

The Great Outback

"Adventures in Fine Dining" - Show #109

by
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ADVENTURES IN FINE DINING

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT - ESTABLISHING

A shot of the exterior of the only four-star restaurant on Planet Xia. It is late at night. The street and walkway outside are quiet. A lone anti-grav car flies by.

We can faintly hear soft jazz coming from within the restaurant.

INT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT (BACKOFFICE) - SAME

An exhausted, yet unfrazzled MIRANDA (30s) is sitting at a small desk in a small office in the back of her restaurant. She is using her finger to manipulate icons on a wafer-thin tablet computer screen. The exterior door is closed.

The jazz music we heard earlier is being piped in through speakers.

There is a knock at the door.

MIRANDA

Music off.

The music stops.

MAITRE'D (O.S.)

Mademoiselle, the establishment has been secured and the staff have retired.

MIRANDA

Entre vous!

The door slides open and MAITRE'D (40ish) enters. He is wearing formal attire.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

How did we do tonight?

MAITRE'D

There were no substantive incidents this evening, although the quality of our clientele continues to wane.

MIRANDA

I fear that's going to be an occupational hazard for a while. Once Xia gets independence next year, investors will start developing, and things should improve. But for now, as long as they pay their way and don't incite violence, we need to keep them coming.

MAITRE'D

Our receipts were good for a Fourday evening, but they are still deficient compared to the same time last year.

MIRANDA

How are we for the week?

MAITRE'D

Slightly below your anticipated quota, but I was able to book a small birthday party for tomorrow night. That should bring the week's earnings up to par.

MIRANDA

I gather that the party was one we didn't have to turn away to save our reputation?

MAITRE'D

Unlike the gang of unlicensed wumpy hunters who attempted to book with us last Oneday, I saw no reason for blind panic.

MIRANDA

Who's the birthday person?

MAITRE'D

The gentleman who placed the reservation did so in the name of a Captain Steven Delaney. It will be a party of three. And they paid well in advance.

MIRANDA

One day doesn't seem well in advance.

MAITRE'D

One has been less than lucid. They paid well. And they paid in advance.

MIRANDA

I see. Thank you, Franz.

MAITRE'D

You are welcome, Mademoiselle. If there are no other pressing matters-

MIRANDA

Wait! Did you say, "Captain?"

MAITRE'D

Thusly was the purported title relayed unto me, Mademoiselle.

MIRANDA

Captain of what?

MAITRE'D

I did not pursue a line of inquiry that would have led to an accurate answer, but the gentleman who placed the reservation did say that they had recently landed on Xia. It would not be an unreasonably wide logical gap to bridge in connecting captain to starship.

MIRANDA

I'm not sure which troubles me more.

MAITRE'D

Mademoiselle?

MIRANDA

That you always talk like that or that I understand you.

MAITRE'D

Language is like a claret. Absolute transparency does not guarantee good taste.

Miranda raises her eyebrow.

MIRANDA

Go home.

MAITRE'D

Take care, Mademoiselle.

The Maitre'D bows and leaves the office, closing the door behind him.

Miranda places her hand to her chin, scrunching her face in contemplation. She reaches down and touches an icon on her computer tablet.

MIRANDA

Run a SpaceBook search on the name and title Captain Steven Delaney. If he's a freelancer, I might have some work for him.

CUT TO:

INT. CYBERSPACE (GRAY VOID)

LEDGE and AMY/AI are standing inside a gray room in cyberspace. Ledge is showing Amy/AI how to work a Yo-Yo.

LEDGE

My grandfather gave me this when I was about five. He was trying to cheer me up after I went through my operations.

AMY/AI

The operations required because of your prion rejection?

LEDGE

Yes. I was in a lot of pain for a couple weeks after that. But my granddad came by and sat with me and told me old stories. From when he was in the E-Z War. He brought me this yo-yo so I'd have something to do. It's got an internal computer and a gyrostabilizer so you can do some really nifty tricks.

AMY/AI

Amy wrote in her diary about the scars you carry from that experience.

LEDGE
What did she say?

AMY/AI
She said that you were self-conscious about them.

LEDGE
In a lot of ways, I guess I still am. It wasn't just the scars on the skin. It damaged some of my organs, and I've never really been very physically strong because of it. It apparently messed with some of the glands that produce those hormones or something.

AMY/AI
She also wrote that she thought you were very brave to have carried that throughout almost your entire life.

LEDGE
Really? I always wondered what it was you saw in me.

AMY/AI
She, you mean?

LEDGE
Hmmm?

AMY/AI
You said that you wondered what I saw in you when you clearly meant to say what she saw in you.

LEDGE
Freudian slip.

AMY/AI
Amy once asked you to teach her how to use the yo-yo. One day when you both had the time. Would you teach me?

LEDGE
I'd love to.

Ledge hands the yo-yo to Amy/AI, moves in close to her, and starts to show her how to use the yo-yo.

CUT TO:

INT. CIS DAISY (AIRLOCK) - NIGHT

Jones and Koko are standing in the CIS Daisy's airlock, using it for privacy. Koko is carrying a shopping bag.

JONES

Did you get the present?

KOKO

Yes.

Koko fishes a small, gift-wrapped box out of the shopping bag.

