

"THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT"

by

Steve Johnson

Based on the 'Stainless Steel Rat' series of books

By Harry Harrison

FIRST DRAFT
30TH JULY, 2010

COPYRIGHT © STEVEN JOHNSON 2010.
THIS SCREENPLAY MAY NOT BE USED
OR REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE EXPRESS
WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

EXT. NEW VEGAS - NIGHT

FADE IN:

We are looking out over a vast, neon-lit cityscape of the future. Far, far below, tiny pinpricks of light can be seen, some moving, some stationary. The skyline is broken by fantastically-tall skyscrapers, some with their upper levels piercing the few clouds that speckle the dark sky.

A CAPTION FADES IN, telling us this is 'FIRST LEAGUE BANK, NEW VEGAS, BETA CYGNUS SYSTEM'. The camera pulls back to reveal 'SLIPPERY' JIM DIGRIZ standing on the roof of this impossibly high building. He is a man of average build with dark hair and blue eyes and in his late-thirties. He is wearing an oxygen mask out of necessity and a tight, black, one-piece suit with numerous pockets and a belt full of gadgets.

He checks an electronic device. It shows the time, '26:45hrs', and his altitude, '4,000 metres'. There is also a countdown and it is at '00:45' and counting. He pockets the tablet and runs to the edge of the building.

Leaning over the side, he looks down to see a large, silver ventilation duct, jutting out of the concrete, glass and metal wall. He produces a molecular piton and jabs it into the concrete in front of him. It melds with the wall instantly. He slips a rope through the piton's hoop and pushes himself over the side.

He expertly glides down to the duct and finds a metal grating blocking his way. Hanging in mid-air, he pulls out what looks like a pen and draws an invisible line around the edge of the grille. Instantly, the molecular bonds of the grate are released and it drops down. The man catches it and shoves it into the vent. Then he climbs in after it.

Once inside, JIM unhooks the rope and crawls along the metal tunnel towards a bright light. A beeping comes from his pocket and he pulls out the device with the countdown. It is at '00:10'. He quickly shuffles forward, the beeping continuing.

Suddenly, the light at the end of the vent begins to be eclipsed. The vent is being sealed! He barely makes it through the narrowing gap in time, landing in a heap in a small, dark room.

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/MAINTENANCE ROOM - NIGHT

JIM climbs to his feet and looks at the sealed vent.

JIM

(sweating and smiling beneath the mask)

That was close.

JIM pulls off the oxygen mask and tosses it aside. He flicks on a flashlight set into the arm of his suit. Finding the door, he crosses to it and inspects it quickly.

JIM

(to himself)

Simple magnetic lock. Sloppy, guys. Or cheap.

He unclips a small, black box from his belt, sticks it to the door and presses the single button on its surface. The door swings open to reveal a corridor with stark lighting. Jim clips the box back onto his belt.

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/CORRIDOR #1 - NIGHT

JIM slips into the corridor, closing the door behind him. He produces the electronic tablet and efficiently calls up a floor plan of the bank, along with an overlay of the security grid highlighted in red. He presses some icons on the screen and the security display turns green, also informing him 'ALL DOORS UNLOCKED'. JIM smiles.

He silently slips through a door at the far end of the corridor and we CUT TO:

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/CORRIDOR #2 - NIGHT

We are in a more ornately-decorated corridor, with potted plants and paintings on the walls. There are several side-doors and one set of large, double doors at the end.

Directly in front of JIM are three armed SECURITY ROBOTS. They are human-sized, bipedal and metallic, painted to look like they are wearing dark uniforms. They raise their weapons in unison.

SECURITY ROBOT #1

This is a restricted area. Submit to arrest, so you can be escorted from the premises.

JIM throws a disc-shaped object into the air and hits the deck, shielding his eyes. There is a bright flash and when we can see again, the robots are slumped forward with sparks flaring from every joint.

JIM dashes to the double doors, picks the lock with a simple-looking lockpick and slips inside.

CUT.

INT. FIRST LEAGUE BANK/OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is in darkness, except for the shafts of moonlight streaming through the tinted windows. JIM heads straight for a painting hanging on the wall and feels around the frame. He finds a switch and presses it. The painting slides to the side to reveal an old-fashioned-looking wall safe.

JIM

(to himself)

Oh. Not what I expected. I wonder how many thousands of years it's been since somebody did this?

He dons a stethoscope and begins cracking the safe. Eventually, it clicks open and JIM pulls out handfuls of jewels, necklaces and hard currency. He stuffs it all in a bag and turns around.

INSKIPP

Just put the bag on the desk, diGriz.

The desk lamp flickers into life to reveal a man of about fifty years of age. He is HAROLD INSKIPP, head of THE SPECIAL CORPS. He is smiling, apparently unarmed and sitting in the chair of whomever the office belonged.

JIM pulls out a handgun and aims at INSKIPP's head.

INSKIPP

Sit down, diGriz, and put that cannon away. If I wanted to kill you, I could have done it while you were on the roof or in that ventilation duct. Nice work, by the way. Reminded me of myself in my youth. No, you're more valuable alive than dead. And there are so few of us left these days.

JIM smiles, drops the bag and gun on the desk and flops down into the chair opposite INSKIPP.

JIM

Who the hell are you?

INSKIPP

I think you already know that. (pause as INSKIPP looks at JIM). James Bolivar diGriz. Wanted for a hundred and twelve counts of robbery. Two hundred counts of breaking and entering and one count of breaking the heart of a prime minister's daughter.

JIM

(smiling)

Ah, Melanie. She was a lovely girl. (pause as JIM reminisces internally) So, you're from the Special Corps. Of course. How did you get on to me?

INSKIPP

We've been shadowing you ever since you pulled that job on Altair. Excellent work. Cleanly in and out and no casualties.

JIM

Not clean enough, it would seem. How did you trace me?

INSKIPP

You left a sample of your DNA at the scene.

JIM

(his eyebrows rising with realization)

Ah, the old lady in the bank who slapped me. She had quite a right hand, as I recall.

INSKIPP

You showed remarkable restraint, diGriz. As I said, no casualties.

JIM

I've never had casualties. Not purposefully anyway. Well, there was that time on... (pause) Wait, why aren't there armed goons crashing through the doors and windows?

INSKIPP

Because I'm not here to arrest you,
Slippery Jim. I'm here to offer you a
job.

JIM bursts out laughing and we CUT TO:

INT. SPACECRUISER

JIM is still laughing out loud. He is sitting in a private
spacecruiser. Only he and INSKIPP are present in the bright,
luxurious cabin.

INSKIPP

Have you finished?

JIM

One minute.
(he laughs some more)
There, done.

INSKIPP

You're considering my offer. You are
here.

JIM

I'm here because I didn't want the New
Vegas police to get their grubby hands
on me. You provided an escape route.
(pause) Are you going to tell me your
name anytime soon?

INSKIPP

Not too bright. I'd have thought you'd
have figured it out by now.

JIM pours himself a large glass of scotch and sips at it,
staring at the man opposite without a hint of malice.

JIM

The eyes. You have a crook's eyes. They
say that the Corps only hires reformed
criminals.

INSKIPP

Not only. But crime is so rare these
days that when somebody decides to break
the law, they tend to do it in a big way
and the best way to catch them is to use
people who think the same way.

JIM takes another sip. Then another. A long pause.

INSKIPP

Oh, for crying out loud. My name's Inskipp.

JIM

(surprised)

Harold Peters Inskipp? Inskipp the Unc...

INSKIPP

Yes, Inskipp the Uncatchable.

JIM

What happened?

INSKIPP

What do you think happened, you blithering idiot? They caught me!
(pause) Like we caught you.

JIM finishes off the scotch and sets the glass down on the low table between them.

JIM

Nobody catches Slippery Jim diGriz.

A pleasant bell sound rings in the cabin.

INSKIPP

We're here.

JIM looks out of the window and we move through the glass to see

EXT. SPACE - SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ

The spacecruiser glides towards a huge asteroid in open space. A distant sun bathes the space rock in amber light, but there are no other planets or anything else visible.

The surface of the asteroid is festooned with domes and antennae and all manner of technological gizmos. A docking port slides into view with flashing lights blinking into darkness beneath the asteroid's barren surface. The cruiser swoops inside.

FADE OUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/PRISON CELL

FADE IN.

JIM is sitting in a brightly-lit, windowless cell, miserable, with his elbows leaning on his knees. The jangling of keys has him looking up to see INSKIPP approach the barred cell door.

JIM

A bit 'olde-worlde', isn't it? Bars, keys? If I wanted, I could be out of here quicker than you could say 'The Glorious League of Allied Planets'.

INSKIPP

(smiling)

And where would you go? You're deep in an asteroid in an uninhabited star system. You'd be shot before you took one step into the docking harbour.

JIM

Whatever. Go away.

JIM returns to his moping. INSKIPP sighs and shoves a piece of paper, with a photograph of a spacecraft in a planetary dry-dock on it, through the bars. It flutters to the floor in front of JIM.

INSKIPP

Look at this. What do you make of it?

JIM picks up the photograph and looks at it, his brow furrowing.

JIM

Big warship of some kind. Looks like Empire lines. Now for the last time - go away.

INSKIPP

It's a late Empire battleship of the Warlord class. Undoubtedly one of the most truly efficient engines of destruction ever manufactured. Over a kilometre of defensive screens and armament that could probably turn any fleet existent today into fine, radioactive ash.

Jim yawns and stretches. He stands up and hands the photograph back to INSKIPP.

JIM

Except for the fact that the last one was broken up for scrap over a thousand years ago.

INSKIPP

Somebody has built this thing now. Maybe they've built more. We don't know.

JIM looks shocked. He grabs the paper again and stares at the image as if it will leap out of the page and grab him by the throat.

JIM

Holy shit. This is real? There hasn't been a war for two-hundred years. If some maniac lets loose with one of these, not even the League capital will be safe.

INSKIPP

(smiling)

I thought that would pique your interest. Our files indicated you had a keen interest in history and a deeply-suppressed soupçon of goodness.

(he stares at JIM for a long moment)

Are you with us now?

JIM

(smiling weakly)

I never really had a choice, did I?

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/COYPU'S LAB

JIM and INSKIPP are in the laboratory of PROFESSOR COYPU, an elderly scientist, with thinning grey hair and no time for JIM's quips. JIM is fingering a piece of technology from COYPU's desk.

COYPU

Put that down, diGriz! Do you want to blow a fifty-metre hole in the side of this asteroid?

JIM immediately sets down the small, silver tube and smiles at INSKIPP, who scowls back at him.

COYPU

Now then, diGriz, as you are new here, I will forestall the usual pleasantries and get down to business, as my great-great-great-great-great (pause) great grandfather used to say.

JIM

You knew him? How old are you?

INSKIPP

diGriz!

COYPU

I spoke to him only last week.

JIM

How old is he?

COYPU

(rummaging through a pile of odds
and ends)

Oh, he's been dead for centuries. Now,
where did I put the blessed thing?

JIM looked quizzically at INSKIPP, who merely raised a hand
as if to say, 'I'll explain later.'

COYPU

(producing a utility belt)
Ah, here it is. Now, my boy, this is
standard issue for all field agents. A
Special Corps Assignment Belt.

JIM

A SCAB? Nice.

COYPU

What? Oh, yes. (chuckles) I never
thought of that. Anyway, this has
everything an agent might need on his
mission, from a nerve toxin tablet to a
mini-nuke.

JIM

Mini-nuke? I thought nuclear weapons
were banned under the League Treaty?

INSKIPP

There are treaties and there are
treaties, diGriz.

COYPU

Don't worry, my boy. It's a Corps nuke.
Totally clean and 100% guaranteed to
vaporize anything within ten kilometres.

JIM smiles nervously.

JIM

They should get you in the Sales and
Advertising Department.

COYPU hands JIM the belt and he slips it around his waist,
admiring it as he does so.

ANGELINA

Very fetching. Do they come in pink?

JIM looks up to see a slinky, young woman, with raven-black
hair in an attractive bob cut, approaching. She is wearing a
tight, black catsuit with pink piping. JIM's pupils
immediately widen at her menacing beauty.

INSKIPP

Ah, Angelina. Nice timing. James Bolivar diGriz, this is your partner on this venture, Angelina.

ANGELINA extends a slender hand and JIM gallantly kisses it.

JIM

A pleasure.

ANGELINA withdraws her hand and casts a glance at INSKIPP.

INSKIPP

Knock it off, diGriz. Angelina will be in charge of the operation. Whatever she tells you to do, you do. Got that?

JIM's eyes never leave ANGELINA.

JIM

I look forward to working under you, Angelina.

ANGELINA

(without a hint of irony)
I'm sure you do, Slippery Jim.

JIM

Slippery by name, Slippery by natu...

INSKIPP

Alright. That's enough. Our only lead on this battleship is from the image we acquired from one of our agents on Cittanuvo in the Beta Cygnus system.

JIM

I just came from there!

INSKIPP

Yes, you did. And if it wasn't for the fact that you are strictly 'small time', you might have been at the top of the list of suspects! No, we believe a non-human is behind this plot.

JIM looks genuinely shocked.

JIM

What? How? Almost all the non-human races we've encountered have been peaceful species. How do you think the Empire spread so rapidly? Why humans are so ubiquitous in the League? Non-humans don't share the same levels of curiosity that we do.

INSKIPP

Well, this one does. I don't know. Maybe, he thinks it's time for us humans to be knocked off our perch after five thousand years. The Jetani tried it two-hundred years ago.

JIM

Yeah, and it almost caused their extinction.

INSKIPP

Anyway, you two leave tonight. Get acquainted, get packed and get lost.

FADE TO
WHITE

EXT. HYPERSPACE

FADE IN:

A huge, sleek starliner is cruising through the whirling vortices of HYPERSPACE. We watch its lustrous lines for several moments before we **CUT TO**

INT. STARLINER

JIM and ANGELINA are sitting in the first-class lounge of the STARLINER. JIM is sipping a scotch, while Angelina is reading papers pertaining to their mission. JIM is watching her intently.

JIM

Your nose wrinkles when you concentrate. Has anybody ever told you that?

ANGELINA

(not looking up)
Once. He's dead now.

JIM takes another sip of scotch.

JIM

Boyfriend? Husband? Accidental death? Did he fall down an elevator shaft? Did you kill him? Throw me a bone, Angie.

ANGELINA

(glancing up from her papers)
Angelina. Not Angie, Ange, Angelica or Angeleyes. Your attempts to engage me in small talk are futile.

ANGELINA returns to her reading and JIM finishes his drink, setting the glass down next to the bottle on the low table between them.

JIM

It's a long flight and Inskipp told us to get to know each other.

ANGELINA slaps the sheaf of papers down on the table and glares at JIM.

ANGELINA

(a little too loudly)
Fine! (calms a little) His name was Pepe, he was my boyfriend. No, I did not love him and, yes, I did kill him. Satisfied?

JIM

(smiling)
See? Now we're making progress. Why did you kill him? Did he beat you?

ANGELINA

(sighing and picking her papers back up)
No, he did not beat me. (long pause) He led the Special Corps straight to me, so I took my .75 recoilless and shot a hole in his forehead.

JIM

Yikes. So, before the Corps recruited you, what was it you did? Robberies? Assassinations? Grand Theft Auto?

ANGELINA ignores him, but her eyes betray her annoyance at JIM's line of questioning.

JIM

Never mind. I grew up on a small planet, ooh, I don't actually remember where or what it was called. (pause) Funny that. I had a loving mom and dad. Well, sort of. Did well at school, until I was expelled for embezzling the entire semester's lunch money. Stole my first aircar when I was sixteen. Ended up in prison at seventeen. Learned a trade... breaking and entering, safe-cracking, computer networking... the usual. The rest, as they say, is history.

