as her ATTACKER steps over her, staring with blood shot eyes. He seems calm in his insanity, cocking his head as he studies her. Then he raises the rod again --

She rolls away as the rod clangs next to her head!

Agatha scrambles across the floor, slipping in some blood as her attacker lumbers after her, pulling equipment away.

Agatha screams, ducking under a table as the rod slams down. Metal instruments fall around her, clattering to the floor.

POV of the eject button across the room. She goes for it.

Agatha scrambles across the floor, slipping past her attacker as he swings the rod. It slips out of his hand, rolling away across the floor.

Agatha sees her chance, lunging for the eject button as --

His massive hands wrap around her ankle, flipping her onto her back, dragging her backwards across the floor.

The eject button BEEPS faster. Purge sequence terminating.

Agatha kicks at his hands, slipping away. She drops and spins, scrambling on her knees for the EJECT BUTTON as --

Her blood smeared hand smashes down on it.

WHOOSH!!! The BIO-WASTE TUBE shoots away from the ship.

Agatha pulls herself to standing, looking out the portal as a blinking red beacon spins out into the endless darkness.

Her message is away.

Then she turns to face her attacker. He walks toward her, breathing heavy, eyes insane, metal rod back in his hands.

But Agatha seems calm now. Unafraid. She sees a scalpel near her hand and grabs it, flicking on the spinning blade.

It whirs as she holds it out, facing her attacker for moment.

Then she brings it to her throat and opens her jugular.

As blood sprays out we --

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: N I G H T F L Y E R S

ACT ONE

EXT. TALL GRASS - SUNSET

Light flickers through towering redwoods as we PICK UP --

KARL D'BRANIN (40's), in front of a stunning modern home, his intelligent warm eyes following something as we REVERSE to --

His daughter SKYE (9), beautiful and free as she spins in the tall grass with a handful of dandelions clutched in her fist.

CLOSE as the tiny flowers detach in SLOW MOTION, floating away like miniature spacecraft searching for planets.

SUPER: Year 2092.

Skye tumbles into the grass laughing as D'Branin comes over, reaching down for her --

D'BRANIN

Come here, you...

Skye pulls him down to the ground and they lay for a moment in the grass looking up at clouds.

SKYE

They were talking about you in school today.

D'BRANIN

Really? What'd they say?

SKYE

My teacher thinks you're like that guy who sailed across the ocean --

D'BRANIN

Christopher Columbus? Wow.

Skye nods, beaming.

SKYE

Will you be up there a long time?

D'BRANIN

It's going to take a while. We're going farther than anyone's gone before.

SKYE

But you're coming back, right?

D'BRANIN
Yes. I'm coming back.

Skye lays silent for a moment, looking up at the clouds --

SKYE
I just don't understand why you
have to go...

D'Branin touches her hair, moving it out of her eyes. She's beautiful and innocent. A flicker of concern lurking there.

D'BRANIN
Because I'm the one who found them.

Skye rolls away from him, jumping to her feet --

SKYE
Try and catch me!

She looks back laughing as she runs around the corner of the house toward the trees. D'Branin follows her. The light is golden, almost dreamlike as he NOTICES --

His wife JOY (30's) on the steps. Skye runs toward the trees as Joy comes over, blocking D'Branin's path.

JOY
Hang on, Professor.

D'BRANIN
(playful)
Am I in trouble?

JOY
You might be. We only have six
months to fit in two years of sex.

D'BRANIN
That's some pretty tricky math.

Joy moves closer, her lips brushing his --

JOY
You're a genius. Figure it out.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

D'Branin and Joy in bed. The room is dark, a flickering candle defining her shape. Her face and body in silhouette.

Massive SKYLIGHTS above her REVEAL --

The endless NIGHT SKY filled with glistening stars.

Joy leans close, face coming into the light. Her skin glistens with sweat as she whispers --

JOY

You're going to change the world.

Then she freezes. Her face surrounded by a million stars.

He hears a soft computer voice from somewhere --

COMPUTER VOICE

Memory paused.

A window pops up on screen. **PERSONNEL REQUEST: Karl D'Branin.**

PULL BACK to REVEAL --

INT. MEMORY PLAYBACK SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Karl D'Branin sitting in a control chair in the center of the smooth circular room, surrounded by a wraparound screen.

The image of Joy frozen around him like a huge video mural.

D'Branin spins the control chair into the light and we see him for the first time in the environment of the space craft.

Handsome, strong, confident. Eyes sharp and focused.

D'BRANIN

Talk to me.

COMPUTER VOICE

The shuttle is docking. Your cargo has arrived.

D'BRANIN

How long do we have until launch?

COMPUTER VOICE

The Nightflyer will depart low Earth orbit in 6 hours, 22 minutes.

D'Branin presses the silver TRACK BALL down into the arm of the chair. Joy's image fades as the lights come up.

D'BRANIN
I'm on my way.

CUT TO:

INT. CREW QUARTERS

A glowing *holo-ball* bounces along the floor. TILT UP as --

MEL (28), D'Branin's first officer and prodigy of the Genetic Space Program reaches down to pick it up. She's stunning and athletic, studying the ball. She looks over at two CREW MEN.

MEL
Mind if I try?

They nod yes with a little smirk, the *holo-ball* is not an easy thing to master. Mel hits it with her hand against the wall. The ball changes color and bounces back.

Mel concentrates, eyes tracking the ball as she moves faster.

Stunned CREW MEMBERS sit up to watch. The ball becomes a streak of light and Mel hits harder and faster until --

Her hand shoots out, catching the ball.

CLOSE as the glowing ball hovers over her palm. A sphere of energy pulsing with light. Then something catches her eye --

A CAMERA mounted on the wall.

It moves. Focusing and tracking her as D'Branin enters the central crew area. Mel looks over.

D'BRANIN
Cargo's here.

Mel nods, tossing the *holo-ball* back to the stunned CREWMEN.

MEL
Cool toy.

CUT TO:

INT. BAY TWO - ENTRY

D'Branin and Mel walk up a ramp as two CREW MEMBERS float a CARGO BIN the other way on a humming *anti-grav hover lift*.

Mel watches as they pass, amazed by the technology on the ship. She hustles to keep up with D'Branin --

MEL

Have you tried memory playback yet?
It's incredible.

D'BRANIN

I've only had 48 hours to load and
prep our team before launch.
(he cracks a smile)
I may have tried it once or twice.

They turn a corner, approaching a door that reads: **BAY TWO**.

MEL

I just wanted to say, sir. Thank
you for making me part of your
mission. I'm honored to be here.

D'Branin enters a code on the command screen, glancing over --

D'BRANIN

You don't need to keep thanking me,
Mel. You were the best candidate.

The doors slide open and they walk into --

INT. BAY TWO - CONTINUOUS

A large docking bay filled with cargo bins. The massive
domed room silent and empty except for an ARMED SECURITY
DETAIL standing in the center of the room.

MEL

(to D'Branin)
Has Captain Eris told his crew
about Thale?

D'BRANIN

Not yet. Only the security detail.
Eris thought it was better to wait
until the mission is underway.

D'Branin sees DR. AGATHA MATHESON waiting by the guards. We
recognize her as the woman who killed herself in the opening.

D'Branin approaches Agatha. Mel stands just behind him.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

(shaking hands)
Dr. Matheson, welcome aboard.
(indicating Mel)
This is Melantha Jhirl, my first
officer.

Agatha smiles slightly, shaking hands. She seems anxious.

AGATHA
Nice to meet you.

D'BRANIN
How was the shuttle ride?

AGATHA
Still trying to get my legs under me. They say this feeling wears off but I have my doubts.

MEL
You'll be fine on the Nightflyer. This ship is more comfortable than being on Earth.

AGATHA
Yes, I've heard. Still, I prefer to have real dirt under my feet.

Mel shoots a knowing glance at D'Branin.

D'BRANIN
What about Thale? How's he doing?

AGATHA
He's excited despite the conditions we've agreed to. I suppose anything is better than what L-1's are forced to endure on earth.

D'Branin nods, treading carefully --

D'BRANIN
This mission could change the way people view L-1's.

Agatha softens a little, she trusts D'Branin.

AGATHA
I truly hope you're right.

D'Branin turns to the LEAD SECURITY GUARD behind him.

D'BRANIN
Let's bring him in.

The Guard nods and signals a command as the roof of the bay slowly opens over their heads and --

A STEEL AND GLASS CUBE descends from above.

The other Guards step back as they SEE --

A PERSON inside the cube bound to a chair with restraints.

A murmur of tension from the Guards as the cube comes to rest on a large *hover platform* waiting below.

