

FADE IN:

**[Sequence 1]**

INT. SCION HALL - DAY

A windowless hexagon made out of concrete and metal.

On the floor, an polished array of three circular panels are linked to each other and the walls by large cables.

A life-sized hologram hovers a foot above each panel.

VESPER: Green, female 60s, an aged goddess.

MARCUS: Red, male 50s, a stoic general.

SPARK: Orange, male 30s, a bohemian

VESPER and MARCUS are arguing while SPARK stares at the wall.

VESPER

We mustn't let fear guide our  
actions. I understand-

MARCUS

Do you? Do you understand because I  
don't think you do.

VESPER

Marcus, we've all seen the logs of-

MARCUS

But you weren't there. You weren't  
there when the Volaar attacked.  
Humanity was broken. Decimated.  
Shattered. You don't know how far a  
people have to be pushed to even  
consider destroying their home.  
Diplomacy means nothing to an  
opponent seeking conquest.

VESPER

But, Marcus, don't you think the  
Endari deserve to be judged by  
their own actions, not ghosts from  
our past.

MARCUS

You may be right, they may not be a  
threat. But I will always do  
everything in my power to ensure we  
never go down that path again.

VESPER  
Spark? What do you think?

MARCUS  
(scoffs)  
And we entrust our future to the  
boy.

Spark turns and looks between the two of them.

SPARK  
If we aid the Endari, they can  
unite all Augeum tribe in the  
system under one banner. This would  
make them powerful allies.

Vesper nods.

MARCUS  
Powerful, yes. Allies only until  
they aren't. We can't give them a  
knife and be surprised when they  
choose to slit our throats with it.

SPARK  
And you suggest we ally with the  
Enclave instead.

MARCUS  
The Endari may well unite the  
Augeum without our help. If that's  
the case, you can ensure the  
Enclave will not stand idly by.

SPARK  
You don't wish to make ourselves a  
targets.

MARCUS  
Not only that. There is a reason  
the Nightlings have lasted so for  
centuries of war with the Aurem.  
Enclave technology is vastly  
superior and their relationship  
with the Posari is invaluable. If  
we can get the Enclave and the  
Commonwealth on our side, we can  
easily quell any threat the  
Collective may pose.

VESPER  
Or we may just initiate another  
System war, which is clearly the  
last thing anyone wants.

MARCUS  
War is inevitable.

VESPER  
For a general maybe. Peace. Trade.  
These are more than just interludes  
to fighting, Osborne. These are  
tools to building strong nations,  
ones that don't rely on conquest or  
sabotaging others out of fear of  
what they can do.

MARCUS  
Well, I hope your peace and trade  
serve you well when an Endari  
battle armada hovers over Riande.  
Maybe they'll accept your diplomacy  
then.

Marcus and Vesper each take a moment to compose themselves.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
What say you boy?

VESPER  
Yes, Spark. You'll have the  
deciding vote here. Where do you  
stand.

Spark stares at both of them.

SPARK  
I'll need time.

MARCUS  
Don't think too long boy. I can  
hear that battle cruiser roaring up  
it's engines now.

VESPER  
(chastising)  
Marcus.  
(to Spark)  
Take your time and consider it  
well. The fate of humanity rests in  
the balance.

Spark nods.

INT. SPARK'S STUDIO - DAY

Spark's eyes flicker on, the iridescent glow of his synthetic  
pupils shining.

He disconnects a cord attached to where his index finger should be and the chair slides backwards into the wall.

His hand morphs and his finger grows back.

He's in a loft turned art studio. There is no bed and the kitchen and bathroom have been become overtaken with art supplies and old sketches.

He walks over to the balcony and stares out.

SUPER: BABEL, RIANDE, LEONIS II System  
SUPER: Year 427 A.V.

The city below is sprawling and majestic.

Flying cars fill the air and lush green wilderness can be seen over the city walls.

The door opens and ADAM, a short man with graying brown hair, enters.

He stops in the middle of the room and crosses his hands.

SPARK  
Greetings, Councilor. What can I do  
for you?

Adam approaches the balcony.

ADAM  
(gravelly)  
The Council wishes to know...

He coughs and grabs a tissue from his pocket.

Spark stares at it in his hand.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Pardon me, half the family is sick.  
Anyway, the Council wishes to know  
if the Scions have reached a  
decision.

Spark laughs.

SPARK  
Once again, they have made their  
decisions and it is up to me to  
make mine. Placing the fate of the  
entire species in my hands.

ADAM

I imagine that's the reason they created a third Scion, to serve as tiebreaker and end their constant deadlocks. Although I doubt that makes you feel any better.

SPARK

Feeling is a luxury we A-Cogs do not have.

He grabs the tissue from Adam's hand.

SPARK (CONT'D)

You have no idea how much I envy you. Sickness, happiness, embarrassment. Even the most base of human emotions: anger, jealousy, fear. From the day I was created to this very moment now, nothing has changed within me.

ADAM

Some would call that a blessing.

SPARK

A blessing would require a soul, which isn't an option at the factory.

They share a laugh.

ADAM

You say that but I think you're more human than you imagine.

He faces the paintings on the wall.

ADAM (CONT'D)

They say art originates from the soul. These images. They come from somewhere.

He walks up and touches one of the paintings.

ADAM (CONT'D)

We still don't fully understand the A-Cog brain. Despite what some people say, I believe somewhere in there, hidden behind the ones and zeroes, something lives. Makes sense to me at least.

SPARK

Thank you, Councilor. Still, this decision carries such heavy weight and ramifications. What would be the "human" thing to do?

Adam contemplates and approaches him.

ADAM

Ask for help. I have a mentor. Someone who I've consulted during difficult times. He may be able to help you.

SPARK

Thank you Councilor. I would like to meet with him.

**[Sequence 2]**

EXT. THE PIT - NIGHT

SUPER: SYONIS, COMORO, LEONIS II

The open-air stadium howls with cheers and jeers.

ARENA

In the center, a sand pit with two gladiators, an Aurem and a Nightling, battling to the death.

Between the pit and the crowd sits the Emperor's box. Seated inside are the following:

EMPEROR POOSUS: Aurem, large even by Aurem standards, wearing ceremonial silver-plated armor and a skull-crown with spikes jutting through the top.

ENYOK BARLOW: Aurem, wearing fine robes with a nervous look on his unmarked face.

ELDRIC WEEMES: Human, 60s, bald with white beard, cream colored tuxedo.

ALEC-JON KERBEROS: A-Cog, 30s, clean-shaven and chestnut spiky hair.

Alec-Jon is scanning the fight. His optics zoom in to capture every detail.

The Nightling jabs the Aurem with it's spear.

The Aurem swings a three-headed flail, the Nightling rolls to the side. His leg is nailed, he's wounded.

Alec-Jon excuses himself from the box and heads to the arena concourse, Weemes watching him.

#### MAIN CONCOURSE

The darkened hall is filled with a few vendors barely tending to their shops focusing instead on the battle.

Weemes finds Alec-Jon sitting on a bench, his hands folding and unfolding an old butterfly knife with superhuman speed.

WEEMES

Quite barbaric, you must think.

ALEC-JON

I don't know how you can stomach it.

Weemes sits beside the A-Cog.

WEEMES

What's bothering you?

Alec-Jon stops flicking.

ALEC-JON

Poosus is an animal. If he doesn't get his way tomorrow...  
(gesturing towards the arena)  
what's to stop him from throwing us in there.

WEEMES

(smirking)  
Ye of little faith, Alec-Jon.

ALEC-JON

I have faith in us. Faith in you to find the best solution. I don't have faith in some Augeum warlord not to bite the hand that feeds him. It's what they do.

