

Wanderers
Episode One: Ship of Fools - Part 1

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WANDERERS

EPISODE ONE - SHIP OF FOOLS PT. 1

FADE IN

TEASER

INT. SS WANDERER BRIDGE

The scene is the bridge near the bow of the interstellar corvette SS Wanderer. In the front is a large viewport that wraps part way around the sides. The rest of the side bulkheads are covered with manual controls and screens showing ship's status.

One display reads "SHIP'S TIME - 12:24:32 - 30 OCTOBER 2331" with the seconds ticking upwards.

Over the hatch in the back is a plaque that reads "S.S. WANDERER".

In front are two chairs, the one on the left for the pilot, the one on the right for controlling ships systems; weapons, shields, life support, etc. Each chair is surrounded by an arc of controls and screens.

In the pilot's seat is MANSE Deerfield, Wanderer's first officer, holding a yoke and staring intently through the viewport.

In the system's chair is AV-X, a cyborg who was a born a human female. Most of her screens are blank and she is sitting very still, staring at nothing in particular. A cable runs from the base of her skull into the console in front of her.

Behind the two chairs stands the Captain, Xiao-Long (Fierce Dragon) KELLEY, arms folded while she watches out through the viewport.

What she's looking at is an enormous ship, the Dominion Battlecruiser DSS Derzkiy (Defiant), almost a kilometer long and bristling with weapons. There is a slight shimmer around the Derzkiy indicating that her shields are up.

MANSE

(Aussie accent)

That's Pavlov's ship alright. The Derzkiy. -- What's got him so pissed at a certain Captain Kelley, master of the S-S Wanderer?

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Kelley takes a step forward and leans one arm on Manse's chair.

KELLEY

Call it a lover's spat. -- Don't get too close, Manse. I don't want them seeing through our disguise.

MANSE

(nods)

Aye, Captain. -- Maintaining distance at ten thousand meters.

Manse turns the yoke and rotates the ship so that the Derzkiy seems to slide from directly in front to now being visible out the starboard side of the viewport. Directly in front through the viewport is a distant red dwarf star.

Kelley turns and looks at AV-X's station and frowns.

KELLEY

A-V-X, I told you I want your screens on.

AV-X slowly turns to look at Kelley.

AV-X

(flat voice)

I don't need them.

KELLEY

I do.

Kelley reaches past AV-X and presses a button, turning on all the screens at the station.

Kelley steps back to her original spot and AV-X continues to stare at nothing.

KELLEY (cont'd)

DeSalle, are you two watching their shuttle port?

DESALLE (O.S.)

(French accent)

Aye, Capitaine. Damn automatics won't lock onto a Dominion ship, but Tyrone and me can hit them fine from here.

KELLEY

Good. -- Stay alert.

EXT. SS WANDERER

View of a boxy looking freighter, slowly gliding along the side of the enormous battlecruiser.

The freighter draws level with the mid-point of the battlecruiser when a shuttle port starts to open on its side. Light spills out from the bay showing a sleek assault shuttle rising from the deck.

INT. SS WANDERER BRIDGE

DESALLE (O.S.)
Capitaine, the shuttle port is opening. -- Should we fire?

KELLEY
Not yet. -- A-V-X?

AV-X
They're hailing us.

Kelley rolls her eyes.

KELLEY
Let me hear.

A CONVERSATION comes from out of thin air. One of the VOICES is AV-X's, but the sound is not coming from her body.

AV-X (O.S.)
... repeat. This is the Cyborg Union transport X-G-K-Seven-Nine-Five, with clearance for Malwa Station.

DERZKIY OFFICER (O.S.)
X-G-K-Seven-Nine-Five, Malwa is an interdicted system. Stand by to be boarded for inspection.

Kelley makes a cut motion with her hand and steps forward next to AV-X, giving her a tap on the shoulder.

KELLEY
Tell them there's no human crew on board.

AV-X nods. Outside, the assault shuttle slowly glides out the shuttle port and heads towards the Wanderer.

AV-X (O.S.)
Derzkiy, beware. We have an all Cyborg crew. -- Human safety protocols have not been uploaded.

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DERZKIY OFFICER (O.S.)

Wait one.

The shuttle slows for a moment, then accelerates rapidly towards the Wanderer.

DERZKIY OFFICER (O.S.) (cont'd)

X-G-K-Seven-Nine-Five, prepare to be boarded.

Kelley steps back to her spot.

KELLEY

I really hoped they'd be too scared to board a Union ship.

She folds her arms, a determined look on her face.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Oh well, if that's the way it's going to be. -- Jettison the disguise.

EXT. SS WANDERER

As the shuttle races towards it, the shell of the boxy freighter breaks into four pieces. The pieces are made of thin sheets that hid the corvette inside.

The SS Wanderer is about 100 meters long, with large engine nacelles at the back, hinting at immense speed.

There are two twin gun turrets mounted near the center of the hull; one on top and one on the bottom.

It's sleek shape indicates that it is capable of entering atmosphere and landing on planets.

One of the shell pieces spins towards the shuttle and it must slow and dodge to avoid being struck.

As the sheet passes, pulses of light shoot from the top turret on the Wanderer, striking the single gun turret on the top of the shuttle, disabling it.

INT. SS WANDERER BRIDGE

Through the viewport the shuttle, molten metal where the turret used be, seems to hesitate a moment before resuming it's charge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY

Good shot, Desalle. Now disable their engine.

DESALLE (O.S.)

Aye, Aye, Capitaine.

Kelley steps to the right to look at the Derzkiy.

KELLEY

Manse, get us out of here. Get us far enough away from that ship to jump.

Manse spins the yoke to the left and thrusts it forward. Outside through the starboard side of the viewport, the Derzkiy glides out of sight up and to the right.

MANSE

Cap, we'll be able to jump in sixty seconds.

The shuttle is still in sight for a moment as more pulses of light strike its stern. It staggers before it too glides out of sight.

KELLEY

A-V-X, are they bringing weapons on line?

AV-X

We are too close for their main batteries...

KELLEY

Thank, god.

AV-X

... but their point defense system is trying to lock on.

KELLEY

Can it?

AV-X shakes her head and if she wasn't a cyborg, you might say she even smiles a little bit.

AV-X

No. The cyborg running that system is insufficiently programmed.

Pulses of light shoot past the viewport from behind, then a THUMP comes from astern and the ship shakes for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY
 But they can fire blind and cripple us
 with a lucky shot. -- Manse how much
 longer?

Manse taps a button and adjusts the yoke.

MANSE
 Ten seconds. -- Nine...

KELLEY
 Jump us to the far side of that star.

MANSE
 ... Four -- Three -- Two -- One -- Jump.

ACT ONE

EXT. MALWA STATION

Malwa station is spaceport circling a lifeless rock, which in turn circles a nondescript red dwarf star.

The station is large and there's even a habitat with a clear dome that let's in sunlight, such as it is. But the station looks rundown and gives the appearance that maintenance isn't a high priority for those in charge.

There are about two dozen docking slips on a spindle extending from the bottom of the habitat. A few banged up freighters and couple of corvettes occupy some of the docks.

The Wanderer slips into one of the empty docks.

INT. THE JIGGLY ROOM - NIGHT

The Jiggly Room is everything you expect in a sleazy spaceport bar.

Some of the patrons are obviously spacers, but most appear to be miners, wearing dirty work clothes and hard hats.

On the stage, a skinny girl with improbably large breasts dances listlessly to MUSIC with a heavy amount of sitar notes.

Kelley and Manse enter the bar, followed by a muscular man who appears to be about forty, DESALLE, and a tall, well-built young man with calm features, TYRONE.

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Kelley stops inside the door and looks around. At first she looks at the girl on the stage and frowns.

Then she looks around the room until she spots a man in a booth in the back who looks utterly out of place. He is wearing expensive clothes and seems tense, as if he's worried someone will see him.

Kelley gestures for the crew to gather round.

KELLEY
Alright, the customer is here.

Kelley looks at a data pad strapped to her left wrist and taps it. A faint BEEP comes from the pad.

KELLEY (cont'd)
I just transferred everybody's share of
the deposit. Go have fun...

Tyrone nods and walks out the door. Desalle's face breaks into a big grin, but as he turns to go, Kelley grabs his arm.

KELLEY (cont'd)
... but not too much fun. Where are you
headed?

DESALLE
There's a Kama Sutra school on this
station. -- Thought I'd help les pauvres
ch ris with their studies.

KELLEY
Don't get too messed up. We might have
to leave in a hurry.

Desalle gives her a wink and a smile and bolts out the door.

Kelley shakes her head and turns to Manse, gesturing at the door.

KELLEY (cont'd)
You too, Manse.

