

The Great Outback

"The Daughters of Albion" - Show #104

by
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THE DAUGHTERS OF ALBION

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. ALICE SPRINGS (AEROSPACE PORT) - ESTABLISHING

WIDE ANGLE shot of Alice Springs Aerospace Port at mid-morning. Ayres Rock is in the extreme distance, on the horizon. The spaceport is busy. Various types of aircraft and spacecraft are arriving and departing.

CAPTION: Alice Springs Aerospace Port

EXT. LOADING DOCK- DAY

CIS Daisy is in the BACKGROUND. LEDGE and ABDUL are standing on a loading dock. Behind them, an open door leads inside the adjacent warehouse.

LEDGE

What's the cargo today?

ABDUL

Passengers and their personal belongings. Five-thousand smooos a head. Just transport them to ZPH-17. Drop them off at the starport planet-side. It's three jumps each way. About a 24-hour round-trip if you don't lollygag.

LEDGE

ZPH? That's in Zimrakkan space.

ABDUL

Correct. It's under Zimrakkan jurisdiction, but they haven't colonized it. It's about 70 percent water and the Zimrakkans don't like the humidity. So they are leasing to human business concerns. Lots of natural resources as I understand it. But my concern is getting the workers transported there.

LEDGE

Why not use commercial flights?

ABDUL

No regular flights go there. There's not enough people to justify chartering a ship. There's no space station, so we have to hire streamlined ships. So, it's cheaper for me to just hire freelancers like yourself. How many can you take on?

LEDGE

I can take up to three passengers per trip.

ABDUL

Fifteen-thousand smoots for a day's work. Not a bad deal, if I say so myself. How soon can you depart?

LEDGE

My crew are on leave in town, so for this run, I'll say oh-eight-hundred tomorrow morning. If you need more, I'll need twelve-hours notice to guarantee availability, but we might be able to do a faster turnaround, depending on the timing.

ABDUL

That works for me. Let us take care of the paperwork.

Abdul motions for Ledge to follow him inside the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALICE SPRINGS (SHOPPING DISTRICT) - DAY

JONES and KOKO are walking around Alice Springs, window shopping. A large number of obviously poor people are walking about, making the scene appear something of a mix between a modern outdoor walking mall and an outdoor bazaar.

Everyone is wearing appropriate clothing for the hot, dry climate of central Australia (NB, it should be clear that many of those milling about are unemployed and begging or looking around to liberate shoppers from their belongings).

Koko is looking at an "Authentic Aboriginal Souvenirs" stand, which is, of course, about as authentic as Sitting Bull at a Thanksgiving Day reenactment.

There are a large number and variety of wooden trinkets being offered for sale. She picks up and starts testing the feel and balance of a full-sized wooden boomerang.

Jones' phone BEEPS. He removes it from his belt and activates it. The phone has a small video monitor. Ledge's face appears on the screen.

JONES

Hello?

LEDGE

Hey, Jonesie. Is Koko with you?

JONES

Yeah. She's right here.

KOKO

Hello, boss.

LEDGE

Good. I need you both on board for a mission at oh-seven-hundred hours tomorrow morning.

JONES

Where we headed?

LEDGE

It's a day trip to somewhere called ZPH-17.

KOKO

ZPH? What's that?

JONES

(to Koko)

Short for Zimrakkan Planet,
Habitable.

LEDGE

See you both in the morning. Have fun and don't get arrested or anything. Over and out.

As Koko examines the boomerang, she momentarily shows the camera that it has the text Made on Albion printed on its underside.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. ALICE SPRINGS (AEROSPACE PORT) - ESTABLISHING

WIDE ANGLE shot of Alice Springs Aerospace Port in early morning.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Jones is sitting at his navigation station, doing navigator stuff.

Koko is sitting at her engineering station, running preflight system diagnostics.

Ledge enters the ship from the rear airlock. He is wearing a tee-shirt that has a picture of Ayres Rock that reads, My Friends Went Walkabout And I Only Got A Shirt.