ANGELINA glances from her papers.

ANGELINA

What did your parents think of your choice of lifestyle? I can't imagine they were impressed.

JIM

My dad threw me out when I was fifteen, after he went through my pockets one night and found I had more money than he did. I never went back.

ANGELINA

So they could be dead and you'd never know.

JIM looks down at his empty glass.

JIM

Yeah, I guess so. I missed mom at first, but The Life soon teaches you to break any ties. If the League or the Corps found out about my past, they'd have had my folks in an interrogation suite before they could say Gershtinkken. (pause) Was that my home planet? Rings a bell.

ANGELINA

Actually, no it wasn't. Here.

ANGELINA hands JIM a single sheet of paper. He grabs it and scans the text, his eyebrows rising.

JIM

Well, I never. (pause) Hang on! Is this it? My entire Special Corps dossier amounts to one sheet of paper?

ANGELINA smiles and retrieves the slightly crumpled leaf of data.

ANGELINA

Think of it as a compliment, Agent diGriz. You kept a low profile for years. Half of this intel was only retrieved in the last six months. That's how Inskipp tracked you down.

JIM

Jim. How thick is your file?

ANGELINA

Thick, Jim.

JIM

How thick?

ANGELINA

(using her thumb and forefinger to indicate several centimetres)
I didn't keep as low a profile. When you usurp the royal throne of Friebur and try to start a war with the neighbouring system, it kinda gets you noticed.

JIM is impressed. He leans back in his comfortable chair and whistles.

JIM

Wow. That I was not expecting. (pours himself another drink and one for ANGELINA too) So, seeing as we're working closely together on this assignment, what do I call you? Sir? Ma'am?

ANGELINA

Angelina.

JIM

Angelina what?

ANGELINA

(smiles slightly)
Just Angelina.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - CITTANUVO

FADE IN:

A starliner roars into view above the blue-green world of CITTANUVO. The twin suns of Beta Cygnus blaze in the background, the larger yellow sun appearing dominant, while the smaller, blue partner, some six hundred billion kilometers distant, appears as little more than a bright star.

We follow the starliner down through the atmosphere, passing through cloud layers until it emerges above a vast spaceport. It glides in to land at a passenger terminal and a docking tunnel extends towards the ship.

CUT.

INT. CITTANUVO SPACEPORT - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA casually walk down the tunnel and into the spaceport terminal, each carrying their own single bag. It resembles an airport, with thousands of people (and a few aliens, mostly carrying human luggage) jostling for space or reading the huge departure boards that are seemingly everywhere.

There is a lot of ambient noise and JIM and ANGELINA are speaking normally.

ANGELINA

You all set for our honeymoon, Mr Fodder?

JIM

You have no idea, Mrs Fodder.

ANGELINA

Don't get any ideas, agent. We're here on business.

JIM

(smiling and admiring her curves)
Of course, (beat) Mrs Fodder. By the way, did you know the local custom is for the wife to do anything her husband says?

ANGELINA

Try it and the Corps will need to recruit another crook.

JIM

Now you put it like that. There aren't many of us left.

(he looks around and decides to change the subject)

You know, I don't think is the best place to start looking for an illegal battlecruiser.

ANGELINA

(smiling)
No shit, Sherlock.

JIM

Who?

They disappear into the crowds and we CUT TO:

EXT. CITTANUVO SPACEPORT - DAY

An armoured ground vehicle pulls up outside the main entrance of the spaceport. Six guards leap out and form a protective barrier around the vehicle. Lettering on the vehicle says 'LEAGUE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION'

Another sextet of guards bring a hovering pallet out of a side door of the spaceport. The pallet contains dozens of bags of currency.

As they exit the spaceport, JIM notices the guards loading the money bags into the armoured vehicle. He whispers something to ANGELINA and she smiles mischievously. They head towards a nearby car rental booth.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CITTANUVO - CITY STREETS - DAY

FADE IN:

The armoured vehicle comes to a halt in front of an imposing building with the huge words 'LEAGUE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION' above the main entrance. The guards pile out and start carrying the money bags inside.

Across the street, JIM and ANGELINA watch patiently from their hired aircar. When the guards come back out, climb into their truck and drive away, JIM expertly drives the car across the street and parks it in the now-vacant space where the armoured truck had been. He pops the trunk and they climb out and head towards the double glass doors.

JIM

Remember, Mrs Fodder, in and out. No fireworks. No need for Homicide to bring body bags.

ANGELINA

(with a hint of disappointment)
Naturally.

JIM notices the tone in her voice and glances at her with worry. Was he doing the right thing? They enter the building.

CUT.

INT. CITTANUVO - LEAGUE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION - DAY

The interior of the building is large and airy. The money bags are piled near the door as a single GUARD begins carrying them, two at a time, through a security door.

JIM and ANGELINA enter and quickly scan the room with their eyes. ANGELINA pulls out a huge pistol and fires a single shot into the air. JIM almost jumps out of his shoes.

JIM

What the hell? I said no fireworks.

JIM catches his breath and fiddles with a data tablet.

JIM

Right, the security system's disabled. I just hope they didn't trigger it after you decide to shoot holes in the ceiling.

ANGELINA

(ignoring JIM and talking loudly to guard)

You, pass over all of that tax money you have extracted from the sheep-like suckers who populate this backward planet. Carry it outside and dump it in the trunk of the aircar. Don't try to run or I'll drill a hole in you big enough to fly a cruiser through.

The GUARD immediately begins to carry the bags outside, with ANGELINA following him. JIM grabs a couple of sacks and follows. A MAN watches with disbelief.

MAN #1

What are you doing?

JIM

(smiling)

Taking money.

(he reaches into the bag and removes a couple of wads of cash)

Why don't you have some yourself?

JIM tosses the money to the MAN, who looks around and then stuffs it inside his jacket. JIM carries his loot outside and tosses it into the trunk, slamming it shut.

ANGELINA

That's only half the haul!

JIM

It's enough. Let's go before anybody in there decides to be a hero.

JIM smiles at the GUARD, standing bemused nearby. He tosses him a wad of banknotes.

They climb into the aircar and JIM guns the engine, sending it skyward and away from the government building. The GUARD watches them fly away. He then looks at the wad of banknotes in his hand, smiles, stuffs it in his shirt and re-enters the building.

FADE OUT.

INT. CITTANUVO - HOTEL - NIGHT

FADE IN:

JIM and ANGELINA are sitting in their hotel room, a large penthouse suite at the most expensive hotel in the city. ANGELINA is looking at a holographic projection of the planet's surface, while JIM is mixing cocktails. On the floor are the bags of money, with wads of notes spilling all over the thick carpet.

ANGELINA

I don't understand how anybody could secretly build a Warlord class battlecruiser on a planet like this? They have blanket satellite surveillance. A project that size would be noticed by the League.

JIM

(ignoring her)
Lemon?

ANGELINA

What?

JIM

Slice of lemon in your drink? I call it 'The diGriz diZaster'.

ANGELINA smiles and nods. JIM drops a slice of lemon into the glass he is holding and hands it to ANGELINA. She sips the pink drink and coos quietly.

ANGELINA

Mmmm. Yummy. Maybe you should rename it 'The diGriz diLicious'.

JIM laughs. He joins her at the table and looks at the hologram while sipping his cocktail.

JIM

They couldn't even build a ship of that size in one of these remote, desert areas. It would still be seen from orbit. Underground?

ANGELINA shakes her head.

ANGELINA

No. There have been no large-scale underground operations for the last decade and all the existing underground facilities are clean.

JIM

I'm impressed. You really do your homework. How long have you been with the Corps?

ANGELINA

(suddenly serious)

Long enough. (pause) Look, I don't really like to talk about the past. Nothing personal. It's my problem, not yours.

She gets up and crosses to the panoramic window. Outside, brightly-illuminated aircars and taxis whoosh by as the city gets on with its nighttime life. She folds her arms and stares out of the window.

JIM

(from his seat)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry.

ANGELINA

I know. It's me.

(she turns to him with tears in her eyes)

I - I wasn't a good person when the Corps recruited me. In fact, I was probably the least good person in the entire League. The Corps saved me. Fixed me. Gave me purpose.

JIM looks unimpressed with her opinion of INSKIPP's Special Corps.

ANGELINA

You may think they're the bad guys, the cops. But they're not. There are real bad guys out there, Jim. People out there right now that used to be like me. (whispers) People who kill. Back there, at the tax building, it reminded me a little of how I used to be and how quickly and easily I slipped back into my old ways. We shouldn't have done it.

JIM

Nobody got hurt. The money's insured. The people of Cittanuvo won't suffer because their government lost a few million credits. I doubt word of the heist will reach even Inskipp in his asteroid.

JIM joins her at the window and puts an arm around her shoulder. He kisses her lightly on her head and they stare out of the window together for several seconds.

JIM

(shouts, making ANGELINA jump)
Asteroids! Shit!

He dashes back across to the holographic display.

JIM

Computer, display all the non-human colonies in this sector.

A star map replaces the ground atlas and a dozen red dots flash. JIM smiles.

JIM

See? All of these colonies are populated by non-humans, mostly Cittanuvans, as they were the original inhabitants of this system. But these three
(he points to a small cluster near the edge of the map)
are Jetani colonies, one on a planet and two on asteroids. The photo Inskipp showed me had the ship in a planetary dry-dock, so that leaves just one location
(he points to the outermost dot)
here. (pause) I wonder if we have enough money in those bags to buy a private ship?

ANGELINA smiles.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - JETANI COLONY PLANET

FADE IN:

A small spacecraft enters orbit around a barren, red world, pockmarked with craters and dominated by jagged mountain ranges.

CUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM guides the ship down into the atmosphere. ANGELINA is sitting beside him, monitoring her console.

JIM

Any sign we've been detected?

ANGELINA

No. According to Inskipp, this is a new colony. They only started terraforming the planet five years ago. The atmosphere's thin, but breathable. They have no orbital defence platforms or anything like that. In fact, they're pretty much defenceless.

JIM

(smiling)

Apart from the kilometre-long battleship they've got stashed somewhere.

A light flashes on ANGELINA's console.

ANGELINA

(pointing out of the window)

I'm getting a stronger reading over there.

CUT.

EXT. JETANI COLONY PLANET - DAY

The ship comes in to land on the outskirts of a small settlement. A ramp slides down and the airlock hisses open. JIM and ANGELINA exit the ship and make their way to the collection of prefabricated, single-storey structures.

A group of aliens gather in their path. They are clothed in simple garments, about two metres tall, slightly reptilian, with sinister-looking faces and sharp, needle-like teeth. They speak English, but with a guttural, hissing accent.

JETANI #1

No here, hooman. Go. Go.

JIM

(smiling and producing an official-looking badge)

I'm from the League Office of Non-Human Affairs. We need to know you're doing okay out here. Need anything?

(he looks around)

School, hospital, friggin' anything!
Just name it.

The JETANI look confused and begin speaking an alien language between themselves, the largest of them appearing particularly aggressive.

ANGELINA

Hey, (louder) HEY! Nobody gets eaten today, got that?

She shows them her pistol in its holster.

JIM
(quietly)
You speak Jetani?

ANGELINA
A little. I... once... dated one. Hey, you.
C'mere.

ANGELINA walks across to the largest of the aliens and with a single blow, knocks him out. Then she walks back to the main group.

ANGELINA
Okay. Now we talk. Who is in charge here? Him?
(she points to the unconscious Jetani. They shake their heads in unison)
Who then?

They all point to her. She turns and smiles at JIM, who shakes his head, nonplussed.

CUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM is sitting with his feet up on his pilot's console. ANGELINA is arguing in Jetani with one of the aliens. She shows him the photo of the battlecruiser, but he shakes his head and pushes it away. She angrily shoos him away.

ANGELINA
This little bastard knows something, but he's too afraid to say.

She slumps down in the co-pilot's seat and the alien scurries from the ship.

JIM
Of course he knows something. They all do. But look at them. They're not building a battlecruiser. They can hardly build an outhouse.

ANGELINA
Jim, that's very racist.

JIM
What? I didn't mean... Okay, show me where they're hiding the ship. This is a big planet. It could be anywhere in this hemisphere. I did a scan of the immediate area. There's nothing here.

ANGELINA

Then how do you account for the readings
I got as we approached?

There is a long pause as JIM thinks about it. Then realization dawns on his face. He begins firing up the ship's engines and the airlock hisses shut.

ANGELINA

What is it?

JIM

You were picking up residual readings
from the upper atmosphere. Readings from
the battlecruiser's engines. It's
launched. It could be anywhere by now.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ

FADE IN.

The SPECIAL CORPS HQ sits peacefully in the void of space. Beams of light suddenly criss-cross the screen and a squadron of SPACEFIGHTERS rockets into view. We follow the five of them and see that they bear the insignia of the Special Corps and they are attacking a massive, hulking BATTLECRUISER.

They swoop down and strafe the BATTLECRUISER with their energy cannons and fire missiles down onto the huge craft. They barely make a mark. A particle beam erupts from the BATTLECRUISER and slices across the sky, vaporizing each fighter in turn.

As it approaches the SPECIAL CORP HEADQUARTERS, the base's defence systems open fire. The BATTLECRUISER fires a volley of energy beams, each one surgically destroying the asteroid's weapons emplacements.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is sitting in the command chair on the BATTLECRUISER'S bridge. The room is dark and forboding with many flashing consoles, each operated by a JETANI WARRIOR in full combat armour. GAR-BAJ is Jetani, but completely unlike the inhabitants of the colony or, indeed, his own soldiers. He is wearing evil-looking battle armour and sports a huge scar that runs from the feathered crest on his head down to his jaw.

He watches the weapons of the Special Corps HQ fall silent and turns to his LIEUTENANT, RA-BISH. His voice is deep and guttural and he is speaking in Jetani.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

Ra-Bish, take a squad and retrieve the Helix device.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

At once, my lord.

RA-BISH salutes and leaves the bridge. GAR-BAJ returns to the viewscreen and a guttural chuckle issues from his throat.

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/COYPU'S LAB

RA-BISH and four Jetani WARRIORS materialize inside COYPU's laboratory. COYPU immediately crosses to a communicator on a wall.

COYPU

Security alert! Intruders have teleported into the lab section!

A clubbing blow from one of the WARRIORS sends him flying across the room.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

Cover the door as I prepare the Helix for teleportation.

The WARRIORS train their weapons on the lab's single set of double doors. RA-BISH crosses to a large, silver cylinder, covered in tubes and wires, and affixes a box to its side. He begins pressing buttons on the box.

The double doors burst open and Special Corps GUARDS flood in. They are immediately cut down by the energy bolts from the JETANI rifles. Another wave of GUARDS appears and one of the WARRIORS is hit by an energy bolt and slumps to the deck. This continues until only one WARRIOR remains.

RA-BISH

(into hand-held communicator - subtitled)

Teleport! Leave the disgraced fallen!

RA-BISH, the lone WARRIOR and the SILVER CYLINDER shimmer and vanish in a flash of light.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ

The BATTLECRUISER turns slowly in space and lumbers away from the asteroid base. Another squadron of FIGHTERS gives chase, but there is a bright flash from the huge vessel's engines and it disappears into hyperspace.

FADE OUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ - COYPU'S LAB

FADE IN:

PROFESSOR COYPU is sporting a large bandage on his head. INSKIPP, JIM and ANGELINA are inspecting the void where the silver cylinder once stood.

JIM

What the hell's a Helix?

