

ABLE SQUAD

"PILOT"

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ABLE SQUAD - "PILOT" - PART 1

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

In the far distance, an ore freighter sits alone amongst the sea of stars, its engines pushing it towards the sun of Earth's solar system.

The beaten and battered hull is weathered by the rigorous nature of space travel. Hundreds of cargo containers line the entire central boom of the ponderous ship, clutched with massive metal ribs. Small bits of dust and debris reflect off of an unseen magnetic skin that surrounds the hull.

At the front of the enormous freighter, on the side, near the bridge, her name, DANUBE, is illuminated.

INT. DANUBE - MESS HALL

Male and female crew members, most in dirty flight suits and tattered overalls, are getting their meals in a cramped mess hall. The crew all look a little worse for wear, but the overlapping chatter, conversations, and laughter fill the old vessel's walls with good spirits.

INT. DANUBE - ENGINE ROOM

The INCESSANT WHINE of the fusion reactor echoes throughout the cramped engine room, muffling the voices of the crew members trying to talk. Several crew members carrying access terminals and patch cables fight for space within the cave like confines, attempting to monitor the equipment and perform basic maintenance tasks. The equipment looks as if it has been patched together and jury rigged over the years cords and cables go every direction.

INT. DANUBE - CREW QUARTERS

The crew quarters are cramped, a common theme on the ship. The walls are lined with sleeping racks, three bunks tall. A few of the bunks are filled with lower ranking crewmen who hot rack with others.

The room is dimmed for those that are sleeping, small pin lights spill illumination into the locker areas and doorways. Inside one of the second level bunks, light glows around the edges of a privacy curtain.

Behind the curtain a MALE CREWMAN holds a flat computer with a chunky keyboard on it. From the back of the flat surface projects a rudimentary holographic projection that is displaying the image of a woman performing a striptease. The crewman is completely fixated on the image and begins to unbutton his pants, balancing the large device on his chest.

INT. DANUBE - BRIDGE

The bridge of the Danube is dimly lit, mostly illuminated by the sheer amount of illuminated buttons, dials, and digital VU meters. Cables and wires run haphazardly over all corners of the bridge. A soft hum prevails over most of the background noise. In the door threshold and high traffic areas the wires are liberally covered with duct tape to prevent crewmen from tripping over them. The chunky consoles and keyboards are surrounded by monitors and a few holographic projections of status readouts.

The CAPTAIN, 40s, is sitting at a station monitoring the systems and sensors. On the bridge is also a HELMSMAN, 30s, and a YOUNG CREWMAN, 20s. We come into the room mid-conversation.

YOUNG CREWMAN

But you served in the war, right, Captain?

The Captain laughs.

CAPTAIN

Yeah.

YOUNG CREWMAN

It's almost the anniversary of the 'sapes surrender at Olympus Mons.

The Captain thinks for a moment.

CAPTAIN

It is, isn't it? I've been so busy trying to get this job done, I wasn't even paying attention.

YOUNG CREWMAN

What was the war like?

CAPTAIN

I only came in near the end. After the Neos retreated from Venus. Luckily, I never had to deal with that. Some of the guys in my unit were stationed there, though.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

They had more than a few stories to tell.

YOUNG CREWMAN

Like what?

HELMSMAN

Don't they teach you anything in school anymore?

YOUNG CREWMAN

They say the Neos fought for independence --

The Captain and the Helmsman both chuckle, interrupting the Young Crewman mid sentence.

CAPTAIN

Those bastards were starting a revolution. They never mentioned Venus?

YOUNG CREWMAN

Briefly.

CAPTAIN

(scoffing)

Independence. The war wasn't nearly as nice as they make it sound. The Neos wanted revenge.

YOUNG CREWMAN

Come on! Now you have to tell me what happened on Venus.

CAPTAIN

Probably best you didn't know everything. Besides, I wasn't there. I only heard stories.

The Helmsman interrupts the conversation as the Young Crewman sighs.

HELMSMAN

Captain, we are on an automatic course back to the Homeworlds. We've got about two weeks of smooth sailing ahead.

CAPTAIN

Good! It's about time we got some relaxation. Begin preparations for interplanetary burn --

The Captain is interrupted by the sound of an explosion, shaking the Danube violently.

The power on the bridge cuts out, leaving everything in darkness.

Emergency lights kick on, bathing the bridge in ominous, red light.

INT. DANUBE - CREW QUARTERS

The Male Crewman, now pleasuring himself, is frightened out of his aroused state when the ship rocks violently. He pauses the hologram and pokes his head out of the curtain, but the room hasn't changed much, save the lights are out. The man closes the curtain and starts playing the now nude holographic girl again.

INT. DANUBE - BRIDGE

Same as we left it.

CAPTAIN
What the hell happened?

The Captain moves to the helm station.

HELMSMAN
I'm not entirely sure, sir.

YOUNG CREWMAN
Did we hit something?

HELMSMAN
Did the engine malfunction? She's been on the fritz ever since the Galilean job.

The Captain rushes back to his chair and retrieves a headset.

CAPTAIN
(to the Young Crewman and Helmsman)
You two see if you can get power restored up here.
(taps the earpiece)
Engine Room, this is the bridge, do you copy?
(nothing)
Engine Room, this is the Captain, status?

ENGINEER (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
Engineering here, sir. We just got
hit by something!

CAPTAIN
Hit by what? Debris? An Asteroid?

INT. DANUBE - ENGINE ROOM

The ENGINEER, wearing a similar headset looks out a porthole to see the pylon holding one of the engines is now a smoldering hulk. He yells over the warning buzzers and shouting crew members.

ENGINEER
I can't say for sure, but the
starboard engine is gone.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
What do you mean, gone?

ENGINEER
I mean its no longer part of the
ship, what the hell do you think I
mean?

INT. DANUBE - BRIDGE

The Captain walks over to the Young Crewman's station.

CAPTAIN
Where's back-up power?

ENGINEER (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
Give us a second.

BEAT

The lights kick on with a HUM.

ENGINEER (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
Power won't be consistent across
the ship. The back-ups got damaged
in the explosion. Look, sir, sorry.
We gotta figure out what happened.
I'll call you when I have
something.

CAPTAIN
 Make it quick.
 (clicks a switch on the
 headset)
 Get me a view on the starboard
 engine.

YOUNG CREWMAN
 Yes, sir.

The Young Crewman hits a few commands on his keyboard console.

After a moment his display pops up a window that has a view of the pylon that once held the engine to the ship.

CAPTAIN
 Son of a bitch! My ship!

The Young Crewman is looking hard at something, squinting his eyes.

YOUNG CREWMAN
 What's that?

CAPTAIN
 What's what?

The Helmsman leans in to view.

YOUNG CREWMAN
 This thing here in the distance.

HELMSMAN
 It looks like junk, maybe what we
 hit?

YOUNG CREWMAN
 Are you sure that's junk? I think
 its another ship.

CAPTAIN
 Can you magnify that?

The Young Crewman moves his hands to an integrated trackball near the keyboard and draws a makeshift box around the area on screen. Once the box is complete it brings up a contextual menu and he selects zoom.

The image zooms in optically. The silhouette reveals another vessel.

BEAT

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ!

YOUNG CREWMAN
What's wrong?

The Captain hurries to the back of the bridge.

The Helmsman looks at the image for a moment, then steps back with fright in his eyes.

HELMSMAN
Oh my god!

YOUNG CREWMAN
What? What is happening?

HELMSMAN
Son of a bitch.

The Young Crewman looks at the screen, trying to desperately figure out what has the two veterans spooked.

CAPTAIN
It's pirates.

YOUNG CREWMAN
Pirates? Out here? Aren't we too close to the core?

CAPTAIN
Here.

The Helmsman and the Young Crewman both look back to the Captain who quickly tosses them each a pistol. The Helmsman checks his magazine and charges it. The Young Crewman turns the gun over in his hands as if looking for the magazine release.

The Captain walks up and takes the pistol from the Young Crewman, grimacing at him. He checks the magazine, charges it and hands it back to the Young Crewman.

YOUNG CREWMAN
I've never used a gun before.

CAPTAIN
I guess they don't teach you much of anything at flight school either. The side with the hole is the business end. You point it towards pirate bastards and you pull the trigger. Don't hesitate. They won't.

The Captain goes to a panel and pulls a radio handset out. A ring echoes throughout the ship, followed by the Captain's echoing voice.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Attention all hands. Attention all hands.

EXT. DANUBE

The Pirate ship closes in on the Danube. As the larger ship approaches, it launches several grapplers that clamp down into the hull with a thud.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
The explosion that rocked the ship was from a pirate ship off our starboard aft.

INT. DANUBE - CREW QUARTERS

The Male Crewman from earlier looks around as the announcement is made and jumps out of the bed. He zips up his pants and the computer drops to the floor, still activated.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
As I'm sure you've heard, there have been stories of pirates raiding civilian and mining boats.

INT. DANUBE - MESS HALL

The mess hall is completely empty. Food trays are sprawled across the tables, some on the floor. Everyone left in a panic.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
You know what they do.

Through portholes we can see the pirate ship drawing closer.

INT. DANUBE - ENGINE ROOM

The ENGINEER is handing out weapons to a frantic group of crewmen from a weapons locker on the wall.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
 (over radio, filtered)
 Report to your stations and await
 further instructions from your
 section chiefs. Good luck everyone.

INT. DANUBE - BRIDGE

The Captain hangs up the radio and drops his head for a moment.

A loud CREAK and SHRIEK of metal GRINDING on metal reverberates throughout the bridge.

The pirate ship is docked.

CAPTAIN
 They're going to start cutting into
 the hull. Has the automatic
 distress signal been activated?

The Young Crewman nods.

YOUNG CREWMAN
 It's sending the company
 information from our ships flight
 recorders too.

CAPTAIN
 Alright.

The Helmsman locks the door and spins the latch to seal it.

YOUNG CREWMAN
 Are we going to fight them?

CAPTAIN
 That's the idea, kid.

The Young Crewman plops down into one of the chairs, unable to absorb everything happening so fast.

YOUNG CREWMAN
 How many survive these raids?

The Captain and the Helmsman look at each other.

HELMSMAN
 It doesn't matter anyway. We can't
 let them take the bridge or
 engineering.

Silence.

The radio CHIRPS from the Captain's headset. He activates it, SCREAMS and SHOOTING are all that comes through.

ENGINEER (V.O.)
(over radio, filtered)
Captain, they're in! They cut
through the door... too many...
they aren't...

The radio goes dead.

The Captain rubs his head and attempts to think of an idea.

CAPTAIN
Can we vent the air from every deck
but the bridge?

The Helmsman looks at the Captain, astonished.

HELMSMAN
We have three dozen people out
there, our crew!

CAPTAIN
Do you have any other ideas?

HELMSMAN
Not about saving my own skin!

The two argue and the door begins to emit sparks as the pirates begin cutting in.

The Young Crewman watches in terror.

YOUNG CREWMAN
Captain.

No one hears him.

CAPTAIN
We don't know if anyone else is
still alive out there! If they got
engineering, everyone is already
dead!

HELMSMAN
We have to give everyone a fighting
chance, though!

YOUNG CREWMAN
(yelling)
Captain!

With the arguing ceased, the Captain turns and notices the door is more than half way cut. The sound of the cutting can now be heard on the bridge.

The sparks follow a trail around the edge of the door frame. The three scatter across the room, taking cover behind consoles and chairs. They all point their guns at the door, waiting.

The cutting stops.

SILENCE

The door falls to the ground with a LOUD THUD.

SILENCE

Smoke fills the bridge from the corridor outside.

FOOTSTEPS

The Captain has beads of sweat rolling down his face. His back is up against a wall, waiting for something to happen. He looks over at the Young Crewman, who is BREATHING ERRATICALLY.

Dust and smoke settle.

SILENCE

A shadowy figure moves in the corridor, stepping over the threshold, placing a boot onto the bridge.

The Captain takes a deep breath as the hidden figure moves onto the bridge completely. Other invaders pile in behind him.

The Young Crewman squeezes off a round. BLAM.

The Captain and the Helmsman join him. The three YELL as the enemy returns fire.

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE

Hundreds of people occupy a public square inside of a large, seemingly open air shopping mall. The space is filled with greenery, the perimeter surrounded by shops. A fountain is in the center.

Above all this is a mezzanine overlooking the beautiful square.

We look up towards the ceiling to see pipes, vents, cables run across the entirety of it, suspended above the beauty elow.

But further beyond the sea of industry is a skylight, sunlight pouring in. Through the windows is

EARTH

This is some sort of space station.

Through the window, the station, a massive ring, gets lost beyond the horizon of the planet. Space elevators and tethers attach the orbital ring to the surface.

The public square is extremely crowded. People are getting food, shopping, and children play.

INT. CORRIDOR

Five members of ABLE SQUAD, with First Lieutenant JONATHAN THOMAS MARSH, or JT for short, 26, in the lead, move tactically down a corridor. The squad is fully geared up for combat. Long battle rifles in hand, and in full combat armor.

The squad weaves itself between the crowds walking through the corridors with their friends and families. The people recognize the military markings and jog away in the opposite direction.

ALEC DELEON

(radio, filtered)

Lieutenant, the Feds are reporting that the suspect is making his way to the square in sector ten twenty-two. They want you to provide cover on your level as they go in to make the arrest.

JT MARSH

Copy that. We're moving into that sector now, Ee tee eh, two minutes. Keep me posted of any changes, Sergeant.

ALEC DELEON

(radio, filtered)

Understood, Lieutenant, DeLeon out.

JT MARSH

Able Squad, our objective is reportedly moving into the sector straight ahead.

(MORE)

JT MARSH (CONT'D)
I want a fireteam on each side of
the mezzanine. Understood?

ABLE SQUAD
(together)
Oorah!

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE

A NERVOUS MAN walks into a crowded area of the square. Children run by, laughing and screaming, frightening him. Sweat runs down his face. His clothing is a bit different from the others, less refined and contemporary, more earth toned.

His eyes dart about, glancing back and forth amongst the happy crowds of people. He breathes deep and continues moving forward into the city square, keep his hands cross his chest.

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE - MEZZANINE

JT Kneels down besides the guard rail on the mezzanine over looking the public square below. He signals with his hand for his squad to move up.

Able Squad methodically moves out of the corridor junction and splits into two groups, spreading out across both sides of the mezzanine running adjacent to the open square.

WOLF BRONSKI, 30s, moves towards JT.

RITA TORRES, 30s, moves to the opposite side with her team, hugging the wall to stay out of sight. Squad members MAGGIE WESTON, 20s, and ALICE NORETTI, 19, are with her and quietly urge stragglers to get a move on, while scanning the square below.

ALICE NORETTI
(nervously, to civilian)
You need to exit this area. Move to
the next sector, quickly.

JT MARSH (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Does anyone have eyes yet?

RITA TORRES
Nothing, Lieutenant.

MAGGIE WESTON
Nothing, Sir.

ALICE NORETTI
(quietly, to Rita)
Sergeant, I don't like this.

RITA TORRES
Stay calm, Corporal. Keep your eyes
up.

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE

The Nervous Man watches the children running around the water fountain. He rubs his head as a MOTHER walks up to the fountain with her little BOY and GIRL.

MOTHER
Here, take these old coins and make
a wish.

BOY
What do you mean? What are these?

MOTHER
Coins are an old type of money. You
throw the coins into the fountain
and think about the thing you want
most. With some luck, it might come
true.

The Boy turns to the fountain and thinks.

GIRL
I want a puppy!

The Girl tosses the coin into the fountain. She laughs as the coin makes a splash.

MOTHER
You shouldn't say what you want!

BOY
Why not?

The Nervous Man looks around.

NERVOUS MAN
(to himself)
Give me the strength.