Ledge is leading ADRIANNA, LEAH, and DIERDRE onto the ship. The women look to be around age twenty, and not well-to-do. Their clothing is plain.

Dierdre is diffident and exceptionally attractive despite her unadorned clothing.

The ladies are each carrying a small satchel of personal effects and spare clothes. They look around the ship with curiosity as they enter.

LEDGE

This way, ladies. Welcome aboard the Daisy. We are not a regular commercial flight, but we will do everything we can to make the flight as comfortable as we can.

Ledge gives the lady passengers a short tour of the ship, pointing out important fixtures as he goes.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

This is the galley. During jumps and on takeoff and landing, you'll have to be buckled-up, but at other times, just help yourselves to anything you like.

Ledge stops and slides open the door to the lavatory.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
This is the oh-gee-whiz.

LEAH
Is it clean?

LEDGE
Jonesie! Is the head clean?

JONES
Yes!

LEDGE
Yes.

Ledge continues on to the bunk bays. He demonstrates for the ladies how the bunks, seats, and tables fold down and up.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
If you want to lie down, the top bunks are yours to use. Just fold them down or ask one of us to do it for you.

ADRIANNA
How long is this flight again?

LEDGE
Jonesie! How long is the flight going to be.

JONES
Eighteen jumps plus a micro into the Albion system. So nine hours to recharge the batteries and about four hours to maneuver to and from our jump points. Add another hour of wiggle room. So around fourteen hours.

LEDGE
It'll be a long flight. We'll have to take a nap or two along the way as well.

LEAH
But we can still walk around if we want?

LEDGE
During some flight operations, you'll need to strap in. These are your seats. Just get one of us to help you.

ADRIANNA

Fourteen hours? Is there any in-flight entertainment?

LEDGE

Ummm--Not as such. Like I said, we're not a regular commercial carrier. But we'll see what we can come up with. We could probably put some movies up on the monitor for you to watch. That's what we usually do on really long flights.

ADRIANNA

How long until we leave?

LEDGE

Koko?

KOKO

About thirty minutes. I need to do the visual inspection on the outer hull.

LEDGE

Please use the time to make yourselves comfortable, use the head, grab a bite to eat from the galley, or whatever. Do you have any other questions?

(pause)

Good! I need to get us prepared for lift-off. This is my crew--

(points to Koko)

Koko, and--

(points to Jones)

Jonesie.

Jones does a double-take as he notices that Dierdre is very attractive, but quickly turns back to his work. Koko looks at Dierdre and speaks, trying to be friendly.

KOKO

You're a quiet one.

Dierdre smiles slightly.

KOKO (CONT'D)

What's your name?

DIERDRE

Dierdre.

KOKO

Well, make yourself at home. We don't stand on formalities here. If you're on board, you're family, even if only for a day. Right, Boss?

LEDGE

That's right, ladies. We're all one big, dysfunctional family. Welcome to our asylum!

EXT. ALICE SPRINGS (LANDING PAD) - LATER

SERIES OF SHOTS

The *CIS Daisy* lifts off and flies up into orbit. It then maneuvers out to its jump point. It jumps into hyperspace.

INT. CIS DAISY - LATER

Koko, Dierdre, Leah, and Adrianna are sitting on bunks in the crew section. The door to the cockpit is closed.

KOKO

Where are you all from?

ADRIANNA

Cyprus.

LEAH

Rangoon.

Dierdre does not answer.

KOKO

How about you, Dierdre?

DIERDRE

I--I'm not sure where I was born. I move around a lot. I'm mostly from Australia.

KOKO

What about your parents.

DIERDRE

I don't know. I never met them. I was raised in a workhouse until I was fourteen, then it shut down. I've been on my own ever since.

LEAH

Oh, honey, that's horrible.

KOKO

My parents died when I was young, but I knew them. So that's not the same. I hope I didn't hurt you by asking.