WEEMES

The Augeum may have different needs than us but they have needs just the same. If we take the time to learn those needs, we may have a chance to make a deal work.

The arena starts to roar, louder than before.

ARENA

Weemes and Alec-Jon return to their seats.

EMPEROR POOSUS

Amazing finish. In all of my years...

In the pit, the Aurem has the Nightling pinned underneath it's gigantic foot, crushing it's pelvis and thighs. Meanwhile, the Nightling has thrust the spear through the eye-socket of the Aurem. They both seem to wither in place, frozen in time as life fades from them both.

EMPEROR POOSUS (CONT'D)

(into a microphone)

It appears we have a double victory. What an exciting battle!

The other Aurem, Enyok Barlow, turns to Weemes.

BARLOW

Let's be done with this.

WEEMES

Patience, Ambassador. We mustn't rush their customs.

BARLOW

The Collective doesn't care about some back-world tyrant's feelings.

(leaning in closer)

We need that ore.

Emperor Poosus's eyes turn up as he overhears this.

EMPEROR POOSUS

Well, Collectivizer and Coalition-scum, enough games. Tomorrow we meet at the palace, get to business.

WEEMES

Excellent.

Alec-Jon watches, concerned.

INT. EMPEROR'S PALACE - DAY

MEETING HALL



A large stone dome with holes in the top. The air is filled with smoke from torches on the walls.

The Emperor sits in a polished metal chair, gigantic palms crossed in his lap, in front of a round metal table.

Barlow sits across from him, eyeing the room.

Edged between them is Weemes.

Alec-Jon standing up tall near the door.

WEEMES

I hope you don't mind if Alec-Jon records this. In old age my memory is spotty and he helps me keep my details straight.

The two Aurem's nod.

BARLOW

So, where shall we begin?

WEEMES

Well, let's start with the basics.

EMPEROR POOSUS

Endari wish to use us, mine our ore and in return they offer us toys and trinkets.

BARLOW

This is first grade firearms technology. Hardly trinkets.

EMPEROR POOSUS

We outgun and outnumber the other tribes. They have not contested us for years. The only threat posed to our people is your "Collective" and you'd never give us advantage over yourselves. You need our metal and you offer useless firecrackers in exchange. Hah. If you really want to trade, why not the designs to a battle cruiser.

Barlow scoffs.

BARLOW

In your dreams. You brutes couldn't handle technology on that level. You'd blow yourselves up.

EMPEROR POOSUS  
Someone would be blown up,  
certainly.

WEEMES  
Alright, alright. Let's calm a  
moment.

BARLOW  
Listen, Weemes. The Collective  
trusts that you'll be impartial  
which is why we accepted his  
request to have you mediate. But  
know that the Endari will not have  
their time wasted or time kindly to  
threats.

WEEMES  
Like you said, the Emperor  
requested that I mediate. To me  
that shows someone willing to  
negotiate.

EMPEROR POOSUS  
But we have other ways to get what  
we want if need be.

Poosus bares his large fangs.

BARLOW  
Ah, I'd like to see that face when  
it's staring down an orbital ion  
strike. Won't be so pretty then.

EMPEROR POOSUS  
(jumping on the table)  
I can make you not pretty now!

Barlow rises and assumes a defensive stance.

Alec-Jon rushes to Weemes's side to block him from danger.

WEEMES  
Calm!

The two Aurem panting, staring at each other.

**[Sequence 3]**

EXT. EMPEROR'S PALACE - DAY

PALACE OUTPOST

An Aurem is sleeping at his post, overlooking the wall.

Something wakes him.

He looks over the wall and around the rampart.

Nothing. He closes his eyes again.

A large frigate grazes the wall, flying right over him. The shockwave knocks his out of his chair.

#### COURTYARD

We see the Aurem running slowly, wheezing heavily.

#### MEETING HALL

The Emperor and Ambassador are at each others throats literally with Alec-Jon and the Weemes trying to pry them apart.

A loud knock comes from the door.

Another knock.

Finally, the door falls down with the AUREM GUARD laying on top of it.

He gets up in a panic.

#### AUREM GUARD

My liege! Alert, alert! Intruder  
alert!

As he says this a shadow blocks the holes above the dome roof, darkening the room.

#### COURTYARD

Everyone assembles outside as a small frigate lands in the courtyard across from the meeting hall. They all stare in disbelief.

The ramp lowers.

Out walks two Coalition naval officers. CMDR. WILKINS (50s, gray, hardass) and LT. RUBY CHO (30s, black hair with streak of purple).

Wilkins strides forward towards Weemes while Cho follows close behind, eyes darting to the palace guards rushing to surround them.

WILKINS  
Eldric Weemes?

Alec-Jon and Weemes exchange glances.

WEEMES  
Yes.

WILKINS  
Commander Wilkins, this is  
Lieutenant Cho. You've been  
summoned by the Scion council.  
We're here to escort you to them  
immediately.

WEEMES  
I'm sorry?

WILKINS  
We can explain on the ship, sir.  
Gather your things quickly. We have  
a deadline.

Weemes turns to Alec-Jon.

ALEC-JON  
The Scion Council wishes to see  
you. What an honor.

WEEMES  
An honor indeed.

He turns to face the dumbstruck Emperor and the Ambassador.

WEEMES (CONT'D)  
It seems as if I am urgently needed  
at home.

POOSUS  
They tell me Weemes is a man of his  
word. Must be lies.

BARLOW  
This is most unsatisfactory Mr.  
Weemes. The Collective will not be  
pleased to have this negotiation  
fail, especially because you have  
"errands" to run.

WEEMES  
But fail it shall not. I leave you  
in the best of hands.

He throws a hand around Alec-Jon.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

Alec-Jon will take of these negotiations in my stead. I trust him without equivocation and I hope you show him the same respect you've shown me.

Alec-Jon twists his neck and leans into Eldric's ear.

ALEC-JON

(whispering)

Sir, I don't think this is a good idea.

WEEMES

It most certainly is not. But I have faith in you. Remember what I taught you and you will excel.

ALEC-JON

I doubt it, sir.

WEEMES

Consider this. If you fail, Poosus will probably have everyone killed. So believe in yourself. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain from it.

Poosus approaches Barlow with one of the rifles of his guards.

The Lieutenant rests her hand on her pistol, watching the situation closely.

POOSUS

No Weemes, no deal.

Barlow backs away, hands up.

WEEMES

I assure your Emperor, that is not necessary. Everyone can still come away from this a winner. Just trust me.

Poosus stares down the sights and then back to Weemes.

POOSUS

Fine.

He approaches Weemes.

POOSUS (CONT'D)

But if your machine tries to cheat  
me. I'll crush him, the  
Collectivizer and I'll track you  
down and crush you.

Poosus leaves, nudging Alec-Jon out of the way as he walks  
back into the palace.

Ambassador Barlow rises to his feet and dusts himself off,  
trying to play it off.

Alec-Jon looks at the ship's crew and back at Weemes.

ALEC-JON

I can't do this.

WEEMES

For both of our sakes, I hope you  
are wrong.

The guards in the courtyard disperse and Lt. Cho holsters her  
sidearm.

**[Sequence 4]**

INT. C.S.S. STORMWIND - NIGHT

CAFETERIA

Inside a Nautilus-class battle cruiser.

SGT. NEFFARI ONYX (40s) and CORP. BLAKE (30s, A-Cog) are  
sitting at a table.

Neffari eats.

Blake monitors the room.

ONYX

You ever think about life outside  
of the forces?

BLAKE

I'm sorry?

ONYX

I don't know. I was just thinking..

She twirls an empty cup in her hand.

