

The Great Outback

"Milk Run" - Show #111

by
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MILK RUN

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET XIA BASE - NIGHT

Start zoomed out, looking down on Ledge's base on Xia. The CIS Daisy is parked in the field. Her lights are off. Light comes from the portholes of the Habitat Module on the edge of the field.

PUSH IN toward the Living Room window.

INT. HABITAT MODULE (LIVING ROOM) - SAME

JONES, KOKO, and MIRANDA are sitting on the sofa with Koko in the middle. LEDGE is sitting in a Queen Anne chair next to them.

Miranda is sipping from a wine glass.

The large video monitor is displaying various commercials for high-tech consumer products, but the audio is muted. The coffee table is laden with beer bottles, an uncorked bottle of wine, and other snacks and refreshments.

MIRANDA

The previews looked exciting.

LEDGE

There are some very unsettling scenes, Miranda. Do you want advance warning?

MIRANDA

You underestimate my fortitude, Captain Ledge. I'll be fine.

LEDGE

You can just call me Ledge. Captain is way too formal for a three-person crew.

KOKO

Are you going to be okay, Boss?

LEDGE

I think so. I took a happy pill
just in case.

JONES

Ariel! Hurry up! You're going to
miss the start!

ARIEL enters the living room from the kitchen, carrying two
bowls of popcorn.

ARIEL

Next time you can all get your own
popcorn. I'm your business manager,
not your waitress.

MIRANDA

Thank you, Ariel.

ARIEL

Only one thank you?
(beat)
Hey, you've taken all the seats!

KOKO

You can sit here if you like.

ARIEL

No thank you! I know what you two
have been doing there!

MIRANDA

Is there something I should know?

Ledge stands up.

LEDGE

You can have this chair, Ariel. I
don't mind standing. I'll go get a
stool during the first break. What
kind of chair is this anyway? It's
very comfortable.

ARIEL

That's a Queen Anne chair.

LEDGE

Why is it called that?

ARIEL

I don't know.

MIRANDA

It believe it has something to do with the style of the period. The rounded back, the small armrests and the many curves. Antiques are not my specialty.

JONES

Would a Queen Mary chair have no headrest?

Ariel sets the popcorn bowls down on the coffee table. She grabs a beer from the table and sits down in the chair. Ledge walks over and stands behind the sofa.

KOKO

It's coming on now! Everyone be quiet! Get the lights!

Ledge claps twice and the main lights in the living room dim. Jones aims a remote control at the video monitor and presses a button. The audio un-mutes just as the commercials stop and the main program begins.

POV OUR CHARACTERS

They are looking at the living room wall. A large video monitor hangs from it.

A musical flourish begins as a broadcast show's opening credits roll. The name of the show is Blake Lewis LIVE! Starring, Blake Lewis!

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to Blake Lewis Live!

BLAKE LEWIS appears in CLOSE UP on screen in a safari outfit. He tips his hat to the camera.

CUT TO footage of Blake Lewis wrestling an alligator.

CUT TO CLOSE UP ON BLAKE. He is holding a bowie knife between his teeth. With one arm, he holds the alligator in a headlock and with the other he gives the camera a thumbs-up.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Featuring CNA's ace action journalist, Blake Lewis!

We cut to footage of OLIVIA (30) offering Blake a mint julip while he kills the obviously fake alligator with a stab to the head from his bowie knife.

He takes the glass from Olivia and takes a sip from the straw. Both Blake and Olivia look at the camera and give a wink and a thumbs-up.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
This Week on Blake Lewis Live!

We change to a scene of Blake Lewis posing with Olivia, Ledge, Jones, and Koko. Koko is trying to hide her face.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Blake is embedded with the intrepid crew of the scout vessel Daisy as she soars to high adventure!

Ledge, Jones, and Koko cheer themselves on. Ariel is silent. Miranda softly claps, smiling.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Action! Adventure! Romance! Now, that's what we call NEWS!

We cut to a product placement. We show a plain, monochrome screen with a lump of translucent plastic sitting in the middle. In each corner of the screen, other pictures appear in sequence: A spaceship, a flying car, a very modern high-rise building, and a child eating an ice-cream bar.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Brought to you by Polyxytate, the Wonder Polymer of the Third Millenium!
(pause)
Don't go away! The adventure begins right after a word from our sponsors!

ARIEL (O.S.)
How much did they pay you for this?

LEDGE (O.S.)
Not nearly enough. But they did give us something called net points.
(shrugs)
I guess that's good?

ZOOM IN until the monitor fills the screen.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. CBI HQ (BRIEFING ROOM) - DAY

MARSHAL Ryan and his DEPUTY are watching Blake Lewis Live! as it returns from intermission. Both are nibbling from separate bowls of popcorn.

MARSHAL RYAN

I can't believe Delaney consented to this. The whole Confederation is watching him now. I should have arrested him when I had the chance.