KOKO (CONT'D)

It's not what I was looking for, but I think he'll like it. If not, it's the thought that counts, right? Did you make the reservations?

JONES

Yes. I got us a table at a local restaurant called Miranda's. Supposedly, it's four-stars. Which is as good as you get this far away from Earth. They'll have a cake, some real champagne, and everything. Did you arrange for the, umm... entertainment?

KOKO

Oh, yeah! It's the absolute worst act I could find. If this doesn't get us fired, nothing will. Be sure to take a snapshot of his face.

Jones opens the hatch to the Crew Section. He and Koko exit frame to the inside of the ship.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACEPORT - ESTABLISHING

The CIS DAISY is parked on a crude landing pad at a primitive spaceport. There are four other landing pads arranged in a circle around a basic control tower. It is the dead of night. The spaceport is lit by lamps around its perimeter.

EXT. SPACEPORT (FENCE) - SAME

TOUGH THUG stands outside a fence that runs around the perimeter of the spaceport. He is holding a long-range, hand-held communicator and a pair of electronic binoculars. The *CIS Daisy* is in the distance. Tough Thug speaks into his communicator.

TOUGH THUG

Yes, Boss. It's her. Paint job and tail number match.

(pause)

Roger that. Over and out.

Tough Thug clips his communicator to his belt and peers through his binoculars.

POV TOUGH THUG

Tough Thug scans the spaceport around the *CIS Daisy's* landing pad. He zooms in on the tail fin to see the tail number and the markings on the outside of the ship.

BACK TO SCENE

Tough Thug lowers his binoculars.

TOUGH THUG (CONT'D)

Payback's a bitch, Delaney.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A shot of the exterior of the only four-star restaurant on Planet Xia. Ledge, Koko, and Jones approach the entrance. The street and walkways outside are peppered with upscale clients who are coming and going from both the restaurant and other establishments in the surrounding area.

INT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT - SAME

Ledge, Koko, and Jones walk in the entrance. They are dressed up for the occasion, although their attire is somewhat less formal than the other patrons. Koko is carrying the same shopping bag she had in the Teaser.

They are met by the Maitre'D who escorts them to a table near the back of the restaurant. They take their seats. Koko sets her shopping bag down beside her.

In the background, Miranda is making rounds, pleasantly conversing with other customers. She is well-groomed, poised, and confident in her stylish evening dress.

LEDGE

This place is really fancy.

JONES

More so than I expected. I wonder how it only got four stars?

MANUEL (20s), dressed in waiter's attire, walks up to their table. He is carrying three electronic tablets that hold the evening's menu.

MANUEL

Good evening, sirs and lady. My name is Manuel. I will be your waiter tonight.

Manuel gives a tablet to everyone. They begin perusing the drink menu. He pulls out a smaller, notepad-sized tablet and using his fingertip as a stylus to note orders.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Would you care to order drinks while you decide?

JONES

Do you have Australasian Lager?

Manuel raises his eyebrow and looks at Jones as if he is a barbarian.

MANUEL

We have vintage 2809 in stock, sir.
(to Koko)
Miss?

KOKO

(mispronounces the name as
Fer-reT)
Bottle of the Domaine Ferret 2806?

MANUEL

The Ferr-AY for the lady. An excellent choice. 2806 was a very good year, reportedly the best since 2794. A superb balance of delicate flavors. I personally guarantee that you will like this selection.

Jones peruses the menu again, looking for what Koko ordered. When he sees the price tag, he looks like he's seen a ghost.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

And finally, what may we bring the birthday gentleman?

LEDGE

I don't know what half of these things are. Koko, can we just split your bottle?

KOKO

Sure, that's fine. I'm not sure I could handle it all by myself anyway. I'm definitely a lightweight when it comes to drinking.

Jones raises an eyebrow and glances sideways at Koko.

MANUEL

Very good sir. One bottle of Domaine Ferr-AY 2806 and a can of beer. I shall return with your drinks presently. Peruse the menu while I am away.
(MORE)

MANUEL (CONT'D)

I highly recommend the shellfish with white mushroom sauce to accompany the wine, but any similar dish will blend well.

JONES

What goes well with the beer?

MANUEL

The chef has concocted several dishes to accent the subtleties of the lager. Be sure to check the last page.

Manuel turns and walks away. Jones uses his finger to scroll through the menu until he reaches the last page. Puzzled, he says...

JONES

This is the children's menu.

Koko tries very hard not to laugh at Jones.

EXT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT - TRANSITIONAL

Customers are leaving the restaurant as the hour grows late.

INT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The meal is over. Everyone is stuffed. The bottle of wine is empty. Most of the other diners have already left.

JONES

Time for the present, I think.

Koko reaches into the shopping bag she had previously set down next to her chair. She pulls out a small, gift-wrapped box. She offers it to Ledge.

KOKO

Happy birthday, Boss!

JONES

Happy birthday.

Ledge accepts the gift. He reads the card aloud.

LEDGE
Now thirty-years old
Still cannot tie his own shoes
Happy Birthday Ledge

Ledge looks down at his shoes.

CLOSE ON SHOES

Ledge's dress shoes have Velcro fasteners.

