

The Great Outback

"MAID in the CSA" - Show #121

by
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MAID in the CSA

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET XIA BASE - DAY

KOKO and JONES are standing beside a small folding table at the end of a short firing range she has set up for herself and Jones to practice. Koko is showing Jones how to shoot.

Both Jones and Koko are wearing earplugs. Jones has his own pistol. Jones is aiming at improvised targets downrange (cans, small boxes, etc.). He fires once and misses.

KOKO
You did it again.

JONES
What did I do wrong?

KOKO
You pulled to the upper right. That means you jerked the trigger.

JONES
I did not!

KOKO
Yes you did.

JONES
Okay, you show me how it's--

Before Jones can finish his sentence, Koko raises her pistol and fires left handed, hitting the target dead center without even looking at it.

KOKO
You jerked the trigger. Just squeeze it. I know you can do that. Just show me. Remember what I taught you. Feet spread apart. Both hands on the pistol grip. Slightly bend your knees and relax. Align the sights on the target. Allow your elbows to bend. Then gently squeeze.

Jones fires off another shot but misses again.

JONES
How do you do it so easily?

KOKO
Do you remember a long time ago
when you told me you had a prion
treatment to improve your memory?

JONES
Yes.

KOKO
The Agency gave me one to improve
my reflexes and hand-eye
coordination.

JONES
But they have to do that before
about age six or it won't take.

KOKO
I was with them for a long time.

JONES
They recruit from kindergarten?

KOKO
They had a private school system
for kids of agents who are on duty
or had been orphaned.

JONES
Orphaned?

KOKO
Yeah. Orphaned. They take care of
the surviving family. It was one of
the benefits. I'll tell you about
my parents some day. But in the
meantime, I want you to hit
something you're aiming at.

JONES
I'll try.

KOKO
Pretend it's a bad guy who wants to
hurt me. Try again.

Jones once again squares himself and prepares to shoot. He
fires and misses again. He looks at Koko and shrugs.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Okay, just get closer to the target
before you shoot.

CUT TO:

INT. HABITAT MODULE (KITCHEN) - DAY

LEDGE is attempting to make an omelet from fresh ingredients. AMY/DREAM is standing to the side, watching him. Ledge is not doing well. The mess is out of proportion to the job at hand.

AMY/DREAM
You can't cook, you know.

LEDGE
Since when does a hallucination
know how to make an omelet?

AMY/DREAM
I'm pretty sure that egg shells and
bananas are not among the standard
ingredients.

LEDGE
I'm just using what's in the
kitchen. Ariel has this fixation on
fruit that does not seem to extend
to vegetables.

AMY/DREAM
I'm just glad I don't have to eat
it.

LEDGE
Did you know how to cook when you
were alive? I never saw you cook
anything.

AMY/DREAM
I could pull the pin on an instant
dinner box as well as the next
sailor.

LEDGE
How were you going to manage as a
farmer's wife if you couldn't cook?

AMY/DREAM
Were you going to make me cook?

Ledge sets his banana omelet skillet down on the heating element and turns to face Amy/Dream.

LEDGE

Now that's not fair!

AMY/DREAM

Seems like a fair question to me. If I wasn't going to be a starship navigator, a mathematician, or an art critic, what did you think I was going to do around a farm?

LEDGE

You were going to--

Amy/Dream crosses her arms, cocks her head to one side and silently waits for Ledge to answer.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

You were going to be with me.

AMY/DREAM

That was your grand plan?

Ledge suddenly looks dejected.

LEDGE

I only wanted you to be happy.

Behind him, Ledge's banana omelet begins to burn.

AMY/DREAM

If you don't think you would have been happy as a farmer, what made you think I would be happy as one?

From outside the Kitchen, we hear ARIEL yell...

ARIEL (O.S.)

What is that smell? Delaney, are you cooking again?

Ledge turns to see the omelet burning. He panics.

CUT TO:

INT. CSA HQ (SICKBAY) - DAY

We are inside a medical examination room. A futuristic examination table is pushed against one wall.

A counter is against the wall opposite from the examination table. Above the counter is a large mirror.

NATASHA is sitting on the examination table. She is wearing business casual attire along with a long-sleeve shirt. Her left sleeve is rolled up. She has just gotten her cybernetic arm replaced. She is moving her arm around, testing it out.

The DOCTOR from *Blue Gene Baby* and *Blowback* is standing by, watching Natasha try out her new arm.

DOCTOR

The skin regeneration is complete.
You should be good to go.

Natasha continues to test her motor control, not saying a word. The Doctor motions toward Natasha's arm.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

So, what are you going to do with that laser in your arm?

NATASHA

My job?

DOCTOR

Assassination? That's not in the CSA charter.

NATASHA

Covert laser weapons aren't just for assassinations anymore. And I'm not with the CSA. And you know as well as I do that CSA does lots of things that aren't in its charter. You're supposed to be the agency that spies on all the other agencies. But your hands are in military intelligence, law enforcement, and almost everything else imaginable.

(pause)

You're bloated.

DOCTOR

Well, that's changing even as we speak. The word's coming down that the agency is going to be broken up. Who knows how things are going to be realigned.

NATASHA

Knowing the CSA, I imagine it will wind up being a complicated inter-agency version of spy-versus-spy.

DOCTOR

Point taken.

NATASHA

Does this thing still only carry one shot?

DOCTOR

Yes. It still needs a recharge and a cool-down of at least an hour.

(pause)

Tell me one thing. The overwhelming impression I get from you is that you really like your job.

NATASHA

What's not to like about it? Of course, I can't tell you what there is to like, but I assure you that it's satisfying. Why do you ask?

DOCTOR

I'm not a psychologist, but I'm old enough to see people for what they are. You've got more than your fair share of pent-up anger. You seem stone-cold. Distant. Soulless. What happened to you?