MOTHER
Then it may not happen.

Out of the corner of his view, the Nervous Man spots a small group of MALL POLICE walking through the square, searching for someone.

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE - MEZZANINE

JT and Wolf scan the crowd below down the scopes of their guns.

RITA TORRES
(radio, filtered)
Lieutenant, federal agents and
civilian uniforms are moving into
the area.

JT eyes another group coming from the opposite direction.

JT MARSH
(radio, filtered)
I see some more.

Wolf looks down his scope as they enter the square. He sees a small group of CIVILIAN POLICE fanning out, weaving their way through the crowd. Each is wearing a jacket that is obviously puffed out a bullet proof vest.

WOLF BRONSKI
(sarcastically)
Try not to be too conspicuous,
guys.

MAGGIE WESTON
(radio, filtered)
No kidding. They are going to spook
this guy for sure.

JT MARSH
We need to make sure he doesn't do
anything stupid like take a
hostage.

ALICE NORETTI
(radio, filtered)
Did they catch the others they were
tracking?

JT MARSH
Supposedly they got one. They are
interrogating him now.

RITA TORRES
(radio, filtered)
So that leaves this one and two
others?

JT MARSH
That's all the suspicious entrants
that came in the port a few days
ago.

JT is scanning the crowd with his scope. He notices a FEDERAL TACTICAL TEAM dressed and almost identically to Able Squad, but with large HWSB letters written across their backs and helmets. They are moving aggressively.

WOLF BRONSKI
What the hell?

RITA TORRES
(radio, filtered)
Ah, sir.

JT MARSH
I see them.

WOLF BRONSKI
Lieutenant, those guys are moving
with some purpose.

MAGGIE WESTON
(radio, filtered)
Something must have happened.

ALICE NORETTI
(radio, filtered)
What's going on?

ALEC DELEON
(radio, filtered)
Lieutenant Marsh, this is DeLeon.
Do you copy, over.

JT MARSH
This is Marsh, what's going on,
Sergeant?

ALEC DELEON
Sir, the Feds are ordering a shoot
to kill order.

WOLF BRONSKI
What?

JT MARSH

What happened? We see the tactical teams.

ALEC DELEON

During the interrogation the suspect confessed to a plot to blow up Ameron.

Wolf straightens up and starts hunting the crowd intently. The other team across the way do the same.

JT MARSH

Sergeant, that's a shoot to kill? Confirm?

ALEC DELEON

(radio, filtered)

Affirmative. Shoot to kill.

JT shakes his head and pulls up his rifle.

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE

The Mother, Boy, and Girl all move off and away from everything. The Nervous Man tucks himself away amongst some of the people in the square but he brushes up against someone, pulling his jacket back, revealing a small device on his chest filled with CRACKLING ORANGE ENERGY at its center.

A woman, noticing this device, SCREAMS and begins running. Mass panic breaks out, getting everyone's attention.

The crowd goes in every direction in sheer chaos.

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE - MEZZANINE

Able Squad watches the massive crowd below erupt in panic. The entire floor is an indistinguishable soup of humans.

JT's eyes go wide.

RITA TORRES

(radio, filtered)

I can't see anything. What are we going to do about all the civilians?

MAGGIE WESTON

(radio, filtered)

The tactical teams are moving in.

JT eyes the Federal Tactical Teams trying to push through the crowds. The sight of them makes the crowd panic more.

Fresh SCREAMS erupt at the edges of the panic.

JT MARSH
Is anyone tracking anything.

ALICE NORETTI
(radio, filtered)
What are we targeting?

JT MARSH
Just hold your fire and keep looking. The crowd will part eventually.

WOLF BRONSKI
He could leave with the crowd.

RITA TORRES
(radio, filtered)
He's here do something. He isn't leaving.

The immediate crowd all move away from the Nervous Man, isolating him for a single instant.

WOLF BRONSKI
(scanning the crowd)
Maybe his cover is blown, and he'll opt not -- Sir, I've got him.

JT spots him too.

JT MARSH
Do you see him squad?

RITA TORRES
(radio, filtered)
Affirmative. He doesn't have anyone, what's going on?

JT MARSH
Just watch him, let the tactical teams take him. I don't want any strays caught in the cross fire.

The Nervous Man sees his cover is moving away and he opens his jacket to reveal the entirety of a portable fusion core strapped to his chest, cobbled together into a makeshift BOMB. The ramshackle device is held about the size of a family size box of cereal is held together with duct tape and random parts.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)
 (without hesitation)
 Sergeant Bronski, take the shot if
 you have it!

Wolf spots the target amidst the bustle of people and takes aim.

RITA TORRES (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Lieutenant --

NERVOUS MAN
 (yelling)
 Freedom for the United Clans!

JT MARSH
 (almost simultaneous with
 the yell)
 Shoot!

Wolf lines up a shot.

CRACK

He squeezes off a round simultaneously with JT's "Shoot!"

The rifle fires, sending a bullet into the Nervous Man's head, abruptly ending his yell.

SILENCE

In a spray of red the Nervous Man's body falls to his knees, but even before he hits the ground an EXPLOSION FROM HIS CHEST erupts and consumes all signs of him.

The blast levels everything in the square and vaporizes everything organic in the immediate area. Able Squad is knocked back.

The shockwave destroys the GLASS above the square.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)
 No! No!

Everything in the square, including people, debris, dust, and even the explosion are vented out into space. Able Squad, and a handful of others hold onto the second level's guard rail for dear life.

EXT. SPACE

The explosion is immediately dispersed, but debris and people jet out into the freezing void.

INT. PUBLIC SQUARE - MEZZANINE

Rita holds onto the guard rail, her arm is wrapped completely around it. She winces at the pain and the struggle to survive is evident in her face behind the glass of her helmet.

Alice is screaming, barely holding onto the rail.

A CIVILIAN WOMAN holding onto the rail is losing her grip. Alice tries to secure her arm around the rail as best she can and carefully reaches out for the Civilian Woman's hand.

She notices Alice trying to help, moving her hand to grab Alice's with all her might.

The Civilian Woman's grip slips.

Alice snatches for her!

Grabbing hold of her hand, Alice attempts to pull her in but loses her grip on the woman and watches her eject out the breech with a silent scream.

ALICE NORETTI
(tears starting)
Oh my God!

Maggie watches the entire thing unfold in horror.

MAGGIE WESTON
God Dammit! Where the hell is the
safety shielding?

Wolf and JT are holding on for dear life on the other side of the Mezzanine.

JT MARSH
(strained)
Squad! If we get vented out, you'll
have five minutes of air! Remember
to activate your beacons once you
are clear of the station!

The lighting in the square turns red. A soulless, muffled computer voice is barely audible.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE (V.O.)
 (over loud speaker)
 Atmosphere ventilation detected,
 section -- One. Zero. Two. Two.
 Activating safety shielding.

Massive metal doors rapidly slide out from above the shattered glass and close with a MUFFLED SLAM.

Everyone falls to the floor with a THUD.

Able Squad are the first one's up. They scatter out to check the few civilians that remain who might be unconscious or struggling to breathe.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE (V.O.)
 (over loud speaker)
 Breathable atmosphere being re-established.

A HISS fills the room. The red lights go back to normal.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE (V.O.)
 (over loud speaker)
 Atmosphere re-established. Pres --
 Pressure normalized.

Wolf pulls off his helmet and throws it up against the wall.

WOLF BRONSKI
 (yelling)
Son of a bitch!

Alice looks down at her hand. She has tears welling up. Maggie moves over to comfort her.

JT watches Wolf while removing his own helmet.

Wolf paces in a circle, still yelling.

JT MARSH
 Sergeant.

WOLF BRONSKI
 I wasn't fast enough.

JT MARSH
 Bronski!

WOLF BRONSKI
 I could've stopped him.

Wolf rubs his head.

JT grabs his shoulder.

JT MARSH

Wolf.

WOLF BRONSKI

It's my fault, Lieutenant!

JT MARSH

No, it's not. It's my fault.

WOLF BRONSKI

I had the shot.

JT MARSH

And you took it as soon as I gave the order. I was trying to be overly cautious, trying to keep something like this from happening and it happened anyway.

Wolf stops and looks over at JT. He has tears in his rage filled eyes.

Wolf turns and punches the wall.

Civilian and military personnel come swarming in through the doorways.

Jt looks up at the sealed airlock above and shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

People are watching a show on a news network with updates, stock prices, and various asides nearly filling the entirety of the screen, leaving a small slice of the image for the actual program on air.

The program is called The Charles McKenna Show, a roundtable talking heads show. CHARLES MCKENNA, 40s, is the host.

CHARLES MCKENNA

(on tv)

Welcome back to the Charles McKenna show. I am, of course, Charles McKenna, your host. It's the top of the hour and I'm here with Admiral Wallace of the Homeworld's Navy; Jonathon Dean, Chief Editor of Our Civilization Magazine; and Tiffany Schreiber, syndicated columnist and OSN contributor.

(MORE)

CHARLES MCKENNA (CONT'D)

Thank you all for being here with me.

Before our break we were talking about the building controversy over the current colonization effort of the newly terraformed moons in the outer planets.

Admiral Wallace, we'll start with you.

ADMIRAL WALLACE

(on tv)

Mr. McKenna, I think the word controversy is a little much for this situation.

CHARLES MCKENNA

(on tv)

Explain to me how many thousands of deaths is not a controversy.

ADMIRAL WALLACE

(on tv)

If you take a look at the facts surrounding the deaths, they are not directly related to the colonization efforts.

The program drones on as we switch our attention to the bar. Every table is full. The bar area itself is relatively quiet with many watching the TV. The outside tables in the building are loud and active.

Rita, Wolf, Maggie, and Alice all sit around the table. All, save Alice, are drinking beers and trying to listen to the tv. Wolf is a little buzzed. They have half eaten plates of appetizers in front of them and empty bottles litter the table. They are not in uniform.

WOLF BRONSKI

They aren't even talking about what happened up on the ring today.

ALICE NORETTI

They never do.

RITA TORRES

More terrorists blowing up civilians. They won't talk about that.

WOLF BRONSKI

Ugh. I don't want to deal with it. I need more to drink.

RITA TORRES
I'm sick of all this.

Wolf holds up his hand to try and signal the WAITRESS. Who ignores him. He shakes his hand. Nothing still. Frustrated, he convulses it in sarcasm.

Wolf watches the TV instead.

WOLF BRONSKI
You can't tell me that they didn't bring the Admiral on that show so they could set him up.

RITA TORRES
Of course, look at the others, they're all anti-military. They brought on the editor and chief of Our Civilization magazine for God's sake.

WOLF BRONSKI
Liberal rag.

MAGGIE WESTON
I read that.

Wolf picks up a piece of half eaten flat bread off his plate and playfully throws it at her.

WOLF BRONSKI
You would, Weston. You dirty hippie.

Laughing, Weston throws a jalapeño popper at him.

ALICE NORETTI
We were doing our jobs today. I don't understand.

Rita looks at Alice from behind her drink.

RITA TORRES
That would mean they couldn't portray us as freeloading, murdering, rapists.

WOLF BRONSKI
Freeloading is my favorite part.

Wolf steals Rita's beer bottle when she sets it down and takes a swig.

RITA TORRES

Help yourself.

WOLF BRONSKI

Noretta, the civilians are tired of paying for a military with no enemies. If they show us doing our jobs, they can't justify the getting rid of us part.

MAGGIE WESTON

Even I was shocked the police did almost nothing today.

RITA TORRES

At least they called us this time.

WOLF BRONSKI

Probably to set us up.

ALICE NORETTI

Isn't it news?

WOLF BRONSKI

The media is filled with liberal sympathizers that all share the same ideas.

(Weston rolls her eyes)

It's true. Those damned hippies in Weston's old stomping ground of the Western Alliance run the media and they work with their cronies in the government. They hate the military. They jerk off at the thought of shutting us down.

RITA TORRES

(gesturing towards Alice)

Staff Sergeant, there are children present.

ALICE NORETTI

I'm nineteen.

WOLF BRONSKI

Sure, whatever, kid. Have another Shirley Temple. How did you even get in here?

ALICE NORETTI

I choose not to drink!

MAGGIE WESTON

You can't be a Marine and not drink, Noretta.

WOLF BRONSKI

This shit job will drive you to it.

RITA TORRES

Leave the kid be. You break her balls all the time about not drinking.

Wolf squeezes her cheek.

WOLF BRONSKI

Sorry, Noretta. I hope your balls are OK.

They all laugh.

CHARLES MCKENNA

(on tv)

Tiffany, what are your thoughts?

TIFFANY

(on tv)

I think the deaths of the people on these raided vessels are directly related to the colonization of the outer planets. If it weren't for our desire to pursue manifest destiny out there, we wouldn't be putting innocent citizen's lives in jeopardy.

An ANNOYING MAN at a table near our squad is talking to a DRUNK MAN, loud enough to make himself heard to others. The Annoying Man has obviously had a few too many.

ANNOYING MAN

Damn imper-lists is what they are.

Rita laughs, almost spitting out her beer. Wolf chuckles at her.

ADMIRAL WALLACE

(on tv)

Manifest Destiny? It's human desire to explore. The inner planets are becoming over populated, we need new places to expand, and we need more resources to grow.

ANNOYING MAN

They just want profits. The military is being run by corporations.

TIFFANY

(on tv)

It's all about the resources and exploiting them for profit, isn't it?

ANNOYING MAN

Exactly!

WOLF BRONSKI

The media has these people trained like seals.

Wolf claps his hands together and makes poorly imitated SEAL CALL.

The Annoying Man catches him doing this and focuses his attention on Wolf.

The group laughs, except Maggie.

MAGGIE WESTON

They aren't entirely wrong, Bronski.

RITA TORRES

I don't want to hear your shit today, Weston. Especially not after this morning.

MAGGIE WESTON

Sorry, Gunney.

ADMIRAL WALLACE

(on tv)

If Manifest Destiny was our concern we would just go to Saturn and take their resource engorged moons. We are trying to let them be, but we still need fuel to get around the solar system. We use Jupiter to skim off incredible fuels for everything we do. The medicines, the materials we've developed in the last century are because of what you call manifest destiny now. We've found precious metals we didn't even know existed until we started mining those planets.

(MORE)

ADMIRAL WALLACE (CONT'D)

Those metals form the backbone of the ships we all use to travel in space. Do any of your families live off world? You need a ship to see them. A ship lined with metals only found out there that prevents radiation from cooking you.

JONATHAN DEAN

(on tv)

Look, what about the military? Where is the military when these ships are attacked? The people are having a hard enough time paying taxes on a military that is increasingly becoming obsolete. They aren't even doing the job we need them for.

ADMIRAL WALLACE

(on tv)

The military is currently being downsized right now because twenty years ago you told us that you didn't need us anymore. Now our forces are stretched so thin that we can't protect every convoy like we should be.

ANNOYING MAN

(to the squad)

I'm sick of the military.

RITA TORRES

How do you know we're military?

ANNOYING MAN

You all look like high school drop outs.

DRUNK GUY

Hey Man, calm down.

WOLF BRONSKI

(looking to Maggie with a grin)

I am a high school drop out. No, wait, that's Alec.

Maggie rolls her eyes.

The Drunk Guy tries to calm his friend down. Annoying Man just brushes him off.

ANNOYING MAN

Look at you. You disgust me.

Rita shakes her head and takes a drink. The Annoying Man stands up and walks over to Rita.

ANNOYING MAN (CONT'D)

Killers. Killers. Killers. Killers.

He points at each one of them as he says killers.

Rita just closes her eyes and breathes as if she is trying to count to ten in her head.

ANNOYING MAN (CONT'D)

Killers. Killers. Killers --

He points at each again until he gets to Alice. Before he can Wolf stands up and tries to move the Annoying Man back.

