

FIELDS OOFO COLOR

Episode 1:
A Place Called Earth

by

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Act 1

EXT. INTERSTELLAR SPACE

We fly through space toward a lone star. It is the only one visibly growing in brightness. Suddenly we look down on a blue-green globe. Life is here.

EXT. BYURIMIDAS LANDSCAPE - DAY

We descend through the cloud layer and into the world below, flying through a lush, verdant landscape. A subtitle reads:

"Byurimidas: Frontier World"

The camera pans to the horizon, revealing cities floating far above the landscape buoyed by large metal balloons underneath.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Eventually, we settle into a large forest and arrive at last at a footpath.

The peace of the forest is interrupted by JAINA REED, archivist and repair technician speeding along the footpath.

She is dressed in clothes from many different eras and carries a pack at her side and a staff on her back. She makes her way along the path, leaping over branches and grinning with a wide smile.

Suddenly, she stops in her tracks after noticing something on the path ahead. It looks like signs of an animal struggle. Blood and tufts of fur are peppered among the tracks in the dirt.

JAINA
(enticed)
Whoa...

She blinks her eyes, and when they open again, her pupils and irises are illuminated a pale blue. These are the LENSES, the universal computing device of this time. After a second, a small red light appears on the lower right of one of her irises, signifying that she has begun recording.

JAINA (CONT'D)
Looks like something interesting
happened out here. Signs of a struggle
at the edge of the forest.

She moves around the site, documenting it all and narrating as she goes, clearly enraptured by the mystery of what transpired here.

JAINA (CONT'D)

(playfully)

Two, maybe...No, three small animals met and traded blows. Or bites. Or scratches. Maybe one said something the others didn't like.

(mocking gruff voice)

"Your mother is a hamster"

(other animal voice)

"You'll pay for that with your blood!"

(normal voice)

or maybe this was a hit gone wrong.

Can't trust the local cat tribes.

She notices tracks of two small animals leading off the path and back into the brush.

JAINA (CONT'D)

Ah! Looks like these two were working together. Good thing too, this third guy looks a lot bigger. I wonder if they made it...

She trails off at the last bit, more out of distraction than sadness.

We hear an electronic beep coming from her comms, and she startles out of her daydream.

SUPERVISOR (MESSAGE)

Jaina, what's your status?

JAINA

(embarrassed)

Oh! Almost there, sorry.

She gets up and continues down the path, briefly glancing back at the story she left behind.

EXT. COMMS RELAY - DAY

Jaina arrives at her destination on the top of a hill in a clearing: a thin antenna-looking device with an electronics box on its side. She opens the box and sees much circuitry and some burn marks on the hardware. She has her lenses on for the repairs.

JAINA

(to herself)

Okay...diagnostics?

She flips a switch and a red light comes on.

JAINA (CONT'D)

Red.

(MORE)

JAINA (CONT'D)
(begins to examine)
Okay, looks like carbon scoring on
some of the contacts?

She flips another switch to turn the device on, and as soon as she does, the machine starts sparking and becoming further damaged.

JAINA (CONT'D)
(urgent)
Yep!

She quickly examines her surroundings.

JAINA (CONT'D)
Need a fuse, need a fuse...
(sees a dark red rock)
Make a fuse!

She goes over and chops the air above it, but thanks to her FIELD CIRCUITS, a cybernetic enhancement that allows manipulation of force fields, it breaks with a loud crack, distributing iron flakes around the break.

Using FIELD CIRCUITS again, she magnetizes the shrapnel into her grasp and runs to find a leaf on a nearby plant. Using the field circuits again she performs some kind of transmutation on the materials, depositing iron onto the surface of the leaf.

She hurriedly brings it back over to the box and inserts it, stopping the sparking and returning the comms relay to stable operation, indicated by green light.

She sighs in relief and leans against the antenna.

As she takes a breather, she looks over to a line of foliage and sees two small critters looking at her. They have recently healed wounds on their sides and travel as a pair. Its the small animals from the skirmish in the forest. Jaina smirks as she sees them.

JAINA (CONT'D)
Heh, well done.

The creatures turn back into the shrubs and disappear.

SUPERVISOR (MESSAGE)
That was quick thinking there, Jaina.
We're really going to miss having
you around here. And there's no chance
I can convince you to stay?

JAINA
Not on your life, supe.

She looks to the sky to see a ship landing from orbit. It's still on its way down.

JAINA (CONT'D)
(daydreamy)
This is an Earth job we're talking about. I'll never get another chance like this.

INT. REED HOME - EVENING

Jaina steps into the front door of her childhood home. Her parents are making food in the kitchen.

JAINA'S DAD
Welcome home!

JAINA
Hi! What smells good?