Kelley nods towards the man in the back of the bar.

KELLEY (cont'd)
He looks nervous and I don't want to take
any chances. If I show up with a
stranger he's liable to piss his pants
and bolt. -- Taking our other half
million credits with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANSE

(shakes head)

Now, Cap. This is no place for a --
woman to be alone.

Kelley pats the blaster in the holster at her side.

KELLEY

I'm not alone. -- Besides, you're the one
who should be worried. Those miners over
there have been checking out your pretty
ass.

Kelley nods over towards a couple of large, rough looking miners
drinking at the bar. One of them blows a kiss to Manse.

Manse scowls at them, then turns back to Kelley.

MANSE

Okay. I'll stay at the bar. -- The other
end of the bar.

Kelley chuckles as Manse moves around to sit at the other end of
the bar from the miners. They look pissed off and start talking
quietly to one another. Manse sets his blaster on the bar in
front of him and miners go silent.

Kelley starts weaving her way through the bar towards the guy in
the back.

About halfway there an arm reaches out and spins her around. The
arm belongs to a wiry spaceman, SNAKE, wearing a red leather jump
suit with a scale pattern on it.

His head is completely bald and he has no eyebrows. His ears are
gone, leaving just the holes. His teeth are filed to points.

His entire head is covered in tattoos of red snake scales

SNAKE

If it isn't Captain Xiao-Long Kelley, the
fierce dragon of the star ways.

Snake pulls Kelley closer and flicks his forked tongue at her.

SNAKE (cont'd)

You smell goood. -- How's my ship?

Kelley shrugs out of Snake's grasp and puts her hand on her
blaster.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY

Not your ship anymore. -- Still losing at dice?

Snake looks angry for a second then gives her a reptilian smile.

SNAKE

No. My taste in amusements is more -- refined now. Let me show you?

Kelley shakes her head and relaxes a bit.

KELLEY

Not right now, Snake. Business.
-- But if I have the time I'll buy you a drink and we'll swap lies. Deal?

Snake looks around and spots the guy in the back of the bar. Then he sees Manse leaning on the bar watching the two of them with his hand near his blaster.

Snake smiles and flicks his tongue toward the guy in the back.

SNAKE

He looks tasty. -- Deal. But only if you remember your old shipmate when it's time to divvy up the swag.

KELLEY

You got it.

Kelley turns, looks at Manse and nods towards Snake. She continues through the bar towards the guy in the back.

Kelley slides into the booth across from the well-dressed man, DEREK Van Slyke. He looks to be in his early thirties, but something about him says he never really grew up.

Derek is startled for a moment but then recognizes Kelley. He leans forwards, a hungry look in his eyes. He grabs her arm.

DEREK

Captain Kelley. -- Did you get it?

Kelley pulls her arm free and drapes it casually along the back of her seat.

KELLEY

Of course, Mr. Van Slyke...

DEREK

Call me Derek. Mr. Van Slyke is my father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Derek shudders and Kelley nods.

KELLEY

Okay, Derek. -- Transfer the balance owed and we'll deliver the item to your ship.

Derek nods and taps his wrist data pad a couple of times to accompanying BEEPS.

DEREK

There, Captain. A half a million credits. -- But I think you misunderstand me. I don't want you to deliver it. I want you to install it on your ship.

Kelley looks startled.

KELLEY

What? Why would we want to do that?

Derek leans back and smiles.

DEREK

Because I will pay you two million more credits. -- And because we'll need it if we want to catch up with the Ark.

EXT. MALWA STATION STREET - DAY

Kelley, Manse and Derek are walking down a grubby street through the dim red sunlight filtering through the dome.

They pass a small robot spearing litter in the gutter and placing it in a receptacle on its back.

MANSE

You're kidding! The Ark. Lost for centuries and presumed destroyed. -- That's bloody bonkers.

DEREK

Not bonkers at all. I've figured out what happened to it.

Manse chuckles and shakes his head.

MANSE

Carried off by space fairies to a galaxy far, far away?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK

Very funny. -- No, their main engines failed and they couldn't slow down at their destination. -- Now they're coasting through space at half the speed of light.

KELLEY

You said they're slingshotting around stars -- slowly turning back towards Earth. -- How do you know that?

Derek stops and so do the others. He cocks his head and looks into the distance.

DEREK

In amongst the yotta-bytes of data that's all that's left of Athena, I found the last message from the Ark.

MANSE

Athena? The A-I that used to run everything on old Earth? When she went crackers she nearly took everyone and everything with her!

They resume walking.

DEREK

Yes she went -- well, mad. But madness in an A-I is not the same thing as in humans...

KELLEY

... or cyborgs.

Derek stops for a moment and stares at Kelley before continuing.

DEREK

Or cyborgs. The closest thing in humans is like when someone takes too much stim. They become erratic, paranoid -- and sometimes brilliant beyond anything you can imagine.

KELLEY

(nods)

As she was going mad, Athena invented the faster-than-light jump drive, artificial gravity, shields...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK

... and the Momentum Transfer Device, the only extent example of which is waiting for us in your cargo hold.

They reach the corner and turn left. About 100 meters down the street in front of them are large doors with a sign that says "Exit to Docks" above them.

MANSE

What bloody good...

The three stop short. A couple of other people on the street scurry into the shadows.

In the middle of the street, 20 meters in front of them, stands a figure; half man, half machine. The cyborg's eyes glow a menacing red and on it's metal chest is a large gold star.

It's a Dominion MARSHAL.

MARSHAL

In the name of the Dominion I place you under arrest for violation of ordinance Seven-Three-Two-Z, theft of a cultural treasure. -- Drop your weapons.

Kelley and Manse place their hands on their blasters but don't draw them. Derek shrinks behind the other two,

KELLEY

Malwa is not part of the Dominion. You have no jurisdiction here. -- Where's your warrant?

The Marshal draws a menacing blaster from his holster and points it at Kelley's chest.

MARSHAL

This is all the warrant I need.

Kelley and Manse look startled.

MANSE

He just cracked a bloody joke! Only level fives can do that.

Manse turns and glares at Derek.

MANSE (cont'd)

You wanker! You got a level five Dominion Marshal sicced on us?

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CONTINUED:

Derek crouches down even further as if hoping the ground will open up and swallow him.

Manse turns back to face the Marshal.

MARSHAL

You have five seconds to comply with my orders. -- Five -- Four --

KELLEY

Under article eight of the Dominion Bill of Rights, I demand my attorney be present.

The Marshal hesitates for a moment.

MARSHAL

Where is your attorney?

KELLEY

Somewhere on beach on Tau Ceti Four. He can be here in a month...

The Marshal makes a chopping motion with his hand and his eyes glow even brighter.

MARSHAL

Enough. Three -- Two --

Kelley sighs and reaches to unbuckle her gun belt. Manse glowers and does the same.

MARSHAL (cont'd)

One --

Kelley raises her arm and taps the data pad unit on her wrist.

The three are surrounded by a dome of distortion. Inside the dome their figures stretch, writhe and jump around, making it impossible to determine exactly where they are.

KELLEY

Run.

MANSE

Right.

Kelley, Manse and Derek turn away from the Marshal and start running back the way they came.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Marshal fires three quick SHOTS from his blaster at the trio, but as they reach the distortion field the shots appear to gyrate wildly within the dome before streaking out the other side, completely missing their targets.

The three tear down the street. They are out of the Marshal's line of sight for only a moment before the Marshal reaches the corner moving at a speed impossible for mere humans.

He stops, raises his arm and carefully aims at the fleeing trio in the field, the gun gyrating slightly as he compensates for the distortion.

He zeros in on Kelley and his finger tenses on the the trigger.

Before he can fire, the Marshal is engulfed in arcs of electricity that BUZZ all around him. He spasms violently and falls to the ground, twitching and smoking.

From out of the shadows strides Snake. In his hand is an odd little box with buttons on it.

The trio stop and Kelley drops the field.

Snake goes over to the Marshal laying on the ground and picks up his blaster. He stands up admiring it and smiles.

SNAKE

(hisses)

Nice.

Manse runs back, nudges Snake aside and uses his foot to turn the Marshal over on his back. The Marshal is no longer moving and his open eyes no longer glow. They are blank pools of ink.

MANSE

It'll take him at least ten minutes to reboot. -- Time to scoot.

Kelley walks up to Snake and nods.

KELLEY

Good timing. -- Thanks.

Snake smiles wickedly and nods.

SNAKE

I guess we're ship-mates again.

ACT TWO

INT. SS WANDERER BRIDGE

Kelley is standing in her usual spot with Manse and AV-X at the controls. Derek is sitting in a jump seat along the rear bulkhead near the hatch.

