

DESTROYER OF WORLDS

FADE IN:

SOUNDS: The chaos of battle: the dull thuds of explosions, the klaxon of alarms, the yelling of soldiers, the pings of ricochets, the screams of the dying.

SIGHTS: A pair of young man's eyes, barely old enough to be in this battle, perhaps not old enough to vote. Brown eyes, the right marked with a visible flaw: they are full of fear.

Then: the cold void of space -- no sound.

EXT. SPACE

It's an all-out war in space with battle ships of two types opposing one another: streamlined, awe-inspiring star-cruisers that look like every boy's dream of a space-ship model; and jagged, dark starfish-like things that can only fill one with dread.

One streamlined cruiser takes a big hit.

INT. SHIP

Inside that ship, it's a nightmare of sparks, screamed commands, men and women running, metal tearing.

The boy with brown eyes sits in the center of it all, his head hooked up to a spider-web of neural lines -- he's pilot and controller of the ship.

But he's now confused and scared.

PIKE

Captain?

He looks over his right shoulder, as he usually does, for his commander.

CAPTAIN MAKIN is slumped back in his command chair, a gaping hole in his chest, blood flowing down over his legs. Dead.

PIKE

Captain!

A FLASH

Of an alien thing: a face framed by the void. An enormous snake with glowing red eyes! It seems to mouth something.

PIKE

Reacts in fear as if he'd seen this thing in the ship with him.

PIKE

Wha?

THEN: A shadow falls over the ship.

Pike thinks a thought and the front viewscreen opens on his command. He looks and sees a gigantic globe moving right in front of the ship.

An ensign near him screams.

ENSIGN

It's attacking!

The globe moves closer. Pike's eyes widen with fright.

Others crowd the viewscreen.

LIEUTENANT

What is it?

ENSIGN

It's coming right at us! Do something, Pike!

And Pike does, he thinks a thought quickly and sees a confirmation light on the board in front of him.

EXT. SPACE

Outside, the port side of the ship opens and a laser cannon reveals itself, pointed directly at the globe.

CLOSE ON: PIKE'S EYES

He's never been so afraid.

THE GLOBE

Comes closer and closer.

PIKE

Blinks his eyes: a command to the neural network above him.

OUTSIDE

The cannon fires!

The globe evaporates in a flash of light, which expands outwards over the nearby warring ships.

The ships are scattered as if by a giant wind.

INSIDE

As his ship flounders, Pike's eyes look questioningly: what has he done?

DISSOLVE TO:

THOSE SAME EYES

Older and colder. Wind whips long brown hair across the eyes.

A FIGURE

Seems to stand on a cloud miles above the earth, gusts making his clothes flutter around him.

He's godlike, solitary and seems to be gazing at humanity beneath him.

A SOUND

The whirring of massive machinery.

THE CLOUD

Moves away, revealing that the man stands on some kind of platform suspended in air by itself.

The whirring becomes louder.

And a huge, two-story structure, towed by two small flying tug-craft, moves into place above the man. The workers on the tug-craft gesture down to him and he gives them a thumbs up.

JESSE, a bald, black man on a tug-craft yells down.

JESSE

Ready for it, Cutter?

THE MAN BELOW

Is obviously the same boy from the battle, but now disguised. He nods and deftly maneuvers the structure onto the floating platform on which he stands.

CUTTER

Anti-grav units set and go. Let her drop.

The two-story structure drops lightly down on the platform and holds firmly.

A BUILDING

Rises on this structure. A cloud-scraper: a massive edifice floating way over earth, in the clouds.

A group of twenty or so men and women make this happen quickly and efficiently, tier upon tier.

They work hand in hand, perilously hanging over the void beneath them, each one watching out for the others, helping when things get too dangerous.

Except for Cutter. He is always on the highest level, by himself, doing his job solo.

Halfway up the building, he sets a gargoyle on the outside wall, then another, then two more. He looks at one gargoyle's face closely.

CUTTER

Seen worse.

A voice makes him nearly drop the sculpture.

JOY (O.S.)

Don't play with the merchandise,
Cutter.

ABOVE HIM

Stands JOY, a commanding presence. She's queen of the building team, as tough as one of the gargoyles, but that strength seems hidden by a girlish charm.

Cutter is not happy to see her.

CUTTER

You think the rich feebs paying for
this gonna notice if a replica ain't
perfect? All they care is what it
cost.

He leaps up past her, climbing the side of the building like a monkey, all the way to the top. He yells back down to her.

CUTTER

They should spend time down below
with the real people.

She looks up after him, joined by Jesse.

JOY

Two weeks with our team and I still
don't know grub about him.

She fingers a silver lightning bolt on a necklace she wears.

JESSE

What do you know about any of us?

JOY

I have your records. I know how bad
you were. And I know what good you
can do.

JESSE

We all appreciate what you've done
for us. No one else would even look
at us, let alone give us a job.

JOY

He doesn't appreciate it. Or
anything.

ON TOP OF THE CLOUDSCRAPER

Cutter puts up a series of decorative angels around the
corners of the very apex of the building. In the middle of
the angels sits a large flight deck.

Jesse climbs up beside him.

JESSE

This flight deck big enough for
angels?

CUTTER

Angels don't come to Old Earth.

JESSE

Too sinful?

CUTTER

Too far away. We're out past the
suburbs. We done?

Jesse looks from the building to Cutter.

JESSE

Guess so. Look, Cutter, don't run
off like you always do. Have a drink
with us.

Cutter takes out a keyring, hits a button on a flat object.

CUTTER

Don't drink.

A small buzz comes from beside them, then a beat-up three-seated flyer lands on the flight deck. Cutter starts to walk to it. Jesse intercepts him.

JESSE

Boss woman thinks you don't like her. Or us.

CUTTER

Is that a requirement for the job?

He opens the driver door of the flyer and gets in.

JESSE

You're a cold son-of-a-grub.

CUTTER

Gotta be to work up here with the angels.

He slams the door shut and takes off in the flyer, which belches some smoke and stutters a bit on lift-off. But it manages to clear the building and head towards earth.

Jesse watches him go, turns and faces Joy.

JESSE

He's a right bastard. Leave him be.

JOY

Can't. He works for me, I gotta know about him. Give me a lift.

JESSE

You got a flyer!

JOY

I'm gonna hitch a ride..

She jerks her thumb after Cutter's departing flyer.

JOY

With him.

Jesse smiles.

JESSE

He ain't gonna like that.

JOY

So? Hurry or we'll lose him.

EXT. MARKET

An all-night market hovers midway between the cloudscrapers and the ground. Cutter pulls into the parking lot.

A large mini-van-flyer pulls in beside him, with a big family inside. A little girl pokes her tongue out at Cutter. Her grandmother gives her arm a slap at that.

Cutter pokes his tongue out at her and goes towards the door.

Near the door, a stretch flying limo hovers, getting its packages delivered to it. Cutter makes a point of bumping into the cart full of packages -- one of which goes flying off to the earth below.

The driver of the limo yells at him and Cutter shrugs as if it were an accident. He enters the market.

Another flyer lands near his -- and Joy gets out. Jesse looks concernedly out the door.

JESSE

Sure you know what you're doing?

JOY

Always sure. You get on.

They hear someone coming.

JOY

Get going!

He flies off. She crouches near the passenger door of Cutter's flyer, works at the lock and gets it open.

She looks up to see him only feet away, dives in the back seat.

He walks up to his vehicle and gets in.

IN THE FLYER

He unwraps a sandwich from a vacuum seal, messily opens a mustard packet and starts squeezing the mustard onto the sandwich, getting more on himself than anywhere else.

JOY

So now I know you like Vacu-dried meatloaf. That's a start.

He whirls around, at the same time kicking open his glove compartment, taking out a gun, pushing into Joy's face.

JOY

Whoa! I'm only a stowaway, not a flyjacker!

He eases up.

CUTTER

Sorry. Been jacked before. Wasn't pleasant.

Then realization hits him.

CUTTER

What the hell are you doing here?

JOY

Part of my job. You work for me, I gotta know you. Find out who you are.

He just stares at her.

JOY

You can fly me home. It's not far.

He shrugs, starts up his flyer, but turns to talk to her as he begins to take off.

CUTTER

Believe me, you won't like what you find.

She starts to reply, then shouts and points her finger. He spins around to see the family flyer-van right in front of him -- he's about to crash into it.

He quickly jabs at his controls, jerks the wheel -- and narrowly avoids hitting the other flyer.

He pauses to catch his breath.

CUTTER

Close.

The family flyer-van appears outside his window. He leans out.

CUTTER

My fault! Sorry!

He waves them away.

JOY

Good thing you build better than you fly.

CUTTER

Hey! I've been flying longer than
you..

The family flyer-van now floats directly in front of them.
He sighs in frustration.

CUTTER

Look, I said I was..

Then he realizes that the passenger of the family flyer, a
mom, is holding a lethal blaster on him.

CUTTER

Holy Grub!

He jerks the wheel again and floors it. The blast from the
weapon scorches the back of his flyer.

JOY

What's going on?

EXT. THE FLYERS

Cutter's flyer swoops forward, but the family flyer is right
behind -- and catching up.

Cutter leans out the window again and takes another look at
it.

THE FAMILY FLYER

The little girl he saw earlier rolls down her window and
leans out, blaster in hand. She sticks her tongue out at
him and points the blaster directly at his face.

CUTTER

Yells and spins his wheel again. Joy screams, looks out the
window.

JOY

They're shooting at you!

CUTTER

I've never been popular.

OUTSIDE

His flyer whirls about to face the family flyer dead on.
It's a game of chicken. They both move at each other fast.

Then the family flyer's roof pops open and grandma pokes her
head out. She's got an econo-sized blaster and she's gonna
let it rip.

CUTTER

Floors it and smashes directly into the family flyer, sending grandma spilling out into the air.

JOY

Cutter! You'll kill her!

OUTSIDE

The family flyer manages to get underneath her and she lands safely. It pulls around and heads back to Cutter. He wastes no time in T-boning it from the side, sending it smashing into a nearby skyscraper.

CUTTER

Leans out of his window with his gun. Joy tries to restrain him and he pushes her off. Then he fires.

THE FAMILY FLYER

Is raked by gunfire, but only on its bottom chassis. Sparks erupt and flames shoot out, extinguished by built-in firefighters. But the flyer is crippled and unable to move.

The family makes gestures at Cutter as he flies away.

IN CUTTER'S FLYER

Joy stares at him as he flies on, not acknowledging her look or saying a word.

JOY

Does that happen every day?

CUTTER

I'll take you home. Then I have to go.

JOY

To the police?

CUTTER

(shakes his head)

No police. Just away.

He finally looks at her.

CUTTER

You're hit!

She touches her forehead and finds blood.

JOY

Must have hit my head. I'll be all right. Take me home.

CUTTER

Need directions.

JOY

Your home. We have to talk.

CUTTER

I'm leaving. Nothing to talk about. I don't work for you any more.

She leans over him, pulls out the necklace with the lightning bolt charm on it.

JOY

I have to help you. It's my duty.

CUTTER

Bolt-baby, huh? Look, I don't give a damn about your religion. I've gotta go.

JOY

And leave me bleeding here? You owe me. You have to take care of me. And you live closer than I do.

CUTTER

How do you know?

JOY

Can't hide everything.

His face shows that he would prefer that he did.

EXT. FLYER

They descend through mazes of huge, rundown buildings, past more floating markets and vendors, past an enclosed transparent display case (plastered with graffiti) housing the Liberty Bell, down to the streets. They hover over cars on the street below. Each car looks about a century old.

IN THE FLYER

Cutter stares down at the cars.

CUTTER

Poor schlubs. Stuck down here, way out in this forsaken solar system.

JOY

But the history -- this is Old Earth!

CUTTER

Think they care about the history?

He turns the wheel suddenly and they enter a parking garage on the top of a twenty-story building.

EXT. BUILDING

The garage floats over the actual residence. Cutter and Joy walk down floating stairs to the roof of the apartment complex.

A couple sits on the corner of the roof, gazing at the stars. Cutter glares at them.

THE COUPLE

The girl is a pretty teenager. The male is covered in blue fur with pointed ears.

CUTTER

Snorts in disgust and stalks over to the elevator. Joy keeps up with him.

JOY

You have a problem with them?

CUTTER

What's a Sirian doing here? Probably a criminal hiding out.

JOY

Maybe he's a pilot; maybe they're in love.

CUTTER

Just wants his green card, I'd bet.

JOY

You should talk about hiding out. Are you going to tell me why that family attacked you?

As the elevator whirs, he turns to her angrily, then grabs her and throws her on the ground.

She looks up to see the top of the elevator housing glow red and melt.

THE COUPLE

Both stand with heat-pistols in their hands.

CUTTER

Stands between them and Joy.

CUTTER

Shit! Not here, too!

They aim at him again and he dives right for them.

The blast goes wild, melts a hole in the floor near Joy. She looks down to see an elderly couple in the room below pointing at her in fear.

CUTTER

Slams into the Sirian, knocking the heat-pistol from his hand. The girl smashes the butt of her pistol into the back of Cutter's head, but Cutter does not let go of the Sirian.

All three are heading dangerously close to the edge of the roof.

JOY

Jumps up and runs to them, taking hold of the girl and prying her loose from Cutter.

THE GIRL

Screams and claws at Joy, but Joy's solid as a rock and will not let go. The girl tries to bring her heat-pistol up to Joy's face -- they struggle silently.

CUTTER

Gets the upper hand in his battle, hitting the Sirian in the midriff, making him double over. He grasps the alien's blue fur and tosses him forward -- right over the edge of the roof!

THE GIRL

Howls, frees herself from Joy, runs over and dives off the roof after her lover.

JOY

Just stands there in shock, looking at Cutter. He breathes heavily, stares back at her.

JOY

You killed them!

CUTTER

What if I did? They would have killed me.

She turns away from him. He strides quickly across the roof to her, seizes her arm and pulls her to the edge where the couple went over.

Joy fights with him, thinking she's the next to go. Finally, he takes her neck and forces her head out over the edge, looking down.

HER P.O.V.

The couple are both very much alive below, on the ledge of the next building over, hanging like flies to the wall.

CUTTER (O.S.)

If you'd been watching more closely..

JOY

Looks from the couple to Cutter.

CUTTER

You'd have seen the anti-grav bands on their wrists and ankles. They were ready to make a jump after they took care of me.

He pulls Joy back from the edge of the roof.

CUTTER

I just hurried up the process.

He walks alone toward the elevator shaft.

JOY

What is happening, Cutter?

CUTTER

I'll fix you up. Then you go. And so do I.

Joy trembles a bit.

JOY

You have any booze down there?

INT. HALLWAY

Cutter and Joy walk softly down the hallway towards Cutter's door.

He motions her to be quiet as he listens, then nods to her, indicating he hears something.

He pulls his gun out of his coat pocket, then thrusts open the door.

INT. CUTTER'S APARTMENT

Inside, Cutter sees movement and fires!

In front of him is a soldier in full battle regalia, with a laser-rifle aimed right at him. The bullet passes right through the soldier.

A voice resonates from somewhere nearby.

ANNOUNCER

Learn to kill! Join the Army!

