

The Great Outback

"Ad Astra Per Aspera" - Show #122

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AD ASTRA PER ASPERA

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTER SPACE (NEW BRAZIL)

SERIES OF SHOTS

The *CIS Daisy* approaches New Brazil and enters orbit.

AMY/AI (V.O.)

We are preparing to enter low orbit
around New Brazil. It is my
understanding that you wish to be
alerted to this event.

SFX an ALARM blares. We can hear the crew AD LIB off-screen,
cursing at Amy/AI and imploring her to turn off the alarm.

INT. CIS DAISY - LATER

Amy/AI's avatar on the video monitor looks smug. LEDGE,
JONES, and KOKO are seated in their respective crew stations,
and all three look somewhat annoyed.

LEDGE

So, Amy, did you find any sites
that might fit our search
parameters?

AMY/AI

Yes. I located three sites that are
close matches to your search
criteria. They all appear to be
abandoned.

JONES

Anyone have a three-sided coin?

KOKO

Sounds like rock-scissors-paper
time to me.

(pause)

Amy assigns one site to each of us.
Whoever wins gets their site
investigated first.

JONES
What if we tie?

KOKO
If we tie, it goes to odd man out.

LEDGE
What if we all tie?

KOKO
If we all tie, I win!

JONES
You ever been thrown out of a
casino?

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (ORBIT) - LATER

The *CIS Daisy* begins to reenter the atmosphere of New Brazil.

LEDGE (V.O.)
Rock.

JONES (V.O.)
Rock.

KOKO (V.O.)
Rock.

LEDGE (V.O.)
Okay, Koko wins round one.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The *CIS Daisy* reenters the atmosphere of New Brazil and levels out, assuming flight like a normal aircraft at about five-thousand feet altitude.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

KOKO
Amy, what's the name of my town?

AMY/AI
Your town?

KOKO
The one I picked.

AMY/AI

It is recorded as Zumpco New Brazil
Minerals Extraction Logistical
Support Facility Three.

JONES

I told you that Zumpco had no
imagination.

EXT. CIS DAISY - LATER

The *CIS Daisy* swoops in and lands on a crude, dirt landing
area.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (LANDING AREA) - SAME

MEDIUM SHOT. The *CIS Daisy's* ventral iris hatch opens and the
ladder is lowered. Koko jumps down to the ground sliding down
the ladder rails. Jones and Ledge climb down afterwards.

The surrounding buildings are all prefabricated or crudely
constructed from local building materials.

THREE SHOT. Ledge, Jones, and Koko stop at the edge of the
landing area.

KOKO

They could have just called it
Dodge City and been done with it.

JONES

Let's find a bar.

KOKO

Seriously? You want a drink?

JONES

No. I want to ask the bartender for
directions. Isn't that why we
stopped here instead of just
looking on our own?

KOKO

Why the bartender?

LEDGE

Well, we can't really ask the local
marshal now, can we?

KOKO
Fair enough. Let's go.

INT. NEW BRAZIL (BAR) - MINUTES LATER

NATASHA is nursing a drink and watching a video monitor that is showing a week-old professional soccer match. She is nursing a glass of water. A BARTENDER is intently watching the game.

NATASHA
That game is over a week old.
Arsenal wins.

BARTENDER
Good thing I'm a fan of the sport
and not just one side. We can't
help that we only get about one new
ship per week dropping in. This one
came off that transport that
exploded earlier today. Did you see
it?

NATASHA
I was looking the other way. I did
hear it though. It was rather loud.

BARTENDER
Fred Jacinto said it went off like
a nuke. It woke me up, but I didn't
see it. I'm on a later shift than
most people here.

NATASHA
Did you ever see or hear of anyone
from a company called United
Salvage? They might have operated
near here. It might have also been
several months ago.

BARTENDER
I've only been here three months,
so I couldn't tell you, Miss. But
Barney Chan down at the warehouse
could. He's been here since the
Confeds first dozed away the
forest.

Natasha looks frustrated.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

I've not seen you before today. Are you waiting for someone?

NATASHA

Yes. But it may be some time before they arrive. Is there anywhere to stay in this town?

BARTENDER

Rex Barker usually has a couple spare rooms to rent out. It's not fancy, but it's dry. When it rains here on New Brazil, you'll be glad to have a roof. Gets downright torrential.

NATASHA

Do you have a restroom?

BARTENDER

Yes. Out behind the bar, through the back door. It's portable. You have to pull the chain to flush it.

NATASHA

I realize that this is a remote outpost, but isn't it still the Twenty-Ninth Century?

Natasha finishes her water. She stands up from her bar stool. She walks towards the rear of the bar and exits through the rear door.

BARTENDER

High maintenance.

Moments later, Ledge, Koko, and Jones walk into the bar.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Afternoon, friends. What can I get you?

JONES

Australasian Lager?

BARTENDER

Coldest on New Brazil. How about for the lady?

KOKO

Just some fruit juice. Whatever's freshest.

BARTENDER
Same price virgin as not, but will
do for you.
(to Ledge)
And you sir?

LEDGE
Make it two of those lagers.

KOKO
Do you have a restroom?

BARTENDER
Well, sort of. It's portable. It's
through the back door. You have to
pull the chain to flush it. It
might be occupied though.

KOKO
(sighs)
Thanks. I'll be back in a minute,
Boss.

Koko exits the bar through the back door.

LEDGE
Can I ask you a question?

BARTENDER
Sure.

LEDGE
Have you ever heard of a company
called United Salvage?

BARTENDER
Are you serious?

LEDGE
Well... Yeah.

BARTENDER
(points toward back door)
The lady in the latrine just asked
me the same question. Are you the
ones who are supposed to be meeting
her?

LEDGE
(guardedly)
I don't think so.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (OUTHOUSE) - SAME

Koko tries to open the outhouse door, but finds that it is locked. She fidgets, painfully in need of relief.