Seen through the viewport is the dim outline of small, icy planetoid that grows slowly as the ship approaches.

The hatch slides open with a SNICK and Desalle followed by Snake enter the bridge.

Kelley turns to face them.

KELLEY
Well? How'd it go?

DESALLE
I mounted the device on a stanchion near the ship's center of mass like this...

Desalle turns to glare at Derek then turns back.

DESALLE (cont'd)
... gentleman here said to do. But damned if I know what's going to happen. -- Probably tear the ship -- and us, to pieces.

Derek jumps to his feet and almost collides with Snake.

Snake glares at Derek who wilts away then dances around him to stand beside Kelley.

DEREK
It won't tear as to pieces.

KELLEY
Are you sure?

DEREK
Pretty sure...

Kelley glares at Derek.

DEREK (cont'd)
Almost completely sure. -- After all, if I wasn't sure would I be here?

Manse calls over his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANSE

The little wanker's got a point, Cap. He wouldn't risk his pretty pink skin if he wasn't sure.

DEREK

(nods)

Uh huh. -- Hey.

While this is going on, Snake wonders over behind AV-X, leans in and flicks his tongue at her.

SNAKE

(to himself)

Hmm -- cyborgs.

He pauses to contemplate the taste of her smell, then quickly turns and gives a quizzical look at Kelley.

Both Kelley and AV-X completely ignore him.

Kelley walks over to stand behind AV-X and Snake retreats.

KELLEY

A-V-X, does the planetoid check out?

AV-X

Yes, Captain. It's direction of travel matches the current estimated direction of the Ark. -- If the Momentum Transfer device works...

Derek nudges Kelley aside to talk to AV-X.

DEREK

... since momentum equals mass times velocity and the planetoid is much more massive than the ship...

Derek looks at Kelley who glares back at him. Derek's speech tapers off and he wilts.

AV-X

... it will slow down an infinitesimal amount while we will be boosted to one half the speed of light. -- In theory.

Kelley nods and turns to Manse.

KELLEY

In theory. -- What do you think, Manse?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Manse ponders for a second.

MANSE

Well, if we come a gutser, it's no more worries.

Snake rolls his eyes and whispers to Desalle.

SNAKE

Come a gutser? Is he for real?

Desalle frowns and shakes his head.

Kelley stares at the planetoid then turns to AV-X.

KELLEY

And using that device is the only way we have to match the Ark's real-space velocity...

AV-X

That is correct. No ship that currently exists can boost to that speed in real-space.

KELLEY

(nods)

So that's that. -- Are we in position?

AV-X

Yes. We are inside the planetoid's gravity field. -- Awaiting your command, Captain.

Kelley takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly.

KELLEY

Engage.

The universe turns inside out.

INT. SS WANDERER COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

The universe is again right side out.

The common room is the largest one in the Wanderer's crew quarters area. Off to one side is a kitchenette. Off the other is a small conversation area with two couches that are molded to the deck.

In the center is a large, old-fashioned wooden table that's dinged and worn, but is still a solid piece of furniture. Around it are eight wooden chairs that don't all match.

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CONTINUED:

It's night time by the ship's clock and the lights are low.

Kelley sits at one end of the table cradling a mug of tea in one hand. She looks groggy as if she's hung over or just woke up from too short a sleep. Or both.

Tyrone silently glides into the room and stands beside her, a look of concern on his face. Kelley doesn't notice him.

Tyrone CLEARS HIS THROAT. Kelly slowly looks up at him and gestures at a chair around the corner of the table to her right.

KELLEY

Sit.

Tyrone slides into the chair.

TYRONE

You alright, Captain?

Kelley shakes her head and rubs one temple.

KELLEY

Tried to shake off the effects of using that damn device with some cheap rum. Bad mistake. -- How 'bout you, Tyrone?

Tyrone smiles shyly.

TYRONE

A felt a bit queasy for a minute or so. -- But I'm alright now.

Kelley frowns then SIGHS.

KELLEY

I know you didn't come down here to bask in my wit and charm. -- So, what's on your mind?

Tyrone looks at his hands for a moment in indecision.

TYRONE

Captain, do you know much about the Ark? Who Athena put on it?

KELLEY

(shakes head)

Not much. I was in military schools starting at age eight. -- They have a pretty narrow curriculum.

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CONTINUED:

TYRONE

You know my grandparents were Mennonites,
right?

Kelley shakes her head.

TYRONE (cont'd)

Their ancestors were among the few
Brethren that were able to hide from
Athena when she gathered the passengers
for the Ark.

Kelley looks puzzled.

KELLEY

Aren't Mennonites anti-tech pacifists --
or something like that?

TYRONE

(nods)

Something like that.

KELLEY

Like those annoying retro-hippies. -- So,
what's the harm in that?

Tyrone leans in and grabs Kelley's forearm.

TYRONE

Captain, the passengers weren't just a
bunch of pacifists, or hippies, or
Buddhists, or whatever. There were some
pretty dangerous, even crazy people put
on that ship.

KELLEY

What do you mean?

TYRONE

Captain, Athena gathered up every member
of every kooky, fringe, violent or just
plain weird group on Earth she could get
her hands on. Then she launched them at
the stars. -- Everyone that was literally
driving her crazy. -- A million of 'em.

Kelley's face falls and she looks a little green.

KELLEY

Oh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TYRONE

In other words, Captain, we're hurtling through space at half the speed of light searching for the biggest insane asylum in the galaxy.

INT. SS WANDERER BRIDGE

AV-X is sitting in the right seat, blankly staring out through the viewport at the stars.

The stars to the front are now all a brilliant blue due to red-shifting, while those to the side are dim streaks.

The hatch opens with a SNICK and Kelley walks in.

She spends a moment looking at the stars, a bemused look on her face. She then walks up and sits down in the left seat.

AV-X

I have almost completed the scans for this leg. There is nothing to report.

KELLEY

I didn't expect to find the Ark right away. -- Or ever, for that matter.

AV-X

If the data we obtained from our client is accurate, we should find the Ark with a mean search time of four-point-seven days.

KELLEY

Uh huh. -- Well, you're relieved. I can handle her for awhile.

AV-X turns and stares blankly at Kelley.

AV-X

Captain, you are well aware that I do not need rest. -- There is no need to relieve me.

Kelley's face has a look that is part whimsical and part sad.

KELLEY

I know. I know. -- But you're overdue for a reboot and a systems diagnostic, so go do that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AV-X
 Captain...

Kelley reaches over and squeezes AV-X's arm. AV-X doesn't react.

KELLEY
 We need you in ship shape, so that's an order.

Kelley withdraws her hand. AV-X nods and stands up.

AV-X
 Aye aye, Captain. -- The next jump is in twelve minutes, thirty seconds.

AV-X leaves the bridge.

Kelley taps at a couple of buttons on her console then sits back in her chair. She speaks to thin air.

KELLEY
 This is Captain Kelley of the S-S Wanderer requesting a link with Captain Pavlov. Over.

Silence for a moment.

DERZKIY OFFICER (O.S.)
 Wanderer, this is D-S-S Derzkiy. Wait one for Captain Pavlov.

Kelley drums her fingers impatiently on her armrest for a moment.

PAVLOV (O.S.)
 (slight Russian accent)
 This is Pavlov. -- How are things, Xiao-Long?

KELLEY
 Not good. Not good at all.

PAVLOV (O.S.)
 My, my. What's the matter, my dear. Our little deception outside Malwa system was flawless. No one suspects a thing.

KELLEY
 Yeah. -- Well we had a little run-in with a Dominion Marshal. A goddamn level five Marshal. -- I thought we had a deal?

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CONTINUED:

PAVLOV (O.S.)

Now, now. I heard about that little incident but truth be told it was an unfortunate accident.

KELLEY

An accident?

PAVLOV (O.S.)

Yes. He was an Malwa chasing another suspect when he ran into you. -- You with your very high priority arrest warrant.

Kelley shakes her head.

KELLEY

Alright. Just see it doesn't happen again.

PAVLOV (O.S.)

I have no control over the Marshals. No one does. They go where their programming takes them. -- What about your mission?

Kelley squirms a bit in her seat.

KELLEY

We're on track. We've matched the calculated velocity of the Ark and if Van Slyke's data is correct we should find it within a few days.

PAVLOV (O.S.)

Just make sure no harm comes to him. My principal wants Van Slyke to come home in one piece.

Kelley rolls her eyes.

KELLEY

Got it. Just make sure your principal keeps his end of the bargain.

PAVLOV (O.S.)

Of course. Find the Ark and return with Van Slyke unharmed and you will get your reward. -- Your sister will be restored.