COYPU

The Time Helix is a device that enables the operator to open a portal in hyperspace that leads to any point in our space/time continuum.

JIM

A time machine? You're joking, right?

COYPU

I never joke about my work, Agent diGriz.

(he mops his brow with a handkerchief)

We found it inside an ancient, derelict spacecraft in the outer systems about a year ago. Amazing technology, completely non-human and dating from the time of the Empire, some two-thousand years ago. This is terrible.

JIM crosses to COYPU, leaving ANGELINA and INSKIPP in a silent discussion.

JIM

Terrible? How? So they can look back through time. What good will it do them? They could talk to their ancestors, as you have?

COYPU

You misunderstand, my boy. If the Helix is correctly installed into a ship with a hyperdrive engine, it will be able to send that vessel back to any point in the past. Or forward to any point in the future

JIM

Ah... Imagine if they traveled back to the days before the Expansion and prevented humans from going on to dominate the galaxy. A Jetani Empire instead of a League? Gives me the willies just thinking about it.

INSKIPP and ANGELINA walk over to them, looking determined.

INSKIPP

One of the Jetani warriors survived. We've got him in a holding cell now. I think we should ask him about the intentions of his masters, don't you?

JIM

If he's willing to talk.

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/PRISON CELL

The JETANI WARRIOR is stalking his cage and occasionally pounding his clawed fists into the bars. JIM and ANGELINA enter and approach the angry alien. It roars and rushes at them, flinging its arms through the bars, its yellow eyes sparkling viciously. JIM and ANGELINA stop at a safe distance.

JETANI WARRIOR #1

Release me, hooman!

JIM

I don't think so, bright eyes. Now, my friend, why did your people steal the Time Helix?

JETANI WARRIOR #1

No speak. Kill or release.

ANGELINA

(pulling out her gun and speaking in Jetani - subtitled)
That can be arranged. But you won't die quickly. You will suffer terribly and the dishonour to your brood will be great.

JETANI WARRIOR #1

(subtitled)
The human female knows our ways. How is this possible?

ANGELINA

(subtitled)

Never mind how I know. Tell us what we need and I will kill you quickly. A warrior's death. What are your people planning to do?

The JETANI WARRIOR begins to laugh, the sound throaty and filled with malice.

JETANI WARRIOR #1

No matter. Soon hoomans no more. Hoomans of past dead. Make hoomans of now gone. Gar-Baj will rule. Jetani will be top species. (long pause) Kill now, hooman! You said.

ANGELINA raises her pistol and aims it at the alien. After several seconds, she slips it back into its holster.

ANGELINA

I lied. Come on, Jim.

ANGELINA and JIM leave the Prison Section.

CUT.

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/INSKIPP'S OFFICE

JIM, ANGELINA and COYPU are sitting in front of INSKIPP's desk. INSKIPP is staring at them intently, his fingers arched in front of his face.

ANGELINA

I did some research on this Gar-Baj character. It seems he was an extremely wealthy, highly-placed aristocrat and top general in the Jetani military before their surrender after the Deneb Skirmishes. He never forgave his government for surrendering to 'inferior humans', as he put it. Did I mention he was rich?

JIM

The Deneb Skirmishes? They were over two hundred years ago!

ANGELINA

The Jetani have very a long lifespan. Gar-Baj is three hundred and twenty-seven years old and that's only equivalent to middle age for humans.

JIM

(smiling)

I did not know that.

ANGELINA

According to the Jetani Ruling Council, Gar-Baj resigned his commission and disappeared eighty years ago. I suggest he used that time to slowly, very slowly, construct the battlecruiser from plans he found in the League Archive, available to all citizens.

JIM

Can't knock his tenacity. So, he has a grudge against the League, has the financial resources to build his doomsday machine and now a means to execute his chilling plan. Did I miss anything?

INSKIPP

I'm not sure we should believe the testimony of a Jetani warrior, particularly one that has nothing to gain.

JIM

But it was your idea for us to question it!

INSKIPP

Yes... and that may have been a mistake on my part.

(he leans back in his chair)

No, I think it is more likely that this Gar-Baj is going to launch an attack against the League naval spacedock on Cetus Gamma III. That was his last known heading.

JIM

When did you turn from Inskipp the Uncatchable into Inskipp the Deluded Asshole?

INSKIPP

(shouting)

How dare you! I should have you...

JIM

Killed? Fine. Go ahead. Because if I'm right and that warrior was telling the truth, it won't mater anyway. Pretty soon, we'll all wink out of existence when that battlecruiser goes back and turns our ancestors into piles of smouldering ash!

All falls quiet in the room. It last for several long seconds.

COYPU

(nervously)

If I may add?

(he pulls out a small holographic emitter and sets it on INSKIPP's desk. A stellar map appears in front of them)

If we project Gar-Baj's course beyond the Cetus Gamma system, it will bring them here.

(a red dot begins flashing)

This is a dead system now, but historians believe the third planet was once the original birthplace of humanity.

INSKIPP

Another one? What's it called?

JIM

I've heard about this. It's called Dirt or Earth or something. (pause) I'm not totally convinced either, but think about it. What other use could Gar-Baj have for the Time Helix? Why destroy a naval shipyard now, when he can destroy his enemies before they achieved stellar travel?

ANGELINA

Sir, the battlecruiser is big, but it's slow. It will take it several days to reach the planet Dirt.

JIM

Or Earth.

ANGELINA

Whatever. Jim and I could use our ship, get there before them, slip aboard and destroy the Helix.

INSKIPP

It's that simple, is it?

JIM

Well, sort of. What other choice do we have?

INSKIPP

How do you intend to 'slip aboard'? You saw what that ship did to our defences. It would destroy you before you even got close.

JIM smiles and looks to COYPU.

JIM

That's where the professor comes in.

FADE OUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

FADE IN:

GAR-BAJ is sitting in his command chair, watching the swirling vortices of hyperspace on the viewscreen. RA-BISH approaches and salutes.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

My lord, the Time Helix was retrieved undamaged and our scientists are working to integrate it into the ship's hyperdrive. (pause) Unfortunately, that means we will have to exit hyperspace.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

No. We cannot give the humans time to reach Earth before us. We shall remain in hyperspace.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)

But, sire, the danger...

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

You have your orders, lieutenant.

RA-BISH
(subtitled)
Yes, my lord.

RA-BISH leaves the bridge and we focus on GAR-BAJ's yellow eyes.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. SPECIAL CORPS ASTEROID HQ/COYPU'S LAB

We DISSOLVE to a pair of yellow, Jetani eyes. We pull back to reveal a Jetani lying on a bed in COYPU's laboratory. COYPU is examining the creature's eyes and teeth with a small flashlight. ANGELINA and INSKIPP are standing close by.

COYPU
Excellent! Better than I expected. Show me your teeth.

JIM
(muffled and displaying a set of sharp, Jetani teeth)
Better than you expected? I can hardly breathe and my eyes are in agony with these damn contact lenses.

COYPU
But you look like a Jetani, my boy. In particular, you are identical in appearance to the warrior in the prison section. That's all that matters. The servomotors in the snout are translating your lip movements perfectly. Now where have I put my probe?

JIM sits upright in bed and stretches out his new, reptilian arms. He picks up a small mirror from a tray beside the bed and looks at his reptilian facial features.

JIM
I look like shit.
(he presses his new skin with a clawed finger)
What is this crap, anyway?

ANGELINA
It's Synthetic Non-allergic Organic Tissue. Coypu invented it.

JIM

S.N.O.T., eh? And I wouldn't push the 'non-allergic' aspect either. I'm itching like hell. (to ANGELINA) How did I let you talk me into this?

JIM begins scratching his neck and COYPU swots his hand sharply.

COYPU

Don't scratch. The itching will subside in time.

(he jabs a needle into JIM's arm, making him yelp in pain)

This will temporarily alter your blood chemistry to mimic that of the Jetani warrior. In case they decide to perform a blood test on you.

JIM

(panicking)

Alter my blood chemistry? What the hell?

COYPU pats JIM on the shoulder gently.

COYPU

It will only last a week or so and then your blood will return to normal. (long pause) It may be painful when you urinate.

JIM

Aww, doc!

COYPU ignores him and attaches a small device to JIM's temple. Lights flash on it and JIM convulses, causing ANGELINA to step forward with concern. Then JIM relaxes and the lights stop flashing.

JIM

(in Jetani - subtitled)

What the hell was that?

ANGELINA grins at COYPU.

COYPU

I have implanted the Jetani language patterns from our friend downstairs into your cortex. You should now be fluent in the standard Jetani tongue.

ANGELINA

(subtitled)

Can you understand me?

JIM

(in English)

Perfectly, but I think you should have been coated in the green stuff. You speak the language already.

COYPU

The Jetani culture is male-dominated. Females are not allowed to serve in the military or even leave the family brood nest. Although they do not carry those prejudices over to non-Jetani females and have been known to take human lovers.

ANGELINA shuffles nervously from foot to foot.

JIM

Figures. (pause) Do we know this joker's name? What if I'm asked for it?

ANGELINA

(smiling)

I'm sure you can work around that, Slippery Jim.

COYPU points to a screen across the room.

COYPU

The warrior's armour is behind that screen. I think we should see how you look in it.

JIM climbs off the bed and staggers across to the screen

JIM

Hells bells, doc, what now?

COYPU

The dizziness will pass. It's the chemical changes in your blood affecting your inner ear.

JIM

If you say so. (to ANGELINA) No peeking!

ANGELINA smiles wickedly and then affects an innocent expression, as if to say, 'As if I would.'

INSKIPP

Angelina, are you sure you want to go through with this? It all seems a little too risky.

ANGELINA

'Risk is part of the game.' You told me that when I was recruited. Besides, we have no choice.

JIM steps out from behind the screen, looking resplendent in the ornate Jetani armour. He does a twirl and ANGELINA giggles and applauds.

JIM

Well?

ANGELINA

Amazing. (she kisses COYPU on the cheek)
You're a genius, professor.

COYPU

Unfortunately, I am painfully aware of that fact, my dear. (to JIM) Now, Agent diGriz, these non-human language implants are delicate little beasts and tend to be absorbed rather quickly into the general cortex. You'll need to complete your infiltration within the next fifty-two hours.

JIM

Or what?

COYPU

You don't really want to know, my boy.

CUT.

EXT. HYPERSPACE

A HUGE EXPLOSION rocks the BATTLECRUISER as it rockets through hyperspace. Huge chunks of the ship's hull are flung in all directions and the swirling clouds of hyperspace dissipate as the ship returns to sub-light speeds.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is furious. He leaps from his command chair and grabs RA-BISH by the throat.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

What have your fools done? Go down and kill those responsible for this!

He flings RA-BISH across the bridge and the lieutenant scurries from the room through a sliding door. Another officer wheels up and salutes.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

(subtitled)

We have entered normal space near the
Cetus Gamma system, my lord.

GAR-BAJ crosses to a flickering console and examines the
data flashing across the screen

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

Good, the League Naval Dockyard has not
detected us. Hold this position for now.
If any League ships approach, destroy
them. (he jabs a button) Ra-Bish, get
that hyperdrive operational or your
brood line ends here!

CUT.

EXT. HYPERSPACE

JIM'S SPACESHIP glides serenely through the whirling
vortices of hyperspace. Its hull is pitted with holes and
streaked with scorch marks.

CUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM is piloting the ship. ANGELINA is sitting in the co-
pilot's chair, admiring his reptilian disguise.

JIM

You know, I hope they are fooled by the
fake damage to my ship.

ANGELINA

Our ship. I have an equal stake.

JIM

(smiling wryly)

Of course. (starts scratching his neck)
Ow! This fake bloody skin is a
nightmare. And I look like a walking set
of luggage.

ANGELINA

(smiling)

It's a good look for you. Particularly
the eyes. Very sexy. I've always had a
thing for Jetani eyes.

JIM

(looking up from the controls)

You know, you worry me sometimes.

ANGELINA laughs and gets from her chair. She crosses the cabin, opens a cupboard and pulls out two plastic beakers. She then crosses to a cabinet and extracts a large bottle of something green. She pours a generous amount into each beaker, replaces the bottle and hands one beaker to JIM.

JIM puts the cup to his mouth and immediately spills the liquid down his chin.

JIM

Oh, for crying out loud. I'll never get used to this!

ANGELINA coolly slips a straw into the beaker and JIM slurps merrily.

ANGELINA

You know, Jim. Inskipp was right about one thing.

JIM

(still slurping)

Hmm?

ANGELINA

This mission has a very low chance of success.

JIM

That's why he's contacted Admiral Lewis and had the League Navy start searching for Gar-Baj. If they drop out of hyperspace at any time, they'll get a heck of a shock.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE

Three LEAGUE FRIGATES roar into view, heading towards the BATTLECRUISER, which is still in normal space.

CUT.

INT. FRIGATE BRIDGE

The bridge of the lead FRIGATE is dark and somber. Human officers go about their duties with quiet efficiency. The captain is pacing nervously, though.

CAPTAIN

Hail them again.

An officer presses some buttons on his console.

OFFICER #1

No response, sir. Scans indicate they are charging weapons and screens.

The CAPTAIN stops pacing and sits in his command chair.

CAPTAIN

Activate defence systems.

OFFICER #1

Yes, sir. Systems ready. (pause) Sir,
the battlecruiser is in weapons range.

CAPTAIN

Very well, have the flotilla open fire.
Don't stop until that ship is in pieces.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE

The NAVY SHIPS begin bombarding the BATTLECRUISER with energy beams and missiles. The massive vessel's defensive screens are not dented by the onslaught and three powerful particle beams stretch out into space, slicing each FRIGATE in two.

One of the Navy ships explodes, the remaining two drifting helplessly, leaving ship fragments, atmosphere and bodies in their wake.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

A JETANI OFFICER runs up to GAR-BAJ and salutes.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

(subtitled)

Hyperdrive restored, sir. Helix fully
installed and operational.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

Excellent. Resume course for Earth.
Maximum velocity.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE

The BATTLECRUISER glides through the remains of the NAVY FRIGATES and zips off into hyperspace, leaving death and destruction behind it.

FADE OUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM is sleeping in the bunk area that adjoins the cockpit. He has a blanket over him and murmurs quietly. ANGELINA is at the flight controls. Hyperspace whirls outside the windows, casting an eerie, purple glow across ANGELINA's beautiful face.

She sets the controls to AUTOPILOT and rises from the pilot's seat. She stretches and crosses to the sleeping area. She watches JIM snoring slightly through his reptilian nose and smiles.

She sits on the bunk, waits a few seconds, then slides under the blanket beside JIM. His eyes flicker open and he looks startled at ANGELINA.

ANGELINA

(grinning)

How much of this green stuff did Coypu cover you with?

(we see her hand moving under the blanket and JIM catches his breath)

Not everything...

ANGELINA giggles and pulls the blanket over both of them.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

FADE IN:

The planet below us is not the EARTH we know. It is a barren, dead rock, pockmarked with craters and only retaining a tenuous, poisoned atmosphere.

The BATTLECRUISER looms into view, its engines booming. We fly around the massive, heavily-armed vessel, taking in its menacing bulk. Then we glide away to focus on a small spacecraft. This is JIM'S SPACESHIP, waiting patiently for the Jetani to arrive.

We swoop in to the cockpit and see JIM in his Jetani disguise and ANGELINA through the cockpit window. We pass through the glass and come to a rest behind JIM and ANGELINA, looking over their shoulders.

ANGELINA

They're charging weapons.

JIM presses a button on his console.

JIM

(subtitled and somewhat theatrical)
Mighty Gar-Baj, I bring a prisoner from
the human enemy. I captured her and
escaped from their fortress. Allow me to
dock and I shall convey this gift to
thee.