Her mother wipes off her hands with a towel.

JAINA'S MOM
Well, we had to cook your favorite meal for your last night on Byurimidas. Celebrate your send-off properly.

JAINA
Thanks! Let me go set my stuff down and I'll give you a hand.

She walks through the house into her bedroom.

INT. JAINA'S ROOM - EVENING

Jaina enters the room she grew up in. It is filled with maps and books and the walls are adorned with artwork that looks to be from many different eras of humanity.

Upon seeing the room, she realizes this will be the last time she'll be here for a long while. Her face saddens and she takes a moment to walk around and take one last good look at everything. She traces the edges of books and artifacts with her fingers and lingers on them, savoring the feel.

Her mother stands in the still open doorway.

JAINA'S MOM
Are you sure you're ready for this?

Jaina turns back around to meet her gaze.

JAINA

(unsure)

No. But I *have* to go, Mom. I can't keep reading other people's stories. I've been imagining this since I was old enough to walk.

Jaina's mother walks in to the room.

JAINA'S MOM

Your father and I were the same way when we came here.

Jaina's father finally enters the room.

JAINA'S DAD

What way was I?

JAINA'S MOM

Restless.

JAINA'S DAD

Ah! Yes, very true. Very true. But a measure of homesickness it not unexpected.

Jaina's father walks over to sit on the bed beside Jaina, who joins him.

JAINA

Did anything help?

JAINA'S DAD

You know, when I was feeling dreary, I would always read from my favorite book. It felt like the people who came before me were giving me comfort. Inspiration. I never felt alone when I was with them.

Jaina gets up and goes over to a bookshelf. She pulls out an ornately decorated tome of lore and brings it back to the bed.

JAINA

I'll take this one.

JAINA'S DAD

Then whenever you miss home, just read from this book.

(taps cover)

And it will be like we're right there with you. Right beside all of the people in this book.

Jaina's mom joins them on the other side of Jaina and they all enter into a group hug, clutching each other and the book.

JAINA
I'll make you guys proud.

JAINA'S MOM
You already have.

EXT. REED HOME - NIGHT

We look in through the kitchen window, where amber light illuminates the Reed parents cleaning up from dinner. As the camera rises to the roof, Jaina sits upon it, munching on some remnants from the meal.

She stares out at the night sky at the stars beyond, longing for her adventure to begin.

EXT. SPACEPORT - DAY

We see an establishing shot of the port from above. Multiple craft sit waiting for passengers and cargo on a tarmac.

CUT TO:

Jaina climbing aboard a ship through its ramp. she carries only a few bags with her along with her trusty staff. An automated voice comes over the speakers.

PILOT (V.O.)
(cordial)
Welcome aboard passenger transport
451 en route from Byurimidas to Earth.
Please strap in as we will be
launching shortly.

CUT TO:

INT. PASSENGER SHIP - DAY

Jaina straps into her seat next to the other passengers and gets quietly excited. She places her bag underneath her seat

PILOT (V.O.)
Activating gravity shield in
3...2...1.

The lights in the cabin go dim as everything becomes weightless.

EXT. SPACEPORT - DAY

The ship's landing gear retracts, but it stays floating in position. It is no longer being affected by gravity.

Jet engines spin up and propel the ship aloft.

INT. PASSENGER SHIP - SPACE

PILOT (V.O.)
 Passengers, we have achieved escape
 velocity and are now leaving
 Byurimidas. Please stay in your seats
 while we prepare for warp to the
 Great Portal.

Jaina takes one look back at her home planet as she leaves the atmosphere. Her look of excitement dwindles, and she turns to pull her favorite book out of her bag, cracking open the pages and reading.

EXT. BYURIMIDAS ORBIT - SPACE

The ship deactivates its jet engines after reaching space. After a moment, it activates its warp drive and speeds into the distance. It approaches a large polyhedral frame in space: one of the GREAT PORTALS.

INT. MUSEUM (VFX) - NIGHT

Fade in to a 3D painting of Earth in front of the sun against a starry background.

JAINA (V.O.)
 In the 57th age of our worlds, human
 lifespan had grown a thousand fold.

As the camera slowly zooms out we see more of the painting, revealing a few solar sail spacecraft departing from Earth.

JAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Carried by the winds of our sun...

Cut to further out in the painting, revealing many more solar sails and a border of alien planets as their destinations.

JAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Countless cultures spread to the
 worlds beyond earth, in what became
 known as The Great Diaspora.

The camera pans up to reveal a fresco surrounding a dome skylight depicting multiple people raising their hands towards the skylight, stars visible beyond. The skylight is bordered by a depiction of a Great Portal frame.

JAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Hundreds of years later, the work of
 ten generations was complete, and
 (MORE)

JAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Great Portals allowed humankind to
cross the stars in the blink of an
eye.