INT. SS WANDERER COMMON ROOM - DAY

Kelley and Derek sit at one end of the table. Her with a mug of tea. Him a mug of coffee.

Scattered over the table in front of them are sheets of paper with sketches on them. Some are details of enormous engines and cargo bays. Some are of the entire Ark.

In the sketches the Ark looks like an open ended Can with a long spindle down it's center. Attached to each end of the spindle sticking out of the Can are rings with rocket engines mounted on them.

One sketch shows the Ark from the side. It has markings that show the scale of the ship. The Can is 200 KM long by 60 KM in diameter.

KELLEY

These are really quit good, Derek.

Derek smiles shyly and nods his head.

DEREK

Thank you, Captain. I haven't been unable to find any images of the Ark. Athena was always quite secretive. -- I drew these based on descriptions I found.

Kelley picks up one sketch and looks at it.

KELLEY

And there's really an artificial sun in the middle of the -- Can?

DEREK

Yes. Powered by interstellar hydrogen gathered by the Bussard ramjet's magnetic fields into a gigantic, floating fusion reactor.

KELLEY

Amazing. I can't wrap my arms...

Manse's voice comes over the intercom.

MANSE (O.S.)

Captain. Can you come to the bridge? You'll want to see this.

KELLEY

On my way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kelley stands up and Derek starts squirming in his chair like a puppy anticipating a treat.

MANSE

Oh, and bring our passenger with you.
-- The little wanker was right.

INT. SS WANDERER BRIDGE - DAY

Manse is in the left seat, AV-X in the right.

Half filling the central part of the viewport is the Ark. The Wanderer is approaching at a slight off angle from straight aft. The Can slowly spins around the spindle.

Derek's drawings were pretty accurate except he missed the tapered cone shapes at each end of the spindle and a shallow, narrow ring sticking out around the center of the Can.

Inside the Can is the achingly bright artificial sun and through the glare a hint of green can be seen.

But there is nothing coming from any of the engines mounted on smaller rings around the spindle on either end.

The hatch opens with a SNICK and Kelley, followed closely by Derek, enters the bridge. She stops just inside the hatch, stunned.

Derek darts past Kelley and stands in the small walkway between Manse and AV-X, his mouth open. Tears start to form in his eyes.

DEREK

(whispers)

There it is, father. -- Do you believe in me now?

Kelley shakes her head a steps forward to stand in here usual spot, fists on her hips.

KELLEY

Range to the Ark?

AV-X

One thousand kilometers. Closing speed one kilometer per second.

MANSE

Should I increase speed, Cap?

Kelley shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY

No. -- Let's ease in nice and slow.

Kelley steps forward and gently pulls Derek back and eases him over to stand behind Manse.

Derek is so engrossed in staring at the Ark he doesn't appear to notice.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Have you hailed them?

AV-X

Yes, Captain. No response.

KELLEY

What do sensors read?

AV-X

There is an intense barrage of neutrinos emanating from the artificial sun...

KELLEY

Those aren't dangerous.

AV-X

Not to humans. But over an extended period they can damage our jump drive.

Kelley shakes her head.

KELLEY

We won't be here that long.

The hatch opens again and Snake, Desalle and Tyrone crowd onto the bridge. Snake goes to stand next to Kelley.

SNAKE

(hisses)

There she is. -- The richest prize in the galaxy.

KELLEY

How so?

SNAKE

Use your imagination, Xiao-Long.

Kelley gives Snake a quizzical look then shakes her head.

KELLEY

Manse, any ideas where we can dock?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANSE

It won't exactly be a piece o' piss to dock on that giant spinning Can, but I'd like to have a go at it.

Snake HISSES and rolls his eyes.

Derek suddenly comes to life and waves his hand at Kelley.

DEREK

Captain, we need to dock near the bridge.

KELLEY

Where's that?

DEREK

Until just now I didn't know. Now I do.

MANSE

And where the bloody hell is that?

Derek jerks away from behind Manse.

DEREK

Uh -- Uh -- It's somewhere on that ring around the middle of the Can.

Kelley stares at the Ark for a moment then nods.

KELLEY

Okay. We'll dock near the bridge. But first I want to make a complete survey before we approach the Ark.

Kelley turns to Desalle and Tyrone standing near the hatch.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Desalle. Tyrone. I want you two in the gun turrets when we get close. -- Just in case.

Desalle and Tyrone nod.

Kelley turns back to Manse.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Manse, how do you want to approach this?

Manse ponders for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANSE

It'll be a might easier to kick away if we come in from the bow. -- If we get into trouble, that is.

AV-X turns and looks at Kelley.

AV-X

Captain, the intense magnetic fields generated to feed the Ark's reactor emanate through the bow.

KELLEY

So?

AV-X

We will not have shields.

KELLEY

(shakes head)

Let's hope we don't need them.

LATER

Manse and AV-X are in their usual places. Derek is sitting in the jump seat furiously typing into a tablet.

Kelley is looking at one of the monitors on the bulkhead.

The Ark is no longer visible through the viewports but a small display window hovers in front of the bottom of the central viewport showing the view aft with the Ark in it.

KELLEY

Magnetic flux density?

AV-X

Approximately ten mega-Teslas and rising. -- At these levels our sensors are not exactly precise.

Kelley taps the screen she's looking at and it changes to a colored diagram of the Wanderer showing the status of ship's systems.

Some are colored green. Many are yellow.

Kelley frowns then walks over to her usual position.

KELLEY

Is that level dangerous?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AV-X

If you were to leave the ship the iron in your red blood cells would interact with the magnetic field and the results would be -- unfortunate.

KELLEY

What about here inside the ship?

AV-X

For now our hull protects us. -- But I must point out, Captain, that no one has actually carried out an experiment like this.

MANSE

At least no one who survived.

Kelley nods and touches the data pad on her wrist. When she speaks her voice ECHOS through the ship.

KELLEY

This is Kelley. I want anyone who feels anything odd -- nausea, dizziness, whatever -- to report it right away.

She taps her comp again.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Desalle. -- Tyrone. -- Get ready.

The hatch SNICKS and Snake enters the bridge. He nods to Kelley and goes over to the monitor showing ship's status.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Alright, Manse. It's your show.

MANSE

Aye, Captain. Turning the ship.

Manse turns the yoke and the bow of the Ark slews into view, almost filling the viewport. The little window showing the view aft closes.

For a moment the sun in the middle of the Can is too bright to look at, but then a circle like the lens of a pair sunglasses covers it, making it possible to see.

As they approach, the inside surface of the Can can be seen. There's a hexagonal pattern, like a honeycomb, superimposed over it. Each hex holds a discrete environment. Most show various shades of green, but some are tan and brown deserts. Several appear to be covered in blue water and one is a frozen wasteland.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The habitats look like they are covered with a dense screen, like bug screen over a window.

The Ark rapidly fills the viewport until all that can be seen is the edge of the spinning Can and part of the interior.

Manse twists the yoke slightly to the right and the Wanderer slowly matches the spin rate of the Can so it no longer appears to be spinning.

Up close the outer surface of the Can no longer looks smooth. There are protrusions, trenches, and what appear to be small hatches dimpling the surface.

AV-X

We have matched the Ark's spin rate of one rotation every six minutes, Captain.

KELLEY

(nods)

Good. Proceed.

The Wanderer passes the outer edge of the Can and an ALARM sounds. A red circle is super-imposed over a small dome further forward on the surface.

AV-X

Captain, we're being tracked by radar.

KELLEY

Can you jam it?

AV-X

Negative. Our counter-measures work through the shields...

KELLEY

And shields are down. -- Distortion field?

AV-X

Also down.

The dome with the red circle starts to slide over to the left and Kelley walks over to the side viewport to watch it.

DEREK

It must be the collision defense system.

Kelley glares at Derek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY
Collision defense system? -- Desalle, I
want you to target that dome.

DESALLE (O.S.)
Aye, aye, Captain.

KELLEY
Manse, how much longer until we dock.

MANSE
Approximately two minutes.

A small hatch near the dome opens and a gun mount with two barrels
slowly emerges and swings towards Wanderer.

KELLEY
Desalle...

DESALLE (O.S.)
On it, Captain.

KELLEY
Evasive action.

MANSE
Crikey.

Manse yanks the yoke violently to the left turning upspin along
the Can. The alarm gives a WOOP and the gun mount fires twice.

One shot misses. The other strikes the Wanderer aft with a WHUMP.

Kelley is thrown off balance but catches herself.

Derek tumbles from the jump seat with a SQUEAK, rolls across the
deck and bowls Snake over.

The Wanderer's guns FIRE and streaks of light strike the dome,
blasting it open.

The shattered dome spins out of sight as the Wanderer moves
rapidly upspin.