DEPUTY

Is this a synchronized broadcast? Going out everywhere at the same time?

MARSHAL RYAN

I believe so. No one will have a jump on us if it causes any ripples.

DEPUTY

Shhhhh. It's starting again.

The video monitor shows the transitional credits for Act One of Blake Lewis LIVE!

CUT TO:

INT. CNA STUDIOS (INTERVIEW ROOM) - DAY

BLAKE is interviewing LEDGE inside a studio interview room. The room is not spacious, but it is large enough to comfortably seat all of those present.

BLAKE

We're speaking with Captain Steven Delaney of the CIS Daisy. Welcome, Captain!

LEDGE

It's good to be here, Blake.

BLAKE

Yes, it is. Some time ago, CNA received a scoop about criminal activity on the Zimrakkan planet of Albion. I understand that you were the source.

LEDGE

I'd rather not to talk about that.

BLAKE

But surely, this act of heroism sets you apart from those without the conviction to adhere to their principles and do the right thing.

LEDGE

I'm just an ordinary guy who happens to own a spaceship.

BLAKE

Modesty! The defining characteristic of a true hero! Thank you Captain.

Blake turns to another camera and says

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Now, on to our main segment. Some say that if you wait long enough, adventure will just come along on its own. But that's never been our style. We seek it out! Just like we did when we went along with the crew of the CIS Daisy on what we all thought was going to be a milk run. I had a feeling that something big was going to happen, and as always, I was right!

CUT TO:

INT. CIS DAISY - DAY

Ledge, Jones, Koko, Olivia, Blake, and ENDO are doing a group interview. Endo is wearing a conspicuous, bright-red shirt. The CAMERA is on a tripod in the CIS Daisy's center aisle. Three of our heroes are on each side of the walkway. As Blake introduces the crew to the camera, he points to them.

BLAKE

While we're on our way to resupply one of the mining ships vital to the Confederation's economy, let's meet our crew!

(pause)

I'm Blake Lewis, as you all know. This is my lovely assistant, Olivia!

Olivia curtsies for the camera, her expression clearly showing that she wished she had stayed in school to get her Master's Degree.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

This is Koko, Daisy's flight engineer.

Koko tries to hide her face from the camera.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

This is Mister Jones, the ship's navigator.

JONES

Doctor Jones, actually--

BLAKE

And Endo here is our action cameraman!

ENDO

Ndobuisi, actually--

BLAKE

Nice shirt, Endo!

ENDO

Thanks--

BLAKE

Red is definitely your color!

Blake gives a thumbs up to the camera. Olivia smiles and gives a thumbs up, followed by Endo and the rest of our heroes in a very uncoordinated fashion.

INT. CIS DAISY - LATER

The flight crew are all in their positions. The news crew are filming from outside the cockpit. Amy/AI is on the ship's video monitor.

POV HANDHELD

ON BLAKE

BLAKE

For those who have never been in a spaceship when it makes an interstellar jump, we wanted to show you what it looks like to the crew.

ANGLE TOWARD COCKPIT

AMY/AI

CAA regulations state that all passengers and crew should be strapped in during hyperspace transits.

LEDGE

It's alright, Amy. They signed a waiver.

Ledge pushes some buttons on his instrument panel and places his hand on the ship's throttle.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

Five... Four... Three... Two... One... Jumping.

Through the windshield, we can see the space around the CIS Daisy warp as if through a fisheye lens. Outside the ship, there is a flash of light, and when it fades, the CIS Daisy is in a different star system. In the distance, there is a large gas giant surrounded by a huge asteroid belt.

BLAKE (O.S.)

That was it?

JONES

Pretty much.

BLAKE (O.S.)

(whispers)

The eff-ex guys can punch that up some, right?

INT. CIS DAISY - LATER

The crew are in their flight stations. Through the windshield we can see the mining ship CCS Orpheus. The orpheus looks something like a large, porcelain gumdrop.

There are a number of windows, but no light comes from within. All appears dark. The CCS Orpheus is attached by its flat end to the surface of a very large asteroid.

The CIS Daisy is approaching a docking ring on the nose of the Orpheus.

BLAKE (V.O.)

We knew right away that something was wrong.

LEDGE

Something is wrong.

(pause)

Amy, can you link to the Orpheus' AI unit?

AMY/AI

Negative, Ledge. I am not receiving any response.

LEDGE

Is she broadcasting anything?

AMY/AI

Negative. Not even her automatic transponder.

LEDGE

Okay. I'm initiating docking procedures. Take it from here, Amy.

AMY/AI

Affirmative, Ledge. Docking protocols engaged.

JONES

Said the fly to the spider.

The view in the windshield turns along with the ship as Amy/AI begins to dock the ship on autopilot.