ONYX (CONT'D)

Back when I was a kid, 6 or 7, my  
parents took us to go see this  
troupe in Millennium City.

Blake listens with a blank expression.

ONYX (CONT'D)

The way they moved. I swore when I  
grew up I would be a dancer. I  
would move like that and make other  
people feel what I had felt that  
day.

Blake turns his head.

ONYX (CONT'D)

I wanted that. So bad. I convinced  
my parents to pay for dance  
lessons. I did all the school  
plays. I got accepted into an art  
school where I would learn from the  
best dancers. And then Harvest got  
glazed and I got conscripted, the  
rest is history.

BLAKE

Your point, ma'am?

ONYX

Sometimes I wonder what life  
would've been like if I had become  
a dancer.

BLAKE

The war ended over a decade ago.  
You could still become one.

ONYX

Yeah, I suppose. But my entire  
adult life has revolved around  
this. All of my friends, my family.  
My world revolves around the  
Hellknights. I wouldn't know how to  
begin anything else.

BLAKE

I believe it begins with a choice.

Onyx raises an eyebrow.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Unlike you, I was constructed in a  
factory.

(MORE)

BLAKE (CONT'D)

My personality generated by a seed template created by another A-Cog. I was determined to be a suitable combat model and given that designation upon activation. I've never had any alternative presented. Even the thought of a life outside of this seems surreal. Combat unit is literally etched into my command module. But even then, I know that I have a choice. I serve not for those reasons. I serve because the men and woman and A-Cogs who serve beside me. I serve because I can. But that's my choice.

Onyx nods.

ONYX

You're pretty wise for a bucket of bolts.

The A-Cog smiles.

Klaxons start firing overhead.

An automated voice calls everyone to their battle stations.

Onyx and Blake look at each other.

BLAKE

I believe our official role in a combat scenario is to run-and-hide.

ONYX

Yeah, where's the fun in that.

BRIDGE

Sgt. Onyx enters the darkness of the bridge.

The large viewport reveals a snow-laden planet made of ice and metal.

A suited ADMIRAL addresses her as she walks into the room.

ADMIRAL

Sgt. Onyx, glad you're here. My men and I are having a bit of a discussion.

ONYX

In the middle of combat?



ADMIRAL  
Admittedly, didn't mean to alarm  
anyone but protocol must be  
followed.

He turns to one of the other officers.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)  
Bring it up.  
(to Onyx)  
We found the source of the signals.

A real-time feed pulls up from the surface of the planet. It shows a large encampment built around what appears to be mining equipment.

ONYX  
Have you identified them?

The Admiral takes a deep breath.

The image zooms in and revealing a red and white circular flag.

Underneath it stands an armed sentry with purple skin and a large crest in the crown of his head.

ONYX (CONT'D)  
Lord, is that...

ADMIRAL  
Correct. We've identified the flag,  
the camp, the technology and the  
operators. Volaar.

ONYX  
Shit. Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit.

ADMIRAL  
Correct.

ONYX  
I don't know about Naval engagement  
but with us, the standing orders  
with Volaar are shoot on sight.

ADMIRAL  
Likewise.

ONYX  
Have you reported this to Command.

ADMIRAL

The gravity well surrounding this world is inundated with ionized radiation which disrupt our long-range comms. But we're preparing comms to relay once we return to clear space.

ONYX

So what's the debate?

ADMIRAL

No debate. Just pondering.

He walks closer to the viewport and stares at the image.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

None of us are old enough to remember the Volaar invasion. In fact, I wager this is the first time our two species have encountered each other in over four centuries.

He turns to Onyx.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)

In all of my years of service, I've never been more conflicted about an order than the one I must issue now.

Onyx clenches her jaw.

ONYX

Protocol must be followed, sir.

ADMIRAL

Lord, I know. And I don't regret it. But to think, here we are so close to our race's mortal enemies. The destroyers of our homeworld. The sins of the father carry on. May God have mercy on us all.

He nods to one of the officers on deck who presses a button.

The ship's ion cannon fires a streak of white energy towards the planet.

The screen flashes white.

The mining camp has been reduced to a crater surrounded by the remains of a some burning fortifications and buildings.

He takes a deep breath.

ADMIRAL (CONT'D)  
You may wish to prepare your team,  
Sergeant. We're gonna need boots on  
the ground for recon and intel.

ONYX  
Indeed, Admiral.

ADMIRAL  
And, remember, Onyx. They took our  
home from us. Whatever you find  
down there, remember that.

Onyx leaves the Admiral to stare stoically at his screen.

**[Sequence 5]**

INT. SYONIS - NIGHT

CENTRAL BOULEVARD

Syonis is an small capital city.

The houses are rustic and the technology is outdated by  
Coalition standards. This is juxtaposed by stunning monuments  
and ornate facades of clean, crafted metal.

A family of burly Aurem watch Alec-Jon as he passes down the  
street. One of them lifts a flap of clothing, revealing 6  
dangling testicles.

Alec-Jon averts his eyes as he hears several rising grunts  
which he can only take to be Aurem laughter.

He sits on a bench underneath a glowing street-lamp.

He reaches into his skin and pulls a small rod from in front  
of his ear.

Twisting the rod down from it's base, a small lens folds out  
and lights up.

INT. C.S.S. SORAKI - NIGHT

WEEMES'S CABIN

Eldric is laying in bed staring up at the ceiling.

He hears a chime.

He walks over to the communication panel across the room.

Waving it open, he seems Alec-Jon's warmly lit face.

INTERCUT - VIDEO CONVERSATION

ALEC-JON

Sir, how glad am I to reach you.  
All is well on your journey, I  
hope.

WEEMES

Indeed it has been, my boy.

They share a brief silence.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

They tell me this is one of the  
fastest ships in the galaxy and we  
should expect to arrive within a  
few mordents.

ALEC-JON

Amazing. How has the crew been?

WEEMES

I've yet to be introduced to anyone  
aside from the two officers we met.  
The Lieutenant says I'll be  
required to stay in my room until  
she can my access has been cleared  
with Naval Intelligence. So, for  
now, it would seem I'm a prisoner.  
But, alas, the accommodations  
aren't worthy of complaint.

He waves around the room.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

What about yourself, Alec-Jon? How  
are the negotiations going?

Alec-Jon looks away.

ALEC-JON

How do you do it? How do you make  
them listen to you? How do you make  
them interested in your proposals?

Weemes chuckles.

WEEMES

A fundamental law of human, and it would seem alien, interest is this: if you want someone to pay attention, talk about their favorite topic.

Alec-Jon turns up an eyebrow.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

Themselves. Discuss their problems, their needs, their desires and you can captivate even the most hostile audience.

ALEC-JON

But how can I learn their needs if they refuse to speak of them? The Collective would never trust an outsider with details of their weaknesses. And Poosus is so prideful, he would be loathe to admit such a weakness.

WEEMES

Then don't ask him. Ask those around him. Better yet, use your own eyes and look around him. Place yourself in the mind of a Augeum warlord and his people. What would you want? What would you need?

Alec-Jon nods.

WEEMES'S CABIN

The door slides open.

Lt. Cho walks in, looking tired.

CHO

The Commander...

She notices the video conference and pauses.

WEEMES

It would seem I have to go.

ALEC-JON

(on monitor)

Thank you. As always, Alderman, you've been a great help to me.

WEEMES

Remember, my son. Believe. Believe in hope. And one believe in yourself, as I believe in you.

Alec-Jon nods.

The connection is closed.

Weemes turns to the Lieutenant.

CHO

Sorry to interrupt, sir.

WEEMES

Think nothing of it, dear. You'll pardon an old man for being crass but when was the last time you rested, dearie?

Cho laughs.