The camera slowly moves through the skylight, revealing only
the starry sky.

JAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now, in this Age of Reunion, human
cultures once separated by hundreds
of lightyears...

Cut to black.

JAINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Would begin to collide once again.

EXT. EARTH ORBIT - SPACE

We look down on Earth, surrounded by a satellite constellation.
A subtitle reads:

"Earth: Protected Heritage Zone"

A similar Great Portal frame floats near Earth. From its
vertices come bright lights which fire energy into the center
of the frame. A gigantic bubble of warped spacetime grows
from the intersection point, opening the Portal.

Jaina's ship comes through and heads towards Earth.

INT. PASSENGER SHIP - SPACE

Jaina looks out the window to marvel at the new world below
her. She shakes the shoulder of the man sitting next to her
and points out to Earth. The man flashes her a kind smile and
nod and goes back to his business. This is second nature for
him, but she's clearly excited.

EXT. EARTH SPACEPORT - DAY

The ship begins its descent into the spaceport of its
destination.

EXT. EARTH ROAD - DAY

We pan down from Jaina's ship landing afar, and onto ART
SAKNUSEM, pilot and former weapon designer watching the ships
land in the city.

He rests on the side of the road, sitting atop a large suitcase
and dressed in a plain clothes with a long coat.

The road is otherwise empty and quiet, having long fallen into disuse. He takes a breath, collects himself and gets up. Picking up his suitcase, he walks down the road towards the city.

EXT. BAZAAR - DAY

People mill about an open bazaar, some with formal stalls, others simply laid out on blankets.

A old jewelry merchant is among them. He works with his tools on a plain silver ring, but it slips from his hands and rolls into the street.

As it rolls, we see Art's feet come into view and stop the ring in its path. After a second, it begins vibrating and levitates up into Art's hands.

He brings the ring back over to the merchant and sits down on his suitcase to face him, handing the ring across.

MERCHANT

Thank you young man!

ART

What makes you so sure I'm a young man? People can look like anything these days.

MERCHANT

You used field circuits. Old folks like me don't have those.

ART

You could get them. It's not a difficult procedure. You could even take off some of those years, if you wanted.

The merchant swats the air.

MERCHANT

Ah, no. I don't much see the point with my profession. And the years have never bothered me.

Art pauses to think.

ART

How much for the ring?

MERCHANT

Oh! You are older than you look.

ART
(smiling)
Why?

MERCHANT
Things have not been done *that* way
in some time.
(points to sky)
Not since the Commonwealth came and
brought their supply lines with them.
Are you not from Earth?

ART
Originally. But I haven't been back
in a long time. It's...strange, and
lonely to not recognize anything
here.

MERCHANT
The people here are friendly, for
the most part. You should not be
afraid to strike up conversations.
Just...stay away from the pilgrims.

ART
I'll keep an eye out. Can I ask...Why
do you still keep making rings? If
the Commonwealth provides, why do
any of these stalls still exist?

The merchant leans forward. Art follows.

MERCHANT
Well, I can't speak for the others,
but I have always enjoyed the craft
itself. It feels...as if I am making
the world a more beautiful place.
Like I am taking a small piece of
the world and putting myself into
it. They say the Commonwealth is the
same way. Spreading their bounty
across the stars to see fruit from
their own crafts.

Art gives a silent nod of approval, and the merchant extends
his hand out to offer the ring.

MERCHANT (CONT'D)
Here, a gift. From one old man to
another.

Art takes the ring, and we cut to him walking out the exit of
the bazaar.

On his way out, he passes Jaina who is just getting off the landing pad and walking through the street.

In voice-over, Jaina's letter of acceptance is heard.

APPROVER (V.O.)

Dear Jaina Reed, we are delighted to inform you that your request for relocation to Earth has been approved.

INT. JAINA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jaina arrives at her apartment and opens the door. The room is thick and stark concrete with no ornamentation.

APPROVER (V.O.)

We're sure that your research will go smoothly, but there are a few things that you should know before relocation that will ensure you have a pleasant stay.

EXT. RUIN STREETS - EVENING

Art walks along the abandoned streets of a ruined city. buildings have crumbled and plants have overgrown almost everything.

INT. JAINA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

She sets her things down by the door and starts walking around the empty room.

APPROVER (V.O.)

Earth is a protected heritage zone, which means that the normal commonwealth judicial system is more complicated there. We will not be able to fully protect you outside of the main ports and cities.

EXT. RUIN STREETS - EVEN

Art sets his suitcase down and stares at the ruins and rusted machines lining the avenues with sadness, perhaps remembering what these places used to be.