A huge explosion takes place in the center of the room, with dead bodies flying everywhere -- then they disappear.

Cutter relaxes and motions Joy inside. The soldier is replaced by a news broadcaster. Cutter looks embarrassed.

CUTTER

Left the holo-vee on.

He makes a hand motion that turns down the volume on the 3-D transmission. She laughs. He looks at the far wall, poking at the bullet hole.

CUTTER

How do I explain this to the landlord?

Joy smiles, glances at the holo-vee. The announcer points to a picture of various aliens, one of which is a huge snake-creature with glowing red eyes. Joy looks curiously from the snake-thing to Cutter.

Cutter has a decanter of liquid, pours it into two glasses and turns to Joy.

Then he drops the glasses, scrambling for his gun.

Joy looks at the open door, sees nothing, then at the holo-vee. Stepping right through the news announcer from the other side of the transmission is a very large figure.

Obviously part-human, part-robot, it holds up its right arm and a pencil of red light shoots out of its bionic hand. It aims the hand at Cutter.

Cutter dives under the light, fires his gun at the man-robot and hits it, but does very little damage, the bullets deflecting off its metal surfaces. The killer speaks.

RILEY

Say your prayers, Pike.

Cutter picks up a large metal table and slams it into the cyberman.

CUTTER

Say yours, cyberman.

Joy dodges twisted metal flying her way. Cutter looks at the table and sees only about a third of it is still in his hand, the rest having fractured on the cyberkiller's steel body.

Nevertheless, he smashes the remaining table into Riley's right hand -- and the hand goes flying off, much to Riley's dismay.

RILEY

Dang second-hand replacements!

Riley's face is half human, half steel-plated, with one eye a mechanical thing that radiates red light. A blaster sits in a holster on his hip, cowboy style. He also sports a Stetson.

Cutter feints to the left, Riley moves to take him, then Cutter runs to the door.

But Riley literally blasts off from where he stands -- boot-rockets -- and swats the door shut ahead of Cutter. Then Riley holds up his left hand.. the only one still attached.

His fingers detract and a blade with a glowing light around it slides out.

RILEY

The sonic blade will make your death quick and painless, pardner.

But the glow around the blade sputters, then sparks.. and the blade stands inert, unmoving.

Riley slams it against a wall several times.

RILEY

Durn mail order weaponry!

Cutter takes the opportunity to help Joy up and they dash out of the room. He grabs a bag from a table near the door as they leave.

INT. CUTTER'S FLYER

Cutter takes off hastily in his flyer, scraping it against a wall of the floating garage on the way out.

This pushes Joy into him; he tries to push her back, but she grabs the key and switches it to neutral.

The flyer stops in mid-air, humming but not moving.

JOY

You have to tell me what's going on.

CUTTER

I'm leaving is what's going on.
I'll drop you at your building.

JOY

It's my duty to help you!

CUTTER

You bolt-babies really think you're something, huh?

She starts to speak in anger, then holds back.

CUTTER

Some zealot hit with a lightning bolt in the year 2100 -- over ten centuries ago. And you still follow his teachings?

JOY

He was a wise man. He said we're all one family.

CUTTER

Well I'm the black sheep. You don't want anything to do with me, believe it.

He starts the flyer back up, zips off into the night sky.

EXT. JOY'S BUILDING

On the flight pad on top of Joy's building -- a much nicer apartment complex than Cutter's -- the flyer lands.

She steps out, hesitantly.

JOY

I know you're in trouble..

CUTTER

Trouble doesn't even begin to describe
it. You'd be dead inside of an hour
if you came with me.

He gives her a little pat on the cheek -- about as close as
he can get to affection.

CUTTER

Take care, Joy. You're a good boss.

He shuts the flyer door, starts to rise back into the air.

CUTTER

But you're too damn easy on those
workers! Kick their butts!

He flies away. Joy looks after him for a moment. Then she
takes a signalling device out of her pocket and presses it.

A few seconds later, her flyer lands silently next to her.
She gets in.

EXT. SPACEPORT

The sprawling Spaceport Of Brotherly Love is actually several
miles long, with buildings of all sorts and sizes shoved
next to one another in no real order. In the center of it
all sits a huge landing pad where spacecraft of every design
are taking off and landing.

Cutter flies over the spaceport, pulls into a floating garage.

INT. GARAGE

He sees a sign for long-term parking pointed way back into
an area hundreds of feet away. He turns the other way, into
short-term parking and takes a handicapped spot.

He locks his gun in the glove compartment, gets out, gives
the flyer a rap on the hood as he exits with his bag.

CUTTER

You'll wind up with a better owner
than me, believe it.

He shoulders his bag and heads over to the floating escalator.

ON THE ESCALATOR

Taking the open, floating escalator down to the interior of the spaceport waiting area, Cutter looks down on hundreds and hundreds of aliens of all kinds.

There are tentacled Hyadeans, gaseous Rigelians (in containers to protect them from earth's atmosphere), spider-like Achernarians, flying tiny Pyxians with their insect antennae on top of very human heads.

Cutter's wary, looking to see who the next enemy might be.

He steps off the escalator onto the spaceport proper.

INT. SPACEPORT

As he walks, he gazes at more and more alien passengers, mixed with even more humans. This is just a stopover for most and they're all rather antsy.

A whole flock of feathered Polarians pass him, dressed in hooded monk outfits. They take frequent breaths from small cannisters they carry, to help with their adaptation to alien air. A huge, mollusk-like thing slides past Cutter. He looks at it with apprehension, but it merely coasts on over to a ticket counter.

Cutter himself heads for one of the ticket counters and gives his passport and papers to the woman behind the counter.

The attendant looks suspiciously from the passport to him.

ATTENDANT

Your destination, Mr. .. Cutter?

He wonders if he's about to be caught.

CUTTER

Antlia III.

ATTENDANT

Very few people travel to Antlia III.

CUTTER

Well I want to.

She shuffles some papers and surreptitiously presses a button under the counter.

ATTENDANT

You'll have to take FTT transport to Vela Delta and then fly local. It's a difficult journey.

CUTTER

I don't mind.

ATTENDANT

And the reason for your trip?

Cutter stares at her, measuring the situation. The silence becomes awkward -- then suddenly interrupted.

JOY (O.S.)

Running away from something?

Cutter turns to see Joy standing behind him.

CUTTER

Business.

JOY

What?

He turns to the attendant.

CUTTER

I have business on Antlia V.

ATTENDANT

What kind of business?

CUTTER

Your job is to plot my space hookup and issue tickets. So do that. I'll be back.

He takes back his passport, squeezes Joy by the arm and drags her to a quiet corner.

Nearby, the monklike Polarians chant in a bird-like choir.

CUTTER

You've gone too far.

JOY

You're going too far. Antlia V. Not a nice place.

CUTTER

It's my business. And I am not your business.

JOY

I've made you my business.

Cutter starts to reply angrily -- but Joy steps back and gasps.

Cutter quickly spins to see the whole flock of Polarians pulling blasters out of their robes and aiming them at him.

He jumps on top of Joy, forcing her to the ground as the Polarians fire. The heat singes Joy and Cutter's clothes.

Deafening alarms sound throughout the spaceport. The sound of many running feet shakes the ground.

Airport security -- goons in black outfits -- round a corner right at them.

Cutter pushes Joy ahead as the Polarians prepare to fire again.

JOY

Makes it around a pillar.

CUTTER

Stumbles for a moment, turns to look right at the Polarians.

THE POLARIANS

Look like a gentle brand of geese, but they have hands and those hands have guns about to fire on him. The blasters begin to spark.

A BLAST

Scatters the Polarians. The security goons are gunning down anyone with a weapon.

SECURITY HEAD

Drop your weapons now.

Cutter runs ahead to Joy while Security deals with the Polarians.

CUTTER AND JOY

Walk slowly and normally away from the scene.

CUTTER

You go out the front door. Act like you don't really know me. You'll be safe.

But their egress is blocked by two tentacled Hyadeans. Cutter tries to get around them.

CUTTER

Excuse me.

The Hyadeans emit wet noises that are translated through a metal box around their necks.

HYADEAN

No excuse for you, Pike. Only death.

Both wrap their tentacles around him. Joy starts pulling at them to let him go.

Cutter has his air cut off; he's being strangled.

Joy slams her elbow into the lone eye of one Hyadean. It lets go, mewling. Cutter gets leverage on the other one and throws it across the way into a ticket counter.

He starts sprinting.

But the tiny, flying Pyxians buzz around his face, blinding him.

He tries to brush them off, but they send him crashing into a wall. Their small translated voices surround him.

PYXIANS

Now! Now!

CUTTER

Now what, goddamit?

ACHERNARIAN

Now you die!

The spiderlike Achernarian waves several heat pistols at him from its many arms, firing them all at the same time.

Cutter dives, Joy runs headlong into the Achernarian, making his shots go wild.

In front of them, a whole slew of aliens and humans are taking out their own weaponry -- a gauntlet to be run.

Cutter yells to Joy.

CUTTER

Go left! They only want me!

Joy does so -- and is immediately fired on.

ACHERNARIAN

Kill the friend of the killer!

JOY

I'm not with him!

ACHERNARIAN

Do not attempt to lie. Only die.

He fires at her and she dives out of his path, runs back to Cutter.

JOY

I'm with you, for better or worse!

She and Cutter then both run the other way -- as spaceport security bears down on them.

JOY

(breathless)

Security will help us!

CUTTER

Not hardly.

Security begins firing at them as well. Cutter takes Joy's hand and pulls her forward even faster.

CUTTER

How well can you jump?

JOY

Jump?

EXT. SPACEPORT

Outside the spaceport, Cutter and Joy can be seen through the transparent plastic. They're several levels above the ground.

Cutter kicks at one of the plastic panels in the wall till it falls forward. He pulls Joy up to it and over the edge.

She screams. And they fall.

But just before they hit the ground, they slow down and come to a catlike landing.

Joy pushes him away angrily.

JOY

Why didn't you tell me you had anti-grav boots on?

CUTTER

No time.

The ground around them starts melting in spots as humming sounds come closer and closer.

CUTTER

They're still firing! Run that way!

He points out to the landing and take-off area of the spaceport where huge ships are blasting off.

JOY

Are you kidding? We'll be fried!

CUTTER

We'll be fried if we don't!

They run.

ON THE LANDING FIELD

They dash past flames from a ship taking off, avoid another one landing.

Cutter pulls her to a small, rickety looking antique off to the side. It's oval-shaped, about the size of a handful of flyers.

CUTTER

Get in.

JOY

This thing? It's not functional.

CUTTER

It will be.

He pushes her inside.

Spaceport security appears across the landing field.

IN THE SHIP

Inside, it's tight quarters for two, but it actually looks like all the parts work.

Cutter immediately works on the control panel, ripping off the top of it and immersing his hands in the wires beneath.

CUTTER

Bypassing security codes, getting us airborne fast.

JOY

Done this before?

Cutter doesn't answer and soon the ship shivers from the rumble of engines starting.

He points to one of the chairs.

CUTTER

Strap in and pray.

He locks himself into the pilot's chair and begins working the controls.

Through a view-window, Joy can see spaceport security only yards away.

JOY

How soon..

She's stopped as the ship makes a massive lurch into the sky.

OUTSIDE

The security guys yelp as they're almost scorched by the flames coming out of the rising ship.

The head security man talks into his wrist-box.

SECURITY HEAD

Get me planetary security. We got a wild one.

He looks up at the ship, making shuddering thrusts up into the sky. It recedes and almost looks like an old-time flying saucer.

IN THE SHIP

Cutter and Joy shake so much that it seems like there's more than one of them in each chair.

Then it stops as they burst through the atmosphere. Cutter's out of his chair, working on the neural network over his head.

JOY

Do you know what that is?

CUTTER

FTT Drive neural network. Used to build them.

JOY

Then what the hell were you doing on old earth building cloudscrapers?

Before he can answer, the ship jolts backward as if it's been hit. Cutter swears as he looks out the view-window. Joy joins him.

THEIR P.O.V.

Three ships the same size as his float outside.

INSIDE

The radio crackles and a voice fills the ship.

PLANETARY SECURITY

That was a warning shot. Surrender
now and move yourself to our tow
line.

Cutter keeps working on the neural network but talks into
the communications console.

CUTTER

I have an innocent person on board
who needs to be taken to safety.

PLANETARY SECURITY

You are both in violation of security
and will be treated as criminals.
Surrender now.

Cutter doesn't answer, gets the neural network up and running.

JOY

We can't outrun planetary security!
Not in this thing!

OUTSIDE

The three ships move to attack positions; weapons appear,
bristling around their outside hulls.

INSIDE

Pike works on the wiring, putting the spider-web helmet on
his head and attaching the inputs to his temples, finally
pulling down his collar and jabbing one line into a jack in
his neck.

The radio crackles again.

PLANETARY SECURITY

Prepare to be fired upon. If the
blast doesn't kill you, the vacuum
will. Bad way to die.

Joy blanches, looks at Cutter.

JOY

Say something!

CUTTER

Sit down!

She stands there. He pushes her into the chair and sits himself, attached to the neural network.

She turns to the view-window, just in time to see all three security ships fire at once, point-blank range.

She screams. Cutter closes his eyes.

And the ship blinks out of existence.

OUTSIDE

The ship disappears right as the three blasts hit it. A voice can be heard over a radio.

PLANETARY SECURITY

Did we hit it?

IN PSY-SPACE

The ship whirls through a place with no stars, no planets, just grayish matter and whirling white clouds.

IN THE SHIP

Cutter still sits with eyes closed. Joy, braced for impact, holds onto her chair for dear life.

Cutter opens his eyes, smiles at the sight of Joy.

CUTTER

Exhale.

She does and relaxes.

CUTTER

Ever been in Psy-Space?

She shakes her head, at a loss for words.

CUTTER

It's a smooth ride. FTT -- I mean, Faster-Than-Thought travel is something special.

He moves about the cabin, still hooked up to the neural network.

CUTTER

Didn't have time to think about a destination, so let's take a look.

He closes his eyes again.

OUTSIDE

The ship blinks into existence amidst stars and planets.
One planet looms close, dark and grim.

INSIDE

Cutter takes in the view. Joy remains in her chair.

CUTTER

Pluto. Didn't get far. We'll have
to figure out where we need to..

He realizes Joy is not listening to him, comes up to her
softly.

She's crying. He touches her shoulder.

JOY

It's all gone. My job, my home, my
life.

Cutter is awkward about consoling anyone.

CUTTER

No, no. It's all still there. I
just have to get you back.

JOY

I'm a criminal! You've made me a
wanted felon! I can't go back!

CUTTER

I'll explain to them that you..

She turns on him suddenly.

JOY

You!

He steps back, surprised.

CUTTER

I can get you back. We'll dock at
the outer station and I'll get you a
a ride home.

She stares at him for a moment, then..

JOY

You killed them.

He doesn't know what to say.

JOY

They called you Pike. You're the..

He winces and beats her to the punch.

PIKE

Destroyer Of Worlds. In person.

He looks out the view-window at the stars. It's hard for him to speak.

PIKE

It was a war.

JOY

You weren't fighting them!