The MAN IN THE CUBE'S head lolls slightly.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)
 (to Agatha)
 He's still suppressed?

AGATHA
 Yes but the dose will be wearing off soon.

D'Branin nods to the LEAD GUARD.

D'BRANIN
 Secure the cube. We need to get him down to Bay Six.

The Guard acknowledges the order, stepping forward reluctantly. As he moves closer we can SEE --

The Man in the Cube is thin and pale. His hand twitches.

His head raises up slightly as if semi-conscious.

The Lead Guard quickly flips a latch, securing the cube. The other Guards shift nervously, hands moving to their weapons.

The Lead Guard, moves to the second latch. His hand shakes as he reaches out for the metal latch and we HEAR --

A sudden BLAST of STATIC as he is bombarded by a BARRAGE OF SURREAL IMAGES: *fire, worms, a melting face, insects, blood.*

The Lead Guard slams the latch down, stepping back from the cube. He's shaken, mind reeling. He turns to D'Branin --

LEAD GUARD
 What the hell was that..?

AGATHA
 Residual psychic energy. You're picking up feedback from Thale's subconscious.

The Lead Guard goes back to his position, shaking his head.

LEAD GUARD
 This is messed up.

Agatha steps up behind D'Branin, sensing the anxious crew.

AGATHA

We need to get him into isolation
before he becomes fully lucid.

D'Branin nods to the Guards. They activate the platform,
sliding the cube away as --

MEL

(to Agatha)

We can show you to your quarters,
get you settled in.

AGATHA

I'd like to see the garden first.
(to D'Branin)
That was our agreement.

CUT TO:

INT. CURVED HALLWAY

D'Branin and Mel lead Agatha down a long, curving hallway
approaching a large observation window: **TERRAFORM HABITAT 3.**

Agatha approaches the window looking down into --

A huge TERRAFORM DOME filled with trees, grass and plants.

WORKERS in white BEE KEEPER SUITS move between the rows of
plants, spraying nutrients and checking for disease.

Agatha stares down through the window in awe --

D'BRANIN

All those plants are clones. Eris
replicates and cultures millions of
different forms of organic life
right here on the Nightflyer for
use in his off-world colonies.

D'Branin turns to Agatha, selling her on the deal --

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

Thale will be allowed two hours a
week in here, under full security
detail, of course. He can walk on
grass and climb trees. There's
even a creek behind that hillside.

MEL

(impressed)

I still can't believe you managed
to pull this off. We're not even
allowed to go in there ourselves.

Agatha looks down at the fluttering trees, tears in her eyes.

AGATHA

Thale has spent his entire life
locked away in a mountain. No
sunlight. No air...

She turns to D'Branin, genuinely overwhelmed --

AGATHA (CONT'D)

It's beyond anything I ever
imagined. Thank you, Karl.

D'Branin glances up to see a MAN approaching behind them.
Large and bearded. His shape hulking as he moves closer --

The psychotic attacker from the opening of the show.

Agatha turns, standing face to face with her future attacker.
This is ROWAN, eyes warm. A thin stick of ROPE in his teeth.

ROWAN

(to Agatha)

You must be the lion tamer.

(beat)

Looks like you could use a drink.

D'BRANIN

Agatha, this is Rowan, our resident
xeno-biologist.

Rowan smiles, shaking Agatha's hand. His eyes slightly red.

AGATHA

First contact with alien life.
This must be an exciting time for
you.

ROWAN

For a guy like me it's kind of like
discovering fire.

(twinkle in his eye)

Hence my willingness to fly
headlong into the unknown.

Mel nods toward the observation window --

MEL
Hey guys, look...

They turn to see an array of MIRRORS mounted on the inside of the TERRAFORM DOME begin to rotate in unison.

MEL (CONT'D)
Sunset.

The mirrors turn, sending red shadows across the trees.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL

CREW MEMBERS sit around tables lit by floating *hover globes*.

LOMMIE (26) a gender fluid cyber technician with piercings and jagged bangs stands in front of the FOOD SYNTHESIZER.

She types a command into the screen: **BANANA SPLIT SUNDAE**.

TINY NOZZLES whiz around fabricating the elements of the dessert like the world's most advanced 3-D printer only with food. A banana is built layer by layer, taking shape as other nozzles build ice cream, whipped cream and the cherry.

The nozzles retract into the wall of the machine as the window opens. Lommie slides the sundae out, dipping her finger into gooey chocolate sauce. It's steaming hot.

LOMMIE
No way...

She notices the Crew Members sitting nearby, watching her with knowing smiles on their faces.

AUGGIE (40's), the First Officer and Chief Engineer of the Nightflyer comes over.

AUGGIE
That's an easy one. Try something more difficult.

Lommie thinks about this for a moment --

LOMMIE
I don't know... like what?

AUGGIE
Something obscure. What was your favorite restaurant as a kid?

LOMMIE

My moms used to take me to Silver
Spurs on Fridays. I'd get the
Downtown Dog. It's so gross.

Auggie taps the button for voice control.

AUGGIE

(to the computer)
Downtown Dog from Silver Spurs
restaurant. Circa...

Looking to Lommie --

LOMMIE

'77, I guess.

AUGGIE

Circa 2077.

The machine goes into action. Nozzles spinning and whirring
as they build a foot long chili dog with shredded cheese,
sour cream and onions. The window opens.

Lommie slides out the Downtown Dog. It sits in a red and
white paper tray with western writing that says: Silver Spur.

LOMMIE

It got the little paper tray right!

Auggie notices the NEURAL PORT implanted in Lommie's arm.

AUGGIE

You're D'Branin's systems tech?

LOMMIE

(nodding)
Lommie.

Auggie moves to liquids typing: **12 yr. Highland scotch 96
proof.** Brown liquid pours into his glass.

AUGGIE

What's it like going inside a
computer like that?

Lommie shrugs, picking up her tray of food.

LOMMIE

I love it. Imagine listening to
your favorite music but not with
your ears. You're the instrument.

AUGGIE
Sounds interesting.

Auggie sips his whisky.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)
Auggie. Chief Engineer for 22
years. Welcome to the 'Flyer.

Auggie raises his glass as she walks away with her tray.

Lommie crosses to the table where D'Branin eats with Mel,
Agatha and Rowan. She slides in beside them.

ROWAN
(re. Lommie's food)
That looks healthy.

LOMMIE
You look like you've had a couple
of these in your lifetime.

Agatha looks over at Rowan. She's intrigued by this man.

AGATHA
What do you think they look like,
the Volcryn?

ROWAN
Mostly tentacles, suction cups.

Rowan relishes her reaction for a moment, then smiles.

ROWAN (CONT'D)
That was a joke.
(to D'Branin)
You discovered them. Want to take
a stab?

D'BRANIN
We know their ship's over a mile in
diameter and travels at speeds
beyond anything we could ever
achieve. We've detected a trail of
organic materials: CO2, nitrogen,
other complex gasses, so we're
fairly confident they're a carbon
based life form.

ROWAN
That's his scientific way of saying
we have no idea.

Mel takes a bite of food, thinking out loud --

MEL

Personally, I'd love to know when we get to meet Captain Eris.

Everyone at the table watches D'Branin expectantly --

D'BRANIN

Eris stays on his private deck.

LOMMIE

Wait, so the whole time you've been planning this mission, you've never met him in person?

D'BRANIN

Only through vid-feeds.

ROWAN

Kind of weird to spend your life building colonies on other planets then stay locked away on a ship.

LOMMIE

Guy's probably a basket case. His mother was Cynthia Eris.

They all nod at this thought. Cynthia Eris was notorious.

AGATHA

(sardonic)

Wonderful. We have a reclusive narcissist at the helm of the ship.

They glance over as MURPHY (38), a systems tech engineer, heads over to their table. He seems unnerved.

MURPHY

We just got word that you brought an L-1 on board.

D'BRANIN

That's right. Thale is a critical part of this mission.

MURPHY

We're heading deeper into the void than anyone's gone before and now we're doing it with a *psychic* on board? This is *insanity*.

AGATHA

L-1's have been unfairly maligned. Thale's mind is powerful but he's also a sensitive, beautiful person.

Auggie comes over, trying to ease Murphy back.

AUGGIE

Come on, Murph. This isn't the
place --

Murphy pulls his arm away from Auggie, frustrated.

MURPHY

We're under contract to build
colonies, not chase some phantom
ship across the solar system with a
goddamn freak on board.

AUGGIE

(sharp)

You're under contract to do
whatever Eris tells you to do.

D'Branin stands up, moving closer to break the tension.

D'BRANIN

You need to understand, we no
longer have the ability to produce
enough energy to sustain the human
race. Our world is dying.