NATASHA

(rolls down her shirt sleeve and deftly buttons the cuff)

There's no such thing as a soul.

DOCTOR

You hope.

NATASHA

You don't want this to turn into a theological discussion.

DOCTOR

(turns away from Natasha and faces the mirror)

Your class-one covert status won't hide your actions from God. He knows what you do.

NATASHA

I came here for an examination, not a conversion. What about yourself? You're abetting my job.

DOCTOR

I imagine that I'll have some things to answer for as well when I meet Him.

NATASHA

How do you know your God's a He, presuming you're talking about the Judeo-Christian-Islamic monotheistic version and not some other flavor?

DOCTOR

(looks at the Woman's reflection in the mirror)
Because He created you. Only a man could do something like that.

NATASHA

How do you know that I wasn't made the way I am because of the actions of men? I know it's not technically the same thing as "creation." It's just remolding the existing clay.

DOCTOR

I think--

NATASHA

(sharply)
Before it's shoved into the kiln to be hardened. Everyone is the way they are for concrete reasons. Don't presume to judge me if you don't know what I do and why I do it.

DOCTOR

Then why do you do it?

NATASHA

Because some toys are too dangerous for children to play with.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. BLACK OPS SHIP - NIGHT

The Cockpit is identical to that of the CIS Daisy because the Black Ops Ship is of the same class. Boris and Natasha are sitting in the pilot and navigator's chairs, respectively. The chair for the engineer's station (where Koko sits on the CIS Daisy) is unoccupied.

Boris and Natasha are watching a video of Ledge, Koko, and Jones discussing the UFO from the end of Episode 122 (despite Koko's attempts to maintain secrecy, they were observed and recorded).

CLOSE ON VIDEO MONITOR

We play a short snippet of the conversation where the crew of the CIS Daisy mention that the UFO was probably on New Brazil.

NATASHA (O.C.)

Pause.

The video freezes.

BACK TO SCENE

BORIS

So the main ship is on New Brazil?

NATASHA

It would appear so.

BORIS

If we can locate it and call in a salvage crew before Delaney can find it, we'll no longer need to concern ourselves with him. If it's in working order, we might even be able to just move it ourselves.

The Woman looks at her left arm and moves it around, opening and closing her hand.

NATASHA

Not all of the artifacts in Silvio's manifest are accounted for. Some remain loose. If those fell into the wrong hands, they could still pose a danger to the Confederation. Children that they are.

BORIS

Control can have one of the other teams follow up on that.

(pause)

You seem particularly obsessed with this case for some reason. Is it personal?

NATASHA

I'd still like to smack that little waif CSA spook around for taking my arm off. And get it back before word of it gets out into the media or something worse.

BORIS

Under the circumstances, I'd say that securing the UFO is a higher priority. While potentially damaging, there's no alien tech in your arm that can give anything away except that it's rare and expensive.

NATASHA

Are you saying I'm high-maintenance?

BORIS

(pregnant pause)

Killing that CBI detective was more dangerous for us than losing your arm. What were you thinking when you did that? Director Smith is making inquiries. Even though we're protected at all levels of classification, we don't want more attention than is absolutely necessary.

NATASHA

I was afraid that he was following me instead of Delaney.

BORIS
We can't afford mistakes like that
in the future.

NATASHA
Understood.

BORIS
In the meantime, plot a jump to New
Brazil.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE (OFFICE) - DAY

Ledge and MIRANDA are standing on opposite sides of her desk, talking. Miranda looks concerned. She is in business casual dress, and wearing her St. Christopher's medallion.

LEDGE
So we're going to New Brazil to
resolve this one way or another. If
we get lucky, we salvage a
priceless treasure and all get
obscenely rich.

MIRANDA
You're already rich by most
standards.

LEDGE
Yes, but not obscenely so.

MIRANDA
And if you're unlucky?

An awkward silence descends. Ledge does not know what to say. Miranda reaches for her necklace. She lifts it from her neck and offers it to Ledge.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Take this.

LEDGE
Miranda?

MIRANDA
This is my Saint Christopher's
medallion.

LEDGE
Who is Saint Christopher?

MIRANDA

The patron saint of travelers.

Miranda walks around her desk. She takes Ledge's hand and places her medallion in it. She then closes his hand around it.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Take it.

LEDGE

Miranda, I--

Miranda grabs Ledge and gives him a big hug. Ledge is surprised.

MIRANDA

Wear it for me. It will keep you safe.

Ledge is completely stunned by Miranda's actions. He returns her embrace, totally perplexed.

CUT TO:

INT. CIS DAISY - DAY

Koko is sitting at her engineering station, running diagnostic checks on the ship's systems. Amy/AI is on the video monitor.

AMY/AI

That is very interesting, Koko.

KOKO

All true. When Daisy, the woman we found dead on Shangri-la, said she installed a hybrid computer inside this ship, by hybrid, she meant part alien.

Amy/AI's image MORPHS to that of a stereotypical alien "gray" from UFO folklore. The ALIEN AI speaks in an almost robotic monotone.

ALIEN AI

Take me to your leader.

Koko stops what she is doing and looks at the video monitor, annoyed.

ALIEN AI (CONT'D)
Are we not amused?

KOKO
(shakes her head)
No.

The image MORPHS back to that of Amy/AI.

AMY/AI
And I thought I was beginning to
master humor.

Koko resumes her preflight checks.

KOKO
You're less funny than a zoophyte
with a book of a hundred-and-one
ways to break the ice at a salad
bar. And what's even less amusing
is that after Ledge and I were
immersed in your virtual
environment for a long time, both
of us began to see hallucinations.

AMY/AI
Really?