CHO

Didn't mean to eavesdrop but I noticed he called you Alderman?

WEEMES

Indeed.

CHO

They didn't tell us you were a member of the Star Council?

WEEMES

That was ages ago, probably before you could even walk.

CHO

I had no idea, sir.

WEEMES

For some that was half a lifetime away. For some, a full lifetime.

CHO

Well, Alderman, I just came to tell you that you've been cleared for level 1 access to the ship's facilities. Mess hall, the lounge and observation. The bridge, barracks, armory and weapons bay are off-limits without supervision, obviously.

WEEMES

(with a smile)

I doubt I'll be needing anything  
from the armory, thank you.

She smiles.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

So, I hear this ship is quite  
extraordinary. To be able to make  
the trek in such a short period of  
time...I didn't think we had ships  
that fast.

CHO

The Soraki is state-of-the-art and  
beyond bleeding edge. There are  
some things I can show you but  
others...

She looks down.

CHO (CONT'D)

Would you like a tour?

Weemes smiles and nods.

EXT. SYONIS - NIGHT

PARK

Alec-Jon people watches from the same bench.

He notices the babbling of a small stream.

He stands and looks off the stone-faced bridge overhanging  
the water.

It crests underneath him and leads off towards a distant  
river which he can hear but lies obscured by the jungle.

His eyes catch a reflection and zooms in.

A vendor he passed earlier is capturing water from the stream  
in a small contraption being held on a hovering platform.

It appears to be a water distiller.

Alec-Jon zooms in on the muck in the flask. It's black as  
tar.

Alec-Jon returns to his normal vision and stares for a  
moment, contemplating.

He then takes off back towards the large palace in the background.

INT. EMPEROR'S PALACE - DAY

COURTYARD

Alec-Jon catches the Emperor leaving his quarters.

ALEC-JON

Water!

Poosus stops in his tracks, surprised by his tone.

His guards grip their weapons.

ALEC-JON (CONT'D)

I don't know why I didn't realize it.

Poosus watches him, confused.

ALEC-JON (CONT'D)

The metals from the ore. The very thing that makes your planet valuable is the thing that makes it unsustainable.

Poosus looks around.

His guards calm down.

POOSUS

Aurem physiology strong. Stronger than weak human. But still. Without good water, Aurem no good.

ALEC-JON

I've been authorized to provide water sanitization designs.

POOSUS

In exchange for?

ALEC-JON

In exchange for patience. Patience and trust as we move forward. We all want to come away from this deal with something. I ask that you remain patient with the Endari and myself. Do we have a deal?



POOSUS

Deal? No deal until plans in hand.

ALEC-JON

I'll do you one better. Coalition is sending a portable decontamination plant as we speak. It will be here in a few days. You can test it for yourself.

POOSUS

If that true, you will have trust. Until then, we wait.

He turns to a guard.

POOSUS (CONT'D)

Tell Collectivizer we don't negotiate today. Human scum may have saved his life.

Alec-Jon smiles.

**[Sequence 6]**

INT. C.S.S. SORAKI - NIGHT

CREW KITCHEN

Cho is showing Weemes around.

CHO

NARA, the ship's internal Cognizance, dispenses meals throughout the day but help yourself to the cupboards at anytime.

WEEMES

Lieutenant, you've been so gracious. And I must say, in all of my years, I've seen few so enthusiastic about their work as you are.

Cho smiles and relaxes a bit.

CHO

Pop hated ships growing up. He said if Man were meant to fly, we'd have wings. He about lost it when I told him I enlisted.

She looks around the compartment with glee.

CHO (CONT'D)

I've always loved ships. I used to sit at the port and watch them take off and land all day. At six years old, I knew one day I'd explore the galaxy in one.

WEEMES

How precocious.

CHO

I'm doing it, aren't I?

WEEMES

Indeed.

Cho smiles.

The disembodied voice of the NARA chimes in over the speakers.

NARA (V.O.)

*Command to the Bridge. Repeat.  
Command to the Bridge.*

Cho grimaces.

CHO

Wilkins is off-cycle. I'm up.

COMMAND DECK

Cho and Weemes walk into the dimly lit room.

Empty space fills the viewport.

All stations lie empty except for two junior officers, monitoring different stations.

An ENSIGN with bags under his eyes looks up at her from the navigation terminal.

ENSIGN

Officer Cho, some kind of anomaly on the slipstream sensors, ma'am.

CHO

Pull it up.

A 3D overlay appears to show a circular rift with lights dispersing from it in a spiral pattern.

CHO (CONT'D)  
What is it?

ENSIGN  
No idea, ma'am. Doesn't match any  
of the markers of known  
interstellar phenomena.

CHO  
Are we on a course for collision?

ENSIGN  
No ma'am. We're already passing it.

CHO  
Make note and we'll report to--

NARA (V.O.)  
Pardon me, Lieutenant Cho.

CHO  
Yes, Nara?

NARA (V.O.)  
My threat analysis subroutine is  
triggering a class 1 threat  
response according to that  
signature.

CHO  
What kind of threat response?

NARA (V.O.)  
An immediate action, ma'am.

CHO  
Well, what is it?

NARA (V.O.)  
I'm sorry, ma'am, I'm unable to  
determine that. My analysis  
protocols are disabled, as are my  
response protocols. Otherwise, I  
could determine what immediate  
action is being recommended.

CHO  
Well, enable them.

NARA (V.O.)  
Unfortunately, I can not.

CHO  
Why not?

NARA (V.O.)  
They were explicitly disabled by  
Commander Wilkins and can only be  
re-enabled by his orders.

HALLWAY

Cho stands by the doorway, Weemes still following behind.

She engages keypad by the door, a chime goes off inside.

A few moments pass.

The door slides open and Commander Wilkins stands there in  
his casual dress.

WILKINS  
What is it?

CHO  
Sir, we've found a slipstream  
anomaly and NARA has classified it  
as a class 1 threat. She needs your  
authorization to identi-

WILKINS  
No.

CHO  
I'm beg your pardon?

WILKINS  
Have the Staten note it and we'll  
report it back to Command when we  
return.

CHO  
But, sir, NARA programming suggests  
an immediate action response. We  
don't know how sever-

WILKINS  
We're not enabling the protocols.  
That's final.

CHO  
I don't think that's a good idea,  
sir.

WILKINS  
Well I do. End of discussion.

CHO  
But, sir...

The door slides shut leaving her winded.

Cho turns to Weemes. They both look puzzled.

WEEMES'S CABIN

Weemes pours himself a glass of brown liquor.

CHO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry you had to witness that,  
Alderman. I'll--

WEEMES

Pardon me for asking, but why does  
your Commander not wish to enable  
the protocols.

CHO

He has his reasons, sir.

WEEMES

And they are.

Cho looks away.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

I can tell from your reaction that  
you don't agree with those reasons,  
whatever they are.

CHO

No, sir.

WEEMES

Let me guess, Wilkins is the type  
who prefers human engagement to A-  
Cog? He limits reliance on  
Artificial Cognizants to trivial  
tasks. A blood and bone type.

Cho turns her head.

CHO

He says certain things require a  
heart to accomplish.

She shakes her head.

CHO (CONT'D)

But it's ridiculous. This is state  
of the art technology. By limiting  
those protocols, we're crippling  
not just her functionality but our  
own effectiveness.

(MORE)

CHO (CONT'D)

We're limiting ourselves. Not to mention, the increased strain on the crew, having to manually run tasks which are designed to be automated and...

She stop herself and looks at Weemes.

CHO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Commander Wilkins is fine leader and I respect his orders.