The crew shift in their seats. This is a cold, hard fact.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

The Volcryn move between star
systems. Their technology could
save us. This mission isn't about
me or Roy Eris. It's about your
children. Your grandchildren.

He searches their eyes --

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

What we're doing is dangerous...

D'Branin glances back at his team, proudly --

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

But it's far less dangerous than
doing nothing at all.

SCAN the faces of the crew, moved by D'Branin's speech.

MURPHY

Unless that L-1 kills us first.

Auggie steps up to Murphy, shutting him down.

AUGGIE

Anyone not fully dedicated to this mission is free to disembark before launch. Captain Eris has agreed to honor your contract in full. Those who stay on will be awarded triple credits.

This news ripples through the crew. That's a lot of money.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

As for our cargo in Bay Six...

Auggie glances back to D'Branin --

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

If he jeopardizes the ship in any way Captain Eris will eliminate him.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

D'Branin rides a cylindrical elevator as it shoots into the interior of the ship. Deck 4, 5, 6, 7. It slides to a stop.

INT. DECK SEVEN

The elevator opens to a metal walkway stretching across a shallow pool of metallic liquid. D'Branin crosses to the entrance to ERIS' PRIVATE DECK.

The ship senses him. Lights and buttons coming to life.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE

Place your identity please.

D'Branin presses into a rubber mask. A grid of laser lines trace the contour of his face. After a BEAT, it goes dark.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE (CONT'D)

Confirmed. State your request.

D'BRANIN

I need to talk to Captain Eris.

The screen flashes a message: **PERSONNEL REQUEST: Roy Eris.**

A WALL SCREEN flickers to life with the image of a beautiful WHITE ROOM. Sterile, clean and luxurious. After a BEAT --

ROY ERIS (40) steps into view. He's polished and handsome, staring down at D'Branin from his private deck.

ERIS
Professor?

D'BRANIN
You can't eliminate Thale. He's our only hope of communicating with the Volcryn once we make contact.

ERIS
Are you doubting my dedication to this mission? I'll remind you, I delayed the opening of our Titan colony by three years and volunteered 160 of my employees. My mother devoted her life to ensuring that the Eris name represents the pinnacle of human achievement. I have every intention of honoring her memory.

D'BRANIN
I need a guarantee.

ERIS
Thale's life rests in your hands. Make sure he causes no harm to my ship or my crew and he'll be fine.

D'BRANIN
He's not some expendable piece of equipment. He's part of my team. He volunteered for this.

ERIS
I have granted you full authority to design this mission but when it comes to the safety of this ship there will be no negotiation.
(beat)
I'm the captain.

D'Branin nods, stepping back. Eris holds all the cards.

ERIS (CONT'D)
I suggest you get your team ready.
We launch in less than 60 minutes.

Eris flickers out, leaving D'Branin in the flickering glow.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHTFLYER - LOW EARTH ORBIT

The EARTH shines below the Nightflyer as the SHUTTLE detaches from the docking complex to begin its return to earth.

INT. BRIDGE

The nerve center of the ship. Auggie and his crew lock into their control bays as they prepare for launch.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS we see the massive Earth swirling below.

Roy Eris looks down from the vid-feed on a control screen overhead, watching as Auggie finally clips into his seat.

ERIS (ON SCREEN)
Are we ready, Augustine?

Auggie glances at Murphy and the other engineers sitting at their stations. They nod, giving him the thumbs up.

AUGGIE
(to Eris)
Systems ready, sir.

He reaches forward, tapping a wobbling HULA DANCER on his station for good luck.

AUGGIE (CONT'D)
Let's do this.

Eris nods, reaching for his controls.

ERIS (ON SCREEN)
Begin rotation.

OUTSIDE THE SHIP:

The massive ring of titanium spheres rotates outside as jets fire from the drive complex. A ballet of engineering.

BACK ON THE BRIDGE:

Systems Engineers monitor pressure in the hydrogen drives, data flooding past them on the screens.

ERIS (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Go to 80 percent.

Auggie depresses the thrusters as the humming builds. Mel glances at D'Branin with a smile.

MEL

Waited my whole life for this.

Agatha looks sick, whispering a silent prayer. Rowan smiles.

OUTSIDE THE SHIP: curling rings of fire blast out of the vent stacks. The entire ship shaking with pressure.

ON THE BRIDGE: Auggie glances over at Murphy at his console.

AUGGIE

What's your reading?

MURPHY

(confused)

I'm getting error codes.

A wave pulses through the ship as the internal gravity in the bridge gives way. Something crashes behind them and a case opens. HYPER ALLOY TOOLS slowly twirl into the air.

Auggie checks his screens. Data codes are scrambling.

AUGGIE

We lost the gravity field.

ERIS (ON SCREEN)

Full power, Auggie. Get us loose.

Auggie pushes the thrusters down but nothing happens.

AUGGIE

Something's wrong...

Murphy looks up from his bay --

MURPHY

I can reset the grav-field.

AUGGIE

No, Murph. Stay put.

But Murphy's already un-clicked and sliding across the bridge to the grav-field control screen. Auggie glances down as his screen suddenly flashes: **THRUSTERS FULL POWER.**

AUGGIE (CONT'D)

Get back in your seat!

The rumbling of the ship suddenly turns to a HORRIFIC SHRIEK!

The sound echoes through the bridge, squealing out of the headsets of the Nav Team as they rip them off their heads.

Murphy reaches the grav-field control as the glass shatters, breaking into pieces. He throws up his hands to keep the shards out of his face as --

The ship breaks out of Earth's orbit with huge force.

D'BRANIN

Watch out!

D'Branin knocks a floating tool spinning near Mel's head out of the way as Murphy flies backwards --

Slamming against the metal wall.

The tools spinning in the air whirl at him, piercing his arm and leg and IMPALING him to the wall as the earth falls away outside. They're off.

Murphy screams, trapped and bleeding, impaled to the wall by metal tools as that horrible SHRIEK continues and we --

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT TWO

The Nightflyer moves into frame, majestic and beautiful. Her titanium spheres rotating slowly around the central core of the ship. As it moves past we can make out --

The surface of MARS below. On the red planet we see a colony of interconnected clear domes filled with lush green vegetation and silver buildings. The Eris colony ALPHA.

CUT TO:

INT. LONG HALLWAY

Agatha pushes a steel MEDICAL CART down a long hallway. A tray with GLASS VIALS and PNEUMATIC SYRINGE clatters lightly next to a plate of food. D'Branin walks beside her.

D'BRANIN

The crew are convinced Thale caused the malfunction during launch. They're blaming him for Murphy.

AGATHA

It's not possible. Thale can't penetrate inorganic systems like this ship. He's a telepath. He reads thoughts, picks up visions.

The hallway ends at a steel door that reads: BAY SIX.

Agatha enters security commands on the screen.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I've known Thale since he was four years old. I've dedicated my life to understanding his mind. He's thrilled about this mission, not trying to disrupt it.

D'BRANIN

And I'm trying to protect him.

Agatha studies D'Branin for a BEAT and then nods --

AGATHA

What are you asking me to do?

D'BRANIN

His sketches. Maybe he picked up something, caught some flash of what happened during the launch?

Agatha nods, understanding. The steel doors to Bay Six separate and D'Branin starts to follow but Agatha pauses --

AGATHA

Wait outside. He already knows
you're here.

D'Branin stands back as she wheels her cart into --

INT. BAY SIX

The steel doors close behind Agatha as she pushes her cart across the cavernous bay toward --

A steel and glass LIVING HABITAT sitting ominously quiet.

Agatha parks her cart and sets the break. She slides one of the vials into place, slowly walking to one of the windows.

AGATHA'S POV of a *hover globe* drifting aimlessly over a work table with pencils, paper, sketches scattered on the floor.

Dirty clothes, uneaten food. No sign of anyone in there.

Agatha moves to the next window for a better angle. She peers in again, eyes sweeping across the sleep nook, the kitchen. The place looks empty and abandoned.

As she moves down to the next window we NOTICE --

A shadow sliding along the wall.

THALE (17) comes into frame. He's just a boy!

Thale presses himself against the wall, skinny and shirtless, dark eyes set deep into his skull as --

Agatha's peers through the window near his face.

His eyes flutter and roll back as he reaches out with his mind, slipping into Agatha's mind and we QUICK FLASH TO --

Agatha in the shower. She leans her head back, water shimmering across her body, a glimpse of her breasts as her hand moves down between her legs and we're --

BACK IN THE BAY. Agatha gasps, dropping the syringe. She steps back, realizing what just happened.

AGATHA

Thale. Dammit. Stop that.