DIERDRE

I'm okay, but thanks. I've gotten by so far. I have to think that things get better if we keep trying.

The cockpit door opens. Jones walks to the galley and retrieves a couple of Australasian Lagers from the cooler.

JONES

Don't mind me, ladies.

Jones returns to the cockpit and the door closes behind him.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Jones hands one beer to Ledge, then sits down and opens his.

JONES

Cute girl, that Dierdre.

LEDGE

I sort of got the impression that you were interested in Koko.

JONES

Koko? Are you serious? She's just one of me mates, so to speak.

LEDGE

Maybe you could ask Dierdre out to lunch when we land then?

JONES

Nah. She's really pretty, but she's too quiet for me. She's also maybe eight or ten years younger?

LEDGE

That seems like a lot of time when you're thirty, but when you're forty, she'd be in her early thirties. And when you're fifty, she'll still be about forty.

JONES

So, the age ratio matters more than the linear deviation?

LEDGE

You really are a total nerd, aren't you?

JONES

Loud and proud. Kampai!

Jones takes a long drink.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER SPACE (ALBION SYSTEM) - HOURS LATER

An Earth-like planet is in the distance (about the size of a nickel). A yellow-white star should also be in the extreme distance. It appears slightly smaller than the planet, but larger than the background stars (about the size of a dime). The CIS Daisy jumps from hyperspace into frame, her nose pointing in the general direction of the planet.

CAPTION: Planet Albion (Zimrakkan Territory)

JONES (O.S.)

It should be about another four hours until we land. Did someone ask for entertainment?

INT. CIS DAISY - LATER

AD LIB a short scene of the crew trying to entertain their passengers. The less successful they are, the better, but if the actors have any otherwise unused talents to display, this is a good opportunity. Perhaps a scene from HMS Pinafore?

EXT. OUTER SPACE (ALBION ORBIT) - LATER

SERIES OF SHOTS

The CIS Daisy enters orbit around Albion and then reenters the atmosphere.

EXT. ALBION (LANDING PAD) - EARLY MORNING

The spaceport on Albion is very crude. The landing pad is merely a dirt clearing with a concrete loading dock and a few prefabricated buildings scattered around.

Other small starships are in the landing area. One is a very fancy, streamlined, high-performance "sports" ship.

The surrounding countryside is heavily wooded with Earth-like deciduous trees.

The CIS Daisy slowly swoops in and lands on an empty landing pad.

INT. CIS DAISY - MINUTES LATER

The crew is waving goodbye to their three passengers as they debark via the ladder in the floor of the airlock (the landing pad is very crude and has no boarding ramps).

JONES

I hope the entertainment wasn't too horrendous!

KOKO

Goodbye! Good luck! May come see you at lunch to see how you're doing!

LEDGE

Thanks for flying Air Insanity, where we can't even lose our own baggage!

The girls all climb down the ladder, waving goodbye as they go. The airlock hatch slides shut behind them.

JONES

Who has baggage?

Koko slaps Jones hard on the behind.

JONES (CONT'D)

Ow!

KOKO
Mystery solved.

LEDGE
Well, that was a long trip. Let's
do the post-flight maintenance and
try to find something to back-load.

EXT. ALBION (LANDING PAD) - TRANSITIONAL

It is late morning outside. The CIS Daisy sits on an unpaved
landing pad.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Ledge and Jones are sitting in the cockpit, doing AD LIB post-
landing activities. Koko is standing behind them, preparing
to leave the ship.

KOKO
Do you think those girls are doing
okay? They're about as far from
home as they can get. I got the
impression from talking to them
that they're pretty much on their
own. No families or anything to
look out for them.

JONES
This really is a nice planet. Good
climate, no pollution, fresh air.
Should be a working vacation for
them.

LEDGE
That was a nice, easy run. Fifteen-
thousand in the coffers. I'm going
to keep us down overnight while I
look for something we can back-
load. Once you two get the post-
flight diagnostics done, you get
the rest of the day off.