Koko hears the latch on the portable lavatory click open. The door swings open and she finds herself face-to-face with Natasha. The two women immediately recognize each other.

Natasha tries to bring the hidden laser in her arm to bear, but petite Koko steps inside Natasha's reach. In a flash, Koko draws and locks the hammer of her pistol. Natasha finds the barrel jammed under her jaw.

KOKO

I know your arm's robotic. Is your brain?

Natasha says nothing. Neither does Koko, but she uses her wireless deway to talk to Ledge.

KOKO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Ledge! We've got a problem. Get out here STAT!

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (LANDING AREA) - LATER

Ledge and Jones are carrying a coffin-sized cargo box across the landing area. They stop at the *CIS Daisy's* ladder.

INT. NEW BRAZIL (WAREHOUSE) - DAY

Koko enters the warehouse. BARNEY sits behind an administrative office desk, half asleep. He is watching a pornographic video on his newspad. Although we cannot see the picture, the moaning and cheesy 1970s music gives it away. A roll of toilet paper and a bottle of whiskey sit on the desk.

BARNEY

Yeah, what do you want?

KOKO

Barney Chan?

BARNEY

Is he in trouble?

KOKO
Only if he gives me a hard time.

BARNEY
(mentally undresses Koko)
That could probably be arranged.

Koko walks over to the desk.

CLOSE UP ON KOKO

Koko pulls out her ID Card and shoves it toward the camera. Unlike both of its previous iterations, this time it identifies Koko as Koko Tanaka, Chief Marshal, Confederation Bureau of Investigation. (It is a feature of her CSA ID card to be able to impersonate other IDs).

BACK TO SCENE

Barney turns off his newspad and sits up straight in his chair. His expression clearly shows that he has something to hide from the law, probably tucked away in his warehouse.

BARNEY (CONT'D)
Do you have a search warrant?

KOKO
I don't need one. I just want information.

BARNEY
I know nothing.

KOKO
Yeah, whatever.

Koko reaches into her pocket and produces a 1,000 Smoo bill. She slaps it on the desk.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Tell me what you know about a United Salvage operation that was running here about two years ago.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (LANDING AREA) - TRANSITIONAL

The *CIS Daisy* is parked on the landing area. Her ladder has been retracted and its hatches are closed.

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

An oblong, now empty cargo box is stored upright in one of the interior cargo bays.

Natasha is handcuffed with her hands behind her back. Her ankle is also cuffed to the one of the ship's bunks.

Koko has just reentered the *CIS Daisy*, and the transition from equatorial heat to air conditioning causes her to sweat. She grabs a towel from her bunk area and wipes the moisture from her arms.

LEDGE

Why don't you tell us what's going on here?

KOKO

Let me handle this, Boss.

LEDGE

Okay--

Koko pulls her pistol out from under her belt and places it against Natasha's temple.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

KOKO!?!

KOKO

If you make a single movement or utter a single word I don't like, you get a free lobotomy. Do you understand me?

NATASHA

Yes.

KOKO

Lie face down on that bunk.

Natasha complies, although her bindings make it awkward.

Koko sits down next to Natasha. With one hand, she places the pistol to Natasha's head.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Disengage the service lock on your left hand.

NATASHA

(unhappy)

Done.

With her free hand, Koko rotates Natasha's left hand, then detaches it from her arm. She sets the hand down, then reaches inside the forearm. She slides out Natasha's covert laser weapon tube.

Koko tosses the weapon across the room. It lands on the opposite bunk. She then picks up and reattaches Natasha's hand to her wrist.

JONES

What's that?

KOKO

Covert laser weapon.

JONES

How did you know to do that?

KOKO

I am NOT a gun nut! Sheesh.

JONES

Okay, okay.

Koko stands, moves across the aisle, and picks up the laser weapon. At no point does her pistol stray from being pointed at Natasha.

KOKO

Jonesie, come here.

JONES

Yes, Ma'am!

KOKO

Don't be difficult, not now.

Koko hands the laser weapon to Jones.

KOKO (CONT'D)

Take this into the airlock, stomp it to pieces, and then sweep it out of the hatch.

Jones complies, more afraid of Koko than he is of Natasha. He exits through the inner iris hatch, closing it behind him.

LEDGE

You had me worried for a minute.

KOKO

Don't stop worrying yet. Keep out of reach of this woman. She's still very dangerous.

LEDGE

You don't have to tell me. I'm still tender in spots from the last time I met her.

KOKO

The question now is what to do with her.

NATASHA

You need me.

KOKO

I need you to shut up.

NATASHA

I can fly it.

LEDGE

Whoa! Fly WHAT?

NATASHA

We're both here for the same thing. Don't pretend otherwise.

LEDGE

You're one of those military alien intelligence division MAIDS aren't you.

KOKO

We can't trust her, Boss.

NATASHA

You still need me.

KOKO

Your call, Boss. Do I shoot her now or later?

LEDGE

Later.

KOKO

Amy?

AMY/AI

Shoot her now. She is a clear and present danger to us all.

KOKO

That's not what I meant, Amy. Does this woman have a wireless dewey?

AMY/AI

Not that I can detect. She does have a standard dewey plug at the back of her neck.

KOKO

(to Ledge)

Have Jonesie scan her to be sure when he gets a chance.

NATASHA

Can I sit up now? This is uncomfortable.

Ledge looks at Koko, as if to ask her approval.

KOKO

Yes.

Natasha slowly and carefully reorients herself to sit upright on the bunk.

The inner airlock hatch reopens and Jones steps back into the crew section.

JONES

All done. Are you sure that was a weapon.

KOKO

Yes. In fact, isn't it the same one you used to shoot Daisy, Silvio's girlfriend?

NATASHA

Yes.

KOKO

Like I said. Don't take your eyes off her for even a second.

EXT. CIS DAISY - LATER

The *CIS Daisy* lifts off and flies Eastward.