WEEMES

Loyalty is admirable. But remember, in the end, we all must know for ourselves the difference between right and wrong in order to exercise that discretion when lives are at stake. I commend you for voicing your objection back there. Regardless of your role or position, your loyalty to your crew must always prevail.

Cho nods.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll leave an old man to enjoy his libations. It would seem you have a ship to attend to.

**[Sequence 7]**

EXT. VOLAAR MINING CAMP - DAY

EDGE OF CAMP

Silver scorch marks cover the ground.

Smoke creates a haze in the air.

Burning debris surrounds the crumbling remains of the makeshift buildings and shacks.

Charred and bloody remains are peppered amongst the debris.

The camp is quiet and still.

Dirt crunches below a heavy boot, disturbing the peace.

NIEEMA VHO (Volaar, purple-skin, short blue hair) trudges forward at a snail's pace. Eyes wide and lips trembling.

She tries to speak but her voice only cracks.

She falls to her knees.

To her left, a singed plush doll along with the charred little fingers that used to hold it.

Tears mix with the soot-encrusted dirt.

A piece of metal rattles nearby.

She whips out her blaster and aims.

An alien quadruped with a pink snout and long ears stares back at her through orange-green eyes.

She's hands tremble as she lowers the gun just an inch.

It tilts it's head to one side.

The dog slinks over to the doll and takes a sniff. It then walks towards her.

She clenches her blaster tighter.

It gets closer and licks her cheek.

She can see sympathy in it's large fluorescent eyes.

She forces a smile.

The dog's eyes jump upwards.

Ship thrusters are getting louder and louder.

Nieema grabs the doll and tucks it into her satchel.

She smiles one more time at the dog and then runs towards the edge of camp.

She finds a building that is partially intact and climbs through the missing facade over a pile of rubble to the second floor.

She ducks behind a metal radiator and waits, blaster ready.

CRATER

A COALITION SHUTTLE lands on the edge of the largest crater.

Out walks Sgt. Onyx and Corp. Blake followed by a dozen other Marines, each suited and booted for combat and warfare.

ONYX

I want every inch of this place  
combed. Any survivors I want  
collected for questioning. Tag  
everything.

BLAKE

Will do, ma'am.

The Corporal reaches into his rucksack and pulls out three  
small pyramids.

He places them on his palm where they light up and begin to  
float.

They expand to the size of a large ball and start to fly  
around in different directions.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Drones deployed.

The forward tips glow a hot white and a vertical white line  
is emitted as they scan the surroundings.

The rest of the soldiers begin to fan out.

ONYX

What does this look like to you?

She walks through a destroyed tent.

BLAKE

A mining installation. Gathering  
resources to fuel their ships  
maybe.

Blake analyzes what appears to be piece of fabric that  
survived the blast.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Cobbled together. They look like  
they've been having a rough go of  
it.

ONYX

Ironie.

Onyx kneels walks over to a mass of burned bodies.

She pulls back the top one to reveal the bodies underneath.

Two adults corpses shielding the dead remains of a toddler  
and an infant.



Blake walks over behind her.

ONYX (CONT'D)

These are the monsters who attacked  
our homeworld?

BLAKE

This looks like a civilian  
operation. I'm not seeing much  
evidence of a military presence.  
From the remains it looks like they  
were desperate for resources.

ONYX

These are the monsters...

BURNED-OUT STRUCTURE

Nieema eyes dart between the three drones in the air. She  
doesn't notice a Marine approaching the first floor of her  
building.

A low-pitched bark/screen attracts her attention along with  
that of the other Hellknights.

She sees the space dog pressed over the Marine on the landing  
below her. It's barking viciously in it's face.

The other Hellknights are getting closer.

Nieema shuffles out of the back window of the building onto a  
pile of debris below.

She turns as she hears a blaster firing behind her.

She peeks around a corner

The soldier pushes the dog's limp body off of him.

She pauses for a moment.

She readies her blaster, when she hears voices in the  
distance.

HELLKNIGHT #1

Armed Contact! Armed Contact!

Blaster fire disintegrates the wall in front of her.

She stumbles backwards.

Half a dozen boots are now bearing in her direction.

Nieema sprints towards the barren wasteland she had returned from earlier.

Hellknights take potshots at her from out of range.

Blake stands next to Onyx, still back in the center of the camp.

BLAKE

Ma'am.

Blake produces a large SNIPER RIFLE from over his shoulder and aims it towards the noise.

Nieema is nothing but a mere dot on the horizon as he takes aim but his scope magnifies her to full size.

His robotic reflexes make his aim perfect and true.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Shall I take the shot?

He continues to follow the Volaar through the scope.

Onyx grits her teeth.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Shall I, ma'am?

Onyx looks down at the charred bodies again.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Ma'am.

Nieema disappears behind a rock enclosure.

ONYX

Take the shot.

BLAKE

It's too late, ma'am. She's gotten away.

Sgt. Onyx shakes her head.

Blake pulls away his rifle and approaches her.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Ma'am. Shall we pursue her?

Onyx wipes a tear from her eyes.

ONYX

(sternly)

Yes, follow her. If the Volaar have a camp, they also have a ship. We can't let her report in. Find her. Stop her.

BLAKE

Yes, ma'am.

Sgt. Onyx looks one last time at the charred bodies.

ONYX

God Helps us.

Nieema sloshes through muck and dirt in the wastelands as Hellknights follow close behind her.

**[Sequence 8]**

INT. BABEL PORT - DAY

Weemes strolls down the ramp of the Soraki.

Adam greets him with a smile.

ADAM

Eldric, it is so good to see you.

WEEMES

You as well, Adam. Or should I say Councillor?

ADAM

Ah, you know me too well to rest on ceremony. Lord knows my position with the Star Council would be a mere fantasy without your guidance.

WEEMES

Regardless, how are you and the family? Does Lucilli still make that terrific tart with those Nulinga berries?

ADAM

Indeed. I'll make sure she whips one together for our dear old friend before you leave.

WEEMES

(smiling)

Spectacular. And old is right...

They grasp each other in a tight embrace.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

So I must ask, why fetch an old bag  
of bones from so far away with such  
haste?

Adam turns dour.

ADAM

It's a matter of grave importance,  
I'm afraid. A friend of mine is  
facing a dilemma.

Weemes smiles.

WEEMES

Well, to summon me with such  
urgency and resources, it must  
truly be a matter of life and  
death.

Adam looks around.

ADAM

I can't say much in these auspices,  
you know the walls have ears. But  
suffice it to say...  
(leaning in closer,  
whispering)  
The fate of humanity may rest in  
the balance.

Adam steps backwards and returns to his normal volume.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I'm hoping you can offer him your  
wisdom and counsel as you have done  
for me so many times.

Weemes lets the words soak in for a moment.

WEEMES

Well, we best get going then. What  
is your friend's name?

INT. SPARK'S STUDIO - DAY

Adam enters followed by Eldric.

Spark is at his easel, hands engaged and moving with inhuman  
speed.

SPARK  
I'll be with you in one moment.

The two enter and wait.

Weemes looks around the room, surveying the collection of paintings.

With a sudden jerk, Spark is finished.

ADAM  
May we?

Spark nods.

The two humans walk over and begin staring at the finished artwork.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Magnificent, Spark. It's beautiful.

SPARK  
Thank you, Councillor.

WEEMES  
What is it about?

Spark tilts his head, staring deeply at it.

SPARK  
I do not know.

He turns to Weemes.

SPARK (CONT'D)  
Do you?

The old man smiles.

SPARK (CONT'D)  
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, correct?

WEEMES  
True but art without intention can hardly be called art at all.

Adam turns to his mentor with a sharp look.

ADAM  
I—I believe what the Alderman is means to say is—

SPARK  
(interrupting)  
No, he's correct. I must do better.