A soft giggle as Thale moves into the window peering out.

THALE
Good morning, Agatha.

A smiles spreads across his thin lips.

THALE (CONT'D)
You look nice.

Agatha holds his gaze, reasserting her authority.

AGATHA
You're being immature. My memories
are mine. They're private.

THALE
(mock sad face)
Awww. I like it when you share.

Agatha composes herself, picking the syringe off the floor.

AGATHA
Sharing indicates that I gave you
permission and unless you behave, I
won't let you see things like that.

Thale's smile evaporates.

THALE
No need to be grouchy.

Agatha unlocks the door. It rises with a hiss. She holds
the syringe out like a gun, stepping forward --

AGATHA
Turn around please. You're going
to feel something --

THALE
(finishing her sentence)
Cold on your back.

Agatha moves closer, pressing the syringe to his skin.

AGATHA
Did you see what caused the
malfunction during launch?

A mischievous smile in Thale's eyes --

THALE
I don't know what you're talking
about.

AGATHA

Did you pick up anything? What about when that man was hurt?

THALE

Would you let me watch you in the shower if I did?

AGATHA

This isn't a game, Thale. A man was very badly hurt.

Thale's smile fades, revealing the COLD VOID of his eyes.

THALE

That's a shame.

CLOSE as she presses the trigger on the syringe. It hisses as the clear blue fluid is injected into his body.

Thale gasps, taking a couple steps to his sleep nook. He slumps to the bed, slowly turning face her, eyes heavy.

THALE (CONT'D)

You changed something. The dose...

A little smile on Agatha's face as she walks to the work table, collecting a stack of his sketches: *A MELTED FACE, A FOREST OF BONE TREES, A HIDEOUSLY BURNED BODY.*

She tucks them under her arm and turns back.

AGATHA

Trust is a two way street.

Thale slumps on the bed, his POV blurring as Agatha slips back into the bay, the door hissing closed with a click.

CUT TO:

INT. LOMMIE'S QUARTERS

CLOSE on Lommie's face. Eyes open but vacant, hair hanging as her lip ticks slightly. She's surrounded by --

Graphite towers of liquid cooled NITROGEN PROCESSORS and MONITORS patched by cables. An OPTICAL TETHER extending from the network into the NEURAL PORT on the inside of her arm.

Her nervous system merged with the computer network.

A flicker of movement in her face as she lifts her hand, manipulating data flowing across the screen like a conductor.

After a BEAT, she waves her hand and the data flutters away.

Lommie comes back to her eyes. Present in her body again.

LOMMIE

I can't find any evidence of a technical malfunction.

D'BRANIN

What about that noise during launch? Maybe it was some kind of vibrational anomaly?

LOMMIE

(shaking her head)

That would have left a fingerprint in the data.

D'BRANIN

I need some proof it wasn't Thale. Whatever shred of confidence we had with the crew has been trashed.

MEL

What's the word from Agatha? Did she find anything in Thale's sketches?

D'BRANIN

Nothing.

MEL

Maybe we should take a look at them ourselves?

D'Branin thinks about this, nodding.

D'BRANIN

Agreed. Have you had a chance to talk to Murphy?

MEL

He's still in Re-Gen.

LOMMIE

There's something else.

Lommie moves her hands, using her computer network to build a 3-D projection of the SOLAR SYSTEM in the middle of the room.

She rotates the model to reveal a flashing GREEN DOT along a long, curved line that extends out into the darkness.

LOMMIE (CONT'D)
Here's our current trajectory.

She then scales the model and spins it to bring up a RED DOT hovering far outside the planets.

Deep inside the VOID beyond our system.

LOMMIE (CONT'D)
And here's the Volcryn. Now watch.

She magnifies the section with the RED DOT and we can see it has MOVED SLIGHTLY off the curved line of the intercept.

MEL
They've shifted course.

Lommie and Mel watch D'Branin expectantly. After a BEAT --

D'BRANIN
What's the result to intercept?

LOMMIE
An additional 18 months in the void. Over two years total.

D'Branin goes silent, his mind working the problem. Then --

D'BRANIN
Run the calculations. I need the precise intercept, breakdown of provisions and fuel.
(beat)
When you're done, wipe the data.

Mel and Lommie share a look --

LOMMIE
Eris' Nav team are going to detect the shift. It's a matter of time.

D'BRANIN
Then buy me time. The crew is already on edge about Thale. I need to control this information as long as possible.

Lommie and Mel nod, ready to support their leader.

LOMMIE
Give me 12 hours to run the math.

CUT TO:

INT. D'BRANIN'S QUARTERS

D'Branin watches a LIVE IMAGE of Joy D'Branin on a small vid-feed screen, her image rippling from a transmission delay.

D'BRANIN

How are things on the ground?

JOY

About the same. There's been a lot of talk about the mission on the feeds.

D'BRANIN

Good talk?

JOY

Some. The protests have grown but there are supporters as well.

D'BRANIN

(frustrated)

Those protesters should understand we're doing this for them.

JOY

They will when you get back. Everyone will.

Joy leans closer, searching his eyes --

JOY (CONT'D)

What's wrong, Karl? Is everything okay?

D'BRANIN

It's the crew. They're on edge about the telepath.

JOY

But you still think it was the right decision to bring him?

D'BRANIN

Absolutely. It's his doctor that concerns me. She's awfully close to her patient.

JOY

You fought for five years to make this mission a reality. Nothing's going to stop you now.

D'Branin nods. There's a flicker in his eyes. Then --

D'BRANIN

I miss her, Joy. I wish Skye could be there, watching all this...

JOY

Karl, stop. You know how proud she was of you. Skye loved --

Joy's image freezes.

D'BRANIN

Joy?

D'Branin types a command but Joy's face is frozen.

Then it begins to degrade.

At first imperceptible. A few pixels at a time. Tiny blocks of emptiness collecting around her eyes and mouth --

Turning Joy's face into a DIGITAL GHOUL.

D'Branin stands up in shock as her eyes go black and empty.

Then a burst of STATIC and she's gone.

An error message appears the screen: **COMM-LINK TERMINATED.**

D'Branin swipes everything off the counter as we --

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE

NAV CREW move around stations as the titanium spheres rotate outside. The shattered control screen has been repaired.

We see Murphy back at his station, SMALL CUTS on his face and a compression band around his arm where he was impaled.

The doors open as D'Branin enters.

D'BRANIN

Something happened with my comm link.

Murphy glances up, not happy to see D'Branin. He checks the readings on his panel.

MURPHY

I don't see any malfunction. All our links are operational.

Auggie hears them and comes over to intervene --

AUGGIE
There a problem, Professor?

MURPHY
He's saying the ship dropped his
link but I just ran diagnostics --

D'BRANIN
It's not the link. The computer
changed her image... *her face.*

Auggie watches D'Branin suspiciously for a BEAT.

AUGGIE
Murphy's my top systems engineer.
If he says the link's
operational...

D'Branin stares at Auggie and Murphy. The Nav Team stands in
the background, watching.

D'BRANIN
I want to talk to Eris in person.

AUGGIE
I'm sorry. That's impossible.

They face off for a moment --

MURPHY
Maybe you should talk to that kid
in Bay Six?

Auggie's crew nod.

AUGGIE
I'm inclined to agree. The ship
hasn't been herself since we
brought that L-1 on board.

D'Branin steps back, shaking his head --

D'BRANIN
I'll take it up with Eris.

CUT TO:

INT. CREW QUARTERS

D'Branin walks through an area with off-cycle CREW MEMBERS
playing 3-D Zampf and resting in micro-mesh hammocks.

He turns a corner, pausing in the darkness. The red lights from under the foot grate shroud him in an eerie glow.

He notices something strange --

The air around him is freezing cold.

His breath puffs in white plumes. Moisture on the railing near his hand crystallizes into ICE as --

The COLD SPOT expands around him.

The ship hums. Red lights wavering like a heart beat.

We hear soft footsteps. Something moves in the shadows.

D'Branin can't move. Fear crystallizing in his body like the ice spreading across the walls. A shadow shifts again.

Then we hear the soft voice of a little girl --

SKYE (O.S.)
Try and catch me...

D'Branin spins around as the footsteps patter away.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT THREE

INT. BAY FOUR

An empty bay outfitted with exercise machines and rows of DECOMPRESSION SILOS along the back wall.

In the center, a large CARDIO SPHERE spins on a track bed, wheels and pistons dipping and shifting to simulate terrain.

We hear feet pounding as we CUT INSIDE --

THE CARDIO SPHERE.

Mel runs inside the rubber-treaded ball wearing a micro-mesh skin suit with sensors and a pair of ultra-light VR GOGGLES.