KOKO (O.S.)

I got these coordinates from that Barney man the bartender sent us to.

JONES (O.S.)
They match. I'm laying in a course.
ETA two hours.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (SKY) - DAY

The *CIS Daisy* is flying in between rolling, forested mountain peaks.

LEDGE (V.O.)
Jonesie, we're about two minutes to target. Get on your science scanners and start looking for something.

JONES (V.O.)
I'm way ahead of you.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (GROUND) - SAME

LONG SHOT of the *CIS Daisy* passing overhead from the ground.

AMY/AI (V.O.)
Ledge, I feel unusual.

Another LONG SHOT of the *CIS Daisy* flying over the correct location, which is a mountain or mountain range with a clearing at its base.

LEDGE (V.O.)
How so?

INT. CIS DAISY - SAME

Ledge is in the pilot's seat.

Jones is at his science module in the Crew Section.

Koko is keeping watch over Natasha, who is sitting quietly on the bunk to which she is handcuffed.

Amy/AI's avatar on the video monitor looks as if she is ill.

AMY/AI
I cannot explain it. It is as if my extremities are tingling.

LEDGE
Jonesie, are you detecting anything unusual?

JONES
Not really.

KOKO
Maybe Amy can sense the UFO? Her organic brain was taken from it.

CLOSE UP ON NATASHA

Natasha perks up when she hears that Amy/AI is partially constructed from alien parts.

LEDGE (O.S.)
I'm orbiting the site so Jones can get some good scans. Amy, let me know if you feel anything else, or if you need me to abort or land or anything.

BACK TO SCENE

AMY/AI
I believe I am okay. My internal diagnostics do not show any anomalies or malfunctions.

JONES
WOO HOO! I got something!

KOKO
Better to be lucky than good.

LEDGE
What is it?

JONES
About halfway up the mountain next to that clearing. There's some kind of odd-shaped cave or cavern dug into the side. The radar is reflecting some artificial objects inside.

LEDGE
Can you tell what they are?

JONES
No, it's too deep. But shallow enough to get a reflection.

LEDGE

I'll plot an approach and take us in for a landing. I'll have to land in the clearing. There's too much clutter elsewhere.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL - SAME

SERIES OF SHOTS

The *CIS Daisy* circles and decelerates, slowly coming in for a landing in a small clearing near the base of a small mountain in the jungle of New Brazil.

INT. CIS DAISY - DAY

Ledge, Jones, and Koko are getting their hiking gear in order. Koko hands holstered pistols to Ledge and Jones.

KOKO

(to Jones)

Whatever you do, don't shoot me or the boss.

JONES

I'm rather hoping that I won't have to "throw down," as your childhood friends might have said.

Koko presents Jones with an obscene gesture.

NATASHA

Are you bringing me along?

AMY/AI

Please do. I do not want her on board.

KOKO

Do you really think she's going to be less trouble than she's worth?

LEDGE

Well, if she can tell us how to make the UFO work, assuming that we can find it, we might actually need her.

JONES

What if we don't find the UFO?

LEDGE

We'll leave her a pack full of food and water and a radio. She can get back on her own.

NATASHA

I'm glad to know that you aren't planning on killing me.

LEDGE

I'm not a murderer. Koko, uncuff her ankle, but leave her hands cuffed behind her back.

Koko walks over to Natasha and uses an electronic key to unlock the cuffs around Natasha's ankle.

LEDGE (CONT'D)

Okay, we're all serious from here on out. We know that the people who found this site got captured by pirates. We don't know what to expect. There might be unfriendlies, including local predators.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (LANDING SITE) - MINUTES LATER

Ledge, Jones, Koko, and Natasha are standing on the ground near the *CIS Daisy*.

Jones is carrying a portable scanning device. He is going over the ground in the landing site.

JONES

Yeah, this was definitely a landing site. Even though it's grown over, there are several landing gear imprints and some stray garbage spread around.

Jones bends over and picks up a discarded, empty can of Australasian Lager.

LEDGE

Anything recent?

JONES

I'm not good enough to tell that.
But I think there used to be a
couple of habitat modules parked
here. But they're gone now.

Koko points off-screen toward the rising hills.

KOKO

There's a clear trail worn in the
foliage over there. I think it
leads up toward that cave Jonesie
saw on his sensors.

JONES

Looks like a long climb.

Jones rejoins the party.

LEDGE

Just who are you, exactly? What's
your name?

NATASHA

I gave up my name a long time ago.

KOKO

She's not going to talk, Boss.
She's probably not going to help us
either. She's just waiting for an
opportunity to turn the tables.

NATASHA

Ask me any question you want and I
will answer truthfully. You need to
trust that I'm only trying to
protect the Confederation.

LEDGE

Alright. Are you a MAID?

NATASHA

That organization does not exist.
It's only an urban legend.

JONES

Then who do you work for?

NATASHA

We're just a part of CSA.

KOKO

Who is your section chief?

NATASHA

The truthful answer is that I can't tell you that.

KOKO

Told you it was pointless.

NATASHA

There are still some things I can't tell you. I'll say so if you ask a question I'm not allowed to answer.

JONES

So we're down to playing twenty questions?

LEDGE

How did you get here?

NATASHA

I was brought here by a commercial transport.

KOKO

Your black ops ship was still in the shop?

NATASHA

In a manner of speaking.

LEDGE

What is it you actually do?

NATASHA

We protect the Confederation from the accidental leakage of restricted technology.

LEDGE

How? By murdering people who get too close to it?

NATASHA

If necessary.

JONES

You really are a paragon for other sociopaths, aren't you?

NATASHA

When I was seventeen, I was kidnapped by the owners of the restricted technology.

JONES

Were you anal-probed?

NATASHA

No. But they took my left arm.

LEDGE

Why would they do that? And who are they? Tell us what you know.