WOLF BRONSKI

(getting serious)

Hey, man, we're just having a drink after a long day.

The Annoying Man starts again, but points around Wolf's bulk and all at Alice.

ANNOYING MAN

Killers! Killers! Killers! Killers!

Alice is getting upset.

RITA TORRES

Wolf, we're leaving.

The Annoying man tries to get right in Alice's face.

ANNOYING MAN

(to Wolf)

Yeah, Woof, why don't you leave.

(to Alice)

Hey, little girl, how many civilians have you murdered today?

Rita, almost out of nowhere, punches the man square in the face, causing him to stumble backwards and onto the table he came from. The room goes silent and looks towards the squad standing over the reeling man.

BEAT

Wolf turns to Rita.

WOLF BRONSKI
 (shocked and excited)
 Damn, Sarge!

Rita, breathing heavily, turns and walks towards the door.

MAGGIE WESTON
 We should probably get out of here
 before we cause anymore political
 turmoil.

ALICE NORETTI
 (tearing up, to herself)
 I watched someone... I tried to
 help.

Maggie puts an arm around her as she helps her up.

Maggie stops at the counter and puts a large bill down.

MAGGIE WESTON
 For the mess the diplomat made.
 Sorry about that.

The bartender looks over at the Annoying Man then back at the squad leaving the restaurant. He can't decide on whether to take the money or call the cops.

BEAT

He picks up the money.

INT. CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A WOMAN, CASSANDRA CRUISE, mid 20s enters into the apartment, hearing a commotion in the kitchen. She pulls her coat off and hangs it, head cocked listening to the sounds.

She thinks and smiles, realizing what's happening. She hurries down the small hall and into the kitchen.

JT stands in the kitchen chopping vegetables, pots and pans are sizzling on the stove as he prepares dinner.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
 JT! Oh my God! Why didn't you tell
 me you would be in today?

JT comes around the island and embraces Cassandra. He gives her a deep kiss, she reciprocates.

JT MARSH

I had a thing this morning and
it... ah - ended early, so the
squad got a few days leave.

Cassandra's eyes go wide.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

A few days!? Are kidding me?

JT laughs.

JT MARSH

No kidding. I've got forty eight
hours -- Well, since this morning
that's less nine, so thirty nine --

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Thirty nine hours! JT. I wish you
would have called me. I would have
left work early. That's barely more
than a day now!

JT heads back to the island.

JT MARSH

I just wanted it to be a surprise
and you mentioned you had a big
thing you were working on in your
last letter --

Cassie follow him to the island and hugs him tightly.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

No, it's fine. I'm just so happy
you're here.

JT kisses her on the head and hugs her more. He melts into
her and just holds on, letting it show that he's upset.

He moves her head and kisses her intensely. He sinks into it
and gets swept up. The two kiss passionately.

Cassandra pushes him back a bit.

CASSANDRA CRUISE (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, what's wrong? I can tell
you're upset.

JT MARSH

It's nothing. I'm just happy to see
you.

JT kisses her again. Cassandra kisses him back.

JT goes to pull her blouse off, but she stops him.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
Hey! Now I know your upset.

JT stops, frustrated.

He sighs.

JT MARSH
It's just been a long day. That's
all.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
You said you had a thing this
morning and you've been hanging out
for nine hours, I guess?

JT MARSH
It was a long day by this morning
already.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
Do you want to tell me about it?

JT MARSH
Not particularly.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
Talking about it might help.

Jt turns his head from her and stares off for a moment.

JT MARSH
Did you hear about what happened on
Ameron?

CASSANDRA CRUISE
(concerned)
No, what happened on Ameron?

JT MARSH
There was a terrorist thing today.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
(frustrated)
Thing. Thing. You keep telling me
there was a thing. What does that
mean?

Jt rolls his head around.

JT MARSH

I can't tell you some of this stuff.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Tell me what you can.

JT MARSH

Ah. Some pirates got aboard the ring and wanted to blow some of it up.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Oh my God.

JT MARSH

Able got called in to support the civilians while they attempted to make the arrests. Uh, we didn't succeed and a lot of people... died.

Cassandra grabs up JT's hand.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Oh my God, JT? Are you ok?

JT MARSH

(calming her down)

I'm fine. Obviously. I mean what happened was my fault, so --

CASSANDRA CRUISE

What do you mean?

JT MARSH

I thought I was saving people's lives by being cautious, I just, we just didn't know.

JT trails off as he becomes upset. He doesn't cry, but talking about it is rolling the emotions around in his gut.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Is your squad ok?

JT MARSH

Yeah. Yeah, they are --

(pause)

No, my youngest, my medic, she tried to help someone today, and she couldn't. She watched that person die.

(MORE)

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

She's never been through that. I could have gotten her killed today.

Cassandra can't quantify fully what he means, but tries to empathize.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

You've never come back like this so it must have been serious. Why did the pirates want to blow up Ameron?

JT rubs his face with both hands.

JT MARSH

(stern)

I don't know, Cassie. They just do. I don't want to talk about that. I'm just done with this shit.

Cassandra backs off.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Ok, ok. I'm sorry. You seem to be getting more and more frustrated each time you come back. Why don't you just quit the service?

JT MARSH

I don't want to be here anymore.

Cassandra looks at him curiously.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

What are you talking about?

JT MARSH

I'm sick of the military. I just want out.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Like I said, just leave!

JT MARSH

I want to, but I can't just leave I have to fulfill my service commitment from college.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

You went to college, what five, six years ago?

JT MARSH

Two years for every one that they pay for.

JT starts pacing around the kitchen. Cassandra turns off the stove.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Ok, then we will take it one day at a time. You've got three years left, that's nothing. I'll be here.

JT MARSH

You don't deserve to be waiting for me like you do.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

I willingly wait for you, JT. I'll wait for you as long as it takes. I love you.

JT MARSH

I love you so much. I just want to be with you now. Nothing else matters.

JT and Cassandra embrace and kiss.

INT. CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

The inside of the apartment is dark. The city lights cast a dull glow on everything through the windows. The wind blows the sheer draperies around ever so slightly.

JT is slightly sat up in the bed, gently caressing Cassandra's shoulder. Cassandra lays her head on his chest.

They sit in the relative silence cherishing the time together.

BEEP BEEP

The moment is interrupted by a beeping sound coming from a small device on an end table. The display is a scrolling text that says "incoming message."

BEEP BEEP

Cassandra and JT both look over at it and sigh. JT begins to reach for it, but Cassandra blocks him from retrieving it.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

JT. You just got here.

JT MARSH

I know.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
I just haven't seen you in days. I miss you.

She turns her head away.

BEEP BEEP

JT MARSH
I'm sorry Cassandra, but this is what I do. It could be a general alert and be nothing.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
You just said you wanted out.

JT MARSH
I also said I can't until I've fulfilled my commitment. Until then, I'm obligated.

BEEP BEEP

CASSANDRA CRUISE
I know. I know. That damn sound always means you have to leave. You said you would be here tomorrow too.

JT takes a finger and gently turns her head to face him again. He looks into her eyes for a moment and kisses her. She returns the kiss.

BEEP BEEP

The device beeps again, this time louder. They stop kissing and JT reaches for it. He clicks through its interface.

JT MARSH
Son of a bitch.

Cassandra watches him read the message. His face getting visibly more upset.

JT closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
You have to leave, don't you.

JT MARSH
(quietly)
Yes --

CASSANDRA CRUISE
God dammit, JT! You showed up just
 to blow off steam because of what
 happened this morning.

She gets off the bed and walks over to the window, looking
 out across the futuristic, neon laden Chicago skyline.

JT walks up behind her and wraps his arms around her.

JT MARSH
 Cassie, of course that's not true.
 You know I can't help it. I'm
 sorry. When they tell me to jump,
 I've got to jump. Remember what I
 said? I'm going to get out. I'm
 going to be with you. It won't be
 like this much longer, I promise.

She looks back to him over her shoulder.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
 Promise?

JT MARSH
 I promise.

She pulls him closer in for a kiss. He pulls back for a
 minute.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)
 You know I love you, right?

CASSANDRA CRUISE
 Yes.

JT MARSH
 And you know I'll be back again,
 right?

She hesitates.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
 You aren't going to die like you
 almost did today, are you?

JT MARSH
 I hope not.

CASSANDRA CRUISE
 I mean it! I don't know what I
 would do without you.

JT MARSH

Get along I would imagine.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Smartass. I usually don't think about what you do. I try and stay occupied at work, but now I'm worried.

JT MARSH

Nothing has changed, ok? What I do can be dangerous, but it's rare that it is. Most of the time I'm just sitting on the ship filling out paperwork.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

I know.

JT MARSH

I'll be fine, ok? I'm sure this is some silly exercise. Ok?

Cassandra nods.

CASSANDRA CRUISE

Ok.

JT kisses her again, this time she turns around and wraps her arms around him tightly as she can. The breeze flutters the sheer curtains around them. They hold each other in a tight embrace.

EXT. SHUTTLE PORT - NIGHT

A small landing pad is surrounded by cargo containers of various sizes being moved by large walking forklift mecha. The city is lit up, sparkling and shimmering. The buildings look like neon crystals reaching out to touch space. Various lines of traffic move around the air like a long strand of Christmas lights strung across the sky.

JT walks up to a PILOT standing by the cargo door of a military drop ship.

The engines HUM.

JT MARSH

(yelling over the engine)
Thanks for waiting up, Chief.

PILOT
 (over the engine)
 No problem, Lieutenant. Always glad
 to help.

JT slips the pilot some cash. Both board and a CREW CHIEF closes the cargo door behind them.

The ship lifts off and makes its way slowly into the sky.

EXT. DROP SHIP - NIGHT

JT watches out a small porthole window as the city rapidly becomes smaller. The engines fire additional rockets and propel the ship faster and faster into the sky.

EXT. SPACE

The ship moves up and up, finally breaking away from the atmosphere. The clouds turn into vast, open space. We pan around for the big reveal of Earth.

Ship traffic is everywhere. Vessels of all sizes enter invisible highways surrounding the planet that break off towards Luna and other unseen destinations.

The Earth is surrounded by a geosynchronous, equatorial ring that completely encircles the planet. The ring is very thin by comparison to Earth, but massive from our perspective.

The drop ship flies by the surface of the ring as bullet trains move inside glass tubes at various points around the station. Sections that look like skyscrapers jut both upwards and downwards all down the ring as far as the eye can see.

Ships are docked in commercial areas delivering goods to the billions upon billions of people that live on the planet and aboard the orbital ring.

At random intervals around the ring, space elevator cables gleam in the sun down towards the planet, lifting and lowering massive platforms to and from the station.

The drop ship moves towards a large scaffold like military dock. Several massive carriers and cruisers are docked within the complex structure, we head for one of the largest.

The ship moves past the carriers illuminated name.

U.H.S. RESOLUTE

This amazing vessel is a flagship of the Homeworlds fleet.

The drop ship passes to the rear part of the large front section and begins moving into a landing position, lining up to one of the dozens of bays along the backside of the structure.

PILOT (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Resolute, this is drop ship Macon,
requesting permission to land.

PRE-FLY (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Macon, this is Resolute. You are
cleared to land in bay four.

PILOT (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Bay four. Affirmative Resolute.

INT. RESOLUTE - HANGAR

The drop ship enters the cavernous bay and touches down on one of the numerous elevators that line the bay. A small line of windows across the back wall filled with people watch the entire process. The massive doors close behind them.

PRE-FLY (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Doors sealed. Bay pressurizing.
Welcome home, Macon.

Lights begin flashing in conjunction with a siren ringing, indicating the elevator is lowering into the hangar deck.

The elevator slowly lowers revealing a colossal hangar bay filled to the brim with shuttles, fighters, crewmen, mechs, and other craft of utility.

A small group of crewmen latch the drop ship to a small tow truck and wheel it into the bay where several other drop ships lay in wait, being waved in and out of storage areas by crewmen.

The drop ship is parked in a staging area to unload. The Crew Chief opens the door. Both JT and the Pilot step off the ship.

JT looks around the deck and sighs.

JT notices ALEC DELEON, early 20s, walking into the staging area.

JT MARSH
Hey, Sergeant DeLeon.

ALEC DELEON
Evening, Sir. Welcome back.

JT MARSH
How did you know I was here so quickly?

ALEC DELEON
I heard your ship come in over the comms. Since you said you were going to see Cassie after this morning, I figured you would be aboard.

JT MARSH
Yeah. Back on the metal box.

ALEC DELEON
Hey, you're due for a promotion board before long anyway, maybe you can PCS off a ship?

JT MARSH
Yeah, that would be great.

ALEC DELEON
I'm glad you decided not to go AWOL on us, though.

JT laughs.

JT MARSH
It would be your fault if I had, Alec.

ALEC DELEON
Hey, Hey, wait a minute. Cassie was Maggie's friend.

JT MARSH
And you had nothing to do with setting me up with her?

ALEC DELEON
I might have pointed out to Maggie a certain Lieutenant that needed some female companionship.

JT MARSH

I just haven't seen her a lot lately and I miss her. A day here a day there, it's been hard.

ALEC DELEON

I know it's not easy doing this. I think it will turn out alright though. Maggie says Cassie can't stop talking about you.

JT MARSH

That will have to stop, can't have the enlisted knowing the intimate secrets of their see oh.

Alec laughs.

JT and Alec walk towards a bank of lifts that leads out of the hangar.

ALEC DELEON

Did you get any word what this recall might be about?

JT MARSH

That's what you really came to see about, isn't it.

ALEC DELEON

Your charming personality is great, but I wanted to know before Bronski got aboard. He's going to start nosing around as soon as the ramp drops.

JT MARSH

I don't have a clue. Got the signal and just came back. Have you seen the rest of the squad?

ALEC DELEON

No one came back aboard after this morning.

JT MARSH

I guess that forty eight hour pass is cut short.

ALEC DELEON

I'm sure the squad will be along. They don't have a bird in their back pocket, so it might be a little longer.

JT MARSH

The message didn't say it was an exercise. So this must be an OP.

JT presses the lift call button.

ALEC DELEON

What the hell could have happened?

JT MARSH

I'm not sure. Probably more pirate nonsense.

ALEC DELEON

Speaking of pirate nonsense, I'm sorry about this morning, sir.

JT MARSH

Why? It's not your fault.

ALEC DELEON

I know, it just went sideways so quickly.

JT MARSH

There is nothing you could have done. We didn't know anything until it was already going sideways.

ALEC DELEON

Still, I feel terrible.

JT MARSH

It is what it is. We just gotta keep rolling on. Did you get any word on whether the Bureau ever caught the other two?

ALEC DELEON

The one they arrested this morning said the only objective was the bombing, so they assume the other two are in the wind. They are still working it, but as of right now, no one knows.

JT MARSH

(motioning above his head)
After this morning I've had it up to here with damned pirates.

The lift doors open with the grind of sliding metal. JT steps into the lift.

ALEC DELEON

Agreed.

JT MARSH

I'm going back to my rack to unload my bag. I'll meet up with you later, once the squad gets back onboard. Maybe we can all get a bite to eat?

ALEC DELEON

That would be good. I should probably meet Maggie when she lands. Lord only knows what she'll be mad at me for today.

The door tries to close, but JT holds it open.

JT MARSH

Are you guys ok?

ALEC DELEON

Yeah, fine. I guess?

JT MARSH

I worry about you two.

ALEC DELEON

Nah. Don't worry about it. I'll let everyone know not to run off to the mess without you.

JT stops holding the door.

JT MARSH

Good luck telling Bronski that. I'll see you in a bit, Sergeant.

ALEC DELEON

See you later, sir.

The door shuts. Alec sighs heavily. He looks around for someone that might know something.