The soft glow from the VR display illuminates her face as her body drips with sweat, muscles rippling as she runs faster.

INSIDE VR PROJECTION.

MEL'S VIRTUAL POV as she runs down a JUNGLE PATH, her POV approaching the steps of a crumbling MAYAN PYRAMID.

BIO-DATA floats across the bottom of the screen as Mel takes the stairs two at a time, pushing harder. She reaches the top of the pyramid, turning to take in the jungle canopy as --

COMPUTER VOICE
Congratulations. Goal achieved.

Mel pulls her goggles off, flipping a sunken latch in the curved side of the ball to step out into --

BAY 2. Mel comes down the ramp, bubbling decompression silos in the background. She checks her arm sensor.

Cal: **1275** Time: **54 min.** Oxy: **82 mHg.** Nit: **< 7.2**

A voice echoes from the darkness --

ERIS (O.S.)
That's impressive. No one's ever
done the pyramid in under an hour.

Mel scans the room. She's all alone. Just the flickering lights of machines and bubbling silos.

MEL
Who's there?

Mel peeks around the machines. Nothing but shadows.

A CAMERA in the wall focuses and follows her as she walks.

ERIS (O.S.)
You don't recognize my voice?

Mel pauses, noticing the camera pointed at her.

MEL
Captain Eris.

ERIS (O.S.)
Nice to meet you, Melantha.

Mel walks to a silo, wiping her body with the towel.

MEL
Where are you?

ERIS (O.S.)
Where I always am. Somewhere below
your feet.

MEL
You've been watching me, haven't
you? Do you watch everyone?

ERIS (O.S.)
I find you fascinating.

MEL
I find you fascinating as well.

ERIS (O.S.)
We've never had a cadet from the
genetic program on board.

MEL
A lot of people are enhanced. I'm
sure some of your crew...

ERIS (O.S.)
Enhancement is not the same as
engineering. You were designed for
space travel from birth.

Mel initiates the silo. It lights up.

MEL
Is it true you were born on the
Nightflyer? Have you ever been to
earth?

ERIS (O.S.)
I'm more comfortable in space.

The lid over the silo slides open.

MEL

Where else do you watch me?

Mel climbs the ladder, pausing on the platform as she peels off her running suit and tosses it to the floor.

ERIS (O.S.)

I'm sorry. I was just curious.

MEL

About what?

ERIS (O.S.)

If you feel different.

Mel reaches for the breathing regulator, thinking about this.

MEL

I just feel like me.

There's no response. She listens for a moment --

MEL (CONT'D)

Captain Eris? You still there?

No answer. A long BEAT.

MEL (CONT'D)

I don't mind if you watch.

She slides the regulator into her mouth and slips into the liquid, floating inside swirling bubbles as we HEAR --

COMPUTER VOICE

Begin nitrogen decompression cycle.

CLOSE on Mel floating in the bubbles as we --

CUT TO:

INT. AGATHA'S QUARTERS

Immaculate and organized. Work in neat piles on the desk.

Agatha sits studying Thale's sketches. She pauses on one of her naked in the shower that he stole from her mind earlier.

A chime on her screen: **PERSONNEL REQUEST. AGATHA MATHESON.**

She slides the image from the shower into a drawer, hiding it, then presses the hatch release.

D'Branin stands in the hall. He looks concerned.

D'BRANIN

I want to see the new sketches.

Agatha stands, inviting him in --

AGATHA

I was just going through them.

He moves to her desk, flipping through the drawings: *a screaming face, a bird pecking a skull, a man with no eyes.*

D'BRANIN

What about Thale's dosage? Are we sure he's fully suppressed?

AGATHA

I'm already giving him more than I'd like to. The medication can decay his neurology if I don't give him breaks.

D'BRANIN

But during those breaks, he has access to his full powers?

AGATHA

That's why he's in isolation.

One of the sketches catches D'Branin's eye. His blood goes cold. A LITTLE GIRL spinning with dandelions in her hands.

D'BRANIN

(to himself)

Skye...

D'Branin picks up the sketch of Skye in his hands.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

This is my daughter. She died in the second wave of Celio virus. Thale must have picked this up while I was using memory playback.

He turns to Agatha --

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

Is it possible he could make you hear or see things. Can he implant images in your mind?

Agatha studies him. His reaction is making her nervous.

AGATHA
What happened, Karl?

D'BRANIN
Just tell me. Is it possible?

A long BEAT as she considers her response --

AGATHA
It's called projecting. Thale's an L-1. He could make you hear things or even see things... but not while under suppression.

D'Branin indicates the sketch of his daughter --

D'BRANIN
I heard my daughter's voice. She was right there behind me.

AGATHA
Thale may have volunteered to support your mission but I'm here to support him.

D'BRANIN
(pointed)
I'm beginning to wonder if you really have him under control.

CUT TO:

INT. ROWAN'S QUARTERS

PAN across SPECTROGRAPH IMAGES of the Volcryn ship on the wall: blurry images of a MASSIVE DISC with various features highlighted: *edge of craft, nutrient trail, propulsion.*

The steady beat of ethereal electronic music plays as we hear the sound of a water bottle misting and PICK UP --

Rowan moves along his hydroponic towers. His quarters filled with life. Terrariums, jars of tadpoles, hanging plants.

The mist settles along his budding ROPE PLANTS as he flips a pair of goggles down on his head to inspect the SEED PODS.

He breaks one open, touching the white sticky sap to his tongue. After a moment his mouth turns numb.

ROWAN
Nice...

He slides it in his mouth as the wall screen chimes. Rowan sets his water bottle down, hitting the hatch control.

ROWAN (CONT'D)

Entre.

D'Branin ducks under some hanging plants into the space --

D'BRANIN

Got a minute?

Indicating for D'Branin to sit down --

ROWAN

Got a million of them.

D'Branin takes a seat.

D'BRANIN

I know you have some booze in here.
Time to share the wealth.

Rowan turns to a glass decanter on the table. He pours a splash of green liquid into two glass bulb tumblers.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

What is it?

ROWAN

A hybrid. Absinthe and green tea.

D'BRANIN

(disgusted)
That sounds delicious.

ROWAN

Kind of grows on you.

Rowan shrugs, taking a sip of the drink with a wince.

D'BRANIN

I know we don't always agree on
everything but I've got a problem.

ROWAN

(messing with D'Branin)
Eris? Maybe you should get to know
the guy a little. Try to find a
more sympatico pathway.

D'BRANIN

It's not Eris.

Rowan sets down his glass.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)

I'm wondering if Agatha is fully capable of keeping Thale contained.

ROWAN

That's controversial.

D'BRANIN

What's our probability of mission success without Thale?

ROWAN

You know how I feel. I'm with the hundred million people who were protesting the idea of making contact in the first place.

D'BRANIN

That's exactly why I'm asking you. Your annoying opinion might actually shed some light.

Rowan nods, thinking about this for a moment, then --

ROWAN

We've been bombarding them with radio and light waves for years. Every language we know. Fibonacci, fractals, pulse mathematics. What do we get back? *Diddily.*

D'BRANIN

Your point?

ROWAN

I doubt the Volcryn are having a problem understanding us. They're too advanced. The likely scenario is they *don't want to talk to us.*

D'Branin looks up at Rowan. This is interesting.

ROWAN (CONT'D)

Any beings that intelligent would see the human race for what we are. A disease. A virus that killed its host and is now looking for a new host to infect.

D'BRANIN

That's a pessimistic view of human kind.

ROWAN

Realistic. If you look at it through a biological prism... we're the disease.

D'Branin reaches for the drink in front of him, tossing it back. He grimaces for a moment, then gets up to leave.

D'BRANIN

You never answered my question. Will we be able to communicate with the Volcryn without Thale?

ROWAN

Yeah, sure... we might be able to figure out some way to communicate. But what's the difference? They're probably going to exterminate us.

D'Branin pauses at the door, thinking about this --

D'BRANIN

Tell me one thing. If you're so dead set against this mission, why'd you agree to come?

Rowan leans back, indicating the alien designs around them.

ROWAN

I spent my entire life wondering what form alien life might take.

Rowan shifts the rope in his teeth --

ROWAN (CONT'D)

I want to see what they look like.

CUT TO:

INT. BAY FOUR

Mel floats peacefully in a glass silo, the shape of her body distorted by the bubbles and curvature of the glass.

INSIDE THE SILO: Mel glances through streams of bubbles to her wrist module: **Pressure 3.7 bar. 34 min to goal.**

She taps a command on her wrist to toggle the readout --

MEL'S POV of her arm sensor: **Oxygen 92 percent.**

The readout flickers. She taps it with her finger and the image stabilizes but now it reads: **Oxygen 12 percent.**

That's impossible. It was just nearly full. She clicks on the arm sensor, running diagnostics. The readout flickers.