Adam looks confused.

SPARK (CONT'D)  
So this is your mentor?

ADAM  
Yes. Spark, meet former Alderman  
Eldric Weemes. Alderman Weemes,  
meet Spark, the youngest of the  
Scion Council.

Weemes smiles.

WEEMES  
It's a great honor, dear boy.

They shake hands.

SPARK  
The honor is all mine.  
(turning to Adam)  
Has he been informed of the  
situation?

WEEMES  
Yes, but I'd like to hear your view  
on it.

Spark nods and turns to Adam.

SPARK  
That will be all, Councillor.

Adam nods and leaves the room.

SPARK (CONT'D)  
Make yourself at home.

Weemes takes a seat.

SPARK (CONT'D)  
If you would like something to eat  
or drink, just ask. We can have  
something brought in.

WEEMES  
Gladly. Thanks for your  
hospitality. Now, please Scion,  
explain to me your troubles.

Spark walks towards the balcony and stares at the setting sun.

SPARK

Are you familiar with the other Scions? Vesper and Marcus?

WEEMES

Indeed, back when I was an Alderman, they were the only Scions. Marcus didn't know of a problem that couldn't be solved with a well-placed bomb. And Vesper preferred honey to his vinegar. Never seen two people so at odds.

SPARK

People?

WEEMES

Forgive me, I don't put much stock in this blood versus circuitry nonsense. My assistant, Alec-Jon, is as honorable a man as I've come across in my many years. He's an A-Cog. For that, I see no need to draw lines based structural anatomy.

SPARK

You have a very progressive view. I wish others shared it. It's why we have to keep this meeting a secret. Many have a hard time accepting the power of the Scion Council as it is. I suppose I can empathize. An A-Cog Council making decisions for the Human Coalition. If I were a Human I might find it difficult. And yet, to know one was receiving advice, from a Human no less, would cast doubt on our very existence. At the very least, they would seek to reassess my template code to determine if I'm unfit for my role.

WEEMES

Well, from what I understand, your role is to serve Human interest on the council. Marcus will seek the protection and advancement of the species at all costs. It's in his programming. Vesper will always seek the diplomatic solution.

(MORE)

WEEMES (CONT'D)

It is in her programming. You seem to take the human approach. And, in order to do that you must think like a human. There's no programming for that. Humanity is an acquired perspective.

Spark nods and looks at his canvas.

SPARK

And maybe that's why I'm so troubled by this. Both alliances are valid. Vesper is right. Strengthening the Endari and uniting the Augeum would make them powerful trading partners. Without the resources they can provide, our growing colonies would suffer. Immensely. And yet...

He turns away from the canvas.

SPARK (CONT'D)

A united Collective turned against us would be a death spiral. Allying with the Enclave would provide us with a fighting chance, not to mention the benefits gained from trade with the Simr'rak Commonwealth.

Spark rubs his hands.

SPARK (CONT'D)

Both options can potentially lead to disaster and the destruction of our species. And yet both could also turn out to be the very thing that saves us.

WEEMES

Quite the dilemma, indeed.

Spark turns to him.

SPARK

What would you do?

WEEMES

Do you have any books here?

Spark looks at him, confused.



**[Sequence 9]**

INT. C.S.S. SORAKI - DAY

COMMAND DECK

Lt. Cho sits in the command chair, appears nervous.

The door slides open. Commander Wilkins followed by 4 grunts who begin to swap seats with those already sitting down.

Cho rises to her feet and gives Wilkins a salute.

CHO  
Commander on Deck.

WILKINS  
At ease, Lieutenant. Anything to report.

CHO  
Yes, sir. A slipstream anomaly has been detected...

WILKINS  
You've already informed me of this Lieutenant and I gave a course of action.

CHO  
Yes, sir, but I believe it's in our best interest to reconsider.

The grunts swapping out terminals pause for a moment.

WILKINS  
Excuse me?

CHO  
I think-

WILKINS  
I didn't ask you what you think, Lieutenant.

He takes a step closer.

WILKINS (CONT'D)  
I think you've been up too long. I think you need to take some time and reassess your position aboard this vessel.

CHO

Sir, your mistrust of A-Cogs is not only irrational but it's putting the entire ship at risk. Not to mention, it's in violation with the Coalition Naval bylaws.

The room quiets and eyes dart away.

WILKINS

Lieutenant, you are relieved of the deck. I suggest you get some rest and return when you have a grasp of who runs this ship.

CHO

Sir-

WILKINS

That's an order.

Cho looks around, teeth clenched.

She storms out of the room.

CREW QUARTERS

Cho lays rigid in her cot, eyes glued to the ceiling, hands crossed.

She sits in silence and darkness.

The door opens and someone walks in, she doesn't move.

She stays still, eyes concentrating.

She hears a voice in her head.

WEEMES (V.O.)

*...we all must know for ourselves  
the difference between right and  
wrong in order to exercise that  
discretion when lives are at stake.*

Suddenly, she stands up and gets dressed.

TECHNOLOGY BAY

As she walks in a half-asleep MIDSHIPMAN nearly spills out of his chair.

CHO

At ease.

He nods.

She looks around, scouring the room for a moment.

CHO (CONT'D)  
What are your duties?

MIDSHIPMAN  
Monitor ship vitals.

He points to a screen of blinking lines and gauges.

CHO  
Anything *vital* happening?

He stares blankly.

CHO (CONT'D)  
It was a joke. Get it? Vital,  
*vital*.

MIDSHIPMAN  
No ma'am. Nothing vital happening.

CHO  
So nothing would fall apart if you  
stepped away for about twenty  
minutes?

He furrows a brow.

MIDSHIPMAN  
No ma'am. Is there something wrong?

CHO  
Awesome, can you do me a solid?

MIDSHIPMAN  
Step away for about twenty minutes?

She nods.

MIDSHIPMAN (CONT'D)  
Umm, I guess.

CHO  
And can you do me a really big  
solid? And not tell anyone you saw  
me.

MIDSHIPMAN  
What's going on?

CHO  
Nothing bad. I just need to look  
into something.

MIDSHIPMAN  
And you can't have me around when  
you do.

CHO  
It's nothing bad, I swear.

He looks around and exhales through his nose.

He stands up and walks away.

CHO (CONT'D)  
Many thanks.

As the door closes behind him, she runs over to a large red  
cylinder, perched in the corner of the room.

She flips a switch and a holographic panel appears. Cho  
begins typing.

The ship's A-COG greets her.

NARA  
Hello, Lieutenant. You have  
accessed my primary cortex. How may  
I be of assistance?

CHO  
Nara, I would like you to pull up  
the response and identification  
events for the slipstream anomaly  
we spotted earlier.

Cho continues typing.

NARA  
I'm sorry, Lieutenant. As I stated,  
those protocols are blocked by  
Commander Wilkins, I cannot.

CHO  
True, you can't access your  
protocols. But I'm granting you  
access through my comms channel to  
the central Coalition Intelligence  
hub. You should be able to access  
all standard response protocols  
through there. Scan them and find  
out which ones would've triggered  
your response.

NARA

The Commander will not be happy.

CHO

The safety of the crew is at stake.

Cho finishes typing.

Silence for a moment.

NARA

It is complete.

CHO

And?

NARA

I've scanned through all 14,087 response protocols triggered by slipstream anomalies. Only one matched the signature that we discovered.

CHO

What's the response?

NARA

Level 1 Threat Report to Central Coalition Command, along with High Alert notification to all military forces. Followed by a mandatory immediate evacuation order to all civilian bodies within a two sector radius.

CHO

What are we to reporting?