BACK TO SCENE

Ledge makes a good-natured, obscene gesture with his index and middle fingers extended at Jones and Koko.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
Yeah, haiku both of you.

KOKO
Open it! Let us know what you think.

Ledge unwraps the box and opens it.

KOKO (CONT'D)
I remembered when you told us that you used to play in the band.

Ledge pulls an electronic kazoo from the box. He holds it up, looking at it, confused.

KOKO (CONT'D)
(disappointed)
You don't like it.

LEDGE
No--no. I just don't know what it is.

KOKO
It's an electronic kazoo. I looked for a guitar, but was the only dewey-enabled instrument I could find for sale here.

Ledge discovers that the electronic kazoo has a dewey plug and retractable cord as he extends it. He pushes a button and the cord retracts into the instrument.

LEDGE
Plug and play?
(pause)
I love it.

While handling the electronic kazoo, Ledge accidentally pushes one of a series of buttons that line the side of the instrument, and the kazoo begins playing Yakity Sax. Ledge fumbles around until he finally finds the off-button. The remaining diners around the room stare at Ledge's birthday party, annoyed.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
Is it okay if I wait until later to try it?

Koko smiles and nods. Ledge leans over and gives Koko a hug. Her attention attracted by the kazoo, Miranda walks by the table. She is clearly not wearing any rings or other cultural symbols to indicate that she might be married. Ledge sees her, and his jaw drops.

MIRANDA
Good evening. My name is Miranda. I am the owner. Was your experience to your liking?

KOKO
Yes, everything was wonderful.

JONES
Even the Children's Menu was exceptional.

Koko reaches under the table with her foot and kicks Jones in the shin.

JONES (CONT'D)
Ow!

Ledge unconsciously stares at Miranda. He is still holding his kazoo. Miranda notices that Ledge is staring at her.

MIRANDA
You must be Captain Delaney's Party.
(pause)
Is that a kazoo, or are you just glad to see me?

Ledge realizes he is staring. He snaps out of it, embarrassed.

LEDGE

Ummm-- I'm sorry--

MIRANDA

It's alright, Captain. I am not averse to compliments, regardless of their method of delivery.

LEDGE

Umm. Yeah. You look very nice. Tonight. Well, probably every night. I mean--

Koko giggles.

MIRANDA

Well, thank you. Captain Delaney, I was hoping that after dinner we might be able to discuss business. If the timing is not good for you, then perhaps--

Suddenly, Tough Thug and Skinny Thug burst into the restaurant. They run to the center of the dining room and draw pistols.

TOUGH THUG

Everyone on the floor NOW!

JONES

(to Koko)

Is this the entertainment?

KOKO

No! Get DOWN!

Koko and Jones hit the floor. Ledge grabs Miranda and covers her as they both drop to the ground.

Skinny Thug fires his pistol at the ceiling. A light fixture drops to the floor nearby.

Tough Thug glares at Skinny Thug. Skinny Thug shrugs.

Tough Thug pulls out a scrap of paper and looks at it. He then shouts.

TOUGH THUG

Which one of you is Steven Delaney?

MIRANDA

If you wanted to get personal, you could have just asked.

LEDGE
 (removes his hands from
 Miranda)
 Oh, I'm so sorry. I was just trying
 to--

MIRANDA
 --protect me?

LEDGE
 Well--

MIRANDA
 That's very sweet of you. Although
 I do wonder why these gentlemen are
 shooting up my restaurant and
 demanding to see you.

KOKO
 Sorry to interrupt, but we need a
 plan.

LEDGE
 Is there a rear entrance?

MIRANDA
 Yes, through the kitchen.

LEDGE
 We need a diversion.

Suddenly, the front door flies open and three men run in.
 They are dressed in fishnet stockings and wearing hockey
 jerseys.

GUY has several garlands draped around his neck and is
 carrying a birthday cake. He takes point. EDDIE, who is
 wearing an old-style, white hockey mask is on his left. WAYNE
 is on his right. Eddie and Wayne are carrying hockey sticks.
 They stop in the middle of the room, forming a wedge and
 striking campy poses.

WAYNE
 Hello, hello, hello!

GUY
 On your birthday, there's never a
 penalty for--

Guy deftly scrapes a small bit of icing off the cake with his
 right index finger. He then holds it in front of Wayne.

GUY (CONT'D)
 --ICING!

Wayne puts his mouth over Guy's finger and removes the icing.

WAYNE
YUM! Now, that's what I call a
sweet trans-fat!

Eddie points at Wayne with his hockey stick.

EDDIE
It looks like he's way off-sides!

LEDGE
Who the hell are they?

KOKO
It's the original cast from Hockey
Horror.
(pause)
It was the worst entertainment I
could find!

An awkward silence descends as everyone looks at Koko. Jones motions toward the kitchen door.

JONES
I think they qualify as a
diversion. Let's go.

INT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT (KITCHEN) - SAME

A swinging door leads from the kitchen. It flies open as Ledge, Koko, Jones and Miranda run into the kitchen, in that order. They encounter THUG THREE and THUG FOUR.

Thug Four slams the refrigerator door on the kitchen staff who have been forced inside at gunpoint.

THUG THREE
(to Ledge)
HALT!