His turn to pivot angrily.

PIKE

How would you..!

He stops himself, returns to the cabin controls.

PIKE

I've run this race too many times.

His silence is deafening. She moves softly behind him and speaks as if he would shatter if she spoke too loud.

JOY

Tell me what happened.

He half-turns over his shoulder at her.

PIKE

What happened..?

FLASHES IN BLACK-AND-WHITE

His eyes -- frightened.

The dead captain.

Explosions.

PIKE (V.O.)

We were fighting the Valerans and taking the worst of it.

On the viewscreen of his starfighter: the Valeran ships, starfish-like, closing in.

PIKE (V.O.)

I was jacked in -- the weapons master.
Captain Makin called me his 'thought
police'. Captain Makin..

The captain -- dead, blood flowing.

PIKE (V.O.)

Then they were there.

On the viewscreen: the huge globe, shadowy, frightening.

PIKE (V.O.)

I said: identify yourself! Identify
yourself! They didn't.

His young voice yells over the din of war. But all he gets
in response is a FLASH in his brain of an enormous snake
with glowing red eyes.

PIKE (V.O.)

Worms, big worms in my head. I was
frightened.

He hangs like a scared fly caught in a web, his neural network
shaking around him on the starship.

PIKE (V.O.)

I thought..

His eyes look to the screen, thinking something.

PIKE (V.O.)

I thought they should die. It was
just one thought, one quick thought.

On the viewscreen the globe explodes, the explosion engulfing
his ship, washing them away like so much flotsam.

PIKE (V.O.)

One thought. Thoughts can kill.

BACK TO JOY AND PIKE ON THE SMALL SHIP

Pike stands in the same position, half-looking at her over
his shoulder.

PIKE

I was scared. I was just a kid. It
was a mistake.

He turns to face her fully.

JOY

A mistake..

PIKE

I didn't know they were.. who they were.

JOY

The Mirgi.

He nods, the words coming out with difficulty.

PIKE

Their whole race was on that ship.
The most peaceful race in the
universe, along with ambassadors
from every other race.

He looks out the viewscreen at the stars.

PIKE

They just wanted to stop the war.
And I killed them all. I killed
peace. The Destroyer of Worlds.

Quickly he jacks back into the neural network and the ship
blinks into Psy-space.

PIKE

So for ten years I've been running.
But they always find me.

JOY

They?

PIKE

Friends of the Mirgi; relatives of
the ambassadors; people who lost
their loved ones in the war. It
kept going for five more bloody years.
You wouldn't know because it never
got to Old Earth.

Joy remains silent.

PIKE

Planets, worlds were destroyed.
Because I killed peace. They say
it's all my fault.

He's angry, jabbing at controls on the console before him.

JOY

And you say it's not?

PIKE

It was an accident! I had no control
over it!

JOY

Then they can't hurt you.

PIKE

They want me to stand trial for war crimes. Crimes! What crime did I commit? Did I run a penal colony on Arcturus 3? Did I pillage burnt worlds of their jewels and valuables? Did I?

Joy shakes her head no.

PIKE

I need to go far away, but I'll get you to the station, get you home.

JOY

But they're after me now, too.

PIKE

I'll make them understand you're not part of it.

He works on the controls, almost nonchalantly now.

JOY

You don't feel guilty about it?

PIKE

Guilty? I'm sad for them, but it was a war! It was about survival. I survived.

The discussion has ended, at least for him.

PIKE

We'll be at Sol-9 Station in about ten minutes. I'll leave you there.

JOY

May I send a message home so Jesse and the others won't be out looking for me?

PIKE

Not sure if the communications system is up to par, but go ahead.

He busies himself with the control console. Joy looks askance at him, then works on the communications.

She punches in some numbers, makes certain Pike isn't watching, then punches in some longer message before hitting "Send".

He glances at her and she straightens up, smiles, as if everything's fine.

JOY

That should do it.

He looks suspiciously at her. Then the ship suddenly blinks back into real time and space.

OUTSIDE

The ship nears a huge rotating wheel: the space station.

Several scanning satellites zip over the exterior of the ship.

INSIDE

A voice booms over the radio.

STATION SECURITY

Identify yourself or you will not be permitted to dock.

Pike monkeys with the communications system -- when he speaks over the microphone, his voice sounds altered, almost alien.

PIKE

Station Sol-9, this is two-person craft C0098 with Captain Jameson requesting docking coordinates. Security code TVC15.

Silence for a moment. Then on the viewscreen, a huge port opens to receive them.

STATION SECURITY

Proceed.

JOY

Who's Captain Jameson?

PIKE

Someone who'd like me dead. I lifted his personal codes and credit.

OUTSIDE

The ship is taken into the station by a tractor beam.

INSIDE

Pike disengages himself from the neural network.

PIKE

They'll take pity on you when they know I kidnapped you. They'll let you hitch a ride home.

JOY

What will you do?

PIKE

Head right back out. They won't even know I was here.

With a thud, the ship docks. They hear the cabin pressurizing outside.

Pike works on the door controls. A green light signals that pressure is normal. Pike hits the button that opens the door.

The door slides open. And Riley, the Cyberkiller, stands there, smiling.

RILEY

I don't imagine you missed me, pardner?

He moves to launch himself forward with his rocket boots. But one boot misfires and Pike manages to push him back out of the door.

Pike tries to close the door, but it won't shut.

Riley's cyber-arm reaches inside and pulls him out. Joy screams and follows them.

INT. SPACE STATION

The large docking area is swarming with humans and aliens, all now staring at the battle between Riley and Pike.

Both are airborne, with Pike trying to smash Riley's face in as Riley flies up to a higher level. Pike's fists do no damage since Riley's face is metal.

So Pike twists around and lifts one of Riley's legs up, screwing up his trajectory. They both slam into a wall and slide down to the floor.

Alarm bells start sounding, along with a deafening siren.

Pike drags Riley to the edge of a catwalk -- gigantic machinery hums below. Riley fights him -- and they both flip over the side.

Below them, Joy screams again, then starts climbing up to the catwalk herself.

Pike tries to free himself and use his anti-grav boots to float down safely. Riley quickly turns himself upside down, rips off the anti-grav boots with his sonic knife. Pike starts to fall, grabs the ledge above him.

Each has a hand holding onto the catwalk. With their free hands, they continue the fight. Riley pikes at Pike with the sonic knife from one hand. Pike tries to hold it away from his face.

Workmen of many races now surround them on the catwalk. They start yelling and Pike is surprised to find they're on his side. One half-human, half-spider Achernarian moves forward.

ACHERNARIAN

Push the fragging robot over the side!

A teddy-bear-like Fomalhautian agrees.

FOMALHAUTIAN

Help our boy kill the cyberthing!

The workmen kick Riley's hand so that the sonic knife scrapes uselessly against the metal catwalk.

RILEY

Didn't think anyone would help the Destroyer of Worlds!

The workmen are silent for a moment.

ACHERNARIAN

He's the Destroyer of Worlds?

RILEY

I've been sent to make him pay for his crimes. Kind of like a hired gun.

FOMALHAUTIAN

Our mistake, sir.

The workman help Riley up; Pike still hangs perilously from the catwalk.

Joy breathlessly arrives on the catwalk.

RILEY

Would you boys like to decide what to do with him?

ACHERNARIAN

Drop him.

Several of them raise their boots to stomp on his hand. Pike squirms, uncomfortably.

JOY

You can't kill him!

FOMALHAUTIAN

Ma'am? He murdered thousands, maybe millions.

PIKE

I didn't. The war did. You can't blame me for that.

RILEY

I think we can, bucko.

Riley places his metal rocket boot on Pike's hand and starts to press.

Joy dashes forward and lunges for Riley, but the workmen hold her back.

Suddenly, a form smashes through the workmen, scattering them.

Riley is thrown backwards, against a railing.

A hand reaches down and lifts Pike easily, holds him in the air.

This is COMMANDER FACE, a huge man whom most would guess had alien blood -- but he's all human, just a mountain of humanity.

He dangles Pike with his one hand, waving a finger in his face with the other hand.

COMMANDER FACE

I'm Face. You're Pike. I don't want you here.

He drags Pike to the ladder that leads below and tosses him down it.

Pike tries to slow his descent by grabbing the sides of the ladder, but he still slams into the floor, hard. Face is on him immediately.

Pike is lifted again and thrown over to where his ship is docked.

Face picks him up once more in front of the open airlock on the ship.

COMMANDER FACE

My station is neutral in government matters but I will not harbor murderers.

He shoves him against the wall of the flyer.

COMMANDER FACE

You leave. You were never here. You show up here again and we disperse you into atoms.

Pike nods groggily.

COMMANDER FACE

It's a better chance than you gave them.

He tosses Pike inside.

INT. SHIP

Pike gets up unsteadily and moves to the controls, starts readying the ship for departure. The ship starts to shudder in response to his actions.

Then he hears a noise in the rear of the ship. He picks up a large hammer and softly heads to the back of the vehicle.

Another noise. He lifts the hammer, ready to kill.

Movement -- he starts to swing.. and stops. It's Joy.

She flinches, then gives a slight, weary smile.

JOY

I couldn't let you leave without me.

PIKE

They would have gotten you home.

JOY

I think you need me more than the guys at home.

Pike doesn't know what to say.

They both jump when a voice booms over the communications console.

COMMANDER FACE

Leave. Now.

Pike quickly returns to the controls, hooks himself up to the neural network, jacks in.

EXT. SPACE STATION

The ship pulls away from the station -- and blinks out of existence.

INT. SHIP

In Psy-Space, the ship travels through grayness. Pike swivels around to look at Joy in her chair.

PIKE

Dreyer Drive, they used to call it.
Somehow your mind makes the turn
into another warp of reality, then
guides it back into our universe,
faster than thought.

JOY

I've heard of it. I wonder if the
mind that guides it has any effect
on the reality we see.

She gestures at the grayness outside, then stands, stretches.

JOY

Think the cleaning cubicle works?

She points to a translucent rectangle in the corner. He shrugs.

PIKE

Guess so.

She takes her coat off, starts to take off her top. Their eyes lock and hold. She doesn't move. He breaks the contact, looks down at the console.

PIKE

I'll program it for the Grus system.
Off the beaten path.

She nods, moves around the cubicle. He can see her clothes fall on the floor on the other side of the cubicle, sees her naked outline as she steps inside.

The cubicle begins to hum and Joy starts singing softly inside. Pike stares at the cubicle, then forces himself to look out the viewscreen at Psy-Space. His emotions are turbulent.

Shaking himself as if he were waking up, he gets up and starts bustling around some storage holds, unpacking food packets and water containers.

He pries open one big storage bin in the aft section -- and a blaster points right at his face.

Riley steps up out of the storage area. Pike moves back slowly, unhooking himself from the neural network.

RILEY

Commander Face thought it fitting
that your sins follow you, pardner.

PIKE

Who the hell programmed you? Some
old holo-Western fan?

RILEY

I programmed mys..

Pike doesn't let him finish, smashes a water container onto the blaster, which spurts fire and evaporates the falling water.

Riley strikes forward with his metal arm, sending Pike flying into the viewscreen -- which doesn't give at all. He falls with a thud.

Joy yells from inside the cleaning cubicle.

JOY

Pike, what's the..

Pike has his long hammer, whirling it through the air at Riley, takes a good whack at Riley's head. Riley tries to stand his ground, but staggers back into the cleaning cubicle, knocking it over. Joy screams.

She climbs out, a towel around her, sees the carnage and the fight. She dresses herself as they flail around her

Pike and Riley both smash into the rear of the ship -- almost moving a huge metal pod.

JOY

You'll wreck the exploror-pod, you
idiots!

They don't listen. Riley has his sonic knife out, cuts the long hammer in half. Pike reaches down to pick up a cutting tool on the floor, Riley quickly fires up a rocket boot and bashes him in the chin. Pike falls back, defenseless.

Riley holds the sonic knife to Pike's throat. But fingers tap him on the shoulder. He looks back to see his own blaster pointed at him by Joy. It's a stand-off.

RILEY

I ought to tell you, ma'am, that I must fulfill my contract even if it means my death.

Joy lets that sit for a moment. Pike, groggy, shakes his head and moans.

JOY

Does that mean his death?

RILEY

It means justice. What else would that be but death?

Pike's now fully attentive to the situation, tries to squirm out of the way of the sonic knife, but Riley's other arm holds him fast.

JOY

Repentance.

Riley considers the concept.

RILEY

Explain.

JOY

He goes to the Mirgi homeworld and makes peace with whatever remains of the race he slaughtered.

Pike explodes at this.

PIKE

Not there! Those grubbing little worms will eat me alive.

RILEY

Not at all, they're a race of highly evolved telepaths.

PIKE

They'll fry my brain! They'll ruin me!

JOY

At least you'll be alive!

PIKE

I'd rather be dead!

Riley puts his sonic knife very close to Pike's eye.

RILEY

This is not a democracy, bucko, and
you ain't got a vote.

Riley pauses, turns his face upward, letting a program run
inside him.

RILEY

My employer says that is satisfactory
for now. But if he acts up, he's
dead. I'll hitch a ride with you to
make sure it happens.

JOY

Agreed.

PIKE

What do you mean agreed..?!

She shushes him.

RILEY

Once he is on Mirgi soil, my contract
is terminated. But how can we be
certain he won't stop us?

Pike looks daggers at both of them. Joy goes to the control
console and the neural network, hooks herself into it and
jacks in. Pike is surprised to see a jack in her neck as
well.

JOY

Used to program computers before I
got into cloudscrapers. We're set
for Auriga, the Mirgi system.

She unjacks, plays with the console.

JOY

It's got a virus that will destroy
the ship if the course is changed.

Riley thinks for a moment, then his sonic knife retracts
into his hand.

Pike gets up slowly and goes to the neural network, jacks
himself in.

PIKE

How did you do this?

JOY

My father knew a lot about computers
and the stars.

He unhooks himself. Joy putters about with the food, making
a meal.

JOY

Join us, Mr..

RILEY

Riley. I don't need to eat. I'll
just recharge myself this way, if
you-all don't mind.

A prong protrudes from his back, which he inserts into an
outlet in the walls of the ship. Then he settles down and
his eyes close.

Joy sets a meal for two. Pike stares at it as if it were
poison.

PIKE

This is all part of your wacko bolt
religion, isn't it?

JOY

Repentance is good for the soul.

PIKE

Soul! What soul?

She gets up, guides him to his chair, makes him sit. He
doesn't fight too hard.

JOY

Were you like this as a child?

He looks up as if shot.

PIKE

Child?

JOY

Your father, your mother, where are
they now?

Pike turns to look out at the vagueness of Psy-Space.

PIKE

My father..

PIKE FLASHES OF HIS MEMORY -- JAGGED LIKE LIGHTNING

His father, a sculpted Adonis in a uniform, medals glistening on his chest.

PIKE (V.O.)

My father was a god..

Pike as a five-year-old boy sits in front of the holo-vee, watching a chip play over and over -- it's a scene of a starship exploding in space.

PIKE (V.O.)

But even gods die. I swore I'd get those damn Valerans.

CLOSE-UP

Of a lizard-like face with crocodile teeth, evil, inhuman.