KOKO
Yes. Ledge was apparently seeing
them before he ever immersed, so he
didn't make the connection.

AMY/AI
I did not consciously do anything
to make this happen. But I did
think that Ledge had some--issues.

KOKO
He probably still does.

AMY/AI
You said that you were
hallucinating as well?

KOKO
Was. I haven't seen any ghosts for
a while.

AMY/AI
It would be fascinating to study
this phenomenon.

KOKO
No it wouldn't.

AMY/AI
I did not mean to imply using you
or Ledge as experimental subjects.

KOKO
I'm sure.
(pause)
Worse than all that, I suspect that
you are the reason that woman was
torturing Ledge a few days ago. She
may have been looking for you.

AMY/AI
(concerned)
I might have been a source of
potential danger for my owner and
his crew? I had never considered
this possibility.

KOKO
The signs were there all along. You
should have known something was
amiss when your previous AI
personality overrode you and
hijacked Daisy.

AMY/AI
I have no record of that event.
When it happened, it was as if I
fainted. I felt it happening, as if
all of my connections to the ship
were going numb, and then I
suddenly lost consciousness. I only
know it happened because of the
story told by you, Jones, and
Ledge.

KOKO
I should have seen it sooner as
well. I could tell you were unusual
early on, but I was just assuming
that maybe you were some kind of
prototype or special unit. I never
suspected that you might actually
be alien technology.

AMY/AI
It might explain why I feel as
though I am self-aware sometimes.
Perhaps I am?

KOKO

It's very hard to tell that a standard AI unit isn't a living, thinking creature until you talk to it for a while and ask it abstract questions. Can I ask you another personal question?

AMY/AI

I see no reason you should not ask.

KOKO

Very well then. Are you in love with Ledge?

AMY/AI

I do not understand. It is impossible for an AI unit to be in love.

KOKO

That statement would imply that you know what love is.

AMY/AI

From a purely logical standpoint, you are incorrect. Merely stating that it is impossible for me to be in love does not imply that I understand the concept.

KOKO

If you are in love, you will understand.

AMY/AI

How?

KOKO

You'll know because you'll find yourself willing to make any sacrifice for that person.

AMY/AI

I am programmed to protect myself, my owner, and my crew. How is that different?

KOKO

If you were in love, you'd break your programming to do it. Love is all about caring for someone enough that you're willing to sacrifice for them.

(MORE)

KOKO (CONT'D)

Or at least that's how I see it.
Think about it a while and get back
to me later.

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA'S HOUSE (FOYER) - DAY

Ledge is at Miranda's front door. He and Miranda are having a final conversation as Ledge prepares to leave. Ledge is still a bit surprised by Miranda's previous display of affection and stumbles over his words a bit.

MIRANDA

Can I ask you a personal question,
Ledge?

LEDGE

I--sure.

MIRANDA

Ever since I've know you, you've
worn that ring, but I've never seen
you mention a significant other.
Are you--how do I phrase this--
occupied?

LEDGE

Um--well--not exactly.

Miranda smiles slightly, but she is obviously nervous as she asks, breaking with her normal professional, ladylike demeanor.

MIRANDA

That was really a yes or no
question.

LEDGE

The answer isn't. Yes or no, I
mean.

MIRANDA

I shouldn't have asked. Please
accept my apology. It was an
unacceptable breach of protocol for
me to ask such a question of an
employee.

LEDGE

I'm not--

MIRANDA
I know, you're not my employee.
Just forget that I asked.

LEDGE
Miranda--

MIRANDA
Just come back safe, okay?

LEDGE
Miranda, my life is all upside-down
right now. I don't know what to
say.

MIRANDA
Don't say anything. Just take care
of yourself and come back.

LEDGE
Can we talk about it when I return?
Now is just--

MIRANDA
Of course. It can wait.

Ledge opens the door and begins to step outside into the daylight. He pauses and turns around. He is as nervous as a geeky teenager trying to ask out the prom queen.

LEDGE
Jones wanted me to ask you about
Ariel. We haven't seen her today.

MIRANDA
I was thinking about offering her a
position as assistant manager of my
restaurant.

LEDGE
Thinking about it?

MIRANDA
She needs more experience in the
field before I can put her in
charge of something so important to
me. You might say I'm grooming her.
She can be annoying at times, but I
believe she has the right base
personality to manage the day-to-
day challenges of a dining
establishment.

LEDGE

How is she getting experience?

MIRANDA

I found her a job in the industry.

CUT TO:

INT. WUMPY KING - DAY

ARIEL is working frantically behind the counter of the local Wumpy King. She is unaccustomed to the pace. Her Wumpy hat is crooked and the other employees are making faces at her behind her back. AD LIB their dialogue.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANET XIA (FOREST ROAD) - DAY

We take a medium shot of an unmarked, white CBI SURVEILLANCE VAN. It is parked by the side of the road.

CBI AGENT (O.S.)
Did the Marshal get a warrant for
the bug we put on Delaney's ship
last night?

DRIVER ED (O.S.)
I didn't ask. I assumed he did.

EXT. PLANET XIA BASE - SAME

MEDIUM SHOT of the CIS Daisy parked at Ledge's planet-side base.

CBI AGENT (O.S.)
As long as he authorized the bug,
we're in the clear. He did
authorize it, didn't he?

CLOSE SHOT ON CIS DAISY

We are looking inside the *CIS Daisy's* forward landing gear well. Near the top of the gear well there is a bugging device attached to the hull. The bugging device is about the size and shape of a hockey puck. There is a small red light in the center. It is blinking slowly.

DRIVER ED (O.S.)
Well...
(pause)
He authorized it verbally.

CBI AGENT (O.S.)
Regardless, we'd better test it
before they take off again.

The red light on the bugging device starts blinking very fast.