NATASHA

We don't know who they are. But we do know that their technology is so far ahead of anything else in known space that it might as well be magic. Not even the Zimrakkans come close.

JONES

Are they really little gray men with bug eyes?

NATASHA

Yes, and no. We don't think we have ever recorded the actual controllers. All of their craft are crewed by constructed androids who are little gray men with bug eyes.

KOKO

Why are you telling us this?

NATASHA

No one will believe you.

JONES

Unless we fly in to downtown Beijing in a flying saucer.

NATASHA

Basically. And if that happens, the consequences are dire.

LEDGE

I don't see why. When we made contact with the Zimrakkans, there weren't any serious implications.

JONES

Several established religions had to do some fancy dogma-dancing.

NATASHA

The Zimrakkans were within the realm of our imagination. The UFO controllers are well beyond it. When the level of their technology becomes widely known, it will likely cause a blind panic that will destabilize society.

LEDGE

How is that?

NATASHA

We've always been concerned about what would happen if the Zimrakkans decided to act against us militarily. Right now, we could not prevent them from wiping us off any planet they chose to attack. What people do not know is that a single one of these so-called flying saucers can tap into enough power to single-handedly destroy planetary bodies.

JONES

Are you serious?

NATASHA

This cat cannot be let out of the bag.

KOKO

Sort of throws a damper on our plans to sell the UFO, doesn't it?

NATASHA

I can make you this promise. If we find one, and you allow me to take custody, I will ensure that you get paid fairly for salvage.

JONES

Really? I'd say we're talking billions here.

NATASHA

I can't go that high. But I can probably go millions.

KOKO

Don't trust her, Boss.

LEDGE

Everything hinges on us finding an intact flying saucer. So we'll worry about all that when we find it. Let's move out.

Koko motions for Natasha to lead the way.

KOKO

You go first. In case of land mines.

NATASHA

I'm not your enemy.

JONES

Remind me to double-check the definition of enemy.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (FOOT TRAIL) - DAY

Natasha is leading as she, Jones, Koko, and Ledge ascend the foot path. Jones pauses and takes a swig from his canteen, then offers one to Natasha. Jones and Ledge look tired. Koko is unfazed.

JONES

How much farther do you think it is?

KOKO

I don't know. But I'll take the lead from here on out. Keep quiet unless you have to say something.

LEDGE

Does labored breathing count?

KOKO

You two are such wimps.

POV REMOTE CAMERA

A hidden camera is watching the crew as they resume their walk up the path.

CLOSE ON THE CREW'S FEET

Alongside the path, a small, thin metal tube juts up from the ground to the side of the path.

EXTREME CLOSE UP ON THE METAL TUBE

The tube is perforated along the sides. It is part of a concealed gas mine that has been triggered remotely. We hear a slight hissing sound as an invisible gas begins to spray from the metal tube.

BACK TO SCENE

Koko stops on the trail and turns to Jones and Ledge. She whispers...

KOKO (CONT'D)
Do you hear something?

Jones stops and begins to look around. He then passes out. Ledge looks at Jones, then passes out himself. Natasha also succumbs, collapsing to the ground.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Oh sh--

Koko also passes out.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

BLACK - LATER

KOKO (V.O.)

Boss. Can you hear me? Wake up.
This is Koko.

INT. NEW BRAZIL (CAVE) - SAME

We are inside a medium-sized cave. There is a single exit at the far end of the cave. There are several small tables and crates filled with scientific equipment and various tools randomly scattered about.

The cave has been dug out from around a crashed UFO. The UFO is half-exposed from the rock, and is embedded in one side of the cave wall. It's access door is closed. SPFX it is faintly luminescent.

Three male TECHNICIANS are examining the UFO. They are dressed in uniform jumpsuits that have no insignia. Their name tags read, Manny, Moe, and Jack. They are wearing holstered pistols.

A pirate INTERROGATOR is busily setting up a chair next to a folding table that is loaded with implements that can be utilized for torture. There is a shelf on the wall behind the Interrogator, upon which rests a pistol belt with a holstered weapon.

Ledge, Jones, and Koko have their hands cuffed behind their backs. They are sitting with their backs against the cavern wall. Natasha is sitting with them, her hands still bound behind her back.

Ledge's eyes snap open. He quickly glances around the Excavation Site.

GUNMAN 3 is standing watch over the prisoners. He is holding an assault rifle and wearing futuristic, polyceramic-plated body armor. When he sees Ledge awaken, he calls out.

GUNMAN 3

(to Interrogator)

The last one is awake!

KOKO (V.O., RADIO)
 Boss, don't let them know that I
 can talk to you. They haven't
 figured it out yet.

Ledge turns his head and looks at Koko, who is sitting next
 to him.

BACK TO SCENE

Ledge nods to Koko. The Interrogator points at Ledge.

INTERROGATOR
 Bring that one.

LEDGE (V.O.)
 Can you contact Amy?

KOKO (V.O.)
 No, she's either out of range or
 we're too far underground.

Gunman 3 walks over to Ledge and jerks him to his feet,
 forcing him to walk over toward the chair.

LEDGE (V.O.)
 We're in a tight spot. Tell me
 everything I missed.

INTERROGATOR
 Put him in--
 (pause)
 --the chair.

JONES
 What is it with you evil guys and
 the dramatic pauses at the end of
 your sentences?

Gunman 3 shoves Ledge down into the chair and locks him to it
 with a second set of handcuffs. The Interrogator points at
 Jones.

INTERROGATOR
 You're next--
 (pause)
 --smart-ass.

JONES
 Better to be a smart-ass than a
 dumb-ass.

INTERROGATOR

From my perspective, your calling me a dumb-ass doesn't seem very smart.

(to Gunman 3)

Smack him, please.

Gunman 3 walks over to Jones and bonks him on the head.

JONES

OW!

KOKO (V.O.)