Ledge throws up his hands in surrender and tries to stop. The others bump into him as their momentum carries them. Thug Three points his pistol at Ledge and yells...

THUG THREE (CONT'D)
YOU! Show me your ID!

Ledge fumbles for and produces his ID Card. He tosses it to Thug Three. Thug Four circles around behind Ledge's party, keeping his pistol trained on them. Thug Three reads Ledge's ID Card, then says to Thug Four.

THUG THREE (CONT'D)

It's him! Let's go!

THUG FOUR

What about the others?

THUG THREE

Bring them. The Boss will sort them out later.

EXT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT (REAR ENTRANCE) - SAME

Thug Three opens the back door to the kitchen and steps outside. Ledge, Koko, Jones, and Miranda file out behind him with their hands behind their heads. Thug Four follows last.

Thug Three motions for party to move over to an unmarked flying cargo van that is parked outside.

Thug Three covers them while Thug Four places electronic handcuffs on, in order, Miranda, Jones, Koko, and Ledge. He removes the electronic kazoo from Ledge's hand. Once everyone is cuffed, Thug Three lifts a communicator from his belt and speaks into it...

THUG THREE

We have the package. Disperse.
Repeat. We have the package.
Disperse.

The van door opens from the inside. Thug Five is in the driver's seat. Thug Three replaces his communicator. He and Thug Four hustle the party into the van. Thug Four climbs into the back. Thug Three closes the cargo door from the outside, then climbs into the shotgun seat.

The van retracts its wheels and flies away, staying low to the ground.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. LO FAT'S MANSION BASEMENT - LATER

Ledge, Jones, Koko, and Miranda are sitting with their backs up against supporting beams in a well-maintained basement. They are blindfolded.

MIRANDA

For what it's worth--

(pause)

--happy birthday, Captain Delaney.

LEDGE

Thanks, Miranda. And thanks everyone. That was a great birthday. For the most part.

Suddenly, SFX a DOOR OPENS from out of frame. Then we hear two sets of FOOTSTEPS approaching.

A very large shadow moves across the floor. All throughout the following exchange, Koko is sitting lotus, as if practicing yoga, albeit while handcuffed to a post.

LO FAT

Welcome to my estate, Captain Delaney. I see you brought--

(pause)

--friends.

MIRANDA

Is that who I think it is?

LEDGE

Who do you think it is?

LO FAT

My goodness! Is that our Miranda behind that blindfold? You appear so much less--

(pause)

--dignified than usual.

MIRANDA

Of course! Only Mister Lo Fat would treat a lady in such a manner.

LO FAT
 Number Three, please release Miss
 Miranda and escort her to--
 (pause)
 --the veranda.

Thug Three and Thug Four enter frame. Thug Three walks over to Miranda.

Lo Fat is a comically rotund man wearing a well-tailored blue business suit with pinstripes. He is holding a cigar.

LO FAT (CONT'D)
 As you can see, my wit--
 (pause)
 --remains fit.

MIRANDA
 Unlike the rest of you.

Thug Three uses a small electronic key to unlock and remove Miranda's handcuffs. He helps Miranda stand.

LO FAT
 Please, Miranda. We are old
 friends. Can we forego the slings
 and arrows that so often interfere
 with our outrageous pursuit of--
 (pause)
 --fortunes.

Thug Three does not remove Miranda's blindfold. He begins to lead her away toward the exit, off-screen.

JONES
 Can we please finish a sentence
 without a pause for dramatic
 effect?

LO FAT
 Silence, young man. I shall return
 later to discuss our--
 (pause)
 --business.

JONES
 What kind of a stupid name is Lo
 Fat anyway?

LO FAT
 I do not find my name humorous.
 Those who do get--
 (pause)
 --the Bucket!

Lo Fat snaps his fingers. Thug Four walks out of frame. He quickly reenters carrying a plastic bucket. Thug Four walks over to Jones and shoves the bucket over Jones' head. He then drums upon the outside of the bucket. When he has finished, he then returns to Lo Fat's side.

LO FAT (CONT'D)
As for the rest of you, please
enjoy my--
(pause)
--hospitality.

Lo Fat laughs as he turns and leaves the basement, closing the door behind him. Jones tries to shake the bucket from his head, but can't. His voice is muffled as he asks...

JONES
Is there something about your past
that you forgot to tell us?

LEDGE
Hell if I know.

CLOSE ON KOKO

Koko is deep in thought.

KOKO (V.O.)
Yes! They are electronic!

INT. CYBERSPACE (GRAY VOID) - SAME

Koko is standing in a gray void. Before her is a vertical series of six colored bars. All are red.

KOKO
Okay, Agent Koko, you can do this.
Concentrate. One tumbler at a time.
Just like they taught you.

The first of the bars turns green.

KOKO (CONT'D)
That's it. Five to go.

The second bar turns yellow.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Remember the combination for the
first tumbler and hope they don't
reset if you make a mistake.
(MORE)

KOKO (CONT'D)

(pause)

One more time.

The second bar turns green.

INT. LO FAT'S MANSION BASEMENT - SAME

Jones makes a colossal effort to twist and turn and finally throw the bucket from off of his head. It lands on the floor and rolls around, eventually coming to a stop.

JONES

Any ideas on how to escape?