The ALARM sounds again and another dome with a red circle comes in
sight around the edge of the Can. Manse turns the yoke and the
Wanderers heads aft on the Ark, but the maneuver is sluggish.

KELLEY
Report.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AV-X

We've been struck by a slug from a rail gun. -- Main engines are off-line.

MANSE

Helm is sluggish but I have control.

The second dome slowly recedes behind the horizon of the Can.

Snake untangles himself from Derek and rolls to his feet with a HISS, preparing to kick Derek. Derek cowers away.

KELLEY

No, Snake. -- Manse can we still reach the docking port near the bridge?

MANSE

Yes. But I wouldn't slow down to dock, Cap. We'd be an easy target.

AV-X

I concur, Captain. I estimate there are at least sixteen of those emplacements on the Ark. I've plotted a course that will allow us to avoid them as long as we stay close to the surface.

Kelley frowns and looks at the surface of the Can slowly sliding by. She shrugs.

KELLEY

Abort. Manse, get us out of here.

AV-X

I don't recommend that, Captain. Without main engines we can't separate fast enough to ensure we aren't struck again.

MANSE

(nods)

And if we need to do an E-V-A to fix 'em, we'll get fried by that magnetic field.

Kelley balls her fists in frustration.

Derek picks himself up. He dodges around Snake to get to Kelley.

DEREK

We can dock near engineering on the aft spindle. -- The defense system can't hit us there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY

AV-X?

AV-X pauses for a moment.

AV-X

I concur. I've modified our calculated course to take us there.

KELLEY

Very well. -- Manse?

MANSE

Got it. -- As me mum used to say; piss or go home.

Manse turns the yoke.

ACT THREE

EXT. WANDERER OUTSIDE THE DOCKING PORT

The Wanderer slowly eases aft along the spindle. Up ahead is the ring with six enormous engines on it, each one dwarfing the Wanderer in size.

The artificial sun baths her in light.

The spindle and the engines do not spin. Struts leading at an angle from the spindle to the Can spin on a ring around the spindle.

There's a rectangular door with a circular docking ring around it on the spindle between the struts supporting the engine rings and those leading to the Can.

The Wanderer turns and eases forward until her nose is inside the ring. She jerks to a stop just before striking the door.

INT. WANDERER'S FORWARD AIRLOCK

Kelley, AV-X and Snake are standing inside the airlock, helmets in hand. Kelley has her blaster holstered on her hip and Snake has the weapon he stole from the Marshal.

The inner hatch is open and Manse is standing in the corridor.

Through the window in the outer hatch part of the ring around the docking port can be seen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANSE

Cap, I don't like you going in there without me. -- Besides, I'd love to have a gander inside.

KELLEY

(shakes head)

No, I need you on the ship in case something goes wrong.

Snake walks over to the control panel near the inner hatch.

SNAKE

Besides, boarding ships is for real pirates.

(hisses)

Not Aussie posers. -- Mate.

Manse balls his fist and glares at Snake.

MANSE

(coldly)

Get stuffed. -- Mate.

KELLEY

Enough! You two can compare tallywackers later. Right now, Manse, I need you on the bridge. -- And, Snake...

Kelley nods at AV-X who puts her helmet on.

KELLEY (cont'd)

... get ready.

Kelley puts her helmet on and Snake HISSSES at Manse and does the same. He places his hand near a pair of red buttons on the panel.

MANSE

Alright, Cap. -- You take care.

Manse takes a step back and Kelley nods at Snake. Snake presses one of the buttons and the inner hatch closes.

He presses the other one and air starts to HISS as it's sucked out of the airlock.

EXT. ARK ENGINEERING DOCKING PORT

Kelley and Snake float near the docking port while AV-X is punching keys on a control pad. The little screen above the buttons has a red circle on it with the word "LOCKED" inside it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The port itself is about 15 feet high by 8 feet wide and has a small window in it. Inside the window it is completely black.

KELLEY

How much longer can we stay outside?

AV-X continues to punch buttons.

AV-X

We have approximately three minutes before the magnetic field starts damaging our biological systems.

SNAKE

I already feel tingling. -- In my crotch.

AV-X

Considering what I see when I monitor you in your bunk, that is not unexpected.

Snake HISSES.

KELLEY

Can we concentrate on the task at hand, please. -- How much longer to get the port open?

AV-X pushes a key and the little screen changes to a green circle with "UNLOCKED". Light pours from the window in the port.

AV-X

The is based on a system in use since the twentieth century.

AV-X hovers a finger above the control pad.

AV-X (cont'd)

Ready on your signal, Captain.

KELLEY

Manse, we're opening the port. Make sure the boys in the turrets are ready for any nasty surprises.

MANSE (O.S.)

Wilco. -- Be careful, Cap.

Kelley draws her blaster and Snake follows suit. Her helmeted head nods.

KELLEY

AV-X, any sign that anyone knows we're here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AV-X
No, Captain. I have only interacted with
automatic systems.

KELLEY
Okay. -- Open it.

INT. ARK ENGINEERING DOCKING PORT

The port airlock is an empty space about 20 feet high, 10 feet wide and 20 feet deep.

Kelley floats in front of the inner door while AV-X is at the inner control pad.

Snake is coiled up next to the door with his feet braced in two of the hand holds that ring the inner door.

Both Kelley and Snake still have their blasters drawn.

KELLEY
Ready. -- Open the inner door.

AV-X pushes a key on the pad and the door slides to the side, air HISSING as the pressure equalizes.

Inside dim lighting comes on in a large space of indeterminate size. There is metal lattice work crossing the space with a few large plastic storage boxes anchored to it here and there.

The hatch is halfway open when Snake twists his body and launches himself into the compartment beyond.

He bounces off part of the lattice near the door and sails down a corridor free of lattice crossing the compartment between the inner port door and a smaller, lit door about 200 meters away across the compartment.

As he sails he rotates his body rapidly along its long axis, scanning the room with his blaster ready for any trouble.

Kelley slides up to the edge of the door frame and covers Snake with her blaster.

Snake stops himself just short of the door and spins around scanning all parts of the space.

He sees nothing and relaxes slightly.

SNAKE
All clear, Xiao-Long.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kelley holsters her blaster and takes off her helmet. AV-X takes her's off as well.

KELLEY

Let's go find out where the hell everybody is.

INT. ARK ENGINEERING CONTROL

The compartment is not large and has eight control stations, three across the back wall and two on each side. It is dimly lit and there is dingy quality to the fixtures. Over the centuries the plastics covering everything have lost their patina.

Since there is no gravity, there are no chairs.

AV-X is "standing" in front of the center station along the back, her feet anchored to the deck by her magnetic boots. She is no longer in her space suit.

Kelley stands next to her but with her back turned, also no longer in her suit. Hand near her blaster, she watches the door.

AV-X's station has three monitors with rapidly streaming text and graphics on them. All the other station's screens are blank.

AV-X TAPS rapidly at the keypad, a blank expression on her face.

CLANKING FOOTSTEPS sound beyond the door.

Kelley starts and grabs her blaster.

Desalle enters followed by Derek.

DESALLE

Just us, Captain.

Kelley relaxes and holsters her blaster.

KELLEY

Sorry. This place gives me the creeps.

DESALLE

I know what you mean, Capitaine. -- This ship launched with a million souls on board, but...

KELLEY

Where is everyone?

Desalle shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY (cont'd)

Any problems?

Desalle shakes his head.

DESALLE

No. The tube from the ship to the port is in place. No need to suit up anymore.

Kelley turns to look at Derek. He stands there with his mouth open looking at the controls.

KELLEY

What about him?

DESALLE

(shakes head)

The newbie's not used to zero G. He's having trouble with the magnetic shoes.

Kelley frowns and nods towards AV-X.

KELLEY

She can't access ship's controls. I want you two to help.

Desalle looks startled.

DESALLE

Her? Having trouble? -- Merde. How is that possible?

Derek comes around and joins their conversation.

DEREK

The security protocols were designed by Athena. Although the cyborg is undoubtedly very smart...

Derek points at AV-X.

AV-X

(doesn't turn)

My mind can't begin to match Athena's.

Kelley walks over to AV-X using a graceful, gliding step. Derek follows, CLOMPING clumsily.

KELLEY

Any progress?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AV-X

Some. I've accessed a diagram of the ship, and I've been able to map a route to the bridge.

AV-X TAPS some keys and a transparent diagram of the ship appears on the central screen. A red line leads from where they are in the spindle to the bulge around the center of the Can.

Kelley and Derek study it for a moment.

KELLEY

Do we need to go through any of the habitats?

AV-X

Negative, Captain. There's a maintenance tram line that runs underneath them leading to the bridge.