Suddenly, the readout goes black. A warning begins to flash behind her on the monitors. **System malfunction.**

Mel tries to suck air out of the regulator but there's nothing coming out. She kicks up to the top of the silo, pressing on the emergency release button. Nothing happens.

Panic begins to set in. She pulls the regulator out of her mouth, checking the gauge. It flashes red: **Oxygen depleted.**

Mel holds her breath, face bulging as she hammers on the lid with her hands, trying to get the latch to release.

She's out of air. Seconds ticking by. Warnings flash behind her, distorted through the curved glass.

Mel stops fighting, thinking for a moment, analyzing the physics of the silo, sliding herself to the exact midpoint --

She places her feet against the glass and her back against the wall behind her. Using all her strength to push --

Her legs shake, her bones nearly cracking, the glass creaks --

CRAAAAASH!!! The silo explodes outwards.

Water and shards of glass shoots across the floor as Mel spills onto the ground, screaming and gasping for air.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT FOUR

INT. MEDICAL LAB

Mel lies on the MEDICAL TABLE as D'Branin stands nervously watching automated surgical arms attend to her wounds.

MACHINE POV: the cuts in Mel's legs are magnified.

The lens scans the injury, highlighting wounds in red:

Glass detected. Peripheral tissue damage. Minor bleeding.

COMPUTER VOICE
Removing foreign particles.

Mel watches D'Branin as a micro-suction nozzle runs over her wounds. We hear blood and glass sucking up through the tube.

Mel is strong. Just the slightest tick of pain in her face.

COMPUTER VOICE (CONT'D)
Applying compression gel.

The machine goes to work, swabbing green gel on the wounds. After a BEAT, the cuts seal up as the gel self-contracts.

D'BRANIN
(to Mel)
You're lucky to be alive.

MEL
It wasn't luck. It was force.

D'BRANIN
And if it didn't break --

MEL
You'd be at my funeral.

There's a soft noise as the Med Lab doors open behind them.

D'Branin and Mel turn simultaneously to a MAN standing in the hallway. After a BEAT --

Roy Eris steps into the Medical Lab.

No one speaks for a moment, stunned to see the reclusive captain of the Nightflyer standing in front of them.

D'BRANIN
(in shock)
Captain Eris. Nice to see you.

Eris moves closer. He's polished and powerful, his clothes cut perfectly to fit his body, blue eyes glimmering.

ERIS
(nodding to D'Branin)
Professor.

Eris moves closer, inspecting Mel's wounds.

ERIS (CONT'D)
Your body will heal fast.

Eris looks up at Mel, eyes filled with empathy.

ERIS (CONT'D)
I'm relieved to see you're okay.
We've never had a problem with the
decompression silos.

There's chemistry between Eris and Mel. D'Branin notices.

MEL
(to Eris)
It's a shame you didn't stick
around.

D'Branin watches Eris, suspicious.

D'BRANIN
You knew she was in there and you
didn't help her?

ERIS
I was embarrassed by our
conversation. I terminated my vid-
feed to give you privacy.

Mel holds Eris' gaze. After a BEAT --

ERIS (CONT'D)
That was not a technical
malfunction. Something forced that
silo to remain closed.

D'BRANIN
I think it's time we talk to Thale
face to face.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Thale rises into frame, strapped to a gurney. His body held by restraints. Tubes with medication feeding to his arms. His face comes slowly into frame, dark eyes staring as we --

PULL BACK through an observation window to reveal Captain Eris standing with D'Branin and Agatha.

Thale's eyes find Eris, his head fixed to the gurney.

THALE

Nice to see you, Captain. I was beginning to feel neglected.

Captain Eris moves closer, studying Thale. Intrigued.

ERIS

Your habitat? Are you comfortable?

THALE

It's fabulous. Who wouldn't want to spend two years in a cargo bay?

D'Branin steps up beside Eris, eyes locked on Thale --

D'BRANIN

You understand why we've brought you here?

THALE

I have some ideas... but please explain, professor. I'm all ears.

D'BRANIN

There have been a series of events on the ship since we launched. People have been hurt.

AGATHA

I've told you, Karl, Thale cannot penetrate inorganic systems. His abilities are not kinetic.

D'BRANIN

Maybe we underestimated how he would react to this environment? His abilities could be changing.

THALE

(smile fading)

My life depends on this ship as much as yours. I have no intention of harming the Nightflyer.

D'BRANIN

How can we know you're telling the truth?

THALE

How can we know you are, Professor?

Thale holds D'Branin's gaze. He knows something.

THALE (CONT'D)

I know you plan to extend the mission. Have you told Captain Eris what the Volcryn are doing?

AGATHA

What's he talking about, Karl?

D'Branin glares at Thale. This kid stole his secret.

D'BRANIN

(cautious, to Agatha)

Our intercept has moved. We're looking at an additional 18 months in the void.

AGATHA

(panic)

No... that wasn't what we agreed... we can't... we have to turn back --

D'Branin cuts her off, rage flaring in his eyes --

D'BRANIN

We're not going back without making contact!

Agatha stares at D'Branin in horror. Eris steps closer --

ERIS

My Nav Team detected the shift two weeks week ago. We've already begun plotting the new course.

AGATHA

(incredulous)

You're crazy. Both of you.

ERIS

The Nightflyer can make this journey. Thale is the unknown. We need to remove him from the equation.

AGATHA
You're talking about killing him?

Eris doesn't need to answer that. Agatha goes to D'Branin --

AGATHA (CONT'D)
(pleading)
Don't hurt him. Please. I can
increase the suppressives --

D'BRANIN
You told me you could completely
suspend his brain function.

Agatha can barely speak, terrified at the prospect --

AGATHA
Yes but it could kill him.

Thale watches helplessly behind the glass --

THALE
It's not fair! I'm only here to
show people we're not monsters!

ERIS
I suggest you put Thale under,
Professor. Or I will have him
removed from the ship.

Eris turns, exiting the room. D'Branin looks at Agatha.

D'BRANIN
(sympathetic)
If we don't do this, the crew will
kill him. It's his only chance.

Thale thrashes against his restraints, screaming at D'Branin.

THALE
I didn't do anything!!

Agatha moves to the command screen. Tears stream down her
cheeks as she types in the command for the medication.

AGATHA
I'm sorry...

Thale screams, eyes wide, pulling on his restraints.

THALE
IT'S NOT ME!!!

Clear blue fluid moves through the tubes, making its way into his veins. Thale tenses as it hits his system, keeping his eyes on D'Branin. Body shuddering, drool swinging.

THALE (CONT'D)

Not me...

Then he goes limp. Falling unconscious.

D'BRANIN

(to Agatha)

Let's get him downstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. MEL'S QUARTERS

Mel lies on her nook enjoying a VISUAL PULSE DISPLAY of light and sound on her wall screens. We hear a familiar voice --

ERIS (O.S.)

Mel. Are you there?

Mel glances at the camera on the wall. It moves, focusing.

MEL

Captain Eris? Everything alright?

ERIS (O.S.)

It's never easy making life and death decisions.

She dims the display, sitting up --

MEL

We trained for those moments in the academy but you're living it.

ERIS (O.S.)

Tell me more about your training. What was the hardest part?

MEL

Year three. Isolation.

ERIS (O.S.)

How long were you by yourself?

MEL

400 cycles. No comms. No contact with anyone. Just endless time.

Her wall screen chimes Lommie appears on the wall screen.

ERIS (O.S.)

You have a visitor. I can go.

Mel slides up to sitting, reaching for the hatch control.

MEL

You don't have to.

Mel presses the hatch release and Lommie enters.

LOMMIE

I got your message. You okay?

Mel stretches out her leg, showing Lommie the compression gel. They've molded into her skin now, completely blended.

MEL

The Re-Gen cells itch like crazy.

Lommie stands awkwardly in the doorway.

MEL (CONT'D)

Come over here. Sit down.

Lommie comes over, sitting on the nook with Mel.

MEL (CONT'D)

I was listening to this pulse. You want to join me?

Mel reaches her hand over, touching Lommie's shoulder.

We see the faint lines of a BODY TATTOO peeking out.

MEL (CONT'D)

Can I see it?

There's tension as Mel's finger traces across Lommie's skin.

LOMMIE

(looking down)

I'm not very good at this stuff.

MEL

You can't let your hormone profile collapse. If you don't signal your brain that you're alive, it thinks you're dying.