NARA

The slipstream anomaly that we witnessed holds the signature of a dreadnaught-class Volaar cloaking shield.

CHO

What?

NARA

A Volaar dreadnaught, ma'am. That's what the signature belonged to. It was cloaked behind the anomaly.

CHO

The Volaar? Are here? In Leonis?

NARA

It would appear so, ma'am. Shall I  
report the sighting.

The door whooshes open.

Behind it are Commander Wilkins and two grunts, along with  
the Midshipman being held with his arms behind his back.

Cho's eyes are wide.

**[Sequence 10]**

EXT. BABEL PORT - NIGHT

Alec-Jon shuffles down the shuttle dock.

He stops at the end of a line leading to a small booth with  
an A-Cog standing there.

His attention turns to a STRANGER, dressed in dark brown  
leather who brushes past him.

This stranger repeatedly looks around, scarf obscuring her  
face and neck.

She locks eyes with Alec-Jon who stares back.

He detects an imperceptible smile.

The stranger then hops over a small barrier marked KEEP OUT.

Alec-Jon makes a small chuckle to himself.

He watches the reflection of the cruiser docked in the next  
berth.

The stranger crouches down past a couple of dock workers  
unloading cargo.

They stop as they hear a port guard coming their way.

The guard passes by, they continue.

Alec-Jon smiles as the stranger finesses their way into an  
empty baggage rack and shuffles inside a small utility  
compartment.

He shakes his head.

The person standing in front of him disappears and now at the  
front of the line.

He approaches the BAGGAGE ATTENDANT.

ALEC-JON  
You guys catch a lot of stowaways?

BAGGAGE ATTENDANT  
More than you'd think.

ALEC-JON  
I'm not surprised.

He claims his baggage ticket and leaves.

EXT. SCION GARDENS - DAY

Alec-Jon sits in front of the downtown plaza.

Inside the multi-building complex the 100ft monument at the center lies visible.

The entrance in crowded.

A crowd stops in front of Alec-Jon.

An A-Cog TOUR GUIDE points to the building and enunciates at a high volume.

TOUR GUIDE  
Inside these halls, the Artificial  
Cognitives known as the Scions  
reside and convene to work out  
legislation and accords to protect  
the Coalition as a whole...

Alec-Jon turns as the tour guide points to a nearby statue of an A-Cog and a Human lifting a wall together.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)  
A monument to the vast trust and  
bond that has been forged between  
the centuries between humans and A-  
Cogs.

Alec-Jon smiles as a finger taps his shoulder.

He turns to see Alderman Weemes.

ALEC-JON  
It's a pleasure to see you again,  
sir. I must admit, I was afraid  
we'd parted ways for the last time  
back on Komoro.

WEEMES

Indeed, it was tense. But you made it through, as I knew you would. And what do you have to report?

Alec-Jon stands.

ALEC-JON

The Endari and the Emperor have officially come to terms and signed the agreement.

They both smile.

ALEC-JON (CONT'D)

It was all thanks to you, sir.

WEEMES

Not true, my boy. You did this and you shall tell me all about it now, over drinks.

ALEC-JON

Yes, sir.

Weemes turns to hail a cab when he bumps into a small child, knocking their toy to the ground.

WEEMES

Oh dear, terribly sorry.

The picks it up and hands it to the child who smiles and walks away.

He stays kneeled for a moment, watching the child leave and then shakes his head.

INT. BRAYBURY LOUNGE - DAY

The bar is almost empty, save for a few regulars in power suits.

Weemes and Alec-Jon are quietly chatting in a corner booth.

WEEMES

Ah, and the plant?

ALEC-JON

I received confirmation that it arrived last night and has already started producing.



WEEMES

Excellent. You've done  
extraordinarily well. This is what  
happens when people listen to one  
another. Excellent things happen,  
indeed.

Weemes eyes drift off.

ALEC-JON

Is everything alright, sir?

Weemes twists his head.

ALEC-JON (CONT'D)

You seem distracted. Is it your  
assignment? You never did explain  
why the Coalition stole you off in  
a such a hurry? What have you been  
up to?

Weemes sits, hands crossed as if contemplating.

ALEC-JON (CONT'D)

If you don't wish to—

WEEMES

I think I've made a grave error.

ALEC-JON

I'm sorry, why?

WEEMES

I was summoned me here for my  
council and I gave the best I  
could, but I'm afraid I've misled  
someone.

ALEC-JON

I'm sure that wasn't your  
intention. I know you well enough  
to know you would most certainly  
never give anyone bad advice. Not  
consciously at least.

WEEMES

True, but all in the same, I feel  
like I've steer them down a dark  
path and many may suffer because of  
it.

ALEC-JON

Wait? Is this why you were at the  
Gardens?

(MORE)

ALEC-JON (CONT'D)

Is this person associated with the  
Scions or the Star Council?

Weemes laughs nervously.

WEEMES

I've already said more than I  
should have.

He caresses Alec-Jon's hand.

WEEMES (CONT'D)

You're a good man, Alec-Jon. A wise  
and humble man. I look at you and  
feel pride that in some way I  
helped shaped you into that but in  
all honesty, I must admit that I  
had no part in such a thing. You  
were always a good and wise and  
humble man. It's just taken many  
years for us to notice. In a world  
so easily corrupted, I'm truly  
honored and grateful to call you my  
friend.

Alec-Jon smiles.

ALEC-JON

Thank you sir. But please, tell me  
about what is troubling you? Who  
did you mislead and why will others  
suffer?

Weemes grins.

WEEMES

Ah, dear boy. Let's forget the past  
ramblings of an old coot. Let's  
celebrate your first successful  
negotiation.

(to bartender)

Barkeep, another round, please.

Alec-Jon looks at him and smiles.

ALEC-JON

You know alcohol has no effect on  
me, sir.

WEEMES

Indeed, so I'll have to drink twice  
as much to make up for it.

They both laugh.

**[Sequence 11]**

INT. C.S.S. SORAKI - NIGHT

COMMAND DECK

Lieutenant Cho stands, head down.

The commander stares up at her from his Command Chair.

A starry abyss shows on the screen behind her.

WILKINS

This is your first command position  
aboard a vessel this size, that  
right?

CHO

Yes, sir.

WILKINS

Now, they told me when I took ova'  
that you were the most familiar  
with the crew an' the ship. They  
said you would be an asset and mah  
right-hand, help me keep 'er in the  
air.

He pauses for a moment.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

They tol' me you wuz loyal to a  
fault. That you place the mission  
before all else.

For the first time, he looks up at her.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Now, I have a question for ya. Look  
at me when I talk.

Cho drills her eyes forward.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

My question is: did they lie to me?

CHO

No, sir.

WILKINS

I'm sorry?

CHO  
No, sir. They did not lie to you.

WILKINS  
Well, that's awful confusing, don't you think? Cuz if they ain't lyin' and you so loyal, why did I find you going around my back and disobeying orders.

He waits.

WILKINS (CONT'D)  
Huh? Answer me, girl.

CHO  
I'm loyal to the crew and the Coalition, sir, not to you.

WILKINS  
Woman, on dis ship, I *am* the Coalition. As long as we in the air, my word is that of the Council isself.

CHO  
I humbly disagree, sir.

WILKINS  
You what?

CHO  
I said, I humbly disagree.

She drops her hands.

CHO (CONT'D)  
On this ship, you are a human. Just like me, just like them and everyone else on this crew. As such, you are subject to mistakes and errors of judgment which is what you made when you let your irrational fear of A-Cogs take over this ship. That fear chose to disregard a class 1 threat warning which has not only put this ship and it's crew at risk but the also the Coalition as a whole.

The rest of the crew stands, watching with undivided attention.