INT. JAINA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

She looks out the window to see the sunset above the rolling hills outside, calling her to adventure.

APPROVER (V.O.)

This is due in part to pilgrims from the kingdom of Arath-Makah, who use sites on the planet as part of their religious practices.

She looks towards her still open door, smiles, and runs back out of her apartment, grabbing her bag and staff on her way out.

APPROVER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As a result, we highly advise you to not venture outside of your designated abode if you can avoid it. Congratulations once again, and travel details will be sent shortly.

She closes the door behind her.

EXT. RUIN STREETS - EVENING

After a moment longer staring, Art picks up his suitcase and heads back the way he came.

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

Jaina finds herself on the crest of a hill overlooking the port town and stares out at the lights. She takes a deep breath in and listens to the wildlife around her as the breeze softly blows.

Suddenly, a streak of light flares across the sky and begins falling down towards the area she stands on.

EXT. EARTH ROAD - NIGHT

Art hears the boom from when the object enters the atmosphere and turns around in time to see the streak of light.

He immediately turns on his lenses and zooms into the object to analyze it. A message reads "No Radiosignatures".

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

With a muted crash, the object lands not too far from where Jaina is standing on the hill, behind a treeline.

Without a second thought, she goes to chase after it.

EXT. EARTH ROAD - NIGHT

Art turns off his lenses and goes to follow where the object landed.

EXT. CRASH SITE - NIGHT

Jaina reaches the crash site in the middle of a small clearing.

The beacon is floating inside of a shallow crater leftover from impact. It is shaped like a length of old branch, with a large knot two-thirds of the way down. It emits a faint golden glow. Jaina steps into the crater and approaches the object.

JAINA
(whispering)
What are you?

She blinks and her lenses activate, her eyes scanning over the strange artifact before her.

JAINA (CONT'D)
Maybe some kind of lost distress
beacon, sent from the far reaches of
space. Or maybe a fragment from a
stealth starship that disintegrated
during landing.

She moves in to touch it when Art arrives.

ART
I wouldn't touch that thing!

Jaina turns to look at him. He starts slowly inching towards the object.

JAINA
Why not?

ART
That thing made it past the Thousand
Eyes.

Jaina gives him a quizzical look and he points to the sky.

ART (CONT'D)
Satellite constellation. It's supposed
to watch the skies. Whatever that
is, it should've been targeted for
vaporization.

JAINA
(playfully)
But...It wasn't.

She uses her field circuits to levitate the object up towards her and begins examining it more closely. Art takes a step forward as if to stop her, but relents. She's going to poke at this thing and he won't be able to convince her otherwise.

Jaina deactivates her lenses to talk to Art.

JAINA (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm willing to share credit for the find! But my name goes first, okay?

ART

Credit?

JAINA

(confused)

Are you another archivist?

ART

(looking around)

No, I just don't like it when things fall out of the sky. So what name will be in the credit before me?

JAINA

(proud)

Jaina Reed, Archivist and former repair technician, who found a mysterious alien artifact crash-landed on Earth on her very first night! And you?

Art smiles at her enthusiasm, but hesitates for a second. He decides to take the merchant's advice.

ART

Arthur Sahnusem. Pilot. Friends call me Art.

JAINA

Hi, Art!

ART

(smirking, indulging her)

Hi.

Suddenly, in the distance, shouting is heard from multiple people. It doesn't sound friendly.

ART (CONT'D)

What is that?

JAINA

More treasure hunters?

Art turns on his own lenses and stares into space, blinking repeatedly to change the images.

The images Art sees from his perspective are satellite images getting closer and closer to ground level where they are. We can see the crater as well as a small army of figures dressed in white robes approaching the site.

ART

Not unless treasure hunters started wearing white robes while I wasn't looking.

JAINA

Sounds like pilgrims.

(activates lenses)

Weird. Nothing's on the Gardenbraid about this yet.

(Deactivating lenses)

We should go. Come on, I have a place not far from here. We can barter the discovery credits there.

Jaina grabs the object, leaps out of the crater, and starts running back towards the city with Art following close behind.

INT. JAINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jaina pushes the front door open and strides in quickly, transfixed by the recovered object, not looking where she's going. Art follows her in and pauses a moment, shocked by the empty apartment.

JAINA

(distracted)

Feel free to make yourself at home.

Art just looks around. At home in what?

ART

(incredulous)

Sure... You, ah... You doing alright?

Jaina finally catches on to his concern and looks around. She realizes he's talking about her place.

JAINA

Oh, yeah. I just moved here earlier today, I haven't gotten the chance to decorate or... do anything really.

She moves over to her bag and pulls out a thick black box with a screen and wires protruding from it.

JAINA (CONT'D)

You sure you don't want credit for this find? I really am okay with sharing.