ALEC DELEON (CONT'D)

Hey, Petty officer!

INT. RESOLUTE - JT'S BUNK

JT sits in his single, although small bunk, quarters, with what looks like a chunky iPad if it were designed in the 80s on his lap. A picture of Cassandra is pulled up. The quarters are made up of a bunk, a desk, and a wardrobe locker.

It takes no more than three steps to reach any piece of furniture in the spartan quarters.

JT sets the tablet on the desk and lifts the screen portion up making it look like an elongated laptop.

He looks at the screen.

A LETTER

Started with "I don't know how to show you how much I love you."

The rest of the page is blank.

He thinks for a moment, but the silence is interrupted when the tablet brings up a dialog box with an alert for an incoming message from Captain Marcus.

JT sighs, but hits answer.

The screen fills with the face of CAPTAIN MATTHEW MARCUS, mid 40s.

JT MARSH
Lieutenant Marsh here Captain.

MATTHEW MARCUS
Lieutenant, I'm ready to brief you on why you and your squad were recalled. If you could please meet me in my ready room at 2100 hours.

JT looks to the clock it says 2043.

JT MARSH
The rest of my squad isn't back yet, sir.

MATTHEW MARCUS
I only need you Lieutenant. This is an extremely urgent matter.

JT MARSH
Understood, sir.

Matthew nods and the video is cut off abruptly. The dialog box disappears.

INT. RESOLUTE - CREW BUNK

The enlisted members of Able Squad walk into a large bunk room. The room is very sterile.

Not much on the outside, but inside each member's private rack has a tablet like the one we saw JT with. Each bunk is filled with personal items: pictures, posters, notes, toys, cassette like players, mementos.

Each member has their own locker in the general vicinity of their bunk. This is the only personnel space they have.

A duffle hits the wall and lands on a mattress. Alice walks up to the bed.

ALICE NORETTI

Every damn time we get some shore
leave or a pass, we're recalled.

Norette pulls some headphones off and throws them on her bunk.

RITA TORRES

You gotta deal with it, Marine.

ALICE NORETTI

I know, Sarge, but we've been six
months without any real down time.
We just dropped anchor a few days
ago and today we finally get a
forty eight hour pass.

WOLF BRONSKI

What else do you have to do?

Wolf drops his duffle on the floor next to his bunk and lays down. He starts checking his tablet.

Maggie walks in and see a note on her pillow. She picks it up while the others discuss what's going on.

ALICE NORETTI

I dunno. Nothing really, I guess.
It's just the principle of the
matter.

WOLF BRONSKI

This is what you signed up for.
This is your life.

Maggie opens the note, which reads

"Sorry I couldn't make it. Love, Alec."

Maggie rolls her eyes and crumples up the note.

RITA TORRES

No matter how much it pains me to say it, but he's right.

WOLF BRONSKI

Awe, shucks sarge.

Rita rolls her eyes and unpacks her things. Everything is folded and rolled to regulation. Her toiletries are in their assigned places. Not one thing is out of place.

ALICE NORETTI

What do you think, Sergeant Weston?

Maggie snaps out of her thoughts and into the conversation.

MAGGIE WESTON

After this morning, I was thinking about going to see my family.

Maggie sits down and touches her tablet.

WOLF BRONSKI

Scuttlebutt is the entire carrier group has been recalled.

RITA TORRES

How the hell did you hear that already, we just stepped onboard the ship twenty minutes ago.

Wolf sits up.

WOLF BRONSKI

From the flight deck chief. He says the el tee (LT) is already onboard and they've got rotating shuttles scooping up people all night.

ALICE NORETTI

What!? I was just being pessimistic. I thought we were just going on an exercise. I didn't really think we were going to ship out.

Wolf stands, picking up his bag and dumping the entirety of his disorganized contents out on his bed. Rita watches him in horror.

MAGGIE WESTON

That's generally what we do when we get recalled, Noretta.

ALICE NORETTI

Like I said, exercises, we go scoot around on the moon or something. Or go rescue some comms person from the life and death situation of their tent and MREs in Florida or Arizona. Not the entire group shipping out.

RITA TORRES

Staff Sergeant Bronski what the hell are you doing?

Wolf looks confused.

WOLF BRONSKI

Unpacking?

RITA TORRES

Have some decency, I'm standing right here!

Wolf looks around.

WOLF BRONSKI

And?

Rita walks right up into Wolf's personal space.

RITA TORRES

I want that folded and stowed to regs before lights out. Do you understand?

WOLF BRONSKI

(annoyed)
Ok.

RITA TORRES

Stand at attention when I address you, staff sergeant! I'm not your mother and this isn't your childhood bedroom!

Wolf snaps to attention.

WOLF BRONSKI

Aye, Aye, Gunnery Sergeant!

Rita turns from him, Wolf still at attention. She roots through his things. She goes over tubes with various oozes on them, dried bits. Disorganized shaving accessories, stained shirts, food wrappers.

RITA TORRES
This. Is. Sickening.

WOLF BRONSKI
Aye, sir!

RITA TORRES
Disgraceful. Get to work.

Wolf turns and begins organizing his things. Rita turns from him and eyes the others who have inadvertently stood at attention during Wolf's dressing down.

RITA TORRES (CONT'D)
At ease.

Maggie and Alice coyly and quietly begin unpacking their things, careful to roll and straighten everything as it comes out.

INT. RESOLUTE - HANGAR

A drop ship like the one JT took is being towed into the staging area from a lift. It gets parked and the cargo door drops down, disgorging dozens of people.

However, amongst the humans are extremely tall humanoids with purple, blue, and greenish skin, four fingers with a thumb on each side of their hand, and large feet with four toes. These are Neosapiens. Each has a unique marking on their head, a brood mark unique to them, in primary colors.

Many of the Neosapiens are crew members in uniforms but they are mostly segregated from the humans, save for one.

A large Neosapien MARSALA, looks in 30s, walking with NARA BURNS, early 20s, disembark the ship.

They walk towards the lift cluster.

MARSALA
I want to thank you for
accompanying me to Earth,
Lieutenant Burns.

NARA BURNS
Marsala, it was a good time, even
though it was short.

MARSALA
Earth is very colorful. I enjoy it
very much.

NARA BURNS

I guess compared to Mars it is.

MARSALA

Mars has its green areas with foliage, but for the most part it is a desolate place.

NARA BURNS

If you thought Earth was colorful, you should see Venus. Have you been to Venus?

MARSALA

No.

Nara becomes extremely emphatic in her gestures describing her home as they walk towards the lift.

NARA BURNS

The next time we get some shore leave, I'll take you to my parents farm on Venus. We'll watch the sunset together. It's one of the most beautiful things you'll ever see in the solar system. The sun shines through the clouds causing this... kaleidoscope of colors.

(she stares out for a moment)

My Dad would take my brother James and I out to this place we called the snake tree to watch the sunset once he got done working the fields.

(smiling)

It was always incredible.

MARSALA

You would share this with me?

NARA BURNS

Of course! I couldn't think of anyone I would rather watch the sunset with.

MARSALA

You are too kind, Lieutenant.

She grabs his blue hued hand with hers. His dwarves hers completely. His massive thumbs curl around her hand.

NARA BURNS
 You can call me Nara when we are
 off duty, ok?

There is a pause as they smile at each other.

The moment is broken as a LOUD, CHAOTIC WHISTLE is made throughout the ship to capture the attention of the crew. An announcement follows, echoing throughout the hangar.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)
 (radio, echoing)
 Attention all hands, attention.
 Able and Baker Marine Squadrons,
 Angels Fighter Squadron please
 report to briefing room eight
 immediately.

NARA BURNS
 I guess we are going to briefing
 room eight instead of unpacking.

MARSALA
 It would seem so.

The two of them enter the lift with others.

The message repeats.

INT. RESOLUTE - BRIEFING ROOM

The briefing room is filled, nearly wall to wall. It is a small and cramped theater like area with a podium and table at the front with displays placed behind the podium off to either side.

People are talking, waiting for the briefing to start. Rita, Maggie, Wolf, and Alice enter the room on one side as Nara and Marsala enter the room on the other. The rest of the room looks to each side as they enter.

MARINE
 Officer on deck!

The room goes silent and stands at attention as Nara enters.

NARA BURNS
 At ease!

The room goes back to its previous bustle. Able Squad spots Nara and Marsala and they all convene together. Rita stands respectfully. Maggie and Alice greet Nara. Wolf shakes Marsala's enormous hand.

WOLF BRONSKI

Good to see you both. Do you know what this is about Lieutenant?

NARA BURNS

Not a clue, Sergeant Bronski. We literally stepped on the ship a few minutes ago.

Alice points to a group of officers in flight suits.

ALICE NORETTI

What's with the Angels being here?

NARA BURNS

I'm not sure.

We hear Alec's voice behind Marsala.

ALEC DELEON (O.S.)

I smell an OP cooking.

WOLF BRONSKI

Sergeant Deleon!

Alec pats Marsala's back. Wolf and Alec shake hands.

Alec looks to Maggie and smiles. She gives him a scornful look, but still grabs his hand as he moves closer.

ALEC DELEON

(to Maggie)

Did you get my note?

MAGGIE WESTON

(to Alec)

Yes, but I'm still mad at you.

ALEC DELEON

(to Maggie)

Alright. I AM sorry.

MAGGIE WESTON

(to Alec)

We'll talk about it later.

Alec nods. She gives his hand a squeeze unable to do anything publicly.

Wolf spots a young officer in a flight suit, this is KAZ TAKAGI, mid 20s. He starts walking towards the front.

WOLF BRONSKI
 (to squad)
 I'll be back in a sec.
 (in a high pitched voice)
 Hey, fly boy!

Kaz turns and looks ready to tear an enlisted person apart.

KAZ TAKAGI
 Excuse me -- Oh Bronski?

Wolf and Kaz both laugh and shake hands.

KAZ TAKAGI (CONT'D)
 I thought you were some punk kid,
 ready to get a stern talking to.

WOLF BRONSKI
 No, just an old kid with no respect
 for officers.

KAZ TAKAGI
 Don't fool yourself you're an old
 man.

WOLF BRONSKI
 What are you talking about, kid.

Wolf pulls a protein bar from his jacket pocket. He busts it open and goes right at it. Kaz ignores it like this is normal. Wolf speaks while chewing.

KAZ TAKAGI
 Have you been drinking, Sergeant?

WOLF BRONSKI
 Uh. Yeah. We were on a pass before
 this recall though because of this
 morning. Gunney punched some guy
 across the table though, so that
 made my day better.

Wolf turns and gives a thumbs up to Rita, who just looks confused as she talks to the others.

KAZ TAKAGI
 I heard about the ring this
 morning. I'm sorry, man.

WOLF BRONSKI
 (waving him off)
 Ah, I don't want to talk about it.
 (MORE)

WOLF BRONSKI (CONT'D)

You know, I've been trying to figure out what's going on since I got back. The rumor mill is dry on this one.

KAZ TAKAGI

I have no clue. We just got done doing some maneuvers around Luna today to log some flight time. Came home to wrap it up for the day when we got called in for this.

WOLF BRONSKI

I think its weird we're both here.

KAZ TAKAGI

Yeah, seems like another OP is coming down.

WOLF BRONSKI

That's what DeLeon said. But it seems odd to come without any rumor.

KAZ TAKAGI

I'm sure that means its bad.

WOLF BRONSKI

I guess if it is, I'll have to watch your ass.

KAZ TAKAGI

At your age, I'm sure you're slow on the stick, so you'll be seeing plenty of me from the rear.

WOLF BRONSKI

Only because I'll be changing your diaper after you shit yourself in real combat.

KAZ TAKAGI

You'll have to catch me in that bulky mech of yours.

Wolf chuckles.

WOLF BRONSKI

Bulky. I might be enlisted, but I'll out fly you any day in my E-Frame.

They both laugh and knuckle bump.

A door by the podium slides open, Captain Matthew Marcus, E-Frame Battalion Commander Lt. Colonel NINA DEANGELO, late 30s, Baker Squadron commander First Lieutenant LEON KOZERI, early 20s, and Lieutenant Marsh enter.

RITA TORRES

Room, ten hut! Officers on deck.

The room comes to complete attention. The members stand like statues with their arms at their sides.

Everyone gets situated and sits down. Some have to stand along the walls. The doors are shut by Marines guarding outside. They lock with a click.

MATTHEW MARCUS

Thank you, Gunnery Sergeant. You may all have a seat.

Nina and Leon stand off to the side of the briefing area.

Matthew sits down and places a tablet on the table. The tablet lights up with select commands for the briefing room.

JT steps up to the podium. He pushes on a tablet screen to bring up some documents. The results are displayed on the wall screens behind him.

JT MARSH

This briefing is classified. I know it's getting late and many of you have been recalled from some passes, so I'll cut right to the chase. A Hyperion Corporation Mining vessel named the Danube was attacked and boarded by what appears to be a United Clans military vessel a few days ago.

(beat)

This is the distress call.

The broken RECORDING plays through speakers in the room.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

(radio, filtered)

-- is the ore freighter Danube of the Hyperion Mining Corporation to anyone out there. Our vessel was attacked and our engines disabled. We have been boarded by pirates from the United Clans. They have nearly taken the entire ship, we are desperate for assitan...

The audio ends with GUNSHOTS.

JT MARSH

Headquarters received the distress call relayed to us from Hyperion just a day ago. At the end of the message, the Captain is apparently shot by the boarding party.

The room goes into a fervor of whispers.

MATTHEW MARCUS

Quiet down people!

JT MARSH

As of right now there is no evidence of this other than the Captain's word and flight recorder data that came with the distress call.

As of zero hundred hours the Resolute and her entire battle group are being deployed to the last known position of the Danube to begin an investigation into what happened. We suspect the entire crew was killed and everything of value was taken. As you all know the Gladiator and her battle group investigated a similar incident a few weeks back that was lovingly neglected by the media.

The room is in silence.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

Any questions?

Alec raises his hand. JT nods at him.

ALEC DELEON

The clans are boarding our ships all the time, why did this turn south?

JT MARSH

As most of you are aware the clans, at least in public, board our transports and colony ships as a way to both check and harass them. They generally tend to let them go, but some have been raided, leading to deaths that the media explicitly likes to report on.

(MORE)

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

In regards to the ships being raided it can only be assumed that the United Clans are responsible. Usually this information comes from third parties, or, again, poor flight recorder data that is inconclusive. This is one of the few vessels that has given us a seeming primary witness and complete flight recorder data. The attack was also made well outside the Saturn orbital perimeter, which puts this as a hostile action in the Homeworlds court. Long range observation and sensor data from a listening post in the asteroid belt have detected the vessel adrift.

A FIGHTER PILOT raises their hand.

FIGHTER PILOT

Why doesn't the outer planets defense force deal with this?

JT MARSH

The main fleet is currently on patrol around Neptune making sure colony interests arrive safely. As you all know, there just simply aren't enough patrols.

JT points to a BAKER SQUAD MEMBER.

BAKER SQUAD MEMBER

What happens if it is them, you know, the pirates?

JT MARSH

Unknown. The senate will have to decide that.

JT points to Wolf.

WOLF BRONSKI

What happens once we get there?

JT MARSH

It will take four days to get out to the Asteroid belt where the Danube last made contact. Squadron commanders will come together in the next few days to devise more detailed plans as we get more data from Intel and observation posts.

(MORE)

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

As of right now Able Squad will run point with Baker in reserve. The Angels will fly CAS. Colonel DeAngelo, Captain Takagi, Lieutenant Kozeri, Lieutenant Burns and Myself will be meeting to review all this data. Your squadron leaders will brief you once we have more information.

Matthew stands up.