Then the face explodes and green blood pours out.

It's a holo-vee ad that a now adolescent Pike is watching. The figure of a soldier comes up behind the dead Valeran, pushes its body into the mud, kicks it a few times, and gives a smiling thumbs-up.

ANNOUNCER

The Space Marines are looking for a few good killers!

A UNIFORM

Now on Pike. He stands on a space station with a crew about to board.

Another Adonis in a uniform approaches, medals glowing on his chest: Captain Makin.

PIKE

Captain Makin was the best. And he made me the best.

Pike is shown all aspects of the ship, all different ways to kill, with Makin smiling over him like a father.

PIKE (V.O.)

I wanted to fight, to kill, to win.

CLOSE-UP

Of a Mirgi: its snake-like face with glowing red eyes in a void.

PIKE (V.O.)

But then that damned accident..

BACK ON THE SHIP

Joy can see tears starting in the corners of Pike's eyes, doesn't press him about the accident.

JOY

What happened since? What have you done?

Pike turns away from the viewscreen to her, then looks down at his food, plays with it without eating.

PIKE

Was a derelict for years. Finally decided to go on living. Knew it wasn't my fault.

His eyes meet hers over that one.

PIKE

New identity. But they kept finding me, so I kept moving further out. Ended up in the sticks, I thought. Old Earth.

JOY

(defensively)

Old Earth is where humanity began!

PIKE

So? Is that something to be proud of?

She finally loses her temper, gets up and starts slamming the food away, cleaning up.

JOY

You're not going to try anything stupid?

PIKE

Do I look stupid? What could I try out here?

Joy shifts her chair so it lies flat, touches a button and it inflates like a cushion.

She walks to Riley, pats him in his shoulder where he sits recharging.

JOY

You watch him. I need some sleep.

Riley's eyes are open and a buzzing sound comes from somewhere inside him.

BLACKNESS

A very loud buzzing sound in the midst of blackness.

CLOSE ON: JOY'S EYES

Snapping open.

INSIDE THE SHIP

She sits up on her bed/chair, looks around. The buzzing seems louder and louder.

Then she sees a red light flashing over the airlock.

She jumps up, runs to the viewscreen.

HER P.O.V.

Outside, they're no longer in Psy-space. Stars twinkle around them. A planet looms in the distance.

But directly in front of her is the ship's small exploropod, with Pike on top of it, sitting as if it were a bicycle. He wears a space-suit. Somehow, he's controlling the pod and making it move forward.

IN THE SHIP

Joy swears, runs to the sitting Riley, who still has his eyes open, but has no sign of awareness. She pulls him from the wall and a big arc of electricity shoots out of him.

He jolts awake.

JOY

I told you to watch him!

RILEY

Sorry, ma'am. Short in my charging system. I was dang well dead to the world.

JOY

He's out!

RILEY

Out?

She points to the viewscreen.

JOY

Out there! Used the exploratory pod. Somehow he's riding it!

She dashes to the control console, starts scanning radio frequencies. Riley joins her.

RILEY

You seem to know how to work this right well.

She ignores him, finally pinpoints Pike. She talks into the radio.

JOY

Pike! You can't do this!

Pike's voice filters into the cabin.

PIKE (O.S.)

I already have. Thanks for your help, but now I have to go it alone.

She walks to the viewscreen, looks at him as she speaks.

HER P.O.V.

She sees him outside.

JOY (O.S.)

Pike! You have to come back!

He talks into his helmet.

PIKE

You'll be fine. The ship is set to go back into Psy-Space in three minutes. It will take you wherever you want.

JOY

She starts to jack into the neural network.

JOY

This is going to take too long!

She watches Pike zip further and further away.

Riley walks straight to the airlock and punches the button to open the inner door.

RILEY

That won't be necessary. I'll get him.

JOY
You have no suit!

RILEY
Don't need one.

JOY
But you're part human!

RILEY
Not the outside parts. My innards
are well protected.

JOY
But your equipment..

RILEY
What about it?

JOY
It doesn't exactly work right.

He snorts contemptuously, steps into the airlock and closes the door behind him.

She sees through a port-hole that the outer door has opened. Frantically, she turns to the viewscreen.

EXT. SHIP

Outside, Riley rockets away from the ship -- and for once, his equipment functions perfectly.

He vaults through space towards Pike. Pike turns, sees him coming, reaches into a compartment in front of him and pulls out Riley's blaster.

Before he can bring it to bear on the cyberman, Riley is on him. Riley tries to lift Pike off of his escape vehicle, but Pike holds fast.

Slowly, Pike raises the blaster closer and closer to Riley's head.

IN THE SHIP

Joy screams into the communications console.

JOY
Pike! No!

OUTSIDE

The scream makes Pike hesitate, giving Riley time to get his sonic knife out -- and quickly puncture Pike's space suit.

Pike drops the blaster, using both hands to hold the puncture in his suit.

Joy's voice crackles over his helmet radio.

JOY (O.S.)
Get back to the ship!

PIKE
I'd rather die!

IN THE SHIP

Joy looks over at a timer mounted on the console, counting down the time till they catapult into Psy-Space. A minute and a half.

JOY
Is that why you hid all these years?
To die for nothing?

Silence. She goes to the viewscreen.

HER P.O.V.

Neither Riley nor Pike is moving. Then she sees Riley circle around and start pushing Pike and the pod back to the ship.

INSIDE

Joy stands near the airlock as the inner door opens. Pike walks in, helmet off, looking contrite. Riley follows him.

Suddenly, Pike's got the blaster out again, pointed at Joy.

PIKE
Just so we understand each other.
I'm in charge now.

Riley's cyberarm comes down with a thud on his head, knocking him unconscious to the floor.

JOY
I'm not sure he's worth all this
trouble.

RILEY
Is anyone?

OUTSIDE

The ship blinks out of the star system and into Psy-Space.

INSIDE

Riley and Joy finish tying Pike down to his chair. Riley is now jacked into the neural network.

JOY

You've got the course set?

RILEY

Mirgi homeworld in round about..
five minutes. We weren't far.

Pike starts to wake up.

PIKE

You can't take me there!

RILEY

Consider yourself taken.

PIKE

I'll kill us all before I go to that
stinking place.

JOY

You need to go there.

RILEY

From what I hear, the Mirgi were a
very clean, highly evolved race.
Communal intelligence and all.

PIKE

Communal?

RILEY

Shared consciousness. One big racial
mind.

The ship jolts to a stop as it blinks out of Psy-Space, making both Riley and Joy tumble to the floor.

RILEY

That shouldn't..

A loud growling sound surrounds them. They look around in concern, then realize it's the communications console. Riley adjusts the translator.

The growls become a hissing voice.

VALERAN CAPTAIN (O.S.)

You have invaded Valeran Space. It
is ours by treaty.

Joy turns to the viewscreen, sees that they're surrounded by those starfish-like ships.

Pike crouches like a cornered animal as he sees his old foes outside.

Joy talks into the communications console.

JOY
We are on a peaceful mission to the
Mirgi homeworld..

The growls drown her out, then are translated.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Prepare to be boarded.

Their ship's power suddenly dies.

RILEY
They've got control of our computer
system.

They turn to the viewscreen.

THEIR P.O.V.

The largest of the starfish-ships comes closer and closer -- they're being dragged into it.

IN THE SHIP

With a clunk, they dock next to the Valeran ship. Their outer airlock door opens.

Riley stands near the door, about to attack.

The inner door opens -- and three huge, space-ship suited Valerans enter. One immediately grabs Riley and holds him easily.

Through their dark, elongated helmets, Joy can see alligator-like faces and fierce eyes.

On his chair, still bound, Pike's eyes are full of hate.

The leader of the trio of Valerans towers over Joy, speaks through a translator-box.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT
You will dress in your space suits
and come with us.

JOY

We have none. Our only suit is damaged.

The Valerans confer, the Lieutenant gives an order and one Valeran leaves.

The next few moments are silent but filled with tension as the Lieutenant examines them and the ship. He points to Pike.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT

Your prisoner?

JOY

No, not exactly.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT

Now he is our prisoner.

He has his other man untie Pike, much to Joy and Riley's consternation.

Then the other Valeran returns, bearing three human space suits.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT

Left over from the war. But they should work.

Pike, now free, looks at the three Valerans, eyeing his odds. The Lieutenant unholsters a nasty-looking rifle-like weapon that fits in his hands like a pistol.

Pike, then Joy, suit up in the space suits. Riley waves his away. The Lieutenant sizes him up.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT

A robot?

RILEY

Cyberman, you sidewinder!

Puzzled, the Lieutenant waves them onto the Valeran ship.

INT. VALERAN SHIP

The Valeran ship is cavernous, mammoth.. and very dark and dank, as the Valerans like it.

Groups of the reptilians gather to watch the humans, their former deadly enemies.

The mood is uneasy. The Valerans with Pike, Joy and Riley shed their space suits, push along the three of them to an area away from the docked ship.

The walls of their ship look like an underground cavern, the light on the ceiling glowing like a fungus.

A door opens and an even larger Valeran strides through, dressed in royal robes: the Captain.

He extends a large claw and speaks without a translator box.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

Greetings. I quote one of your great leaders: "The difference of race is one of the reasons why I fear war may always exist; because race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance."

He offers his claw to Joy.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

Let us banish our differences.

Joy lightly, hesitantly takes his hand and shakes. The Valeran shows his teeth.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

Our goal must be not peace in our time, but peace for all time.

He offers his hand to Riley, who shakes, then Pike, who won't.

Joy pipes up to stop the unpleasant moment.

JOY

You know our language and our history.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

I find your race to be full of wisdom. I only wish your scholars would study our wisdom as well.

He stares at Pike.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

I know you.

PIKE

I doubt that. I only met your kind when they were trying to kill me. They died first.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
 I correct myself. I know of you.
 Destroyer of Worlds.

They are surrounded by Valerans, curious to see this galactic legend.

Then the Valerans start growling and stamping their feet.

The Captain spreads his teeth wide again.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
 They applaud you, Pike. You have
 killed more than any of us. Come,
 feast with us.

He ushers them through the open door.

INT. HALLWAY

The three humans are dwarfed by the Valerans as they walk through the corridors of the ship.

They see male and female Valerans, chatting with each other, flirting, then looking curiously at them as they go by.

One young Valeran boldly steps forward. His translator box speaks with a boy's voice.

YOUNG VALERAN
 Have you come to destroy us as well?

The Captain shoos him aside.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
 He is our guest. You must honor him
 as one of us.

Joy looks at Pike to see how he's handling it. Badly would be an understatement.

INT. MEAL HALL

The Valeran eating area is a huge hall made up of one gigantic square table. The Captain ushers them to the center of one side.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
 Sit. No seats are better than any
 others in our hall.

Pike and Joy, in their space suits, look at each other awkwardly.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

You may take off your helmets. I
have created a.. compromise atmosphere
in which we both can live.

Riley sniffs the air, cocks his head as he runs some
calculations.

RILEY

It's safe.

They remove their helmets and sit. The Captain sits and
food is brought in-- very earth-like food. The Lieutenant
and other Valerans join them, tearing into their food
aggressively.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

Equality. All men are by nature
equal, made, all, of the same earth
by the same Creator.

RILEY

Plato.

The Captain shows his teeth again.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

Good! A wise man.

He turns to Joy and Pike, who gingerly poke at their food.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

You will be my guests. We will treat
you as equals.

PIKE

Isn't that a little difficult when
you wanted to wipe us from all corners
of the universe a few short years
ago?

VALERAN CAPTAIN

We lost. We know how to lose. We
agreed to a treaty. Now we must
live with you. I'm merely trying to
make it agreeable..

PIKE

It'd be real agreeable if you let us
go.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

I cannot..

JOY

We must go to the Mirgi homeworld.
Pike has something he needs to do
there.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

(nodding vigorously)

Penance. I know the concept. We
call it..

PIKE

Screw the Penance and the grubbing
Mirgi. Just let me go home.

JOY

(angrily)

And where would that be?

VALERAN CAPTAIN

I appreciate your guilt over that
massacre. But what of us? Who mourns
for our dead? We lost millions. We
lost five planets full of our people.
Are you sorry for that?

PIKE

It was a war, reptile!

JOY

Pike!

VALERAN CAPTAIN

All we get is this slim sector of a
quadrant. When we ruled system upon
system!

PIKE

You're a warrior race..

VALERAN CAPTAIN

You invaded our planets! Tried to
colonize our worlds! We merely
defended our territory! Is that
kind of killing wrong?

Pike's heard that argument before and can't respond. The
Valeran Captain tries to change the tone of the argument.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

War is the father and king of all;
some he has made gods, and some men;
some slaves, and some free.

RILEY

Heraclitus.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Excellent!

He looks directly at Pike.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
You are free.. to roam the ship. I
am adjusting the atmosphere so you
can go where you wish.

He points to Joy.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Both of you go. See our sights. I
want to talk to this well-read
cyberman.

Joy and Pike finish eating, stand hesitantly. The Captain
shoos them away. They go through the door.

The Captain gestures to one side of the room and the walls
part, revealing a magnificent view of the stars and nearby
planets.

VALERAN CAPTAIN
Have you words for this?

RILEY
Oh, Lord, I've never lived where
churches grow.
I love creation as it stood that day
You finished it so long ago
and looked upon Your work and called
it good.

The Valeran Captain smiles broadly.

INT. DECK

Joy and Pike stroll along the outer deck of the ship, with a
360-degree view of the stars, brilliant all around them in
all sizes and colors.

RILEY (O.S.)
I know that others find You in the
light that's sifted down through
tinted window panes;
and yet I seem to feel you near
tonight in this dim, quiet starlight
on the plains.

Joy and Pike look from the stars to the decks below them,
filled with the life and activity of the Valerans -- howls,
growls and hisses -- their laughs, shouts and camaraderie.

PIKE

I dedicated my life to killing these things. They murdered Captain Makin. They killed my father.

JOY

You heard the Captain. They were defending themselves.

PIKE

Shouldn't they atone for their sins as well?

The question lingers in the air.

Joy changes the subject, takes his hand and pulls him further out so they have a better view of the stars.

JOY

When was the last time you walked beneath the stars with a woman?

PIKE

I've been with plenty..

JOY

That you didn't pay for?

He stops short, almost embarrassed. Then he turns and looks out at the view.

PIKE

A lifetime.

She holds his hand to her cheek, then softly kisses it. He looks at her, amazed. Then he takes her face in his hands and kisses her fully, passionately on the mouth.

When they separate, Joy pulls him playfully by the hand around a corner.

INT. VALERAN PARK

It's a steamy, mossy park created by the Valerans to give them a sense of home. The water bubbling past them looks sulfuric and emits colorful gases.

The plants are jungle-like and low to the ground. Joy trips along the greenery, laughing. Pike sways behind her, gawkily. He's forgotten how to have fun.

She disappears over a hill. He stumbles up to where she was, looking concerned. Her hands reach up and pull him down.

UNDER THE HILL

They strip quickly and make love as if their lives depended on it. Joy smiles and accepts his passion, but he is all fury, twisted into himself. His climax is explosive, not tender.