ANGELINA

(mouthing)
Thee?

JIM shrugs and flicks off the communicator panel. They WAIT
patiently for several seconds, the only noise in the cockpit
that of the sensors pinging quietly and the low throbbing of
the engines.

GAR-BAJ

(O.S. subtitled)
Bring the human aboard.

JIM smiles and grabs the flight controls.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

JIM'S SPACESHIP manoeuvres around the huge warship. A set of
massive doors slide open and the small ship glides into the
BATTLECRUISER'S docking bay. The bay's huge doors then slide
shut with a loud bang.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER ENGINE ROOM

RA-BISH is overseeing several JETANI SCIENTISTS as they make
final checks on the TIME HELIX, now attached to the
BATTLECRUISER'S hyperdrive engine.

He nods to one of the SCIENTISTS and crosses to a
communication panel, pressing a button on its surface.

RA-BISH

(subtitled)
My lord, the Helix is ready. Temporal
coordinates are set and stable. The
human security scan has been converted
for Jetani DNA. We can jump on your
order.

GAR-BAJ

(O.S. subtitled)
Good work, lieutenant. You may proceed.

RA-BISH turns to a console. A screen has the text (in English - it's an old, human battlecruiser, remember): DNA IDENT REQUIRED. Below this is an icon of a human hand. RA-BISH presses his scaly hand against the screen and the text changes to: DNA IDENT RECOGNIZED - TEMPORAL JUMP INITIATING.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER shimmers in space, then collapses in on itself, leaving nothing to suggest it had ever been there.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - DOCKING BAY

JIM and ANGELINA are walking away from JIM'S SPACESHIP when the SCREEN SHIMMERS and they stagger for a moment. They look to each other, shocked.

JIM

Shit. They've used the Helix.

ANGELINA

We're out of time. Literally.

They DASH out of the DOCKING BAY only to be met by a squad of heavily-armed JETANI WARRIORS. Their weapons are aimed directly at JIM and ANGELINA.

JETANI WARRIOR #2

(in broken English)

Surrender, hooman.

JIM

(subtitled)

Have no fear, thee. Thy hooman ist thou prisoner. I am to take her to our lord, Gar-Baj.

ANGELINA stares at JIM with a bemused look. JETANI WARRIOR #2 also seems puzzled. He glares at JIM for several seconds then strikes JIM across the temple with the butt of his plasma rifle, sending him reeling. He grunts an order and the remaining WARRIORS grab JIM and ANGELINA and drag them away.

FADE OUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

EARTH hangs in space, a beautiful, blue-green orb. We zoom in slowly to reveal the International Space Station. We continue to move in to a small, round window and an astronaut peering out.

CUT.

INT. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

An UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT floats, in zero gravity, over to his UNNAMED AMERICAN colleague looking out of the ISS observation window. The interior of the station is brightly-lit and they are wearing light clothing.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT
(with a thick, Russian accent)
What is it? Do you see something out there?

UNNAMED AMERICAN ASTRONAUT
I'm not sure. It was like the stars twinkled.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT
(smiling and patting his colleague on the shoulder)
The stars don't twinkle up here, my friend. Maybe it was moisture on the glass...

There is a brilliant flash and the BATTLECRUISER shimmers into existence, filling the window's field of view.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT
(in Russian)
Shit! What in God's name is that?

They both reel back from the window, the UNNAMED AMERICAN ASTRONAUT pulling on a headset. The UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT does likewise.

UNNAMED AMERICAN ASTRONAUT
Houston! Houston , do you read me?

A burst of static has him tearing the headset off. It floats away in zero gravity. He looks to his colleague.

UNNAMED RUSSIAN COSMONAUT
Korolyov? Are you receiving? An unidentified spacecraft has appeared.

A similar burst of static makes him wince and he, too, removes his headset.

They look to each other, unable to comprehend what is happening. They float back to the window and gawp at the massive BATTLECRUISER.

UNNAMED AMERICAN COSMONAUT
Maybe they're friendly?

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

JIM and ANGELINA are shoved onto their knees in front of GAR-BAJ. He growls at them menacingly. RA-BISH enters the bridge and appears surprised at the presence of the humans. He recovers quickly and assumes his station.

JIM

(subtitled)

My lord, I beseech thee. I am but a humble servant of thou divine might.

ANGELINA

(whispering in English)

What the hell are you doing, Jim? What's with all the thees and thous?

JIM

(whispering in English)

I'm speaking like a Jetani.

ANGELINA

(whispering in English)

You're speaking like a Jetani retard!

GAR-BAJ

(in perfect English)

He is attempting to make me look like a fool, Special Corps Agent Angelina, (beat) isn't it? I suspect your Professor Coypu tried to imprint the Jetani language into your friend's cortex. He should know better.

ANGELINA

How do you know who I am?

GAR-BAJ simply smiles at ANGELINA, his needle-like teeth glinting in the semi-darkness between his reptilian lips.

GAR-BAJ

If he was the genius he claims, Coypu would have known that language imprints tend to degrade quickly, resulting in garbled nonsense.

ANGELINA

The Corps have been using the technology for years.

GAR-BAJ

But not on the Jetani. Our language is (pause) bothersome. (he smiles again)

GAR-BAJ looks down at JIM, grips the feathered crest on the top of JIM'S head and pulls with force. The fake skin tears at the neck and peels away, leaving JIM looking very human, save for his yellow, Jetani contact lenses.

GAR-BAJ

You think this pathetic mask could fool us?

JIM

(sarcastically in English)
No blood test, then?

GAR-BAJ ignores him and points to the viewscreen and barks an order in Jetani. An image of the ISS in low Earth orbit appears.

GAR-BAJ

See, Agent diGriz. The planet Earth. Ancestral home of humankind. Birthplace of the most insidious plague in galactic history.

JIM

You mean the planet Dirt?

GAR-BAJ

(screaming and sticking his face close to JIM'S)
EARTH, you stoopid hooman!

JIM

Your accent's slipping, Garby.
(he gets to his feet)
Okay. You've made your point. I'm sure that, under the circumstances, the League will listen to any of your demands...

GAR-BAJ smacks JIM with a heavily-armoured forearm and JIM is sent flying across the bridge. JIM shakes his head, blood seeps from his lower lip. He wipes it with the back of his still-reptilian hand, realizes this and rips off the synthetic skin and plucks out the contact lenses.

GAR-BAJ

The League does not exist. It never will.

JIM blinks several times, gets up and casually walks back to GAR-BAJ.

JIM

So, you destroy mankind before they reach the stars. Change history. I've read about this in science-fiction books. Never works out for the bad guys.

GAR-BAJ

We will see, diGriz.
(turns to RA-BISH)
Destroy that station.

RA-BISH hesitates and glances momentarily at ANGELINA. GAR-BAJ casts him a simmering glare. RA-BISH barks an order to an underling in Jetani.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION is dwarfed by the hulking mass of the BATTLECRUISER. A searing particle beam lances out, slicing through the station. Oxygen and fuel tanks explode as the beam continues cutting. Within seconds, nothing is left of the ISS but spinning debris and a severed arm with an American flag patch on its sleeve.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

JIM is seething. He tries to rush GAR-BAJ, but two WARRIORS grab his arms. He struggles, but their grip on him is too tight. ANGELINA looks on, seemingly maintaining her cool composure.

JIM

You murdering bastard!

GAR-BAJ watches the remains of the ISS for several seconds, then turns to his human captives.

GAR-BAJ

Murderer? How many innocent Jetani were murdered in our war with the League?

JIM

You started that war, Gar-Baj! Your leader's lust for power almost destroyed your race. He used civilians, females and broodlings, as shields, placed them in harm's way. You were there! You saw what happened!

GAR-BAJ

Yes, I was there. I saw my great race humbled and defeated by a screeching tribe of primates. Before you humans, we were the only power in the galaxy. Our technology was centuries beyond yours.

(he smiles grimly)

Who do you think constructed the Time Helix?

JIM looks shocked. He shrugs off the WARRIORS, but remains in his position. GAR-BAJ signals for them to retreat and they take a single step back.

JIM

The derelict that the Corps found was Jetani?

GAR-BAJ

Your race is not the only one with a long history, human! It was the *Black Sword*, our flagship,

(he raises his arms, indicating the BATTLECRUISER around them)

twice the size of this crude, human vessel and five times more powerful.

DISSOLVE
TO:

EXT. SPACE - ASTEROID FIELD

We are looking at a huge WARSHIP being constructed on a large ASTEROID. The inky-black sky is filled with many more chunks of rock. GAR-BAJ provides a voice-over for this segment.

GAR-BAJ

(V.O.)

The *Black Sword* would have been our killer stroke against your empire over two-thousand years before you were born. If completed, her captain would have used the Helix and taken her back in time to your past and destroyed your world, thus ensuring our domination of the stars. But we were betrayed.

A FLEET OF WARLORD CLASS BATTLECRUISERS drops out of hyperspace above the ASTEROID and immediately begins pummeling the JETANI WARSHIP. Huge explosions rip across the ASTEROID and the WARSHIP is dislodged from its construction moorings, crashing down onto the rocky surface below. Their mission successful, the BATTLECRUISERS vanish back into hyperspace.

GAR-BAJ

(V.O.)

Developing the Time Helix had consumed our resources to breaking point. It was our last hope for victory. Our fleets were decimated by your human numbers and the story of the *Black Sword* passed into myth.

DISSOLVE
TO:

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ stares out at Earth.

GAR-BAJ

Soon the human germ will be gone. (turns to RA-BISH) Begin targeting the major population centres.

RA-BISH

My lord, scans show that the larger cities are several kilometres in size. The particle beams will require time to fully charge.

GAR-BAJ

Time is something we have plenty of, lieutenant. Proceed.

RA-BISH casts a glance at JIM and ANGELINA. JIM notices the look in RA-BISH'S eyes and steps forward.

JIM

Gar-Baj, the humans of this time number in the billions. They are spread over the entire planet. How can you possibly hope to destroy them all?

GAR-BAJ turns from the viewscreen, his yellow eyes glinting.

GAR-BAJ

Oh, I don't intend committing genocide. I think a billion or so deaths will be enough to dissuade them from reaching for the stars.

RA-BISH

Weapons charging, my lord. If you permit, I need to check on the status of the Helix.

GAR-BAJ nods and RA-BISH exits the bridge, again glancing towards ANGELINA and JIM.

ANGELINA

What about us? Why don't you just kill us now and get it over with.

GAR-BAJ smiles menacingly.

GAR-BAJ

I have no intention of killing you. Yet.

GAR-BAJ gestures with a hand and two of the WARRIORS grab JIM and ANGELINA and drag them from the bridge.

GAR-BAJ turns his attention back to the viewscreen. In the distance, several small points of light appear.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - CORRIDOR

The WARRIORS frog march JIM and ANGELINA down a long, dark corridor. They are side-by-side with the WARRIORS behind them.

JIM

(whispering)

Did you notice Gar-Baj's lieutenant?

ANGELINA nods with the tiniest of smiles.

ANGELINA

He didn't seem to like the orders he was given. We need to get down to the engine room.

JIM winks at her and they continue walking. Suddenly, JIM trips and sprawls on the floor. One of the WARRIORS stands over him, aiming his weapon at JIM. He grunts something in Jetani, but before he can finish, JIM has kicked the rifle away and taken the WARRIORS legs out from under him.

ANGELINA also acts quickly in the confusion, grabbing the other WARRIOR'S head and twisting it violently. There is a sickening crack and the alien slumps to the deck.

JIM, in the meantime, is rolling about with the first WARRIOR. The stronger alien soon gets the upper hand and clasps his sharp claws around JIM'S throat.

JIM begins to change a shade of purple when an energy blast rings out and the WARRIOR slumps forward. JIM rolls the dead alien off him, puffing and panting. He sees ANGELINA standing with a Jetani rifle.

JIM

(panting)

Thanks.

ANGELINA

(smiling)

No problem.

ANGELINA helps JIM to his feet and they set off down the corridor.

JIM

Now, where the hell is the engine room?

ANGELINA

The schematics I memorised said it was at the back of the ship. We can use the teleporter to get there quickly. There's a station this way.

They duck down another corridor and enter a small, dimly-lit chamber. At the centre is a square, glowing pad and beside that, on the wall, is a control panel.

JIM

And you memorised how to work this, I hope?

ANGELINA

Mostly.

JIM

Oh, what the hell.

They step onto the pad and ANGELINA presses a single button, marked 'ENGINE ROOM'. JIM rolls his eyes and prepares for teleportation.

They begin to shimmer and fade, but the room rocks violently and sparks fly from the control panel. Then they are gone.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is laughing out loud as fantastically brilliant explosions overload the viewscreen.

GAR-BAJ

Look at them. They fling arrows at us.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My Lord, they are firing small nuclear missiles. Our shields are holding, but we have some minor systems being affected.

The explosions die down and the viewscreen returns to normal, displaying Earth once more.

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)

My lord, the weapons are charged and the city they call Tokyo has been targeted.
(pause) However, I think...

GAR-BAJ

Fire!

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER slowly turns in space, its main, forward guns trained on the planet below. Four searing green particle beams reach out from the ship and slice through the atmosphere. The beams are constant for several seconds.

Far below, the city of TOKYO ceases to exist.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ watches the destruction of Tokyo with satisfaction.

GAR-BAJ

(not turning from the viewscreen)

Set course for the next largest city.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Yes, my lord. We will be in firing position in seventeen minutes.

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)

My lord, the weapons require several minutes to refresh after a sustained discharge.

GAR-BAJ

Very well, lieutenant. (turns to the JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER) Are the humans settled in the brig?

The OFFICER checks his console and his eyes widen. He looks up at GAR-BAJ nervously.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My lord, they have escaped.

CUT.

EXT. RACHEL, NEVADA - STATE ROUTE 375 - DAY

The sun is blazing down on the Nevada desert. A highway stretches into the distance in both directions, its black surface dusty with blown sand. A green road sign declares that it is 'EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY 375'. Not far from the road is a small collection of white, one-storey buildings. This is the town of Rachel.

Beside the road sign, a small dust devil begins to form. It whirls and eddies. Then electrical fire reaches out, sparking against the sign. There is an audible pop and JIM and ANGELINA appear, coughing and wheezing.

JIM

(doubled over)

What the hell happened?

He looks up, scanning the area with his eyes.

JIM

Er, this isn't the engine room. Which button did you push again?

ANGELINA

Ohhhhh dear.

She pulls a small data pad out of her pocket and begins tapping the screen.

JIM

That's all you have to say? 'Ohhhhh dear'? (he looks around, sees the road sign) Were they expecting us?

ANGELINA

(reading from her data pad)

Crap. There was an explosion on the ship just as we teleported. We really should be dead. How did we end up here?

JIM

Where's here?

ANGELINA

(looking around)

At a guess, I'd say we're on the planet Dirt.

JIM

Earth.

ANGELINA gives him a sarcastic smile. She sees Rachel in the near distance and points it out to JIM.

ANGELINA

Well, I guess we head over there and talk to the locals. See if we can find a way back on to the battlecruiser.

As they begin walking towards Rachel, a huge truck roars past, blaring its horn and startling them.

JIM

What the hell?

ANGELINA

(her nose wrinkling)

Oh, that stinks. What are they using for fuel?

JIM

Probably some form of simple fusion engine.

They watch the truck pull to a halt outside a nearby building.

They continue walking and Rachel grows larger in front of them. They see a building with a sign outside identifying it as 'The Little A'Le'Inn'. Several automobiles and a truck are parked in the lot in front of the building.