MATTHEW MARCUS

This briefing was to squash rumors about why you were recalled, give you the word, and prepare you for the upcoming operation. Like Lieutenant Marsh said, you'll be briefed further by your individual squadron leaders before we arrive at the Danube's last known coordinates. Once again, this briefing is classified and cannot be discussed outside this room until we have cleared Mar's orbital perimeter.

(Kaz raises his hand)
Captain?

KAZ TAKAGI

When will the battle group leave port?

MATTHEW MARCUS

We are still awaiting personnel to return, but we will set sail at oh six hundred.

JT nods to Rita.

RITA TORRES

Ten hut!

The room stands to attention. The officers file out the door they came in.

MATTHEW MARCUS

Carry on.

Once the door shuts everyone begins talking in a FERVOR. No one leaves. Some people groan and moan, others just stand and think about the repercussions.

EXT. SPACE

Below, the lights emanating from the cities on Earth glow in the night below.

Above, the Resolute sits in dock. Ships are loading cargo containers and multiple drop ships filled with personnel are landing. Every door is open with activity.

INT. RESOLUTE - NARA'S BUNK

JT stands in the doorway of Nara's room. She is unpacking. Her room is mostly identical to JT's except it is filled with many more personal items.

JT MARSH

I got the Admiral to give us tomorrow as a down day since we had the ring issue this morning.

NARA BURNS

I'm sorry Sergeant Marsala and I weren't there.

JT MARSH

Nah, it's fine. I didn't want you and Marsala to give up the leave you took. I know you had it planned a few months back.

NARA BURNS

We didn't get much of a chance to do anything anyway, so it was a bust.

JT MARSH

Yeah. Everyone's day was a bust. I've got Rita punching people, Bronski buzzed, and a kid with probable PTSD. That's why I asked for the day off. Everyone's in bad shape. But we'll have to double time it the rest of the cruise to make sure we're caught up with the other units.

NARA BURNS

We don't have to do that if were going to be strapped for time.

JT MARSH

I already told Torres and I'm too tired to go back down there.

(MORE)

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

Just sleep in, we'll meet for breakfast at oh eight hundred. I wanted to have dinner with everyone tonight, but this ran longer than I wanted it to.

JT rubs his neck.

NARA BURNS

I need you to answer a question for me.

JT MARSH

Sure.

NARA BURNS

How bad is this?

BEAT

JT MARSH

It could get silly really quick.

NARA BURNS

Great. I hate it when you use the word silly.

JT laughs.

JT MARSH

I'm going to turn in. Get some rest, OK?

NARA BURNS

You too, Lieutenant.

JT steps out and shuts the door behind him. Nara sits on her bed for a moment thinking about everything. She taps on her tablet in laptop mode and begins recording a message.

NARA BURNS (CONT'D)

Record video message.

(she thinks)

Hey Dad, Mom, James. I wanted to send you a quick letter to let you know I was doing OK and to let you know that I love you all. I wanted to say sorry that I couldn't get out to see you this time, but as always, duty calls.

INT. RESOLUTE - CORRIDOR

JT is walking down the corridor and turns towards an observation room. He pokes his head inside and spots no one, so he walks in.

INT. RESOLUTE - OBSERVATION ROOM

JT sits down in one of the chairs. He stares up at the stars, partially obscured by the ring and scaffold of the docking port. Large and small ships pass by periodically.

A moment later Marsala enters the room. JT looks over at him.

JT MARSH
Hello, Sergeant Marsala.

MARSALA
First Lieutenant.

JT MARSH
What brings you here?

MARSALA
I come here often to think.

JT MARSH
Me too. Helps me clear my head.
Have a seat.

Marsala sits down near JT.

MARSALA
I don't want to intrude.

JT MARSH
No, it's fine. I'm just wanted to sort some things out before I went to bed. I'll get all restless if I think in bed.

MARSALA
I do not need to sleep often. What do you think about in bed?

JT MARSH
Uh. I guess I think about what I have to get done the next day. I think about the people I love, the places I would rather be. How about you?

MARSALA

I prioritize my tasks. I think about the things I care for as well.

They stare out the window for a moment.

JT MARSH

Do Neosapiens ever look up at the stars and wonder what else is out there?

MARSALA

We do, but not in the sense that you do.

JT MARSH

How so?

MARSALA

Terrans tend to look up at the stars with questions about if we are or are not alone, or is there something greater than ourselves, perhaps ponder the existence of a deity.

(JT nods)

Neosapiens look up to determine if there is anything out there useful to us. Opportunities to better ourselves as a civilization.

JT MARSH

Practicality versus imagination.

MARSALA

I would not say imagination, sir. I would use the term wonder for lack of a better one. We hope for possibilities.

BEAT

JT MARSH

Do you believe we have a creator?

MARSALA

I would say yes.

JT MARSH

Really? Why do you think that?

MARSALA

I will say that being external to the human condition, I can see things from a unique perspective. However, Humans are the creators of the Neosapiens. I could not imagine the being that created you.

JT laughs.

JT MARSH

With your external perspective, What do you think about this business with the clans?

MARSALA

You instructed us not to discuss the matter until we've cleared the Mars orbital perimeter.

JT gets up and closes the room's hatch.

JT MARSH

Indulge me.

JT sits down.

MARSALA

I think it is odd. Many clansmen died during their battle for independence. They have risked much for their way of life. To put that in jeopardy seems counter productive.

JT MARSH

Agreed.

MARSALA

The only explanation is that their society is fracturing. Perhaps they are running out of resources to keep people satiated?

JT MARSH

The moons of Saturn are filled with resources. Those moons are the primary reason why we fought so hard to keep them from seceding. It would take them millennia to mine them.

Marsala ponders.

MARSALA

They also do not have Neosapien labor to expedite the process in the hazardous conditions. I can only imagine that governing a population made of prisoners has proved difficult.

JT MARSH

They banded together to fight us pretty quick.

MARSALA

Indeed. Do you think it is possible that the United Clans, as a whole, are not responsible for this attack?

JT MARSH

A rogue group? I don't know. Everything I've read on Jonas Simbacca tells me that he would never let that happen. He rules through absolute power.

MARSALA

I have never met Jonas Simbacca, nor has anyone that I have ever known. He is a mystery to many. He is quite reclusive as I understand.
(pause)
I have no answers.

JT MARSH

That's OK. I don't either. No matter how I try and dissect this problem in my head I feel like I'm missing something.

MARSALA

I am hopeful that our investigation will yield answers.

JT MARSH

Me too. If we can't, I'm afraid war is on the horizon.

MARSALA

With the state of our armed forces right now, I hope that is not the case.

JT sighs. They both go back to looking out at the stars, leaving the rest of their thoughts unsaid.

TAPS begins playing across the ship signaling the end of the day.

EXT. SPACE

The sun shines on Earth and the ring as the Resolute is pulled away from the dock slowly by several small tug type ships. Several others in surrounding docks are pulled out with her.

As the ship passes we follow her and see a battle group assembled some distance away.

INT. RESOLUTE - GYM

Torres stands with several MARINE PRIVATES and a few SEAMEN around a pull up bar. They are all in PT gear. The small gym is stocked with exercise equipment.

A CHUBBY PRIVATE is attempting to do a pull-up.

RITA TORRES

Come on private! Push yourself!

The Chubby Private tries with every bit of strength he has and nearly gets his chin over, but misses and drops from the bar in exhaustion.

He lands on the ground and goes down on all fours.

CHUBBY PRIVATE

Dammit!

RITA TORRES

Private, that was the sorriest excuse for a pull-up I have ever seen. If you're going to be in my corps, you're going to have to get your ass in shape!

Torres helps the private to his feet.

CHUBBY PRIVATE

Sorry, Gunnery Sergeant!

RITA TORRES

I don't want to hear it. I better see your ass in here at oh five hundred every other day lifting or I'll bust your ass to fuel cell detail.

CHUBBY PRIVATE
Yes, Gunnery Sergeant!

RITA TORRES
Do you want to scrub solid fuel
cells all day?

CHUBBY PRIVATE
No, Gunnery Sergeant!

RITA TORRES
I'm tired of looking at you. Get
out of here. All of you.

Rita tosses the Private a towel and heads out of the room as they file out to the showers.

INT. RESOLUTE - CORRIDOR

Rita walks out of the gym with a determined step in her walk. She doesn't waste time in anything she does.

REVEILLE begins playing, hinting at just how long they have been at PT. Rita stands at attention and salutes while it plays.

Wolf steps up beside her from behind, munching on an apple. Wolf matches her pose, but with deliberate failure.

Reveille ends just as Wolf takes a large bite out of his apple from the hand he is saluting with, it echoes through the now silent corridor.

WOLF BRONSKI
Done busting the kids this morning,
Sarge?

Rita doesn't even look at Wolf.

RITA TORRES
You should know by now I will never
stop busting those sorry kids. They
keep sending us rejects. When we
joined this wouldn't have flown.

Wolf chuckles.

RITA TORRES (CONT'D)
I don't know what people think they
sign up for when they join the
military.

WOLF BRONSKI

You have to give them some credit,
they haven't cracked yet.

RITA TORRES

Give it time. These kids haven't
seen any action. They'll crack.

WOLF BRONSKI

Hey, didn't the Lieutenant say we
had this morning off?

RITA TORRES

This isn't work.

WOLF BRONSKI

(seductively)

You should have woke me up. I like
the abuse.

Wolf takes another loud bite of his apple. Rita shakes her
head.

RITA TORRES

There is a difference between abuse
and discipline.

WOLF BRONSKI

Ooh, easy sarge you're getting me
excited.

RITA TORRES

Only now? You haven't been hitting
on me since we went to basic?

WOLF BRONSKI

Oh come on, give me some credit
now. It's not everyday.

RITA TORRES

Hit on Torres day is any day ending
in a Y.

Wolf looks at his wrist, but there isn't a watch.

WOLF BRONSKI

Hey, what do you know, today is
Tuesday!

Rita rolls her eyes.

WOLF BRONSKI (CONT'D)

So... about dinner tonight?

Wolf takes another bite of his apple, grating Torres.

RITA TORRES
Bronski, thanks to you I just lost
my appetite.

Rita tosses Wolf her workout towel and gets inside an elevator. She gives him a slight smirk and the door closes.

Wolf stays a second, looking at the door with a playfully hurt expression on his face. He sniffs the towel and tosses it over his shoulder.

He takes another bite of his apple.

INT. MESS HALL

The mess hall is alive with activity. People are eating in various groups, members with their squadrons. There are a few Neosapiens scattered about. Most are alone or eating with others of their kind.

The camera moves to hear some of the conversations. Most of them are whispers about the mission.

Alice, Marsala, and Wolf moving through the chow line.

ALICE NORETTI
Does anyone know what we are having
today?

WOLF BRONSKI
It's Tuesday, what do we have every
Tuesday?

MARSALA
I believe we have the same thing
everyday for breakfast, except the
weekends of course.

WOLF BRONSKI
Marsala, one day you'll appreciate
the finer points of sarcasm.

Wolf puts up his tray to get a spoonful of eggs. Wolf, with a disappointed look signals for another scoop.

WOLF BRONSKI (CONT'D)
Keep it coming, cowboy.

The COOK throws another spoonful of eggs on the tray.

ALICE NORETTI

They need to have pancakes more often.

Noretta watches the eggs plop onto her tray.

MARSALA

They have pancakes on Saturday, Corporal.

Behind Alice and Marsala's conversation, Wolf is loading up on bacon. The KITCHEN SUPERVISOR, a Petty Officer, comes out and shoos him away.

KITCHEN SUPERVISOR

Leave some for the others, man!

ALICE NORETTI

I know, Marsala.

WOLF BRONSKI

Noretta just likes to bitch.

Alice gives him a smart ass look.

Wolf laughs as he picks up a cup of orange juice. Alice picks up a glass behind him, as does Marsala. They all head to a table that has Rita, Nara, and JT sitting and eating.

RITA TORRES

The fleet will clear the Mars orbital perimeter in about twenty-four hours. It will take about three days to get to the Danube.

JT MARSH

Alright. We'll have three days to get everything straight for the operation. We'll begin the planning stages and we'll get the rest of the crew on maintenance and preparation. The next two days we'll practice the OP.

RITA TORRES

Yes, sir.

WOLF BRONSKI

Morning, sirs.

JT MARSH

Good morning, Able.

MARSALA

Good morning, Lieutenant Burns.

Marsala takes a seat next to Nara.

NARA BURNS

Good morning Sergeant Marsala.

ALICE NORETTI

Excuse me, sirs, but aren't we supposed to be off today?

NARA BURNS

You are, but we still need to get our game plan in the works so we can get busy tomorrow.

RITA TORRES

We need to make sure we are ready to fly when we arrive.

MARSALA

Should we discuss this in such a public location?

JT MARSH

Ah, everyone's already talking about it. I had two Navy kids ask me today what the name of the ship was we are going after. I'm standing there, starring at them, wondering when the hell they were in the briefing room?

Every chuckles.

NARA BURNS

I don't know how news travels so fast.

RITA TORRES

Confined space. People talk. Welcome to the military.

JT looks over at Alice scoffing at her eggs.

JT MARSH

You alright, Noretta?

Everyone looks over at her.

ALICE NORETTI

Never any rest. Never any pancakes.

JT laughs.

JT MARSH

Norette, you can do whatever you want after breakfast until oh six hundred tomorrow. The Lieutenant, Gunnery Sergeant, and I are just trying to get the planning started.

Alice perks up.

WOLF BRONSKI

What am I going to do with myself? You know, you gripe about getting your pass revoked then you get back some more time off. Then you don't know what to do.

MARSALA

Perhaps you would like to do some range time with myself, Sergeant Bronski?

WOLF BRONSKI

That actually sounds like a plan. When?

MARSALA

How about fourteen hundred hours? In range three.

ALICE NORETTI

Can I come?

Wolf nods enthusiastically. He puts out a fist to bump it with Marsala's, but Marsala stares at it blankly.

JT MARSH

Folks, real quick. Tomorrow is prep and maintenance so I need you all in the hangar by oh six hundred to get your equipment ready. We'll probably be doing insertion via drop ship. Marsala's idea of getting in some firing practice may not be a bad idea. We could encounter resistance.

In the background Wolf and Alice fist bump. They look at Marsala, trying to show him how a fist bump works. Marsala nods in realization. Wolf extends his fist out again. Marsala gently bumps it with his. Wolf is super excited. Alice tries to suppress a laugh. JT doesn't pay any attention.

RITA TORRES

I think its a slight chance, if any. They would assume, or even know at this point, we are coming to take a look.

ALICE NORETTI

So, we aren't taking our frames?

JT MARSH

No, this will be a regular combat insertion, no flight time.

ALICE NORETTI

Damn. No frames now.

NARA BURNS

The Danube doesn't have enough room inside to maneuver the frames. You better get used to it, this is where the Corps is headed. Double duty.

JT MARSH

Maggie can work with you to requisition any equipment and help prep it for the operation.

(looks around, confused)

Speaking of which, have either of you seen Weston or DeLeon?

The group all looks away. Even Marsala pays more attention to his meal.

INT. RESOLUTE - CREW BUNK

Maggie is sitting in front of her locker, furiously shining her boots. She's clearly frustrated. She looks up at a picture taped to the door of her locker.

The picture is of Alec and Maggie holding each other in front of a bar. They have a look of unbreakable happiness on their faces.

She turns back to shining her boots.

ALEC DELEON (O.S.)

If you shine any harder you might have to go stand on the flight deck and help direct air traffic.

(Maggie ignores)

(MORE)

ALEC DELEON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I was waiting here this morning,
but I didn't see you come back from
PT.

(again, Maggie ignores,
Alec sighs)

If you're still mad about me not
coming with you yesterday, I'm
sorry. I've told you a thousand
times. What more do you want from
me?