He falls asleep in her arms. She strokes his hair. His eyes are closed and peaceful for a change.

CLOSE ON: HIS EYES

The peacefulness departs abruptly as his eyes pop open. He hears a humming sound.

IN HIS SHIP

He's strapped and bound to his chair in his ship again. Riley stands over him, examining him as if he were an insect.

Pike struggles with his restraints.

PIKE

You won't get away with this. The Valerans will come after me.

RILEY

Not if they think you've hit the trail for a love romp.

PIKE

Love..?

At that moment, Joy enters the ship, holding a blaster.

PIKE

Shoot him, Joy! Shoot Riley!

Joy just stands there, looking trapped.

RILEY

You oughta tell him.

PIKE

Tell me what?

Riley pretends to make himself busy in the back of the ship. Joy squats down next to Pike, face to face.

JOY

My father was the Ambassador from Old Earth on the Mirgi spaceship.

Pike's in shock.

JOY

He died when you blew it up. I've been looking for you since then.

PIKE

(with difficulty)

It was a set-up -- the cloudscrapers, everything?

She sighs, stands, starts working the controls, preparing the ship for departure.

JOY

We had tabs on you. Knew you'd like a job like that, set you up to find it.

PIKE

(exploding)

And then you fucked me!

She winces.

JOY

I made love to you because I wished to and because I care about you.

PIKE

You care? You just want revenge like everyone else!

The ship starts to move.

JOY

(nods)

There was a time I wanted you dead. But I discovered a belief system.

She fingers the lightning bolt necklace around her neck.

JOY

And after I met you, I knew you could be saved. That's why you must go to the Mirgi homeworld.

PIKE

I'll die there! You know it!

He looks to the viewscreen, sees the Valeran ship as they move away from it.

A voice booms from their communications console.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

Farewell, young romancers. Remember:
Love is space and time measured by
the heart!

Pike screams out.

PIKE

They've got me hostage! Save me,
Captain!

JOY

He can't hear you. I thought the
Valerans were your deadly enemy.

PIKE

If they save me from you, they're my
best friends!

Joy calls to Riley in the back of the ship.

JOY

Set the course for the Mirgi
homeworld, but make it look like
we're headed out of the system.

He nods and jacks into the neural network.

Pike looks hopelessly out at the stars.

THE STARS

From another angle. We're on the Valeran Bridge, watching
the small ship move away. The Valeran Lieutenant speaks to
his Captain.

VALERAN LIEUTENANT

(in Valeran)

They make it look like a honeymoon,
but they will go to the Mirgi
homeworld.

VALERAN CAPTAIN

(in Valeran)

That is where they are supposed to
go.

He does not smile as he watches them leave.

IN THE SHIP

Pike smolders in his chair. Joy and Riley work various
controls.

JOY

Were you always a killer, Riley?

RILEY

Hardly, ma'am. Was an explorer centuries ago, like a cowboy. Then got injured in the Centaurian System, they started putting metal in me.

JOY

Did it hurt?

RILEY

Can't rightly remember. But soon there was nothing left to explore and I needed to keep my parts in working order. Took what jobs there were. Can't say I like 'em all.

PIKE

Spare us your morality, cyberman. You're barely human any more.

Riley tries to ignore him, works the control console.

RILEY

Be there in a half hour, give or take. You know about the Mirgi moon?

JOY

Tell me.

RILEY

It's in synchronous rotation with the planet. The Mirgi myths claim the two planets are in love and must always face one another. They call the moon "Mirha", their word for love.

PIKE

Have you got any useful information in that robot brain of yours?

RILEY

My brain is human. My access to it is through cybernetics.

PIKE

And what else does it say about these worms?

RILEY

I told you about their collective consciousness.

PIKE

Meaning?

RILEY

A true communal mind. The whole
race was of one mind, always.

Pike almost leaps up, straining against his bonds.

PIKE

That's it!

JOY

What?

PIKE

If there's even one grubbing worm on
the planet! Then the race's mind is
still alive!

RILEY

Theoretically, the whole race would
live on in one mind.

PIKE

Then I didn't kill them! They're
all still alive in that one mind!

JOY

Pike..

PIKE

Listen to me! They didn't die! If
just one worm is crawling around
down there, I am not the Destroyer
of Worlds!

Joy and Riley look at him as if he's a mental patient.

EXT. SHIP

The ship passes the Mirgi moon, forever facing its planet.
They hit the atmosphere, causing sparks of friction, multi-
colored, radiant.

The ship starts shuddering as if it will fall apart as the
winds and elements tear at it.

RILEY (O.S.)

The big high lonesome's a place in
my mind;
and sometimes when it's storming,
you can look the Lord in the eye;
I stood and watched in amazement

(MORE)

RILEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 out on San Augustine Plain,
 while the sky turned black as the
 curtains in Hell
 and the wind came a'chasin' the rain.

The ship swoops below layers of clouds, almost smashing into
 a green mountainside.

IN THE SHIP

Riley's jacked in, trying to control the ship. Joy is pale,
 strapped into her chair. Pike lies nonchalantly, still bound
 to his.

PIKE
 Kill the cowboy poetry, robot. It's
 old-fashioned.

Riley tries not to look angry.

JOY
 I enjoyed it, Riley.

RILEY
 Thank you, ma'am.

PIKE
 Why don't you scan for life-forms so
 that we can get this over with?

Riley's consults a console.

RILEY
 Scanning.. nothing. Wait, there is
 something.

PIKE
 (eagerly)
 Where?

RILEY
 Plotting the course. Near their
 capital city.

Pike strains at his restraints.

PIKE
 I can't see.

JOY
 It's very green.

PIKE
 Good! Green means life!

JOY

If there is life, Riley and I will find it.

PIKE

You have to take me with you! You said this is where I have to go for repentance!

Joy stares at him, looks to Riley.

RILEY

We need his word that he'll behave himself.

PIKE

My word! You have my word. I'll behave. We have to find that life!

EXT. SHIP

Outside, the ship flies past empty cities, all beautiful, made out of emeralds it seems. But all quite sterile.

Finally, it flies over some massive green structures, lands on a flat area between them.

IN THE SHIP

Riley bends over Pike with his sonic knife, waves it in his face.

RILEY

You gave your word.

PIKE

(irritated)
I did. Get on with it!

Riley cuts the bonds and Pike is out of the chair almost instantly.

He heads for the airlock, but Riley's cyberarm holds him back.

RILEY

You'll be dead in ten seconds out there.

Joy removes two space suits from a locker.

JOY

We, uh, borrowed these from the Valerans. Old, but they should work.

Pike and Joy suit up quickly. Riley removes a small box from the control console.

RILEY

This says the life-form is due west.

The three of them enter the airlock. The inner door closes behind them.

EXT. SHIP

Outside, Pike just about jumps out of the outer airlock as soon as it opens.

He's on the ground, running west, towards one of the big buildings.

JOY

Pike! Stay with us!

PIKE

I have to find it!

He's gone, running into a huge, cavernous opening in the building. Riley and Joy follow.

IN THE EMERALD BUILDING

The green is overwhelming, with the sunlight filtering through, making everything emerald and jade.

Pike is looking in every cubbyhole, every anteroom, frantically.

PIKE

It has to be in here -- somewhere!

Riley and Joy watch him as if he were an unruly child.

JOY

Pike, this is not the way..

Pike jumps to Riley, yells through his helmet.

PIKE

Tell me where!

Riley points towards a hallway and Pike runs clumsily in his suit to it and away from them. Riley looks at Joy.

RILEY

Ain't exactly going as planned, is it?

They both go down the hallway. Riley pats Joy softly on the shoulder to reassure her.

FURTHER INSIDE THE EMERALD BUILDING

An immense room in the middle of the building. Various items that would be furniture and decor for the Mirgi dot the floor and walls.

Pike has found some kind of metal tool and is smashing the decorations.

PIKE

Where the frag is it? Why is it
hiding?

Riley quickly takes the tool with his cyberarm and wrenches it from Pike's grasp.

Pike responds by smashing his fist into Riley's face, doing no damage, but skinning his knuckles and making them bleed. He continues to hit Riley.

PIKE

Find it, damn you, find the grubbing
worm!

He's almost in tears he's so frustrated.

And a gentle voice stops him cold.

MIRGI

Pike! You have come!

They all look up. On an area that could be a stage in the front of the room, crawls a Mirgi.

It's green, large and seems almost like a cartoon character except for its red glowing eyes.

MIRGI

We knew you would find us!

Pike runs full steam to the stage.

PIKE

Find you! You're my salvation!

He jumps up onto the stage.

PIKE

I could kiss your ugly green wormhead!

He dives at the Mirgi, arms outstretched.. and passes right through it.

A strangled sob escapes him as he turns around, not sure what's going on.

The Mirgi continues talking as if nothing has happened.

MIRGI

We want you to know that we forgive you, Pike. We sent this message back to our homeworld at the moment of our death to let you know that we are now part of the life\death\life cycle of the whole universe.

PIKE

What the frag..

By now Joy and Riley have reached the Mirgi. Riley passes his cyberarm through it.

RILEY

It's a holo-vid. A transmission.

Joy puts her hand on Pike's shoulder.

JOY

It's not alive, Pike.

Pike pushes her aside and jumps up.

PIKE

But something is. You registered a life-form. Something started this transmission. Find it, Riley. Find it!

Riley consults his box, waves it around the room, settles on the holo-Mirgi.

RILEY

Here. The signal was faked. No Mirgi life-forms are registering now.

But Riley sees something else on the scanner.

RILEY

But there is..

Pike bats the scanning box out of his hand.

PIKE

Don't tell me it was faked. There's a grubbing worm here somewhere. I did not kill the whole damn race.

The holo-Mirgi waddles over to him.

MIRGI

You did, Pike. We have all moved
Beyond. As we were meant to. We do
not blame you. We wish you well.

PIKE

Wish me well?

He kicks at the thing, his foot passing through it. Then he starts kicking the walls, looking for the machinery that operates the transmission.

PIKE

Wish me well? I'm glad you're dead,
you grubbing worms! Snakes tempted
man; they're evil. They should be
dead.

He's just about crying as he barks this out. Joy looks at him sadly.

JOY

You don't mean that. You know what
you really feel.

She moves closer to him. So does Riley, more for protective reasons than emotional ones.

Pike moves faster than a snake striking, grabbing Joy's holstered blaster.

PIKE

Don't tell me what I feel! I'll
tell you. I feel free. I came here,
like you wanted. Now I'm free.
That's the deal.

RILEY

Pike..

Pike shoots at him, blasting a hole in his cyberarm. Riley looks down at it, having felt no pain, but very concerned about the damage.

RILEY

I can't rightly afford to fix this..

PIKE

You won't be able to fix anything if
you don't get out of my way right
now.

A tense moment as all three seem about to try something.

BAXTER

Drop your weapon and surrender to
the forces of the United Worlds.

They turn to see the room full of an armed security force,
one of each kind of alien race, all with weapons aimed at
them.

The human of the group steps forward in his space suit.

BAXTER

Lieutenant Edwards M. Baxter, Space
Marines. You are our prisoners.

Pike begins to aim the blaster in Baxter's direction, but
Joy acts first, knocking the weapon from his hand.

A gaseous Rigelian, in its crystalline container, hovers
over them, coming near Riley. Its voice hisses through its
translator box.

RIGELIAN

You have done well, Riley. Your fee
has been paid to your account. Your
orders are terminated.

RILEY

But this man..

RIGELIAN

Your mission is over. We will talk
of this no longer.

Joy stands between Pike and Baxter.

JOY

What are you going to do with him?

BAXTER

Like all war criminals, he will be
tried.

JOY

I need to be there.

BAXTER

You are there. The trial will happen
now. Right here. This United Worlds
group has been formed for the express
purpose of trying the Destroyer of
Worlds and sentencing him.

Without a weapon, with nowhere to go, Pike has become almost
docile.

PIKE

They've got me, Joy. Let them have their silly trial.

JOY

Who is representing this man?

The members of the United World force chuckle among themselves.

BAXTER

He needs no representation.

JOY

I will represent him.

PIKE

You can't..

BAXTER

You're not qualified..

JOY

I claim his right to a defense in full view of this court. Do you contest that right?

BAXTER

Er, no.

JOY

Then proceed with your prosecution and we will respond.

BAXTER

Very well.

He gestures and a wall of the emerald building turns black. On it is projected the battle in which Pike committed his supposed crime.

Pike kneels down below the images on the screen and stares up at them, lost in emotion.

BAXTER

Immanuel Pike, do you deny that you were the weapons master on the ship Tom Payne during the period in question?

PIKE

(painfully)
No, I don't deny it.

On the screen, the Mirgi ship floats in, immense, almost godlike.

Then it explodes in a flash, making Pike wince and the assembled group jump.

BAXTER

Do you deny that you gave the order to destroy the Mirgi ship?

PIKE

It wasn't an order. It was just a thought! I didn't mean..

BAXTER

A technicality. Did you make your ship fire on that ship?

PIKE

I did.

BAXTER

Then you are guilty.

JOY

Guilt is a very subjective thing.

They all look at her. She takes center stage, near Pike.

She whispers to him as she goes past.

JOY

(whispering)
Follow my lead.

PIKE

(whispering)
How do I know you're not selling me out?

She winces at that, turns from him and addresses the multitude.

JOY

He was a young boy whose father died in the war. He'd been promoted to weapons master far too fast. His emotions were not equal to the task. The Mirgi ship was an unknown. He did not know if it was a Valeran weapon.

The images on the screen replay, perhaps looking a bit differently this time.

JOY

(to Pike)
Did you think it was a weapon?

PIKE

Yes, I did.

JOY

He reacted as any soldier would: he protected his ship.

BAXTER

He made no attempt to communicate with the alien ship. He could see from its design that it was not Valeran.

PIKE

I didn't know..

BAXTER

Did you communicate with it?

PIKE

I.. saw an image in my mind.

BAXTER

Yes, the Mirgi were telepaths. What was the image?

PIKE

It was frightening.. a snake with glowing eyes! I knew it was evil.

The crowd rustles; the spidery Achernarian rubs its legs together; the Rigelian emits soft sighs; the flying Pyxian twitters to itself.

BAXTER

You knew it was evil. Didn't it look like that?

He points to the holo-Mirgi.

JOY

Pike, you don't need to..

PIKE

But I didn't know..

BAXTER

You should have known. Case closed.

Baxter turns to the multitude.

BAXTER

Ignorance is a crime when you've been trained otherwise. He should have known all alien races, all of you. He should not have been frightened.

JOY

Not have been frightened? Then he wouldn't have been human!

That causes a stir among the gathered alien races.

JOY

I mean..

BAXTER

We know what you mean. Pike, stand for sentencing.

Pike wearily rises from his knees to a standing position.

PIKE

They said they forgave me! Listen to them! They said it wasn't my fault!

BAXTER

A holo-vid is not admissible evidence.

Joy tries one more time.

JOY

You can't kill him! If you kill him, you're no better than he is!

BAXTER

We're far better than he is. Pike, you are sentenced to.. Inferno.

The assembled aliens nod -- or do whatever their race's equivalent of that is.

Pike groans an inhuman groan. Joy and Riley look at each other, ashen.