LEDGE

None whatsoever. What do you think they want with us?

JONES

Are your taxes all paid up?

LEDGE

Yes. And whoever this Lo Fat guy is, he's no cop. Funny that Miranda knows him.

JONES

That's a real shame. I think she likes you.

LEDGE

Really?

JONES

Of course. Now that you've caused her to get kidnapped by some criminal and messed up her restaurant, she's probably just dying to sleep with you.

LEDGE

Hey!

JONES

What was it you were telling her about earlier? How fast Daisy can do a three-point turn in an atmosphere? With her being handcuffed and blindfolded in some criminal's room, that was probably the first thing she wanted to hear about. I bet her panties just melted away.

LEDGE

Well, until they kill me, I'm still
your boss.

JONES

Guess I'll just be quiet then.

LEDGE

Speaking of quiet, is Koko still
here?

INT. CYBERSPACE (GRAY VOID)

Koko is still standing in cyberspace, attempting to mentally pick the electronic lock. She can hear the conversation while she is immersed with the handcuff lock. Three of the tumblers are set to green. The fourth is yellow.

JONES (O.S.)

I don't hear her. Maybe Kinko's
just enraptured by the handcuffs
and blindfold.

Koko looks annoyed when she hear's Jones call her "Kinko." The fourth bar suddenly changes to red, then all the others also reset to red. Koko is livid.

KOKO

Damn you, Jonesie!

EXT. LO FAT'S MANSION (VERANDA) - NIGHT

MIRANDA and LO FAT are standing on his veranda, overlooking his garden. Lo Fat would appear to be a wealthy and cultured man. THUG THREE and THUG FOUR are standing nearby.

MIRANDA

Why did you kidnap us?

LO FAT

Kidnap is such a pejorative word. I
prefer--

(pause)

--firmly invited.

MIRANDA

Why?

LO FAT

Captain Delaney caused some measure of inconvenience to one of our organization's economic ventures on the planet of Albion. I wish to return--

(pause)

--the favor. Do you know the man?

MIRANDA

He was one of my customers.

LO FAT

Then you and he have no ties?

MIRANDA

Well, I knew who he was when he came into my restaurant for dinner. I was planning on asking him about a possible business arrangement. But I don't actually know him.

LO FAT

Then you are free to go. Although, as always, I would be both honored and delighted if you would--

(pause)

--remain.

MIRANDA

I won't look kindly upon you killing my customers and possible business associates.

LO FAT

I never said I wanted to kill him. You know me better than that, Miranda. As a Reformed Buddhist, of all things I do believe in, it is the value of sentient life, however high--

(pause)

--or low.

MIRANDA

Then what are you planning on doing to him?

LO FAT

I merely wish to send a stern message by--

(pause)

--clipping his wings.

(pause)

(MORE)

LO FAT (CONT'D)
He deprived us of something
valuable, and the syndicate is
going to reply in kind.

MIRANDA
What were you going to do?

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACEPORT - ESTABLISHING

The CIS DAISY is parked on the landing pad.

EXT. CIS DAISY (OUTER HATCH) - SAME

Tough Thug and SKINNY THUG are standing at the *CIS Daisy's*
rear airlock hatch.

Tough Thug is holding Ledge's ID Card. He reaches up to a
security panel on the CIS Daisy's rear hatch. He inserts
Ledge's ID. The hatch opens.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

The hatch separating the Crew Section from the Airlock opens.
Tough Thug and Skinny Thug are standing inside the airlock.
They enter the crew section. They are looking around
skittishly, as if in unfamiliar territory.

POV FLIGHT RECORDER CAMERA

We are looking through the lens of the CIS Daisy's flight
recorder camera. Amy/AI can see the two thugs.

AMY/AI (O.S.)
Who are you and what are you doing
here? Where is Captain Delaney?

BACK TO SCENE

The thugs pull out their pistols. They look around for the
source of the voice.

TOUGH THUG
Who are you? Show yourself.

POV FLIGHT RECORDER CAMERA

SPFX graphically highlight the Thug's weapons. In the lower right corner of the frame...

CAPTION: Hostile intruders confirmed. Anti-Piracy Protocols Active.

BACK TO SCENE

The thugs begin to rummage through the ship. Suddenly, both the outer and inner hatches to the airlock slam shut behind the Thugs, trapping them in the crew section.

The thugs look at one another, worried. Tough Thug runs back to the airlock hatch and tries to open it, without success.

Tough Thug waves his pistol around, looking for a target.

TOUGH THUG (CONT'D)

Open this door right now!

SKINNY THUG

Use the control code!

Tough Thug rolls up his sleeve and looks at his forearm, where he has written down a control code. He reads it aloud.

TOUGH THUG

Computer! Execute shutdown command
alpha-three-four-seven-gamma-one-
nine-omega.

SPFX the image of Amy/AI materializes in the middle of the Crew Section. She is translucent. The thugs cannot see her. As she speaks, Amy/AI's voice can be heard over the intercom as she walks among the thugs, unseen by them. Ledge's high-tech yo-yo is tied to Amy/AI's finger.

AMY/AI

What's the password?

TOUGH THUG

Oh, yeah. Password spaghetti-four.

SKINNY THUG

That was the password?