I've seen a total of seven bad guys. The leader, who is about to torture you, three armed guards, and three technicians. Our guard has a rifle, the others all have pistols. The boss has a pistol belt on a shelf behind you.

The Interrogator begins playing with a pair of carving knives.

KOKO (V.O.)

I'm going to try and unlock our cuffs.

Koko closes her eyes and tries to concentrate. The Interrogator sees her and points.

INTERROGATOR

Smack her as well. I want her awake to see this.

Gunman 3 steps over to Koko and slaps her.

GUNMAN 3

Eyes open!

In the background, the pirate workmen open the door to the UFO, which vanishes as one touches the hull at the correct point.

JONES

(to Koko)

You okay?

KOKO

Duh!

JONES

The door just disappeared like you said it would.

KOKO
I think there are more important
things to worry about right now.

GUNMAN 3
YOU TWO SHUT UP!

JONES
Or what?

The gunman fires a shot between Jones' legs. The shot draws the attention of everyone as it is very loud within the cave. A few moments later, GUNMAN 1 and GUNMAN 2 rush in from outside.

GUNMAN 3
It's okay! Just explaining some
things to our guests.

Gunman 1 and Gunman 2 nod and turns around. They walks back outside.

JONES
Okay, I'll shut up.

LEDGE
How did you find this site?

INTERROGATOR
Technically, I'm the interrogator
here and you are the subject. But
I'll indulge you this once. I
extracted the information from the
crew of a ship we captured some
time ago. They didn't want to talk
at first--

LEDGE
Okay, okay. Too much information.
What do you want with us?

INTERROGATOR
I don't have much incentive to keep
you alive, so the least I can do is
to obtain the control code for your
starship. It should be valuable.

LEDGE
What starship?

The Interrogator puts his knives down. He strikes Ledge across the face with the back of his hand.

INTERROGATOR
 I dislike smart-asses.
 (points at Jones)
 Smack him again.

Gunman 3 bonks Jones on the head again.

JONES
OW!

Gunman 2 reenters from outside. He walks over to the Interrogator.

GUNMAN 2
 I just received a message from the Grozny. They are inbound per your request to drop off a spare flight crew for that courier ship.

INTERROGATOR
 (nods)
 Good. Stay here for now.

Gunman 2 steps to the side and assumes a military-style rest position.

LEDGE
 You people look very organized.
 You're not pirates, are you? You're privateers?

The Interrogator strikes Ledge again.

INTERROGATOR
 That's not your business. But now to mine. Give me the code or I remove your fingers.

LEDGE
 But--

INTERROGATOR
 With a spork.

The Interrogator picks up a rusty spork from his table of implements of torture. He brandishes it menacingly.

LEDGE
 Uh--

The Interrogator tosses the spork away.

INTERROGATOR

Not really. Just a little torture humor there.

(pause)

I'll use a knife.

LEDGE

(nods toward Natasha)

Why not torture her instead?

Natasha glares menacingly at Ledge.

INTERROGATOR

The quiet girl? No. Wouldn't want to spoil a face like that. I'll let the boys have her when they're off of work.

Two of the nerdier-looking Technicians working in the B.G. heard that. They give each other a high-five.

Natasha shifts her menacing glare from Ledge to the Interrogator.

KOKO (V.O.)

Boss! Give him that obsolete code. It will sound legitimate, but Amy will reject it.

LEDGE (V.O.)

What happens when they find out it's fake?

INTERROGATOR

I'm not going to ask again.

KOKO (V.O.)

I don't know, but it buys us some time.

LEDGE

Promise not to hurt us?

INTERROGATOR

(picks up a knife)

No.

LEDGE

The code is alpha-three-four-seven-gamma-one-nine-omega.

INTERROGATOR

And the password?

LEDGE
Spaghetti four.

INTERROGATOR
That's the password?

LEDGE
(shrugs)
I didn't set it.

INTERROGATOR
(taunting)
Well, I guess there is no reason to
keep you all alive anymore, is
there?

LEDGE
YES! There is.

INTERROGATOR
Yes?

LEDGE
(lying)
The password is voice-print
protected. It won't work unless at
least two of the crew say it.

INTERROGATOR
(to the other pirates)
Hey, do any of you know if that's
true?

The Technicians, Guard 2, and Guard 3 all shrug their
shoulders in ignorance.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (CAVE ENTRANCE) - TRANSITIONAL

MEDIUM SHOT of a cave entrance that is set into the side of
the mountain at which our characters landed earlier.

INT. NEW BRAZIL (CAVE) - DAY

Gunman 1 and Gunman 2 are holding Jones and Koko at pistol-
point. All four are standing near the Interrogator.

INTERROGATOR
(to Gunman 1 and Gunman 2)
Take them down to their ship. Try
the control code.
(MORE)

INTERROGATOR (CONT'D)
If it works, bring them back alive.
If it fails, shoot them.

CLOSE ON INTERROGATOR AND GUNMAN 1.

The Interrogator leans close in to whisper to Gunman 1.

INTERROGATOR (CONT'D)
Once you gain control of the ship,
shoot the girl and the smart-ass
anyway. Dump them where they'll be
found by scavengers.

Gunman 1 nods.

BACK TO SCENE

GUNMAN 1
Alright, you two ladies heard the
boss! Move it.

JONES
I'm not a lady.

INTERROGATOR
Coulda fooled me.

GUNMAN 1
(shoves Jones toward the
entrance)
Ladies first.

Gunman 2 grabs Koko and pushes her into line behind Jones.
They then march them out of the cave.

LEDGE
What now?

The interrogator smiles at Ledge and plays with his knife.
Ledge looks depressed.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (WOODED HILLSIDE) - DAY

Koko and Jones have their wrists cuffed behind them with electronic handcuffs. They are being escorted down the forested hill by Gunman 1 and Gunman 2.

CLOSE UP ON KOKO

Koko suddenly looks around as she hears...

AMY/AI (V.O.)
Can you hear me, Koko?