CUT TO:

INT. RUN-DOWN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The living room is unkempt, with much junk piled around. A large video monitor on one side of the room clearly shows a snippet of Blake Lewis Live.

Switch to an an angle on the couch where DAWN JOHNSON sits. She is holding a small bag of popcorn. She looks at first stunned, and then very angry.

DAWN
Holy shit! MOM!

MOM (O.S. IN OTHER ROOM)
What is it, hon?

DAWN
Amy's on Blake Lewis Live.

MOM
Dawn, honey, that's not--

DAWN
That son-of-a-bitch Delaney's programmed her onto his ship's computer.

Dawn storms out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. CIS DAISY - LATER

POV HANDHELD

The crew are preparing to board the CCS Orpheus. Jones is holding his hand scanner. Koko is wearing her pistol in its holster. Everyone is wearing a small oxygen bottle and a nose-tube breathing apparatus.

BLAKE (V.O.)
We found that the Orpheus was running on emergency battery power and that her internal atmosphere was barely breathable.

KOKO
Does anyone have any questions about their breathers?

JONES
How long will they last?

KOKO
They should be good for about four hours. Are you sure about the atmosphere?

JONES

Yes. It's mostly nitrogen, but there is some oh-two. It's not normal for a ship. But the air pressure is okay. Kind of like being on top of a mountain. Just less oxygen content.

LEDGE

How is the temperature?

JONES

A little on the cool side, but not bad. The artificial gravity seems to be off, but the asteroid is dense enough to give us a little gravity. It's very dense actually. About four times the usual mass for its size.

LEDGE

No wonder the miners went for it. They must have thought it was pure iridium. Is everyone ready to go in?

Ledge opens the airlock door.

INT. CCS ORPHEUS (BRIDGE) - LATER

POV HANDHELD

Endo has already entered the Orpheus' bridge. He films the others climbing down a ladder from the airlock above to the Bridge. The ladder is in the center of the bridge. It continues downward through an open hatch in the floor. There are four crew stations on the bridge, one in each corner.

The main power for the ship is turned off. The emergency lights are on, but eerily dim.

LEDGE

Koko, see if you can get the power on-line.

KOKO

Boss, come over here.

Ledge walks over to where Koko is examining the flight engineer's station. Endo follows with the camera.

Koko points to a place on the engineer's chair where the cushioning has been ripped by some kind of large, serrated edge.

BLAKE (V.O.)

There had clearly been some kind of struggle.

INT. CNA STUDIOS (INTERVIEW ROOM) - DAY

Blake is interviewing Koko. Koko is demure, completely in contrast to her usual, boisterous self.

BLAKE

Tell our viewers what you found out about the ship when we first boarded.

KOKO

The entire electronic system had been fried, including all the connections to the ship's AI unit. If I had to guess, I would say it might have been caused by some kind of massive EMP.

BLAKE

For the benefit of our audience who may not be familiar with the term, what is an EMP?

KOKO

Electro-Magnetic Pulse. It's a high-energy burst of--
(fumbles for word)
--high-energy. Normally the kind of thing you get when a nuclear weapon goes off. Jonesie would know more about that kind of thing.

CLOSE ON BLAKE

BLAKE

We explored the rest of the ship but found no trace of her crew. But we found definite signs of a struggle.

INT. CCS ORPHEUS (LOWER AIRLOCK) - LATER

POV HANDHELD

Ledge, Jones, Blake, and Olivia are standing around the lowest airlock hatch on the CCS Orpheus as Endo films them with his handheld camera.

The hatch leads to tunnels cut into the asteroid by the mining ship's crew. It has been melted through as if dissolved by some kind of acid.

Resting against the wall is a bulky PLASMA DRILL. The drill looks more or less like a jackhammer with a shielded emitter tube protruding from its business end. It is connected to the wall by a series of cables.

Ledge points to the drill as he speaks to Jones.

LEDGE

You don't think that plasma drill is what melted the hatch?

JONES

No. It's not hot enough to melt through. It was some kind of acid.

LEDGE

Is it safe?

JONES

It seems to have finished reacting with the metal in the hatch. Whatever did this was extremely corrosive. We're not dealing with high school chemistry students.

Koko climbs down the ladder from above. She has a small bag slung over her shoulder.

LEDGE

Koko, did you find anything we can use?

KOKO

I found a bag of demolition charges. Figured I'd bring them along in case.

Everyone stops what they are doing and they all look at Koko, concerned.

KOKO (CONT'D)

You never know.

BLAKE
You mean bombs?

KOKO
Yeah. Explosive Polyxytate. They're harmless unless they get hit by both heat and pressure at the same time.

Koko removes one of the blocks from her bag of charges. She takes a small bite and swallows it. Those assembled stand in mute surprise. Koko replaces the block in the bag. She then holds out her arm with her index finger extended.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Pull my finger.