KOKO
I'm going to go sample the local
cuisine and get some fresh air.
Maybe see if I can find out how our
girls are doing. See you all in an
hour or two. You need anything?

JONES

I'm going to have a walk around myself when I finish up here, so I'll be fine.

LEDGE

Enjoy yourself. And what do we always do on shore leave?

KOKO AND JONES

(simultaneously)

Have fun but stay out of trouble.

EXT. ALBION (FACTORY COMPLEX) - LATER

Koko is wandering around the light industrial factory nearby the landing site, looking around, and generally enjoying the nice, sunny day.

SPFX a grav-limousine passes by as it flies by, hovering a meter or so above the road. It lightly stirs dust as it quickly moves past.

Koko continues to stroll until she arrives at...

EXT. ALBION (CAFETERIA) - SAME

Koko walks up to a building with the sign that reads-- Albion Diner: If it ain't movin', it's done.

INT. ALBION (CAFETERIA) - SAME

Koko walks in the door. It is lunchtime. Several workers are sitting at tables, eating lunch. Koko looks around and sees Leah and Adrianna sitting together. She waves to them.

INT. ALBION (CAFETERIA) - SAME

Koko is sitting at a table with Leah and Adrianna. Leah and Adrianna are wearing tracking collars. They are chatting as they finish eating.

KOKO

Where's Dierdre?

LEAH

I haven't seen her since we went through that processing place this morning.

ADRIANNA

Me neither. They pulled her out of line and took her away. Same with another of the new girls who came in on that other transport.

KOKO

Did you see where they took them?

LEAH

They led them outside and drove away in a van. Maybe there is another work site further away.

KOKO

What's going on with those collars.

LEAH

The other girls said that they use them to keep tabs on where we are. To see if we're working. We're not allowed to take them off or we get fined ten smoos each time, and that's about what we make in a full day.

KOKO

Tell me about how you got here. Why you took the job.

ADRIANNA

We all needed the job. It's hard to find one back on Earth. Even if you move out to one of the colonies, it's still very hard unless you have a land grant.

(sighs)

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

LEAH

We sign on for a contract period. Three years. They transport us and provide necessities.

ADRIANNA

What they didn't tell us was that it all comes out of our pay, and when we're done, we either sign on again for another year or pay our own way back.

KOKO

You're kidding. Aren't you?

LEAH

It was in the contract. I should have read it closer.

KOKO

What kind of work do they have you doing?

ADRIANNA

So far, it's been all processing and orientation. After lunch, I start with assembling little wooden trinkets and things.

LEAH

I get to do souvenir boomerangs.

KOKO

Why don't they use machines for that? Why women?

LEAH

Small fingers for small parts, I guess. I heard tell that they do use machines to cut the pieces, but they make so many different things in small amounts that it was more expensive for them to use machines than to hire us girls to do the assembly.

ADRIANNA

I thought I'd be glad to have the job, but I'm not so sure now. Since they are taking our housing and laundry and food and everything else out of our wages, I don't know how I'm ever going to pay back the transport fee.

KOKO

Let me get this straight. They brought you out here for a minimum wage job, but they are forcing you to pay for all your expenses when they inflate the prices?

LEAH

And they have all these guards walking around. It feels more like a prison than a factory.

ADRIANNA

(sits up straight)
Speaking thereof--

A GUARD has been wandering around the cafeteria. The Guard is wearing a private security officer's uniform and carrying a baton. He approaches their table on his rounds. He looks at Koko, notices that she is not wearing a collar, and walks over.

Koko, already angered by what the girls have told her of their treatment, is in a foul mood. She glares at the Guard.

GUARD

Where's your collar?

KOKO

I don't wear collars.

GUARD

You do if you work here.

KOKO

I don't work here.

GUARD

Then you shouldn't be talking to the girls who do.

KOKO

I'll speak to anyone I damn well please.

GUARD

This is private property, and I think its time for you to leave.