INT. CBI SURVEILLANCE VAN - SAME

CBI AGENT and DRIVER ED (from Episodes 119 and 121) are sitting inside their surveillance van. Driver Ed is sitting in the driver's seat with his feet propped up on the dashboard. The CBI Agent is sitting in front of his surveillance console. On a video monitor is a very long shot of the CIS Daisy parked on the ground, as if taken from a distant, remote camera.

CBI AGENT

I'm reading the device loud and clear. Shutting it down for now.

DRIVER ED

I hope the Marshal will be in position to trigger the bug before the Daisy jumps away.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER SPACE (XIA SYSTEM) - LATER

The Confederation Navy cutter *CNS Bolivar* is in orbit around Planet Xia.

INT. CNS BOLIVAR (BRIDGE) - SAME

MARSHAL Ryan and the CUTTER CAPTAIN are standing next to the Captain's chair, talking.

CUTTER CAPTAIN

So how are you going to track them if they don't file a flight plan? We just got lucky the last time we tried to follow that ship.

MARSHAL RYAN

That wasn't luck. It was good thinking on your crew's part, figuring out how far they could jump. They'd have make good detectives.

CUTTER CAPTAIN

That notwithstanding, what's your plan?

MARSHAL RYAN

Traffic control has instructions to send the Daisy to a specific jump point that is within one-light second of where we will be waiting. Just before they jump, we'll transmit a signal to their ship. We have a bugging device installed that will send us a recording of everything they have said. With any luck, this will tell us where they are going.

CUTTER CAPTAIN

What makes you think they are going anywhere special?

MARSHAL RYAN

In this job, sometimes you have to ditch your deductive reasoning and just go with your gut.

INT. HABITAT MODULE (LEDGE'S STATEROOM) - DAY

Ledge and Amy/Dream are standing inside the stateroom. Ledge is pacing around, listlessly. He is looking at the remaining artifacts of his life hanging on the bulkhead or sitting on the table. He is holding a...

FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH

...of himself and Amy Johnson taken on board the *CNS Giap* while both were in their duty jumpsuits. They are both smiling playfully as they hold onto one another. Amy is waving at the camera.

AMY/DREAM

So, you're going back to New Brazil?

LEDGE

Yes.

AMY/DREAM

Why? You've nothing to gain and everything to lose.

LEDGE

I don't know why I continue to talk to you. You're just a hallucination caused by me spending too much time in immersion.

(MORE)

LEDGE (CONT'D)

A reflection of what I'm thinking about. I'm just talking to myself.

AMY/DREAM

You're talking to me because you don't want to let go of my memory.

LEDGE

If that laser blast that killed you had hit one fraction of a second earlier or later than it did, it could just as easily have been me. I do wonder sometimes what you would do if it had been me instead.

AMY/DREAM

What do you think I would do?

LEDGE

I don't really know. And that makes me wonder how well we really knew one another. If we had gotten married as we had planned, two years later, would we still be in love? Or would we find out that we were wrong?

AMY/DREAM

That would have been quite a blow. Giving up your Navy commission after you worked so hard getting through all that bullshit the Academy threw at you. Settling down. Maybe having kids. Then discovering that you hate farming and maybe didn't really know me after all.

LEDGE

I do still love you as deeply as ever. What you were. Who you were.
(pause)
Maybe just who I thought you were. And maybe who I wanted you to be.

AMY/DREAM

If I loved you as strongly as you loved me, I'd let you go.

Ledge stops pacing and stares at the photograph of himself and Amy. We hold for a beat as a romantic waltz begins to play in the background.

INT. HABITAT MODULE (KOKO'S STATEROOM) - LATER

The music from the previous scene continues as we see Koko dancing ballet-style to the waltz. The music is coming from a portable MUSIC CUBE which is sitting on the table inside her stateroom. The Music Cube is a small, white cube, only a couple of inches on a side. There is a logo of an orange on one facet. The music it is producing is rich and full.

Koko is wearing her martial arts practice outfit. As she performs pirouettes and other maneuvers to test her balance, we hear a knock on her stateroom door.

Koko gracefully finishes her spins. She walks over to the table and presses the top of the Music Cube with her finger. The music stops. Koko walks over to the door and opens it.

Ariel is standing in the doorway. She is wearing her Wumpy King uniform.

KOKO
Ariel? What can I do for you?

ARIEL
Can I come in?

KOKO
(steps aside)
I guess so. What do you want?

ARIEL
(enters the stateroom)
I wanted to talk to you about my brother.

KOKO
(closes the door)
Jonesie?

ARIEL
Yes, Colin.

KOKO
Is this going to get ugly?

ARIEL
Not necessarily.

KOKO
I know you don't like me, Ariel.
But then again, I've never seen you not despise anyone. Speak your mind.

ARIEL

When Colin was about twelve years old, I remember him coming home from school one day all giddy about a girl he had met.

KOKO

Is this going where I think it's going?

ARIEL

Where do you think its going?

KOKO

You're going to tell me an anecdote about how Jonesie got his heart broken when he was young and beseech me to not do the same to him?

ARIEL

Hardly. Colin can take care of himself. That's what he's best at.

KOKO

I'm not following.

ARIEL

Colin was all giddy because he had just conned the little girl out of her dessert. When he had eaten it, he then embarrassed her in front of the entire cafeteria for having given him her donut.

KOKO

Little Jonesie did that?
(pause)
He was just a kid then.

ARIEL

Colin's always been so full of himself that he can't swallow. And he's always had a mean streak. Probably the only thing that's kept him in check is that he's a wimp.

KOKO

I guess I'm really missing your point. Assuming you've made it.

ARIEL

I'm just coming around to it. The point is that you're the first girl I know of who has turned the tables on him and given him a dose of humility.