WILKINS

How long ya been a member of the  
Coalition's Navy, Cho?

CHO

Six years, sir.

WILKINS

How old that make ya?

CHO

25, sir.

WILKINS

Well, I'm a lot older than that  
miss. And the thing you don't seem  
to understand is that while you  
were in underroos watching Posari  
telenovelas, I was out here in the  
void, blowing holes in real-life  
monsters and bogeymen.

He stands to face her directly.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

I fought the real fight and put  
down some of the baddest of the  
bad. Meanwhile, back home, a bunch  
of cog-heads decided, like you,  
they had had enough of taking  
orders. They went into a small town  
with a buncha guns and explosives  
and blew themselves and a buncha  
innocent humans sky high.

Cho's jaw is clenched.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Mah little girl was born in that  
town. Raised in that town. Died in  
that town. Right next to mah wife.  
They both got blown to kingdom come  
because of some A-Cog with some  
screwy code. So, excuse my languae,  
but I'll be damned before a machine  
steers any ship I'm in command of.

Cho jaw drops.

CHO

Sir, I didn't know that.

WILKINS

No, you didn't Lieutenant. You just got tired of following orders and acted against my wishes Lieutenant, just like them A-Cogs.

Cho pauses a moment.

CHO

I'm sorry for your loss...but that's just not good enough.

WILKINS

I'm sorry?

CHO

I get that you don't like A-Cogs, I get that now. But the Coalition does. After the revolt on Turtle Island was put down, new measures were put in place to prevent future generations from developing the same flaws. And this ship was designed and built to be operated by one of those A-Cogs. The Coalition has forgiven and moved on. Now, if you don't want to, I understand. But then you shouldn't be commanding this vessel if you aren't willing to enable the protocols. If you won't do it for the Coalition, look around you.

She raises her hands.

CHO (CONT'D)

The men on this ship are sleep-deprived, burnt out and malnourished. We were not allocated the resources to run a manned-crew around the clock. It's just not possible. The Soraki was never built for that and it can't be run like that forever.

WILKINS

I think you'll find that a ship requires one thing above all else to run properly: Trust. Without it, everything falls apart.

He waves over one of the guards.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

And I'm afraid, Miss Cho, that I simply can't trust you. As such, you have been relieved of your command pending a court martial back on Riande. For the time being, you'll be remanded to the guest cabin. Meals will be brought to you.

CHO

Sir! You can't do this.

WILKINS

Take her away.

CHO

But the alert. The Volaar are here! A Volaar Battle Fleet. Nara detected it. We have to warn Babel.

A wave rolls over the crew. They start mouthing silently to each other.

WILKINS

You need time to figure out how command works on a ship like this.

INT. C.S.S. SORAKI - NIGHT

Cho is sitting on the floor, staring at the wall. Her dress jacket is off, revealing a white tank top.

Her knuckles are bleeding.

Her eyes are bloodshot and puffy.

The door slides open.

She turns.

The Midshipman walks in with a platter of food and sets it on the table.

He looks at her and then looks around for anyone else.

He walks over to the comms panel and starts typing.

CHO

They deactivated it.

MIDSHIPMAN

No, ma'am. They just removed your access.

She stands up and walks towards him.

CHO

What are you doing?

The Midshipman turns around, leaving the terminal activated.

MIDSHIPMAN

You're connected using my access codes. You need to see the communication on channel 9.

CHO

What is it?

MIDSHIPMAN

The Commander almost shit himself when he heard it. I don't think he can court martial you after this, but he's still gonna try.

CHO

What?

He turns and leaves, the door locks behind him.

She walks over to the terminal and tunes it to Channel 9.

An automated distress signal chimes out from the speakers.

*VOLAAR ENCAMPMENT FOUND IN DELTA QUADRANT. ALL FORCES ARE SUMMONED TO BASE FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTION AND ALL CIVILIANS ARE TO EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY.*

Cho eyes widen.

A tear falls down her face.

She smiles.

**[Sequence 12]**

INT. ASCENDANT DRAGON - NIGHT

WARMASTER'S QUARTERS

The room is quiet and dark.



A beam of light emanates from a glass pod in the center of the room.

Floating in the middle is a 7 foot purple being known as WARMMASTER XARD. He is muscle-bound and shirtless. Appears unconscious.

The door slides open.

In walks CONSIG NARTE, a feeble humanoid with purple skin and gold robes.

He walks towards the pod and taps the glass.

Xard's eyes snap open.

The pod opens and Xard exits.

XARD

I told you never to disturb my  
meditat-

NARTE

It's your sister, master. I'm  
sorry.

Xard walks over to a stand and puts on a shirt.

BRIDGE

Xard pushes past a subordinate who drops a datapad.

XARD

What happened Consig?

Narte gestures towards the screen.

An aerial view of a large smoking crater.

NARTE

The camp's been wiped out, master.

The room is quiet for a moment.

XARD

Nieema?

NARTE

Long-range scanners suggest there  
were no survivors.

Xard smashes a console in front of him.

XARD  
Who did this?

NARTE  
That's the other thing, master. We  
did a subspace scan and found only  
one ship in the area.

A freeze-frame of the Stormwind appears.

NARTE (CONT'D)  
We believe this vessel bombarded  
the camp from space.

XARD  
Who is responsible for this?

Narte looks around.

NARTE  
Now, on your orders we have yet to  
make contact with any species in  
the system. The entire fleet has  
remained in cloak except for your  
sister's expedition. But some of us  
immediately recognized this ship's  
insig-

XARD  
Who are they, Narte?

NARTE  
See for yourself, sir. The  
insignia. Here, let me pull up a  
log from the historical catalogs.

He pulls up two images on the screen.

On the left, the ship with an insignia of a blue orb with  
green oblongs overlapping it.

On the right, the same insignia from the catalogs.

NARTE (CONT'D)  
It's them, Warmaster. We have  
finally found them. The  
humiliators. The animals. The  
Humans.

Xard looks at the screen and a grin creeps over his face.

NARTE (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry for your loss but  
Warmaster, this-

XARD

I'm already a legend. But now. Now,  
I will be a god.

He turns to Narte.

XARD (CONT'D)

Send a destroyer group to  
investigate. I want to learn more  
about the humans and whoever else  
resides in this system.

NARTE

Indeed, sir. We shall not rest  
until your sister has been avenged.

Narte scurries off.

Xard stares at the screen a little longer.

XARD

I'm sorry Nieema. I have failed to  
protect you. But your death shall  
not be in vain. This is the final  
chapter of my mortality and the  
beginning of Xard the Immortal.

EXT. WASTELANDS - NIGHT

Nieema is sprinting through a swamp.

She has new cuts and scrapes on her arms and legs.

She stops behind a rock and crouches in the muck.

She sticks her head out and looks behind her.

Nothing.

She takes a moment to catch her breath.

A piece of warm metal places itself next to her head.

HELLKNIGHT #1

Gotcha sweetie.

She closes her eyes for a moment.

When she opens them, she unleashes hell upon the Hellknight.

She grabs the blaster from his hands and yanks him over the  
front of her.

She holds it trained on his face and he stares up at her, foot on his chest.

She lets out a breath and hears shouting voices nearby.

She turns back to the soldier and looks at him one last time.

She starts running again.

More blasters fire behind her.

She runs into a small ravine with multiple paths.

She follows the one on the right.

As she steps forward, the ground gives out and she collapses into a cavern below.

The light from the moon shines through as she crawls out of view.

She leans against a small boulder and catches her breath.

A noise comes from the darkness of the cavern.

She turns on the light at the end of the rifle.

A humanoid-figure in tattered cloth appears for just a moment before it vanishes.

She screams.

FADE OUT.