CLOSE ON GUARD'S BELT

The Guard presses a button on a communication device that is attached to his belt.

BACK TO SCENE

LEAH
Koko, don't--

KOKO
(to Guard)
Touch me. I dare you.

CUT TO:

INT. CIS DAISY - DAY

Ledge is running diagnostics on the ship's flight controls. Jones is eating a nutrition bar and fiddling with a wooden boomerang just like the one Koko was playing with in the bazaar on Earth in the Teaser. Amy/AI is observing from the video monitor.

LEDGE
Jones, did anything give you the impression that something isn't right here?

JONES
Well--
(pause)
It's very quiet. There are a lot of guards. There's an oppressive malaise hanging over everyone I met. So, it's a normal factory from what I can see.
(pause)
Plus, this boomerang only cost one smoo here, but they wanted ten for the same thing back on Earth. Clearly a rip-off.
(self-conscious)
Koko was looking at one when we were in Alice Springs. I thought she might like it.
(pause)
That's all. Nothing to see here.

LEDGE
I noticed that on the transaction record for our flight here, it only listed the amount of the deposit. No mention of what our cargo actually was.

JONES

Is that not normal?

LEDGE

It just smells fishy. I don't really know why.

(pause)

I did notice that all of the ships that have landed here since we arrived are small transports. A hundred displacement-tons or less. Too small for CAA regulations on passenger carriers to kick in. And there have been at least three really expensive private transports. I'm talking about custom jobs. High-performance.

JONES

Maybe this is where the rich and famous come to save money on their boomerangs.

LEDGE

Amy, is there any unusual radio traffic?

AMY/AI

Ledge, I'm monitoring a large number of low-powered transponders. They seem to be broadcasting GPS positional data. Perhaps they are tracking devices.

LEDGE

Is there any reason to think this is unusual?

AMY/AI

I am not qualified to define what is usual and what is not. However, it is conspicuous that the transmissions are concentrated in a specific set of buildings.

LEDGE

The factory complex?

AMY/AI

Yes.

(pause)

And one other. Twenty-eight transponders are operating at a remote location.

LEDGE

How remote?

AMY/AI

Twenty kilometers away. Would you like to immerse to view the map?

LEDGE

Sure.

Ledge plugs in his dewey and relaxes in his chair, closing his eyes.

INT. CYBERSPACE (MAP ROOM) - SAME

Ledge and Amy/AI are standing next to a round table with a relief map of the surrounding environs. The map is photorealistic, as if being displayed from a satellite photo. Amy points to areas as she tells Ledge about them.

AMY/AI

This is the landing area, where we are.

(pause)

This is the factory area, including the assembly plant, dormitory, cafeteria, general store, warehouse, etc. There are one-hundred and sixteen transponders coming from this area.

(pause)

Over here at the edge of this map is a separate compound. It looks like an expensive estate of some sort. Perhaps a mansion. I have noticed something very odd about the security arrangements there.

LEDGE

What is that?

AMY/AI

The automatic sensors are pointed inward on the grounds. Not outward. I do not understand why a security system on a private residence would be oriented in that direction.

LEDGE

How do you know all this?

AMY/AI

I hacked into the local security network. For all the expensive hardware they have employed, they used commercial-grade security software. It presented no challenge-

-

(smug)

--whatsoever.

LEDGE

What else have you discovered?

AMY/AI

The transit records show that a total of one-hundred, forty-four workers have been registered with the factory staff.

LEDGE

And?

AMY/AI

I am reading one hundred and forty-four transponders. One hundred, forty-four minus twenty-eight equals one-hundred, sixteen. That is the number of transponders in the factory.

LEDGE

So, twenty-eight of the workers are staying at the mansion on the hill?

AMY/AI

You don't have to be an advanced AI unit to add two and two together.

LEDGE

What are they doing there?
Housework? Knitting?

AMY/AI

Overnight, the transponders did not move from the mansion. But they did move around within the building. If we access the mansion's architectural layout and cross-reference that with the historical movement of the transponders, we discover that during the daylight hours, these tracking devices are primarily in the bedrooms and they never leave the estate.