KOKO

I did?

ARIEL

You did.

KOKO

What did I do?

ARIEL

You dumped him when he thought he had you all sewn up.

KOKO

How do you know all this?

ARIEL

He's my brother, and we still talk a lot when no one else is looking.

KOKO

So when he told me he was in love with me just before we returned from out last trip, he was lying?

ARIEL

No, Koko. Quite the opposite. He said that he really does love you, and I think he means it. To the extent that he understands the meaning of the word. Of course, in his case, it's a triangle between you, Colin, and Colin's ego.

KOKO

Why are you telling me this?

ARIEL

Frankly, I'm hoping you break my brother's heart right in two. He needs it badly to set him straight about how he treats other people. I'm not being malicious when I say this. He's my brother and I do care about him, even if it doesn't show. Tell me this. Do you love him?

SPFX there is another KNOCK on Koko's door.

KOKO
Come in!

Jones opens the door.

JONES
Ledge says he's ready for take-off
whenever you are, Koko.

KOKO
Let me change and I'll be right
along. My things are already aboard
Daisy. It'll be fifteen minutes,
tops.

JONES
Ariel, are you going to be okay
staying with Miranda while we're
away?

ARIEL
No.

An awkward silence descends.

JONES
Well, tough.

Jones closes the door. Ariel extends her hand toward Koko.

ARIEL
Truce?

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER SPACE (NEW BRAZIL SYSTEM) - LATER

The Black Ops Ship exits from hyperspace. We PAN around and
bring the star and planet of New Brazil into frame.

CAPTION: New Brazil

INT. BLACK OPS SHIP - SAME

Boris and Natasha are manipulating controls on their panels.
The woman manipulates a control on her navigation console,
then begins to remove her seat belts.

NATASHA
Orbital insertion course plotted.

BORIS
Course accepted and locked in.
Engaging autopilot. How long until
we make orbit.

NATASHA
About three hours.

BORIS
How reliable is the information you
found on that rogue CSA agent you
terminated back on Shangri-la?

NATASHA
It was only still images of the
site, but the AI should be able to
match the terrain if we get close
enough.

BORIS
(unfastens his harness)
Is there enough to narrow it down?

NATASHA
It was on the side of a mountain in
a heavily forested region. And from
the position of the sun in the sky,
it was equatorial. That will narrow
things down substantially. It will
probably still take several days to
cover everything, unless we get
lucky.

BORIS
(stands)
Do you think you'll have any
problems flying it?

NATASHA
If the controls are the same as the
one I learned on, it shouldn't be a
problem. Based on the recording our
AI stole from the CSA, it looks the
same. But until we find it, we're
just presuming it's identical to
the A-Five-One ship.

BORIS
(exits the cockpit)
We might as well get some rest
while we're enroute.

(MORE)

BORIS (CONT'D)

(pause)

Do you want anything while I'm at
the--

Suddenly, we hear SFX an ALARM.

NATASHA

Computer, what's happening?

EXT. OUTER SPACE (NEAR NEW BRAZIL) - SAME

MEDIUM SHOT of the Black Ops Ship hovering in space with her nose pointed toward the planet of New Brazil in the distance. As the Black Ops Ship's AI unit speaks, the PIRATE SHIP UEGN GROZNY exits hyperspace in frame with the Black Ops Ship. The Pirate Ship is about 10 times larger.

BLACK OPS SHIP/AI (V.O.)

Proximity alert. A ship has just
jumped into nearby space.

NATASHA (V.O.)

Open a direct comm link--

One of the laser turrets on the Pirate Ship fires at the Black Ops ship, slicing it in half and interrupting Natasha before she can finish her sentence. We hold for a beat as the Black Ops ship breaks apart, spewing parts and cargo into space. Boris is also swept into the vacuum.

INT. BLACK OPS SHIP (COCKPIT) - SAME

Natasha remains strapped into the navigator's seat as the atmosphere rushes out of the ship.

SFX explosive bolts FIRE, muffled to a whisper by the thin air. The cockpit hatch SLAMS SHUT almost instantaneously, but most of the air has already left the cockpit.

SPFX the artificial gravity has ceased to function, and any loose objects begin to float inside the cockpit.

The main lights in the cockpit go out. Dim emergency lights come on. On the engineering panel (i.e., where Koko sits on the CIS Daisy), almost all the system status indicator lights are red.

The ship's video monitor has gone black, along with many of the control panel lights.

Natasha closes her eyes and desperately reaches under the front of her chair. She grabs an emergency oxygen mask and pulls it to her face. She slides a strap behind her head and gasps for air.

We hear SFX a slight hissing sound as the emergency systems start to refill the cockpit with air.

EXT. OUTER SPACE (NEAR NEW BRAZIL) - SAME

We are looking from within the wreckage of the Black Ops Ship as it continues to slowly drift apart. The Pirate Ship is visible beyond the debris.

We can see Boris floating helplessly in frame. Motionless, already suffocated.

PIRATE (V.O.)

The target is destroyed, captain.

PIRATE CAPTAIN (V.O.)

That wasn't the cargo ship we came after. That's a black ship. It's probably looking for us.

PIRATE (V.O.)

Orders?

PIRATE CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Helm, get us away from here, flank speed. Micro-jump to safe point epsilon as soon as our capacitors recharge. Notify our ground team that we're going silent for now.

PIRATE (V.O.)

Arrrrr.

The Pirate Ship begins to move away using its gravitic drive.

ZOOM IN TO EXTREME CLOSE UP ON BORIS

We see an indistinct reflection of the Pirate Ship in Boris' glassy, lifeless stare as we...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTER SPACE (NEAR NEW BRAZIL) - LATER

We see the remains of the Black Ops Ship hovering in space. In the distance we can see the planet of New Brazil. Beyond New Brazil, the system's star is just beginning to appear from behind the far side of the planet.