KOKO (V.O.)
Yes.

AMY/AI (V.O.)
I have linked with your wireless
dewey.

INT. CYBERSPACE (TACTICAL DISPLAY)- SAME

Amy/AI is standing in the center of a gray floor. Koko is standing behind her. An image of the surrounding sky is displayed all around.

Amy/AI points into the distance and we ZOOM IN on the tactical display to show the PIRATE SHIP as it is swiftly moving closer. Technical graphics point to her ventral laser turret (Amy's attention is focused on that).

AMY/AI
I have spotted an armed vessel
closing on my position. It does not
have a transponder. I believe this
is the same ship we encountered
previously, and whose hostile fire
killed the real Amy Johnson almost
two years ago. What is your
situation on the ground?

KOKO
We have been captured by a gang of
pirates. They intend to capture
you.

(MORE)

KOKO (CONT'D)

Ledge gave them your obsolete control code. I think they intend to torture him and kill us all.

AMY/AI

Do they, now?

KOKO

I can't concentrate enough to unlock my handcuffs. Can you help?

Amy/AI pauses for a moment.

AMY/AI

Both your and Doctor Jones' restraints have been unlocked.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (LANDING SITE) - SAME

The *CIS Daisy* powers up her gravitic drive. She pitches her nose upward and raises her landing gear.

INT. CYBERSPACE (TACTICAL DISPLAY) - SAME

As Koko and AMY/AI converse in the following scene, the tactical display moves around as the *CIS Daisy* lifts off and spins to face the pirate. The sky image spins and bobs and weaves as the *CIS Daisy* takes evasive action on her path toward the pirate ship.

KOKO

What are you doing, Amy?

The indicator pointing to the Pirate's ventral laser turret blinks brightly.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (SKY) - SAME

MEDIUM SHOT of the side of the *CIS Daisy* as she is flying toward the pirate ship. From off-screen, a bright anti-ship laser blast slices off the Daisy's starboard winglet.

SFX there is a very loud CRACK as the laser super-heats the air around it.

INT. CYBERSPACE (TACTICAL DISPLAY) - SAME

Amy/AI looks focused as KOKO watches the events unfolding around her.

The display shudders and gets more wobbly (the intent of the shot being that the *CIS Daisy* was grazed along her starboard wing and has lost some of her aerodynamic stability). The *CIS Daisy* continues to close with the pirate.

AMY/AI

I don't have much time. Presently,
you will have an opportunity to
save yourselves and Ledge. Do not
hesitate.

(pause)

I am sorry that I cannot do more.

The *CIS Daisy* gets closer to the Pirate Ship. The Pirate Ship fires its laser again, missing. Amy/AI is emotional.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)

Tell Ledge that I now understand
just how much he loved his Amy.

The Pirate Ship begins to take evasive action as it becomes apparent to her pilot that the *CIS Daisy* intends to ram them. Amy/AI fixes her gaze on the Pirate Ship. She looks very determined, and at the same time, frightened by what she is about to do.

AMY/AI (CONT'D)

Tell him--

(pause)

Tell him that he must let go of her
memory.

(pause)

And tell him that Amy Johnson is
avenged.

The *CIS Daisy* rams the pirate ship. (NB the pirate ship is about ten times larger than the *CIS Daisy*.)

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (WOODED HILLSIDE) - SAME

CLOSE ON KOKO

Koko's eyes were closed. They snap open.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (SKY) - SAME

The *CIS Daisy* hits the pirate ship, but only with a glancing blow. The *CIS Daisy* disintegrates in mid-air and crashes, fragments large and small mixed with pieces of the pirate ship spin and slowly fall to the ground. The sound of the crash hits about two seconds after the ships make contact.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (WOODED HILLSIDE) - SAME

GUNMAN 1 and GUNMAN 2 are distracted by the *CIS Daisy's* kamikaze run on the privateer. Koko drops her unlocked handcuffs. She charges and grapples Gunman 2's gun-arm.

Jones dives for cover to distract Gunman 1 from Koko. Gunman 1 takes a snap shot at Jones, hitting him in the left arm as he ducks away.

Koko turns Gunman 2's pistol on Gunman 1 and causes the pistol to fire, killing Gunman 1 with an incredible, heroically impossible head shot through his helmet visor.

Koko then disarms Gunman 2, sending his pistol flying away. In the course of the fight, she also manages to dislodge his helmet, which tumbles to the ground and rolls away.

CLOSE SHOT ON PISTOL

...as it lands some distance away. Koko and Gunman 2 are struggling in the background.

CLOSE ON KOKO

...as she struggles with the stronger man in his armor. Gunman 2 gets the upper hand on Koko and begins to strangle her with his forearm.

CLOSE ON GUNMAN 2

From off camera, a pistol is placed to Gunman 2's head.

POV GUNMAN 2

...looking down the barrel of his own pistol at Jones. Jones is holding it in both hands. Hold the scene for a beat, then switch to...

EXTREME CLOSE UP ON GUNMAN 2

...with the barrel of his pistol pressed against his face.

MEDIUM SHOT

Frame Jones, Koko, and Gunman 2. The camera is behind Jones. Gunman 2's head is obscured behind Jones' body.

SFX the sharp crack of a pistol as Jones fires point blank into Gunman 2's head. Gunman 2 goes limp and falls down, dragging Koko down with him.

POV KOKO

Koko is looking up at Jones. Jones is a nervous wreck. Filled with fear and rage, and bleeding from a gunshot wound to his left arm, he is shaking. He lowers the pistol.

JONES

I think this is what Ledge meant
when he used to talk about seeing
the elephant.

As Jones is speaking, from overhead, we see the Pirate Ship move into view, hovering overhead.

ON KOKO

We are looking down at Koko. She is looking upward despairingly. She holds her hand up as if to cover the sun.