LEDGE
No, I won't. Did you see any sign of the crew?

KOKO
I saw a couple patches of blood, but no bodies. They either left on their own or got hauled off. I'd bet on the latter.

Ledge points his flashlight to the floor. There are traces of blood around the hatch that were clearly left after the hatch was melted open.

LEDGE
Looks like they went this way.

Ledge points at the dried blood around the hole in the melted hatch, and then down through the hole.

EXT. ASTEROID - TRANSITIONAL

We frame the CIS Daisy docked to the CCS Orpheus, which is clinging to the asteroid.

INT. ALIEN HIVE (CORRIDOR) - SAME

The crew are standing inside a hexagonal passageway. The walls are textured. Along the creases where the walls meet run small panels that dimly and eerily illuminate the passageway.

The camera is on Blake. He points to a hole the miners punched in the side wall of the hexagonal tunnel. Olivia is still climbing down from the hole.

BLAKE

We have descended through the mining shaft. We now find ourselves in some kind of alien structure.

Endo trains his camera on Koko. She sticks her finger up as if trying to detect any airflow.

KOKO

We are going to go look for the crew of the Orpheus now. Everyone stay very sharp. Watch out behind us.

Koko draws her pistol and chambers a round. She flips the safety off.

We cut to the Transitional Scene for the end of Act One of Blake Lewis LIVE!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Blake and Olivia will be right back with more news! Stay tuned!

CUT TO:

INT. LO FAT'S MANSION (MEDIA ROOM) - NIGHT

LO FAT is sitting in a very large chair in front of a huge home entertainment system. He is holding a large tub of popcorn. THUG FIVE is standing beside him.

LO FAT

I can't believe Delaney would voluntarily attract so much attention.

(to Thug Five)

Number Five! Bring me another tub of--

(pause)

--popcorn.

Thug Five takes Lo Fat's popcorn tub and walks out of frame.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

STUART, the gentleman's gentleman who trained the CIS Daisy's AI Personality Reeves, is preparing dinner for his current employer as he watches Blake Lewis LIVE! on a video monitor. He nibbles from a bowl of popcorn as he works. Stuart looks just like Reeves (same actor), except that he is a few years older.

STUART

Well, I never! That really is our old Daisy. I wonder what happened to Reeves?

Stuart returns to preparing dinner, one eye on the monitor as we cut to the transitional credits for Act Two of Blake Lewis LIVE!

INT. CNA STUDIOS (INTERVIEW ROOM) - DAY

Blake is interviewing Jones.

BLAKE

Welcome back to the show! We're talking to Mister Colin Jones, Daisy's astronavigator. Tell our viewers what it takes to be a navigator on a starship.

Jones holds up his Astronavigation for Dummies book, showing the cover to the camera.

JONES

Well, I--

BLAKE

Thank you very much!

Blake turns to another camera and continues...

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Mister Jones got us to our destination on time and on target, as he always does!

In the background we hear...

SFX a SMACK against Jones' head.

JONES

Ow!

CUT TO:

EXT. ASTEROID - TRANSITIONAL

We frame the CIS Daisy docked to the CCS Orpheus, which is clinging to the asteroid.

INT. ALIEN HIVE (CORRIDOR)

POV HANDHELD

The entire crew is now in the corridor. Koko is taking the lead. She has drawn her pistol and is holding it with both hands, pointing it in the direction she is looking as she barks out orders. She is careful not to turn it towards her allies.

KOKO

Follow me. Two meters separation.
Stay in two columns on either side.

(pause)

Jones! Behind me and to my right.
Talk to me about what's on that
hand scanner.

The party forms up as Koko requested and starts slowly walking down the corridor.

JONES

Koko, something big is moving up
ahead, just around that corner.
Coming this way.

Koko holds up her palm, giving the stop signal to everyone.

Suddenly, from around the corner runs an...

ALIEN SPIDER

The creature's body is an egg-shaped, chitinous orb about a meter (3 feet) long. Eight legs protrude from the side of the body, four on either side. Four legs are in contact with the floor, and four are in contact with the ceiling.

It uses the corners of the hexagonal tunnel to place its "feet" as it charges forward.

Koko fires a single shot at the body. The flechette easily penetrates the shell, splitting the body in half. The creature collapses to the floor, lifeless.

KOKO

Keep to the sides in case any come up from behind us. I'll need a clear shot.

OLIVIA

I did NOT sign up for THIS!

BLAKE

Honey!

Endo turns the camera around to face Blake and Olivia. Blake is FRAME LEFT. Olivia is FRAME RIGHT.

OLIVIA

My contract says dangerous animals are okay, but not human-eating ALIEN ANIMALS!

Blake notices that Endo is filming them instead of the action. He extends his right forearm, palm vertical. He starts jabbing his left index finger into his palm (toward Endo) and looks at Olivia, annoyed.