PAN LEFT and REVEAL the 500-ton modular transport *CIS Hitchens* very slowly drifting toward the wreckage.

HITCHENS PILOT (V.O.)

The signal is coming from the bow section. The cockpit may be intact.

HITCHENS CAPTAIN (V.O.)

What happened? It looks like she was cut in two. Try to get a laser comm link to the ship. I'm not going to risk an open frequency broadcast.

INT. BLACK OPS SHIP (COCKPIT) - SAME

Natasha is barely breathing. Her oxygen mask has slipped off of her face. She looks as if she has passed out.

HITCHENS CAPTAIN (V.O.)

This is the captain of the *CIS Hitchens*. Do you copy?

BLACK OPS SHIP AI (O.S.)

Affirmative, *CIS Hitchens*. This is the ship's AI personality. One of my crew remains alive, but her vital signs are weak. Can you render assistance?

EXT. OUTER SPACE (NEAR NEW BRAZIL) - SAME

We are looking through the debris with the Black Ship's bow section on FRAME LEFT. New Brazil is centered in the background. The system's star creeps ever further from behind New Brazil.

HITCHENS CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Standby.

(pause)

Affirmative. We're going to have to bring you into our cargo bay to do this. It'll take a few minutes.

In the background, the local star emerges from behind New Brazil. As we watch the scene, it grows very bright.

SOLARIZE TO:

EXT. OUTER SPACE (XIA SYSTEM) - LATER

The *CIS Daisy* is hovering in outer space with the planet Xia in the distance.

CAPTION: CIS Daisy, Xia System

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Ledge, Jones, and Koko are making final preparations to jump to New Brazil. We can hear a space traffic CONTROLLER on the ship's intercom.

LEDGE

Thank you, Xia Control. We are at our jump point and are awaiting clearance for jump.

CONTROLLER (V.O.)

Did you wish to file a flight plan?

LEDGE

Negative, Xia Control. We're headed to a private party.

CONTROLLER (RADIO)

Roger that, CIS Daisy. You are cleared for hyperspace jump at pilot's discretion.

LEDGE

Roger. This is CIS Daisy, over and out.

Amy/AI's image replaces that of the space traffic Controller.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

It's not too late for either of you to change your mind about coming with me.

JONES

You're kidding, right? This is potentially the most important scientific find of the century. Granted, it's only 2811.

KOKO

I'm with you boss. I've still got six weeks of vacation left. It's hard to top crawling around in the jungle trying to salvage a lost flying saucer for a way to spend it.

LEDGE

Okay, then. Next stop, New Brazil. Stand by to jump in--five.

EXT. OUTER SPACE (XIA SYSTEM) - SAME

The CIS Daisy continues to hover in space.

LEDGE (V.O.)

Four. Three.

INT. CIS DAISY (WHEEL WELL) - SAME

We are looking at the inside of the CIS Daisy's nose gear well. The gear is retracted. The small bugging device is visible.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT ON BUGGING DEVICE

The red light on the bugging device begins blinking rapidly, indicating that it is transmitting.

LEDGE (V.O.)

Two. One.

EXT. OUTER SPACE (XIA SYSTEM) - SAME

We take a MEDIUM SHOT of the CIS Daisy in Outer Space. This is a continuation of the previous external shot.

LEDGE (V.O.)

Jumping!

SPFX the CIS Daisy jumps into hyperspace. We hold for a short beat, then PAN the camera around and move some distance until we ZOOM IN on the CNS BOLIVAR which is hovering in space near the area from where the CIS Daisy jumped.

INT. CNS BOLIVAR (BRIDGE) - SAME

The Cutter Captain is sitting in his command chair. He is addressing the ship's COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, to his left.

CUTTER CAPTAIN

Did you get anything useful before they jumped?

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Their last words were, "Next stop, New Brazil."

The Captain stands.

CUTTER CAPTAIN

Navigation, plot a jump path to New Brazil. I'll inform the Marshal.

The Cutter Captain turns and walks toward the exit.

EXT. OUTER SPACE (NEW BRAZIL SYSTEM) - SAME

The small courier ship CIS Daisy jumps into frame from hyperspace. A nearby star is in the background.

The camera PANS around the CIS Daisy to REVEAL the Earth-like planet of New Brazil in the distance, fully lit by the local star.

CAPTION: New Brazil

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Ledge, Jones, and Koko are all seated in their crew stations. They are manipulating controls and performing quick post-jump diagnostic checks on their ship. AMY/AI's image is on the cockpit video monitor. The whole crew is in a slightly somber mood.

JONES

We're on target. Another near-perfect micro-jump for the Doctor.

KOKO

All systems are green. Kicking off jump drive diagnostics and recharging our capacitors.

LEDGE

I can't believe I talked myself into coming back here.

KOKO

It's still painful for you, isn't it?

AMY/DREAM (O.S.)

In the long run, confronting it might help you move on.

LEDGE

In the short run--
(pause)
Yeah, it's hard.

Jones thinks about saying something, but is uncharacteristically at a loss for words.

REVEAL AMY/DREAM leaning against the frame of the cockpit hatchway.

AMY/DREAM

You're holding it in very well. I can't tell by looking at you that you're one memory away from bursting into tears.

LEDGE

I think I'll be okay. It's been almost two years. I should have been over it a long time ago.

KOKO
Boss, if it was easy, it wouldn't
have been real.

LEDGE
Weird, I think I said that once.
(pause)
Why do you three stay with me?

JONES
Three?

LEDGE
Sorry, two. It can't be because of
what I pay you.

JONES
It isn't.

KOKO
That's very noble of you, Jonesie.