Mel leans closer, kissing Lommie's neck.

LOMMIE

I know, I just... I have a hard time sexing with random people.

Mel turns Lommie's face to her, eyes strong and commanding.

MEL

I'm not random people.

Lommie obeys, letting Mel pull her shirt off to REVEAL --

RED TATTOOS laced across her skin like a circuit board.

Lommie turns, kissing Mel back as they lie back on the nook.

As they make love, Mel looks past Lommie's shoulder --

Up at the camera on the wall.

Mel keeps her gaze on the camera as Lommie moves down her body, knowing Eris is watching as we REVERSE to --

The image of two women sexing on a VID-FEED SCREEN.

PULL BACK FURTHER to reveal this feed is one of dozens and dozens in a huge bank of feeds as --

Roy Eris sits in the darkness monitoring life on the ship.

CUT TO:

INT. MEMORY PLAYBACK SUITE

Karl D'Branin sits in the control chair. He clicks the track ball and spins to face the screen. The lights dim.

D'BRANIN

D'Branin. Access memory bank.

A flicker of data as the screen comes to life.

COMPUTER VOICE

Playback initiated.

His fingers roll the trackball as images blur past.

ON THE SCREEN:

Light flickers through towering redwoods as we float through a field of grass. We hear laughter and turn to pick up SKYE spinning wildly, clutching dandelions in her hands.

The flowers detach in slow motion, floating into the air.

REVERSE to D'Branin watching the memory play out around him.

Alone in the darkness.

ON THE SCREEN:

Skye falls back in the grass laughing as our POV comes over. As OUR ARMS reach down, she scrambles to her feet.

SKYE
Try and catch me!

Then she's gone. Laughing as she runs.

We run after her but this time the memory is different.

Skye doesn't run around the side of the house. This time she slips into the redwoods. Our POV follows as Skye ducks behind the trees, peeking out and laughing. She slips out of sight.

D'BRANIN
Stop playback.

But the images keep playing. We hear Skye's feet behind us as our POV turns, searching for her. But she's gone.

SKYE (O.S.)
Can't you find me?

D'Branin's hand moves the trackball, desperately trying to stop the images. But the memory keeps evolving.

D'BRANIN
Stop playback. This is wrong.

D'Branin stumbles out of his chair surrounded by images of redwood trees as Skye peeks out behind him.

SKYE
Peek-a-boo!

D'Branin turns but she's gone. He backs up to the screen as we see Skye peeking out behind him. Her hand REACHES OUT.

PHYSICALLY COMING OUT OF THE SCREEN.

Her soft voice as her fingers nearly touch him --

SKYE (CONT'D)
I see you!

D'Branin screams, stumbling away as Skye's voice swirls around us. D'Branin gropes for the controls --

D'BRANIN
Stop playback! This isn't how it happened!!

He fumbles for the control screen. A message reads:

ERROR. ERROR. ERROR. ERROR. ERROR. ERROR.

D'Branin finds the hatch in the darkness, heart pounding as we notice Skye moving behind him. He unlocks the latch and pulls the bar down --

CLOSE on D'Branin's face, afraid to turn around as --

SKYE STEPS OUT OF THE SCREEN.

She comes across the dark room, standing behind D'Branin as he struggles to push the door open and --

INT. DARK CORRIDOR

D'Branin stumbles onto the metal floor. Red motion lights pulse below, shrouding him in an eerie glow. He glances back to MEMORY as we hear the computer --

COMPUTER VOICE
Identity confirmed. Playback
initiated.

D'Branin gasps, as the light flickers inside the room.

A DOZEN SKYE'S STANDING IN THE FLICKERING SHADOWS.

MULTIPLE SKYES
Daddy?

D'Branin slams the door shut, stumbling away from Memory and down the narrow hallway. Steam hisses, obscuring his view. Then he pauses. There's someone on the catwalk.

A little girl in the shadows.

SKYE D'BRANIN her arms out, running at her daddy --

SKYE
GOT YOU!!

D'Branin screams as she lunges into the air, knocking him into a bank of super-heated vent pipes. Skin burning as we --

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT FIVE

INT. DARK CORRIDOR

D'Branin wakes up on the floor grate. Red light under him pulses slowly, fading up and down.

He pulls himself up, looking back at the open hatch of the MEMORY PLAYBACK suite. It's empty now. Quiet.

D'Branin takes a cautious step back looking into the room.

D'BRANIN POV: the command chair sits empty, lights on, the circular screen surrounding the walls is blank.

As if nothing ever happened.

D'Branin turns away, his mind reeling. He knows that experience was real. Something attacked him.

He walks down the corridor, picking up speed as we --

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

D'Branin presses the intercom outside Agatha's cabin, leaning against the wall. No answer. He bangs on the door.

D'BRANIN
Agatha... goddammit...

A CREW MEMBER cautiously glances out of their sleep chamber behind him. D'Branin presses the intercom again.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)
Come on, Agatha... please!

We hear a mechanical click as the hatch opens. Agatha stands in the darkness, annoyed and half asleep.

AGATHA
Karl? What are you doing here?

INT. AGATHA'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

D'Branin steps past her, shaking with adrenaline. Agatha waves her hands at the sensor to bring the lights up to half.

AGATHA

We're off-cycle another three hours.

D'Branin turns to face her, still processing --

D'BRANIN

My daughter Skye... I was in memory playback and she... she... was there... not on the screen... right there in front of me. Look.

He shows her the burn on his arm where he hit the vent pipe.

AGATHA

Karl, you're not making sense.

Agatha moves closer cautiously.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

The stress of this mission coupled with nitrogen in your blood --

Rage flares into D'Branin's eyes --

D'BRANIN

I'm not imagining this!!
(beat)

Thale's powers are unpredictable out here. He's under threat and now he's lashing out.

AGATHA

That's not possible. He's still being held in a coma state.

Agatha moves closer, trying to talk him down --

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Let me give you something. You need to sleep...

D'BRANIN

No! I want to see for myself.

AGATHA

Karl, he's unconscious.

D'BRANIN

Then wake him up.

This is not a request. This is an order.

CUT TO:

INT. LONG HALLWAY

Agatha enters her information at the entrance to Bay Six.

She submits to security array and then glances over --

AGATHA

I have to be honest, you're the one
scaring me right now.

The doors slide open and they step into --

INT. BAY SIX

Agatha enters the dark bay. D'Branin right behind her. Their footsteps echo as they approach THALE'S HABITAT. It's silent. An eerie glow coming through the windows.

As they come around the outside they NOTICE --

A medical cart overturned. Tools scattered around. A piece of clothing. Agatha walks faster, coming around to SEE --

The door to Thale's habitat is open.

Agatha stands frozen, fear gripping her like a vice. She glances at D'Branin who steps up behind her as she peeks in --

AGATHA

Thale?

No answer. Agatha steps through the doorway into --

INT. THALE'S HABITAT

The place is a mess. Sketches scattered across the floor, half eaten trays of food, rumpled clothes. No sign of Thale.

AGATHA

Thale? Where are you?

Agatha and D'Branin search behind the work table, under the sleep nook, peeking in every dark corner. The *hover globe* bobs ominously overhead as D'Branin turns --

D'BRANIN

He's gone.

Agatha sees the gurney where Thale was restrained. Medical tubes and leather straps hang loosely on the side.

AGATHA

Thale is just scared. I know him better than anyone...

(beat)

He will hurt people if he feels threatened.

D'BRANIN

If we don't find him first, this will be a disaster.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

D'Branin stands in the elevator.

Descending down into the heart of the ship.

INT. DECK SEVEN

D'Branin waits by the entrance to Eris' private deck. The security screen flashes, cameras turning and following him.

ON THE SCREEN we see: **PERSONNEL REQUEST. ROY ERIS.**

After a BEAT the screen flickers to life. Eris is there.

D'BRANIN

Thale is gone.

Eris stares back at D'Branin. These two men facing off.

ERIS

I'm aware of the breach. A search of the ship is underway.

D'BRANIN

You have cameras everywhere. You must know where he is.

Eris moves closer, his tone becoming pointed --

ERIS

The security feeds went dark just before Thale escaped. My engineers are working to repair the system.

D'BRANIN

How could this happen?

ERIS

My men will find Thale and take care of the problem.

D'BRANIN

No. I should handle this. Agatha is the only one he trusts. If you corner Thale, people will die.

ERIS

(cold)

Then he will be eliminated.

D'BRANIN

You're making a mistake.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

Emergency lights flash as a SECURITY DETAIL runs down the hall armed with LIGHT RIFLES. D'Branin passes the other way.