KELLEY

Good. We don't want to interact with the any of the nut jobs except as a last resort.

Derek hops with excitement and becomes unanchored from the deck. Irritated, Kelley tugs him down and his feet stick with TWO CLANGS.

DEREK

But, Captain. We have to visit the habitats. -- It's our duty to see what's there. -- Who's there.

KELLEY

(shakes head)

The only duty I have is to get us home in one piece.

Kelley looks at the screen and frowns.

KELLEY (cont'd)

So, you still think we have to go to the bridge to turn off the defense systems?

AV-X

Yes. If I could break through the security protocols I could transfer control here. Otherwise...

KELLEY

Otherwise, we need to book a trip on a tram.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Desalle has fired up one of the consoles on the side and is intently looking at a screen with the words "GUEST SERVICES" across the top.

DESALLE

Capitaine? Why does the Ark think I'm a guest? -- What are we on, some sort of cruise ship?

INT. ARK EMBARKATION HOLDING AREA

Snake is floating in air holding a strange, human sized harness attached to a metal strand cable about six feet long. The cable is attached to the bulkhead and there is no visible means of detaching it.

Snake turns and looks to his side.

Stretching out in front of him, running as far as the eye can see in the dim light, is an enormous, elongated compartment.

The only items in the compartment are hundreds of floating harnesses attached to the bulkheads by cables.

Snake HISSES.

INT. ARK EMBARKATION TRAM STATION

Kelley is standing on the platform of the tram station, anchored by her magnetic shoes.

In front of her is a perpendicular extension of the platform that runs alongside a tram that looks like a subway car. On either side of her are at least a dozen other extensions with trams.

The lighting is dim and there is still an old, dingy quality to everything.

Kelley is talking into her wrist data pad.

KELLEY

That's right. I want you to gather together a week's rations, med kit, repair kit... You know, the usual.

MANSE (O.S.)

Got it. Everything we need to go walkabout. -- But, Cap, I still don't get why you want to abandon the Wanderer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLEY

We're not abandoning her. We'll need her to get home. -- I just think everyone should stay together.

MANSE (O.S.)

Cap...

KELLEY

That's an order, Manse. -- She'll be fine. A-V-X and Desalle are on their way to set up full defensive protocols.

MANSE (O.S.)

(sighs)

Aye, aye, Captain. -- We'll be ready.

KELLEY

I know. You always are. -- Get everyone down here to the tram station as soon as possible. -- Kelley out.

Kelley lowers her arm and walks forward to the door of the tram in front of her.

She reaches the door and it slides open with a SNICK.

INT. TRAM CAR

The tram car has windows in the front and back and there are rows of seats with an aisle up the middle like in an airliner.

Kelley enters and approaches Snake who is watching Derek work a console in the front of the car.

KELLEY

Any progress?

SNAKE

Ask the mark -- sss -- client.

Kelley stands next to Derek, arms folded.

KELLEY

Well?

Derek turns to her and smiles.

DEREK

Easy peasy, lemon squeezy. -- Ready when you are, Captain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LATER

The entire crew, except for Derek, is strapped into seats near the front of the car. Backpacks line the aisle near the crew.

Derek is standing in front of the console wearing a harness similar to the ones Snake found earlier.

DEREK (cont'd)

Captain?

Kelley looks around at her crew and they nod they are ready. Kelley takes a deep breath and lets it out.

KELLEY

Go.

Derek presses a key and the tram car moves forward smoothly.

MANSE

Bloody hell.

Tyrone and Desalle grip their arm rests. Snake HISSES. AV-X stares ahead blankly.

The tram gathers speed and shoots towards a round tunnel about 200 meters away across the station.

It travels down the tunnel at a rapid speed. Lights shooting by mark its progress.

The tram hurtles into an enormous open space, at least 500 meters across and even more up and down. The tram turns, corkscrews and heads towards the "ceiling".

Through the forward window, it looks like the tram is heading straight towards a solid wall.

KELLEY

Van Slyke! What's going on?

Derek gulps, his eyes open wide, but says nothing.

Kelley starts to unbuckle herself but AV-X, who is sitting next to her, grabs her arm.

AV-X

Trust Athena.

Kelley sits back. The rest of crew fidgets as they approach the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At the last second a circular hole slides open and the tram shoots into it. The tram moves along another tunnel.

AV-X (cont'd)

The system ensures that we arrive at the opening in the base of the strut at the correct time.

DEREK

As it circles the spindle. -- I wondered how that worked.

Manse tries to jump up but is held in place by his seat belt.

MANSE

And you didn't know, you little wanker?

Derek turns and smiles sheepishly at Manse.

DEREK

Like the cyborg said; trust Athena.

INT. ARK WAREHOUSE INTERSECTION

The crew are walking down on aisle between enormous stacks of plastic storage boxes, like the few that were inside the docking port. The aisle runs as far as the eye can see in the dim light.

Down the middle of the aisle is a yellow stripe that glows faintly. The crew's FOOTSTEPS ECHO.

DEREK

... it's truly amazing. The Can spinning makes the gravity feel just like Earth.

AV-X

What you feel is not gravity, but centripetal force.

DEREK

(irritated)

Whatever.

AV-X

The Ark spins at one rotation every six minutes which yields a centripetal acceleration of approximately ninety-three percent of Earth's gravity...

Kelley grabs AV-X's arm and she stops talking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tyrone has been walking point about twenty meters ahead of the rest. He has stopped and is gesturing at the floor.

Kelley raises a fist in the air and everyone stops and grows silent. She walks forward to where Tyrone is.

On the floor the yellow line is bisected by a green one that leads down a side aisle. Next to each limb of the cross words are stenciled on the floor.

Back the way they came it reads "AFT - SPINDLE". To the left; "UPSPIN - ADMINISTRATION". Straight ahead; "FORWARD - HABITAT 343". To the right; "DOWNSPIN - MAINTENANCE".

Kelley looks down the aisle to the right and in the distance the compartment curves upwards along the inner surface of the Can.

Just at the point where the upward curve is apparent is a small building with freight elevator doors facing Kelley's direction.

KELLEY

I think this is where we turn.

INT. OUTSIDE ARK MAINTENANCE ELEVATOR

The freight elevator doors are shut and AV-X is typing into a keypad to the right of the doors on the wall.

A BEEP sounds and the small screen above the keypad reads "GUEST ACCESS DENIED".

Kelley stands watching AV-X, TAPPING her foot impatiently.

Manse and Desalle are checking their packs and Tyrone is back along the aisle a little ways keeping watch.

Snake stands staring intently at a stack of storage boxes nearby when Derek slides quietly up next to him.

SNAKE

(to himself)

I wonder what's inside all these boxes?

DEREK

Probably supplies and stuff.

Snake starts and HISSES.

DEREK (cont'd)

Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SNAKE

Supplies?

DEREK

Uh huh. You know, for the ship. -- And for when they start the colony.

SNAKE

Shouldn't they be out of supplies by now? -- The journey was only supposed to last a century. -- It's been two.

Another BEEP from where AV-X is working. Kelley SNORTS.

DEREK

(nods)

Over two and a half. -- Athena overbuilt everything. This ship can keep going for a thousand years. -- At least.

Snake steps forward and places a hand on the box in front of him.

Derek shrugs and turns back to look at the others.

Kelley turns and gestures for Derek to come join her.

KELLEY

Van S... Derek. Come here.

Derek walks over to her. Manse sets his pack down and joins them.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Why could we just walk through the doors into this -- warehouse -- but we can't access the elevator?

Derek places his hand on his chin and ponders for a moment.

DEREK

I have a theory.

Derek goes silent and Manse grabs his arm and shakes him.

MANSE

(angry)

Well? -- Out with it.

Derek shrugs free.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK

Okay -- Okay. I think when we left the tram station we were on a path that the passengers -- the guests -- used to enter the habitats.

KELLEY

And?

Derek turns to look at AV-X and the elevator controls.

DEREK

And now we're trying to enter an area only accessible by the crew.

MANSE

And we're not part of the Ark's bleedin' crew. -- Bollocks.

Kelley watches AV-X for a moment.

KELLEY

Suggestions?

Manse taps his blaster.

MANSE

We can try blasting our way in.

Derek SNORTS and Kelley shakes her head.

KELLEY

We'll save that idea for last.

DEREK

Captain, I think we should try and find...

A BELL sounds and a red light comes on over the elevator doors.

KELLEY

Save it. -- A-V-X?

AV-X

It wasn't me, Captain. Someone, -- or something, is coming.

ACT FOUR

INT. OUTSIDE ARK MAINTENANCE ELEVATOR

The crew gathers in front of the doors.