BLAKE

We can discuss this later, dear.

Olivia is upset. She turns to follow Koko, passing Endo on CAMERA RIGHT. Blake also follows, passing Endo on CAMERA LEFT. We then switch back to...

POV HANDHELD

Our heroes are cautiously inching their way down the corridor when suddenly...

SFX Jones' hand scanner starts BEEPING.

JONES

Another one coming around corner. This one looks bigger!

Coming from around the next corner is an...

ALIEN SPITTER

The Spitter has the same arrangement of legs as the Alien Spider Koko shot earlier, but it moves more slowly and has a much larger body. It's body is more elongated and resembles that of a larva or grub. Also unlike the Alien Spider, it has a maw at the front of its body.

Koko has her pistol out, aiming carefully at the Spitter. She fires a single shot. The flechette strikes the Spitter solidly, but passes through the rubbery skin, emerging from the other side with a spray of ichor. The Spitter does not seem to be affected.

OLIVIA

BLAKE! There's ANOTHER ONE!

Endo turns around and points the camera at Olivia and Blake again as they continue to argue with one another.

KOKO (O.S.)

It's spitting something at us!
DUCK!

BLAKE

Honey, PLEASE!

KOKO (O.S.)

Damn it, DUCK!

Endo does not see the incoming ball of bile. He is struck square in the back. Blake and Olivia turn to look at him as he screams and falls to the ground, and our POV stays with the CAMERA. His camera arm quivers momentarily, then stops.

Olivia screams.

Blake takes the camera from Endo's hand and points it at the action. The Spitter looks as if it is saving up its corrosive bile for another shot.

Koko turns around and yells.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Everyone hug the walls! NOW! If you see a spitball coming at you, dodge it!

Koko holsters her pistol. She reaches down to her belt and unplugs her oxygen cylinder. She holds onto the cylinder as she removes one of the plastic explosive charges from her belt and quickly forms it over the cylinder's valve, making a bomb out of it. She turns the bomb around in her hands to get a solid grip as if it was a football. She stands ready for the Spitter to discharge its next shot.

JONES

Koko!

KOKO

(shouting)

Shut up and do exactly what I say!
Hug the walls!

Everyone obeys Koko, crowding against the waist-high corner of the hexagonal wall. The camera is now being held by Blake as he moves to the right wall. Koko stands in the center of the corridor, in between the party and the Spitter.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Come on you bastard! Cough it up!

The Spitter opens its maw and releases another ball of acidic phlegm, aiming it directly at Koko.

Koko dodges the projectile by rolling away. She quickly stands up, plants her feet, and throws an accurate pass with the bomb directly into the Spitter's mouth. She then draws her pistol and fires at the cannister. The cylinder explodes, in turn setting off the explosive charge, blowing the Spitter to bits and splattering it all over the walls of the corridor.

KOKO (CONT'D)

(holsters her pistol)

Is everyone--

(sees Endo)

--else okay?

Koko steps over to Endo's corpse, carefully removes his oxygen cylinder, and plugs it into her breather apparatus. She starts barking commands.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Do NOT touch Endo. That spit may still be dangerous. Check and make sure you didn't get hit by any of that crap in the spray!

Blake turns the camera to look at Endo. He is lying on his belly, quite dead. Where he was struck in the back has been dissolved all the way through by an extremely powerful acid. Blake points the camera at Olivia, who is staring at Endo, panicked.

JONES

That must be what happened to the outer hatches on the Orpheus.

Ledge slides down against the wall, tucking in his knees and pulling himself into a ball. He is staring at Endo's body. He is shaking, and clearly having a PTSD-induced breakdown.

Koko steps over to Ledge and starts shaking him.

KOKO

BOSS! Of all times, do NOT freak out on me now!

JONES

Ledge, are you okay?

KOKO

Jonesie. I want you to take everyone else back to the ship and prep it for an escape.

JONES

Like hell! I'm not leaving you down here alone.

KOKO

I MEAN IT, Jonesie! Get the boss upstairs! Can you operate that plasma drill that's sitting next to the Orpheus' lower docking ring?

JONES

I don't know.

KOKO

Do your best. If you can't figure it out how to use it as a weapon, then get to Daisy. If anything comes after you, undock and pull away!

BLAKE (O.S.)

I'm not leaving you alone either. Someone's got to capture this video!

OLIVIA

(hysterical)

Blake! Endo is DEAD! This isn't Reality TV anymore, this is REALITY!

KOKO

Jonesie, take Olivia with you and Ledge. She's not in any condition to go on either.

OLIVIA

Hey!

KOKO

Just go! Blake, come on with me. If we find the crew, I may need an extra hand.

BLAKE (O.S.)

I'm with you, Koko. Go on back and take care of Captain Delaney, Olivia. Jones will cover you.

OLIVIA

BLAKE!