JIM and ANGELINA approach the building and a man exits, holding a burger and a bottle of Coke. He looks at JIM, who is in his Jetani armour, and ANGELINA, in her slinky, black catsuit, and shakes his head. He climbs into the truck and begins eating his lunch as JIM and ANGELINA stare at him through his open window.

After several seconds, he sighs and looks down at them.

TRUCK DRIVER

Look, I get it. Your costumes are very good. Now can I eat in peace?

JIM

Sir, I apologise for staring. (he looks down at his armour) And for my frankly ridiculous get-up, but there is a rational explanation. You see, we were on the Jetani battlecruiser and accidentally teleported..

The TRUCK DRIVER shakes his head and fires up the truck's engine.

TRUCK DRIVER

(to himself as he drives away)
Unbelievable. Every damn place I go...

JIM and ANGELINA watch as the truck disappears into the distance, dust plumes in its wake.

ANGELINA

What an asshole.

JIM

Yeah, he was very rude.

ANGELINA

Not him, you idiot. You! This is Earth before they made contact with off-world non-humans.

JIM

(pointing to the sign up the road)
But the sign?

ANGELINA rolls her eyes and heads off to the building from where the TRUCK DRIVER emerged. JIM follows her, scratching the remains of the fake skin on his neck.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER reorients itself again, its weapons now pointing down to a new location on the planet's surface. The particle beams reach out once more.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is seated in his command chair. His satisfaction with destroying another city is tempered by the loss of his human prisoners.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Mexico City is destroyed, my lord.
Another wave of missiles are
approaching.

Explosions rock the ship, once again overloading the viewscreen. A bank of consoles at the rear of the bridge erupts in a shower of sparks.

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)
My lord, the cumulative effects of the nuclear explosions are having consequences. Our shields are down to ninety-three percent. Weapons will take longer to recharge by a factor of thirty percent.

GAR-BAJ

Very well, Ra-Bish. (to JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER) Target the next wave of missiles when they appear. Ensure that they do not detonate close to the ship.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My lord, our defensive batteries are inoperable due to the energy requirements of the main guns.

GAR-BAJ

Move us to a higher orbit, out of range of their missiles.

CUT.

INT. RACHAEL, NEVADA - LITTLE A'LE'INN - DAY

ANGELINA pulls open the door and steps inside the cool interior of the Little A'Le'Inn. JIM follows her, his armour clanking in the quiet of the inn. It is surprisingly light inside. At the far end of a long counter are shelves with various types of 'alien and UFO' merchandise and clothing.

There are only three (3) people inside, two (2) customers, both male (JOHN and RICH), seated together on stools by the counter and a woman (PAT) behind the counter. PAT sees JIM and ANGELINA and smiles knowingly.

A television is quietly playing a sporting event in the background.

PAT

Come on in, sweethearts. Have a seat.
(she points to some tables away from the counter) What can I getcha?

JIM and ANGELINA cautiously move to the tables and sit down, facing the door. PAT waddles over with a notepad and pen. As she does so, JOHN ducks around the counter and increases the volume on the TV so he can hear the game.

PAT

John, don't go behind the counter! (she looks to JIM) Men! (smiling genuinely) I recommend the 'Alien Burger' and a beer. Are you drivin'? (they shake their heads). Beer it is then.

PAT looks JIM up and down, the smile never leaving her face.

PAT

Sweetheart, I've seen some great costumes over the years, but yours is surely the best yet. You folks over from the convention in Laughlin?

JIM

No, ma'am. (he spies the clothing racks at the back of the inn) Actually, this stuff is making me itch. How much for some native dress?

PAT

Native dress? My, you are taking it seriously, aincha? Well, you've come to the right place. We see all sorts of weird stuff in the sky round here. Spacecraft and such. Mostly from the base, we reckon. (she looks JIM up and down again) Shirt, pants and cap. Forty-five dollars for cash. Fifty if you're payin' by credit card.

ANGELINA pulls out a wad of League credits and shows them to PAT, who laughs without malice.

PAT

I'm sorry, hun. It's gotta be US dollars.

JIM

I'm afraid we don't have any local currency yet, ma'am.

PAT

Oh, just flown in from abroad, huh? I thought your accents were not from around these parts. (thinks for a moment) Tell you what, sweetheart. If you're done with your costume, I'll trade you for the clothes straight up and I'll throw in the burgers and beer too.

JIM smiles broadly and stands up.

JIM

You have a deal, ma'am.

PAT

(winks at JIM)

You can call me Pat, honey. Just go and select something you like. There's a changing room in the back. I'll be right back with your food.

PAT ambles away to the kitchen and JIM and ANGELINA cross to the racks of clothing.

JIM

I have no idea what to choose.

ANGELINA

Something inconspicuous.

JIM ogles at ANGELINA in her sleek, black catsuit and grins.

JIM

Maybe you should grab something while you're here.

ANGELINA

(whispering)

I will not be seen in native clothing. I would rather walk around naked.

JIM

Hell, yeah. (he grabs a denim shirt, jeans and a baseball cap with 'AREA 51' stencilled on the front) When on Gallinia Prime...

JIM slips into the changing room, leaving ANGELINA to peruse the various alien and UFO merchandise. JOHN sidles up beside her. He is wearing dirty work clothes and has grease on his face. He is obviously a mechanic of some sort.

JOHN

Looking at you, darlin', I'd say your one of them yoofoe nuts from Laughlin.

ANGELINA turns to him, her nose wrinkling.

ANGELINA

I'm sorry, a what nut?

JOHN

You know? U-F-O. Unidentified Flying Objects. Little green men?

JOHN points to the merchandise, most of which depicts the classic 'Grey' alien, with large, bulbous head and oversized, black eyes.

ANGELINA

Oh, those? I think they were called the Prellini. They were pretty much wiped out during the first Imperial Expansion.

JOHN eyes her suspiciously.

JOHN

Huh?

ANGELINA

Oh, I'm sorry. That has happened for you yet. Temporal mechanics wasn't my strong suit at the Special Corps training academy.

JOHN

Corps? You military? (turns to RICH)
Hey, Rich, I think this gal's from the
base. Haven't you been wantin' to talk
to one of them? Rich here runs a website
dedicated to (waggles his fingers in the
air) Area 51.

RICH puts down his beer and slides from his stool. He is
blond with blue eyes and quite handsome. He is wearing
almost identical clothes to the ones that JIM has just
chosen.

RICH

What's that, John?

JOHN

I think the lady and her beau are from
Groom Lake.

RICH

(to ANGELINA)

You from the base? You sure don't look
Air Force.

JIM emerges from the changing room and approaches the trio.
He looks RICH up and down and then checks out his own
clothes.

JIM

(extending a hand)

Jim diGriz. This is my partner,
Angelina.

RICH accepts JIM'S hand and shakes it firmly. JOHN looks on.

RICH

We were just asking your partner if you
were from the base.

JIM

I'm afraid I can't answer that.
Planetary Security.

RICH

You mean National Security.

JIM

(smiling)

That too.

They continue to stare at each other, mirror images of one
another.

ANGELINA

Oh, for Pete's sake. Rich, is it? Rich, Pat, mentioned spacecraft from the base. Can you show us how to reach it?

RICH looks nervous for a moment. JOHN begins sidling towards the counter, where a telephone sits.

RICH

Wait a minute. Who are you guys? If you're not from the base...

A news report suddenly flashes onto the television in the background, interrupting the game. They all turn in unison to watch.

NEWSREADER

(on TV)

This is a breaking news flash. The cities of Tokyo and Mexico City have been destroyed. Reports are sketchy, but survivors are speaking of green beams of light coming out of the sky and reducing the cities to ash.

JIM and ANGELINA look at each other in horror.

NEWSREADER

(on TV)

The quickly-formed emergency governments of both Japan and Mexico are meeting in session, but we understand from the State Department that terrorism has not been ruled out at this stage.

JOHN picks up the phone and dials. He speaks quietly and we cannot hear his words.

NEWSREADER

(on TV)

We can now bring you these exclusive images of the attack on Tokyo. The shots were taken from an airliner on approach to Narita National Airport. We must caution our viewers that what they are about to see may be disturbing.

The TV image flickers and we CUT TO fullscreen, shaky, uneven footage through an airliner window. It was shot using a cellphone. Far below, Tokyo is in darkness, the city's lights stretching to the horizon.

Suddenly, four intense, green energy beams appear, striking the ground and creating a huge wave of destruction across the night-time cityscape. We hear screams of horror from inside the plane and the footage shakes more wildly.

We hear the jet's engines strain as the pilot veers away from one of the particle beams. The beam passes very close, almost filling the window, and then the plane is safely by.

The NEWSREADER reappears, also FULLSCREEN

NEWSREADER

All flights into Tokyo and Mexico City have been rerouted to alternative airports. (he touches his ear) We... we are now going over to the White House, where a statement is about to be made.

We CUT TO to the WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM. We see the podium with the presidential seal. A man walks from the left and takes position behind the lectern. A caption on the Tv reads: 'JAMES MCDONALD - US SECRETARY OF STATE'

JAMES MCDONALD

Ladies and gentlemen. Please be seated. I shall make a short statement. There will be no questions. (he waits for the low murmuring to cease) At 12:05, Eastern Time, the International Space Station was destroyed by an unknown force. All personnel on board were killed. Our deep space radar detected a huge, alien vessel in orbit. (the room erupts and MCDONALD waits for calm) In conjunction with our allies around the world, including Russia and China, we launched ICBMs, but the alien ship was not, I repeat not destroyed. At 12:17, Eastern Time, Tokyo was destroyed by some kind of energy beams from the alien spacecraft. Seventeen minutes later, Mexico City was destroyed. Our analysts have determined that our attackers are targeting the largest urban centres, making Mumbai, India, and New York City the next targets. Steps have been taken to evacuate these locations. We urge that people remain calm. If you are in one of the larger cities, make your way safely out of the danger areas. Military personnel are being deployed to assist you.

JAMES MCDONALD (CONT.)

The president has been in discussions with our allies and the United Nations Secretary-General and a global state of martial law has been declared. Unless you live in the larger conurbations, please remain indoors. That is all.

CUT.

INT. RACHAEL, NEVADA - LITTLE A'LE'INN - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA stare at each other. JOHN replaces the phone's handset. RICH has sat back down on his stool, still staring at JIM and ANGELINA.

JOHN

Sheriff's on the way. I think he might want to talk to you two.

JIM

(to RICH)

We don't have time for this! You have to get us to that base.

RICH

I don't think I can. It's a long drive and there's security all round. If we go too far, they'll shoot on sight.

ANGELINA

(angry)

You stupid, backward ape! Don't you get it? Can't you see what's going on? We have to get to a spacecraft and get aboard that battlecruiser so we can stop more cities being destroyed!

RICH looks to JOHN, who shakes his head. RICH ponders for a long moment.

RICH

Okay, I'll get you as far as I can.

JOHN

No, Rich! The sherrif..

RICH

The sherrif can kiss my ass. (to JIM and ANGELINA) Come on.

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH hurry out of the inn, just as PAT appears from the kitchen with two plates filled with burgers and fries.

PAT

Here you go, sweethearts. (looks to see only JOHN) Where'd they go?

JOHN

To get themselves killed. (eyes food)
Those paid for?

CUT.

EXT. RACHEL, NEVADA - LITTLE A'LE'INN PARKING LOT - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA follow RICH to a dusty, terracotta Ford Escort, parked close to the inn's doors. The car's windows are rolled down. He pulls open the driver's door and climbs in. JIM and ANGELINA stand outside, looking in at the back seat, which is filled with UFO magazines and all manner of papers, CDs and cassette tapes.

RICH

Oh, just shove all that to the side.
(when they don't move) Get in. The door handle. There.

JIM pulls at the scratched, plastic handle and the door creaks open. He and ANGELINA climb in and, after shoving some RICH'S stuff to one side, sit down.

RICH starts the engine and begins backing out of the parking space. As he does so, the sheriff's car pulls in front of the inn and a large-bellied man, with a sheriff's badge and a large, wide-brimmed hat, climbs out. He enters the inn.

RICH

We'd better go before John tells the sheriff we just left.

RICH casually, but quickly, drives away, heading roughly south from the inn.

CUT.

INT. RICH'S CAR - DAY

JIM and ANGELINA seem uncomfortable in the backseat of RICH'S Escort.

RICH

(keeping his eyes on the road)
Sorry about the transport. As you might guess, researching secret bases doesn't pay too good.

ANGELINA

(moving a sticky burger wrapper
with thumb and forefinger)
Indeed. (whispering to JIM) Can we trust
this person?

JIM

(smiling - whispering)
Sure. He has great taste in clothing.
What's not to trust? (to RICH - speaking
normally) How far is it to the base?

RICH

About two miles to the Black Mailbox and
then another twenty-five miles or so to
the base itself. Not that we'll get that
far.

ANGELINA

(whispering)
What's a mile?

JIM shrugs.

JIM

How long will it take?

RICH

In this thing? If we don't get picked
up, maybe an hour. If we do get arrested
and they don't shoot us, it might be a
whole lot quicker!

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - EXTRATERRESTRIAL HIGHWAY - DAY

RICH steers the Ford past a white mailbox and onto a dirt
road that leads into the distance.

RICH

As you know, the black mailbox is
actually white now. The owners thought
it would confuse the ufologists.

JIM

The whatologists?

RICH

(speaking normally without fear)
You're aliens, aren't you? (pause) Don't
worry, I won't wig out or anything. Are
you Nordics? Or genetically-engineered
human-Grey hybrids?

ANGELINA

I have no idea what you're saying.

RICH

(smiling)

Sure.

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - ROAD TO AREA 51 - DAY

The Ford Escort zooms away, leaving a trail of billowing dust behind it.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER assumes its new position over Mumbai, India. We CLOSE UP on the huge particle cannons at the front of the ship and hear them cycling up. Suddenly an explosion rips through a section of the ship and one of the cannons shatters, huge sections of twisted metal drifting away into space.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - ENGINE ROOM

The engine room is a scene of panic. Fires blaze in several places and RA-BISH runs to an intercom, his face grimy and scratched. He presses the button on the intercom.

RA-BISH

My lord, there has been an accident. One of the cooling ducts ruptured as the main guns cycled. We have many dead down here. I also think one of the forward cannons has been damaged.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is furious. He leaps from his command chair and stalks across to an engineering console. We see a diagram of the ship with several red areas highlighting critical damage.

GAR-BAJ

What happened, Ra-Bish? How could those puny human missiles cause this kind of damage?

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)

I do not know, sire. We are effecting repairs, but it will be several hours before we can fire again.

GAR-BAJ thumps the console, cracking the clear covering.

GAR-BAJ

Work quickly, Ra-Bish, or your mate will never lay eggs again.

The JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER appears at GAR-BAJ'S side, holding a data tablet.

GAR-BAJ

What is it?

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

(handing GAR-BAJ the tablet)

I don't think it was the humans that caused the damage, my lord.

GAR-BAJ looks at the tablet. His yellow eyes narrow and he hisses between his needle-like teeth.

GAR-BAJ

Sabotage! We have a traitor on board!

He slams his fist down on the console again, this time smashing right through the covering and causing flashing sparks to erupt.

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - ROAD TO AREA 51 - DAY

RICH'S car zips by a sign, stating that they are entering a restricted area.

CUT.

INT. RICH'S CAR - DAY

RICH points to a white, SUV parked on a hillside.

RICH

See that? Camo-dudes. They'll have informed their superiors that we're here. Expect us to get stopped any minute.

As if on cue, the SUV begins rolling down the hill straight towards them.

RICH

Oh crap. Here they come. I'd better turn around.