KELLEY

Defensive positions. -- But don't draw
weapons until I give the word.

SNAKE

(hisses)
Xiao-Long!

Snake withers under the glare she gives him and he slinks off to take position along the wall to the left of the doors. AV-X takes position along the wall to the right.

Desalle crouches next to the crates stacked at the end of the aisle on the right. Tyrone mirrors his position on the left.

Kelley, Manse, and Derek stand twenty feet in front of the doors and wait.

The BELL sounds again and the light turns green. Through the slit of the doors the crew sees an elevator car reach their level.

Everybody tenses.

The freight elevator doors open and inside an enormous car the only thing they see is one of the plastic storage boxes.

The box rises from the floor moves forward out of the car.

Behind the box carrying it is a humanoid ROBOT clad in light blue-gray metallic skin.

As the robot carries the box forward Kelley, Manse, and Derek scatter out of the way.

The robot sees them and stops. It sets the box down and turns to its right to face Kelley and Derek.

The robot's face is actually quite pleasant with a fixed grin and deep blue eyes. On its back and chest is a small silver symbol similar to a QR code.

The robot speaks with a pleasing female voice with a hint of a British accent.

ROBOT

Hello, guests. May I render you some
assistance?

Startled, Kelley gestures for Derek to answer the robot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK

Uh, -- sure.

ROBOT

My, it must be quit an adventure you're on. -- Unfortunately, I must insist you cut things short. Guests aren't allowed in this area.

DEREK

(mumbles)

Sorry.

The robot approaches Derek.

ROBOT

Let me escort you back to your designated habitat. Which one is it?

DEREK

Uh, -- three-forty-three.

The robot clasps its hands together.

ROBOT

Larplandia. Excellent. That's nearby. -- Gather your things and we'll be on our way.

Kelley steps up and gently moves Derek aside. As she does this, Snake slithers towards the open elevator doors.

KELLEY

Excuse me, uh -- What should I call you?

ROBOT

How rude of me.

The robot points towards the symbol on its chest.

ROBOT (cont'd)

This mobile unit doesn't have a name, just a designation symbol. I'm merely using it as conduit to communicate with you.

The robot lowers its hand and cocks its head slightly.

ROBOT (cont'd)

My name is Minerva.

Derek starts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEREK

Oh -- My -- God. Minerva?

The robot gives a slight bow.

MINERVA

At your service.

Derek stands there with his mouth open and Kelley shrugs.

KELLEY

Minerva, we need to go to the bridge.

The robot CHUCKLES.

MINERVA

Don't be ridiculous. Only cast members
have access to the bridge.

Snake has reached the doors and turns to Kelley for confirmation that he should enter. Kelley's head gives a barely perceptible shake.

MINERVA (cont'd)

Let me close the elevator doors and we'll
be on our way.

The robot turns towards the elevator control pad. It sees AV-X.

MINERVA (cont'd)

Funny. You look like a member of the
cast, yet I don't sense your presence.

The robot leans forward slightly, almost as if its sniffing AV-X.

Everybody freezes.

The robot comes to a fighting stance, its so far friendly demeanor becoming menacing.

MINERVA (cont'd)

You are not a cast member. What are you?

AV-X

(flatly)

I am a cyborg.

MINERVA

That is not permitted. -- You must be
deactivated. -- Immediately.

The robot steps towards AV-X, hands extended in claws.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Desalle, Tyrone and Kelley draw their blasters but hesitate to shoot because AV-X is in their line of fire behind the robot.

A BLASTER BOLT strikes the robot, tossing its molten remains twenty feet away which land with a CLATTER.

It was Snake who fired.

KELLEY

Good shot.

ALARMS go off and continue to sound. The light over the doors flashes red and the doors snap shut so fast that Snake barely has time to roll out of the way.

Snake fires a BLASTER BOLT at the doors, punching a hole through them, but it's too late. The car is already sliding out of sight downwards.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Get ready to move out.

While AV-X goes to the elevator control pad, everybody else gathers up their packs.

AV-X taps a key and the audible alarm stops, but the red light over the door continues to flash.

KELLEY (cont'd)

AV-X, can you call the elevator back.

AV-X taps a few more keys.

AV-X

Yes, Captain. The controls are unlocked at this moment.

Manse is over by the hole blasted through the doors, head coked to listen into the shaft.

MANSE

Bad idea, Cap. Sounds like a whole mess of those clanky bastards are piling into to the car down below somewheres.

DESALLE

Merde.

Snake walks up to Kelley.

SNAKE

Time to slither away, Xiao-Long.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kelley looks back down the aisle between the boxes and nods.

KELLEY
 Alright, people. -- Run.

And they do.

INT. ARK WAREHOUSE INTERSECTION

The crew sprints into the intersection of the aisles and stops. Most are starting to breath a little hard, and Derek is definitely getting winded.

Tyrone has a monocular out and is looking back towards the elevator.

TYRONE
 Captain, twenty-five or so robots just filed out of the elevator. -- They're forming up.

KELLEY
 Okay, which way now?

MANSE
 We should go back to the ship.

AV-X
 I don't recommend that. We would be trapped.

Kelley points forward along the aisle marked "ADMINISTRATION".

KELLEY
 Can we get to the bridge that way?

Derek nudges forward.

DEREK
 It'll be locked. -- Minerva won't let us in there.

AV-X
 I concur.

DEREK
 We have to go through the habitats. -- It's the only way.

KELLEY
 (frowns)
 I said only as a last resort...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tyrone waves his arm while still looking back through his monocular.

TYRONE
Captain. They're coming. Fast.

Kelley looks down the aisle and sees a column of robots like the one they destroyed earlier marching towards them at a rapid pace.

MANSE
Back to the ship, Cap?

KELLEY
(shakes head)
No. -- We head to our last resort.

Kelley picks up her pack and sprints up the aisle towards the habitat. The others follow.

INT. ARK WAREHOUSE AISLE

The crew are trotting down the aisle between the stacks of boxes.

Derek is panting heavily and Desalle is getting there. Kelley, Manse and Tyrone are also starting to tire. Only AV-X and Snake seem unaffected.

Several hundred meters up ahead is a large double door with "EXIT TO HABITAT 343" stenciled over it.

Tyrone is in the back and he looks over his shoulder. The column of robots is coming up fast on the crew.

TYRONE
(shouts)
They're gaining on us.

Kelley looks over her shoulder, taps Snake on the shoulder and stops. Snake, Manse and Tyrone also stop while the rest run on.

KELLEY
(deep breath)
Manse, get the others out of here.

MANSE
Cap...

Kelley points towards the door.

KELLEY
Go! -- You too, Tyrone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Manse nods and he and Tyrone run after the others.

Kelley runs over and crouches down around the corner of a stack of boxes on the left. Snake does the same on the right.

Kelley draws a bead on the column of robots, now only a hundred meters away, and FIRES a bolt. One of the robots in the front falls with a molten edged hole in its chest.

Snake FIRES and another robot is hit, but the blast from his Marshall's weapon flings the robot backwards, knocking several others down.

The remaining robots take evasive action. Most dodge up-down, left-right while continuing their charge.

Three leap onto the boxes on one side and jump along the top of the stacks towards Kelley and Snake.

Kelley and Snake FIRE again at the robots in front of them, but only one is hit. Kelley points upwards.

KELLEY (cont'd)

Snake!

SNAKE

I see them.

Kelley and Snake get up and sprint towards the door, FIRING blindly behind. Up ahead the crew has almost reached it.

A robot jumps to the ground twenty meters ahead of them and is quickly joined by two others. They spread out across the aisle.

Kelley and Snake skid to a stop.

The robots speak in unison:

ROBOTS

Drop your weapons and you will not be harmed.

The other robots behind the pair stop, waiting.

Kelley looks around then lowers her blaster to her side. Snake HISSES and does the same.

The three robots in front step forward.

BLASTER BOLTS tear through the robots on each side, back to front. They collapse to the ground with a CLATTER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Outside the door, Manse and Tyrone, scopes attached to their blasters, wait for another clear shot.

Kelley and Snake roll forward and to either side, turning back towards the other robots.

Two BOLTS tear through the remaining robot in the front.

Kelley fires two quick BOLTS at the bottom box level with where the remaining robots are bunched. The box collapses and the stack teeters towards the aisle.

One BOLT from Snake's blaster is enough and the stack on the other side tumbles into the aisle.

The boxes land in the aisle with a series of THUDS, some so loud that the contents of those boxes must weigh a ton or more.

Many robots are crushed, the rest are knocked down and buried.

Snake and Kelley jump to their feet, ready to fight any robots still standing. But nothing stirs in the jumbled pile.

SNAKE

Let's get out of here.

KELLEY

Right behind you.