Maggie lets out a heavy breath. She looks back quickly with a
disappointed look on her face.

MAGGIE WESTON

I want you to be honest for once
Alec. For God sakes, if you aren't
able to do something, don't say you
can. I hate that.

Alec looks down at the ground in frustration.

ALEC DELEON

Jesus, Maggie! I told you! JT had
me on duty for sixteen straight
hours that morning and I couldn't
go with you, besides the pass ended
up in the shitter anyway.

MAGGIE WESTON

That doesn't matter. You
volunteered! The first pass we've
had in weeks, even after the
trouble yesterday morning. All I
wanted was to spend some time with
you. Instead I end up in a bar
trying to keep Torres from tearing
up some drunken asshole.

BEAT

Alec wipes his hand over his face.

ALEC DELEON

(Quieter and more apologetic)
Look, I'm really sorry. We each
deal with stress in our own ways. I
just prefer to stay busy rather
than dwell on things.

(Maggie stops)

You're the only thing I look
forward to seeing every morning. I
can't do this without you.

Maggie turns around on the bench and grabs Alec's hand. He pulls her up into an embrace. They press together, forehead to forehead.

MAGGIE WESTON

I'm sorry I got stupid. I was just stressed out after what happened yesterday. Noretta tried to help this civilian woman on the ring. I tried to help, but was too far away. The woman slipped and Alice had to watch her...

Maggie trails off.

ALEC DELEON

Good lord. Poor Noretta.

MAGGIE WESTON

All I could do was watch.

ALEC DELEON

Jesus, Maggie, I'm sorry.

MAGGIE WESTON

No, it's my fault. I took it out on you. I know how you operate. I was just being selfish.

ALEC DELEON

I'm barely keeping it together myself. Now this thing with the Danube. I'm nervous.

(Alec pulls away a bit)

Please, just talk to me about how you are feeling. Don't push me away or give me the silent treatment. We have too much going, OK?

Maggie nods.

MAGGIE WESTON

I know.

ALEC DELEON

I promise I'll make up the leave, OK?

MAGGIE WESTON

How's that?

Alec looks up and thinks about it.

ALEC DELEON
I'll buy you some flowers?

Maggie shakes her head.

MAGGIE WESTON
You said that last time and then
you lost the rest of your paycheck.
To Bronski no less.

ALEC DELEON
I know. I know. Damn Bronski and
his poker games. Look, this time is
different. I'll get you flowers
from Venus the next time we get
into port, OK?

She rolls her eyes and goes to grab up her boot.

MAGGIE WESTON
Venusian flowers? I'll believe that
when I see it. What do you want to
do today? What time is it?

ALEC DELEON
Wait! JT is expecting us for
breakfast.

MAGGIE WESTON
Oh my God. I forgot!

Maggie turns and throws her boots, gear, and tools into the
locker and shuts it.

She grabs Alec's hand and they run out of the room.

INT. RESOLUTE - MESS HALL

Maggie and Alec come running into the Mess Hall and stop to
look for the squad. They spot them quickly and swiftly walk
towards the table.

The squad is picking up their trays. Wolf gives them the
you're in trouble eyes.

WOLF BRONSKI
(deliberately slow)
Good morning. Sergeants.

Alice runs her finger across her throat, then drops her head
and sticks her tongue out as she walks off.

Marsala gets up.

MARSALA

Good morning Sergeant DeLeon,
Sergeant Weston.

ALEC DELEON

Sorry we're late, Lieutenant.

Rita and Nara stay behind.

JT waits for everyone to walk away.

JT MARSH

Have a seat, both of you.

Maggie and Alec hesitantly sit down.

ALEC DELEON

Lieutenant, I want to say...

JT MARSH

Just be quiet. I'm going to make
this brief, so please don't make me
repeat myself.

(Rubbing his brow)

I have tolerated this thing you two
have going on more so than I
should. You aren't subordinate to
one another so I've overlooked it.
But, both of you are getting to the
borderline. You can consider this
an informal warning.

MAGGIE WESTON

May I say something, sir?

JT MARSH

Yes, Sergeant Weston.

MAGGIE WESTON

I was under the impression we were
given a pass today.

JT MARSH

I told Sergeant Torres that we
would be having an informal meeting
this morning at oh eight hundred
after the briefing last night. Is
that correct, Sergeant Torres?

TORRES

Aye, aye, Lieutenant. I then
relayed that information to the
squad in the bunk before lights out
immediately following the briefing.

JT MARSH
Even Bronski was here.

JT points to Alice and Bronski trying to stand up on their tip toes to see eye to eye with Marsala after turning their trays in. They aren't even close.

RITA TORRES
Did you receive that information last night, Sergeants?

ALEC DELEON/ MAGGIE WESTON
(together)
Yes, Gunnery Sergeant.

JT MARSH
Then I don't need to hear about your pass. Consider this your last friendly warning. As Gunnery Sergeant of the squadron Torres is now watching you two and will monitor you more closely. Lieutenant Burns, in her training capacity is now aware of the issue and will also be monitoring you two.

(JT pauses, he's more intense with this next line, less formal)
We are not a normal unit, so I let a lot of things slide and we work it out in the family, but you two have been getting a little loose for my taste. Tighten up, or we will have to move one of you to another flight. I don't want that, and I know you don't want that.

ALEC DELEON/ MAGGIE WESTON
(together)
No, sir.

JT MARSH
Do I make myself clear?

ALEC DELEON/ MAGGIE WESTON
(together)
Yes, sir!

JT MARSH
Alright. At oh six hundred we've got equipment and weapons prep in the Hangar Bay. Weston, obvious you'll be heading that effort up.

MAGGIE WESTON
Understood, sir.

JT MARSH
DeLeon, after, I'll need you to start going through the data we have on the Danube with Lieutenant Burns and myself. I need you working with the Resolute Intel people to pull all they are gathering as we get closer.

ALEC DELEON
Yes, sir.

JT MARSH
In addition to your normal duties we will also begin doing exercises in preparation for the operation after tomorrow. I'll have more details on that once I work with the other squadron leaders. OohRah?

ALEC DELEON/ MAGGIE WESTON
(together)
OohRah.

JT MARSH
Dismissed.

Alec and Maggie both stand and walk out. Wolf, Alice, and Marsala are all waiting in the corner for them.

JT turns to Nara and Rita, shaking his head.

NARA BURNS
That's always fun.

JT MARSH
Those two. They're going to get us in trouble one day.

BACK TO THE SQUAD

WOLF BRONSKI
Did you get chewed out?

MAGGIE WESTON
Of course we did.

WOLF BRONSKI
Show up for meetings, then, dumbasses. Hey, Marsala and I are going to the range, wanna come?
(MORE)

WOLF BRONSKI (CONT'D)

Range three, say, fourteen-hundred-ish?

MARSALA

I believe we agreed on fourteen hundred precisely, Staff Sergeant Bronski.

Wolf waves him off.

Alec looks at Maggie. There is a pause.

ALEC DELEON

No, we gotta pass.

WOLF BRONSKI

Ah, what, come on. It's going to be a good time.

ALICE NORETTI

I'm probably going too.

Wolf points at Alice behind him with his thumb.

WOLF BRONSKI

Noretti's probably comin' too. Come on, man, it's going to be a party.

Alec hesitates and shoots Maggie another glance. She knows what's happening.

ALEC DELEON

(holding his ground)

I'm going to spend the time off I have with Maggie today, but thanks, Bronski.

Alice is still going up and down on her tip toes next to Marsala, but looking at Alec and Maggie.

WOLF BRONSKI

Alright, have fun, kids.

MAGGIE WESTON

You too.

Maggie and Alec walk past the rest of the group down the corridor.

ALEC DELEON

Bronski is a bad influence.

MAGGIE WESTON

(sarcastic)

I know that was hard for you.

(seriously)

Thank you.

She smiles at him as they walk away together.

INT. RESOLUTE - FIRING RANGE

Marsala, Wolf, and Alice are in the firing range. Wolf and Marsala are firing rounds at targets, Alice is in another booth loading a magazine into her pistol. All have ear protection on.

She holds after loading to see how they do.

Wolf, seemingly without effort manages to destroy the center of the target in a tight cluster, leaving a massive hole. Marsala shoots nearly perfect but with several well placed shots, although not as tight a grouping as Wolf. Marsala and Wolf step out of their booths and remove their ear covers.

MARSALA

I never cease to be amazed by your prowess with a fire arm, Staff Sergeant.

WOLF BRONSKI

(shallow bow)

Why thank you, Staff Sergeant. At least I'm good at something 'round here.

Alice moves into a booth. Wolf and Marsala replace their ear covers.

She extends her pistol. Taking aim, the others notice her hands shaking. She gently squeezes off a round. Wolf and Marsala are watching. She hits just outside the center mass.

MARSALA

Not bad, Corporal.

WOLF BRONSKI

That'll make anyone think twice about coming at you.

Alice unloads the magazine and chambered round from her pistol, setting them in the booth. She removes her headset. Marsala and Wolf do the same.

WOLF BRONSKI (CONT'D)
 What's wrong, kid? That was a great
 shot, what are you upset about?

Alice thinks, rubbing her hands to ease her nerves.

ALICE NORETTI
 I'm just nervous.

WOLF BRONSKI
 About what? It's just us.

Wolf motions between Marsala and himself.

ALICE NORETTI
 Yesterday.

Wolf grimaces.

WOLF BRONSKI
 Yeah, that was a mess.

ALICE NORETTI
 (reflecting)
 That woman.

BEAT

WOLF BRONSKI
 I know that was your first real OP
 with some stakes. That was a
 particularly piss poor one. You
 can't look at it as your fault,
 though. You'll go crazy. If it
 hadn't been for those pirate
 assholes, we wouldn't have been
 there.

ALICE NORETTI
 I don't know what's coming now.
 Doing it all for real is different
 than training for it. What's going
 to happen when we get to the Danube
 or worse yet what happens if we go
 to war?

WOLF BRONSKI
 Well, slow down. We don't know if
 we're going to war. We've seen this
 a few dozen times and nothing ever
 happens. So, you can't worry about
 that.

MARSALA

We all, unfortunately, must start somewhere, Corporal. At one point or another we will meet a wall that must be overcome.

WOLF BRONSKI

That's right, kid. All of us have hit this at some point or another. But you learn, you know. You just need to be ready to adapt, to change more quickly than others. After time, you begin reacting faster, and hopefully, staying one step ahead of others. That might help you save some lives.

MARSALA

That is a very good observation. With time you will learn the instincts of survival. You need to rely on your training when you begin, but you will grow your intuition with time and experience.

WOLF BRONSKI

I've seen a few battles. Marsala here has seen his fair share of action too. You'll get there, but it takes time. Just stay good at shooting from a distance. You don't think about it too much then.

MARSALA

We know that this is a unique circumstance for you. You are one of the first term E-Frame operators in history. In the beginning you must rely on your extensive training, but also trust your squad mates, Corporal. They will watch your back if you do the same.

WOLF BRONSKI

JT is one of the best squad leaders I've ever served under. He's got a good head for this. He's not some dumbass butter bar running around wondering what to do. Listen to him and learn. Hey, and don't forget you're a part of Able Squad. You wouldn't be here if you didn't have something, OK?

ALICE NORETTI

How is that?

WOLF BRONSKI

We may not be the brightest human beings, but we are damn good at the jobs we do, plus there is Marsala, he's good at everything.

ALICE NORETTI

Most of us are idiots.

Wolf shakes his head in disappointment and walks up to the booth with Alice's gun. He loads it. Alice and Marsala quickly put on their ear protection.

Wolf quickly shoots the head of each target across the entire range. He turns back to the two.

WOLF BRONSKI

It helps to be really good with a gun, too.

INT. RESOLUTE - WINFIELD'S QUARTERS

Vice Admiral WILLIAM WINFIELD, 50s, is sitting in his quarters, at a large desk tucked into a corner of the room. On opposite side there is a small living space with a bed and a private bathroom. These quarters are luxurious compared to even JT's.

William scrolls through some information on his tablet, but looks up and stares blankly for a moment, daydreaming. His eyes are drawn to a picture sitting on the corner of his desk. It's a young woman, clearly younger than him. He stares at it a moment, lost.

The moment is broken when there is a knock at the door.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Enter.

The door opens to reveal JT Marsh. He carries a computer tablet with him. William stands as JT walks up to the table. JT salutes. William salutes him back and motions for him to take a seat in a chair on the opposite side of his desk.

WILLIAM WINFIELD (CONT'D)

Have a seat, JT.

JT MARSH

Thank you, sir.
(sitting down)

(MORE)

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

The squad leaders and I have put together a plan for the Danube. I brought it for you to review.

JT taps some things on his tablet and slides a diskette out of the drive and hands it to William. William loads it up on his own tablet, sitting on his desk with the monitor in the upright position. Next to it is a larger computer terminal with multiple monitors. He has several books spread out on his desk as well.

William explores the text, browsing it quickly.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

It has some contingencies for fleet operations if the need arises. I think the fleet being positioned --
(Winfield digitally signs it with a stylus, approving it)
Are you sure you don't want to review it completely?

WILLIAM WINFIELD

I can tell it looks good. I've read every tactical plan you've ever put in front of me. You've never failed in your planning.

JT MARSH

I could now, sir.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Do you believe in this plan?

JT MARSH

I wouldn't have brought it to you, sir, if there had been questions about it. All the squad leaders believe its the best play.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Exactly. JT, this role, being a leader comes so naturally to you.
(Thinks)
Most of the time.

JT MARSH

(laughs)
Sir, it's not that, I just want you to know the plan.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Of course I'll read it in full. I always do. You kept the fleet at a distance, you have the Angels flying CAS, Baker in reserve, and you want a ship in case the Danube needs to be towed.

JT MARSH

Yes, sir. Exactly.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Everything else is your department then. I don't need to check your work like some school teacher. You are your father's son.

(beat)

How's that girl of your's?

JT's eyes go wide for a moment. He shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

JT MARSH

You knew about that?

WILLIAM WINFIELD

People talk. The Admiral hears the hushed whispers of the very young bridge crew.

JT MARSH

(chuckles)

I don't know. She's just...

(trails off looking for the words)

WILLIAM WINFIELD

You love her, don't you.

JT nods.

JT MARSH

I do. DeLeon and Weston introduced her to me. She was a friend of Maggie's so I figured she'd be --

WILLIAM WINFIELD

A hippie?

They both laugh.

JT MARSH

Honestly, yes. I don't know how Maggie does it in the Corps.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Sergeant Weston doesn't allow all that Western Alliance bullshit to get into her head. She is a big girl that can form her own opinions.

JT MARSH

Yes. She certainly has her own opinions. Cassandra is the same way. She doesn't seem to let that stuff get to her.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Cassandra? That's a beautiful name.

William leans back in his chair, remembering young love.

JT MARSH

The more time I spend with her, the more I want to be away from this.

(JT motions around the room with his arms)

I can't take this lifestyle much longer.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

It's getting harder to leave her each time. I know. You must be close to asking her to marry you?

JT MARSH

I'm considering it.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Are you going to leave the service?

JT MARSH

I've given consideration to resigning my commission. When my time is up.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

Have you thought about what you would do if you left.

JT MARSH

(chuckles)

No, not really. I just don't want to keep leaving her behind.

WILLIAM WINFIELD

So much for being good at planning.

JT laughs.

JT MARSH
I suppose not.

The two sit for a beat as Winfield reminisces in his head.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
Your father wanted to leave when you were born, but he couldn't tear himself away. He was just too damn good at what he did.

JT MARSH
I never knew he wanted to leave.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
He left those thoughts behind when the war started.

JT MARSH
He always seemed content with his work.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
He was.