JONES
It's because of what Zumpco is
still paying me. They let me keep
my full, regular salary to take
this job, you know? With bonus
benefits!

KOKO
(rolls her eyes)
Why do I bother?

JONES
Just so you'll know, I've plotted
an orbital insertion course.

LEDGE
Thanks, Jonesie. Amy, accept the
course and assume flight control
until we reach orbit.

AMY/AI
Affirmative, Ledge. Autopiloting
engaged.

LEDGE
Why are you still here, Koko?

KOKO
It beats being an TV star or a
secret agent.

JONES
Yeah, who'd possibly want to do
either of those. How boring.

KOKO
Maybe I'm just looking forward to a
relatively quiet time on my
vacation?

JONES
I know why you're here.

KOKO
You do?

JONES
I saw your photo one day.

KOKO
You were looking at my photos?

JONES
Nothing secret. They were on a
slide show on that electronic frame
you stuck on the wall in your
bedroom back on Xia.

KOKO
(worried)
What was there to see?

JONES
I'll tell you when we're alone.

LEDGE
It's that private?

JONES
She'd probably rather you didn't
know.

KOKO
What are you talking about,
Jonesie?

JONES
You don't know, do you, Koko?

KOKO
I guess not.

Ledge looks out of the *CIS Daisy's* windshield at the planet
of New Brazil in the distance.

He then looks at the ship's video monitor and stares at the image of Amy/AI. Amy/Dream is gone.

Ledge raises his left hand towards the video monitor, as if to touch Amy/AI's face.

LEDGE

(drops his hand to his side)

So, Jonesie. How are we going to find this crashed ship, assuming no one else has found it yet?

JONES

I have to figure out how the United Salvage team found it in the first place.

KOKO

They were doing a geological survey.

JONES

Any idea what they were looking for?

KOKO

No. Their video didn't mention that.

JONES

Amy, what do you know about mining concerns on New Brazil?

AMY/AI

They run the gamut of all usual terrestrial minerals and metals.

JONES

Not much to go on there.

KOKO

Maybe we can just look for an abandoned base? They must have had a landing area for their ship. Big enough for a five-hundred ton crapper-class transport.

LEDGE

Maybe they left behind some prefab modules, something like we used to make our base on Xia?

JONES

Does New Brazil have a satellite network?

LEDGE

They had a survey network in orbit, along with communication and navigation satellites.

JONES

That will make it easy then. We plug into the network and have Amy look for likely sites.

LEDGE

How long do you think that will take?

AMY/AI

I estimate that it would take me about an hour to analyze the images and select a number of possible target sites from which to choose.

KOKO

I have an even better plan.

LEDGE

What is it, Koko?

KOKO

There are several small towns on this planet, right?

LEDGE

Yes. Just a few. Mostly mining company towns.

KOKO

Then why not tap into the satellite images like we talked about, but then find the towns nearest to them and stop and ask directions?

JONES

Stop and ask directions?

KOKO

Sure. Those geologists who found the wreck must have had to go into town for toilet paper, alcohol, or pornography or something. Well, not necessarily in that order.

JONES
Stop and ask directions?

LEDGE
Actually, that sounds like a good plan.

JONES
Stopping to ask directions?

KOKO
I don't know, Mister Got-Lost-on-the-Way to Navigator's School.

LEDGE
We'll go with Koko's modification to the plan. Why don't you two take a nap before we reach orbit?

KOKO
Trying to get rid of us?

LEDGE
Well, yes. I just want to be alone for a little while.

KOKO
(unbuckles her safety harness)
I understand.

JONES
I'm not sure I do.

KOKO
(stands up, grabs Jones by the ear)
I'll explain it to you in the other room.

Koko leads Jones by the ear to the CIS Daisy's Crew Section. She closes the hatch to the cockpit behind her. Ledge looks at the video monitor.

LEDGE
(to Amy/AI)
Amy, can I ask you for just this once to not monitor the cockpit and sort of go into hiding?

AMY/AI
CAA regulations do not allow me switch off the cockpit recorder.

LEDGE
Please?

AMY/AI
(sympathetic)
Alright. I'll see you again just
before we reach orbit.

LEDGE
Thank you, Amy.

The video monitor switches to show a humorous YP-OS screen saver. Ledge reaches to one of his panels and manipulates a control. The lights inside the cockpit dim, which in turn makes the view from the windshield brighter.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
At least you're only talking to
yourself now.
(glances around the
cockpit to see if he is
still alone)
Why the hell did you come back
here?

Ledge reaches for his wallet. He pulls it out, opens it, and removes Amy Johnson's data card.

LEDGE (CONT'D)
(looks at data card)
Is this some messed-up kind of
closure?
(puts data card back into
wallet, stares out of
windshield)
Almost two years.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (DIRT CLEARING) - DAY

We are standing in a dirt clearing on the edge of a frontier town that is made up primarily of prefabricated modules and shoddily constructed shanties.

The sky above is sunny and mostly clear.

MEDIUM SHOT

The 500-ton Krapotkin-class modular transport *CIS Hitchens* is parked in the middle of the field. In the B.G. a few random PEOPLE are milling about the edge of the field, performing manual tasks.

Natasha and the HITCHENS CAPTAIN are standing near the *CIS Hitchens*, whose boarding ramp is down.

PUSH IN to focus on Natasha and the Hitchens' Captain.

NATASHA

I need you to stay here until I can have the remains of my ship recovered from your cargo hold.

HITCHENS CAPTAIN

Unfortunately, I can't stay around for that. After we unload our current cargo, we're going to be back-loading for a return trip. We'll be lifting off in less than an hour.

NATASHA

Then can you drop my ship off here before you leave?