LEDGE

So, the workers there are sleeping all day and partying all night? I agree with your math. Very fishy.

AMY/AI

The factory security cameras show the following suspicious activity as well. When these fast transports land--

(pause)

--they transfer passengers to these limousines--

(pause)

--which arrive at the mansion shortly after they depart the landing pad. They seem to be acting as a shuttle service to and from the estate.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)

(startled)

Oh, my! Ledge!

(pause)

I just intercepted an internal security bulletin. Koko has been arrested.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. ALBION (LANDING PAD) - ESTABLISHING

It is late afternoon. The CIS Daisy is sitting on the landing pad.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Jones and Ledge are standing in the Crew Section. Jones is holding the boomerang. Ledge is preparing to leave the ship.

LEDGE

Jonesie, stay here and keep the hatch locked unless I tell you otherwise. If I get detained as well, I want a live crew member on the ship.

AMY/AI (O.S.)

I'm sure I can handle ship operations in your absence.

LEDGE

That's not the issue, Amy. After seeing that things aren't on the up and up around here, I don't want everyone who can walk to get nabbed.

(pause)

Just in case.

JONES

(tries to look tough,
fails)

Sure you don't need some back-up?

LEDGE

(looks Jones over)

Are you kidding?

JONES

Yeah, actually, I was kidding. I'll just stay here where it's safe.

(pause)

But be careful.

Ledge walks away. Jones tosses the boomerang down onto Koko's bunk.

EXT. ALBION (SECURITY OFFICE) - ESTABLISHING

The Security Office is a strongly constructed building with a metal security door on the outside. A sign hangs above the door that reads SECURITY.

INT. ALBION (SECURITY OFFICE) - DAY

Ledge is standing before a desk. Behind the desk sits the same Guard who challenged Koko earlier. The Guard's face is bruised. He is wearing a large bandage over his nose. At least one additional bandage is on his forehead. He looks as if he has been in a brawl. The Guard is looking at a newspad and barely paying attention to Ledge.

GUARD

So, which prisoner do you want to bail out today?

LEDGE

Her name is Koko--

GUARD

(leaps to his feet)
KOKO!?!
(beat)
Five-thousand smoo's bail!

LEDGE

Five-thousand?!?

The Guard winces. He lightly touches one of the bandages on his forehead.

GUARD

Okay, ten-thousand!

INT. ALBION (JAIL CELL) - DAY

Ledge is standing on the inside of a windowless jail cell. The door automatically slides closed behind him. Koko is sitting on a bunk. She has some bruises and scratches.

LEDGE

Are you alright, Koko?

KOKO

The bastards tazed me and roughed me up a little, but nothing else--
(pause)
--lucky for them.

LEDGE

I've posted bail. They aren't going to press charges.

Koko jumps to her feet. She is furious.

KOKO

THEY aren't going to press charges!?!

LEDGE

No. Just follow me. We'll get the hell out of here and never come back.

Koko makes a fist and turns toward the wall. She thinks twice about punching the bare concrete. She looks around in frustration, grabs the pillow from off of her bunk and starts flailing away on the furnishings, venting her frustrations by knocking the stuffing out of it. Feathers fly.

Ledge waits for Koko to calm down. Her anger vented, Koko drops the destroyed pillow as she rushes over and hugs Ledge.

KOKO

It's not fair.

LEDGE

I know, Koko.
(pause)
I know.

KOKO

Ledge. We've got to help those girls we brought here.

LEDGE

How?

KOKO

Murder all the guards and make an escape?

LEDGE

Not--really feasible.

KOKO
 Then pay their transit fees so they
 can at least make some money on
 this shit job without management
 stealing every penny from them.

Ledge starts counting on his fingers behind Koko's back.

LEDGE
 Fifteen-thousand--
 (pause)
 --more?