JOY

But Inferno..

BAXTER

You will be held in confinement until your transportation is arranged.

Two aliens come forward and take Pike away. He does not struggle.

The others in the assembly file out, Baxter remaining behind. He approaches Joy.

BAXTER

You were eloquent. But he is responsible. You know that.

JOY

Do I?

BAXTER

We will arrange transport back to Old Earth for you at your convenience.
(looks at Riley)
Both of you.

Then he leaves. Joy and Riley remain alone in the cavernous jade tomb.

RILEY

"The big high and lonesome is only God's way of putting man in his place."

JOY

Amen to that.

They slowly walk out of the room, Riley patting Joy on her shoulder.

INT. MIRGI HOME

Pike looks around his confinement to see that he's imprisoned in a Mirgi house.

The building is like a burrow, with smooth floors from the wormlike movements along it.

Cupboards and cabinets open at floor level, though there is some hanging decor over his head.

A tiny model of a burrow sits in one corner with little Mirgi dolls near it -- playthings of the children of this house, when there were children many years before.

Dust covers everything. He slumps to the floor and closes his eyes.

EXT. MIRGI HOME

Outside, two large aliens, the spidery Achernarian and the mollusk-like Deebian guard the entrance.

They both jump at a noise, then laugh at one another for jumping. Their space-suit helmets fog up from the laughter.

Suddenly, there is someone in front of them. They both start to jump again, realize it's Joy.

She looks up, way up, at the large aliens from her space suit.

JOY

Baxter said I could see him.

She hands them a computer chip on a card. The Achernarian inserts it into his suit and a little holo-vid of Baxter appears in front of him, saying that yes, indeed, Joy has permission.

They part and let her inside.

INT. HOUSE

Joy looks down on Pike, sound asleep on what would have been the Mirgi bed -- a rug-like thing on the ground in the corner, with ornaments strung around it for privacy.

Through his helmet, she can see him, almost innocent in his sleep.

But he hears her and starts awake, eyes wide with fear.

PIKE

Is it time?

JOY

No, not yet.

He sits up forlornly.

PIKE

Inferno.

The word hangs in the air between them.

PIKE

That's for the worst criminals in the universe. It's the hell planet.

JOY

I know. I'm sorry.

PIKE

Maybe I deserve to be there.

But a muffled sound stops him. He listens -- a humming, getting closer and closer.

They both look frightened. The humming is more like a whirring; they can't figure out where it's coming from.

PIKE

One of them has come to kill me before
I can even get to Inferno.

JOY

Don't talk like that.

PIKE

Don't tell me they haven't thought
about it.

The whirring seems right beneath them -- and it is. The ground crumbles in front of them and they jump back with a yell.

Riley pokes his head up through the hole, then holds up his cyberarm, now equipped with a rotating shovel.

RILEY

This connects to a whole lot o'
tunnels beneath these houses where
the Mirgi used to socialize.

He disappears back into the hole, his hand comes up and widens it. Then his head pokes up again.

RILEY

You coming?

Pike looks at Joy, at Riley. He's frozen.

JOY

Go! It's your only chance!

He abruptly takes her by the arms.

PIKE

Not without my lawyer!

She smiles and whispers to him.

JOY

You go ahead. I'll talk for a while
so they'll hear me.
(she gestures outside)
Then I'll follow you.

RILEY

We'll head east. It's the big tunnel.

Riley disappears down the hole. Pike glances at Joy, squeezes her hand -- and jumps down the hole.

JOY

(a little loud)

Take my advice and behave yourself
on the trip to Inferno. They might
give you time off for being
cooperative.

She smiles as she looks down at the ground where Pike has
escaped.

IN THE TUNNELS

Pike and Riley move through the dense green tunnels. Riley
flashes a light out of his chest, although the tunnels are
dimly lit by some kind of phosphorescence.

PIKE

Why are you doing this, Riley? Your
job is done.

RILEY

A man's gotta choose his own trail;
not have others force it on him.

PIKE

That wasn't what you thought when we
first met.

RILEY

You reminded me of why I went into
space in the first place. Or, rather,
she did.

They move on in silence for a while.

RILEY

She's sure something.

PIKE

Yes, she is.

Then: a shadow to their left; Riley raises a blaster, shines
his chest-light on the shadow.

Pike is prepared to kill with his bare hands now that he's
tasted possible freedom.

But it's Joy, smirking a little -- did she hear the last
conversation?

JOY

You two make more noise than a horde
of Cygnians.

RILEY

Just trying to be sociable.

JOY

So be sociable quietly. Nice hand.

She looks at his cyber-shovel.

RILEY

The Fomalhautians are quite adept at repairs.. and enhancements. I think I might like to visit their world after this is over.

PIKE

Will this ever be over?

JOY

It will if we keep moving.

They move into the massive tunnel ahead of them.

FARTHER DOWN THE TUNNEL

They reach a point where three tunnels diverge from the main one.

JOY

Which way?

Riley examines all three.

RILEY

One ought to lead right to..

Behind them come shouts and growls. Pike almost jumps out of his skin.

PIKE

They found us! Which way, Riley?
Quick!

Riley decides -- though it's obvious he's not sure.

RILEY

This one!

They head to the left.

RUNNING

The three are moving as fast as they can. They hear the crowd behind them hit the three tunnels -- and some definitely come their way.

PIKE

Faster!

Pike's actually the slowest of the three. Joy, in top shape, is ahead. Riley paces himself but could leave them behind if he wanted to. He scans ahead of them.

RILEY

If I'm right, the ship is right above us!

He leaps to a ledge running along the side, starts working his shovel-arm at the ceiling of the tunnel. He's fast, but their pursuers are gaining.

PIKE

Throw me the blaster!

Riley does. Pike turns, ready to kill.

Then from the darkness, the Achernarian pounces. The spider-being is large and all legs, grabbing Pike and immediately immobilizing him.

It emits some whistles that are translated by its translator-box.

ACHERNARIAN

This way! I have the Destroyer!

Pike struggles to get the blaster up -- and the Achernarian bats it away like a toy. It skitters across the ground.

Riley yells down from his perch.

RILEY

I'm through! Come on!

Joy looks from Pike to Riley.

JOY

We can't..

More noise from behind them: the rest of the hunting party is about to catch them.

Joy picks up the blaster and points it at the Achernarian.

PIKE

Shoot him!

JOY

Let Pike go!

RILEY

Hurry!

ACHERNARIAN

I will crush him if you do not put
down your weapon.

The Achernarian makes good on his threat, crushing Pike's windpipe beneath his helmet.

More guards are visible in the darkness, yelling and growling.

RILEY

Now or never!

Pike gasps for air, about to lose consciousness.

Joy is torn. Then she fires, hitting the Achernarian square in the head.

It crumples, its legs withering. Joy looks at it in horror.

But Pike is up quickly, taking her arm and pulling her upward.

PIKE

Come on, Joy! Now!

She's limp, but allows herself to be dragged onto the ledge.

The other aliens are just feet away -- but they stop when they see the dead Achernarian.

RIGELIAN

The Destroyer has killed again!

Pike and Riley are through the hole in the roof. Joy is last, taking one last look at the being she killed.

The aliens below start to scramble up after them.

ABOVE GROUND

Their spaceship sits where they left it, but a troop of guards approaches it in the distance -- alerted to Pike's escape.

The guards see them and step up their pace.

But Pike, Joy and Riley are closer to the ship. They dash forward. Behind them, the other pursuit team appears in the hole in the ground. The first alien, a tentacled Hyadean, aims a long-range laser rifle at them.

THE SHIP

Is just yards away, but the guards running from the other side are very close.

Riley suddenly sprints forward.

RILEY

Get in the ship!

He passes the ship, confronts the guards. With what looks like a mighty effort, the light in his chest flares up, shining so brightly that it blinds the pursuers.

Then the laser-rifle slices through the ground at Riley's feet. He jumps back, heads for the ship.

The laser rifle fires again, this time cutting off part of one foot. Riley pauses in pain, hobbles forward to the ship.

Pike is leaning out of the airlock. The ship's engines are already running.

It's just about to lift off, but Pike leans down, helps Riley aboard as it careens into the sky.

The laser rifle fires useless shots after it.

The aliens gather below and look up angrily at the ship as it climbs higher and higher.

IN THE SHIP

Pike is now hooked into the neural network, his space-suit gone. Joy is strapped into her chair, looking lost.

Riley attends to his wounded foot.

PIKE

Good thing it was robotic.

RILEY

Not all of it.

He's dabbing at blood flowing from what remains of his foot. Pike is aghast.

PIKE

How much pain..

RILEY

A lot.

He continues to treat himself. Pike looks at the viewscreen.

PIKE

Almost out of orbit. Soon we'll hit
Psy-Space and be home free.

He looks over at Joy, who is unresponsive. Then he gets up from his chair, still jacked in, stretches over to touch her shoulder. She still won't respond.

PIKE

I'm sorry you had to do that.

Finally she turns angrily to him, her face wet with tears.

JOY

Sorry? I killed a living being! My
religion, my whole life-system,
forbids that!

PIKE

There was no other way..

JOY

Is this how you felt? When you killed
the Mirgi, did you feel as if your
whole life was a lie?

He can't answer that.

Without warning the ship shudders and stops. Riley's up fast, hobbling to the viewscreen.

RILEY

Tractor beam.

Pike immediately starts working controls.

PIKE

Prepare for Psy-Space.

RILEY

In the middle of a tractor beam? We
could end up being ripped apart -- I
might survive. You won't.

PIKE

I'm open to other solutions. If you
have any in the next second or so.

He adjusts one last control and prepares to blink them into Psy-Space.. when the whole ship shuts down. The communications console rumbles and a deafening voice fills the room.

VALERAN CAPTAIN (O.S.)

Remember: War has made some of us slaves. Much as I'd like you to go free, I must stay on the good side of the victors. Your ship is mine.

Pike has turned pale. Joy continues to cry.

RILEY

The trail ends here, gang.

OUTSIDE

The starfish-like Valeran ship pulls the small ship inexorably towards it.

FADE TO BLACK

CLOSE-UP: PIKE'S EYES

Those brown eyes that looked so young and frightened now look weary and lost.

There are stars reflected in them.

INT. DECK ON THE JEHOVAH

Pike sits in front of a mammoth viewscreen showing the stars moving away from him.

He stares at the stars but doesn't see them.

CAPTAIN DODGE

Do you believe in fate, Pike?

Pike turns slowly, all emotion seemingly drained from him.

He faces a middle-aged, muscle-bound man in full Captain's regalia, wearing the uniform and proud of it. Captain Dodge carries a large book with him.

PIKE

At this point, I can't say.

CAPTAIN DODGE

Uncertainty doesn't become a military man.

PIKE

I'm hardly a military man.

CAPTAIN DODGE

Once in the service, always in the service. Just as if you're in the service of the Lord.

He pats the book under his arm.

PIKE

Captain Dodge, I appreciate your efforts, but I am very tired of discussing the Bible with you.

CAPTAIN DODGE

On your way to hell and you can't spare time for God? A little shortsighted, eh?

PIKE

I know you have to escort me to Inferno, but was it in your orders to convert me as well?

CAPTAIN DODGE

Fate brought you to me. All the possibilities in the universe and you're here.

He gestures to the stars.

CAPTAIN DODGE

To answer your question: yes, it is in my orders to convert you. My orders from above.

He smiles grandly.

PIKE

Captain Dodge..

CAPTAIN DODGE

Yes?

PIKE

Go away.

Dodge doesn't like that, but heads for the door.

CAPTAIN DODGE

You're here for a reason, Pike.

He exits and the door closes behind him.

PIKE

The reason may be to strangle you, you idiot.

There's a laugh from the shadows behind him. Pike turns, anxious.

And Riley comes out of the shadows, his cyberparts looking new and in mint condition.

RILEY

Plays his hand kind of heavy, doesn't he?

PIKE

One more quote from Jesus and I'll put him through the airlock. I'd rather hear your collection of cowboy poetry.

RILEY

(surprised)
That is a change!

PIKE

I mean it.
(gestures to stars)
Give me something to go along with this. Because soon I won't see them any more.

Riley thinks for a moment.

RILEY

(reciting)
And remember God Almighty's been about a million years; A-pointing us back to Eden through this sinsunk Vale of Tears.

THROUGHOUT THE SHIP

As Riley recites, the passengers and crew of the Jehovah go about their jobs: crews work machinery, water plants, make sure the park area is neat.

Guests, including a flying Pyxian couple -- small and wondrous in their miniature life; an irridescent Polarman, glowing like a star; a creature that looks like a bejeweled praying mantis, from the Magellan constellation.

RILEY (O.S.)

He give to nature the winter so she could recuperate; And the night he give to us folks to forget our pains and hate.

Finally, on a lower deck, looking out at the same stars is Joy, in prison-like garb. She's crying.

RILEY AND PIKE

Look out at the same stars.

RILEY

So if we learn to all be joyful,
just the way we like her, see; Why
the trail will be lots shorter and
the quicker we'll be free.

One red star shines brighter than the others. Pike points
at it without saying anything.

RILEY

Algol, known as the Demon Star. Its
only planet is..

PIKE

Inferno.

OUTSIDE THE SHIP

The Jehovah, proudly wearing its name, makes its way to Algol,
the Demon Star.

INSIDE THE SHIP

The guests, including Pike and Riley, gather for a meal around
a long table. Captain Dodge sits at its head.

CAPTAIN DODGE

I will read from the good book before
we partake of this bounty.

The male Pyxian flies a few inches off the table. His small
voice squeaks through his translator box.

MALE PYXIAN

Cap-tain Dodge. Most of us are from
worlds where your religion has no
place. Why do you force it on us?

The Magellanian and Polarian agree with the Pyxian, while
the Pyxian's mate looks at him with admiration and love.

The Captain is angry.

CAPTAIN DODGE

Your are the guests of an earth
starship. You would do well to heed
our beliefs.

PIKE

Captain, that is both arrogant and
ignorant.

CAPTAIN DODGE

How dare you!

PIKE

I'm already going to Inferno. What the frag else can you do to me?

RILEY

Pike!

CAPTAIN DODGE

I can confine you, as I did your accomplice.

PIKE

Joy..

CAPTAIN DODGE

Tried to escape. So she is confined to her quarters.

PIKE

Confine me. Let her go.

Captain Dodge shakes his head.

CAPTAIN DODGE

I prefer having your company.

The Captain begins eating, which means the conversation is finished. The male Pyxian buzzes near Pike.

MALE PYXIAN

Thank you for de-fending uss.

Pike glowers at him.

PIKE

I didn't do it for you. I did it for me. Can't stand that man's arrogance.

That gives the Pyxians pause, but they try to be sociable. Their mellifluous buzzes are badly translated by their boxes.

FEMALE PYXIAN

We are sorry you go to Inferno. Death in wartime not a crime.

Pike's turn to be taken aback.

PIKE

Uh, thank you. You are going to the Algol system?

MALE PYXIAN

No, we go to Cassiopeia for what you
call honeymoon.

Buzzes and twitters. Pike looks from one Pyxian to the other,
surprised.

PIKE

You marry?