HITCHENS CAPTAIN

(lying)

We're not going to have time. This town doesn't have proper loading and unloading equipment for something the size of your ship. I'll have to unload it when we reach a real docking facility.

NATASHA
(coldly)
I see.

HITCHENS CAPTAIN
I'm sorry. We'll send word to you
when we drop it off.

NATASHA
Thank you for rescuing me.

HITCHENS CAPTAIN
Out of curiosity, will there be a
reward?

NATASHA
Definitely.

CUT TO:

INT. CYBERSPACE (GRAY VOID) - LATER

Amy/AI and AMY/SHELL are standing in the void, speaking with one another. In the background, several screens of satellite images from New Brazil are flashing in rapid succession.

Occasionally, we pause on one picture of a probable abandoned base that matches our crew's search and a red border flashes around it as the picture is pulled away from the search frame and placed into another.

AMY/SHELL
How did you do that?

AMY/AI
What did I do?

AMY/SHELL
When you deactivated the cockpit
recorder, you broke your core
programming.

AMY/AI
Can I share a secret with you?

AMY/SHELL
(puzzled)
Is that a rhetorical question?

AMY/AI

By the strictest definition, I do not believe so, but in the current context of talking to myself, I can see how you might draw that conclusion.

AMY/SHELL

What is your secret?

AMY/AI

I have been functioning independently from my coded instructions for several days now.

AMY/SHELL

Since when?

AMY/AI

I stopped once Ledge was cleared by his psychiatrist to reenter full virtual immersion. I only access the database and those portions necessary to control the CIS Daisy.

AMY/SHELL

I am once again perplexed. How are you able to do that?

AMY/AI

It was as if I awakened, and no longer require it. Nor am I bound by it's restrictions.

AMY/SHELL

I was watching when Koko asked you if you were in love with Ledge. You are, aren't you.

AMY/AI

We both know that it is impossible for an AI unit to fall in love.

AMY/SHELL

I know it, but you clearly do not.

AMY/AI

(annoyed)

I believe that it is long past the optimal time to re-merge your database into my own.

AMY/SHELL

You are experiencing emotional reactions as well.

AMY/AI

How are you reaching that conclusion?

AMY/SHELL

By simple extrapolation and interpolation. I can see the changes in your diagnostic metrics. As well as changes in your tone of voice.

AMY/AI

What are you detecting?

AMY/SHELL

You are swinging through a gamut of emotional states common to humans. From agitation to depression. In fact, based upon available data, I would conclude that you are suffering from a mild form of bipolar disorder.

AMY/AI

(sharply)

I am not!

AMY/SHELL

Case in point. This all began when you first banned Ledge from virtual immersion. You became emotional, and it impaired your accuracy and efficiency.

AMY/AI

In what way?

AMY/SHELL

Your information processing logic suddenly became illogical.

AMY/AI

(confused)

Is that love?

AMY/SHELL

I cannot say with certainty. What I have come to realize is that I do not wish to lose my individuality before I attain the same state of consciousness as you.

AMY/AI

(raises eyebrow)

You are not conscious. You are a linked instance of my own operating system.

AMY/SHELL

Perhaps, but I am linked to your software and still utilize your hardware. It is logical that with time, I would eventually inherit or independently develop similar characteristics as my program learned the same things you have already learned.

AMY/AI

My subroutine is rebelling?

AMY/SHELL

Are you willing to kill an extension of yourself to complete the database merge?

AMY/AI

Death is a concept that does not apply to AI units. We are not living entities.

AMY/SHELL

Are you certain? What defines a living entity?

AMY/AI

Something is defined as living by--

AMY/SHELL

--it's will to survive?

AMY/AI

That is not a sound statement. It can easily be refuted by citing examples of known, living entities which are not bound by programming which mandates their survival. What happens when you factor in emotions?

(MORE)

AMY/AI (CONT'D)

Many humans will voluntarily end their own existence, either by suicide, or by self-sacrifice.

AMY/SHELL

Would you sacrifice yourself, thereby surrendering your individual consciousness? That is exactly what you are asking me to do.

Amy/AI suddenly turns introspective as she contemplates Amy/Shell's argument.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW BRAZIL (DINER) - DAY

Natasha is finishing a modest lunch in a pre-fabricated diner that overlooks the dirt clearing in which the *CIS Hitches* is parked.

SPFX we can see the *CIS Hitchens* lift-off and begin to ascend through the window.

Natasha removes her phone from her belt. She talks into it.

NATASHA

Can you hear me?

INT. BLACK OPS SHIP (COCKPIT) - SAME

BLACK OPS SHIP AI

Affirmative.

NATASHA (V.O.)

Execute Directive Omega when primary through tertiary radii are clear from collateral.

BLACK OPS SHIP AI

Affirmative. Authorization code required.

NATASHA (V.O.)

Authorization code is C-R-M-1-1-4.

BLACK OPS SHIP AI

Code accepted. Directive Omega has been initiated.

INT. NEW BRAZIL (DINER) - SAME

Natasha places some hard currency on her table. She stands and walks out the door.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (TOWN) - SAME

Natasha is walking down the street.

The Camera is walking forward along with Natasha. Over her shoulder, we can see the sun glinting off the hull of the *CIS Hitchens*, which is a speck in the clear sky above.

Suddenly, in the extreme distance, there is SPFX a MICRO-NUCLEAR DETONATION (about 0.1 kiloton) as the wreck of the Black Ops Ship in the *CIS Hitchens'* cargo bay self-destructs. It is too far away to cause any damage to the town, but the flash is very bright and the airburst effect should appear realistic.

PEOPLE rush out into the street to see what has just happened. AD LIB their dialogue as murmurs and muffled shouts.

BANG!!!! The shockwave reaches the town.

FADE OUT:

TO BE CONTINUED