KOKO
 Thirty-thousand, actually. It cost
 them ten thousand each.

LEDGE
 (stunned)
 Thirty--

Koko rests her head on Ledge's shoulder.

KOKO
 I'll pay half.
 (pause)
 Please, boss?

LEDGE
 I'll get it. I'm the captain. My
 responsibility.

EXT. OUTER SPACE (ALBION SYSTEM) - LATER

The CIS Daisy is in space, flying away from Albion, which is
 in the distance.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

JONES is sitting in his navigator's seat. Ledge and Koko are
 standing near the Galley. Koko is examining the boomerang
 that Jones left on her bunk. Ledge is holding an instant
 dinner tray and a fork. He is nibbling at his meal.

LEDGE
 Forty-thousand smoos! And five more
 for the pillow. If we start working
 any harder, we'll wind up bankrupt.

KOKO

Boss, don't even start to spout a soliloquy about some kind of lesson in the practical side of morality or ethics. What we found back there on Albion was just, plain wrong.

LEDGE

Wrong, but legal. Except maybe for one part.

KOKO

I said don't start.

LEDGE

What more could I have done? If we'd been a News Service documentary crew, we'd have still been harassed. In the end, we'd have made a lot of noise to which no one would pay any attention. A one-hour documentary on the entertainment net, Senate promises to do something about it, followed by secret handshakes, and in the end, nothing happens. It's forgotten when the next scandal comes along.

KOKO

Why are you so cynical, Boss? Does it have anything to do with that ring you're wearing?

Ledge stares at Koko blankly.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Don't explain. It's your business.

(pause)

Hang on a second. Did you say something just then about part of this maybe not being legal?

LEDGE

No proof. Amy noticed a suspicious looking estate that was off-property.

KOKO

Tell me more about it, Boss.

(pause)

Because I have to believe that if we try to do what's right, sometimes--

(MORE)

KOKO (CONT'D)

(pause)

--just sometimes--things work out
for the best.

Ledge takes another bite of his meal. He leans back,
contemplating Koko's words.

LEDGE

Have I lately told you and Jones
that I'm glad to have you both on-
board?

JONES (O.S.)

NO!

Koko cracks a smile.

INT. CBI HQ CORRIDOR - DAY

DEPUTY is running down a corridor, chasing MARSHAL Ryan, who
is walking the other direction. Other busy people pass by. He
calls out--

DEPUTY

Marshal! Wait! You need to hear
this!

Marshal Ryan stops and turns around.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)

We've got a tip on a slavery ring
operating on ZPH-17 Albion.

MARSHAL RYAN

ZPH? That's in Zimrakkan space.

DEPUTY

Funny, that's what I said.

MARSHAL RYAN

Why are you telling me?

DEPUTY

The tip is from a Captain Steven
Delaney of the CIS Daisy.

MARSHAL RYAN

Our rabbit is busy bunny.

DEPUTY

I thought you'd like to know.

MARSHAL RYAN

Make sure we get the lead on this one. I'll want to interrogate everyone involved with regards to our case. Wouldn't there be a reward for blowing the whistle on something like this?

DEPUTY

If confirmed and charges are filed, there might be.

MARSHAL RYAN

Make sure Delaney gets a fat one, whether or not it's actually deserved. I want to trace the money. Just in case there are any anomalies in his accounting. I'll sign-off on it. I figure about fifty thousand should be good.

DEPUTY

Yes sir. One deputy's annual salary coming right up!

MARSHAL RYAN

I'm guessing if he is working for someone behind the scenes, it's not the crime lords.

DEPUTY

If he is, this might stir the pot.

MARSHAL RYAN

Even if it does, we still don't know how he ties into the murders. I still can't believe he's what he appears to be. We're staring right at something and not seeing it.

EXT. CYBERSPACE (ALBION SYSTEM)

Amy/AI is standing in space. Stars are all around her. Albion and its star are in the distance. A reverse image of CIS Daisy's flight recorder monitor hovers in mid-air. It shows the crew strapped into their stations, preparing to jump.