FEMALE PYXIAN

As you do. We are same, if smaller.

She twitters what might be a laugh.

MALE PYXIAN

We are dip-lomats, so Captain Dodge
gives us a ride.

Riley smiles at Pike's astonishment over the friendliness of
the aliens.

RILEY

Might I say that your bride is
'specially radiant?

The Pyxians seem to blush. The other aliens clap their hands.

POLARIAN

You are very kind to our friends.

Pike swallows hard as he looks around at this little wedding
party of aliens.

Captain Dodge loudly slurps his soup and eyes them all with
discontent.

JOY

Stares out at the stars from her quarters.

PIKE

I'm sorry.

She turns to see him in the doorway and starts, nearly jumps
up to greet him, but stops herself.

JOY

You must have some pull with the
Captain.

PIKE

Must be my reputation. He seems to
want to convert me or something.

He walks directly up to her, puts his hand on her shoulder.

PIKE

I'm very sorry that I dragged you
into this.

She touches his hand.

JOY

I dragged myself into this. I sought
you out.

PIKE

But you'd never have done what you
did if not for me.

She turns her face away from his as her eyes fill with tears.

JOY

I see him every time I close my eyes.
How he died.

PIKE

He?

She taps a sheaf of papers.

JOY

The Achernarian that I murdered.
I've found out about him. He had a
family, two children.

PIKE

It was him or me.

JOY

If we'd just given up, we'd be right
where we are now. And he'd be alive.

The door whooshes open behind them. Riley stands silhouetted
in it.

RILEY

We'll be entering into Inferno's
orbit in thirty minutes.

They nod and he tactfully steps back out into the hallway.
The door closes.

Pike, filled with emotion, takes her by the shoulders.

PIKE

Joy, I..

She looks up at him wordlessly. They kiss passionately.

PIKE

You're an amazing woman. You don't
deserve Inferno.

JOY

I do. I killed someone.

AN EXPLOSION

Throws them to the ground -- the ship shudders and quakes.

Alarms start going off all around them.

The door opens and Riley runs in, lifts both of them off the
ground.

RILEY

The ship's been damaged. It's
breaking apart. Get to the life-
pods!

PIKE

Where are the others?

RILEY

Others?

PIKE

The Pyxians, the Captain.

Riley consults a wall computer console.

RILEY

I'm reading that the captain is on
the bridge. The others are trapped
on an upper level.

PIKE

You can survive a vacuum. Get to
them. I'll try to help the captain.

Joy is amazed at his leap into action.

JOY

I'm coming with you.

PIKE

No. Get a life-pod ready for us.
I'll be back soon, I promise.

She doesn't like it, but she goes. Riley and Pike race off
in opposite directions.

THE BRIDGE

Pike enters amid chaos: klaxons, screams, shouts, alarms.

He pushes through smoke and sparks to the center of the bridge. Captain Dodge sits in his captain's chair. He smiles when he sees Pike.

CAPTAIN DODGE

I'm happy you're alive, since this
is all for you.

The other crew members pay no attention as they all frantically try to save the ship.

PIKE

For me? Are you insane?

CAPTAIN DODGE

I'm one of the few sane ones around.

He stands and leans forward to Pike, whispering.

CAPTAIN DODGE

The snakes had to die! They are the
symbols of Satan! It says so in the
book!

PIKE

What the frag are you talking about?

CAPTAIN DODGE

You were right to kill them! God
created man in his own image. Not
these others, especially not the
Mirgi!

He gestures at the chaos around them.

CAPTAIN DODGE

And so I couldn't deliver you to
Inferno, to Hell! You are our savior!

PIKE

This was your ship! Your crew!
You're mad!

CAPTAIN DODGE

No, I see the truth. You must go
free to do the Lord's work. Destroy
those who are not God's work. You
are the Destroyer. It is up to you!

Pike looks at him in utter astonishment, then steps up and smashes his fist into the Captain's jaw.

PIKE

Go down with your ship, killer!

He runs out of the bridge. The Captain stands, opens his Bible and starts reading passages from it as his crew fights for their lives around him.

UPPER DECKS

Pike rushes through the confusion to a hallway full of fire and electrical sparks.

He hears something, then realizes the air is being sucked forward. He knows he's in trouble.

He looks ahead, sees the Pyxians and the Polarian unconscious on the floor.

The air is escaping quickly and Pike could just make it back through the door from which he entered. But it's closing fast.

Instead, he runs to the fallen aliens, tries to revive them. The Polarian weakly raises her head, sees him and waves him on to the Pyxians. She manages to get to her feet, but her glow is weak.

Pike goes to them, lifts them both up, goes back to the door, but it's shut and locked now.

He's having trouble breathing. He goes forward, carrying them. The Polarian stumbles behind him. He catches her, helps all three forward.

But a jagged gash in the hull starts tearing, getting bigger and bigger. Soon they will all be sucked into the vacuum of space.

Pike swears, pushes through some fallen metalwork, gingerly helping the Polarian, carrying the Pyxians.

He sees another door ahead of him, pounds on it. It won't open.

He swears again, puts down the Pyxians, digs his hands into the cracks of the door, growls mightily as he struggles.

The door opens a fraction, then slams shut.

He looks at the Polarian. She salutes him, then slumps to the ground. Pike puts the Pyxians in a corner, tries to shield them with his body, waits to die.

The air hisses out, pulling at him, at his clothes, but he's able to wedge himself in the wreckage and keep himself and

the Pyxians there. He adjusts the Polarian so she is wedged in as well.

As he's about to lose consciousness, he looks up.

HIS P.O.V.

In rippling waves of delirium, he thinks he sees the door open. A cyberarm pokes through towards him as everything goes black.

HIS EYES

Snap open -- and he is indeed safe. Riley and the praying mantis-like Magellanian hover over him and the others.

RILEY

Thought you'd gone to that prairie
in the sky.

PIKE

Unfortunately, no. How are they?

RILEY

Alive, thanks to you. But this ship
is gonna go soon.

PIKE

Any way to the lifepods?

Riley shakes his head.

RILEY

Too much damage on the lower decks.

PIKE

The madman wants us all dead.

Riley looks at him quizzically. But then the floor shakes and another tearing sound is heard.

Riley dashes down the hallway and quickly returns.

RILEY

Everybody up. We're losing this
deck.

He picks up the Polarian and helps her. The Magellanian gently takes both Pyxians. Pike manages to get to his own feet.

PIKE

Which way?

Riley points ahead and they run.

DOWN THE HALL

But they come up against another set of locked doors. Riley pries them open, but a loud hiss warns them that it's a vacuum on the other side.

Pike looks around frantically.

PIKE

Riley! There's an airlock! You can go outside!

RILEY

We haven't got any suits or lifepods for the rest of you.

PIKE

You go out and climb along the ship till you find some, then bring them back. I'll stay here.

Riley looks at him, sees he means it, punches open the inner airlock and steps inside. Pike watches him through reinforced glass.

PIKE'S P.O.V.

Riley opens the outer airlock, turns and waves.

Just then an explosion tosses the ship around like a leaf and Riley falls out of the outer airlock.

PIKE

Yells and startles the others.

PIKE

Riley!

He waits for the outer airlock to close, then opens the inner one and rushes inside. He looks desperately through the porthole.

HIS P.O.V.

No Riley -- just stars and pieces of ship falling away towards Inferno.

Then: a sphere passes in front of him slowly.

FLASH

The huge Mirgi globe flashes into his mind; it slowly passes in front of his field of vision.

HIS EYES

He's terrified at whatever unknown thing is out there.

HIS P.O.V.

Then the sphere comes into proper perspective: it isn't huge: it's a lifepod. And Joy is waving to him through a porthole.

PIKE

Smiles and waves back.

JOY

Gestures for him to go back inside the inner airlock. Then she points to the top of the pod.

On top is Riley, clinging with his cyberarm. He manages a grin.

PIKE

Dashes back through the inner airlock, closes the door, turns to the group of aliens.

PIKE

We have to leave the ship. There's a lifepod out there.

The Magellanian and Polarian nod to him. The Pyxians are still unconscious.

They turn to see the pod hooked to the outer airlock. The inner door hisses open. Joy walks through in a spacesuit, takes off her helmet.

Pike runs to her and embraces her, hard.

PIKE

I thought I'd lost you.

JOY

Don't worry. You haven't.

Pike then looks up, sees all the aliens, including the reviving Pyxians staring at him. Embarrassed, he lets go of Joy.

PIKE

We better get on the pod.

JOY

(smiling)
We better.

IN THE POD

It's a tight fit as Pike, Riley, Joy and the four aliens squeeze into an area meant for three.

JOY

The good news is we're off the ship.
The bad news is that this pod doesn't
have enough air or supplies for seven
of us.

RILEY

I don't need air or supplies.

JOY

But six of us do. How long till
help arrives?

PIKE

We sent out the distress beacon an
hour ago. The nearest ship is near
Cassiopeia. It could be a day or
more.

JOY

We won't make it.

MALE PYXIAN

My mate and I do not need much.

POLARIAN

We could go down there.

The Polarian gestures planetward. The Pyxians start
twittering.

FEMALE PYXIAN

No. Is hell down there and many
criminals. Not safe.

PIKE

We need another pod. Take us around
to the other side and we'll see if
there are any left on board.

Joy nods and sets the controls. The pod moves away.

MALE PYXIAN

Thanks you, Pike, for saving our
lives.

FEMALE PYXIAN

Yes, you are a hero for us.

PIKE

Riley and your friend from Magellan helped. And if Joy had not been there..

POLARIAN

But without you, we would never have gotten to the lifepod. You are a good man.

Pike really doesn't know how to respond to that. Joy saves him.

JOY

There's one two-person pod.

PIKE

So how do we get to it?

Riley stands and goes to the airlock.

RILEY

Allow me.

He goes through the inner lock, it shuts, then through the outer one.

MALE PYXIAN

Which of us will go on the small..

PIKE

I will.

JOY

So will I.

There's more to this than meets the eye and the aliens sense it.

MALE PYXIAN

No, Pike, stay with us.

There's a clunk as the second pod is attached to the airlock by Riley. He comes back inside.

JOY

Riley, you can manage this pod, can't you?

He nods.

JOY

Pike and I will go on that one.

RILEY

And where will you go?

PIKE

What?

RILEY

You wanna leave us so bad, you gotta be going somewheres.

Silence for a moment.

RILEY

You're going down there, aren't you?

Pike looks at Joy, looks anywhere but at Riley and the four aliens.

FEMALE PYXIAN

Why go there? You are free! You are a hero!

Pike sighs.

PIKE

I deserve to go down there. Besides, even if I escaped with you, the authorities would have me back here in hours.

JOY

I deserve to be down there, too.

POLARIAN

We do not think so.

Pike finally looks directly at all of them.

PIKE

Listen all of you, I am the Destroyer of Worlds, understand? I am the one who massacred the Mirgi and kept the war going for five years. Me, the Destroyer. Tell me, what do I deserve?

FEMALE PYXIAN

You deserve life. You deserve a chance.

PIKE

My chances are all used up.

RILEY

There's always hope.

PIKE

Where could I go that they would not
find me?

No one has an answer to that. He gets ready to leave, looks
at Joy.

PIKE

You could stay. No one would be
looking for you.

JOY

No one except the family of the being
I killed.

She comes forward to join him. Riley stands, blocks their
way.

RILEY

I should go with you, to the end of
the trail, so to speak.

PIKE

These people's lives are in your
hands. Take care of them.

He holds out his hand.

PIKE

You've been a good friend.

Riley shakes his hand. You can almost see a tear in his
cyber-eye. Then Joy hugs him.

JOY

You are a good man, Riley. A real
man. More man than most.

RILEY

Thank you ma'am. That means a whole
lot to me.

The four aliens make their versions of farewells, with the
Pyxians finally flying in Pike's face.

PYXIANS

You will return, Pike. And we will
salute the day.

Pike shakes his head, walks into the airlock. Joy follows.
The lock hisses shut.

Riley hides a snuffle.

FEMALE PYXIAN
Are you crying, Mr. Riley?

RILEY
Robots can't cry.

OUTSIDE

The small pod detaches from the larger one, begins to descend.

Near both pods, the huge starship Jehovah is in pieces, breaking apart, flaming down to Inferno.

THE SMALL POD

Descends to the planet. As it goes through various rings of the atmosphere, it's as if they were the circles of hell.

The planet and its atmosphere are harsh and uninviting: sulfurous clouds, acid rain, finally a fiery lake in which they splash down.

IN THE POD

Flames reflect throughout the interior of the pod as Joy and Pike get on their space-suits.

PIKE
I'm sorry I brought you here.

JOY
Is that all you're sorry for?

That stings.

PIKE
Yes, I'm sorry the Mirgi died. But it was an accident, Joy. Nothing can change that fact. If I could bring them back, I would.

The pod shakes joltingly. They both turn to the porthole to see a huge metal hand has emerged from the lake and taken hold of them. It pulls them under the fire.

UNDER THE LAKE

The metal hand retracts through the liquid into the stone floor.

UNDER THE GROUND

The civilization of Inferno is underground. It looks like Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS gone wild: technology run amok; metal buildings zigzag all through the underground layers

haphazardly; the lighting is all man-made and unnatural:
the accoutrements of hell.

PIKE AND JOY

Look in amazement -- and horror -- from the pod. Finally
the pod is brought inside one large building and brought to
rest on a landing pad.

Pike looks at a gauge.

PIKE

Earth air. Let's go.

Still in their space-suits, but holding their helmets, they
debarck.

INSIDE INFERNO

The inside of the buildings matches the crazy-quilt technology
of the outside.

They're met by a contingent of guards, mostly human, and one
thin, sallow tall man, WARDEN WILLOW.

WARDEN WILLOW

Greetings, prisoners. Welcome to
your final resting place. Though
there won't be much rest for you.

His growling tone is like nails on a chalkboard.

One guard points a scanner at them.

GUARD

She is Willis, Joy. Delivered on
Jehovah.

WARDEN WILLOW

You two destroy that ship? Then
I'll make it even worse for you, if
you can imagine that.

PIKE

Would we have come here if we had?
Do we look that stupid?

The Warden gestures and another guard fires a weapon at Pike,
who screams in agony, clawing at his skin, falling to the
ground.

WARDEN WILLOW

Unpleasant, isn't it? I created
that one myself.

The guard scans Pike.

GUARD

Pike, Immanuel.

He says it as if he doesn't believe it. The Warden smiles a big yellow smile.

WARDEN WILLOW

The Destroyer of Worlds? I'm honored!
We love celebrity guests!

PIKE

Then do me a favor. Let her go.

WARDEN WILLOW

Nonsense! She's as guilty as you
are. I will grant you one tiny boon,
though.

He gestures and the guards roughly take them both and put them in shackles.

WARDEN WILLOW

You get to be together in hell.
Isn't that romantic?

He turns and walks away, they're dragged along behind him.

ON THE CATWALKS

Inside Inferno, the Warden brings them to catwalks overlooking the very bottom of the installation.

It looks like all the paintings of hell: people working and suffering in the midst of fire and smoke. Groans, screams, cries to god.

The warden smiles as he looks out on it all.