JIM

No! Keep going. We have to get to that base one way or another.

RICH sighs and stomps his foot on the gas.

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - ROAD TO AREA 51 - DAY

RICH'S car speeds along, kicking up dust. The white SUV careers down the hill towards it. It pulls in behind the Escort and begins to chase it. A pair of blue lights, under the front grille of the SUV, begins to flash and a chirruping siren is heard.

We CUT TO a shot of RICH driving hard, his face terrified. Then we CUT TO the car screeching round a bend, the SUV in hot pursuit. We CUT TO JIM and ANGELINA, seemingly unperplexed by the high-speed chase.

We CUT TO a shot of the speedometer reaching '100'.

We CUT TO EXT. Suddenly, a heavily-armed Apache helicopter descends in front of RICH'S car and THE CAR skids sideways, coming to a halt a short distance from the chopper.

The SUV screeches to a halt behind the Ford and two camouflage-garbed security men climb out. We follow them to RICH'S car, their handguns drawn. As they near the vehicle, RICH rolls down the window.

RICH

(smiling weakly)

Is there a problem, officers?

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - ENGINE ROOM

The last of the fires is extinguished and RA-BISH is organizing repair crews. GAR-BAJ enters through the large, sliding doors and heads straight for RA-BISH.

RA-BISH

My lord, repairs are underw...

GAR-BAJ grabs RA-BISH by the throat and lifts him cleanly from the deck. RA-BISH clutches at GAR-BAJ'S powerful hands.

GAR-BAJ

We have a traitor on board and I believe it to be you, Ra-Bish.

RA-BISH struggles furiously, unable to speak.

GAR-BAJ

You accessed the teleporter systems moments before the humans escaped to the planet. You are a traitor!

GAR-BAJ releases his grip slightly.

RA-BISH

(croaking)

My lord. I would never betray you. I... can... explain.

GAR-BAJ drops RA-BISH and the lieutenant gasps for breath. He struggles to his feet.

RA-BISH

I was monitoring the systems when I saw the humans access the teleport system. I was attempting to lock them out when the explosion crippled the circuits.

GAR-BAJ eyes him suspiciously.

RA-BISH

Please, my lord. I am loyal to you and you alone.

GAR-BAJ

(looking around)

How long before we can fire on the planet again?

RA-BISH

Several hours, at least, my lord.

GAR-BAJ stalks closer to RA-BISH and glares into his subordinate's eyes.

GAR-BAJ

I am watching you, lieutenant. I am watching you very closely. (he turns to leave) Notify me when the repairs are completed.

RA-BISH rubs his throat and watches his master leave the engine room. There is the slightest hint of a smile on his reptilian lips.

RA-BISH

Yes, my lord.

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - AREA 51 - DAY

The white SUV roars towards a distant collection of buildings alongside an immense runway. The APACHE GUNSHIP shadows it closely.

CUT.

INT. AREA 51 SUV - DAY

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH are sitting in the backseat of the SUV. The two CAMO-DUDES are occupying the front seats. One of them is turned around in his seat, eyeing the trio suspiciously.

JIM smiles at him.

JIM

According to my admittedly hasty research, I should say some like 'Take me to your leader'.

RICH snorts with amusement. The CAMO-DUDE is not impressed.

CAMO-DUDE #1

You folks have no idea what kind of trouble you're in, do you?

JIM

Sir, I think it is you that is ignorant in this instance.

CAMO-DUDE #1

Don't get smart with me, stringbean. (he waves a handgun in JIM'S direction) I could pop you right here and nobody would know.

RICH

'Picking our bones out of the sand', eh? Original, dude, very original.

CAMO-DUDE #1

You shut your mouth, boy!

CUT.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - AREA 51 - DAY

The SUV arrives at the GROOM LAKE FACILITY and parks in front of a non-descript, white building. JIM, ANGELINA and RICH are bundled out and before they can look around, are whisked inside, through a plain, grey door.

CUT.

INT. GROOM LAKE FACILITY

They find themselves inside a lobby of sorts with no windows and a single elevator in front of them. The CAMO-DUDES hand their prisoners over to a pristinely-dressed AIR FORCE OFFICER and leave.

JIM

(as the CAMO-DUDES exit)

Thanks for the lift, fellas.

The AIR FORCE OFFICER leads them to the elevator, presses the single button by the door and it slides open with a hiss. He ushers them inside without a word and presses the button again. The door slides shut.

CUT.

INT. GROOM LAKE FACILITY - ELEVATOR

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH are standing in the elevator alone. We can hear the quiet hum of its operation.

RICH

I am shittin' in my pants right now.

JIM

Why?

RICH

This is Area 51, dude! Nobody just drops in for a visit! We'll either be killed or locked in a tiny cell for the rest of our lives.

JIM pulls out a data tablet and fidgets with its display.

RICH

How the hell did you hide that from the search back at the car?

JIM

(smiling)

I have my ways, Rich. (pause) Here, this is the layout of the base. It seems we are going down several hundred metres to a tunnel of some sort.

JIM shows RICH and ANGELINA a diagram of the facility on his tablet.

RICH

How is this possible? You guys really are aliens!

ANGELINA

(looking around and speaking in hushed tones)

I think we should be quiet. No doubt our captors are observing us covertly. Jim, put the tablet away for now. We need to get inside the base and grab one of the spaceships.

JIM pockets the tablet and the trio waits for the elevator to stop.

JIM

I hate elevators. Too confined. I remember a time on Tau Auriga...

ANGELINA

Jim!

JIM

(sheepishly)

Sorry. (pause) But I barely got out of there with my...

ANGELINA

James Bolivar diGriz, if you say another word, I will shove my fist down your throat and rip out your larynx.

JIM grins and winks at RICH, who still seems petrified.

JIM

My girl.

The elevator stops and the door hisses open. Another AIR FORCE OFFICER is standing in front of them. He gestures for them to follow and they step out of the elevator.

CUT.

INT. GROOM LAKE FACILITY - TRANSPORT TUNNEL

We find ourselves on a platform by a long tunnel, stretching into the darkness in one direction. A HUMVEE is purring beside the platform and JIM, RICH and ANGELINA are bundled inside.

The HUMVEE rolls away, soon swallowed by the tunnel's deep shadows.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

The BATTLECRUISER sits quietly high above the planet Earth. A large, black, triangular spacecraft looms into view. It is almost as large as the BATTLECRUISER itself.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ watches the viewscreen as the BLACK TRIANGLE drifts closer. His scarred face twitching ever so slightly.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My lord, the ship is hailing us.

GAR-BAJ nods and the viewscreen flickers, replacing the image of the BLACK TRIANGLE with that of a GREY alien being, with huge head and large, black eyes. It speaks, its lipless mouth moving robotically.

GREY #1

Intruding vessel. This planet is protected under the Allied World Treaty. Leave orbit immediately.

The GREY seems to notice GAR-BAJ for the first time. Somehow, its eyes widen with surprise.

GREY #1

You are an unknown species. Why do you violate our borders? Your ship configuration is unknown to us.

GAR-BAJ

(smiling menacingly)
The Jetani answer to nobody, Prellini drone, in any timeframe. (turns to JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER) Target that ship. End transmission.

The viewscreen flickers again, displaying the BLACK TRIANGLE between Earth and the BATTLECRUISER.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Sire, our weapons are still offline.

GAR-BAJ

I know. I know. Target them anyway.

After several seconds, the BLACK TRIANGLE rotates in space and moves away.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My lord, they have jumped into hyperspace.

GAR-BAJ

I knew those Prellini weaklings would have no stomach for battle. Even the humans easily defeated them, despite being technologically inferior.

RA-BISH

(O.S. on intercom)

Lord Gar-Baj, the main guns are back online, although we will require one more hour to fully charge the capacitors.

GAR-BAJ

Very well. (to JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER)
Target the next city and fire as soon as the weapons are charged.

CUT.

INT. GROOM LAKE FACILITY - SECURITY ROOM

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH are sitting around a metal table in a plain SECURITY ROOM. One chair is unoccupied. The trio is not restrained in any way. An ARMED GUARD in Air Force fatigues stands inside the room by the closed door. A SECURITY CAMERA in the corner of the room is trained on them.

RICH

I'd have thought they would put us in separate rooms.

JIM

(smiling)

They reckon we have now way of escape. It's a common personality flaw for all those with power.

JIM winks at ANGELINA and she smiles at him warmly. Just then, the door opens and a man in a black suit, white shirt and black tie enters. He is carrying a folder and sets it down on the desk. He then sits in the unoccupied chair. He smiles at the trio.

AGENT WALSH

Good afternoon. My name is Peter Walsh. I am an agent with AFOSI and you three are in a lot of trouble.

WALSH looks to the papers in his folder for an extended period.

AGENT WALSH

Now, the security screening we gave you just now has thrown up some interesting data. (he looks to RICH) You are Richard John Hopkins. Born March 4th, 1975, and currently registered as a citizen of Rachel, Nevada. (pause) Your file says (points to paper), right here, that you are a researcher, specialising in Area 51. (smiles) Looks like you got your dream, buddy.

WALSH looks through the other files and then looks keenly at JIM and ANGELINA.

AGENT WALSH

You two, though, are a mystery. (to ANGELINA) You have no fingerprints or DNA records on file anywhere in the world. (to JIM) Same for you, plus you have some weird compound in your blood that is baffling our scientists right now.

JIM

(smiling)

What can I say? I'm an enigma.

AGENT WALSH

And there are your accents. I can't quite place them. (long pause) The hell with it. (leans on desk with his elbows) Who are you, where did you come from and why are you here? (pause) I know you're not just a bunch of UFO nuts.

JIM looks to ANGELINA and she nods to him.

JIM

I am Special Corps Agent James Bolivar diGriz. This is my partner, Agent Angelina.

AGENT WALSH

Angelina what?

JIM

Just Angelina. Trust me, don't press for more. (he smiles at ANGELINA and she rolls her eyes) We were sent by our superiors to stop the battlecruiser that is now in orbit destroying your cities.

AGENT WALSH

Our cities? They're your cities too.

ANGELINA

No, sir, they are not. We are not from your world. We are not even from your time.

WALSH leans back in his chair and places his hands behind his head.

AGENT WALSH

Oh boy, and here I was thinking I'd get something original from you. You missed out the part where you work for the Greys.

JIM and ANGELINA look to RICH quizzically.

RICH

Little grey dudes. You saw all that stuff in the Little A'Le'Inn? Big heads, black eyes?

ANGELINA

Ah, the Prellini. No, we are not working with them.

WALSH suddenly sits bolt upright. He glares at JIM and ANGELINA.

AGENT WALSH

How the hell did you know that they call themselves the Prellini. That is ultra-classified. Not even the UFO nuts have figured that out yet! (he takes a deep breath) Are you Russian agents?

JIM

No, sir. We are agents with the Special Corps. If you allow me, I can show you.

JIM pulls out the data tablet, activates it and shows AGENT WALSH the screen. The layout of the base is quickly replaced by a schematic of the BATTLECRUISER. JIM winks almost imperceptibly at RICH and ANGELINA.

AGENT WALSH

How did you get that past the security screening?

JIM

Never mind. Look. This is the battlecruiser. It was built from two-thousand year-old designs, but it is still the most powerful vessel in the galaxy. Even in our time.

AGENT WALSH

So, you're time travellers as well? This is getting better all the time.

ANGELINA

Sir, we did not intend to travel back more than five thousand years, but it happened and now we're stuck here with an Empire warship about to blow your civilisation back to its Stone Age.

AGENT WALSH

Five thousand years, huh? Okay, who is the president in the year 2045?

JIM

How the hell do I know? Our records of your history are patchy at best. We weren't even sure what your planet was called a few days ago!

RICH

He's trying to trick you. It isn't 2045 yet. The year is 2012.

WALSH shrugs, as though saying, 'It was worth a try.'

AGENT WALSH

So, I just believe you that you're secret agents from the future, like a mixture of James Bond and Han Solo, and if you fail, all of humanity will be exterminated.

JIM

I don't know those people, sir, but the Jetani will not destroy all of mankind. They intend to prevent your acquisition of interstellar travel.

AGENT WALSH

Why?

ANGELINA

We can't tell you that, sir. It would pollute the timeline. (beat) Probably. (pause) Actually, I don't know what it would do, but, if you have spaceships here, we would very much like to borrow one so we can destroy that battlecruiser and fix history.

WALSH looks at them for a long time.

AGENT WALSH

If you destroy that ship, how do you get back to your own time? Or is it a suicide mission?

ANGELINA

We will do whatever it takes.

JIM blusters and sits forward.

JIM

Woah, sweetie! I did not sign up for a suicide mission! I intend to get back home and fleece Inskipp for as much as I can and retire to my own asteroid one day.

ANGELINA

I didn't expect this to be a one-way trip, either, darling, but I see no other way out.

WALSH looks to RICH, who still seems terrified.

AGENT WALSH

So, what's your story? Why did you knowingly drive onto restricted land and try to evade capture by our security personnel?

RICH

Look, Mr Agent, sir, I don't want anything to do with this shit. They wanted a ride into Area 51 and I gave them a ride. (leans forward) You let me go and I'll not say nothing to nobody.

WALSH leans forward, his forehead close to RICH'S.

AGENT WALSH

Triple negative. Nice, but you'll not say anything to anybody. I can guarantee th...

Suddenly, RICH grabs WALSH' tie and pulls the knot tight up to his throat. The ARMED GUARD reacts and draws his sidearm.

ANGELINA leaps from her chair and with a lightning-fast kick, sends the gun flying. She whirls and brings her elbow into the GUARD'S face, breaking his nose. He slumps to the floor.

JIM comes round the table and grabs WALSH. RICH releases the tie and WALSH gasps for air. RICH picks up the handgun and points it at WALSH.

AGENT WALSH

(gasping)

You stupid fools. There'll be a hundred armed men waiting outside that door by now. (he glances up at the SECURITY CAMERA) Everything that just happened was seen.

JIM smiles and waves the data tablet in front of WALSH'S face.

JIM

Actually, what 'they' are seeing is a looping piece of footage of you and us chatting nicely. There's even some clever, non-repeating audio for them to listen to. All synthesized, of course.

AGENT WALSH

How the hell?

RICH

Because they're from another planet, you idiot. Now, tell them where the space ships are.

WALSH begins laughing.

AGENT WALSH

There are no spaceships here. There never have been any spaceships here.

RICH

Don't believe him. Everybody knows that this is where the military test spaceships and aircraft back-engineered from alien technology.

AGENT WALSH

(still smiling)

That's what we wanted you to believe. We've known about UFOs and aliens for decades and we've met quite a few. (he looks to ANGELINA) The Prellini for example. But we never got any of their technology.

RICH

He's lying. Tell them about Roswell and all the other UFO crashes where you got the technology.

AGENT WALSH

Look, son. I know what all the books and TV shows have said. Hell, I helped write some of them! But I can tell you, hand on heart, that an alien spacecraft has never crashed on Earth. (pause) Those that you know about, like Roswell, were our attempts at copying the alien technology, not back-engineering it. Why the hell do you think they crashed all the time?

ANGELINA

But you have some of these spaceships? The ones that haven't crashed?

AGENT WALSH

That's what I'm trying to tell you! No, we haven't! (he sits back down and runs his fingers through his black hair) About ten years ago, our leaders held a meeting with representatives from somewhere called the Allied Worlds. There were the Prellini and a few others whose names I can't pronounce. It was decided that Earth, being a developing planet, would be protected under a treaty, as long as we did not attempt to develop interstellar flight before (he forms quotes with his fingers) 'we were ready'.

