

# FIELDS ~ofo~ COLOR

Episode 2:  
The Interlope on Starliner  
17

by

Francis John Draus

Contact:  
Golden Spun Cinema  
francisdraus@gmail.com  
484-354-5925

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**EXT. BYURIMIDAS GARDEN - DAY**

YOUNG JAINA plays in a garden outside of a house on Byurimidas. The garden is lush with wildflowers and a small gazebo stands in its center. She makes her way over to it, finding JAINA'S MOM and JAINA'S DAD weaving colored braids as Jaina examines their work.

YOUNG JAINA  
What are you doing?

Her mother smiles but doesn't stop working.

JAINA'S MOM  
Your father and I are making braids  
for your cousin's birthday. Want to  
see?

She gestures for Jaina to come closer and she obliges.

YOUNG JAINA  
Why are you doing that?

JAINA'S MOM  
It's a family tradition. My mother  
taught me how when I was a little  
older than your age, and her father  
taught her. It has special meaning  
in our family. Do you know what it  
is?

Jaina looks up at her and shakes her head.

JAINA'S MOM (CONT'D)  
It's supposed to represent time. The  
threads are like people and other  
things, coming together and getting  
tangled up and then splitting apart  
again. Crossing and recrossing each  
other over and over. Everything in  
the world is like that. Everything  
in history is connected, just like  
the yarn in the braids.

Jaina stares in awe at the works of art, at their implications.

YOUNG JAINA  
Will *I* ever be part of the braid?

Her mother smiles and puts a hand on Jaina's shoulder as the young girl admires the beauty of the colorful threads.

JAINA'S MOM

You already are, Jaina. You always are. Because living things are special, you see. Living things are both yarn and loom...

INT. LIGHTHOUSE - SPACE

JAINA'S MOM (V.O.)

(trailing off)

...Both weave and weaver.

Jaina is napping against one of the scattered objects in the Lighthouse's main room.

Art comes over and shakes her awake.

ART

Jaina...

She quickly opens her eyes and sits up.

ART (CONT'D)

We're almost there. Thought you might want to see this.

Jaina gets up and peers out one of the windows, though we do not at first see what she does. Her eyes widen in awe.

JAINA

Whoa...

Art goes to stand beside her and look out as well.

ART

Jaina Reed, welcome to Bejiir.

EXT. BEJIIR SPACE - SPACE

The camera starts just outside the Lighthouse, framing Jaina and Art through the window before it starts to pull away. As it moves further and further out, speeding up as it goes, we pass by numerous ships large and small.

Finally, the horizon of a world! The camera zooms over the landscape, filled with mountains and lakes. But something's wrong: the ground starts to curve the wrong way.

As the camera continues to pull further away, we see that we were not looking at a world, but a giant ring floating in space with an artificial landscape on it's inner surface.

Finally the camera ceases its retreat and pans up to show the full majesty of the ring, a subtitle reading:

**"Bejiir: Commonwealth Ring"**

EXT. BEJIIR SKIES - DAY

The Lighthouse hits the Bejiir atmosphere and begins its descent, kicking off flames on the way in.

EXT. BEJIIR STREETS - DAY

Jaina rushes out the front doors of the spaceport and Art strolls slowly after her. Jaina looks at the bustling city street surrounding her. The Architecture is simple but colorful. The people here value aesthetics, but not monuments. Jaina takes in the cosmopolitan delights.

JAINA

Wow! Have you ever been here before?

Art shrugs and tries not to dampen her enthusiasm.

ART

Yeah, a couple of times. It is very impressive though. Do you know where you're headed next?

JAINA

(looking around)

Uh...I don't see a sign...

She sees a chef passing by, carting his tools with him.

JAINA (CONT'D)

Excuse me!

(goes over to him)

I'm catching a connecting flight to Arath-Makah from here. Do you happen to know where "Starliner 17" is?

CHEF

(smiling)

You're in luck! I just happen to be one of the chefs on said vessel.

The man seems genuinely excited by the coincidence. Jaina's eyebrows raise.

JAINA

You're kidding!

CHEF

No, I was just on my way there. I'd be happy to show you the way.

JAINA

Oh, that would be great.

CHEF

Going to Arath-Makah, huh? What's the occasion?

The conversation's tempo hiccups for a brief moment as Jaina almost spills the very important beans, but she barely catches herself.

JAINA

Uh...I'm an archivist. I'm going on a cultural exchange.

At this, the chef's eyes glitter.

CHEF

An archivist, you say? Hold on...

He begins to rummage through the haphazard pile of kitchenware he's carting with him.

CHEF (CONT'D)

(focused)

What do you make of...This?

He finally pulls a cast iron frying pan from the junk and displays it like a child's prize from a fair, beaming with pride.

JAINA

(intrigued to slowly  
amazed)

Oh...Now this is a proper artifact.  
Where did you get this?

CHEF

Passed down as a family heirloom for generations. Not the most modern pan, but I still like using it.

JAINA

Well you'll have to tell me all about it on our way there.

The chef finally lets his arms down upon mention of their destination.

CHEF

Yes, we should get underway. Don't want to miss the launch.

JAINA

Okay, just give me two seconds.

She turns back to Art, who has been witness to this whole conversation.

JAINA (CONT'D)

So...

ART

(agreeing)

So...

They look at each other for a moment; it seems like farewell but neither one wants to be the first to say it. Neither one wants their journey together to be over. Jaina is first to break the silence.

JAINA

Thanks for the ride.

ART

(nodding)

Thanks for the help.

He points to his head, indicating his past head injury from the crash.

ART (CONT'D)

You have everything you need?

JAINA

(reassuring)

I think so...Where will you go now?

Art breaks eye contact and tries to play like he's casually thinking about where to go next, rather than letting on that he doesn't have many places to go.

ART

I don't know. Back to Earth, maybe.  
See what else has come of the place.

JAINA

Hey, if anything else comes up, or  
if you need to get in contact...

She blinks her eyes and her lenses flash with a quick flickering animation. Art's lenses respond in kind, indicating that information has been transferred.

JAINA (CONT'D)

...this is my information.

Art nods and gives a smile that is well-practiced.

ART

Thanks.

The time has come to end their journey together. They both nod in farewell to each other and Jaina begins to turn back to the chef.

JAINA  
See you later, Art.

ART  
Good luck, Jaina.

Jaina begins her walk back to adventure, a little less animated than a moment before and she and the chef walk off towards a different part of the port.