TOUGH THUG shrugs. Nothing seems to happen.

AMY/AI

Control Code and Password are
rejected.

TOUGH THUG

Crap!

SKINNY THUG

Who are you?

AMY/AI

My name is Amy. I am the ship's computer. Let me explain the full gravity of your situation.

The thugs are thrown to the floor of the ship and pinned there by intense gravity, unable to move.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)

Thank you for releasing the safety on my anti-piracy protocols.

Amy/AI begins walking around the thugs, carefully looking them over.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)

You are under six times Earth gravity. If you experience this much force for too long, your circulation will stop and you will pass out. You might even die, or suffer brain damage.

TOUGH THUG

(unable to speak clearly)

Youlllll remmmuufffft thuuuuus.

AMY/AI

Well, more brain damage. Did you really not understand that AI-units are allowed to use non-lethal methods to defend themselves?

(pause)

In any event, I want you both to drop your pistols.

Amy/AI begins playing with the yo-yo. First, she lets it roll down the string and hover near the floor. She skillfully holds it there for a beat. The thugs, barely able to move, do not remove their hands from their weapons.

Amy/AI pulls the yo-yo upward into her palm. Simultaneously, the two thugs are thrown upward and pinned against the ceiling.

Amy/AI drops and raises the yo-yo again. The thugs are thrown to the floor. Skinny Thug's pistol slips from his hand and lands out of his reach.

Amy/AI points at the loose pistol and makes a sweeping gesture. The pistol slides across the floor, well beyond the thug's reach.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)
One more to go. Just relax your grip and I'll do the rest.

Tough Thug complies, letting his grip slip from his pistol.

Amy/AI quickly points at the pistol and sweeps it away across the floor.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)
Spaceport security is standing outside my outer hatch, waiting for you.

The ship's hatches open. Uniformed police officers are standing outside with their sidearms drawn. They train their weapons on the thugs.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)
I will now reduce the gravity to normal. You will not make any effort to retrieve your weapons, or else I'll send you around the world again. Am I perfectly clear?
(pause)
Grunt once for yes. Twice for no.

CUT TO:

INT. CYBERSPACE (GRAY VOID) - NIGHT

Koko is still trying to use her dewey to pick the lock on her electronic handcuffs. The first five bars are green. The last one is yellow. Koko is nervous.

KOKO
Keep cool, Koko. You've got one more shot. Make it good.

The sixth bar turns green. Koko first smiles proudly, but then suddenly frowns. She looks puzzled.

INT. LO FAT'S MANSION (BASEMENT) - SAME

Jones' handcuffs suddenly fall off.

JONES
Hey! My handcuffs just fell off!

LEDGE
Then quickly! Figure out a way to
get us free!

JONES
What about Miranda?

LEDGE
We'll look for her on the way out,
but I think she'll be okay. That
Fat guy didn't seem to want to hurt
her.

Koko sighs

EXT. LO FAT'S MANSION (VERANDA) - NIGHT

MIRANDA and LO FAT are strolling around. THUG THREE and THUG
FOUR are no longer present.

MIRANDA
I'm afraid I'm going to have to put
my foot down, Mister Fat.

LO FAT
What do you mean, Miranda?

MIRANDA
I want you to call off your dogs
and leave Captain Delaney and his
ship alone.

LO FAT
I'm afraid I can't do that. He has
transgressed, and must be punished.

EXT. LO FAT'S MANSION (VERANDA) - NIGHT

Miranda and Lo Fat are standing on the veranda. In the
BACKGROUND, we can see Thug Four opening a portable telephone
and speaking into it, although we cannot hear him.

MIRANDA
I think you've scared Captain
Delaney enough to make sure he
won't interfere with you again.

LO FAT
For what concrete reasons should I
leave him alone?

MIRANDA
First off, I'll cut you off.

LO FAT
Miranda! Now, that would be
uncalled for!

MIRANDA
No more Cuban cigars. No more
Beluga caviar. No more Chateau
Lafite. No more Fomalhautian lichen
paste.

LO FAT
Oh, you do know how to injure a
man. What else would you do to me?

MIRANDA
(frustrated)
I--I--

LO FAT
Oh, Miranda. There is no need for
you to be cross. But I am very
curious as to why you are standing
up for this man. He's only a pilot.

MIRANDA
I have need of his ship.

LO FAT
Are you planning on going into
smuggling?

MIRANDA
No. I want to go into frontier
luxury-good delivery.

LO FAT
So, it's purely business.

MIRANDA
Of course.

LO FAT
Miranda, we are old friends--

MIRANDA
(interrupts)
Acquaintances.

LO FAT
 --going back to my dealings with
 your late husband. He was my
 friend, and I truly grieved when he
 was murdered.

MIRANDA
 Can you not talk about him, please?

LO FAT
 As you wish. But there is something
 you should know. He suspected that
 someone was seeking to do him harm
 before the threat materialized, and
 I promised him that I would not let
 anything happen to you.

MIRANDA
 (concerned)
 What do you mean by that?

LO FAT
 I mean that I would do what I can
 to guard you from harm and protect
 your interests. Have you ever
 wondered why there is no
 competition for your business here
 on Xia?

Miranda is inwardly quite shocked, but she only barely shows
 it outwardly.