RICH

Bullshit.

AGENT WALSH

Oh, it's true, son. We dismantled our research programs and had to sit back, as alien spacecraft monitored us constantly. They threatened us with total annihilation if we tried to launch a ship capable of faster-than-light travel.

JIM

The Prellini threatened you? I find that hard to believe.

AGENT WALSH

Well, they did and we believed them. Why wouldn't we? Could we take the chance that they were bluffing?

ANGELINA

Agent Walsh, I learned about the Allied Worlds in ancient history class. (she smiles awkwardly) Well, it is ancient history for us. It was a peaceful confederation of only a few worlds in this sector of the galaxy. A few thousand years from now, they will be conquered by the very beings that now threaten your world, the Jetani. They would have conquered Earth, too, but you had achieved stellar flight by then and begun your first Imperial Expansion. So, despite the warnings from the Allied Worlds, your people do reach the stars.

AGENT WALSH

Imperial Expansion?

JIM

It's a long and sordid story. Angelina, remember what you said about polluting history? I think this is one of those moments.

ANGELINA

Whatever. Look, we need to get onto that battlecruiser right now. Can you contact the Prellini or anybody else? Maybe they can provide us with transport.

AGENT WALSH

(shaking his head)

No. They contact us, not the other way round.

WALSH looks to the trio, his mind whirling. The GUARD begins to stir and JIM kneels down to him. The GUARD looks up, groggily, and JIM punches him, sending him back into unconsciousness.

AGENT WALSH

You know, there may be another way to get you up there. Something that not even our alien friends know about.
(stands up) Follow me.

CUT.

EXT. SPACE - EARTH ORBIT

Three green energy beams lance down to Earth from the BATTLECRUISER. Beneath the clouds, faint flashes of light can be seen as MUMBAI is decimated.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - ENGINE ROOM

RA-BISH is standing by a communication panel in the ENGINE ROOM.

RA-BISH

Their city of Mumbai is destroyed, my lord. Weapons recharging now.

Without waiting for a reply, he flicks off the panel and stalks away. He approaches a JETANI SCIENTIST, who is working at a display terminal.

RA-BISH

The coolant system is fluctuating. Go and stabilize it.

The JETANI SCIENTIST nods and scurries away. RA-BISH remains at the display panel and begins entering commands rapidly. A message flashes up: 'MANEOUVRING THRUSTERS DISABLED'. RA-BISH then returns the screen to its previous configuration and walks calmly from the engine room.

CUT.

INT. GROOM LAKE FACILITY - PORTAL ROOM

JIM, ANGELINA, RICH and WALSH are standing inside a large, hangar-like room. JIM is fiddling with his data tablet. ANGELINA is looking curious. WALSH is smiling broadly. RICH is standing with his mouth hanging open. Flickering lights are playing across their faces. A GUARD and a SCIENTIST lie unconscious on the floor.

In the centre of the room is a large, uneven triangular ARTEFACT. It's apex stands about four metres above the floor and each side is a different length, giving it a 'leaning over' appearance. Each side is made of a material that appears like a mixture of stone and metal. Each side is about sixty centimeters in width.

The area in the centre is a whirling vortex of shimmering lights, similar to a hyperspace conduit. The ARTEFACT is humming quietly, but deeply.

JIM

(stuffing his tablet back into his pocket)

There. The security system's set so that wherever we go, we will appear on the monitors still be in the security room.

AGENT WALSH

They'll find the guard you tied up eventually, you know. Plus, somebody might actually see us with their eyes, you know.

ANGELINA

That is why we must work quickly. (she crosses to the ARTEFACT) So, this is a portal, you say?

WALSH joins her, closely followed by JIM. RICH is still standing agog.

AGENT WALSH

According to our scientists, yeah. It was found in Iraq in 2004, deep below Baghdad. Apparently, Saddam Hussein had been searching for it for years. Luckily, we got there first.

JIM

Who built it?

AGENT WALSH

We don't know. It could be extraterrestrial or from a highly-advanced, lost civilisation here on Earth. They call it the Superluminal Hyperspace Interdimensional Teleporter.

JIM

You're kidding, right?

WALSH moves to a computer screen standing on a trolley close to the ARTEFACT. The computer is attached to the ARTEFACT by a thick bundle of cables. Next to the screen is a skull cap with what look like electrodes dotted around its inner surface. The skull cap is attached by a thin wire to the computer.

AGENT WALSH

(picking up the skull cap)
Apparently, you put this thing on your head, think of where you want to go and the destination appears in the centre of the portal.

JIM

Apparently?

AGENT WALSH

Well, I haven't actually seen it in operation. Not my department.

ANGELINA

Your scientists have tested it right?

AGENT WALSH

I presume so. Why don't you wake him up and ask him. (nods towards the unconscious SCIENTIST on the floor)

JIM

I don't think he'd help.

ANGELINA

I could make him.

JIM

I don't think so, my sweet. (beat)
Thanks for the offer, though.

JIM takes the skull cap from WALSH and slips it over his head.

JIM

So, what now? I just think about where I want to go?

AGENT WALSH

I, er, don't really know. (looks to computer screen) I guess you have to run some sort of programme on her.

JIM

So, run it.

AGENT WALSH

Not my department, remember?

ANGELINA

Oh, for crying out loud.

ANGELINA crosses to the unconscious SCIENTIST and grabs the collar of his white lab coat, shaking him awake. He comes to, groggy.

ANGELINA

Morning, sleepy head. (pulls him to his feet) Okay, make this thing work.

SCIENTIST #1

What the hell's going on? (looks to WALSH) Agent Walsh, who are these people?

AGENT WALSH

Just do as they say, Bob. I can't explain it to you right now.

The SCIENTIST looks from WALSH to JIM to ANGELINA and back again. Then he sees the unconscious GUARD.

SCIENTIST #1

This is a highly sensitive area. Nobody is allowed in here without clearance.

Suddenly, RICH appears behind the SCIENTIST and presses the handgun to his temple.

RICH

Just do it, okay? I've had a really bad day and I just want to get out of here. Make the S.H.I.T. work.

SCIENTIST #1

Alright. Take it easy. I'll do it.

The SCIENTIST moves to the computer screen and taps in some commands via the keyboard. There is an audible change of pitch from the humming coming from the ARTEFACT. He looks to JIM.

SCIENTIST #1

Okay, think of your destination. No need to concentrate hard. Just picture it in your mind. The portal will translate the spatial coordinates.

JIM closes his eyes and, almost immediately, the swirling vortex in the ARTEFACT shimmers and an image of a dark corridor appears.

ANGELINA

That's on board the battlecruiser. (to JIM) Well done, honey!

SCIENTIST #1

Before you leap through, I should warn you that we haven't tested this on humans yet. The window will stay open for only about a minute and it closes forever afterwards. You can't go to exactly the same place twice for some reason. We haven't figured that part out yet.

JIM and ANGELINA look to each other and then at RICH AND WALSH.

ANGELINA

Well, I guess this is it. If we succeed, you'll see some fireworks in the sky in a little while. If not, well...

SCIENTIST #1

Thirty seconds.

JIM

(to RICH)

Thanks for all the help, Rich. We couldn't have done it without you. (to WALSH) Same goes for you, Peter.

AGENT WALSH

Actually, you forced me here at gunpoint. Well, Rich did. I have no idea how I'm going to explain this. They'll throw the book at him.

RICH

(to WALSH)

What? You mean you can't get me out of here? Oh, for Christ's sake. (to JIM and ANGELINA) I'm coming with you.

ANGELINA

Rich, we may be going to our deaths.

RICH

I don't think my options are much different here. at least with you, I'll have a chance.

SCIENTIST #1

Ten seconds. If you're going, it needs to be now.

An alarm sounds throughout the base.

AGENT WALSH

Looks like they found out we're not in the security room. Go now and good luck.

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH stand in front of the ARTEFACT, the image of the corridor shimmering in front of them. Then JIM leaps forward and vanishes, appearing a split-second later in the shimmering image. Then ANGELINA and RICH jump into the portal and, with a flash, the image vanishes, replaced by the swirling vortex again.

AGENT WALSH

Well, I don't know how this is going to look in my report.

SCIENTIST #1

Who were those people?

AGENT WALSH

I have no idea, but they weren't the bad guys, I'm certain of that. I hope they'll be okay. (looks to GUARD on floor) Come on, let's wake up the airman.

FADE OUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - CORRIDOR

FADE IN:

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH are standing in the long, dark corridor of the BATTLECRUISER. It could be the same corridor as earlier. RICH is still holding the handgun, looking around in amazement.

JIM

Well, that wasn't such a chore, was it? I'll have to remember to tell Coypu about that S.H.I.T. thing when we get back. Maybe he can arrange an archaeological expedition and dig it up, if it's still down there after five thousand years.

ANGELINA

Jim, darling, we are standing in an open corridor of an enemy vessel. I think we should get out of here.

JIM

Yeah, sure. We should get to our ship and grab what we need from there, if the Jetani haven't stripped it down by now. Come on.

JIM and ANGELINA set off down the corridor. RICH remains rooted to the spot and JIM has to go back, grab his arm and drag him after them.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

The JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER flies backwards through the air, the victim of a vicious blow from GAR-BAJ. The Jetani general prowls towards his fallen officer and glowers down at him.

GAR-BAJ

What do you mean, we cannot manoeuvre?

The JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER clambers to his feet and scuttles to his console.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

See, sir? The manoeuvring thrusters are offline.

GAR-BAJ

A malfunction? More sabotage?

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

No, sir. A coded command was entered into one of the engine room terminals, taking the thrusters offline and locking out the screen. We have no way to get them back online.

GAR-BAJ

Then open fire on the first human city that our orbit brings us over.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Sir, we are currently oriented with the main guns away from the planet. We were changing our orbit when the thrusters were taken offline.

GAR-BAJ

Who last used that terminal?

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Security scans show it was Lieutenant Ra-Bish, sir. He is currently unaccounted for.

GAR-BAJ roars at the top of his lungs.

GAR-BAJ

(screaming)

I knew it! Find him and bring him here so I can flay him alive by my own claws.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - DOCKING BAY

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH are standing by the DOCKING BAY entrance, looking across at JIM'S spaceship from behind a pile of metallic crates. RICH is grinning.

RICH

(mimicking a line from STAR WARS)

You came in that thing? You must be braver than I thought.

JIM

Huh?

RICH

Never mind. (points to two Jetani GUARDS close to JIM'S spaceship) Look, how are we gonna slip by those things? (a little louder) Jesus, they're frigging aliens! (quieter) Sorry. Look at 'em, though. Real life green, scaly aliens.

ANGELINA rolls her eyes and begins to step out in full view of the GUARDS. Then we see RA-BISH approach the guards. ANGELINA quickly ducks back down behind the crates.

RA-BISH says something unheard to the GUARDS and they stomp away, out of the docking bay. RA-BISH then enters JIM'S spaceship through the open hatch.

ANGELINA

What the hell was that about?

JIM

I don't know, but it's our big chance.
Come on.

The trio dash across the docking bay and run into JIM'S spaceship.

CUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

JIM, ANGELINA and RICH run into the spaceship, straight into the barrel of a Jetani energy pistol, being held by RA-BISH.

RA-BISH

I had hoped you would make it back on board. Hello again, Angelina. (smiles)
It's been too long.

RA-BISH holsters his gun and stares at ANGELINA. JIM looks from RA-BISH to ANGELINA and back again.

ANGELINA

Ra-Bish. (gives him a hug of genuine affection) It has been too long. What? three years?

JIM

Er, excuse me! You guys know each other?

ANGELINA giggles and RA-BISH smiles at JIM, extending his clawed hand.

RA-BISH

Special Corps Agent Ra-Bish.

JIM is flabbergasted. He doesn't take RA-BISH'S hand and it is lowered awkwardly.

JIM

You're with the Corps? Do you know how many people have died down there today? Do you know how many innocent people have been killed when you followed the orders of that insane lunatic on the bridge?

JIM (CONT.)

(to ANGELINA)

Don't tell me this is the Jetani you said you'd dated.

ANGELINA

Jim! Ra-Bish knows his...

RA-BISH

Angelina, please. Jim is right. A lot of people died at my hand today. (to JIM) I tried to delay, believe me, but Gar-Baj would think nothing of executing me and replacing me with a more compliant lieutenant. I had no choice but to play along until I had my opportunity to act.

ANGELINA

And that opportunity has come?

RA-BISH

Yes. I was finally able to access the thrusters controls in the engine room and disable them permanently. They'll never break through my encryption programme. This ship is as good as dead in space. No more cities will be destroyed. (looks to RICH, who is staring at him with terror in his eyes) Who's this?

JIM

A friend. (pause) So, what's your plan, Agent Ra-Bish? Why are you in my ship?

RA-BISH crosses to a panel in the floor and pulls it open to reveal an array of weaponry and Special Corps utility belts. He pulls out one of the belts and unclips a small, black and yellow cylinder.

RA-BISH

I'm going to place this mini-nuke on the Time Helix and blow it to hell, along with the rest of the ship. And us.

CUT.

INT. GROOM LAKE FACILITY - SECURITY ROOM

An AIR FORCE COLONEL is standing, glowering down at AGENT WALSH, who is sitting behind the metal table.

COLONEL

Have you lost your mind, Walsh? You allowed three prisoners to escape, after they neutralized several of our personnel!

AGENT WALSH

They had a gun on me, sir.

COLONEL

(shouting)

I don't care if they had your nuts in a vice, son! This isn't some two-bit reserve airbase in Afghanistan. This is Groom Lake!

(walks away from the table, running his hands through his slick, blond hair)

No, Walsh. You helped them escape. Lord knows why, but you knowingly assisted in it. And by using a highly-classified piece of Air Force property.

AGENT WALSH

Sir, if I may...

COLONEL

(turning back to WALSH)

No you may not! (ruffles some papers on the table) This report. What am I supposed to do with this? Aliens? Time travelers? The goddamn general will laugh his tits off!

AGENT WALSH

Sir, we have dealt with extraterrestrials before. There is an alien ship parked in orbit right now.

COLONEL

Is it alien? Have we received any communication from it? No! For all we know, it's something the Chinese cooked up!

AGENT WALSH

You don't really believe that, colonel.

COLONEL

But you believed the wild tales of these lunatics? Jesus, Peter, what happened to you? You've thrown away your career. For what?

AGENT WALSH

I am aware of what I've done, sir. As I said, they had a gun on me. (sighs) Besides I did believe them. You weren't there, sir. They knew things. Things they shouldn't have. The man, diGriz, was able to neutralise our security system in seconds. They knew about the Greys' real name. (pause) Let's not forget that they are all up there now on that ship.

COLONEL

For all we know, it's their ship!

AGENT WALSH

(shouting)

No, sir! Look, they may need our help. We have to allow them to complete their mission. For God's sake, those three people might save the whole world!

The COLONEL sits down, facing WALSH. He flicks through the papers, not really seeing them. Then he straightens the pages and sits back in the chair.

COLONEL

I've known you for almost twenty years. You're my girl's godparent. I've never seen you like this before.

AGENT WALSH

Because something like this has never happened before. And I'm telling you the truth. I always have, Tom. (smiles) Mostly.

COLONEL

(smiles back at his friend)

What should we do, Pete? How can we help them?

AGENT WALSH

We send all the men we can through the portal and we take that ship.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - CORRIDOR

JIM, ANGELINA, RICH and RA-BISH are slowly making their way through the bowels of the BATTLECRUISER, en route to the ENGINE ROOM. They are in one of the ship's many, identical corridors. At the far end is a junction that leads in two directions, left and right.