BLAKE (O.S.)

It's alright, Olivia. Get safely up top and look after the others. We'll be back soon.

INT. CNA STUDIOS (INTERVIEW ROOM) - DAY

Blake is once again interviewing Ledge. Blake is still upset that Ledge had a breakdown in the middle of the action and is leading him on in the following scene.

BLAKE

Captain Delaney, aren't you a graduate of the Confederation Naval Academy?

LEDGE

Yes. That was my alma mater. "Ad astra per aspera." And all that.

BLAKE

Your permanent records show that while you were in the active-duty navy, you received the bronze starburst.

LEDGE

That's correct. But I didn't really do much to deserve it. Everyone on our ship that day received one. And it was a long time ago.

BLAKE

Less than two years. Why did the Navy let someone of your caliber go? I'd have expected them to fight to keep you.

LEDGE

It was the most--
(pause)
--convenient option at the time.

BLAKE

Well, I'm sure they miss your coolness under fire.

Blake turns to another camera.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Turning back--

LEDGE

No! Wait.

BLAKE

Take your time.

LEDGE

Let me tell you something about the moment of contact. When, in a flash, you open your eyes and look around--

(pause)

--and see that everything you ever really cared about has ceased to exist and that the only thing--

(takes deep breath)

--the only thing you have remaining is yourself, and you're standing alone in the void--

(pause)

--until you see that elephant and look it square in the eye, no one knows what they're going to do.

Ledge stands up and walks out of the Interview Room. He slams the door behind him.

The camera turns back to Blake. Blake almost feels ashamed.

BLAKE

That was Captain Steven A. Delaney the Fourth.

(MORE)

BLAKE (CONT'D)
Former Confederation Navy pilot.
And decorated combat veteran.

CUT TO:

INT. ALIEN HIVE (BREEDING ROOM) - EARLIER

The Breeding Room has a central pillar that looks as if it is made of some kind of organic and very alien substance. It blends flawlessly with the smooth floor. There are small alcoves in the pillar that seem to be filled with a jelly-like substance.

Koko enters the room cautiously, aiming her flashlight into one of the alcoves. Clearly visible through the translucent gel is a human skeleton from which the flesh and clothing have been dissolved. Any other metal objects that might have been on the skeleton are unaffected.

Koko looks inside an adjacent alcove and sees another skeleton. A baby spider is growing inside the gel.

KOKO
Oh, God. Are you getting this,
Blake?

BLAKE (O.S.)
I see it.

Koko turns her flashlight on the walls. There are small, honeycomb-like cells growing from the outer walls. Some of them have incompletely formed bodies of more spiders within.

Koko continues to walk around the pillar. Blake follows her, keeping the camera on her. She hops over to the far wall and looks inside an unsealed cell. She yells.

KOKO
Survivor!

At that moment, from each corridor rush in more of the Alien Spiders. Koko immediately engages each target. She counts off her rounds as she fires. She is deadly accurate as always.

KOKO (CONT'D)
FOUR! FIVE! SIX! SEVEN!

Koko disables the first wave of four. Four more spiders rush in.

KOKO (CONT'D)
SHIT!

Koko blasts three of the four, then runs out of ammunition.

KOKO (CONT'D)
EIGHT! NINE! TEN! RELOAD! RUN!

Koko take off running to keep separation between her and the last spider as she drops her clip and reloads as quickly as she can. She bounces and rolls off the wall in the low gravity, avoiding the spider's stabbing legs.

Blake continues to film her until he realizes that the last spider is lunging for him. He tries to run, but the spider stabs at him with the point of one of its legs. It hits him in the arm as he dodges to the side. As he rolls away, he screams out in pain.

BLAKE
DAMN IT!

Blake points the camera at the spider, which turns to follow him. In the meantime, Koko has reloaded her pistol. She fires twice, hitting the creature both times, killing it. Blake stands up as Koko runs over to him.

KOKO
Are you okay, Blake?

BLAKE
I--feel--fun--

Blake collapses. The camera is strapped to his hand. It conveniently falls so that Koko, the Survivor, and the Pillar are in the same frame.

KOKO
Poisoned. Damn it!
(pause)
Thank goodness for low gravity. I'm going to blow this damned thing and drag you and this crewman out of here.
(pause)
Don't die on me.

Koko grabs both Blake and the Survivor by the feet and drags them across the floor to the entrance through which she and Blake had first arrived. She moves them as far away as she can and still see the center column of the Breeding Room. When she releases them, the camera rests so that it points back into the Breeding Room.

Koko steps partially back into the Camera POV Frame. She uses the butt of her pistol to break open the occupied cell.

She quickly examines the Survivor, holding her hand over his nose to see if he is breathing.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Still just barely breathing. Must
be the paralyzing poison.