WARDEN WILLOW

I do believe I've found my calling.
I created hell and did a pretty damn
good job of it.

He giggles to himself.

WARDEN WILLOW

Behold my kingdom! Murderers,
rapists, thieves..
(shouting)
Listen to me!

All work stops and the sufferers turn their eyes to him.

WARDEN WILLOW
Meet the new meat!

Murmurs among the criminals as they eye Joy -- and a few large and hungry aliens eye Pike.

WARDEN WILLOW
Not just any meat! We have a star here. You serial killers and murderers think you made it big. This, boys and girls, is the Destroyer of Worlds.

He waits. A hush has fallen over the crowd. Then the Warden starts clapping.

WARDEN WILLOW
A big hand for Pike, everyone!

And they do applaud for him, some whistling, some making catcalls, all genuinely impressed.

Pike is sickened by it all.

HIS P.O.V.

He looks out at the array of psychos, killers and lunatics -- and for a moment he sees them all as Demons, big and leathery with horns and tails.

PIKE

Shakes his head at the vision. Now they're all just criminals.

The Warden hits a switch and the catwalk drops down quickly. He hits another and a crane swoops over, takes both Pike and Joy by their manacles and lifts them, painfully, over the side to the fiery earth.

The Warden gives them a little goodbye wave.

WARDEN WILLOW
Enjoy.

IN HELL

Pike and Joy are put to work -- physical labor that seems totally useless. Mostly moving rocks or shoveling dirt or breaking rocks. Then, it's more rocks, more dirt. They sleep right there amongst the dirt and rocks.

Pike has to fight a few psychos away as they try to take Joy from him. But he soon defends his territory and is left alone.

PIKE AND JOY

Sleep one night. He wakes up -- and thinks he sees a Demon right over his head. He jumps up, yelling. Joy runs to him, thinking he's losing it. He just shakes his head in dismay.

THE WARDEN

Overhead, laughing maniacally as they all slave away again.

JOY

Slumps down in a corner, exhausted. A guard starts to whip her, but when Pike stands in his way, he thinks better of it and leaves him alone.

Pike cradles Joy, then looks up -- and sees that Demon again, in a corner, hidden from the rest. It seems to be gesturing to him.

He closes his eyes and opens them again -- but the Demon is still there.

It motions to him to follow it. He looks around, sees no one is watching. Picks up Joy and follows it.

The Demon seems to pass right through a wall.

Pike comes up to the wall and gingerly sticks a foot out -- it passes through the wall. He pushes on through, carrying Joy right into the caverns, literally.

IN THE WALL

A series of tunnels branch out from the wall. Pike follows the Demon up an ascending one. He tries to talk to it.

PIKE

What the hell are you?

The Demon gestures for him to be quiet, keeps climbing up. Pike follows. Joy slowly comes to herself, looks at him. He puts her on her feet.

JOY

Where are we?

PIKE

We're getting out.

JOY

There is no out. This planet is deadly everywhere.

PIKE

Ask him.

He points ahead and she sees the Demon, catches her breath. It seems to smile at them, gargoyle-like. It walks to them, touches their shackles, and the chains fall to the ground. Then it moves on. They continue to follow.

NEAR THE TOP

The caverns lead up to the surface. A sulfurous wind blows down the tunnel towards them. The Demon continues upwards.

PIKE

We can't go out on the surface!
We'll die!

The Demon stops, looks at them, smiles.

DEMON

Wouldn't that be an improvement?

Pike and Joy stare in disbelief.

DEMON

Sorry. Bad joke. Trust me, you'll be fine. Why would I take you all this way to kill you?

JOY

Why are you taking us up there?

DEMON

To give you a choice. Or a chance perhaps.

He flutters his leathery wings and moves forward. They follow.

ON THE SURFACE

The winds howl, the acid rains fall and fiery puddles spring up all around them. But the three of them remain unaffected by it all.

PIKE

Maybe we are dead.

DEMON

Wouldn't you imagine a better afterlife than this?

PIKE

Who are you?

The Demon extends a claw.

DEMON

Name's Lucifer. Perhaps you've heard
of me?

Pike draws his hand back.

LUCIFER

Now, now. I've had a bad rap. You
know about that kind of thing
yourself.

Pike gingerly shakes his claw, as does Joy.

LUCIFER

Contrary to what you may believe, we
are merely life-forms. We're the
original inhabitants of this planet.
You humans came in and decided to
make it a prison-world.

JOY

But you look like..

LUCIFER

Yes, we did make a few trips to your
Old Earth in the past. Your people
made myths of us because we didn't
fit your rules of beauty.
Ridiculous, isn't it?

He flaps his wings and flies about twenty feet off the ground.

LUCIFER

Of course, we could have shown them
our other face.

PIKE

Other face?

LUCIFER

The pretty one.

Suddenly everything around them transforms. The ground
becomes hills of rolling green; the fiery puddles become
crystal streams; golden sunlight filters down through
beautiful white clouds; trees hold singing birds; animals
scamper along the ground.

Pike and Joy stare in wonder, then Joy elbows Pike and points
up.

ABOVE THEM

Floats an angel on fluffy white wings, a being so beautiful it's hard to look at him.

LUCIFER

This is also what we look like.
Depends on your perspective. You
know, like snakes. Which are actually
beautiful creatures.

The reference is lost on Pike.

PIKE

You're angels!

LUCIFER

We've been called that.

PIKE

Then you know the plan!

LUCIFER

Plan?

PIKE

The Divine Plan, why everything
happens the way it does! It's all
part of a Plan, right?

The angel does its best version of a shrug.

LUCIFER

If you like to think so.

PIKE

It's gotta be a plan! It all happens
for a reason! The Mirgi -- that had
to happen, didn't it? You know!

LUCIFER

We're just a little more advanced
than you are, that's all. We don't
have a hot-line to god, whoever he
or she might be.

The angel descends to the ground near them.

LUCIFER

But there is one power we do have.
That's the reason I brought you here.
We can communicate with the after-
life.

JOY

The dead?

LUCIFER

Yes. Would you like to?

JOY

More than anything!

PIKE

Why would we want to do that?

Lucifer ignores him, goes over to Joy and touches her on the forehead. She immediately kneels, closes her eyes and is lost in a trance.

PIKE

What did you do to her?

LUCIFER

She is communicating with the Achernarian she killed. What about you?

PIKE

What about me?

LUCIFER

Do you want to talk to the Mirgi?

PIKE

I already did! They forgive me!
They..

LUCIFER

You're lying.

The angel turns and regards the paradise now around them.

LUCIFER

It's your choice, it's the choice I give all who end up here. You'll notice most of the prisoners are humans? They're the most stubborn. Think the universe revolves around them. So they go back in there. Is that what you want?

PIKE

Inferno? No!

LUCIFER

Then you have to face the sins of your past. Only then can you move forward.

PIKE

Why do I need to move anywhere?

LUCIFER

For anyone or anything to evolve, it has to take responsibility. You know that.

Pike does, but he doesn't want to admit it.

PIKE

It wasn't my fault!

LUCIFER

Prove it. Talk to them.

PIKE

(angrily)

All right! I will! They'll prove I'm right!

Lucifer steps to him and touches his hand to his forehead.

LUCIFER

Sure you're ready for this?

PIKE'S FACE

Expands hugely, becomes the size of a sun.

PIKE'S BRAIN

Is made of stars and planets.

THE COSMIC PIKE

Looks out at the wonders of the universe in awe. When he speaks, solar flares shoot out for hundreds of miles.

PIKE

Where am I?

His face reflects some pain, some anxiety, then:

HE EXPLODES

The sun shoots out in pieces, traversing galaxies. Pike is little bits of consciousness shooting out through worlds and worlds.

HE SEES

Every kind of race under every kind of sun: living, loving, growing, dying.

Then..

HE STOPS

An alien face confronts him: a snake with glowing red eyes.
Then more.. And more.

Thousands of Mirgi surround him, floating above the Mirgi
homeworld.

PIKE

Coalesces back into human form, floats with them.

One Mirgi floats forward.

MIRGI

Come with me.

The Mirgi touches him.

MIRGI PLANET

And he is on the Mirgi homeworld, seeing how they live.
Seeing how they love their children, cute little worms who
still play with Mirgi dolls. How they communicate through
thought, so there is no crime, no cheating, no lying. Just
truth.

He sees them build towering jade edifices, create masterful
artworks, learn to travel through space.

He sees them look in concern at viewscreens showing the
Valeran/Human war destroying planets.

They confer among themselves. He sees in their thoughts
that they know their planet will be in a war zone, that the
Valerans are on the verge of taking it hostage.

So they build the Sphere to house them all. Let the Valerans
have the piece of rock. The Mirgi spirit, the people will
survive.

They broadcast their message and all the races of the universe
agree to send an ambassador to them to talk of peace.

Then they embark, floating high, with high hopes. They fly
right into a warzone where they see...

A PAIR OF BROWN EYES

Scared, young, with a visible flaw in the right eye.

THE MIRGI

Try to communicate by thought with the frightened boy.

MIRGI

Peace! We are for peace!

THE EXPLOSION

The Mirgi die horribly, sucked out into the vacuum of space. The ambassadors from the other worlds try to help save the ship, but it's gone.

Mother and fathers try to save their children, getting them into suits -- but it all happens too fast. The whole ship explodes in a ball of fire.

PIKE AND THE MIRGI

Float in space over the Mirgi homeworld. The one Mirgi floats in front of Pike.

MIRGI

That was our life. Why did you end it?

PIKE

It was an accident! I thought you meant to attack us! I didn't know.

MIRGI

Why?

PIKE

I told you why! I was young, scared. I didn't know!

MIRGI

Why? Why were you there?

PIKE

What?

MIRGI

Why were you in that war?

PIKE

I don't know, I just..

The Mirgi floats closer, touches its head to Pike's. Pike tries to pull his head back in revulsion, but can't do it quickly enough.

The Mirgi touches him carefully.

MIRGI

Show us why.

MONTAGE

Pike as a boy, watching the war on holo-vee. He sees the Valerans portrayed as bloodthirsty, evil.

Pike with his father in uniform. His father is a career army officer.

FATHER

We must cleanse the universe of this evil.

His father rests a hand on Pike's shoulder.

FATHER

Humans are the chosen race. It is our duty to rule the others.

PIKE

Watches the war on holo-vee. Casualties mount. He hears quiet sobbing behind him, turns to see his mother holding a holo-gram unit.

Pike takes the unit from her hand and plays it. A little image of his father appears, explosions all around him.

FATHER

I love you both. I die fighting for humanity.

Then the message fizzles out. Pike looks over at the holo-vee, a grimly determined young boy.

PIKE

I'm gonna kill them all!

His mother looks up, concerned.

PIKE AND CAPTAIN MAKIN

Are on the ship, Makin training Pike on how to use the weapons.

MAKIN

You have a blood thirst in you, son.

PIKE

I hate them. They killed my father.

Some crew members come by -- other races: a teddy bear-like Fomalhautian, a blue-furred Sirian. Pike watches them go.

PIKE

Why are they here?

MAKIN

They're part of the crew!

PIKE

They don't deserve to be treated like humans. One day we'll have to fight them.. for humanity.

MAKIN

You have some odd ideas, son.

PIKE

Humans are the chosen race.

An explosion rocks the ship.

MAKIN

We'll talk about this later. Get to the bridge. We're under attack.

PIKE'S BROWN EYES

Are on the bridge, looking out at the globe that approaches them in the midst of battle.

A SNAKE FACE

Floats before him, a Mirgi, trying to communicate telepathically.

MIRGI

Peace! We are for peace!

PIKE

The only peace will come when all you aliens are dead!

He thinks a thought and the weapons fire, destroying the sphere.

THE BROWN EYES

Are happy with the explosion, reflected in their depths.

PIKE

Floats now in front of the Mirgi race, realizing what really happened during that battle.

PIKE

A thought. I killed with a thought.

MIRGI

You wanted to kill us in your mind,
so you did.

PIKE

I hated you.

MIRGI

You did not know us. You hated
something you'd created in your mind.

Pike's older brown eyes fill with tears.

PIKE

I was so wrong. I am so sorry.

He cries like a child.

MIRGI

Now you know, Pike. Now we forgive
you.

He looks up at them, surprised.

PIKE

Forgive..?

And the Mirgi touches its face to his head again.

PIKE'S FACE

Shrinks, down, down, down from the cosmos back to one lone
planet.

PIKE

Looks up, sees Lucifer standing over him. Lucifer removes
his hand from Pike's forehead.

PIKE

I did do it. I meant to do it. I
murdered them all.

Lucifer nods.

LUCIFER

The first step in evolution is
recognizing your own evils.

PIKE

I deserve to be here. I mean, back
there.

He gestures back down the tunnel to the prison.

LUCIFER

Your choice. Let's see what she wants to do.

He touches Joy on the forehead, who has still been kneeling in her trance.

Her eyes snap open, then a tear trickles down her cheek.

JOY

He forgave me.

She looks at Pike and smiles.

JOY

But he misses his family. Did you..?

He nods. She stands and comes to him, takes his hand.

JOY

What happened?

PIKE

I found out who I was. What I'd done. They forgave me, too.

JOY

What do you want to do now?

PIKE

What can we do? Go back to Inferno, pay for our sins.

LUCIFER

That's one option. I can offer you more.

PIKE

More?

Lucifer gestures at the rolling green hills around them.

LUCIFER

This is really Algol One. We keep the reality hidden or we'd have no world. But you can stay as our guests.

JOY

It's paradise.

LUCIFER

Exactly. You've already paid for your sins. Now you can begin to live. Here. Together.

Pike and Joy look at each other, considering it. Then Pike's eyes harden.

PIKE

You said options. What else?

LUCIFER

You can go back to prison. Or you can leave.

PIKE

Leave the planet?

LUCIFER

We will provide you with transportation. You can go wherever you wish.

JOY

Freedom..

PIKE

To be hunted. They'd have me back here so fast..

LUCIFER

Then you can stay here, in this paradise. But perhaps they won't send you back. Not if you tell them.

PIKE

Tell them.. that I did it?

LUCIFER

And what that means. To them, to humans. It may teach some humans something. About living with other species.

JOY

We could teach..

LUCIFER

Yes. Spread the word. It's a good word.

PIKE

They may kill us.

LUCIFER

And if they do..

JOY

We must forgive them.

Pike looks at her, amazed.

PIKE

You want to go out there?

She nods. He turns, staring away at something only he can see.

PIKE

It won't be easy.

JOY

I'll be there to help you.

He turns back to her.

PIKE

(to Lucifer)

We'll go.

LUCIFER

You'll find a ship right over that hill. It's cloaked from any detection. Good luck.

Pike and Joy start to walk over the hill. Pike thinks of something, turns back to Lucifer.

PIKE

Why do you..?

But Lucifer is gone. They move on.

OVER THE HILL

A small ship sits awaiting them. As they approach it, the door hisses open. A familiar head pokes out: Riley!

RILEY

Ready to hit the trail, kids? Good to have you back with the living.

PIKE

Good to be back.

He helps Joy on board, gives one last look to Eden and gets on the ship himself.

It takes off into the sky.

FADE OUT:

THE END