JIM, ANGELINA and RA-BISH are armed with hefty-looking rifles, while RICH still has the handgun. He keeps looking at the mean-looking weapons and down to his small sidearm.

RICH

Why can't I have one of your ray guns?

JIM

Because they are far beyond your ken, kid.

Suddenly, a pair of JETANI WARRIORS round the corner and stop in their tracks as they see the quartet. They raise their weapons and begin firing. Our heroes dive for cover behind one of the many stanchions that line the corridor.

Energy bolts criss-cross the corridor as RA-BISH and ANGELINA return fire. One of the WARRIORS slumps to the deck.

JIM is struggling with his weapon, pressing the firing stud like crazy, but nothing is happening. RICH calmly looks at the rifle and flicks a small switch on its side. The gun blazes into life, felling the second WARRIOR.

RICH

(deadpan)

The safety was on.

JIM

I knew that.

They continue on their way.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - BRIDGE

GAR-BAJ is impatiently pacing back and forth. The JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER brings him to a halt.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

My lord, Ra-Bish has been found. He is with the human prisoners. They are making their way to the engine room.

GAR-BAJ snarls, his scar contorting.

GAR-BAJ

Have all warriors in the section converge on the traitor's position. I will teleport there immediately and rejoice in their bloody demise.

JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER

Sire, the intra-ship teleporter is still offline.

GAR-BAJ growls deep in his throat.

GAR-BAJ

Then I will see their bodies when I get there.

GAR-BAJ exits the bridge, the JETANI BRIDGE OFFICER watching him leave.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - ENGINEERING SECTION

JIM, ANGELINA, RICH and RA-BISH are pinned down in a large, open area with a high ceiling. The area is dotted with large pieces of equipment, some with flashing lights, some with large, clear tubes in which something gaseous swirls. These tubes disappear into the ceiling. At the far end are large doors that lead into the ENGINE ROOM.

Several dozen JETANI WARRIORS are positioned on the floor, behind some of the equipment and some are on the metal catwalks that hang below the ceiling like cobwebs.

Energy bolts are whizzing and pinging all around our heroes, who are hunkered down behind a bulky machine of some sort.

JIM

Looks like they were expecting us.

ANGELINA

(after firing a volley at a nearby WARRIOR, sending him flying)

You think?

JIM fires his weapon several times around the side of the machine. Another WARRIOR falls, only to be replaced by another.

RA-BISH

There are over two hundred warriors in this section alone. We cannot hope to make it through.

Suddenly, a WARRIOR looms over them, his weapon aimed. There are several, loud gunshots and the WARRIOR slumps to his knees, to reveal RICH holding his handgun with smoke spiraling from the barrel. He flings the sidearm away, its clip now empty, and grabs the WARRIOR'S rifle, grinning.

JIM

You're enjoying this a little too much, my friend.

RICH

You kiddin'? This is Gears of War for real! And I'm aiming for a high score.

CUT.

INT. GROOM LAKE FACILITY - PORTAL ROOM

A dozen, heavily-armed Air Force Special Operations Command soldiers are standing to attention in front of the ARTEFACT. The swirling vortex casts shimmering light across the whole room. LIEUTENANT JOHN COOPER is inspecting them, nodding at each man and silently encouraging each of the soldiers under his command.

AGENT WALSH is also dressed in combat fatigues and arguing with SCIENTIST #1. They are standing by the jerry-rigged computer that controls the ARTEFACT.

AGENT WALSH

I don't care what you said earlier about not being able to leap to the same point twice. Make it happen!

SCIENTIST #1

I don't make the rules, Agent Walsh. It is impossible for me to send you to the same point in space/time more than once.

AGENT WALSH

Shit! (kicks table) SHIT!

COOPER walks over and speaks quietly to AGENT WALSH.

COOPER

Is there a problem, sir?

AGENT WALSH

It seems we can't go, lieutenant. Brains here claims we can't jump to the ship because it is at the same space/time coordinates as a previous leap.

COOPER

Have you tried?

AGENT WALSH

(sharply)

Of course I have, lieutenant! Nothing happened.

COOPER

Apologies, sir. (pause) I recall in the briefing that this device acts as a conduit in hyperspace to any location the operator thinks about.

AGENT WALSH

Yeah, so?

COOPER

Couldn't you think of another area of the ship?

AGENT WALSH

I don't know any other area of the ship. I only saw the corridor diGriz and his friends jumped to.

COOPER

(smiling)

Have you tried thinking of another corridor? If it's anything like here, all the corridors should look pretty much the same.

SCIENTIST #1

He may be right, Agent Walsh. You could visualise the corridor we saw earlier, but think about another location, say, a deck up or down. It's worth a try.

Sighing, WALSH grabs the skullcap and fits it over his head. SCIENTIST #1 hits some keys on the computer and motions for WALSH to try.

AGENT WALSH closes his eyes and concentrates. Suddenly, the vortex shimmers and an image of a corridor identical to the earlier one appears. He opens his eyes and smiles widely.

COOPER

Well done, sir.

AGENT WALSH

(pulling off the skullcap)

Thanks to you, lieutenant. (beat)
Prepare your men. We're going through.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - ENGINEERING SECTION

JIM, ANGELINA, RICH and RA-BISH are still pinned down behind the machinery. There are several more WARRIOR bodies lying around, but they have not been able to escape from their hiding place.

JIM fires a volley at a WARRIOR on the catwalk above him. The alien crashes down beside the group. JIM flings away his rifle and grabs the fallen alien's.

JIM

Energy clip was empty. (pause) This is ridiculous! For every one we kill, another takes his place!

ANGELINA

We need a diversion, something to give Ra-Bish time to enter the engine room and plant the nuke.

She glances at the tubes leading up into the ceiling.

ANGELINA

(to RA-BISH)

Are those waste plasma conduits from the engines?

RA-BISH

Yes. Yes! If we rupture that one (points to a particular pipe close to the ENGINE ROOM DOOR), the plasma will leak all over, forcing the warriors to retreat.

RICH

They'll be distracted for a while, so we can move around and clear a path for Ra-Bish. Classic Team Deathmatch!

JIM

What are you babbling about?

ANGELINA

He's right. Jim, you've got the best line of sight. Aim at the far pipe and fire off a steady burst. Those conduits are tough, but they shouldn't be able to withstand a sustained series of shots.

JIM sighs, pokes his head out from behind the machinery and aims. He presses the firing stud and a searing wave of energy pulses blasts into the pipe. It ruptures and green plasma floods out. Several WARRIORS are consumed and vapourised instantly. The others in the area scatter.

ANGELINA

That's it. Ra-Bish, off you go. We'll keep you covered.

RA-BISH slinks out into the open. JIM, ANGELINA and RICH skulk out from the other side of the machinery. A WARRIOR appears and JIM sends him reeling with a blast from his rifle. Another is killed by RICH and then two more by ANGELINA.

RA-BISH almost collides with another WARRIOR, but dispatches him with ease, a flurry of blows sending the unfortunate alien flying across the room.

The plasma quickly dissipates, efficiently extracted by the ship's ventilation systems. RA-BISH is close to the ENGINE ROOM door by this time. A WARRIOR trains his weapon on RA-BISH, but is felled by a shot to the head from JIM.

RA-BISH makes it to the closed door, expecting it to open, but it remains firmly shut. He enters some commands at the control panel by the door, but nothing happens. JIM rushes to his side.

RA-BISH

They've sealed it. And I've been locked out of the system.

A barrage of energy bolts explodes around them and they dive for cover inside the doorway.

JIM

We're screwed.

JIM looks to his right and sees ANGELINA and RICH pinned down by sustained fire from a squad of WARRIORS high on the catwalk. Several WARRIORS are firing at JIM and RA-BISH from the room's floor level. None of them are able to return fire, the assault is so constant.

Suddenly, the shooting stops and GAR-BAJ'S voice booms over the intercom.

GAR-BAJ

(O.S. over intercom)
You have failed, Ra-Bish. Surrender now and I will kill you quickly.

RA-BISH

(shouting)
Never!

GAR-BAJ steps into view, his hulking, armoured form holding a communicator. He tosses it aside and pulls out a huge dagger from a sheath at his side.

GAR-BAJ

Then I will skin you slowly.

RA-BISH steps out from the doorway, dropping his rifle and pulling out a smaller dagger. JIM peers out, noting that the WARRIORS surrounding them still have their weapons trained. ANGELINA and RICH scurry to his side from their hiding place, taking advantage of the lull.

RA-BISH

You have sentenced our people to death, Gar-Baj. The League will exterminate them.

GAR-BAJ

(smiling menacingly)

The League no longer exists! It never will! Our people will rule, as we should.

RA-BISH lunges at GAR-BAJ, his dagger glinting. GAR-BAJ dodges and brings a heavy hand down across the back of RA-BISH'S neck, knocking him to the ground.

GAR-BAJ

(looking down with disgust)

You are weak, Ra-Bish. (kneels down and displays his huge knife in his right hand) Now die as a traitor.

Suddenly, JIM appears from nowhere, leaping onto GAR-BAJ'S back and pulling the alien's right arm away from RA-BISH. The WARRIORS follow the action with their rifles, unable to fire for fear of hitting their leader.

JIM

You talk too much, Gar-Baj.

GAR-BAJ grabs JIM'S arm with his left hand and pulls the human over his shoulder with ease. He flings JIM to the deck beside RA-BISH. He stands over them, triumphant, but is sent reeling as both RICH and ANGELINA spear him from behind.

GAR-BAJ shrugs off the two humans and picks himself up from the deck.

GAR-BAJ

(stepping back and screaming)

Kill them now!

The WARRIORS' weapons turn on our heroes, but before they can open fire, an explosion rings out and a section of the catwalk collapses. Echoing machine gun fire can be heard above the shouting of human voices.

The JETANI WARRIORS are confused, not knowing where to point their weapons. AGENT WALSH and his team of soldiers charge into the ENGINEERING SECTION, guns blazing and grenades being thrown. Energy bolts begin zipping around as the dazed WARRIORS decide to open fire.

JIM, RICH and ANGELINA crawl behind some equipment. RA-BISH rises to his feet behind GAR-BAJ, who is as confused as his men and looking around angrily. Brandishing his dagger, RA-BISH lunges at GAR-BAJ with a cry of hate. Hearing this, GAR-BAJ dodges the attack and brings his own dagger around, planting it deep into RA-BISH'S back. RA-BISH falls to the floor, dead.

GAR-BAJ pulls out the dagger and slides it back into its sheath. As the chaos around him continues, GAR-BAJ stomps to the engine room door, hits the control panel and it slides open.

JIM looks around, sees RA-BISH fallen and GAR-BAJ entering the engine room. The door begins to slide shut. JIM launches himself at the door and slides through, a split-second before it clangs shut.

ANGELINA fires off a volley at a group of WARRIORS. One falls as her energy bolt hits him in the chest. The rest succumb to searing bullets from the human weapons. She sees JIM sliding through the closing door and calls out to him, too late. AGENT WALSH ducks round the corner and kneels beside ANGELINA and RICH.

AGENT WALSH

(smiling)

Hi. Need a hand?

ANGELINA

(pointing towards the engine room door)

Not really, but I think Jim might.

CUT.

INT. BATTLECRUISER - ENGINE ROOM

JIM ducks as GAR-BAJ'S blade narrowly misses decapitating him. He rolls and fires his rifle, the bolts simply bouncing from GAR-BAJ'S ornate armour.

GAR-BAJ cackles and grabs the rifle from JIM'S hands, throwing it away. JETANI SCIENTISTS scurry for cover. Two WARRIORS appear, but GAR-BAJ waves them away.

GAR-BAJ

(subtitled)

No, this human is mine.

GAR-BAJ grabs JIM by the throat and lifts him from the floor. JIM'S feet dangle a foot from the deck, he thrashes and kicks, but GAR-BAJ'S grip remains firm.

GAR-BAJ pulls JIM closer, their faces almost touching. JIM looks deep into the alien's yellow eyes. His hand reaches down to his utility belt and he unclips a small, disc-shaped object.

GAR-BAJ
(growling)
Now, die, hooman.

JIM
After you.

JIM jams the disc into GAR-BAJ'S armour and we hear it beeping. GAR-BAJ drops JIM and our hero rolls away, shielding his eyes. The beeping rises in tone and frequency.

GAR-BAJ
(roaring)
NO!!

The disc detonates with a blinding flash, blowing GAR-BAJ apart on the spot and causing nearby equipment to explode and spark. Pieces of GAR-BAJ'S bloody armour clatter to the floor. The JETANI SCIENTISTS in the room are blinded and cry out in terror. The WARRIORS are more rugged, though, shake their heads and begin stomping towards JIM, their weapons raised.

The door slides open and WALSH'S men rush in, guns blazing. The WARRIORS fall as bullets rip through their armour.

ANGELINA hurries to JIM as he sits up, blinking and rubbing his throat where an ugly bruise has formed.

ANGELINA
Where's Gar-Baj?

JIM
(looking at the scattered remains
of GAR-BAJ'S armour)
Oh, he's around.

ANGELINA smiles and kisses JIM passionately.

FADE OUT.

INT. JIM'S SPACESHIP

Two JETANI SCIENTISTS salute JIM as he and ANGELINA stand in the cockpit of JIM'S SPACESHIP.

JETANI SCIENTIST #1

The Time Helix is installed to your hyperdrive, Lord diGriz. We have taken the liberty of calculating the coordinates for your return trip, if you would like to check your console.

JIM

That's okay, chuckles. I trust you.
(pause as they look at each other awkwardly) Er, dismissed?

The TWO JETANI SCIENTISTS leave the ship and ANGELINA turns to JIM, putting her arms around him.

ANGELINA

Lord James Bolivar diGriz. That has a nice ring to it.

JIM

Wanna be my lady?

ANGELINA grins and they kiss again. After several seconds, a cough is heard behind them. They turn around to see WALSH and RICH standing, smiling at them.

JIM

Rich. Pete. How's tricks?

RICH

(grinning)
Not as good as they are for you, eh, Jim?

ANGELINA scowls at RICH and he looks away, the grin disappearing from his face.

AGENT WALSH

The Air Force has secured the battlecruiser, Jim. We have many Jetani prisoners. With Gar-Baj dead, they just gave up for the most part.

ANGELINA

So, what do you do now? You have a battleship from the future and hundreds of alien prisoners. I'm not sure this is how history unfolded. (looks to JIM) I mean, why couldn't we take the entire battlecruiser back to our own time?

JIM

(smiling)

Honey, for all we know, this is exactly how history unfolded. Maybe this event was what sparked humanity's reach for the stars.

ANGELINA

With a Warlord-class battleship?

JIM

Well, we'll find out when we get back, won't we? (turns to WALSH and RICH)
Pete, Rich, thank you. You saved not only us and your planet, but you also saved the future.

RICH

Christ, Jim, don't lay it on so thick.

RICH grabs JIM and they embrace warmly. JIM shakes WALSH'S hand and the two leave after ANGELINA silently shakes her head when they hold out their hands for a hug.

JIM sits in the pilot's seat, seals the hatch and fires up the ship's engines. ANGELINA slides into the co-pilot's chair. Through window, we see the docking bay walls slide by and then they are in open space, high above the Earth.

JIM

Coordinates set. The lizard was telling the truth. Ready to go home?

JIM engages the Time Helix and we hear the system cycling up with a high-pitched whine.

ANGELINA

Honey, there's one thing I should tell you. (pause - Helix sound reaches crescendo) I'm pregnant.

JIM turns and stares, his eyes wide. A huge smile starts to spread across his face and, as the Time Helix activates, we

FLASH CUT
TO WHITE:

THE END