POV KOKO

Koko's hand covers the sun. From behind the edge of her hand, we see plunging from above a TORPEDO

The torpedo is gravitic-driven, so does not have any visible thrusters or anything like that, but it would travel so fast that it would leave a thin contrail behind it. It is long and is roughly the shape of a short, twin-ended cotton swab with streamlined and pointed bulbs at both ends of a narrow shaft.

The torpedo strikes the top of the pirate ship and explodes. The pirate ship shudders.

SFX in addition to two successive EXPLOSIONS, there should also be a sharp SONIC BOOM mixed in.

ON KOKO AND JONES

Jones and Koko are both in frame. They are looking upward at the action overhead. Koko frees herself from the clutches of the now-dead Gunman 2. She leaps to her feet.

KOKO

RUN!

A couple of small pieces of debris fall to the ground as Koko grabs Jones by the hand and drags him off-screen as they both run uphill.

INT. CNS BOLIVAR - SAME

The Bolivar's bridge crew are firing torpedoes at the pirate ship from orbit. The crew are excited, as if this was their first real combat and they were winning. The CAPTAIN looks determined. MARSHAL Ryan is standing at his side.

GUNNER

Torpedo one has scored a direct hit.

CAPTAIN

Nice shot.

GUNNER

Torpedoes two, three, and four have target lock and are engaging!

CAPTAIN

(to Marshal Ryan)
Marshal, please join our marine team and stand ready for a possible hot landing zone.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (SKY) - SAME

LONG SHOT of the Pirate ship as it attempts to move away. Another torpedo dives through the atmosphere and strikes her solidly amidships.

A third torpedo then dives toward the Pirate Ship. The Pirate Ship's dorsal laser turret fires and destroys the third torpedo.

The last of the CNS Bolivar's four torpedoes plunges through the air and hits the Pirate Ship.

The pirate ship breaks apart and crashes.

INT. NEW BRAZIL (EXCAVATION SITE) - MINUTES LATER

We see that Ledge is tied to a chair, being tortured by the Interrogator for no reason in particular except that the Interrogator is not a nice man. The Interrogator is holding a big knife.

Natasha is still sitting against the cavern wall with her hands bound behind her back.

Guard Three is standing near Natasha. His attention is split between Natasha and Ledge. An assault rifle is draped in front of his chest, held in place by a tactical harness/strap.

The three pirate technicians are working in the cave.

From out of frame, we hear...

SFX FOOTSTEPS approaching. The Interrogator begins to turn around slowly, pausing to examine his handiwork.

INTERROGATOR

(pause)

We thought we heard thunder--

WIDE ANGLE

...looking toward the entrance to the excavation site.

Koko, dual-wielding pistols she took from the gunmen, walks into the site. With determination, focus, anger, and style, she opens fire on the pirates. Her first volley drops the two nearest Technicians.

The third technician fumbles for his pistol. It flies out of its holster and lands on the floor.

Guard 3 opens fire on Koko with an auto burst from his assault rifle. Koko dives and rolls out of the way.

Natasha suddenly springs into action. She rolls over and swings her legs into the back of Guard 3's knees, knocking him off of his feet. She then quickly stands and begins running toward the UFO's open doorway.

Simultaneously, the Interrogator makes a move for the pistol belt that is sitting atop the shelf behind his "workstation" as the remaining Technician grabs for the pistol he dropped.

Koko recovers from her evasive roll. She fires at the Interrogator with her left-hand pistol, but just misses. The Interrogator dives back behind Ledge for cover, giving up on retrieving his pistol.

With her right-hand pistol, Koko fires at and hits the third Technician square in the chest, knocking him down and mortally wounding him.

Natasha reaches the UFO at the same time as Guard 3 recovers from being knocked down. Koko fires right-handed at Guard 3, nailing him in the head and killing him, blood splattering behind.

With her left-hand pistol, Koko takes a snap-shot at Natasha as she dives through the UFO's open hatch and out of sight, but she misses. SFX the UFO's door re-materializes behind Natasha.

The Interrogator stands and once again goes for his pistol, but Koko again fires a snap shot in his direction and he ducks back behind Ledge.

Koko stands and begins walking across the floor towards the Interrogator, training her right-hand pistol on him.

The Interrogator panics. He is hiding behind Ledge, who is still tied to the chair. The Interrogator looks around quickly. Seeing no easy escape or cover, he uses Ledge as a human shield. He grabs a knife from his table and puts it to Ledge's throat.

Koko stops in her tracks and takes careful aim.

INTERROGATOR (CONT'D)

Drop the gun, now, or I--

ZOOM IN TO EXTREME CLOSE UP ON KOKO.

SFX show the reflection of what Koko is seeing in her wide-open, unblinking eye. We see a flash reflected in her eye and hear SFX a SINGLE GUNSHOT, which echoes around the cave. Silence follows. Koko blinks.

CLOSE UP ON KOKO

Koko's voice is ice-cold as she lowers her pistol.

KOKO

Right eye.

BACK TO SCENE

Ledge is sweating profusely, as well as bleeding from the interrogator's handiwork.

KOKO (CONT'D)
Ninjas seven, pirates nothing. Are
you okay, Boss?

LEDGE
NO! DUH!

Koko uncocks her pistols and sticks them under her belt. She walks toward Ledge.

Jones enters the cave from the main entrance, holding his hastily bandaged arm.

Suddenly, the UFO begins to glow more brightly than before. We hear SFX a THWUMP and the UFO disappears.

JONES
Holy shit! That was a hyper-jump!

LEDGE
Oh, just great! Tortured again and
little miss de Sade steals our
flying saucer!
(pause)
At least you're both alright.

JONES
(wincing)
I'm not.

LEDGE
How's Daisy?

Koko and Jones look at one another.

KOKO
Ummm--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW BRAZIL - TRANSITIONAL

WIDE ANGLE panoramic daytime shot of the foliated hills of New Brazil.