They trot towards the others at the door.

EXT. HABITAT 343 ENTRANCE - DAY

The crew march out of what looks like a castle gate set in a cliff that raises a 1000 meters or more.

In front of them is a macadam road that runs straight through a dense forest largely made up of majestic oak trees.

Tyrone is bringing up the rear and as he clears the gate a metal portcullis lowers and the door behind it swings shut.

The forest filters the artificial sun, yet it still makes the crew squint after spending so much time in the dim light found in the interior sections of the Ark.

The crew hitch their packs and march down the road.

EXT. FOREST EXIT - DAY

The road leaves the forest and winds up a tall, grassy hill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The crew exits the forest into the bright sunlight. The sun is fixed approximately 30 degrees above the horizon straight ahead.

The crew stops and Kelley takes a few steps off to the side. She uses here hand to cover the sun and looks at the sky.

The blue sky is actually covered with a fine, dense mesh and dimly through this she sees the other side of the Can with its mixture of blue, green and brown hexagonal habitats.

She lowers her hand and looks to the left and right. To either side are rolling hills that climb approximately 10 degrees upwards along the curve of the Can. In the distance the horizon is filled by a tall cliff.

Dotted amongst the hills are several villages and what looks like a small medieval castle, but they are too distant to make out any details.

Kelley rejoins the group and Tyrone, who has been scanning the area with his monocular, offers it to her.

Kelley shakes her head and gestures for everyone to gather round.

MANSE

Where to now, Cap?

KELLEY

Whoever built this road meant it to go somewhere. I suggest we continue following it.

Derek hops from foot to foot in excitement.

DEREK

Yes. -- Let's find out what's there at somewhere.

Kelley rolls her eyes and the crew climbs the road up the hill.

EXT. THE GRASSY HILL

The crew is trudging up the road and have almost reached the top of the hill.

From over the hill comes the sound of TRUMPETS blaring followed by SHOUTS and the sounds of metal CLANGING on metal.

The crew stops, frozen in confusion.

MANSE

What the bloody hell?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESALLE
 (crosses self)
 Nom de Dieu.

Kelley shakes her head.

KELLEY
 Okay, -- Snake. -- Tyrone. Come with
 me. -- Manse, get ready for trouble. --
 But no blasters without my orders.

MANSE
 (nods)
 Got it, Cap.

Kelley, Snake and Tyrone drop packs and trot towards the crest of the hill. Just before they reach it they drop to the ground and crawl forward.

They peer over the crest and Tyrone gets his monocular out. What they see astonishes them.

The slope on the other side of the hill is less than half that of the one the crew climbed. At its base a broad valley opens up.

At the near end of the valley a medieval style battle rages. The three are lined up edge on to the battle line.

On the left side about a fifty foot soldiers in studded leather armor and carrying blue and green kite shaped shields are thrusting spears at their opponents.

Behind the near flank of the foot soldiers are a dozen knights, mounted on large white horses, clad in bright mail, and armed with lances with blue and green pennons.

The banners of this army bare a white swan on a blue field.

As bizarre as this army is, their opponents are if anything more unusual. It is an army comprised of what look like Orcs.

Its foot soldiers have grotesque faces and are wearing thick black fur tunics for protection. Their round shields are emblazoned with a red eye. Their weapons are two-headed battleaxes.

The Orc cavalry is mounted on large black horses, wear black mail and the pennons on their lances are black and red.

The banners they fly are a red eye on a black field.

Behind each army are two figures dressed in long flowing robes covered in runic symbols; sky blue with silver symbols on the left, red robes with black symbols on the right.

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CONTINUED:

The robed figures are gesturing rapidly with their hands and appear to be chanting, although what they're chanting can't be heard over the din of battle.

One of the blue robed figures reaches into a pouch at his waist and withdraws an spherical object about the size a baseball. He cocks his arm and lobs it into the air.

The ball sails over White Swan army foot soldiers and lands in the middle of Red Eye ones. It explodes with flash and a BANG, but there is little actual concussive power to the explosion.

Nonetheless, about a dozen of the Red Eye soldiers nearest the blast fall to the ground, apparently lifeless.

The White Swan soldiers SHOUT and CHEER and rush forward into the hole blasted through the enemy lines.

The three on the hill are rendered speechless by the bizarre spectacle before them. Tyrone is using his monocular to rapidly scan over the scene, trying to make sense of it all.

He stops his scan on figure below them just off the near side of the battle. The figure is small and has it's back to them. It's dressed in a black monk's robe with the cowl up so it is impossible to tell if it is a man or something else.

The MONK carries a seven foot wooden staff with a white crystal at the top.

Tyrone lowers the monocular, taps Kelley's shoulder and points at the monk. She takes the monocular, looks, then lowers it and gestures a question to Tyrone.

Tyrone shrugs.

As if to answer Kelley's question, the monk lowers its cowl and turns to look right at where the three are.

The monk is revealed to be slight woman. The crown of her head is covered with shiny metal with a downward peak on her forehead.

The three try to bury themselves in the grass but it is no use.

Snake HISSES and Tyrone gulps.

The monk turns back to the battle, raises her staff and brings it down to strike the ground. A flash of lightening shoots upward from her staff into the sky with a CLAP of thunder.

MONK

Stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The monk's shout ECHOS through the valley.

The battle stops and all the fighters turns towards the monk. The monk points her staff towards the three at the top of the hill.

SNAKE

Should we run?

Kelley shakes her head and stands up. Snake and Tyrone join her. She turns to look back down the hill and gestures for the others to join them.

The fighters are now forming up into one line, White Swan to the left, Red Eye to the right, facing the hill.

The monk stands in front watching Kelley and the others.

The rest of the crew join the three at the top and Kelley walks forward down the hill. The others spread out in a rough line and follow her.

When they are halfway down the monk extends her staff towards Kelley and the crew stops.

No one talks or moves. The only sound is from a horse that SHIFTS nervously.

The monk gestures with her staff left and right and the knights from both armies set spurs to their steeds and TROT around the crew, forming a semicircle blocking any thought of escape.

They lower their lances to point at the crew and shout in unison.

KNIGHTS

Ho.

Derek twists around to look nervously at the knights behind him. He blinks in astonishment when he sees that their lance points are blunted.

He squints at the Orcs and sees that from close up it's obvious they are just men in makeup and costumes.

He looks at the foot soldiers and sees that their weapons are blunted as well. The only damage they can deliver is some nasty bruises and the occasional broken bone or concussion.

The Orcs who had been felled by the blast are no longer lying on the ground and have joined the others.

DEREK

Uh, -- Captain. I don't think this is...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONK
(shouts)
Silence.

Again the shout ECHOS through the valley.

The monk strides forward.

KELLEY
Under no circumstances is anyone to draw
their weapon. -- That's an order.

MANSE
Aye, aye, Captain.

The rest nod in agreement.

The monk stops in front of Kelley, tilting her staff forward.

MONK
We were forewarned of your coming.

KELLEY
(nods)
I figured as much. -- Let us go in peace
and there won't be any more trouble.

MONK
(shakes head)
We have not yet made a decision.

DEREK
We? What about Minerva?

The monk turns slowly and stares at Derek. He wilts.

MONK
Minerva has deferred to the cast on this
issue.

KELLEY
What issue? -- And what's the cast?

The monk taps her chest.

MONK
I am a member of the cast. -- And the
issue is how to dispose of you.

Snake, on Kelley's left, HISSES and reaches for his blaster.
Kelley intercepts his arm and pulls it away.

The monk turns to Snake and tilts her staff towards him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONK (cont'd)
Please remove your weapons. -- They are
not permitted here.

The monk gestures and knights, one for each crew member, move forward until their blunted lance points gentle touch each crew member's back.

The crew unbuckle their gun belts and drop them to the ground.

The monk gives a grimaced smile and nods.

MONK (cont'd)
One final matter.

The monk slides to her left to stand in front of AV-X, who is standing on Kelley's immediate right.

MONK (cont'd)
The abomination is to be deactivated.

The monk tilts her staff forward until it touches AV-X's forehead. Lightening shoots from the staff into AV-X with a CRACKLE and she crumbles to the ground.

Kelley lunges at the monk.

KELLEY
No.

The knight behind Kelley strikes her in the back of the head with his blunted lance point.

FADE TO BLACK

EPILOGUE

FADE IN

INT. DUNGEON

The dungeon is spacious, dry and well lit by torches. There are stone benches covered in clean straw running along the walls. At one end is a stout wooden door.

Kelley is sitting on a bench near the door. There is a bandage on the back of her head and she looks a little shaky.

AV-X lies along the bench, her head in Kelley's lap. AV-X is catatonic and stares blankly at the ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