Koko's mind races as she ponders the situation for a BEAT. She then looks at Blake. As she reaches over to Blake's belt and removes his oxygen cylinder, she says...

KOKO (CON'T) (CONT'D)
Which means that you don't need
this canister anymore, Blake.

Koko runs over to the pillar and places her bag of demo charges against it. She removes one charge from inside the bag and wraps it around Blake's oxygen cylinder. She then places it on top of the bag.

After setting her bomb, Koko runs back to the entrance where she dropped Blake and the Survivor. Koko is very nervous and is slightly shaking, being very apprehensive about what she is about to do as well as about being alone inside the unfriendly alien complex.

When she reaches the exit, she pulls her pistol and begins firing at the oxygen cylinder. She counts off nervously after each shot as a reminder of how much ammo she has remaining as she tries to hit the very small target from across the room.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Four. Five. Six.
(pause)
Come on, Koko. Focus. Breathe in.
Out.
(pause)
Seven.

Shot number SEVEN hits the target and the demolition charges explode, and there is a ground-shaking explosion that throws Koko off her feet. It shatters the covers on the honeycombs lining the walls. Thick fluid oozes out from the broken egg cells.

Koko places her hands over her ears and is obviously in pain from the concussion. When she recovers from the effects of the blast, she crouches.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Crap, I can't hear anything.

Unnoticed by Koko but captured by the camera, on the other side of the room an immature alien spider crawls out of its egg cell as Koko regains her feet and starts dragging Blake and the Survivor away towards the exit.

INT. CNA STUDIOS (INTERVIEW ROOM) - DAY

We return to the Interview Room. Blake is interviewing Koko.

BLAKE

That was heroic of you. You saved both our lives and the life of the Orpheus survivor.

KOKO

I didn't save Endo, your cameraman.
(shrugs)
It wasn't heroic. You just do what you do.

BLAKE

Let me speak for both myself and our audience when I say that you did it well.

KOKO

It's just lucky for us that the doctors were able to fix our eardrums after that explosion. Being deafened was a really weird feeling, and that's not counting the pain.

Koko looks very much as if she does not want to be in front of the camera and is not particularly proud of what she did.

INT. CCS ORPHEUS (AIRLOCK) - EARLIER

POV HANDHELD

The camera is still tightly strapped to Blake's hand. We see what it sees as Koko crawls through the airlock, carrying both Blake and the Survivor fireman-style. Jones is inside the hatch. He helps Koko set Blake and the Survivor down.

The camera happens to be pointing in the right direction to show the Immature Alien Spider crawl up through the melted airlock hatch. Jones spots the spider and yells...

JONES

LOOK OUT!

Jones dives to the side, out of frame. Koko looks at Jones, and cups her hand over her ear.

KOKO

WHAT?

Koko quickly glances around and sees the Spider lunging for her, trying to stab her with its forelegs.

Koko recoils against the hull and reaches for her holster. She quickly draws and fires a snap shot but misses. She deflects the spider's first attack but her pistol is knocked from her hand in the process. The spider pulls back and sets itself, preparing to spring again, when from off-screen we hear...

SFX a plasma drill POWERS-UP.

Suddenly, the airlock is lit by a bright flash as...

SPFX a BOLT OF SUPER-HOT PLASMA shoots from out of frame and vaporizes the baby spider. It strikes the airlock wall and dissipates, leaving a large scorch mark as it burns the paint off of the wall. Koko looks out of frame at Jones.

JONES (O.S.)

I--I figured out how to work the plasma drill.

Koko collapses against the wall and looks at Jones.

EXT. OUTER SPACE (ASTEROID) - LATER

The CIS Daisy undocks from the CCS Orpheus and begins to fly away from the asteroid belt.

INT. CIS DAISY - LATER

POV HANDHELD

Olivia is operating the camera. Ledge, Koko, and the Survivor are lying in the number two and three bunk bays. They all look as if they have recovered from the ordeal. Jones is fiddling with instruments in his science bay.

OLIVIA (O.S.)
How does it feel to still be alive,
Blake?

BLAKE
Every centimeter of me feels like
it's on fire.

JONES
Those creatures had some kind of
neurotoxin in their forelegs. It
was lucky for the man from the
Orpheus in a way, because it slowed
his metabolism enough that he was
still able to live in the low
oxygen.

BLAKE
I hope everyone enjoyed watching
this episode of Blake Lewis LIVE!--
(winces)
--as much as we did filming it.

The transitional screen for the end of Act Two of Blake Lewis
LIVE! fades.

CUT TO:

INT. CSA HQ (DIRECTOR'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

Director SMITH is sitting at his desk in his office at the
CSA HQ. He has been watching the show on a newspad. He
deactivates the screen and sets the newspad down on his desk.
He speaks aloud to an unseen computer terminal that is
installed in his desk.

SMITH
Computer.

CSA COMPUTER (O.S.)
Yes, Director Smith?