William gets up to pour himself a drink from a small bottle of whiskey hidden in a cabinet. He turns and holds it up for JT.

JT MARSH
Uh... Sure. I'm off duty since you signed that.

William pours them both a drink.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
I remember your father and I were moving through the Venusian lowlands and it was a swamp. Just a mess.

William walks back and hands JT the drink.

WILLIAM WINFIELD (CONT'D)
Those damn mark one e-frames couldn't handle the muck. Everything was breaking down. So, your Dad asks two questions.

JT laughs behind his drink.

JT MARSH/ WILLIAM WINFIELD
 (together)
 Why is it doing that and where are
 we?

WILLIAM WINFIELD
 If he asked that you could bet that
 we were going to take fire.

JT MARSH
 What happened?

WILLIAM WINFIELD
 Needless to say we got fired on.

They both laugh.

WILLIAM WINFIELD (CONT'D)
 With our frames full of shit, we
 got pinned down fast by two squads
 of Neos. We called in an air
 strike, it must have torched
 everything around us for a hundred
 and fifty yards. I think we all got
 bronze stars for that.

William fades into reflection. Jt sips his drink.

JT MARSH
 I remember you telling me one time
 never to trade luck for skill.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
 Hell, in those old ass e-frames all
 you could rely on was luck. If it
 was flying someone probably forgot
 to check something.

Winfield's tablet pops up a dialog box with an incoming
 message from the bridge on it. He hits a button. A
 COMMANDER's face appears.

WILLIAM WINFIELD (CONT'D)
 This is Winfield.

COMMANDER
 (on tablet)
 Sorry to bother you Admiral, but
 Captain Marcus wanted to let you
 know that we've cleared Mar's
 orbital perimeter. We've set course
 for the Danube's last known
 coordinates and we estimate arrival
 in just under three days.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
Understood. Thank you, Commander.

The Commander nods and the screen turns off.

William turns back to JT, who is getting up out of his chair.
JT sets the empty glass on the desk.

JT MARSH
I better turn in so I can get an
early start tomorrow getting the
squad organized. Thank you for the
drink, sir.

JT comes to attention.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
Good hunting, JT.

JT MARSH
Thank you, sir.

William Stands.

WILLIAM WINFIELD
Dismissed.

William and JT salute each other. JT does an about face and
then leaves the room.

William walks over to a wall with numerous framed photos and
awards on it. He looks at a picture with himself and JT's
father in it, both are younger standing in front of their old
E-frames.

EXT. SENATE

An enormous governmental building protrudes from the ring
above Earth. Multiple United Homeworlds banners are displayed
prominently across its faces.

SENATOR #1 (V.O.)
We have been very forgiving of the
United Clans military boarding
civilian ships that are heading
towards the new colonies on the
outer planets.

INT. SENATE - SENATE CHAMBER

Inside the chamber is a UN type setting with SENATORS from
multiple worlds and regions within those worlds.

In the center of the room several UNITED CLANS AMBASSADORS being questioned in a hearing style setting.

The United Clans Ambassadors wear robes with dark, earth toned colors. They have a very frontier, traditional look about them. This look is very much the opposite of the chic, cosmopolitan suits worn by the representatives of the Homeworlds.

The United Clans Ambassadors are flanked by UNITED CLANS HONOR GUARDS in uniforms that resemble the flamboyant Mongolian honor guard winter uniforms crossed with soviet era quasi-techno equipment.

SENATOR #1 (O.S.)

In a small percentage of these ships being raided, the crews and civilian populations of these ships are being brutally killed.

The United Clans Ambassadors seem frustrated that they must continue to defend themselves time and time again.

UNITED CLANS AMBASSADOR #1

As we have stated before, the boarding of any ship passing through our territory as dictated by the Treaty of Titan is completely within our rights. We are constantly ensuring the safety of our patrols and we will defend our citizens from any possible subterfuge.

SENATOR #2

Does this include killing innocent civilians?

The news cameras move closer to record the exact response of the United Clans Ambassador.

UNITED CLANS AMBASSADOR #1

Once again, these attacks in which civilians have been assaulted are not carried out with the knowledge or endorsement of the United Clans government. The ships we do board are systematically searched and inspected for any signs of hostile activity. The ships are then allowed to resume their original headings, as per the Treaty of Titan.

SENATOR #2

What about the ships that show signs of... hostile activity in the eyes of the United Clans, Ambassador?

UNITED CLANS AMBASSADOR #2

After approximately four hundred authorized searches, no ship has been detained for more than three days. To our knowledge we have had problems with less than a dozen of these vessels, reports for which you've been provided, and once the matters were resolved, we allowed them to go on their way. Our government has never authorized any aggressive assault on any civilian vessel.

SENATOR #3

What about this freighter Danube?

There is a loud roar from the crowd.

SENATOR #1

Order, please!

The Senator HAMMERS a gavel.

The crowd calms.

UNITED CLANS AMBASSADOR #1

We have just been made aware of the Danube incident. I suspect at the same time you were. Until then we were completely unaware of the ships existence.

SENATOR #3

If the United Clans did not attack this vessel then who did, Ambassador?

UNITED CLANS AMBASSADOR #1

As with previous raids, our conclusion will most likely yield fringe elements of our society may be involved.

SENATOR #2

It sounds like you have a problem within your own borders, Ambassador. Maybe you should pay more attention internally?

SENATOR #1

Perhaps we should shift the conversation to bringing Saturn back under Homeworlds jurisdiction?

The second United Clans Ambassador snaps up to his feet. The cameras capture his reaction.

UNITED CLANS AMBASSADOR #2

If you hadn't abandoned us!

The United Clans Ambassador #1 signals him to sit down.

UNITED CLANS AMBASSADOR #1

I assure you, we have our internal security well under control.

SENATOR #2

Under control? Fringe elements, as you put it, are blowing themselves up in the habitat sectors aboard this very station! We still have armed skirmishes along our borders every few months. I would hardly call that control.

SENATOR #1

Be that as it may, Ambassadors, we've launched a full investigation into the Danube Incident. If that Navy's investigation yields any evidence that suggests the United Clans were involved we will be forced to take... further actions.

The United Clans Ambassadors both nod on the situation.

SENATOR #2

Session is adjourned for the day. We will resume tomorrow at oh eight hundred standardized time tomorrow.

Senator #1 HAMMERS down his gavel to adjourn the session.

The press points cameras in every direction, the crowd in the room ROARS with activity and discussion.

EXT. SPACE

The wreck of the Danube is floating helplessly in space.

The ship's hull is torn in areas where the grapplers took hold. Large and small pieces of debris are scattered around the ship, cold and glinting in the distant sunlight.

The massive central pylon, with ribs protruding from the center, connects a forward section to a massive engine section. Most of the precious cargo the Danube carried in the center of its massive frame is noticeably missing, making the once hulking freighter look like a dried skeleton picked clean by scavenger animals.

The lighting that illuminates the name and registry flashes on and off very eerily, as do some of the lights inside.

This ship that will decide the fate of the entire solar system.

From the registry, out in the far distance, the reflection of the sun reflects from the hulls of the Resolute and her carrier group making their way to scene.

INT. RESOLUTE - HANGAR

Able Squad is in the foreground, near a Drop Ship, preparing for the mission. Baker Squad is in the back doing the same near an identical drop ship.

DECK CREWS are spread across the scene doing maintenance checks on each, PILOTS go through their pre-flight checklists. Other CREWS are in the background tending to other ships and duties with tools and maintenance E-frames.

JT Marsh and Baker Squad leader, Leon Kozeri, are talking together in the mid-ground between their squads.

All the squads are in full combat gear. Able Squad each have a helmet near them. The squad is getting the last bit of gear attached to their suits.

Rita's voice seems to drown out the rest of the hangar's activity.

RITA TORRES

This is a standard recon mission.
Remember how we did it in the
training exercises.

The squad continues to get ready. Wolf laughs silently showing Alec that his belt buckle won't reach around his waist anymore. Alec just shakes his head. Wolf pulls it off and readjusts it, nearly to the limit.

Alice is just sitting patiently, with her carbine over her lap. She's trying to take up as little space as possible, refusing to make eye contact with Rita.

RITA TORRES (CONT'D)
Alright people, let's get on the ready line!

ABLE SQUAD
(together)
Yes, Gunnery Sergeant!

Alice doesn't yell, but she mouths the words.

RITA TORRES
I can't hear you!

ABLE SQUAD
(together)
Yes, Gunnery Sergeant!

Alice uses her normal voice now.

RITA TORRES
What are you!?

ABLE SQUAD
(together)
Marines!

The squad gathers their helmets, carbines, and loose equipment. They attach their rifles to their chests, and put on their helmets. The squad hustles to line up across from the door to the Drop ship.

RITA TORRES
Marines! Ten Hut!

The squad snaps to attention. Rita comes to attention across from them.

They wait.

JT slaps Leon on the shoulder and walks over. The BAKER SQUAD GUNNERY SERGEANT begins running through a similar procedure that Rita did.

JT walks past his squad. He sees Alice out of the corner of his eye, looking a bit like jelly. Breathing heavily. He continues on though.

JT MARSH

The squad will divide into two fire teams. Gold team will be led by Lieutenant Burns and includes Marsala, Torres, and Weston. Everyone else is on Red Team with me. Any questions?

JT waits a moment and looks over at Alice again.

Alice makes eye contact with him and quickly looks ahead noticing he is focusing on her.

No one else says a word.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

You know the plan, Able. We spent two days training for this OP.

JT looks at everyone still at attention.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)

Let's find out what happened to this ship and these people. Ooh-Rah?

ABLE SQUAD

(together)

Ooh-Rah!

JT MARSH

All right, let's move out.

RITA TORRES

Pack 'em in!

The squad hustles up the ramp of the drop ship.

RITA TORRES (CONT'D)

Move it. Hut, two, three four. Move it out! Let's go, let's go!

Before Alice can pile in at the end, Rita grabs her belt, pulling her back off her next step and off the ramp. She spins her around to face JT, waiting for her. Rita lets her go and loads up on the drop ship herself in one smooth motion.

Rita starts yelling inside the drop ship.

Alice snaps to attention in front of JT, now face to face with him.

The electrical systems of the drop ship WHINE to life.

JT MARSH
Is there an issue I should be aware
of, Lance Corporal?

Alice has a tear sliding down her face inside her helmet.

She tries to suck it up.

ALICE NORETTI
No, sir.

JT MARSH
If there is a problem, I can take
you off the OP.

The engines of the drop ship begin SPOOLING up.

She closes her eyes tight, trying to blink away the tears.

ALICE NORETTI
I --

JT MARSH
I what, Corporal?

ALICE NORETTI
May I speak freely, sir.

JT MARSH
Granted.

ALICE NORETTI
I'm nervous after what happened on
the ring.

JT MARSH
This isn't going to be like the
ring.

ALICE NORETTI
But that woman, she slipped right
out of my hand. The closer we got
to this op, the worse the
nervousness got.

JT MARSH
We are all nervous. This is a
dangerous situation.

ALICE NORETTI
Gunney doesn't get nervous, sir.

JT laughs.

JT MARSH
I think she likes the dangerous.

Alice smirks a bit too.

ALICE NORETTI
I think she does too.
(Pause)
What if I can't save one of my
squadmates when the time comes?

JT steps closer to Alice.

JT MARSH
I know this is your first term, so
here is a secret. Everyone is
scared on an op. Remember your
training and remember the practice
runs. Remember the floor plan and
all the cover?

Alice nods.

JT MARSH (CONT'D)
We've got virtually a zero percent
chance of encountering resistance,
but you need to keep your eyes up,
OK? You're our medic, so watch the
backs of your squad mates. Stick
close to us.
(puts a hand on her
shoulder)
We're all right here, beside you.

ALICE NORETTI
Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

JT MARSH
But, Corporal, I need you to be
prepared if something goes south.
Every situation doesn't go like the
ring, but it could and I need you
to be ready for that. Ooh rah?

ALICE NORETTI
Ooh rah.

JT MARSH
Alright, load up marine.

Alice runs up the ramp of the drop ship. JT gives a quick thumbs up to the Baker Squad leader. He thumbs up back.

JT climbs into the drop ship.

The engines are now spun up - SCREAMING.

The CREW CHIEF seals the hatch behind him.

EXT. RESOLUTE

One of the larger front launch bays doors opens. Inside, the two drop ships are together on a elevator, much like the rear bays. Lights flash on all sides around the bay. The interior lights go green and the drop ships lift off the deck and heads out into space.

The drop ship carrying Baker heads off in another direction, the drop ship carrying Able makes its way towards the Danube.

From much smaller bays near the bottom of the Resolute's forward boom, twelve fighters launch off catapults. Four of the fighters launch out heading straight for the Danube at breakneck speed. Four others group, meeting up with the drop ship as escorts, the other four head for Baker Squad's drop ship.

INT. KAZ'S FIGHTER

Kaz hits a few buttons on his panels, getting his instruments adjusted as he and his wingman form up and move towards the Danube.

Kaz checks everything on his holographic heads up display reads out ok.

[* Note: Angel One, Two, etc call signs are temporary until actual call signs can be determined that are more in line with military traditions. *]

KAZ TAKAGI

Resolute, Resolute this is Angel One, squadron one is en route to Danube to recon the area, over.

RESOLUTE COMM (V.O.)

(radio, filtered)

Angel One, Angel One, this is Resolute, that's a hard copy, over.

INT. DROP SHIP - COCKPIT

JT stands in between the CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER Pilot and the WARRANT OFFICER co-pilot. The illumination from the displays and dim red lights are all that illuminate the cockpit.

The squad is seated in the rear compartment, which is bathed in red lights.

JT turns to the cargo hold.

JT MARSH

Alright, Able Squad, the Angels are doing the sweep now, so get ready. Once the drop ship has attached itself we'll begin cutting into the ship.

Wolf has a smirk on his face.

WOLF BRONSKI

Back to work.

The squad chuckles.

INT. KAZ'S FIGHTER

Kaz and his wingmen are very close to the Danube now. Kaz throttles back and flips his fighter to face the hull. He adjusts his sensors to start scanning. We can see the wingmen turning themselves to allow inertia to carry them sideways to observe the ship.

KAZ TAKAGI

Angel two, Angel two, this is Angel One. Keep an eye on those windows and report any movement. Over.

ANGEL TWO (V.O.)

(radio, filtered)

Angel one, angel one, this is Angel Two. That's a hard copy. Wilco, over.

EXT. DANUBE

The four fighters move slowly along the hull. Two fighters fly each side of the immensely long ship.

The hull is badly scared and the lights flicker at random points in the ship.

The fighters get to the end of the vessel and maneuver to fly the perimeter.

INT. KAZ'S FIGHTER

Kaz watches the hull of the ship go by, staring long at each small porthole window as he swoops by.

KAZ TAKAGI

This thing is a ghost ship.

Kaz pulls up his fighter as they move past the Danube's hull. He pulls information up on the computer. There is a lot of data being displayed, we can't discern what's important and what's not.

KAZ TAKAGI (CONT'D)

Drop ship Delta, Drop Ship Delta, this is Angel One. Visual inspection of the ship shows no signs of human presence. Sensors are giving me no pings for life. Power is minimal. Probably battery. Over.

INT. DROP SHIP - CARGO HOLD

The Drop Ship Chief Warrant Officer radios back.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER

Angel One, Angel One, this is Drop Ship Delta. Hard copy. We're beginning our approach.

The Chief Warrant Officer maneuvers the ship directly at the central boom of the Danube.

JT turns back and signals Rita with a hand gesture.

RITA TORRES

Get hot people, we are inbound!

JT turns to the cockpit again.

JT MARSH

We'll see you after the operation, Chief.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER

Good hunting, Lieutenant.