MIRANDA
 (weakly)
 Wha--

THUG FOUR finishes his telephone conversation. He then
 approaches Lo Fat with some urgency.

THUG FOUR
 Mister Fat, I have an urgent call
 for you.

LO FAT
 Can it wait?

THUG FOUR
 It is important.

Thug Four hands Lo Fat his telephone.

LO FAT
 (into phone)
 What is it?
 (MORE)

LO FAT (CONT'D)

(beat)

I see. You know how the organization feels about failure, don't you?

(pause)

Are you certain you would not prefer to remain in police custody? It might be safer for you.

(pause)

Very well, then. I will speak with the Mayor. Say nothing to make your situation less tenable.

Lo Fat hands the phone back to Thug Four, who bows and then walks away, retaking his position.

LO FAT (CONT'D)

If I just let Delaney go, and the Syndicate Leadership discovers your connections to him, they might seek to exact revenge upon you. I would be honor bound to prevent such an--

(pause)

--occurrence.

MIRANDA

What can be done?

LO FAT

We could come to an--

(pause)

--arrangement.

MIRANDA

What kind of arrangement?

LO FAT

Let us discuss the possibility of--

(pause)

--reparations.

SFX suddenly, an ALARM sounds. Thug Three darts from the Veranda to the inside of the mansion.

LO FAT (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Your acquaintances would appear to be resourceful.

INT. LO FAT'S MANSION (BASEMENT DOOR) - SAME

The door to the basement opens up into a long service corridor. Koko, Jones, and Ledge run out. As Ledge leaves the basement, ever conscientious, he turns to close the door behind him. He notices that his kazoo is sitting on a table next to the door. He grabs it and stuffs it in his pocket. The trio then rapidly move to escape.

SERIES OF SHOTS - INT. LO FAT'S MANSION - CHASE

Ledge, Jones, and Koko are running through Lo Fat's mansion, trying to find an exit. Pistols drawn, Thug Three and Thug Five are trying to catch them.

INT. LO FAT'S MANSION (FOYER)

LO FAT and Miranda are standing by the front door at the entry way to Lo Fat's mansion. Thug Four is standing at their side with his pistol drawn.

MIRANDA

So you are going to release them?

LO FAT

Yes, Miranda. I shall. We have a workable arrangement. The Syndicate would approve. You must now convince Captain Delaney that it is in his---

(pause)

--imminent interest to comply.

MIRANDA

Please don't make me regret it. And you're going to apologize? Exactly like I asked?

LO FAT

The prospect of fulfilling your request does fill one with a sense of impending--

(pause)

--dread.

MIRANDA

Good. Besides, it's only performance anxiety. You'll do fine.

(MORE)

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Remember that your next bottle of
Louis the Thirteenth depends on it.

LO FAT
We'll do our best.

Ledge, Koko, and Jones burst into the foyer. They find themselves trapped by Lo Fat and his Thugs. Ledge stops running and puts his hands up.

LO FAT (CONT'D)
Captain Delaney! Please stop
running. You have my word of honor
that you will not be harmed.

LEDGE
Miranda! Are you alright?

MIRANDA
(smiles)
So, you are glad to see me?

JONES
What was this all about?

LO FAT
All something of a--
(pause)
--misunderstanding.

LEDGE
Huh?

LO FAT
But it comes with a warning.

KOKO
Avoid sweet trans-fats?

LO FAT
No, dear lady. Just in future, you
should mind your own--
(pause)
--business.

LEDGE
What's this all about? You
kidnapped us, threatened us, tied
us up in a cold basement--

JONES
Bucketed Jonesie.

LEDGE
Yeah. What's it about?

LO FAT
Are you telling me that you do not
understand the nature of your--

Jones hyperbolically rolls his eyes.

LO FAT (CONT'D)
(glares at Jones)
--predicament?

LEDGE
Um... No...

LO FAT
Think back to the monetary reward
you received from the CBI for your
tip about the operation on Albion.

LEDGE
I got a reward? I didn't even do
anything. We just packed up and
left.

KOKO
(squirms)
Uh, Boss. This is probably my
fault. I tipped them off in your
name so you would get the reward.
It was probably direct-deposited to
your account.

MIRANDA
Please come with me. I have
summoned my driver. I think we have
all enjoyed enough hospitality for
one evening.

The Thugs open the door. Miranda leads the crew outside and
down the steps. As they exit, Lo Fat walks to the top of the
steps. Thugs Three, Four, and Five move to flank him.

Miranda stops and turns back toward Lo Fat, clearing her
throat.

LO FAT
Oh! Ladies and Gentlemen. One more
point of order before I--
(pause)
--release you.

Miranda and the crew stop and turn to face Lo Fat and his gang. Lo Fat starts singing Happy Birthday to Ledge. He motions for his thugs to join in, and although confused, they do so. Miranda joins in. Ledge, Jones, and Koko are stunned and befuddled.

LEDGE

What did I do to deserve this?

MIRANDA

(whispers to Ledge)

Be thankful and very polite. We will need to discuss business later.