She starts plugging the wires into the object, and presses a button on the box, starting analysis.

ART
(waving hand)
No, I'm fine staying out of the
spotlight, really. But...
(moves over to Jaina)
I am curious about what it is.

JAINA
Yeah! I came here to start work as
an archivist so this is...Huge for a
first day!

They take a moment to watch the black box work, until Art becomes worried.

ART
You mentioned pilgrims back at the
crash site.

Jaina turns to look at him inquisitively.

ART (CONT'D)
You were the second person today to
mention them to me. Who are they?

She leans against the wall slowly, getting ready to explain.

JAINA
From Arath-Makah...
(Art still confused)
You didn't get the warning? How long
have you been here?

Art shrugs.

ART
Well, I grew up here. But I've been
gone for a while. I've only been
back for a few hours, can't be much
longer than you.

JAINA
And they didn't tell you about the
pilgrims?

ART
I doubt they'd have a way to contact
me.

She crosses her arms. She didn't expect to have to explain this to someone.

JAINA

Earth is a big part of the Arath-Makahni religion, Korai. And part of their religion commands that they make a pilgrimage to Earth, the homeworld of humanity. It actually caused a really big problem back when the Commonwealth first expanded to include Earth. Big diplomatic fallout over that one. It's why the legal jurisdiction is still so complicated here. Heritage zone and all that.

Art listens to this explanation solemnly and nods.

ART

So why did we run from them?

Jaina stops, and looks out the window into the night beyond.

JAINA

Look, word around the Braid is that the pilgrims have been getting more...aggressive lately. Attacking people on the roads, defacing monuments, more fanaticism. They seemed like they were coming for this...

(indicates to object)
and I... panicked. I couldn't let them do anything to my first big find.

She slumps to the floor.

JAINA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I don't mean to talk bad about them. I've met a few of them before. A lot of them don't even really know what they're doing, they just... You can tell that a lot of them don't have great lives back on Arath-Makah, and the weight of this place in their faith...makes them do things they wouldn't otherwise.

Art just listens solemnly to this. When she finishes, he thinks to himself for a moment.

ART

(almost to himself)
In the end, the Devil is nothing but his victims.

JAINA
Who told you that?

ART
(shrugs. lies)
Don't remember. Probably something I
found somewhere.

Just then, the black box beeps, signaling that it has concluded its analysis.

JAINA
Speaking of!
(looks at screen)
Oh... 'ID not found'. Crap, I
thought... Wait, it's putting out a
radio signal.

Art moves over to look at the screen. A signal waveform is displayed on-screen and a sound code is playing from the box's speakers.

JAINA (CONT'D)
Do you recognize it?

ART
I do, actually. That's a distress
code. An old one.
(intrigued)
Very old. Looks like you found a
distress beacon. Maybe this is why
the pilgrims were after it.

JAINA
Maybe. Either way, they probably
won't come after it this far into
the city.

Immediately after she says this, the same shouting from before is heard outside her window, only this time there's a lot more of them. They both dart to the window to see a crowd of pilgrims surrounding Jaina's apartment.

ART
It's a good thing you're an archivist,
because your predictions suck.

EXT. JAINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The crowd of white-robed acolytes surround the residence; some carry lanterns, but most carry clubs. They signal to one another, trying to prevent any route of escape.

One of them walks through the crowd towards the front and the others bow their heads as he passes.

Clearly this is a man of high standing, the LEAD ACOLYTE.

As he reaches the front, another of the acolytes, ACOLYTE 2, approaches with a worried look on his face.

ACOLYTE 2

My brother, why have we come here?
She is a mere child. What could be
so important that we have to chase a
child into a corner like this?

The lead acolyte places a hand upon acolyte 2's shoulder and smiles an empty smile.

LEAD ACOLYTE

The blessing that fell has been
expected by the High Evangelical for
some time, my brother. That's why
he sent me here, to guide you. It is
the will of Korai that we have it.

ACOLYTE 2

Could we not simply speak to the
child? Tell her our wishes? She may
see fit to give it to us without the
use of force.

LEAD ACOLYTE

Anyone who stands in the way of
Korai's will must be dealt with
swiftly, brother. She cannot be left
to incite further heresy.

Acolyte 2 isn't totally convinced and looks down, shaking his head.

LEAD ACOLYTE (CONT'D)

(threatening)

Would YOU stand in the way of Korai's
will, brother?

In shame, acolyte 2 slinks back into the crowd, which the lead acolyte now turns to.

LEAD ACOLYTE (CONT'D)

Then let us begin!

A group of the pilgrims splits off to break into the apartment's front door.

INT. JAINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Crash! The door is kicked open and the small party of pilgrims flood into the apartment. Seconds later, another crash from behind.