SMITH
One of my field agents has just
jeopardized her cover. I may have
to take action. What's the review
process?

CSA COMPUTER (O.S.)
Either the Agency Director or the agent's section chief may opt to initiate an investigation, and may order that the agent be recalled or suspended pending review.

SMITH
What happens after that?

CSA COMPUTER (O.S.)
A tribunal of section chiefs will review the case. If the tribunal determines that the agent has become a liability, they will make recommendations to the Agency Director—currently yourself—and the Director will decide what actions to take.

SMITH
Call up Covert Field Agent Sixty-Nine's complete file please. Her cover name is Koko.

CSA COMPUTER (V.O.)
Affirmative, Director Smith.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. CNA STUDIOS (SCREENING ROOM) - NIGHT

Blake, Olivia, and some television executives have just finished screening the latest episode of Blake Lewis LIVE! Blake and Olivia are sharing a bucket of popcorn. Olivia is unhappy. She sits with her arms crossed.

BLAKE

What did everyone think?

The small audience politely applauds.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

(shouts)

What were the final numbers?

OLIVIA

Endo is dead. Are the ratings all you can think about?

BLAKE

Honey, if the ratings aren't good, that means no more flying car.

An intercom speaker comes on. The voice of the show's PRODUCER pipes over it.

PRODUCER

We got a five-point-five and a thirty share!

Blake jumps up from his seat triumphantly.

BLAKE

YES!

Olivia stands up as well and slaps Blake across the face. She starts crying as she runs away. Blake rubs his face, perplexed.

CUT TO:

INT. HABITAT MODULE (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Koko is looking at the video monitor, using a hand-held remote control to delete fan emails she received because of her appearance on Blake Lewis LIVE! She looks unhappy. Ledge is sitting beside her.

LEDGE

How many is that so far?

KOKO

Two-thousand, eight-hundred, and one. And they still keep trickling in.

LEDGE

Are you reading them?

KOKO

I read a handful. So far, its been a combination of compliments, marriage proposals, and offers to join the Marines.

(pause)

I got a thank you from the wife of the Orpheus crewman we rescued. I replied to that one.

(pause)

I shouldn't have come with you.

LEDGE

It's very lucky for us that you did. And also for that man you were able to save.

CLOSE ON VIDEO MONITOR

Koko is looking at the headers on each email as she deletes them from the list. She pauses on one from a sender named 0247 that is entitled, Sure is cold out here. She skips it and continues to delete from that point downward.

BACK TO SCENE

LEDGE (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything?

KOKO

Actually--

(pause)

Yes.

(MORE)

KOKO (CONT'D)

I could really use a cup of green tea. There should be some instant packets in the cupboard. Could you--

Ledge gently pats Koko on the head.

LEDGE

Sure thing.

Koko smiles. Ledge stands up and walks toward the kitchen. Koko quickly turns her attention back to the video monitor.

CLOSE ON VIDEO MONITOR

Koko scrolls back up to the email she skipped previously and opens it. The text in the message reads, Albatross. 1300. Package. See Red. We hold for a beat on the message.

CLOSE ON KOKO

Koko closes her eyes and holds up her right forearm.

CLOSE ON VIDEO MONITOR

Koko opens a reply to the message. The "from" field populates with the a sender name: 0069. The following message writes itself out: Blackbird is go. Any day now. The form closes and a pop-up window flashes that says Message Sent. Koko then closes and deletes the original message from User 0247. She continues deleting other messages.

BACK TO SCENE

Ledge emerges from the kitchen with a cup of hot tea. He sets it on the table in front of Koko.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I lost control back there. That was the second elephant I couldn't handle.

KOKO

No problem, Boss. I still see that poor cameraman too.

(pause)

I don't really understand how anyone can handle things like that.

LEDGE

You always seem to handle things
like that very well.

KOKO

No. I don't. You never see me cry.
(pause)
But I do.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

NATASHA sits behind a control panel. An empty bowl of popcorn sits on the control panel. BORIS' image is on her video screen.

BORIS

Did you see the program?

NATASHA

Yes. I'm sorry it took so long. I
had recorded it for later,
commercial-free viewing.

BORIS

What is the status on your
investigation.

NATASHA

I've run full background checks on
the Daisy's new crew, and their
current acquaintances. They
recently relocated their operations
to Xia. I plan on paying a visit as
soon as I can arrange for a clean
transit.

BORIS

Under the circumstances, I'll
authorize a black scout ship. If
you're lucky, I might even pilot it
for you.

NATASHA

Backup might be prudent. We don't
have a safehouse on Xia.

BORIS

Probably time we set one up. I'll
make the arrangements. Pack your
bags.

NATASHA

I travel light. I can be ready in
four hours.

BORIS

See you on the tarmac. Control out.

FADE OUT:

THE END