EXT. NEW BRAZIL (GRAVE) - DAY

Ledge is standing before a square hole in the ground. He is holding a small ENGAGEMENT RING BOX. To the side, a pile of dirt with a shovel lies on top. Inside the hole is the battered remains of the *CIS Daisy's* AI Computer case. It is a square, metal box. It has been completely mangled.

CLOSE UP ON LEDGE

His hands gently trembling, Ledge opens the ring box. He removes his engagement ring from his finger and snaps it into place in one of two empty slot inside the box. He gently runs his finger over the empty slot.

He then removes his wallet from his pocket. He opens it and removes the data card that he used to program the *CIS Daisy's* AI in Amy Johnson's image. He gently places it into the box with his ring and closes the lid.

Ledge kneels at the grave. He leans forward and places the ring box on top of the mangled AI Case. He then takes off his *CNS Giap* baseball cap and sets it on top of the case as well.

POV LEDGE

Ledge looks across to the opposite side of the open grave. Amy/Dream is sitting on the ground. She is wearing her white wedding dress. Her image is softened. She is wearing her engagement ring.

BACK TO SCENE

When Ledge sees Amy/Dream, tears begin to well in his eyes. Amy/Dream slowly quotes from Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*.

AMY/DREAM

And at the closing of the day
 She loosed the chain, and down she
 lay;
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott

CLOSE ON LEDGE

Ledge closes his eyelids. Tears are streaming from his eyes as he fights to maintain his composure. Ledge then opens his eyes and Amy/Dream is gone.

CLOSE ON KOKO AND JONES

Koko is leaning against Jones, who has his right arm draped over her shoulder. She puts her arms around him and holds him.

SWITCH TO LONG SHOT of the Grave site.

Jones and Koko are shown to be standing behind Ledge in the distance, watching over him, but giving him his privacy. Marshal Ryan is standing at extreme FRAME RIGHT with his head bowed. Ledge falls to the ground, crying out loud. He strikes the ground with his fist.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. HABITAT MODULE - DAY

Ledge is standing inside the living room of the Habitat Module on Planet Xia. The video monitor is off. He is holding the video monitor's remote control in one hand. In the other, he is holding a piece of paper.

LEDGE (V.O.)
We humans are every bit as
capricious as the universe into
which we are born.

CLOSE ON PAPER

The paper is an insurance claim form for the *CIS Daisy*. It is rubber-stamped **DENIED**. The stated reason is that the loss was owing to an act of war, which was not covered.

BACK TO SCENE

Ledge activates the monitor. Miranda's image appears. She looks very happy to see Ledge. She is wearing her St. Christopher's Medallion again, and she makes a point of taking it in her hand.

LEDGE (V.O.)
Our careful plans are as often
undone by our own hand as they are
by the conscious or unconscious
actions of others.

We cannot hear them, but Miranda asks Ledge out to dinner. Ledge is surprised, and gladly accepts. They set a time. Ledge turns the video monitor off. Ledge looks down at his casual clothing and looks worried.

LEDGE (V.O.)
Our experiences shape us in ways we
can never predict. Sometimes the
edges are rough. Like water running
over stones in a stream bed, only
the passage of time can smooth
them.

ARIEL enters frame and gives Ledge a shopping box. Ledge looks surprised. He opens the box and finds a tailored tuxedo and matching accessories within.

LEDGE (V.O.)
 One of the hardest lessons we must
 learn is how to let go of the past.

Ariel smiles slyly as she turns and walks away.

INT. CSA HQ (DIRECTOR SMITH'S OFFICE) - DAY

Koko is standing before Director Smith's desk. SMITH is seated in his chair. Koko is dressed very casually, almost as if to insult her boss' professional fashion sensibilities.

KOKO (V.O.)
 Human existence
 Through nature or providence
 Is miraculous

Koko places her ID Card and holstered pistol on Director Smith's desk. She then hands him her official, written notice of resignation from the CSA. Smith stands. He looks angry.

SMITH
 (muffled)
 Why are you resigning?

KOKO (V.O.)
 I have to believe
 If we follow our conscience
 That things will work out

Smith is obviously yelling at her and wagging his finger menacingly, but Koko stares him right in the eyes, unblinking, as if she is looking right through him, tuning him out.

KOKO (V.O.)
 Amid the heavens
 Ephemeral soul unbound
 Ever shall I dance

INT. ZUMPCO HQ (EXECUTIVE OFFICE) - NIGHT

Jones is standing before a desk in a female corporate EXECUTIVE's penthouse office. The Executive is seated. Jones is dressed casually.

Jones places his own letter of resignation on the executive's desk. The Executive stands up. She looks disappointed, and as if she is trying to talk Jones into changing his mind.

JONES (V.O.)
It really does take a lot of
courage to shoot yourself in the
foot.

Jones smiles, shakes his head, "no," and turns and walks
away.

INT. ZUMPCO HQ (CORRIDOR) - SAME

Jones is walking down the corridor in the office.

JONES (V.O.)
Let me put it this way. Love makes
you do stupid shit.

INT. MIRANDA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ledge, Jones, Koko, and Miranda are seated around a table in
the rear of her restaurant. They are all wearing formal
dress. Ariel is waiting on them. It is a private party. The
restaurant is closed to other customers.

They are all laughing and in good spirits as they tell each
other AD LIB stories. Miranda and Ledge are exchanging
friendly glances, and Koko and Jones are exchanging some that
are more than friendly.

Ariel looks annoyed as she fills the wine glasses of those
assembled at the table.

LEDGE (V.O.)
Ad astra per aspera is the ancient
Latin motto of the Confederation
Naval Academy. I always knew the
translation. But for me it came to
have personal meaning.

Ledge, Jones, Koko, and Miranda raise their glasses in a
toast. Ariel raises the wine bottle, downing the remnants.

LEDGE
To the stars. Through difficulties.

FADE OUT:

THE END