The window is shattered and a couple pilgrims enter from that opening.

Jaina and Art stand back-to-back, Jaina clutching her staff in hand and Art feverishly scanning the crowd.

ART

Do you have any combat experience?

Jaina's face breaks into a smile.

JAINA

(self-satisfied)

Hmm!

She slides her hand along the length of the staff, getting her grip. Art glances behind him to see her ready herself. Her eyes open to reveal that her lenses have been activated for the battle. With a turn of her heel, she's off!

She strikes first with aplomb, knocking out a batch of enemies with her staff in short succession. She moves swiftly to throw her staff towards a pair near the door, downing them as well. She magnetizes her staff back to her hand and turns to continue the battle in the other direction.

Art's mostly playing defense. He swats the pilgrim's strikes away and ducks behind cover, grabbing the beacon and clipping it to his belt.

ART

We need to move!

JAINA

On it!

She focuses her efforts on the window exit, clearing a path for their escape. They both climb out the window, Jaina leaping, Art trailing behind.

EXT. JAINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The two emerge to see a smaller collection of pilgrims who Jaina easily deals with. This allows them to begin running full-speed away from the apartment. They talk as they run.

JAINA

Neighbors, Huh?

ART

What the hell was that? You said they wouldn't come in this far!

JAINA

I didn't think they would, I've never
seen them do anything like this!

ART

Must be some trinket you found!

JAINA

If they followed us this far, they'll
chase us anywhere in the city. We
need to get off-world.

ART

Fine with me! This homecoming was
not what i had in mind.

They head towards the light of the port.

EXT. SPACEPORT - NIGHT

The doors to another transport ship open, and Jaina climbs
halfway in. Art faces behind to check their tail.

PILOT (V.O.)

Welcome aboard point-to-point charter
flight from Earth to a location of
your choice. Please specify your
destination on the panel inside.

As the two runners prepare to enter the craft, the crowd of
pilgrims catches up to the borders of the tarmac, and begins
firing plasma bolts out of their hands towards Art and Jaina.

Art deflects the bolts with his bare hands.

JAINA

(amazed)

You know Balam?

ART

This isn't Balam!

Before he can elaborate, he is struck in the face by one of
the bolts and yells out in pain. He stumbles along the ground.

JAINA

Art!

She runs back down the entrance ramp and grabs him, pulls him
into the ship with her, and slams the panel beside her to
select any destination she can.

INT. PASSENGER SHIP - NIGHT

Jaina clicks Art's seatbelt into place as the ship begins its takeoff sequence. She sits down across from Art and straps herself in.

As the ship is taking off, she looks out the window and sees that some of the pilgrims have boarded one of their own ships and launched as well. They are not letting them get away.

Upon hearing a noise within the ship, she turns back around to see that Art has gotten out of his seat and begun rummaging around the compartment, tearing cables and technology from the walls.

JAINA

What the hell are you doing?! You need to strap in!

He takes a previously unseen device from under his cape and plugs it into the cables of the ship.

PILOT (V.O.)

Warning! Unexpected compute load on navigational sub-computer. Please do not tamper with the ship's components in-flight.

On the far wall, an image is projected of some kind of advanced calculation taking place in the computer. It is impossible to make out what it is at this point. The device simply hovers at the center of the room.

Outside the ship, plasma fire can be seen streaking across the ship's hull, barely missing. The ship begins bucking and weaving to avoid the fire automatically.

Art collapses on the ground and begins to bounce around the cabin unconscious as the evasive maneuvers toss the ship.

PILOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Attention! Navigational systems compromised by unexpected compute load. Evasive programs experiencing reduced performance.

EXT. PASSENGER SHIP - SUNRISE

Outside, the ships have risen high enough that the sun is peeking over the horizon.

One of the pilgrim's plasma bolts finally connects with the passenger transport, blowing out the engines. The ship suddenly begins to fall.

INT. PASSENGER SHIP - SUNRISE

The ship is really tumbling now. No control and plummeting to the ground. Jaina fumbles around trying to brace herself for the impact, but mostly panicking.

JAINA

Shit! Shit! Shit!

The camera pans around to see the projected image on the far wall finally congeal into a complete picture. Her head snaps to look at the wall. It's a PULSAR MAP, coordinates to some location in space.

We pull out from the map to see that it is reflected in Art's open, but half-conscious eye. His lenses are on. Upon seeing the image, his feet magnetize to the floor of the ship's deck.

His body stands itself up unnaturally to bring him even with the device and he extends a finger to just next to the device. Small arcs of electricity spark across the gap between finger and machine in a pattern suggesting that information is being transferred.