JT steps back and the Warrant Officer seals the cockpit off from the rest of the ship.

A yellow light blinks on the indicator panel, showing final approach.

Alice takes a deep breath.

EXT. DANUBE

The lights from the drop ship's chin illuminate the scared and weathered surface of the Danube's hull. The ship slows down and aligns its belly with the angle of Danube's hull.

As the drop ship closes in, a small ring extends from the bottom. Two spotlights built into the drop ship's hull, on either side of the tube, light up as the drop ship approaches. A hatch on the tube opens, revealing an inner door.

The Drop ship moves delicately to stabilize and comes to a flat position. The ring, extended slightly from the hull, makes contact with the ship and latches on.

A cutter held within the ring spins rapidly, WHINING, and sparks fly out in every direction as it begins cutting the hull. An outer tube extends down across the ring as it nears the end of the cut, creating a seal.

INT. DROP SHIP - CARGO HOLD

The squad is gathered around the tube door in the floor. They all load their weapons and charge them.

A control panel to the side, monitored by the Crew Chief, has a camera watching the cutting. The hull section falls into the ship and drifts into the exposed corridor.

There is a HISS in the background. A light goes green on the indicator panel.

CREW CHIEF

We have positive seal, you are go.

JT nods and the squad gets in position.

JT looks over at Alice. She nods to him, ready.

Wolf looks through the window panel in the door. He spots the hull piece floating in the cabin.

WOLF BRONSKI
 Son of a bitch. No gravity.

The entire squad moans expect JT, Marsala, and Rita.

JT MARSH
 Just remember your zero gravity training. Same plan as before. Just take it a bit slower than we anticipated. Bronski, open the hatch, you're in first.

WOLF BRONSKI
 Always on point.

Wolf pushes a button on a panel next to the hatch.

There is a SOFT CHIME.

The chime BEEPS FASTER. Wolf stands and points his gun towards the hatch.

The chime stops beeping and HOLDS TONE.

The hatch slides open and Wolf jumps down the hole without a slight hesitation.

INT. DANUBE - CORRIDOR

Wolf falls feet first down the boarding hole, into the ship, but stops abruptly once he hits the corridor.

From our P.O.V. Wolf falls into the corridor sideways.

When his orientation changes he starts flopping around and spinning.

JT MARSH (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red two, Red two, this is Red one do you see anything? Over.

WOLF BRONSKI
 Uh, red one, red one, this is red two, I'm not seeing much of anything right now. My senses are all screwed up. I feel like I jumped into a pool of water and don't know which way is up.

RITA TORRES (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Get yourself together, red two.

WOLF BRONSKI
 Sorry, Sarge, I mean, gold two,
 just odd feeling. Over.

Wolf levels himself out and looks around with his carbine trained on his focus. He turns on the flashlight attached to his carbine and scouts the immediate area.

The ship lurches. Wolf looks around. He pushes off the wall and heads to the first intersection.

He looks down each direction.

WOLF BRONSKI (CONT'D)
 Red one, red one, this is Red two.
 Entry is secured, you're clear to
 enter. Over.

JT MARSH (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red two, red two this is red one.
 Copy. Wilco, over.

Behind Wolf the squad falls down the hole one by one with varying degrees of difficulty. Everyone takes a moment to get adjusted except Marsala. Wolf keeps watching the intersection.

Rita moves up to the junction, opposite of Wolf.

JT MARSH
 Gold team to the engine room. Red
 team with me to the bridge. Report
 anything of significance.

NARA BURNS
 Yes, sir.

The squad splits into their fire teams and floats down their respective halls.

INT. DANUBE - CREW QUARTERS

Red team moves into the crew quarters from earlier. Bodies are floating around. Bits and pieces are strung about. Personal effects, pistols, equipment. The rooms have been ransacked and torn apart.

Alice runs her hand along the wall and sees a hole. She runs her fingers in it.

JT MARSH
 Bullet holes.

WOLF BRONSKI

So we know there was a fire fight.

Alec shines his light on a wall riddled with bullet holes.

ALEC DELEON

Looks like a big gun fight.

The holographic player from earlier floats by, the woman doing her striptease still playing, the image flickers.

Wolf stares at it as it goes by.

Alec shakes his head.

JT MARSH

Let's keep moving, people.

INT. DANUBE - AFT CORRIDOR

Gold team is moving through a seemingly endless stretch of corridor connecting the living quarters with the engineering section.

Nara looks through small view ports that are intermittent alongside each wall.

She looks out to see a long, empty cargo sleeve and space slowly spiraling outside.

NARA BURNS

Almost every cargo container has been taken.

RITA TORRES

That's pirates for you.

Nara continues to the next window.

NARA BURNS

What do pirates need with raw materials? The manifest said it was ores. The clans would have access to all of this in abundance.

MAGGIE WESTON

They mine so much of it they sell it back to the Homeworlds even.

MARSALA

This is not consistent with United Clans methodology. We should stay focused.

NARA BURNS
Good idea, Let's keep moving.
Marsala, take point.

Marsala glides on past the others to go further down the corridor.

INT. DANUBE - MESS HALL

Red team moves into the mess hall, clearing the room as best they can in zero gravity. Trays and cups float around the room. Bits of food and utensils, no bodies.

INT. DANUBE - ENGINEERING CORRIDOR

Gold team moves near the engine room, a half dozen bodies are floating. Guns, bullets casings, and equipment float around.

MAGGIE WESTON
Oh, man.

NARA BURNS
They tried to hold the engine room.

MARSALA
Based on the sheer number of bullets used by the opposition, they did not last long.

RITA TORRES
Armed civilians up against a properly trained military force. They didn't stand a chance, but they tried.

Nara motions to the door.

NARA BURNS
Let's keep moving.

INT. DANUBE - BRIDGE

Red team moves onto the bridge. Wolf enters first, followed by the others, sweeping to secure the room.

Alec turns by the door that was cut earlier.

ALEC DELEON
You can see right where they cut into the door.

Alec moves to the main bridge controls and begins tinkering with it.

Alice is moving about the bridge looking around.

She feels something bump her leg and lets out a SCREAM.

JT MARSH
Noretta, are you OK?

Everyone rushes over.

ALICE NORETTI
Sorry, sir, it just scared me.

The others look down and see the body of the Young Crewman, shot in the chest.

Wolf goes to the rear of the bridge.

WOLF BRONSKI
Lieutenant, here are some other bodies.

JT floats over. The Helmsman and the Captain have their hands bound behind their backs. Each is shot in the back of the head.

JT MARSH
They've been executed.

Wolf notices Alice looking at something and moves towards her. JT spots it also and moves with him.

Near the ground a CORPSE wearing something other than the utility jumpsuits of the rest of the crew.

WOLF BRONSKI
Sir, I think you should have the honors.

JT takes a deep breath, puts his hand on the Corpse.

He hesitates for a moment.

He flips the Corpse over.

The Corpse is wearing a uniform of the United Clans military reminiscent, but not identical too the Honor Guards with the Clan Ambassador from earlier. Colors are muted, but the cut and equipment are more utilitarian, closer to the Soviet influences of the previous guards and designed for space usage.

The Corpse has several bullet wounds across his body.

Alec, looking from behind the console, blurts out, cutting the tension.

ALEC DELEON
Son of a bitch!

WOLF BRONSKI
Oh man.

ALICE NORETTI
Wait, does this mean we're going to war now?

JT has a curious expression on his face.

ALEC DELEON
Lieutenant?

JT MARSH
The clans don't leave their bodies behind so they can bury them.

Alec cocks his head to think.

WOLF BRONSKI
Damn, that's right!

ALEC DELEON
They don't. Why would they leave this one behind? Doesn't that violate their religious customs?

JT MARSH
I don't know. God dammit.

They all stop for a minute.

Alice looks at everyone looking at JT.

ALICE NORETTI
Sir, now what?

JT thinks for another second. The radio comes to life interrupting the silence.

NARA BURNS (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Red one, Red one, this is Gold one, do you copy? Over.

JT MARSH
 Gold one, gold one, this is red
 one, I copy. Over.

NARA BURNS (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red one, engineering is secured,
 but we have a problem. We've found
 some United Clans military
 personnel here, riddled with
 bullets. Over.

JT pounds his fist into the wall, causing everyone to jump.

INT. RESOLUTE - BRIDGE

Admiral Winfield and Captain Marcus stand on an elevated
 command section on the bridge of the Resolute.

The bridge is two stories tall with several purpose built
 stations surrounding the elevated command section.

A large view screen in front shows tactical data on the
 situation. Crew line the first level at the stations, almost
 all of them are turned inward to listen to the reports.

JT MARSH (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Gold one, we've got a body up here
 too, along with several crew
 members that have been executed.
 Over.

The entire crew gasps at the news as if the air had been
 sucked out.

William looks over at Matthew and sneers.

MATTHEW MARCUS
 (to William)
 Shit.

NARA BURNS (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red one, there isn't much to secure
 in the aft sections. Over.

JT MARSH (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Gold one, that's a hard copy.

INT. DANUBE - ENGINE ROOM

The engine room is a mess. Wreckage and debris are everywhere.

Bodies, both shot and burnt are floating amok. A handful are United Clans military.

JT MARSH (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Can Gold four do anything for us?
Over.

MAGGIE WESTON
Red one, this is Gold four. Sir, there isn't much to work with. This place looks like a scrap yard. I'm surprised this section hasn't suffered explosive decompression. There was a heavy fire fight here. The reactor also looks to have lost magnetic cohesion, which caused it to shut down. I can't get it back up and running without more of the backup batteries, which the pirates seem to have taken most of. There's just enough to keep the ship stable. Over.

JT MARSH (V.O.)
(radio, filtered)
Gold two, this is red one. Hard Copy. Over.

RITA TORRES
Red one, this is gold two. Sir, the pirates take their bodies to give a proper burial. This doesn't seem right. Over.

INT. DANUBE - BRIDGE

Same as before.

JT MARSH
Gold two, this is red one. Copy that. Over. Gold one, this is red one. Keep looking around and keep me apprised. Over.

NARA BURNS (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red one, this is gold one. Roger
 that. Over.

JT hunches over. Alec is pecking away at the computer. Wolf
 and Alice are watching the doorways.

ALEC DELEON
 Lieutenant, the pirates wiped the
 computer core. I've just got BIOS
 on each station, no other commands,
 not even the operating system.
 We'll need the tow to come get us.
 Their comm team will need to see if
 they can recover any data on the
 core.

JT MARSH
 Affirmative.
 (He sighs)
 Resolute, Resolute, this is Red
 One. Do you copy, over.

RESOLUTE COMM (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red one, Red one, this is Resolute.
 We copy, over.

JT MARSH
 Resolute, Resolute, this is red
 one. I need to speak with Resolute
 Actual. Over.

There is a brief pause.

RESOLUTE COMM (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red one, red one, this is Resolute.
 You are on with Resolute Actual.
 Over.

JT MARSH
 Resolute actual, Resolute actual,
 this is red one, do you copy, over?

MATTHEW MARCUS (V.O.)
 (radio, filtered)
 Red one, Red one, this is Resolute
 actual, go ahead. over.

JT MARSH
 Resolute actual, I'm sure you've
 heard our findings. Over.

INT. RESOLUTE - BRIDGE

Matthew has a radio piece in his ear. He is leaned over the command table supported with both arms in frustration.

MATTHEW MARCUS

Red one, affirmative. Is everything all clear? Over.

JT MARSH (V.O.)

(radio, filtered)

Resolute actual, affirmative. We've cleared the entire ship stem to stern, there doesn't seem to be any danger. Over.

MATTHEW MARCUS

Red one, I'm going to dispatch the Destroyer Valiant to render assistance and prepare her for tow. They'll do a full forensic investigation on the way back home. Over.

William motions for a DECK OFFICER to make the arrangements. The Deck Officer moves to another console with an ENLISTED CREWMAN and begins giving instructions.

JT MARSH (V.O.)

(radio, filtered)

Resolute actual. That's a hard copy. We'll make preparations. Over.

MATTHEW MARCUS

Red one, understood. Resolute actual out. Over.

Matthew removes the headset and throws it on the table.

EXT. DANUBE

A destroyer is parked next to the Danube. She isn't longer than the Danube, but its more bulky - armored and militaristic in contrast to the Danube's slender disposition.

The destroyer's lights illuminate the ship like a football stadium. A large docking tube is attached to the Danube's docking port from the Valiant and several umbilicals have been connected to provide power.

INT. DANUBE - CORRIDOR

The ship now has gravity and emergency lighting throughout. Everything that was floating is now scattered on the ground.

Able Squad walks towards an air lock which the Drop Ship is now docked with. A VALIANT OFFICER escorts them. The halls are filled with ENGINEERS from the Valiant, all in clean suits. They are moving equipment to other parts of the ship through the intersections.

VALIANT OFFICER

We've got your entry point secured and we're preparing to tow the ship. The Engineers are going to try and get the reactor fired up and see if they can get her going under her own power.

The squad piles in through the air lock.

JT MARSH

Understood, Lieutenant. She's all yours.

JT salutes the officer, the officer salutes back. JT enters the drop ship and the door closes behind him.

EXT. DANUBE

The drop ship disconnects from the air lock. The Valiant is extending large tow struts towards the ship.

The drop ship spins about and heads towards the carrier group, still stationary a distance away.

INT. DROP SHIP - CARGO HOLD

JT is sitting with the squad. Everyone is tired and quiet. They have their helmets removed. They are removing the magazines from their weapons to secure them.

JT MARSH

That was a good operation, everyone. I don't think I need to go into the details of not discussing the sensitive nature of what we found?

ABLE SQUAD

(together)
No, sir.

ALEC DELEON

So, what now?

JT MARSH

They'll do a more thorough investigation on the way back home. After everyone is debriefed I need everyone to lay low until I can figure out what's going to happen next --

The Drop ship rocks VIOLENTLY and the light flickers.

The Crew Chief opens the door, JT is behind him.

BLINDING LIGHT

Fills the cargo hold.

The cockpit is filled with warning buzzers SCREECHING over everything.

WARRANT OFFICER

Shockwave inbound! Prepare for impact!

JT MARSH

What the hell!?

INT. KAZ'S FIGHTER

Kaz is piloting his fighter in a patrol with his three other wingmen. The Valiant is docked with the Danube.

The Drop ship is moving away from the Danube at high speed.

KAZ TAKAGI

Angel Squadron, this is Angel one, The Drop Ship has departed. We're going to do a few quick patrols before we head back home. That was good work, everyone. Over.

ANGEL TWO

BREAK BREAK! This is Angel Two! We've got a massive magnetic build up on the Danube. Over!

Kaz looks at his instruments.

KAZ TAKAGI

Angel squadron, I see it too. Looks like the core activating --

The instruments all SOUND at the same time. SCREECHING, WHISTLEING, and CLICKING, warning indicators start BUZZING.

KAZ TAKAGI (CONT'D)
Whoa! We've got off the chart
readings of plasma build up.

The comm is filled with RADIO TRAFFIC from the squadron.

Kaz looks over at the Danube and the Valiant.

Just as he turns his head the Danube's rear section

EXPLODES

sending a massive shock wave outwards, shredding and melting most of the Valiant instantaneously.

INT. RESOLUTE - BRIDGE

William and Matthew are sitting on the bridge in their command chairs. Matthew is monitoring the ship on a display near him. William is signing a tablet held by a YOUNG ENSIGN.

The screen suddenly turns a brilliant white. Some have to cover their eyes.

Immediately, the general quarters klaxon BLARES.

Red lights begin flashing as William and Matthew both stand up, watching the screen come back into view with debris floating everywhere.

The klaxon drones on.

FADE OUT.

TO BE CONTINUED