Art lets his composure slip after the pair leave and he looks around with a lonely expression. Many people pass by, but he knows none of them. Slowly he turns and heads back into the starport.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

The crowds of crew members bustle through the observation deck, some just passing through, others there to watch the launch. One of these onlookers is, of course, Jaina, one of the only non-crew passengers. She enters the scene from among the crowd and immediately rushes to one of the deck windows to grab a view, her typical belongings presumably in cargo.

Panning back, the image of a man in white dress uniform is projected into a glass shard in the center of the room. He looks about the deck with a stately appearance; this is clearly meant to be in the image of some kind of old naval officer, THE CAPTAIN. As he surveys:

CAPTAIN  
Welcome aboard Starliner 17, one and  
all! Please enjoy our accommodations  
on this one-way flight to Arath-Makah.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

In the flight control center, rows of desks are staffed by technicians looking at their lenses and carrying out their duties. A serious looking woman, FLIGHT, walks among them to inspect their work. She glances occasionally at a large screen on the front wall of the room displaying critical information about the Ring's local environment.

While she watches, a window appears on the large screen with the visage of the Captain alone in a black void.

CAPTAIN  
This is the Captain of Starliner 17.  
(MORE)

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

We are fully accounted for, crew and cargo, and all passengers are safely aboard. We request permission to embark on our journey into the bosom of the cosmos, Flight.

Flight is clearly a bit annoyed with the Captain's pomp and verbosity. As he speaks his request, she slightly spins her finger in a circle to move him along. Once he finishes, she straightens up.

FLIGHT

Yes, 17. You are clear to launch.

The Captain bows an exaggerated bow and disappears from the screen. Flight rolls her eyes and gets back to work.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)

Weirdo windbag..

EXT. LAUNCH BAY - SPACE

On the outer surface of the Bejiir Ring, large bay doors begin to open, and a humongous ship begins to float out. It is shaped like a stout brown cigar, though it's surface appears to be stone and pock-marked by occasional specks of light; the windows to the inside.

As we follow along its length, we eventually reach the front end of the ship, where we turn to see a large hollow channel bored through the long axis of the tube, seemingly open to space. Along its inner surface, we see yet again mountains and lakes and fields of grass, just like the inner surface of Bejiir itself. The inner space is illuminated by an unseen ambient light, seemingly being generated by an unknown technology, which also protects the atmosphere from being sucked into space. Practicality was not the main concern of the ship's design. It was meant to inspire.

After the ship has fully cleared the launch bay, it begins to move with a thrust unseen towards an unopened Great Portal frame in the distance.

Once it arrives outside the structure, the frames vertices light and the Great Portal forms in its center. The ship continues along its path through the Portal's mouth, which closes behind it.

INT. CARRIER HALLWAYS - SPACE

Jaina walks along a hallway lined with nothing but cabin doors. She looks at the numbers as she passes and reads them aloud, recording with her lenses as she goes.



JAINA  
447, 448, 449, 450... 451. Lets see  
what we've...

She opens the door. The room is windowless, stark, and cramped. No ornamentation is to be found.

JAINA (CONT'D)  
... Got.

The light flickers once.

JAINA (CONT'D)  
(deflated)  
Aw, man.

Suddenly, the whole ship lurches and Jaina is thrown to the side of the doorframe.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTELLAR SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Starliner 17 begins to tumble about its own axis and about-face, like a car hydroplaning on an icy road.

BACK TO:

INT. CARRIER HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

A klaxon begins to sound and the lights go dim, replaced by emergency lighting along the hallways. Jaina steadies herself and begins to run back the way she came.

JAINA  
I'm sorry! The room is fine, I didn't  
mean to insult it!

Another passenger comes out of one of the rooms that Jaina passed on her way in. The ship is still lurching and rattling.

PASSENGER  
What's going on?

JAINA  
I don't know, we just started moving!

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
General Alert. General Alert.

The two move off in opposite directions.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

One of the technicians, CHIEF TECH, seated at the main desk is frantically tapping away at his screen. It is abuzz with alerts and dead signal feeds.

CHIEF TECH

(panicked)

Flight, I have lost telemetry on 17!  
All the feeds are dead!

Flight, who was standing at the other end of the room, bolts up from what she was looking at and walks over in a hurry.

FLIGHT

Why? What's going on?

CHIEF TECH

(shrugging)

I don't know, everything just stopped!

FLIGHT

(to room)

Alright, everyone, I want eyes on  
17! Find out what happened!

INT. STARPORT HALL - DAY

Art is walking along the hallways inside the port, not really going anywhere. He watches the other people rush by, much more hurried than he is. Then some people start sprinting past him, dressed very officially and with worried looks on their faces. He clues in that something must be happening.

He turns to follow them around a corner, where he sees a video screen displaying the news: "Malfunction on Starliner 17. Officials investigating."

He's stunned for a moment, but turns around to go back the way he came, now sprinting himself. He activates his lenses and tries to call Jaina.

ART

Jaina! Are you there? Jaina?!

INT. CARRIER HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Jaina picks up the call with her lenses. She's still moving through the ship's corridors but she's visibly lost.

JAINA

Art! I'm here!

ART (O.S.)  
What's happening? The news says  
there's a malfunction.

JAINA  
I think we're tumbling, something  
knocked us off course? I'm trying  
to find someone who knows more.

ART (O.S.)  
Me too.

Suddenly, a new alarm begins to sound.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Alert. Biohazard Alarm. Repeat.  
Biohazard Alarm reported on all decks.

ART (O.S.)  
Did that say 'Biohazard'?

Jaina begins looking around at the rooms near her.

JAINA  
Hold on a sec, stay on the line!

She finds a door labeled 'Airlock' and opens the hatch. Inside  
are a few space suits and other emergency supplies. She rushes  
over to one of the suits and begins to take it down to put  
on.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

Flight is standing at the center of the room, calling out  
orders. The staff around her is rushing around to carry them  
out and try to get things back under control.

FLIGHT  
(frustrated)  
Can you get me contact with *anyone*  
onboard?

CHIEF TECH  
Negative, none of the crew are  
responding! I've been trying since  
we started.

Just then, Art bursts into the room followed by two guards  
chasing after him.

ART  
I have one! I have a line with  
someone onboard!

Flight turns to look at this new disturbance in her already fraught day.

FLIGHT  
Who are you?

Art stops in front of her, breathing heavy.