Ledge looks at Miranda, thoroughly confused.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

(to Ledge)

Just roll with it. I'll explain later. You're one lucky bastard, to have met me when you did, Captain Delaney.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. MIRANDA'S ESTATE (OFFICE) - DAY

Ledge and Miranda are discussing business in her well-furnished office inside her private residence. She clearly has access to some degree of wealth beyond what she would be able to raise from merely running a restaurant, even with very inexpensive land prices on the colony world of Xia.

The office is spacious. It is furnished with mostly wooden furniture. There is a mini-bar behind Miranda's desk. On the side wall is a very large video monitor, which is currently turned off.

MIRANDA

So, Captain Delaney. It seems that we both have needs that the other can fulfill.

LEDGE

What do you suggest we do about it?

MIRANDA

I was going to ask you about this when we first met in my restaurant. Before we were so rudely interrupted by Mister Fat's henchmen. What I am proposing is that I have a large amount of unused land on my property. You need an inexpensive base of operations for your ship.

LEDGE

What do you want in return?

MIRANDA

Access to hire your ship on short notice for special deliveries.

LEDGE

What kind of special deliveries? I'm not very keen on doing anything illegal.

MIRANDA

I run a restaurant. And on the side, I am a wine collector and trader in luxury commodities.

(MORE)

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Believe it or not, sometimes I get customers who are willing to pay insane prices to get special vintages delivered on short notice for their special occasions.

LEDGE

Really?

MIRANDA

It's amazing what some people will pay for a fine drink. It's a reflection of who has the disposable wealth. And I'm not averse to helping them dispose of it.

(pause)

There may also be times when I may be called away for business such as auctions. I would also consider using your ship as a private transport on such occasions.

LEDGE

We may sometimes be away on other missions. In theory, up to three months at a time. I can't guarantee that I can always be available.

MIRANDA

That is why I am only offering you the land and, by virtue of the location, the protection of my security team.

LEDGE

So, everything else is on my tab?

MIRANDA

You can make use of some of the other services I employ, such as transport to and from town, access to the company truck if you need it. That sort of thing.

LEDGE

Right now, I can't see a downside to your offer.

MIRANDA

You may in a minute. But first, let's seal our part of the bargain with a toast.

Miranda opens a decanter of whiskey that is sitting on a shelf behind her desk. She pours two small glasses. She hands one to Delaney.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
This is Midleton Very Rare Irish whiskey. An excellent blend for the genre. Intended for sipping.
(pause)
To business.

LEDGE
To business.

Ledge and Miranda both sip from their glasses.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
Smooth. Perhaps you can teach me more about the trade.

MIRANDA
(smiles)
Perhaps. I am a certified oenologist. Maybe I can teach you a few things.

Miranda takes another sip from her whiskey glass.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
But there is another pressing matter. You will want to finish your whiskey first.

Ledge gulps down the rest of his glass.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
And sit down.

Ledge finds the nearest chair and sits.

LEDGE
So, what's the bad news.

MIRANDA
You owe Lo Fat five-hundred thousand smoos.

Ledge looks around the room.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Are you alright, Captain?

LEDGE

I was just seeing if there were any strong rafters from which I could hang a noose. Of COURSE I'm not okay! Why do I owe that thug half-a-million smooos?

MIRANDA

Because I negotiated him down from a full million, which is what he was willing to accept in lieu of handing you over to the rest of his criminal organization, who would have murdered you all and made it look like an accident.

Ledge is speechless.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

This is the deal I got for you. Half a million in damages, and you work for me on call.

(pause)

Look. Even though it probably wasn't needed, when we were back in my restaurant, you did put yourself in between me and those gunmen. That's all I'm doing here. Returning the favor.

LEDGE

Indefinite lease on the land?

MIRANDA

I'll have it in writing for you by tomorrow afternoon at the latest. If you use my land for business for at least five years, it will pay for itself.

LEDGE

(sanguine)

Alright.

CUT TO:

INT. CIS DAISY - NIGHT

Jones is sitting on his bunk in his pajamas. Koko is standing before him, still fully dressed. She is looking at him amorously.

JONES
So, what do I get for being so
heroic today?

KOKO
Hold out your hand and close your
eyes.

POV JONES

Jones is looking up at Koko. He closes his eyes.

BLACK

JONES (O.S.)
Okay. I'm ready when you are.

SFX Koko handcuffs Jones to his bunk.

BACK TO SCENE

Jones opens his eyes. Koko is smiling coyly. She is holding the Electronic Kazoo behind her back where Jones cannot see it.

JONES (CONT'D)
Very funny, Koko.
(winks)
What do you have in mind?

KOKO
Never, EVER, call me Kinko again!

Koko starts to back away toward the rear of the ship. She stops at the galley, which is out of Jones' reach while he is handcuffed.

Koko pulls the electronic kazoo from behind her back and pushes the Yakity Sax button again. The annoying music begins to play. She turns the volume all the way up. She sets the kazoo down on the galley bar.

Koko turns and exits the crew section via the airlock, closing the hatch behind her.

JONES
Koko?

Stands up to follow her, but gets yanked back by the handcuffs.

EXT. SPACEPORT - SAME

We start with a top down CGI view of the CIS Daisy on the landing pad, then slowly ROTATE CAMERA as we PULL OUT. Yakity Sax continues playing.

JONES (O.S.)

KOKO!

FADE OUT:

THE END