Around Amy/AI at regular intervals are the images of six paintings. They are hanging in mid-air and facing towards her. The paintings are Monet's Field of Poppies, Waterhouse's The Lady of Shalott, Gainsborough's The Blue Boy, Titian's Annunciation, and Pollock's No. 5, 1948.

AMY/AI is fascinated. She is staring intently at Pollock's No. 5, 1948. She points to different parts of the painting as she quotes from a paper that the real Amy wrote while she was in college.

In voice-overs, Amy/AI listens to a recording of Amy Johnson reading part of an essay she wrote.

AMY JOHNSON (V.O.)
Reflections on Number Five,
Nineteen Forty-Eight, by Jackson
Pollock.

(pause)

Drip.

(pause)

Drip.

(pause)

If you stare at it long enough, you can see stars. Galaxies. Perhaps even the entire universe. Order in chaos.

(pause)

There is no definition of art. It is merely a label assigned by the observer to describe an artifact to which they attach meaning. Whether it is an image, a phrase, a series of notes, or other entity, everyone finds different meanings based on their own experiences.

LEDGE (O.S.)
Three. Two. One. Jumping.

Within three seconds, the entire star field in the background collapses inward toward the camera, leaving only the image of the Pollock painting intact.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. CNA NEWS DESK

A NEWSREADER is sitting behind a news desk reading copy from a teleprompter. Basically, this is a future equivalent of a modern 24-7 news channel like BBC World Service or CNN. A story-specific news graphic is visible over the Newsreader's shoulder.

NEWSREADER

Police raided a criminal enterprise operating within Zimrakkan space. Blake Lewis has the story.

EXT. ALBION (LANDING PAD) - DAY

BLAKE LEWIS is walking around with a microphone as a cameraman follows him. In the BACKGROUND, several PEOPLE are being perp-walked across the landing pad, transparently for police PR.

BLAKE LEWIS

The planet Albion became the scene of a CBI raid today. It resulted in the arrest of over forty individuals. The crime? An illegal, interstellar sex-slavery ring.

ZOOM OUT to REVEAL Marshal Ryan standing beside Blake Lewis.

BLAKE LEWIS (CONT'D)

Marshal, please tell us what happened.

MARSHAL RYAN

We responded to a tip and discovered a slave ring that was using kidnapped young women to provide services of a sexual nature.

BLAKE LEWIS

Can you tell us who was arrested?

MARSHAL RYAN

We are filing criminal charges against a large number of individuals, so we cannot comment on specifics at this time.

BLAKE LEWIS

Can you confirm that Confederation Senators and other high-level government officials were involved?

MARSHAL RYAN

I'm afraid that I can't. But I can tell you that this was not the only questionable activity we found here. I'm glad to see the press taking an interest.

BLAKE LEWIS

I understand that we are in Zimrakkan space.

MARSHAL RYAN

Albion is under Zimrakkan jurisdiction, but human trafficking is illegal and enforceable by either side.

Moving from FRAME LEFT to FRAME RIGHT in the BACKGROUND, Dierdre is politely escorted by a police officer as if she was a victim (no cuffs or anything of that nature). Our formerly timid Dierdre is wearing lots of leather...

DEPUTY walks up behind Marshal Ryan and whispers something unintelligible in his ear.

MARSHAL RYAN (CONT'D)

I have to go. For those viewers who are appalled by this affair, let me remind everyone that when ordinary citizens do the right thing and report criminal activity, sometimes things do work out for the best.

BLAKE LEWIS

Thank you very much.

Marshal Ryan and his Deputy turn and walk away. ZOOM IN...

CLOSE UP ON BLAKE LEWIS

...as he turns toward the camera. He is trying to look very serious, his eyes gleaming at the thought of a big scoop.

BLAKE LEWIS (CONT'D)
This is Blake Lewis. CNA
Interstellar Service. Albion.

FADE OUT:

THE END