INT. LOMMIE'S QUARTERS

Lommie and Mel wait anxiously in front of her graphite processors. Lights blink, data flows across the screens.

Mel looks up as D'Branin enters.

MEL

Any news?

D'BRANIN

Eris has his crew looking for Thale but they don't understand what they're dealing with.

(to Lommie)

I need you to port into the ship's vid-feeds to track him down. If we get his location I can use Agatha to lure him back into the bay.

LOMMIE

Okay. I can do that.

Mel looks at D'Branin, concerned --

MEL

Maybe we should let Eris handle this. He's got the firepower.

D'Branin shakes his head, this is spinning out of control.

D'BRANIN

Those guys are walking into a
bloodbath. And if Eris' crew start
to die, they'll turn on us next.

Lommie nods, sliding the optical tether into her port --

LOMMIE

I'll have to port inside the system
to access the security feeds.

MEL

Is it safe to go in there?

D'BRANIN

We have no choice.
(nodding)
Do it.

Lommie twists the tether into her port. We hear a soft *CLICK*
as her pupils expand and we're --

Sucked into the blackness of her eyes.

INSIDE THE BLACKNESS.

PULL BACK SLOWLY from Lommie's eyes to REVEAL --

She's now sitting in an EMPTY BLACK VOID. Everything around
her gone. Her consciousness now inside the ship's systems.

Her image ripples as she moves, the outline of her body
leaving trails. We hear her heart beat and breathing as --

She pulls the various VID-FEEDS on the ship into view.

Lommie scans through security feeds. Her POV distorted from
the fish-eye camera lenses. An image of the CREW QUARTERS
comes into view, an EMPTY HALLWAY, the RADIO-SPHERES.

CLOSE on her face as she moves through various feeds.

Searching for Thale.

As she concentrates we hear something behind her. Footsteps.

Lommie waves her hand, sliding the VID FEED images away.

She turns, eyes searching the darkness as a PERSON walks out
of the darkness. As they move closer we SEE --

IT'S LOMMIE. A perfect emotionless replica of herself.

LOMMIE DUPLICATE
You shouldn't be in here.

Lommie can barely speak, unable to process this experience.

LOMMIE
What... who are you..?

She stands, walking toward the virtual reflection of herself.

LOMMIE (CONT'D)
Identify yourself. Captain Eris?

The Lommie Duplicate wavers, fading for a brief moment --

LOMMIE DUPLICATE
This is my domain.

Lommie takes another step and the Duplicate disappears.

Lommie reaches out in the darkness, feeling for the presence of the thing that was there just a moment ago. It's gone.

She turns back to SEE --

The Lommie Duplicate standing right behind her.

LOMMIE DUPLICATE (CONT'D)
THIS IS MY DOMAIN!!!

The Duplicate's hands shoot out, grabbing Lommie by the throat as we --

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR

Murphy makes his way down a long corridor, glancing at the screen on his hand held COMM SYSTEM MAP.

He pauses, tracking the OPTICAL WEB and DATA LINES that run under the metal foot grate of the walkway. The screen beeps.

Murphy kneels, unlocking a SMALL DISC in the floor grate. He leans back as the grate slowly rises up to REVEAL --

A ladder leading into the darkness below.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR

Murphy clicks on the twin lights on his helmet and climbs down to the floor under the walkway.

It's cramped, claustrophobic and dark.

He ducks under some wires, making his way into the darkness as he watches the screen on his hand held COMM SYSTEM MAP.

The floor is wet down here, pipes running along the walls, water dripping from overhead. We hear a soft BEEP. Murphy looks down at his screen flashing: **NET-COMM INTERRUPTION.**

He opens a steel box, exposing a substation of BLACK WIRES and CONDUITS. Murphy pulls out an INFRARED WAND waving it across the wires as we HEAR --

The jarring sound of two SECURITY GUARDS walking overhead.

Murphy goes back to work as the sound of their footsteps pass overhead on the grate. Then he pauses, sensing something.

Someone standing behind him in the shadows.

Murphy turns to see Thale. Skinny and shirtless, eyes dark.

Murphy glances up at the grate, remembering the guards --

MURPHY

Hey! He's down --

But his mouth won't work. He tries to speak but only manages spittle and gasps. Thale steps closer. Concentrating.

Murphy looks over at the wall panel near his head --

The loose black wires have turned into a nest of snakes.

Thale stands behind him, eyes dark and focused.

MURPHY'S POV as the writhing snakes slide around each other, black and slick. One of them emerges from the center of the nest, slowly extending itself toward Murphy.

Murphy is helpless, eyes wide with terror as the snake slides between his lips into his gaping mouth. He raises his hands, trying to grip the creature, gagging as it burrows deeper --

Thale stands in the shadows, mind locked on his victim as --

Murphy looks down. The thing in his mouth is not a snake.

It's one of the electrical wires.

Electric current courses through his body as he sputters and kicks, body arching and frying as his skin begins to smoke.

The control box explodes in a shower of sparks as Murphy lies lifeless in the water. Burned and blistered. Eyes open.

Thale looking down at Murphy's body for a BEAT. Then he turns, slipping down a dark corridor.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LOMMIE'S QUARTERS - SAME TIME

Lommie sits silently, optical port connected to her arm. Her face twitches, a tear rolling down her cheek.

MEL

There's something wrong...

Mel reaches for Lommie's shoulder, gently rocking her --

MEL (CONT'D)

Lommie? Are you okay?

Lommie slowly turns her head to Mel. Eyes staring vacantly as her lips begin to move. Voice changed. Vacant and low.

LOMMIE

Get out... get out... *GET OUUUUT!!!*

Suddenly, she falls silent. Mel and D'Branin move closer, afraid to touch her as she stares blankly at the wall.

Then she gasps, coming back to her eyes. She looks around, yanking the tether from her arm and tossing it aside.

Mel reaches out again but Lommie recoils, terrified.

LOMMIE (CONT'D)

Don't touch me...

D'BRANIN

What happened in there? Did you see something?

Lommie walks to the hatch, looking back as she steps outside.

LOMMIE

(freaked out)
Myself.

Then she turns and runs.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR

Lommie runs down a hallway, turning a corner. D'Branin goes after her, peeking down side hallways, calling for her.

D'BRANIN
Lommie? *Lommie???*

Lommie finds a dark space under a control bay, pulling herself into a tight ball as D'Branin goes running past.

She waits quietly as his feet run past.

D'BRANIN (CONT'D)
(growing distant)
Lommie??

FOLLOW D'Branin and he runs down the corridor, turning down a long hallway, losing his bearings. He pauses, NOTICING --

The floor grate is burned. A wisp of smoke rising up.

D'Branin gets on his knees, peering down between the metal slats that make up the floor grate to SEE --

Murphy's dead body. Burned and blistered. Skin peeling.

The pulsing red glow of the lights bring the horrific corpse in and out of his vision like a morbid heart beat.

D'Branin sighs, fearing the worst. Then he looks up to see a CAMERA mounted to the wall. It turns and focuses on him.

He's being watched.

CUT TO:

INT. ERIS' QUARTERS

Sterile and clean. White steel and glass. Total luxury.

The private quarters of the world's richest man.

Eris sits in front of a mirror in a dressing area.

He waits quietly for a moment. Totally still. After a BEAT, he moves slightly. A tick in his face as he --

Reaches up to his temple with his thumb and forefinger and PUSHING on the side of his orbital and --

His eyeball slips out into the palm of his hand.

He drops the synthetic eye into a decanter of clear fluid.

Eris reaches over to the other side, slowly pressing his remaining eyeball into his hand.

He slips it in the decanter with its twin and seals the lid.

He taps a button and a drawer slides open and he places the decanter next to a row of similar glass vessels.

Each containing a pair of eyes.

Eris turns his head as if hearing something. Then --

ERIS
No. That's not true.

He stands, turning toward us, empty eye sockets GLOWING BLUE.

Eris walks toward us as he speaks --

ERIS (CONT'D)
(defiant)
I absolutely *am* in control.

TRACK BACKWARDS as he comes to a long table set for dinner.

Eris sits at the head where his meal waits on a plate of fine china. He pours some red wine into a crystal glass.

We PULL BACK FURTHER over the long table to REVEAL --

A second place setting on the opposite side.

A woman's hand rests beside the plate. Pale and still.

PULL BACK over the shoulder of the WOMAN seated there.

We see the back of her head and shoulder. Her arm lying still on the tablecloth. Diamond rings on her fingers.

Roy Eris takes a sip of his wine then looks up at the silent woman with his empty blue eyes.

ERIS (CONT'D)
We're not going back.

HARD CUT TO:

DEEP SPACE

The Nightflyer hurtles into the darkness.