EXT. PASSENGER SHIP - SUNRISE

As the passenger ship falls, the pilgrim's vessel closes in.

Then suddenly, a bright flash of light from the inside of the passenger vessel and the high-pitched scream of energy. An instant later, a bubble of warped spacetime, a portal, opens up inside the passenger ship and expands outward, enveloping the ship within its radius. The shock wave from the portal's opening knocks the pilgrim's ship backwards, preventing it from entering the portal as it closes back up, taking the passenger ship with it and leaving only an empty sky.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE FIELD - DAY

Fade in to a grassy field in the mid-morning. A breeze blows through the grass and a lone house rests on the top of a hill in the distance.

The calm is broken by the same bright light, the same portal, and the same shock wave. When the portal closes, the passenger ship hits the ground with a distant impact.

INT. SHIP CRASH SITE - DAY

Smoke and dust everywhere. Jaina coughs and shakily regains her footing. A hole in the hull of the ship shows daylight beyond. Jaina stumbles over to it.

EXT. SHIP CRASH SITE - DAY

She emerges from the wreckage, eyes squinting in the light.

JAINA
(flicking on lenses
to record)
So...Personal biography. Looks like
we made it. Good. Exactly where we
made it to...

She surveys her surroundings and sees the field empty except
for the house on the hill.

JAINA (CONT'D)
No idea.
(genuinely confused)
Ranch? Wildlife preserve?
(looks over to house)
Only one way to find out.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Jaina is knocking on the front door.

JAINA
(yelling)
Hello? Is anybody there? We've been
in a crash, we need help!

There is no answer. Jaina moves around to look into the
windows, but finds no movement inside.

JAINA (CONT'D)
Did they leave? A starship almost
falling on your house might do that.

She turns back around to return down the hill.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIP CRASH SITE - DAY

Jaina pulls Art, still knocked out, from the crash. When she
gets him out into the light, she can see his injuries. He's
bleeding from the head, on top of the burn he had sustained
before. She's visibly worried.

JAINA
Oh, please don't tell me I killed my
first Earth friend in less than a
day...

She lays him down on the ground and heads back into the ship.

INT. SHIP CRASH SITE - DAY

Covering her mouth and nose for the smoke, she looks around the inside of the ship until she comes upon the words she was looking for painted on the wall:

Emergency first aid: MEDBAC

She moves over to the panel and tears it off the wall, briefly struggling to pry it free. She pulls out an orange canister and moves back outside.

EXT. SHIP CRASH SITE - DAY

She opens the orange canister to find a white paste inside. She scoops some onto her fingers and applies it to Art's head wound. Slowly, and then almost all at once, his wounds begin to heal.

Jaina breathes a sigh of relief and sits back onto the ground beside Art. He still has the beacon clipped to his belt. She unclips it and holds it in her hand.

She sets the canister down and looks around her at the wreckage, wondering what to do now.

Suddenly she remembers: Her book!

She darts back up without a word and plunges back into the wreckage. After a few seconds, she emerges with the charred bag, pulls out the undamaged book, and tosses the bag aside.

With palpable relief, she slumps back down to the ground. She holds both the book and the beacon in her hands for a moment, staring at them. Then she clutches both to her chest and curls up a bit, resting her head upon the book for comfort.

CUT TO:

It's later, the sun is lower in the sky, and Art begins to stir. He opens his eyes and sits up to see that Jaina has built a fire. She notices he's awake and sits up.

JAINA

Oh, thank god! You're awake.

He rubs his head.

ART

Ow.

JAINA

How are you feeling?

ART

Like I just got hit with a train.

JAINA

Actually, you just got hit with a planet.

She turns around to point at the wreckage. Then, she flips back to Art.

ART

Oh. But we made it? We got away?

JAINA

Yep. I don't know where we are but we made it. Barely. It took about a half hour for the Medbac to fix you.

She shows the orange canister.

ART

(chuckles)

Sorry you went through all the trouble. I have some of my own.

He pulls out a small silver vial from his pocket and shows it to Jaina.

JAINA

(joking)

Oh, so you're one of those weirdos who carries their own Medbac around.

ART

It's not *that* weird.

He unscrews the vial and looks at the white paste within.

JAINA

I could never. Too much of a hassle.

Art talks as he walks over to a patch of grass.

ART

Starting the culture isn't the hard part, it's keeping it alive.

He picks a few blades of grass and stuffs them into the vial where they begin slowly dissolving. He screws the lid back on and puts it away as he sits back down at the fire.

Jaina's face is now more suspicious. This man has too many oddities about him. It's time to ask the big question.

JAINA

What was that thing you used on the ship? The thing that brought us here?

After a moment, he lies.

ART

It's a Tetherbox.

JAINA

I think I've heard of those, but I'm not sure. Mind explaining?