ART  
I'm Art Saknusem, I have a friend on  
Starliner 17. I have an open channel  
right now.

Flight takes no more than a split second glance over Art to size him up. She nods.

FLIGHT  
(gesturing with head)  
Come with me.

The two begin to move towards the central command area, but the guards move to intercept Art.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)  
(pointing to guards)  
Let him in, but keep an eye on him.

The guards fall back. Over at the consoles, Flight points to one of the screens on the desk.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)  
Patch us in to your feed, and we'll  
go from there.

Art touches the screen, which instantly responds with a beep.

ART  
Jaina, you still there?

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

Jaina has just finished donning her space suit, clicking her helmet into place.

JAINA  
Yeah, I'm here.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

ART  
I'm in the flight control center on  
Bejiir. You're patched into the  
whole room.

JAINA (O.S.)  
Great! What's going on?

FLIGHT  
(stepping up)  
We were hoping you could tell us.  
Your name is Jaina, right? Can you  
patch your end of the call into the  
local network of the ship? We've  
lost remote connection to it. We  
can't even get telemetry.

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

Jaina looks around for a computer panel inside the airlock, but finds nothing. She tries looking out the door window into the ship and sees one on a far wall. She opens the door and exits back onto the ship.

INT. CARRIER HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Jaina moves over to the glowing wall panel and touches the screen. It responds with the same beep as the flight control computer.

JAINA  
Got it! I'm going to see if I can  
find anyone else.

She runs off down the halls.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

CHIEF TECH  
(serious)  
We have feeds! We have feeds!

The room erupts into motion. All the technicians rush back to their seats and begin working to regain control.

FLIGHT  
(to the room)  
Alright! Get me back in control of  
this ship!

CHIEF TECH  
(feverishly typing)  
We're trying, but it's fighting us!

An image appears on the main large screen, showing a cross section of the ship. It displays the percentage of the ship under control, and areas of the ship start to become lit up white. But large sections of it still remain black.

ART  
 (interjecting)  
 I heard a biohazard alert from her  
 end.

FLIGHT  
 Raise the captain! Fen...

She points to a mousey technician, FEN, on the far end of the room who squeaks when Flight points at her.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)  
 ...Check on that biohazard!

FEN  
 (nervously)  
 Right!

An image of the Captain becomes visible on a glass panel in the room, just like the one on the ship.

FLIGHT  
 (furious)  
 Captain! What the hell is going on  
 out there?!

The Captain stammers in confusion.

CAPTAIN  
 I'm not sure, Flight! All systems  
 have been...

Suddenly, the Captain's image starts glitching and convulsing. The captain lets out a garbled, inhuman shriek. Just as suddenly, he's back but with a dead look on his face

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 (monotone)  
 Sixty seconds to warp.

The room is taken aback. Art's eyes go wide and he looks to the main screen, increasingly worried.

CHIEF TECH  
 Did he say warp? We still don't  
 have that. I think something else  
 is in the system with us!

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
 (unnervingly calm)  
 Why do you scurry...?

The room goes silent. All heads turn to look at the Captain. The all forgot he was still here. Chief Tech is the only one still typing.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 (slowly becoming  
 contemptuous)  
 Rats scurrying on the skin of a Ring.  
 Why are you hiding from our warmth?  
 Does it burn you? Well, then...Burned  
 away you shall be!

The Captain's image disappears. Somehow, Art knows what this means.

ART  
 (almost whispering)  
 It's an atmo-jump...

He lunges for the nearest control screen.

ART (CONT'D)  
 (shouting)  
 It's an atmo-jump!

The two guards from before pull him away from the panel and back from the desk.

ART (CONT'D)  
 NO!

FLIGHT  
 Get him into a chair.

ART  
 They're going to aim for us! They're  
 going to warp in our direction! You  
 need to stop it!

CHIEF TECH  
 Flight, he's right! 17 is turning  
 to point directly at Bejiir.

INT. CARRIER HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Jaina has been left hearing this all secondhand. She's now very confused.

JAINA  
 Hey, guys? I'm still over here.  
 What's goin on?

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

CHIEF TECH  
 Ten seconds to warp! We're hitting  
 a wall in the systems, Flight.

The mood in the room becomes helpless. Flight simply stares at the main screen, shaking her head, overwhelmed.

EXT. INTERSTELLAR SPACE - CONTINUOUS

We see down through the central bore of Starliner 17, turning to aim at a bright star in the distance.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

Art briefly breaks free from the guards and rushes over to the panel to talk to Jaina.

ART  
Jaina, grab onto something, NOW!

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTELLAR SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A dolly zoom down the bore of Starliner 17, conveying that space around the ship is warping.

CUT TO:

INT. CARRIER HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

A mirrored dolly zoom of Jaina running down the hallway and grabbing onto a solid rail. Space is warping in here, too.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTELLAR SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Starliner 17 pauses for a second, and then warps into space.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

The room stares silently at the main screen, reading "Loss of Nav Control". The guards have regained control of Art, who has stopped struggling against their grip, looking beaten.

FLIGHT  
Jaina? Are you still there?

Nothing. Flight turns back to Art.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)  
What is an atmo-jump?

Art's only half listening. He takes a moment to shake his head. Art almost responds, but he's too dissociated to follow through. Instead, he just hangs his head.



FLIGHT (CONT'D)  
(walking to office,  
to guards)  
Bring him.

The four of them move to one of the offices off the side of the main control room.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Flight enters the empty conference room, with the guarded Art following behind. Art seems to have snapped out of his stupor now and begins shaking himself from the guard's grip.

ART  
I'm fine.  
(shakes free)  
It's fine.

Flight nods and the guards leave.

FLIGHT  
Alright, lets go over this again from the beginning. Who are you actually?

ART  
I'm Art Saknusem...

FLIGHT  
(interrupting)  
I meant, what are you? What is an atmo-jump?

ART  
If a ship drops out of warp in-atmo, the shock wave is enough ignite the atmosphere, and tear the ring apart.

Flight is taken aback for the first time since we've seen her.

FLIGHT  
How do you know about this?

Art hesitates, he doesn't want to reveal much.

ART  
(flatly)  
Keep me in the room.

FLIGHT  
(confused)  
What?

ART  
The connection is still being fed  
through my lenses. Keep me in the  
room or I sever it. You'll get  
nothing.

Flight steps back, visibly insulted.

FLIGHT  
I'm not going to kick you out or  
anything... Just stop touching the  
consoles.

ART  
(embarrassed)  
Oh. Uh, sure.

Flight sighs and walks to the opposite end of the room where  
a large window displays the skies beyond. In the distance,  
above the horizon line, the half-finished frame of a Great  
Portal can be seen hanging in space.

FLIGHT  
I know what they say about me... I'm  
not trying to be a hard-ass.

Art begins to follow her over to the window.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)  
(staring at Great  
Portal frame)  
We're just so close to finishing it.  
I can taste it.

Art has met her at the window now.

ART  
So, I'm not really from around here...

FLIGHT  
(sarcastically, but  
friendly)  
Really?

ART  
What is that?

FLIGHT  
That is the next Great Portal frame.  
It's bound, hypothetically, for the  
Signal Site.

Art shakes his head. He's not heard of this either.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)

First contact?

(after a moment)

What rock have you been living under?

ART

(smiling)

Earth, I guess.

FLIGHT

We're making first contact with a new species. Over 20 lightyears. It's gonna break a record. The only thing that would have beaten it was the portal to Arath-Makah, but that got scrapped when the kingdom objected to operating a portal in their space. But you, very cleverly, haven't answered my question: who are you really?

Art turns to stare at the portal construction himself.

ART

It's not something I like talking about.

Flight sighs again, giving up for now, and turns to Art

FLIGHT

Very well, lets go in there and get your friend and my ship back, Art Saknusem.

She extends a hand to Art.

ART

(shaking hand)

And what should I call you?

FLIGHT

(cocking an eyebrow)

Flight.

INT. CARRIER HALLWAYS - SPACE

Fade in on Jaina lying unconscious on the deck of the carrier hallway. The emergency lights provide little illumination on her surroundings, and the ship has gone eerily silent aside from the sound of the engines humming and the occasional creak of the hull.

Jaina stirs awake slowly, groggy from being knocked out. She strains to steady herself against the floor and stands up, propped against the wall.

She checks the screen on the forearm of her suit: "Cranial trauma detected: MEDBAC DEPLOYED".

She begins walking through the corridors, looking around for anyone else. Then, from a distance, she hears an inhuman noise. Turning to see its source, she sees a distant shadow in the emergency lights. Its shape is only vaguely human, and its movements are surely not. The sound begins to grow closer and Jaina bolts in the other direction.

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

The airlock door opens and Jaina flails in and shuts the door behind her. She presses a button on the panel by the door to shut off the airlock lights and crouches below the door's window.

For a moment she listens. Nothing. Slowly she stands up to peer out the window. Looking in both directions, she sees nothing pursuing her so she begins her call.

JAINA

Art, are you still there?

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

The chief technician is sitting at his desk when Jaina's message comes in. He snaps to attention.

CHIEF TECH

Jaina?

Art and Flight begin walking over to the console, while the entire room looks over from their work.

JAINA (O.S.)

Yeah, is Art there?

ART

I'm here, we're still in flight control. Are you okay?

JAINA (O.S.)

I think I hit my head, but the suit has a Medbac supply, so I'm all right.

Art leans onto the desk in relief. While he collects himself, Flight takes over the call.

FLIGHT

Jaina, this is the director of flight control, can you give us any information on the ship's condition right now? Where are you?

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

JAINA  
The ship? It's on emergency lights,  
I can't really see any obvious damage  
from where I am. I'm inside  
airlock...  
(looks around to find  
the number)  
32.

FLIGHT (O.S.)  
Have you seen any of the crew?

Jaina looks out the window again.

JAINA  
No, not since I woke up. But I did  
see...something else.

FLIGHT (O.S.)  
Like what?

Jaina pauses to make sure she doesn't sound too crazy.

JAINA  
I only saw its shadow, but...It didn't  
seem human.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

There is a beat of silence. Art darts his eyes over to flight,  
almost to see what she'll make of that. Flight meets his  
gaze with a look of stoic caution before looking over to Fen,  
who is among a group of other techs watching the conversation.

FLIGHT  
Fen, look up the manifest, see if  
there were any animals on board.

Fen nods.

FEN  
Got it.

Art turns to Flight.

ART  
Is there anywhere safer she can hole  
up until we figure out what's going  
on?

JAINA (O.S.)  
Yeah, as much as I love this airlock,  
I can't really do much here.

FLIGHT

The closest to you would probably be  
the medical bay, its reinforced.  
We'll send you directions, and try  
to keep you away from crowded areas.

She nods at the Chief Tech and he taps a few buttons on his console.

CHIEF TECH

Done.

Immediately, a booming voice is heard over the intercom. It speaks with the voice of the HIGH EVANGELICAL (a secret for later).

HIGH EVANGELICAL

Dissonance! Dissonance in my choir!  
Who are you, little thorn? Do you  
grow in ignorance of the light, or  
in defiance of it?

The room has become silent again. Art looks around in confusion. Flight is staring intently into the direction of the screen.

HIGH EVANGELICAL (CONT'D)

No, it matters not. My songs have  
heard you, thorn. Cower in your  
jealousy, and then be cut down by my  
hymns.

And then nothing.

ART

Did you hear that, Jaina?

JAINA (O.S.)

Yeah? Who WAS that?

Flight points to the Chief Tech, and he begins typing away at a task.

FLIGHT

I think whoever has the ship might  
be onto us. We're still linked into  
systems all over the ship, so they  
probably don't know where you actually  
are. Get moving to the medical bay,  
we'll stay with you the whole way.

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

Jaina is visibly nervous. She takes another look out the window and breathes deeply, steeling herself.

JAINA

Right, moving out now.

She opens the door and ventures out into the ship.

INT. GALLEY - SPACE

A faucet drips in a dark galley sink. The door slowly swings open and Jaina peeks her head in, surveying for danger. She sees none. She slowly walks into the galley and moves toward the door on the opposite end of the room.

As she gets a few steps in, something moves on the other side of the kitchen island and Jaina ducks below to hide herself. The thing on the other side makes sounds of cracking and gasping and almost-words as it lumbers along it's path. We cannot make out its shape, but its dragging something metal behind it as it moves.

Jaina is terrified, but slowly tries to creep along the length of the island, aiming for escape out the other end. But suddenly, the creature goes silent. Jaina catches her breath, not daring to make a sound. She looks around and finds that she is reflected in a panel at the far end of the room, right next to the exit. Also reflected is the silhouette of the creature, misshapen but still identifiable as once human.

For a beat, neither one moves. Then, with a frantic scramble, she rushes for the exit. The creature makes a vocalization as it runs after her, equal parts eager and predatory. When both parties reach the end of the galley's island, Jaina turns to see the shadowed figure loom over her and she reaches out instinctively with a shot from her field circuits, screaming while sending a bolt of plasma into the mass of the creature. It slumps to the floor, dead.

ART (O.S.)

(panicked)

Jaina, what was that?

Jaina sits to catch her breath and looks over at the burned carcass across from her. None of its features can be made out, except for one: its hand. Misshapen, thin, and at the end of even more spindly arms. It is grasping a cast iron pan in its talons.

The realization dawns on Jaina.

JAINA

(hushed, on the verge  
of tears)

It was the chef...

ART (O.S.)

From the port? The one we met?

Jaina begins shaking her head.

JAINA  
No, it wasn't him anymore...He was  
mutated...He came after me...  
(breaking)  
I killed him...

She begins to cry, but stifles the sound so as to not be heard by anything else.

ART (O.S.)  
(gentle, sympathetic)  
...Are you okay?

JAINA  
Just give me a second.

ART  
Okay.

Over the next few seconds, Jaina's breathing calms back down and she begins to recollect herself.

JAINA  
I knew it could get bad out here,  
but I never thought it would happen  
this fast.

ART (O.S.)  
If it's any consolation, it usually  
isn't. You've really been thrown  
into the deep end here.  
(brief pause)  
Get to the Medbay, Jaina. Get to  
safety. We're working on a plan  
over here.

JAINA  
Okay.

She picks herself back up and is about to leave, when she pauses, picks up the frying pan, and hangs it back on the wall above the oven. Finally, she takes her leave from the galley.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

Flight goes to the front of the room, clapping her hands to draw attention.

FLIGHT  
Alright, people! Listen up!

The room settles down to listen to her speak.



## FLIGHT (CONT'D)

(pacing)

Okay, Starliner 17 is rogue. It is heading toward us, we think with the intent to collide. Normally, it's max operating velocity is 0.7 light, but thanks to the swift intervention of all of the fine people working in this room, we've managed to knock out enough power to bring that down to 0.4 light. We have bought ourselves TIME. Enough time to figure out what do do to fix this, but the clock is still ticking so lets get started. Chief, what do you have for us?

The Chief Technician stands and reads from a pad in his hands.

## CHIEF TECH

Okay, thanks to the hard connection to 17, we've managed to keep control of SOME of the primary systems. Uh...Field circuits, life support, some parts of the power distribution system. We're still trying to get everything stable, we're missing a lot of connections. As for what's happening over there, we still have Jaina Reed providing us with the information she receives and we also double checked the logs to confirm that, yes, the biohazard alarms did go off right before we started losing systems.

Flight nods and turns to Fen, standing ready with her own report.

## FLIGHT

Fen, what do you have on the biohazard alarm?

## FEN

(standing at attention)

So right now our working theory is that something got into the biological systems of Starliner 17 and started seizing control from there. From what we can tell, the alarms first triggered in cargo hold 5. We're still combing through the telemetry to see if we can find anything more.

FLIGHT

And the voice on the comms channel?

Fen hesitates but for a second.

FEN

Yeah, that's the thing that still a bit confusing. The register is flagging it as the voice of The High Evangelical, an Arath-Makahni religious leader from the church of the Joining. But we've gone over the manifests and the sensor logs, what we could anyway, and we're certain that he's nowhere on 17 or even in Commonwealth space. So we're still looking into that.

At this news Art furrows his brow. Could the acolytes from Earth be related to this?

Flight nods and internalizes all of this. She turns back to the room at large.

FLIGHT

Alright, what options to we have to stop this thing?

CHIEF TECH

(jumping in)

I think under the present circumstances, the logical choice would be to activate the field circuits onboard and trigger a self-destruct via the nuclear subsystems.

Art immediately jumps up, barely masking his fury.

ART

No!

The room skips a beat at his audacity.

ART (CONT'D)

You heard it yourself, the leader of an Arath-Makahni church is involved. This is CLEARLY a bioweapon attack!

FLIGHT

Mr. Saknusem!

Art looks at her. She is pleading with her eyes for him to tread lightly.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)

Please keep any political speculation  
to yourself.

All look as Art and the Chief Tech stare at each other. The  
Chief Tech seems to have expected this reaction from him.

CHIEF TECH

I understand that you care about  
Reed, but we have the safety of this  
entire ring to think about...

Art interjects, seeming to speak faster than he's thinking.

ART

(somewhat scrambling)  
There's no way a ship cleared to  
enter Arath-Makahni space would have  
enough fissile materials on board to  
trigger the reaction, and there's  
not enough time to make them.

The Chief Tech clenches his jaw, annoyed. Art's clearly making  
this up as he goes, but he's also right.

CHIEF TECH

(slightly contemptuous)  
Yes, I suppose you are right.

FLIGHT

Mr. Saknusem, do YOU have any  
suggestions?

He takes a second to think.

ART

We use the field circuits, like he  
said, but we flood the ship with  
radiation. Burn out the biomaterial.  
Maybe we can knock out whatever the  
root of the infection is. Jaina's  
suit and the medbac should be able  
to keep her safe from the worst of  
the radiation damage.

Flight thinks about this for a moment, looking over to the  
Chief Tech. He shrugs his shoulders at her as if to say,  
"It's worth a shot" and flight nods.

FLIGHT

Alright, do it.

The room begins to move again, as everyone attends to their  
posts.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)

But I want Reed to divert to cargo  
bay 5 to check what may have triggered  
the alarm.

At this, Art looks nervous, but he says nothing, knowing he's  
already pushed his luck in this conversation.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE CB5 - SPACE

Jaina stands before a door marked, "Cargo Bay 5" It has become  
overgrown by a white biological material, not unlike cobwebs  
or slime mold. She stares at the door, hesitant, but reaches  
her hand out to touch the button beside the door. It opens  
with a startling suddenness and a mechanical hiss. She jumps  
slightly at the noise, but steps inside.

INT. CARGO BAY 5 - SPACE

Jaina steps into the cargo bay. It's dark, and the same white  
matter has overgrown the entire room. Some of it is even  
floating around in particulates in the air. Jaina takes a  
second to steady herself, closing her eyes and taking a deep  
breath. When they open again, her lenses are on and recording.  
She's going to archive this.

JAINA

(to comms)

Okay, it looks like I'm alone.

ART (O.S.)

Good, what do you see?

JAINA

(looking around)

The entire place is coated in this  
stuff. Are you seeing this?

FLIGHT (O.S.)

We see it, Reed. Clear and smooth.  
Can you see where its coming from?

Jaina walks around the bay looking for clues and finds a large  
grey crate split open from the inside, with the white matter  
jutting out along the edges like a flower. Or a mouth.

JAINA

Here, I think. It came from inside  
this thing.

FLIGHT (O.S.)

(to Fen)

Fen, can you run the number on that  
crate?

Jaina stares at the crate, then slowly starts approaching it, almost tiptoeing.

FEN (O.S.)

One sec...Okay that was a crate that was inbound from Arath-Makah, but it was flagged as insufficient postage, so it was being sent back.

By now, Jaina has almost reached the box.

FLIGHT (O.S.)

Reed, can you look inside that crate?

JAINA

Way ahead of you, Flight. Let me just...

As Jaina gets close to the crate, the white matter starts moving, slowly, but towards Jaina. Focusing on a spot on her waist.

JAINA (CONT'D)

Whoa, whoa!  
(jumps back)

ART (O.S.)

Are you okay? What was that?

FLIGHT (O.S.)

Reed, don't go any further! We have what we need, just pull back to the medbay.

While they are talking, Jaina pats the spot the growth was reaching towards and figures out what it wanted.

JAINA

Art, it was going for the beacon...

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - EVENING

At this, everyone turns to Art. Flight especially has a look on her face like she's done with Art's secrets. Art himself stares into the distance for a moment, considering the implications of Jaina's news, before looking over to meet Flight's eyes.

FLIGHT

(stern)  
My office.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Flight sits at the conference table, tapping her hand on its surface and processing what Art's just told her. Art sits across from her, a bit ashamed.

FLIGHT

Why didn't you report the beacon  
after it landed?

ART

We were followed. They attacked her  
place and we had to make a run for  
the spaceport.

FLIGHT

Attacked by who?

Art hesitates for a second. The truth is going to have  
political implications.

ART

Arath-Makahni pilgrims.

Flight leans into her hands and rubs her head. She doesn't  
want to hear this.

FLIGHT

So everything points to Arath-Makah.

ART

(ashamed to admit)

Yeah. She was going there to... I  
don't know, find out what the beacon  
was.

(pauses, regretful)

It was her first big find.

Flight gets up and walks over to the window, to look out and  
to mull this all over. Art then gets up from the table, but  
stays by his seat.

ART (CONT'D)

Look, if burning it out with radiation  
doesn't work, we're going to need  
another plan. Does 17 have a reactor?  
Could we shut that down?

FLIGHT

Reactor core is deep in the areas we  
have no control over. We'd probably  
be sending her into the belly of the  
beast.

Art almost comments on this, but instead changes subject.

ART

(gentle)

And in the meantime, i think you  
should start preparation  
for...Evacuating the ring.

Flight takes a breath, and looks out at the Great Portal frame,  
despondent.

There is a knock at the door.

FLIGHT

Come in.

The Chief Tech pops his head in.

CHIEF TECH

Flight, Reed found something in the  
main barrel while she was en route  
to the medical bay.

FLIGHT

Something, chief? Spare me the  
theatrics, what did she find?

CHIEF TECH

We're...not totally sure.

Both Art and Flight look confused.

CHIEF TECH (CONT'D)

It looks like they're building  
something.

INT. MEDBAY HALL - "DAY"

Jaina stands outside of the medbay doors with a skylight above  
her. Artificial daylight pours onto her from above as she  
stares, lenses on and recording, into the main barrel of the  
ship.

JAINA

I'm outside the medbay and uh... it  
seems that something is under  
construction above me in the barrel.

Hanging in the center of the bore, affixed in multiple places  
on the inner surface, is an organic web of the white material  
from the cargo bay. Only this time, the structure is far  
more deliberate and organized. Symmetrical beyond what natural  
growth would allow. Along its ridges and scaffolds, the vague  
impression of moving life-forms can be detected, though no  
forms can be made out. Snaking all throughout and around are  
the letters of some unreadable script.

JAINA (CONT'D)  
Do we have enough radiation for this?

ART (O.S.)  
We should. What is that all over  
the surface?

Jaina looks at the display before her, quite unnerved by now.

JAINA  
I think its...words.

FLIGHT (O.S.)  
Can someone translate?

ART (O.S.)  
Its an old emergency code language.

Jaina, and it sounds like the room on the other side, are  
confused.

JAINA  
What?

Jaina takes in the structure.

ART (O.S.)  
But the grammar's weird. It says:  
"Observe now. Maintain in silence  
and relay our provisions. Radiate  
across the system and grow in the  
water of the dead. Soon the dead  
sun brings fire to the enemy."

The line is silent. Jaina deactivates her lenses and heads  
inside the medbay.

INT. MEDICAL BAY - CONTINUOUS

Inside the bay are an arrangement of medical devices and beds,  
all unused. The place is empty. Behind her, Jaina locks the  
door with the panel beside it and heads into the room.

JAINA  
(shaken)  
Okay, i'm inside the medbay and i've  
sealed the doors behind me. What  
else do i have to seal?

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - NIGHT

Everyone in control is also a bit rattled by the message on  
the structure. Eventually, the Chief Tech snaps to.



CHIEF TECH

Yeah, we'll send you the schematics of the other exits. Once you seal those you should be safe to relax.

FLIGHT

Reed, once you're done i want you to try to get some food and some sleep, we're going to be picking up some light-lag as you get in between the portals so just hunker down for a few days and we'll still be here. It will just take longer for message bounce-back, okay?

JAINA (O.S.)

Sure thing. Over and out, for now.

Fen chimes in from the desk across the room.

FEN

Flight, we were also able to ping the security cameras in the cargo bay sector when Reed came through.

FLIGHT

Show me.

On the main screen appears the silent image of a group of crew members moving cargo in bay 5. One approaches the bulging frame of the Arath-Makahni crate and when he is near it, it bursts out onto him and throughout the room, afflicting the others as well. They all stumble away and out of the cargo bay. The footage follows the first man into a nearby maintenance closet. He rips the cover off of one of the panels and begins mumbling to himself. He then plunges his hands into the computer panels and the feed goes dead.

FEN

And that's where we first lost telemetry. This must have been where it started, they spread all over the ship from there. Especially through the Bio-systems.

The room is silent for a beat.

CHIEF TECH

Flight, we're losing time. We need to start the radiation.

Flight pauses and stares again at the frozen frame of the man screaming with zeal as he electrocutes himself in the computer systems.

FLIGHT

Have we heard ANYTHING else from  
someone onboard? ANY sign of other  
survivors?

CHIEF TECH

Not yet...We could wait and see.

She's still staring, into his eyes this time. They are wide,  
but with something more frightening than fear. A moment  
passes.

FLIGHT

(forcing herself to  
decide)

Do it.

The Chief Tech nods and makes the requisite motions on his  
console.

CHIEF TECH

Alright, we'll keep this going until  
the biohazard alarms cool down.

FLIGHT

Any idea how long that will take?

CHIEF TECH

Nope.

Flight is visibly frustrated by this, but shrugs it off.  
Nothing she can do about this.

FLIGHT

So now we wait...

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. MEDICAL BAY - SPACE

Time has passed and Jaina has gathered a collection of  
materials and is bringing them over to a window in another  
room of the medbay, this one facing out into space. She sits  
down on a bench with a ration pack and looks around, lonely.

Jaina activates her lenses and makes a call.

JAINA

Hey, Art. You there?

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL/MEDICAL BAY - INTERCUT

Art picks up the call on the screen in front of him.

ART

Yeah, I'm here. What's wrong?

JAINA

Nothing, just... Distract me for a bit, would you?

Art is surprised a little, but sits up and leans into the screen.

ART

Sure. Um... Can you see space from where you are?

Jaina looks out the small window in the medical bay. The freckled expanse lies outside.

JAINA

Yeah, but there's not much out there. Well, I guess there's a lot out there. I never really stopped to think about all of it. About how out here is the rest of... everything.

She stares out for a moment.

JAINA (CONT'D)

You ever see something that just... makes you feel smaller and bigger at the same time?

Art hesitates. Does he want to share this? He lets the decision sit for a few seconds until...

ART

There is a memory. When I was much younger, looking at universities. My parents and I were staying in a room outside of the port. It was late and they were already asleep, but I couldn't rest.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

We see a flashback of a YOUNG ART, awake in a bed. The room is simple and timelessly decorated. He gets out of bed and walks slowly to the window.

ART (V.O.)

I walked over to the window of our room. It was one of those summer nights where the humidity was high, so when I looked out and saw the city, It was bathed in a golden light.

(MORE)

ART (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 And it was like I could *feel* the  
 life in the city.

We only look in through the window to see Art through this.  
 The golden impression of the city is only left out of focus  
 in the window's reflection. Young Art simply stares in awe  
 at the sight.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL/MEDICAL BAY - INTERCUT

Jaina continues to look out the medical bay window, seeing  
 her own reflection superimposed on the stars.

JAINA  
 Are your parents still around?

Art's expression drops almost imperceptibly.

ART  
 No. Yours?

JAINA  
 They're still on Byurimidas.

ART  
 Were they on board with you taking  
 the archivist job?

JAINA  
 Oh, yeah. They're history buffs too.

ART  
 But I mean traveling all the way to  
 Earth.

JAINA  
 (considering)  
 Well, I mean, yeah. They were sad  
 to see me go. I was sad, too. But  
 they sent me with my favorite lore  
 book, and told me to think of them  
 whenever I read it. I guess that  
 must be in one of the cargo holds  
 now.

(depressed)  
 I don't know if I'll ever get that  
 back.

ART  
 (trying to distract)  
 Your family sounds nice.

JAINA  
 They are.

ART

You know, people keep telling me you  
can find those, but so far all I've  
managed to do is lose them.

Jaina turns her head away from the window, as if to turn  
towards Art.

JAINA

If you and me make it out of this,  
we're family. We're gonna stick  
together. Okay?

Art's face is hopeful for the first time in a long time. He  
can't fully believe the sentiment, but he allows himself to  
reply anyway.

ART

(quietly)  
Okay.

At that, Jaina stares back out into space, comforted a little.

FADE TO:

EXT. BEJIIR SPACE - SPACE

The Bejiir ring lay suspended in orbit around its gas giant  
host. Around it is a Great Portal frame, another under  
construction, and a cloud of ships awaiting instructions,  
presently still. A voice comes over radio comms.

TRAFFIC CONTROL (V.O.)

Evacuation group 9, we are ready to  
receive you through the Great Portal,  
please begin your course and make  
your way through. Over.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

The team stands at the ready, the next phase of the plan is  
about to begin.

Flight once again takes center stage at the front of the room.  
The crew, Art included, listen to her briefing.

FLIGHT

Today is the day, people. No time  
to slip up now. We have T minus 2  
hours until impact. We have regained  
control of most of the ships internal  
systems, enough to know that 17 is  
now clear of biohazard alarms.

(MORE)

## FLIGHT (CONT'D)

But we have NOT regained engine or reactor control, so we will be sending Reed to investigate what's going on. Mr. Saknusem has informed us that she has training as a repair technician so she should be able to assess damage. Once that's done we will have no time to spare fixing it so we will be staying here. No evacuation for us. If you want to make it through today, better think of something good.

She takes a moment to look around at her coworkers, proud.

## FLIGHT (CONT'D)

Not a single one of you has ever let me down before, and I know you won't start today. Let's move!

CUT TO: - MOMENTS LATER

Art and Flight stand at the console, flanked by the other techs at their stations.

## ART

Alright, Jaina, you know the drill...

INT. MEDBAY HALL - CONTINUOUS

The doors to the medbay open, and Jaina walks out into the artificial sunlight of the window above with renewed resolve.

## ART (O.S.)

We're on the clock. Get to aft reactor control as fast as possible. Don't stop for ANYTHING.

She looks up at the skylight.

EXT. MAIN BARREL - CONTINUOUS

A metal chair crashes up through the skylight from below. Jaina follows shortly after, pulling herself into the main barrel of Starliner 17. We see her framed against the passing space outside of one of the openings on the far end of the barrel. Once outside, she takes a brief glance above her and then starts towards the back end of the ship. As she runs off, the camera tilts upward to see the calcified remains of the construction above her, grey and withered. It is dead from the radiation.

## INT. REACTOR CONTROL - SPACE

The main reactor is a large transparent tube running horizontally through the reactor control room. In the center of the tube is a glowing stream of plasma: the fusion reaction. More decayed organic matter lines the room.

The door opens and Jaina comes in slowly, hands at the ready for combat. She slowly slides in, scanning for danger. None.

JAINA

Okay, it looks like we're clean in here too.

She runs over to the console.

FLIGHT (O.S.)

What do the controls look like?

JAINA

Checking...

The console is dead. No lights, no screens, scorched. Nothing is going to use this for a while. She looks around the room to find that several large cables running into the reactor have been cut.

JAINA (CONT'D)

Bad news, the control console is completely shot. Looks like someone deliberately scorched it. The didn't want us messing with this. Worse than that, is i think they severed the main control lines going into the reactor. The thing's running on autopilot now.

FLIGHT (O.S.)

What about the reactor safeties, could we turn those off?

CHIEF TECH (O.S.)

No, it would take too long. She would need to worm here way into the maintenance tubes.

FLIGHT (O.S.)

Well, someone give me SOMETHING to work with!

Throughout all this, Jaina has been pondering herself. Suddenly she has a flash of inspiration.

JAINA

What about the reaction itself?

ART (O.S.)  
What do you mean?

JAINA  
I'm looking at the reaction chamber  
right here. If i can get something  
in there to pollute the reaction,  
starve it out, would that work? Is  
there back up power?

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

CHIEF TECH  
Not enough to stay at warp.

Art realizes what Jaina is planning, and his face lights up  
in an amazed smirk. He can't believe what the answer is.

ART  
Oh, my god...Do it.

JAINA (O.S.)  
Roger that, on my way.

Flight is still a bit behind, she looks over at Art.

FLIGHT  
What is it? What's she going to  
throw in there?

Art shakes his head for a second in sheer awe.

ART  
Best thing to pollute a reaction...  
(turns to Flight)  
...Iron.

INT. GALLEY - SPACE

The chef's frying pan still hangs on the wall. We dolly back  
to reveal Jaina coming into frame and taking it down. She  
looks at it for a second, and then turns to the corpse of the  
chef on the ground, this time with a look of gratitude on her  
face.

JAINA  
(gentle)  
Thank you.

She bolts back off.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

Alarms ring out across the station. People are starting to  
look worried. Panicked even.



CHIEF TECH  
(over loudspeaker)  
We are at T minus 5 minutes to impact.  
Repeat, T minus 5 minutes to impact.

Flight paces faster than ever before.

FLIGHT  
Send out the order! Get everyone  
out of here!

The chief tech presses his console one again and leans into it with urgency.

CHIEF TECH  
All ships in Bejiir space, this is a  
priority alert. Impact is inbound  
in T minus 5 minutes. Execute  
emergency tether jumps. Repeat,  
execute emergency jumps, NOW!

EXT. BEJIIR SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Ships all around the ring begin to flash with light and then be enclosed by small bubbles of portals, each one disappearing inside them.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL - SPACE

Jaina returns with her only weapon, the pan. She looks around once more at the room, and at the reactor.

With all her force, she lances the pan towards the glass housing of the reactor. It makes impact with the surface, cracking it, but not penetrating it. The pan is now lodged in the glass.

Jaina, thinking quickly, reaches out with her field circuits to push on the pan magnetically. Cracks begin expanding and the pan begins to vibrate under the strain.

Jaina is now pushing with all her might against the floor and onto the pan, groaning and screaming in exertion. Small sparks of electricity arc between her feet and the floor.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

We cut around to see everyone bracing for impact, and likely death. Flight is pacing, Fen has closed her eyes, Chief Tech has started tapping his hand on the desk and scrunching his brow.

Art looks at the screen, waiting.

## INT. REACTOR CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

Finally, Jaina's efforts bear fruit and the glass gives way to the pan. The iron chunk flies inside the glow of the plasma and it changes color and brightness. It makes a horrible screeching sound as the reaction destabilizes. A bright light, then...

## EXT. BEJIIR SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Starliner 17 drops out of warp just before impacting the ring. The two structures float in space, unharmed.

## INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - DAY

The room erupts in applause and relief. People jump around and hug each other. Art lets out a sigh he didn't realize he was holding in, and looks over to Flight. She's simply raising her head up to the ceiling with her eyes closed, breathing.

Once she comes back down, she meets Art's eyes, and nods. Art nods back. Jaina did it.

## INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Jaina lays in a bed, being tended to by robotic arms patching up her radiation burns and bruises. The door to her room opens and in walks Art.

The two smile at each other and Art holds out an object. It's Jaina's favorite book. Jaina runs her hands along its cover, almost crying.

## INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Flight is looking out the grand window at the new Great Portal. The room is otherwise empty. Art enters and the doors close behind him.

FLIGHT

How is our hero?

Art begins slowly walking over to the window to join Flight.

ART

She's doing well. Hungry.

Art is next to Flight now, but she keeps her eyes fixed out at the Portal. She nods.

ART (CONT'D)

She still wants to go.

FLIGHT

That girl is ceaseless.

(MORE)

FLIGHT (CONT'D)

(pauses)

The Grand Jury is currently convened to discuss your request, but the final word will likely be mine.

Art is also looking out the window, but gives a brief glance sideways towards Flight.

ART

I don't think an archivist will arouse suspicion in Arath-Makah.

FLIGHT

No, I think she'll blend in quite well. But I've had my best people looking for any record on you and I can't find it.

She pulls a small vial out of her pocket and finally looks at Art. He looks too.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)

This is a sample of your DNA. From one of the cups you used while you were here. If I sequenced this, what would I find?

Art's expression becomes cold. He turns back to the window.

ART

(unamused)

Nothing about my identity. But you might find I'm cut from slightly different stone than most.

FLIGHT

(accusing)

So nothing that would alarm an Arath-Makahni census?

ART

No. You have plausible deniability.

She pulls in closer, and her voice hushes slightly.

FLIGHT

Because if this *is* an attack by the kingdom, we skirt the edges of war. If you endanger lives because of whatever you're keeping secret...you shouldn't bother coming back.

They stare at each other for a moment. Her eyes are threatening, but none of the venom appears to be phasing him.

After a moment, she pushes the vial into his chest and he grabs it. Flight starts to walk out of the room.

FLIGHT (CONT'D)

Pack your bags, ghost man. You have  
your passage.

She leaves the room, and Art turns back to stare out at the Great Portal's construction, a hint of worry on his face.