She's not letting up. She going to peel the answers away from Art if she has to.

Art hesitates.

ART

Well, it's an old technique, with some technical details. Are you sure you want to hear about it?

JAINA

Who do you think you're talking to?

He thinks for a second and nods. It's okay to give her the technical details.

ART

During the Diaspora, we needed a way to stay in contact with each other across lightyears. Radio signals would work, but they weren't very secure. They were prone to interception. And so the idea was had that we build a network of microscopic portals to transmit messages.

Jaina interrupts, for she knows this story.

JAINA

...Which became the Gardenbraid.

ART

(nodding)

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that you know your history. Okay, so in that time, the Great Portals hadn't been invented yet; we didn't know how to use portals as shortcuts.

(MORE)

ART (CONT'D)

In fact, every portal took longer to traverse than going through the ambient space...Just how the geometry works. Very useful for secure comms but not very useful for travel unless...

He points behind her at the wreckage.

ART (CONT'D)

...You're in an emergency. If you're trapped with nowhere else to go, if you have enough energy you can pry one of the Gardenbraid portals open and slip through as an emergency exit.

She turns to look back at Art finishing his story.

ART (CONT'D)

And that's a Tetherbox.

JAINA

Clever!

Her admiration is palpable, so he chuckles. Then she cocks her head, noticing something.

JAINA (CONT'D)

You talk about it like you were there.

After a brief moment feeling like he just got caught, Art tries to tell her as little as he can.

ART

Well, I wasn't involved in the development, but I was around when it happened.

JAINA

How old are you?

He tries to remember the number, first casually, then desperately. But he fails, and his face becomes tired.

ART

(slightly defeated)

Old enough that it no longer matters.

Jaina can sense that she touched a nerve there, and so relents her questions. For a moment, only the crackle of the fire is heard. Forcing himself out of his sulk, Art stands up.

ART (CONT'D)
Anyway, no need to call for help,
because I brought us right to my
ship.

JAINA
(confused)
Huh?

She stands up also and follows Art to the spot he's using to look out to the hills. He points at the lone house on the hill.

ART
Right there!

JAINA
The house?

ART
I call her The Lighthouse, actually.
Come on, I'll show you.

They both start to walk in the Lighthouse's direction.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Jaina follows Art into the front door of the Lighthouse. Inside is a single room with a large circular control console in the center. Various adornments line the perimeter, but little in the way of actual furniture.

JAINA
This is your ship?

ART
Yep, my house and my ship.

Jaina looks around the space, taking it all in.

JAINA
I forgot you said you were a pilot.

ART
She's got full atmospheric clearance,
high-grade scanners, and artificial
grav circuit paneling underfoot for
an uninterrupted 1 G experience.

JAINA
I don't think I've even heard of
most of those.

Art quickly recovers from another slip.

ART

Well, those are the benefits of being
in the trade for so long.

Jaina stops her wandering and goes up to the control panel,
across the table from Art.

JAINA

Hey, you said High-grade scanners.
Can I use them on this?
(shows beacon)

ART

(shrugs)
Sure, go ahead. You just need to...

She sets it in the center of the center of the control panel
and begins pressing buttons with intent.

ART (CONT'D)

(surprised)
Yep... There you go.

The results of the scan are projected onto the ceiling of the
room, as its walls are mostly windows. The image shows the
same waveform as before, but also machine code.

JAINA

Yeah, there's definitely data here.

ART

What kind of data?

JAINA

Dunno. It's encrypted.

ART

Why send a distress beacon with
encrypted data?

JAINA

That's what we're going to find out.

Art blinks loudly.

ART

...We?

JAINA

Look.

She brings up a new image of the beacon's flight path.

JAINA (CONT'D)

This thing's flight path just got uploaded to the Braid. It came straight from the direction of Arath-Makah. So...

(leans against panel)

...Can you get me there?

ART

(disbelief)

You just spent the better part of a day running from Arath-Makahni pilgrims and your plan is to go to Arath-Makah?

JAINA

Yes.

ART

Where presumably there will be... many more of them.

JAINA

I've gotta find out what this thing's story is. That's the job.

ART

I really doubt that.

JAINA

Come on, Art! Where's your sense of adventure?

Art rubs his neck and thinks.

ART

Alright, look. I can take you as far as Bejiir.

Jaina punches the air.

JAINA

YES!

Art begins working the controls.

ART

...But then you're going to need to hop a carrier to Arath-Makah.

JAINA

Thank you! This is gonna be so cool!

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

The house begins to float as engines propel it upwards from underneath, disturbing the grass around it with the wind it kicks up.

Engines go to full thrust, and the Lighthouse flies into the sky.

FADE TO BLACK: